



TRUTH TO WONDER

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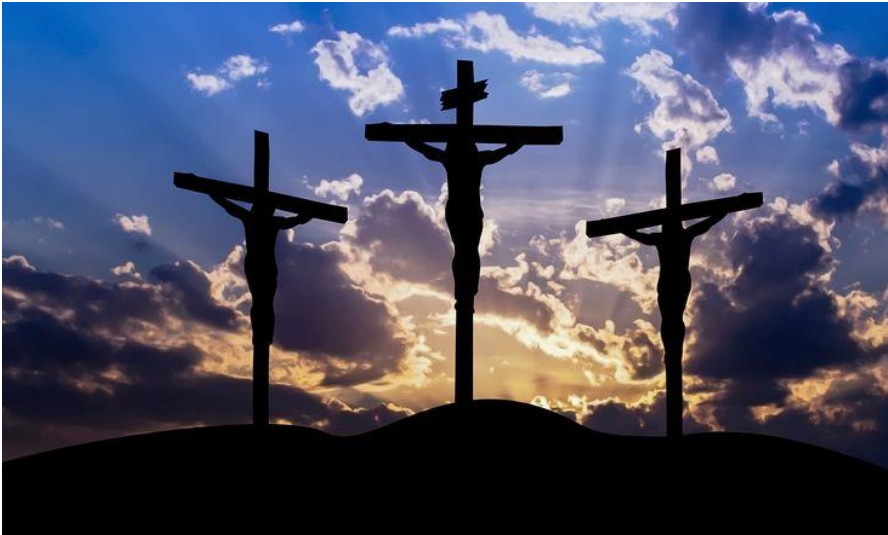
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Who Other Than Christ?!

When Adam sinned against God in Eden, it was a bitter betrayal. A wilful turning against a God who had done nothing but give in great abundance to a Creation that could offer nothing worthy in return. If such a bitter strike against such pure love had been levelled against even the greatest of mortals, the wounded heart would've turned away from the guilty.

That would leave two broken hearts in Adam and Eve and give darkness unrivalled control and victory over future days for all concerned. Whilst the betrayed would suffer the deep wound of a selfless love being thrown back in His face. Such a wound is one of the bitterest that can be felt, and often threatens to turn that poor heart cold in the hope of sheltering itself from further pain (Job 6:10). Yet mighty is the heart of God, and He would not turn to bitterness of ways against His Creation.

The betrayer that was mankind, would find its conscious pricked for but a moment, and then quickly wrestle to push down any sense of remorse. Yet the ongoing irritation to the soul, that it had thrown away the most beautiful treasure it would ever own, would drive it to ever deepening despair. This loss would plague the soul so unceasingly that it would drive the guilty to indulge in all manner of evil distractions, all in the hope that maybe this time the ache of loss would fade away for good.



Such are the ways of mankind. Prone to wander as the hymn says, prone to leave the God we love, as each of us steps into Adam's rebellious sin. We attempt to deliver ourselves from our terrible condition, but our hearts tell us that what we have lost is too great to be recovered by our efforts. And so, our misery continues on.

Yet praise the Lord that He is not like us and that His ways are so much higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9). Those ways are of Heaven and declare unto all Creation that the love of God is the greatest glory in all existence. For where the merits and virtues of even the most loving and

merciful of men fail, the longsuffering heart of God (Exodus 34:6) strides forward into the darkness of the loss we caused. Where we would've turned away in despair and pain, He placed Himself with unwavering faithfulness so that what we threw away, He would recover.

This He did in the heat of the betrayal. When Adam had just turned away from the abundance of God's provision and love, the heart of God revealed itself to be unmatched in its beauty and grace. God did not leave us in the misery of our own rebellion. He looked upon our now fallen nature and took pity upon the wretched being we had made ourselves. We mortal men would look on such a scene and cry against the guilty, 'Go away and do not return! I have given you everything and you have spat on it! I will give you nothing more!' God moved in wisdom and grace, to judge the sin but to extend hope to a fallen being that He still loved.

What manner of God can move in such a merciful way?! What manner of God can extend such awesome grace in the midst of such open rebellion?! None other than the Lord God of the Holy Bible! In the bitterest of moments, God showed His largeness of heart, and promised that He would provide a way back to Him. That way back would not be through cold ritual, brutal duty or soulless religious practice, but through the embracing of a personal relationship. What Adam threw away, the Second Adam recovered in that through Him, we might know Almighty God again. In the embracing of the Son of God, the pain of the loss of God that burdens our hearts might be lifted from us! Would you or I have done such a thing for those who had wounded us so deeply? No, we wouldn't.

All these careful considerations provide us with a spectacular proof for the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Holy Scriptures. That proof being that the mind of humanity could not invent such a pure love as the love of God, simply out of the greatly tainted understanding that we hold of love. The heart of mankind could never conceive let alone receive such majesties as our imitations of love are thin, selfish and lustful in comparison. The existence of such a Gospel, that reveals such a love alien to all human nature and understanding declares that its source must be of Heaven.

It declares that its source must be from one who is the embodiment of such a glorious love. It proclaims that this love is not lost in the ethereal realms of the cosmos, but that it is bound up in the full revelation of the Godhead that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Death Of Fear Through Courage of Faith

Matthew Henry once shrewdly observed ‘In the first five books of Moses we had a very full account of the rise, advance, and constitution, of the Old Testament church, the family out of which it was raised, the promise, that great charter by which it was incorporated, the miracles by which it was built up, and the laws and ordinances by which it was to be governed.’ He was speaking of the similarity in how God moved to lead His people the Jews into the Promised Land as a nation. Furthermore, how God blessed them with all structure and provisions required for a secure existence. So too has the Lord moved to provide His Church, with a realm flowing with the knowledge of the full revelation of the Godhead that is Jesus Christ and the Gospel. Furthermore, how adherence to His Word will bring a life filled with the peace of God, much like the blessings rendered to the faithful Israelites.

Yet there were obstacles and enemies that needed to be overcome for such wondrous blessings to be enjoyed. One of the most fearsome of these enemies was that of fear itself. The Israelites looked to the promise of God to go with them as they entered a land filled with violent men, giants, and mighty cities filled with foul idolatrous practices. Similarly, the early Christians trembled at the thought of going out into the world to share the good news of the Gospel with the world. The world they faced was filled with violent men, giants of political and social power who dwelt in great cities and palaces, all of whom wanted these early Christians silenced forever. Yet just as He had done with the Jews under Joshua, God promised these early preachers of the Gospel that they needn’t be afraid, for He was with them.

This enemy that is fear is known to each of us, and whilst we must not read ourselves into the Bible, we can see how God has delivered others from this great beast that is fear. Then with this Scriptural understanding, we can praise God for how He does not alter in His movements towards those that love Him. This is to be our constant consideration as we journey back to Joshua 1:1, where we read these heavy words ‘Now after the death of Moses’.

Joshua had been a great friend and ‘minister’ to Moses. He had done all he could to assist and support the leadership of Moses, and in turn Moses had likely been a spiritual father and mentor to Joshua. One can only imagine the depth of bond that existed between the two, and how the news delivered to Joshua that Moses was dead would’ve filled his heart with grief. Yet the Lord moved to lift Joshua’s face back to His continued blessing and provision, and not become overwhelmed with the bitter pains of grief and sorrow.

The Lord comes to Joshua and in many ways speaks very frankly to Joshua. For the Lord says ‘Moses, my servant is dead.’ There is no poetical beauty of language to ease the sorrows of Joshua in his hour of loss. There was no glorious eulogy for Moses to soothe the fears of Joshua, as he considered in likely worry about his ability to lead a nation into unknown and hostile territories. Instead, God’s frank speech reminds Joshua and indeed us all to this day, that death comes to us all. The righteous and the wicked both taste the bitterness of death, for it is appointed unto us all that we die once, and then judgment awaits (Hebrews 9:27). Moses, as great a man and as mighty a foreshadowing of Christ he was, was still a sinful man. And so he died too.



It is a tendency of fallen humanity to almost deify those who are heralded as great people but have passed away. This is idolatrous and denies God His singular due glory as the one worthy of all praise and worship. It also harms those who remain, as we can succumb to the foolish notion that we can never emulate such giants of humanity. As a result, we retreat away from the great wonders that God could do with our humble lives, again denying Him glory and robbing us of a truly purposeful life. Joshua is to embark on a mighty work for God, and so he must not believe that the best hope for the people of Israel died with Moses. Joshua’s heart must be strengthened in the one whom death has no hold over. The one who will never grow weary in His leading of His people. So, the frank manner of God’s words is to shatter the heavy chains of loss that were likely descending on Joshua’s spirit.

The seeming frankness of God's addressing of the matter of the death of Moses, is far more tender and sorrow filled than we first see. When we are filled with the miseries of our own grief, we can easily misinterpret other peoples words and make them seem hurtful and cold. Oftentimes, those words that first offended us were spoken from a heart that shares our sorrows but looks to push on to days of certain hope and joy. This is seen in how God refers to Moses as 'my servant'. As much as Joshua admired and loved his great friend and mentor, God loved Moses far more! God speaks of Moses as '**my** servant'. God made Moses. God called Moses. God redeemed Moses. God enabled Moses. God took Moses home to peace and glory. Joshua, though a great friend, had done none of these eternity shaping glories. The Lord does not say this in petty jealousy of grief towards Joshua. He shares His sorrow with Joshua to heal him. 'How so?' we ask with a puzzled brow. He does so by humbling us. By reminding us that as great as our love may have been for those we have lost, He loved and loves them far, far deeper than we can possibly comprehend! In this humility, our tear-filled eyes are lifted from the mire of grief, and are pulled up to gaze upon the one who gave us life and salvation! We are taken from fixation on what we have lost and brought to remembrance of what we have gained! This is the manner of Christ Jesus! To lead our eyes away from death and towards Himself, for He is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6).

Also consider how the Lord reveals His tender heart to Joshua and us today through these heavy words, 'Moses, my servant is dead.' God never wanted mankind to Fall. We were not predestined to Fall. He created a perfect existence so that humanity could be fruitful in all ways and manners, and thereby walk in wondrous communion with Him for all time! This was the wish of His loving heart. And yet His beloved creation that was mankind, chose to rebel against Him, bringing sin and death into a Creation He had so lovingly made. How the Lord laments the death of any life as He takes no pleasure in even the death of the wicked (Ezekial 18:23). How we learn of the meekness, the tenderness and the love of God, for His heart weeps over the evil that mankind welcomed into Creation.

And so, with this entry of sin and evil into Creation, mankind lost its wondrously perfect communion with God. In this glorious relationship with the Lord before the Fall, we knew no fear. Yet, when mankind fell through Adam's sin, fear became the baseline existence for each of us. Fear and shame drove Adam and Eve to hide from the Lord in Eden. Fear and shame have since driven many lost and frightened souls away from the Lord in each and every generation. Fear clouds the understanding of us all. It prohibits us from being able to escape so much pain and suffering that exists in our days. Consider how Solomon, a man of truly staggering wisdom, lived in an age where fear of war and many other sufferings was calmed in the land of Israel. For wisdom to flow freely, true peace must be known.

Fear has destroyed so much of what God created in His love for us. Fear is a cancerous weapon of sin, for a mind and heart trapped in sin says to God 'You cannot overcome this enemy.' And so, we give the strength of the day to attempt to subdue the fearsome enemy that harms our peace. Yet what we should be doing is living in trust that nothing can deny the power and authority of God!

This terrible cancer that is fear, is seen in the weary hearts of so many people burdened by the great weight of their sins. Fear comes to them and sneers 'Your sins are too great. God will not forgive you.' These fear filled words spat bitterly at us by the Devil and his minions, looks to capitalise on the blindness we walk in regarding the wonderful nature of God. Sadly, many lives listen to these vile accusations and sneers of the enemy, and then live in constant fear that if they do not live in perfection of existence, they will be damned forever by a vengeful and angry God. Or they accept the lies of the enemy, and believe that God will never forgive them for their many sins. So, they throw themselves in ever greater self-destruction, believing their fate is sealed. Oh, how such a life breaks the heart of God!

The great Reformer, Martin Luther lived in fear for all his youth. Raised as a Roman Catholic, he saw God as an angry God that must be appeased through our efforts. So, Martin lived in desperation of pleasing God, needlessly wracked his body with punishing denial of needed rest and nourishment, all so that he might display his piety to God. Work, toil and piety would save him from the wrath of God, or so he thought.

Martin's fear was so great that it nearly cost him his life when he was a young monk in Germany. Martin had subjected himself to heavy fasting, hours of self-flagellation, endless labours and no rest. So, he collapsed in his room with no one aware of his terrible state. By the mercy of God, another monk came to check on Martin and after help from others, broke down the locked door to Martin's room and revived him. Fear can deny life its beauty. Fear can even cost a life. Fear looks to inhibit the will of God.

In God's interaction with Joshua then, we see a merciful and truly wise God moving. The Lord knows the destructive power of fear and seeks to protect Joshua from its powerful grip. Remember, Joshua has lost his spiritual father, his mentor, his friend, and is not able to mourn at a place of burial (God buried Moses so that his body would not become an idol). In this hour of great loss and deep grief, Joshua looks out on a nation which is often rebellious, fearful and ungrateful. Seeing this, he likely also felt the weight of his task to lead such a people into a land filled with wicked and violent adversaries. Oh, how he needed comforting and strengthening! And so, God moved to take Joshua's eyes off his

own troubles and reminds him that as he saw the Lord watch over Moses, He will do the same for Joshua. This is the great tool of strengthening that all Christians must utilise, that of knowledge of Church history. To know how God has moved so incredibly through so many humble lives, so consistently over the generations, reminds us that when such a mighty God is for us, who can be against us! (Romans 8:31).

Through knowledge of Church history, see how God can shatter the chains of fear and raise up a nobody to become someone who stands against great but evil powers of the day! One only need consider how God used Moses, the meekest man upon the face of the earth (Numbers 12:3), to stand against the tyranny of mighty Pharaoh! Then, some 3000 years later, God did a similar work in that He took a fearful and anxious young monk called Martin Luther, and enabled him to stand against the might of the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy! As God's people were freed from oppression by God through Moses, so too were God's Church freed from oppression by God through Luther (and many other humble servants of Christ). It is indeed true what Matthew Henry observed centuries ago. That the movements of God with His Church mirror His movements with His people the Jews in the Old Testament.

God moved so in the Old Testament, through the Jews, to prepare a nation and a people to receive the Messiah, our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ. God then moved in the New Testament to provide His only begotten Son and the Gospel, so that the good news of salvation for repentant sinners could be spread to all nations and all peoples. So, we see how in the shattering of the chains of fear, what the first Adam lost in Eden, the last Adam regained at Calvary. All this was done for our eternal good and His eternal glory. Amen.

Shared Flood Legends

There are over 200 Flood legends from across the varying nations and corners of the world. Vastly separated lands such as New Zealand, South Africa, Greece and Mexico to name a few, all share similar tales from their ancient ancestors of a world wide Flood. Dr Henry Morris studied all these varying Flood legends and tabulated the themes that were shared across the various Flood legends. In his book *Searching For Noah's Ark*, Dr Morris listed the frequency of shared themes across the differing Flood legends, of which are listed below:

Was there a favoured family? 88 percent of Flood legends shared this detail

Were they forewarned? 66 percent shared this detail

Was the Flood due to the wickedness of mankind? 66 percent shared this detail

Was the catastrophe only a Flood? 95 percent shared this detail

Was the Flood global? 95 percent shared this detail

Was survival due to a boat? 70 percent shared this detail

Did animals play any part? 73 percent shared this detail

Did survivors land on a mountain? 57 percent shared this detail

Was the geography local? 82 percent shared this detail

Were birds sent out? 35 per cent shared this detail

Was the rainbow mentioned? 7 percent shared this detail

Did survivors offer a sacrifice? 13 percent shared this detail

Were specifically eight people saved? 9 percent shared this detail

Dr Morris then noted on reflection of these shared details, if we were to put 'the main themes of the accounts together, the story would read something like this:



Once there was a worldwide flood sent by God to judge the wickedness of man. But there was one righteous family that was forewarned of the coming flood. They built a boat on which they survived the flood along with some animals. As the flood waned, their boat landed on a high mountain, from which they descended and repopulated the whole earth.'

Isn't it amazing how peoples separated by thousands and thousands of miles, with completely distinct customs and cultures, all share an account of a world-wide Flood that startlingly resembles the Genesis account! We Bible believers should not be astonished by such a discovery, but it provides a very useful witness to those who remain sceptics of Biblical history.

The True Nature of Love

Psalm 115:1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, *and* for thy truth's sake.

Modern Christianity suffers from a misaligned delivery of heart felt affection. With the rise of personal interpretation of the Holy Bible, many have become unknowingly infatuated with the thought that every Biblical passage is uniquely relevant to themselves. Rather than seeking to discover what the author (God) wants us to know about Him, we consider the pages of Holy Scripture with a baseline of 'what can I uncover that speaks to me about my condition.' This inevitably leads to a faith that is subtly underscored by a self-loving outlook, as opposed to a selfless love that truly reflects the love of God.

Some may scoff at such an assertion, yet if we are composed and sober minded in our considerations of this topic (following Scriptural commands after all), we can begin to see how Christianity has lost its potency in many quarters.

The cold, atheistic, Darwinian school of thought that has ruled mankind since the late 19th century, has left many of the younger generations looking for something that satisfies their spiritual hunger. So, the Charismatic Movement has welcomed huge numbers of the young with a promise of fulfilment of the self and the living of their 'best life, now'. Yet this could not be offered through a Christianity that is dependent on seeking the author's intended meaning of His Holy Word. Such a true reading calls the reader to deny the self; take up our cross daily; be willing to suffer for Christ Jesus and the Gospel; all so that others may know of the grace of God. Such a message is not easily received, and so it has been softened to appeal to mankind's sensitivities and preferences.

As young lives look for fulfilment, as they have always done, the subtle lure of being able to enjoy your 'best life, now', was eagerly taken up. Yet the Holy Scriptures do not promise your best life now, it promises your best life in eternity. This promise is assured by the blood of Christ Jesus. Yet its promise remains a way off, too far and at too great a cost for many an impatient and quietly greedy soul (see Matthew 19:16-24 for an example of this). This all-important reality of Christianity has been heavily diluted, largely due to a desire to read oneself into the Holy Scriptures, rather than read than in search of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Human nature dictates that we are each in search of peace. We all long for that perfection of Eden, whether we see this truth in its fullness or not. Therefore, we consistently look to create an environment that is pleasant, secure and enjoyable for ourselves. The notion that we can interpret the Holy Scriptures according to 'what it says to us', means that we will automatically look to twist and turn Scripture into a pleasing text. We do this to assure ourselves of an existence that is in line with our personal preferences. The Holy Scriptures is thus quietly stripped of its power for correction and reproof (2 Timothy 3:16) and made a tool that is more adept at confirming the desires of the individual, no matter what this may be. For proof of such a dilution of truth, we need only look at how quickly many today run to the often wrongly used 'judge not' when they sense their life choices are being rightly challenged.

The result of this is a wealth of younger professing Christians, who all have been wrongly taught. They have been taught that Christian faith means a blind acceptance of many sinful behaviours, all under the misused banner of 'judge not' and 'God is love.' This being built upon the foundation that the Holy Bible can be interpreted in personal, subjective ways, not as a uniform truth that reveals the unchanging nature of God. And so, the young person is not compelled to change their sinful ways, but instead simply change their interpretation of the Scriptures. If someone challenges this notion, then the challenger is deemed harsh and vitriolic in their faith by the misguided individual.

The greatest victim of this war on the absolute truth of Holy Scripture, is the understanding of the nature of true love. The manner of true love is inherently selfless and sacrificial. At a wedding, the bride and bridegroom are joyfully declaring to all present, and crucially God, that they are giving their life to better the other, at the cost of union with all other potential suitors.

Another example being that of a parent towards their child. The parent willingly gives up on health, wealth and peace to ensure the welfare, development and future of their child. Such is the true nature of love. This basic understanding of the nature of love has been heavily but slowly eroded over the last few generations. Today, the greatest love that one can know is to 'love yourself'. This is the message of most TV shows, advertisements, songs, movies, artworks, therapy guides, etc, etc. Such a teaching flies in the face of true, Godly love as revealed in the Holy Bible. Yet such a distorted message has become commonplace in many Christian circles through the notion of personal interpretation of the Bible.



The effect of this is huge but amazingly missed by many. Churches that not that long ago embraced such a method of Bible interpretation, are now seeing a huge disconnect between the old and the young. The young have been told that we must not judge others as Christians; that the fulfilment of self is all important, and that the Bible speaks to us in different ways, not a singular truth. Then as the young have lived this teaching, dutifully following the call to live out our faith in deeds not just words, they have cut ties with the older generations in many places. This is because the older generations still have the vestiges of traditional Bible interpretation (search for the authors meaning, not impose your own onto the text). As a result, they live fundamentally

differently in their faith from the younger generations. Evidence of this can be seen in various churches across the land, as traditional churches are now near enough empty of children. Whereas charismatic churches are often few in number of the elderly. As a result, the young are lacking the spiritual experience to keep them from following every gust of wind that is a new doctrine. Conversely, the old are denied the hope and strengthening of spirit. This strengthening comes from seeing a life's labour for Christ and the Gospel is not lost on the next generation. This gives them peace that their days have been spent well for Christ Jesus.

To further illustrate my point, when my family and I attended various Christmas activities at traditional, local churches, the constant soundtrack to our attendance from the elderly populace was, 'A family! Oh, and children!' We were fawned over each time as they desperately sought to make us feel welcome. Their clear excitement at seeing young faces was both lovely and saddening, as such youthful lives no longer share their time at church each week.

Conversely, many young lives fall into error of ways because they lack the provision of a correcting, older hand done in love and adherence to the Word of God. And so, many young lives fall into all manner of sin filled traps, out of a lack of spiritual experience. The devil has expertly divided churches because churches have not rightly divided the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15).

This division has been fuelled by a thin understanding of the nature of God's love towards the world. For many years now, Christians have been taught to marvel at God's love towards us to the point where the focus has shifted from awe of the love of God to near expectancy of it. Where many have been afraid to preach of sin and repentance, the love of God has become detached from the grace of God. What has been left is a divine love that has no conditions whatsoever. This has grown from a misunderstanding of the nature of God's unconditional love. Yes, we cannot earn the love of God, no matter how pious or virtuous the life, for all fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). This is a fundamental doctrine of Christianity, and in this aspect, the love of God is unconditional on our efforts. However, all loves have conditions if they are to be true and effectual. If a husband or wife was unfaithful in marriage, then they have broken the conditions of the union, the faithful honouring of each other in exclusivity of affections. The Book of Hosea speaks on this matter deeply, as it reveals the **faithfulness** of God's love, a key part of the living of any love.

Our understanding of love today has in many ways been eroded of this understanding of faithfulness in love. To be faithful in love means to sacrifice one's selfish desires for the bettering of the one they profess to love. It is most beautifully expressed in the joyful placing of oneself in the cool shadows of the day so the other may receive the warmth of the light upon them. This is the love that God showed the world through His Son at Calvary (Romans 5:8), a selfless, faithful love. A love that flows from the eternal heart of God without any input, exertion or quality of mankind.

Knowing this then, the Gospel is rightly framed as a glorious testimony of the magnificence of God's love and our unworthiness of it! It is the free gift of salvation through Christ that is offered to us, despite our unworthiness of this eternal gift, that heralds the eternal glory of God through Christ Jesus! Thus, all glory belongs to God! All are unworthy

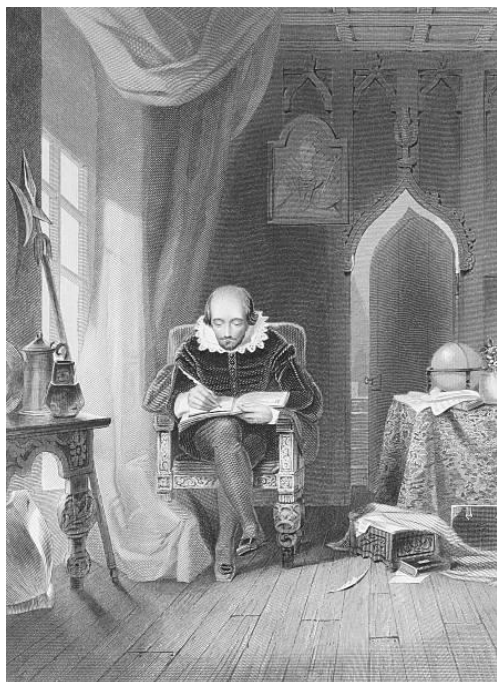
of God's love but through Christ's grace, righteousness and faithfulness, we are made worthy to receive it when we cling onto the Him as our Saviour and Redeemer.

Thus, all are made equal before God through Jesus Christ. None can dare contort the Gospel to make it about themselves, self-love dies, and the love of Christ Jesus lives. In this truth, we are all rightly humbled to see how gracious He's been to all who receive Him as Lord and Saviour. We can look upon old and young with the same praise of the graciousness of God, and marvel at how loving He is to wretches as we. The praise is the Lord's alone and this truth we sing with the songs of our reborn heart! For now, we rightly understand the nature of God's love, and we seek to honour it with faithful service to Him at the expense of all pretenders to His mighty and eternal throne.

Such a joyful realisation and understanding of God not only builds churches, but it also upholds them. It is the truth that acts as a strong tower against the darts of the enemy that are the powers and principalities of the air. Those rulers of darkness against whom we wrestle with each day (Ephesians 6:12). Yet we can do so with a courageous heart knowing the battle is the Lord's (1 Samuel 17:47). Thus, the courage of the young is given to the old, and the wisdom of the old to remain humble in victory and afford all glory to God, is given to the young. And so, iron sharpens iron (Proverbs 27:17), making strong Christian soldiers of all ages, nations and tongues, rightly reflecting the splendour and scope of His eternal love. How the majesties of Heaven can be witnessed by those who seek to know the true nature of the love of God. For in His love, we have our eternal rest. Amen.

Contentedness Is Great Gain

I am constantly surprised by the array of Christian materials that all claim to be able to give a 'better rendering' of the Greek and/or Hebrew manuscripts of the Holy Bible, than those of long-established texts such as the A.V/KJV Bible. Every writer, preacher, and blogger all seem confident in their abilities with these deeply complex ancient languages, to be able to correct the absolute geniuses in their field that were the A.V/KJV translators. Having studied Ancient Greek at degree level, I can tell you how it takes more than a concordance, a couple of brief courses at seminary or some internet searching to become truly adept at such complex languages.



Long time readers of this magazine will be aware of this ministry's stance as regards the extraordinary geniuses that came together under God's hand to give us the A.V/KJV Bible. We have looked at their still unmatched credentials as a collective, their unrivalled attention to detail in translation, and their humility of faith in previous issues. Here, I want to give a brief but greater historical context as to the stupefying levels of knowledge these men held. Furthermore, how these mind boggling skills were used in the translation of the Greek and Hebrew texts that make up the still much beloved A.V/KJV Bible.

To do this we will look at William Shakespeare, a man whose gifts of language helped shaped the English language at the pinnacle of its breadth, richness and beauty (not my opinion but that of numerous English professors the world over).

Not much at all is truly known about William Shakespeare. Much of what we claim to know about him is based on nothing more than scholarly conjecture. The scant documented knowledge we do hold is founded upon a handful of wildly varying signatures on a few legal documents regarding real estate purchases and legal disputes (outside of his plays and sonnets of

course – however most of these are not in his handwriting).

It is believed that William Shakespeare gained his ability to read and write in his attendance at the local grammar school, Kings New School, in Stratford-upon-Avon. The three school master's at the school were all accomplished Oxford University men. This was an unusual situation given that Kings New School was not an elite school but merely a standard grammar school, open to all boys who could read and write to an acceptable entry level.

Children such as Shakespeare entered the school aged seven and attended for seven to eight years. The school days were long, harsh and studious, beginning at six in the morning, and ending between five and six in the evening each day, six days a week. The children were allowed two brief breaks each day, giving insight to the line in *As You Like It* about a boy 'creeping like snail unwillingly to school'. Such an existence was comfortable in comparison to many school children of the age. At Westminster School in London, boys slept in a windowless grain room with no heat, having to endure icy

washes, meagre food and frequent whippings. Whilst their school day also began at sunrise, it lasted long into the evening with additional lessons that often-kept students up well into the night.

Such intense levels of study for so many years meant that even the ‘average student’ became highly expert in classical languages such as Greek, Latin and in some cases Hebrew. For example, one of the main school textbooks of the day taught students one hundred and fifty ways to say ‘thank you for your letter’ in Latin. As Bill Bryson observed in his book *Shakespeare*, “Through such exercises Shakespeare would have learned every possible rhetorical device and ploy – metaphor and anaphora, epistrophe and hyperbole, synecdoche, epanalepsis and others equally arcane and taxing.” Now consider that Shakespeare was not at an elite level of education like all the A.V/KJV translators, who would’ve all been far more accomplished than even he at the use of classical language!

To give further context to the astonishing brilliance of the A.V/KJV translators, even when compared to experts of today, Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor in their introduction to the Oxford edition of the *Complete Works* observed, ‘any grammar school pupil of the day would have received a more thorough grounding in Latin rhetoric and literature ‘than most present-day holders of a university degree in classics.’

Now let us consider again that individuals such as Shakespeare were educated in classical languages to a level **significantly** below that of men like Lancelot Andrews, John Reynolds and the other A.V/KJV translators. Combining their truly astonishing levels of study, natural aptitude and clearly God blessed endeavours, can any today or even men much less educated men such as Westcott and Hort (responsible for the Revised version, the foundation of all modern bible versions) possibly claim to be able to ‘correct the A.V/KJV translators mistakes’.

A wise course of action would be to give rightful thanks unto God for His amazing provision of a still rightly prized, and unmatched Bible translation that is the A.V/KJV Bible. Whilst many prize the unaltered words of Shakespeare, and scoff at those who seek to modernise it for contemporary audiences, many are happy to alter the words of God with supreme ease. Having considered the immensity of skills deployed by God to bring us the A.V/KJV Bible, in humility maybe we should get the message that God has given us an amazing rendering of His Word that should just be enjoyed and not meddled with!

Bonar, Boland And The Unchanging Love Of God

Born in Edinburgh, Scotland on December 19th, 1808, Dr Horatius Bonar excelled in both his school studies and ministerial studies. He was soon ordained as a minister in the Church of Scotland in 1837. However, the Church of Scotland split in 1843, and Bonar became a leading figure in the newly formed ‘Free Church’ in Scotland.

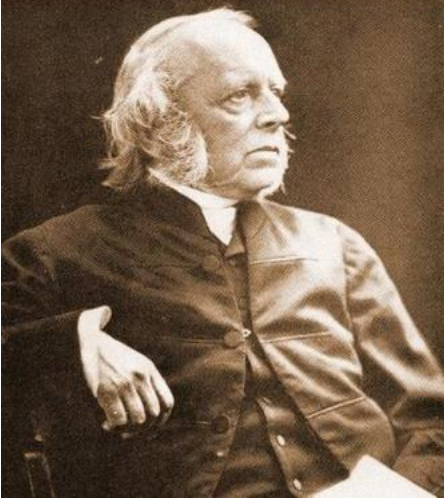
In the same year, he married Miss Jane Lundie and they began married life in Kelso, Scotland. They enjoyed a forty-year marriage, although it was troubled with great heartbreak many times over. The couple experienced the devastating loss of a beloved child five times over. Yet such was the strength of Bonar’s faith that he later wrote, “Spare not the stroke; do with me as thou wilt; let there be naught unfinished, broken or marred. Complete thy purpose that we may become thy perfect image.” Such a declaration speaks of a heart that truly rested in the Lord Jesus Christ, even in the face of a truly painful loss.

It is said that Bonar would spend hours a day in his study praying aloud. On hearing his fervent prayers, a maid at the Bonar home exclaimed “If *he* needs to pray so much, what will happen to me if *I* don’t pray?”

On speaking to a young man about the matter of salvation, Bonar discovered that the youth in question had great difficulty in believing that the Lord would and could forgive his many sins. Dr Bonar asked the troubled youth “Which is of greater weight – your sin, or the blood of Jesus shed for sinners?” Happily, the young man replied, “I am sure the blood of Jesus weighs more heavily than even my sin.” And so, another soul was saved as the young man came to know Christ Jesus that day as his Lord and Saviour.

Bonar was a prolific writer, editing two magazines, writing many articles, creating tracts, penning six hundred hymns and translated at least sixty Psalms. This dynamism and enthusiasm for the Lord’s work fuelled Bonar’s daily desire to utilise his obvious intellect in search of Christ Jesus throughout the Holy Scriptures.

HORATIUS BONAR



Bonar was an imposing figure physically, standing tall and strong. Yet these daunting physical attributes were softened by his gentle, sympathetic nature and childlike faith. This wonderful childlike faith perhaps fuelled his love for children. Many of the hymns he wrote, such as *I Heard The Voice Of Jesus* were written to capture the hearts and minds of the children within his congregation.

In 1866, Bonar moved back to Edinburgh, the city of his birth. There he continued his labours for the Lord until his passing on July 31st, 1889. His death caused a great deal of sadness throughout Scotland, yet no doubt he would have had all those tear-stained faces singing the praises of the Lord he loved, for now he was safe with Him at last.

Just a few decades later, another man from Scotland would be share the good news of the Gospel with many. An ordinary Scottish soldier named James Boland found himself becoming a prisoner of war after being captured at Dunkirk in WWII. On his capture, James noticed a small pamphlet blow to his feet. He would tell his daughter in future years, that no other shred of paper was

within view, just this small pamphlet. So, as he was about to be led away by the Nazi's, James quickly bent down, picked up the pamphlet and saw that it was a collection of verses from the Bible all written in English, along with the message 'Don't give up.'

The whole of the war passed as James and many of his comrades suffered terribly in the prisoner of war camps in Germany. Yet that little pamphlet became a great encouragement to James to press on each day in hope. He used that little collection of Bible verses each week to lead a little Sunday service in the prisoner of war camp, bringing hope to all who gathered.

In the closing days of the war, the camp that James was in was liberated by American troops. After nearly five years in a prisoner of war camp, James was finally able to see home again. On his return home, James continued his eager service for the Lord as he became a church elder and Sunday school leader. James had a particular desire to reach the little ones for Christ Jesus (much like Horatius Bonar), and he would do all he could to ensure that the boys in his care learnt to live the Word of God each day.

James would take every opportunity he could to instil Biblical teaching to the little ones, as he would use football coaching sessions to teach the boys how to live well before God and man. One of the boys in his care at the Sunday school was a certain child called Alex Ferguson (yes, that Alex Ferguson!). The two remained close friends throughout their lives, with Alex in his autobiography calling James his mentor and the one who instilled in him the Christian morals and values he still holds dear to this day. The bond between the two was seen on the day of James' funeral, as Alex Ferguson travelled to attend the service and spoke highly of the faithful servant of God to the assembled crowd.

James kept that little pamphlet of Bible verses all his life and passed it down to his daughter. That amazing testimony of a quiet but mighty miracle of God to bring James His Word in such terrible circumstances, was furthered by his daughter. James' daughter shared the testimony of her father's life and the faithfulness of Christ with over 1 million people through the TV show *Songs of Praise*. Let it never be said that one seemingly insignificant life cannot affect millions!

Two such different men in terms of stature and fame, shared a country of birth. Yet they shared something far greater than a mere country of origin. They shared a faith in the risen Lord Jesus, and used their lives to serve Him through the living and sharing of their faith so that many others may know the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is all a tremendous testimony to the unchanging grace of God; in that He continues to use humble men and women throughout each generation to witness of His love and grace. He calls the lowly of heart, the selfless of nature, those who have often tasted the deepest of life's pains (just as Horatius and James had done), to tell all those they come across that there is one who can heal all wounds. That one being the Lord Jesus Christ, our risen Redeemer who will wipe away every tear from our cheeks by His own nail pierced hand. Such is the personal love of our Lord and God, a love that was deeply treasured and lived by Horatius and James.

Unimaginable Odds

Many are aware of the numerous Old Testament prophecies that point towards Jesus being the Messiah. Critics and sceptics have tried to argue that Jesus somehow conspired to fulfil these prophecies in a deceptive manner. Such a notion is ludicrous! For instance, how could the yet to be born Jesus conspire (if He were but a normal mortal man) to have Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem ready for His delivery? Their placing at Bethlehem for His birth in the flesh was vital to fulfil the prophecy found in Micah 5:2. To claim that a yet to be born child can conspire to influence the decree of a Caesar for a census, so that their parents would be at a required place for their birth, is just too absurd to even remotely consider!

Furthermore, if Jesus were a mere sinful, mortal man, He could not have conspired before His birth to ensure that He would come from royal lineage, thereby fulfilling Old Testament prophecy. He could not have conspired to have the Roman soldiers gamble for His cloak as He endured crucifixion, just as the Psalmist prophesied. The huge array of specific prophecies that Jesus fulfilled in His coming defies explanation by conspiracy or coincidence.

The mathematical probability of Jesus fulfilling all the Old Testament prophecies regarding the coming Messiah faultlessly, was calculated by a renowned mathematician named Dr Peter Stoner. Dr Stoner considered how many of these prophecies are mathematically quantifiable. For instance, regarding Micah 5:2, the birthrate of children in Bethlehem at the time of Jesus is calculable. Dr Stoner took all the mathematically verifiable Old Testament prophecies regarding Jesus being the Messiah and came to a startlingly conclusion. He discovered that the odds of any human being coincidentally fulfilling just 48 of the Old Testament Messianic prophecies, is one in a trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion! That's one chance in a trillion to the power 13!

The conclusion leaves any who spend even but a moment in consideration of the enormity of the numbers, that Jesus Christ was and is the Messiah of which all the Old Testament prophets foretold. Such mind melting numbers therefore leaves all with an inescapable decision to make. Do you accept the evidence given to you in the grace of God, proving to you that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? Or do you disregard the evidence and refuse to accept what is right in front of you?

Is Bad Mental Health A Learnt Behaviour?

1 Corinthians 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

When Joe Rogan interviewed Dr Jordan Peterson on his popular podcast, the question of 'psychological epidemics' arose. Dr Peterson spoke on how through various medical journals, papers, news reports etc, 'psychological epidemics' can be tracked to over 300 years ago. Examples of such epidemics given by Dr Peterson included multiple personality disorder, physical self-harm such as cutting, bulimia and anorexia.

Dr Peterson observed how in repeated cycles over the last 300 years, a few cases of each ailment are reported, before huge numbers spring up. Then given the massive and sudden spread of such problems on a society, scepticism on the legitimacy of the problem and numbers claimed begins to rise. Within another generation, the number of cases falls dramatically and returns to its original position of far fewer reported cases. Then after a lull, the cycle starts all over again.

Dr Peterson noted how these interesting patterns reveal how questions are raised in society to fundamentally challenge basic factors of personal identity. The result being that any who are already somewhat personally unsure or confused on the topic being challenged, are deceived into assigning themselves to the newly suggested label or condition. They are effectively led away from finding a lasting and secure answer to their doubts and left assigned to a group with little hope of ever leaving it.

Could it be that psychological epidemics are somewhat rightly labelled as the behaviours are evidently 'contagious' according to the data. Does such medical data prove correct what was written 2000 years ago in 1 Corinthians 15:33? Holy Scripture warns us that we are not to be deceived. Dr Peterson's position seems to be that many times these 'epidemics' are triggered by a considered challenge to societal norms and established beliefs on identity. As Christians, we would ascribe these considered challenges to be raised by those listed in Ephesians 6:12.

This then would flow neatly on the remaining portion of 1 Corinthians 15:33, that evil communications corrupt good manners. Of course, this means how keeping sinful company will inevitably lead to sinful behaviours being taken on by those who once did not behave in such a sinful manner. Yet it also reveals that large scale narratives, or anti-Biblical ideologies promoted in the world, will also cause a corruption of good ways and behaviours in many. We only need look



at the destructive nature of movements such as BLM, Palestine Action, Extinction Rebellion etc, to see how swathes of confused people were quickly swept up in radical ideologies. It is truly a tragedy that many Christians have also been deceived by the enemies listed in Ephesians 6:12 and have found themselves having their good manners corrupted by becoming supporters of dangerous movements.

In conclusion, a strong and committed defence of the Word of God as outlined in Jude 3, protects us from the deceptive ways warned of in 1 Corinthians 15:33. The Word of God is much like our spiritual immune system, in that when it's looked after, it

defends us against epidemics of destructive movements and deceptive teachings. So, let's put as much effort into strengthening our spiritual immune system as we do our bodily immune system. Then we will not be deceived and thereby guard our good manners for the Lord, so that our lives are consistent witnesses of the goodness of the Gospel.

Lessons From The Shunamite Woman – Part Three

2 Kings 4:18-28 - The mercies and blessings of God had now visited the Shunamite woman and her husband, as they greeted a son of their own at long last. Doubtless, this son was the song of the Shunamite woman's heart, stirring daily thanks to God for such a wonderful gift. Yet the human heart is a strange thing, deeply troubled by the effects of the Curse. For in Eden, fear was first felt by mankind. Its presence until then was unknown to the human spirit, as all we had known until that dreadful day was the peace of uncorrupted union with our Creator God.

Fear is one of the cruellest enemies of humanity. It grows deep within, its poison is not obviously felt at first, as it encroaches ever deeper into the bones of our spirit. The only symptom we feel of this slow growth of fear, is a strange, deep-seated unease that means we never truly feel secure in the blessings we are graciously given. Job was a man who enjoyed great blessings of God (see Job chapter 1), and he offered daily sacrifices unto God on behalf of his children in case they had sinned. Job was a righteous man and had known the goodness of God for many years, and yet still he seemingly moved in a degree of fear.

The Shunamite woman may have happily looked upon the childhood years of her son with a similar strange mix of thankfulness and deep, unsettling fear of what could happen. Such a feeling is known to many of us. We look around at the amazing array of blessings that God has graciously gifted us and yes, our heart is rich in thankfulness unto Him...and yet. Yet there remains a strange presence within the spirit that causes us to fear how all the joys we know, can be so easily taken away from us at any moment. This is the stain of the Curse making itself known deep within the heart of even the best and most faithful of we believers in Christ Jesus.

So, what we often do to quieten this deep-seated fear, is to lean on our own understanding. In this folly, we succumb to the fear that has now spread throughout our hearts, as a cancer advances until it erupts and breaks down the weary body. In this spirit of fear, we begin to erect walls in our hearts. These walls are built to shield us from the misery we believe is soon to descend on us. The fear that all we love may soon vanish, convinces us to silently distance ourselves from the very thing we love. We tell ourselves that in such a venture, we are securing ourselves ready for the dreadful day that we have decided awaits us. Perhaps such a thought was plaguing the heart and mind of the Shunamite woman as she watched her son grow. She knew he was a gift from God, and yet she likely knew enough to know that the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. As frail humans, we often fixate on the latter half, and we live in fear of God. Not reverent fear, but doubtful fear of when not if, but when He will come to take away from us what we love.

God, however, does not want us to live in such a manner. Such a life is not one living in all the wondrous joys of His everlasting love. God blesses us with amazing gifts not so that we live amidst them in fear of their loss, but in application and celebration of His grace in that He gave them to us in the first place. So, He moves lovingly to break this deeply ingrained trait of fallen humanity that lingers in all of us. That tendency to live in constant fear of what may happen. God therefore, sometimes moves in a particular and seemingly peculiar way to cure us of this great evil.

That movement of God came to visit the days of the Shunamite woman and her family. Once again, on a random day on seemingly no significance, death came to claim that young boy's life. The boy had gone to visit his father in the fields,

yet he had become gravely ill. The father, likely an older man himself, quickly charges a servant to take the boy and carry him to his mother. The father's mind was seemingly a blur of panic and confusion, and so he sought out the steady faith that he had witnessed in his wife over their years together. True faithfulness draws the weak, frightened and confused to it, as the fumbling life looks for a strong reference point to hold onto in the storms of life. The Shunamite woman was that reference point for her husband, a man whose own faith appears functional at best. Such is the gift of a Godly woman unto a man and declares the importance of such a woman to any man.

So, the dying child is taken to her mother. She cradles the boy on her lap, unable to do anything but attempt to soothe her child's fear and pain. What unbearable pain must have struck her heart in those moments! How the miseries of the Curse come to trouble us all, even the Godliest and most innocent in our eyes taste death (Ecclesiastes 7:15). It is this awful heartbreak that is a witness to us all, that death is the last enemy and no friend to humanity! For if Evolution were true, death is prompter of the gradual bettering of the world, as the weak and frail make way for the strong and able. Yet we all shatter in our hearts when we lose a loved one, especially a little one we cradle in our arms as they slip away into eternity without us. Oh, such soul shattering agony! So many lives have become bitter and hollow existences after such terrible loss. And so, the child dies in his mother's arms.



Yet even in the midst of such world silencing sorrows, the still, small flame of faith in God refuses to surrender to the tears of grief. As the teardrops fall all around that little flicker of light in the heart, it stands tenderly as a light to the path of heavy and grief filled steps towards hope. That flame of faith moves the grief stricken Shunamite woman to act with the truest of faith's, even when surrounded by the deepest of sorrows.

She takes the now limp body of her son, the son she adored, and places him on the bed of Elisha, closing the door behind them. That still, small voice of God has led her to seek a resting place for her son where she knows a faithful servant of God has slept. So too do all faithful Christians lay their beloved to rest in the grave, a place where they know the most faithful of all servants of God has

slept. They trust that as that faithful servant that is Christ Jesus arose from His sleep in the tomb, they too shall see their beloved again through the power of their risen Lord!

Closing the door to the room of Elisha, leaving her dead son on his Elisha's bed, the Shunamite has acted with wisdom and love towards her husband and the household. Even though her heart is broken, the love of God keeps it from shattering, and so she knows by the witness of the Holy Spirit, that the faith of her husband is likely not strong enough to withstand such a heavy loss. So, in her selfless love, living the very selfless love of God, she shields her husband and household from the horror of the moment. Her actions reflect that of Christ Jesus on the Cross. Christ suffered truly unimaginable horrors of God's just wrath poured out on His sinless shoulders for our sake; all in the deepest darkness. Humanity was shielded from a depth of pain it could never bear, all in His eternal love.

The Shunamite woman now moves in purposeful faith, refusing to allow the bitterness of loss to destroy her belief that God can restore all that is lost. She asks her husband for permission to go and seek out Elisha. This request strikes her husband as odd, as it wasn't a holy day or feast day, a time when people would travel to hear Elisha preach. Here we have a little window in the state of the husband's faith. It seems similar to many people's faith throughout the centuries. The husband has equated seeking after the preaching of God only on the 'allotted days' for such activities. How many of us only go and seek after the Word of God on a Sunday or an occasion such as Easter or Christmas Day?! If we were to see ourselves in either of the Shunamite woman or her husband, in our humility the vast majority of us would be akin to the husband in our seeking after God and His Word.

However, the Shunamite woman has a deeper and truer faith than that of her husband. She does not allocate seeking after the Word of God to special days, but to every day and in every event of life, whether in times of blessing or hardship. So, this consistency of service to God was to later prove its own reward to her and her family. This powerful faith of the Shunamite woman, a faith upheld by the faithfulness of God, stands in contrast to that of her husband. For the husband seems confused and even troubled by the outside of holy day desire of his wife to see Elisha. Yet rather than burdening her husband with a weight he is not able to bear, she merely responds with a statement of faith, as she

says, 'It shall be well.' Only the truest of faiths anchored by the Lord Himself can speak so hopefully in such a bleak moment of life.

So, the Shunamite woman gains her husband's permission to travel and seeks out Elisha for his help (also proving her submission to her husband, following the ordained structure of family even when her heart is broken). Her mission is singular and focused, as she instructs the servant accompanying her to travel quickly to Elisha and not divert or delay in any way. Such should be the manner of each of us when we are in moments of testing and trial. Too often we stop off on our journey to seek God's counsel and aid, by calling in on the opinions of man first. We can let these sin tainted words delay us from seeking the purity of God's Word, and many times we travel no further on to God when we have heard words from someone who says something we find appealing.

As the Shunamite woman approaches Mount Carmel, a regular site of Elisha to preach from, Elisha spots her and her servant drawing near. Elisha is pleased to see her coming to visit him, as any believer in Christ is truly pleased to see another brother or sister in Christ after time away. So, Elisha instructs his servant Gehazi, to go and ask of the Shunamite woman how she and her family are doing. Such is the joy of coming fellowship with another faithful heart in Elisha, that he cannot wait to hear of his dear sister in Christ's welfare any longer than necessary.

As Gehazi hurries to greet the Shunamite woman and enquire of her and her family's welfare, she gives a peculiar response. She does not share the news of the terrible situation with Gehazi, but instead she tells him that 'It is well.' This was no lie, as the words she spoke to Gehazi were led by the Spirit of God to confirm that even when a loved one dies, if they die in faith, then indeed it is well. It is well because that beloved one is now safe with their Lord and God. Furthermore, the words of the Shunamite woman reveal a deep-seated witness to each of us today, that though there may be faithful servants of God, none can bring the fullness of hope and healing that Christ can bring. Therefore, we must push on to seek His healing and His alone to be able to know the fullness of restoration we all crave.

At last, the Shunamite woman reaches Elisha. In her relief, she falls to his feet and grabs them in her deep, deep grief. Unnerved by such an emotional outpouring, Gehazi looks to remove the Shunamite woman from Elisha's feet. It can be that the young in faith see such pourings out of the heart as unseemly and showing a failure of faith. Yet the experienced in faith know that such an act is actually the sign of a true and mature faith in God, as it shows the deepest of trusts to display ourselves in our weakest and most dejected form. Knowing this, Elisha quickly tells Gehazi to leave her be, as she is greatly troubled of heart. Elisha freely admits that he does not know what is plaguing her heart, for the Lord has not revealed it to him.

Let this be a humbling message to all those who are mature in faith. Yes, you may know much of the Lord and His Word, but only God knows all the depths of the heart. It is truly an arrogant mind that can claim to know another person's heart in its fullness, as this is the reserve of God alone. Furthermore, if a mighty man of God such as Elisha (a man who had a double portion of the Spirit that enabled mighty Elijah to serve the Lord) did not know the depths of each heart, then who are we to pretend we know more of other's hearts than God!

Thus, in the humility of Elisha, the until then guarded tongue of the Shunamite woman finally let's go and speaks of the bitterness of heart that she is troubled so deeply by. Again, let this be a testament that all should heed fully. That a humble heart encourages another person's wounded heart to see it can speak openly without fear of judgement. How many times has a broken heart looked to a Christian for help, only for it to be wounded further by a superior and pompous mouth that spews out tainted words of proud counsel. Praise the Lord that Elisha's heart is lowly and humble, therefore gently drawing forth the pain filled words of the Shunamite woman. Elisha here speaks of the lowly and meek heart of Jesus Christ. He who bids all to come and unburden themselves to Him without fear of rejection or disdain.

In this freedom to speak all the bitter pains of the heart, the Shunamite woman pours out her grief at the feet of Elisha. She cries out to him that she said to him long ago that she didn't ask him for a son, and that he should not deceive her. It is her pain that speaks and so Elisha gives no rebuke as he had just done to Gehazi. So, it is when we go to Christ with a deeply wounded heart, and our words pour out with raw emotion, He does not respond with heavy correction. He listens. He listens with a tear in His eye knowing all the depths of the pain we are experiencing firsthand. And so, God simply listens and lets the heart empty itself of its deep misery, until it falls exhausted and spent from sorrows. Then as the heart weakly pants for hope, crestfallen at His feet, He stoops to breathe new life into us.

The Shunamite woman's words reveal at long last what her heart may have carried quietly for so, so long. Back when Elisha had delivered the news that she was to embrace a child of her own, the sadness of her long years without one had made her fearful of such a gift. She had lived in such quiet longing for so long, how could she continue if this precious gift was to be stripped of her. We may sympathise with such a feeling. We may have lived in longing for something or someone for so long that when it finally is brought to us, we are fearful of the pain that could come if we were to lose that longed for thing. The pain of not having known the joy we longed for, can be outweighed by the loss of that same gift.

And so, to protect ourselves from this heavy thought, we live in quiet preparation for that inevitable day. The casualty of such a life, is a that it is a life never reaching the heavenly heights of deepest thanks and revelry in God's goodness that we are called to know.

The only freeing from such a stunted joy, is to let go of fear. Yet to do so takes the greatest of strengths. The might of Samson was nothing in comparison to this task of the spirit! We may be able to face down giants, but we truly struggle to face down the fear of the loss of those we love most. Yet we have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power and love and of a sound mind! This is our release from fear, and yet we often refuse to wield it because of our fears. So, sometimes the Lord will remove what we love the most from us for a season, to have us face the fiercest of our enemies. We find ourselves in the heaviest storm of our lives, and we are brought through them by the faithfulness of God. For when we have poured out the dark and creeping fears that have quietly plagued our lives to Him, then and only then are we ready to be filled up with the joy of true trust in God.

The miseries, sorrow and utter grief of the Shunamite woman, was allowed to come out in the strange but wonderful mercy of God. It is strange to us because we cannot see with the scale of eternity before our gaze. We cannot see how the separation from a love for a season, can be the freeing of a heart from the hidden shackles of fear that plague our lives daily. It is those very shackles that prohibits us from revelling in the gifts and blessings of God daily! The Shunamite woman seemingly was harmed by these quiet chains of the heart for many a year, and the Lord took pity upon her. But such is the reluctance and fearful nature of humanity to hand those chains over to God in fullness of trust to smash them to pieces, He moves to take them from us for our eternal good.

If you are finding yourself in a time like the Shunamite woman, crying bitterly over the loss or separation from a deep love, go to Him in fullness of heart. Pour out all the miseries of your broken heart to Him and trust that He will wipe all those tears away in the fullness of time. Trust that He can restore hope and joy to your days, even when all seems to be lost. Where there is Christ Jesus, there is always hope! George Muller, on having lost two wives to premature death, did not fall into bitterness of heart but trusted they were safe with His Lord. And so, he could say in later days, even after much loss, 'I am a happy old man.'

The Lord would go on to restore all that the Shunamite woman lost that bitter day. Not only that, but He would also free her from the deep fears that had likely troubled her for so long. If you are mourning the loss of a precious little one, trust they are safe with Him. As one child's gravestone in a cemetery near me reads 'We loved you deeply, but Jesus loved you more.' Trust that through faith in Jesus Christ, you shall be restored to one another in glory to come. King David wept bitterly over the loss of his son, but he took hope in the truth that through the atoning sacrifice of His Saviour, he would embrace that child again in Heaven. Only when that happens, there will never be any separation again. Praise the Lord God for that certain hope, and pray He speeds that joyful day along. Amen.

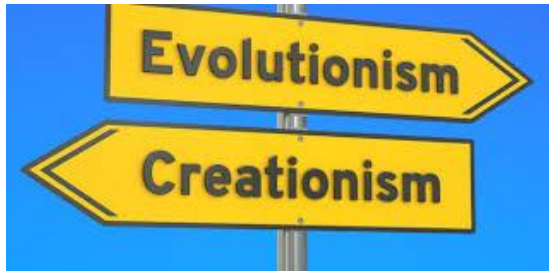
A World With A View

There are many 'hot topics' in society today. Many of these contentious issues such as gender identity, abortion, euthanasia, etc, are used as challenges to Christians by individuals/groups who are looking to cause a scene or confrontation. Sometimes, however such questions on sensitive issues are posed to we believers in Christ by those who are genuinely confused and are looking for clarity on the topic in question. In either situation, we believers can often find ourselves entering the debate on the initial questions assumptions/presumptions. This can be extremely dangerous, as oftentimes both sides have differing understanding of the same terms being used or the same evidence being referred to. So where are we as believers in Christ Jesus to begin our answer to what can be challenging questions on culturally sensitive topics?

Ken Ham, the founder and CEO of Answers in Genesis has long preached a simple message that can help with such problems. He rightly encourages Christians to engage with such issues at the foundational level. By this we are to answer questions put to us on any number of issues, by clearly establishing on what we are basing our answers upon. This should always be the Holy Bible for all Christians in all things, everywhere! We are to understand that by that 'lens' as Ken Ham puts it, we see everything; our lives, our responsibilities, society, Creation, everything. This is the Christian's worldview, that God's Word is our foundation for everything we do, think and speak. We believe that God is a Creator God, who made the world in six days and that we are made in His image and likeness, thus making every life valuable and accountable to Him.

Knowing our reference point in all areas of life is crucial to be able to provide a coherent and consistent answer to all questions posed to us by sceptical and sometimes hostile questioners. Yet we are also to be aware of the other sides starting point, or world view. That worldview is Evolution. A worldview that there is no God to be accountable to, and that survival of the fittest is how not only how life survives, but by how it is gradual being refined into ever greater forms.

Clearly, the two worldviews are at complete odds with each other. Those who seek to reconcile the two must heavily compromise on essential Biblical doctrine, thus seriously undermining the very Word of which they claim to follow. To attempt to reconcile the two is to attempt to reconcile life with death, which is an absurd notion. One is naturally and inherently the enemy of the other. One worldview heralds order, logic and language as the basis of life, whereas the other heralds chaos and random chance as the basis of life (breaking it down simply surely displays the absurdity of such a worldview!).



The evolutionary worldview destroys any sense of the value and sanctity of life. It relegates our existence to a simple accident, a cosmic hiccup, and that since we are the product of random, chance processes, our lives have no essential meaning or value. The evolutionist Michael Shermer commented “There is no higher purpose. It’s left to us. We must create our purpose. That’s the only meaning we have in this universe.” What an empty and disdainful view of life! Yet it is this worldview that props up all the reasoning and justification for gender identity, abortion, euthanasia and a hundred

other life destroying ideologies and practices.

As noted by Michael Shermer, the supporter of the evolutionary worldview has had purpose negated by their own ideology. If our purpose is not to know and love the God that created us, and thereby enjoy the world He has graciously blessed us with for His glory, we ‘must create our purpose’ to quote Shermer. That means that the evolutionary worldview creates a vacuum where anyone can live by any means and indulge in any manner that pleases the self, as that is what has given it all purpose. This is the foundation of the reasoning for gender identity ideology for example. If we are not made by a Creator God who has decreed that there are but two genders, and we are instead a purposeless mass of leftover elements from the Big Bang, then why can’t we invent an identity or gender that pleases us? After all, if there is no God to provide an absolute truth by, then what’s left is a bewildering array of personal ‘truths’ of which no one can ever say who is correct.

Here then is the happy news for all believers in Christ Jesus. The ever-growing range of sensitive topics for life can be approached confidently with a firm understanding of the foundation upon which we stand as Christians. We are to view everything through the worldview of God’s Word. This consistent reference point provides for us a consistent answer to a host of contentious issues that are affecting so, so many today.

By the singular authority of God’s Word, we can answer the advocate for abortion, the spokesman for gender identity ideology, the environmental activist, and so many others with the same answer, ‘God’s Word says...’ Such a calmly consistent message declares the truth of the worldview that we hold and leads lost hearts to hear the joyful news that our worldview brings. That news of sin and death conquered by the risen Lord Jesus Christ. He who gave His life for us so that we might know the very love of God, giving us all purpose and fullness of life.

Who Do You Look Up To?

Who do you look up to? Who do you want to be most like? Who do you whole heartily trust? Is it your spouse, your parent (if you are blessed to have them left), is it even your child if they are now a successful adult? Who do you aspire to be most like? When I was a young girl, I looked up to my mum, like any young girl naturally would. Sadly growing up I didn’t know the Lord, so I looked to someone else to go to in all that I needed. Everyone needs someone to help us when we go through difficult times, and not knowing the Lord I looked to my mother for this. So many of us so sadly make this same mistake as we look to others in place of our Saviour. I as a child not knowing my Lord, I failed a lot, made a lot of wrong choices, and my mother (and father) not being believers did not correct me on a lot of them. And so the blind led the blind, and not realising this, I continued to put all my trust and hope in my mother.

Then one night my mum suddenly passed away in front of me, when I was only eighteen years old. We did not even know she was so ill, literally only finding out one night before she wasn’t well, but the hospital sent her home not knowing what was wrong with her. Twenty-four hours later, (give or take a few), she’d gone. The one I looked up to had gone, over night!

My dad was an atheist, and we didn't have the closest of relationships. He'd have not even been able to tell me my friends names, or my subjects I was studying at school, (I was doing my A levels). But that was just my dad, he didn't take a lot of interest in my brother or I, unless it was something that interested him. My brother (older by three and a bit years) became very angry and I was scared, I was incredibly scared. My mum was my rock, my comfort in life, and had gone. No warning. No time to prepare, just suddenly gone. I was left with my dad and my brother at only eighteen years old, barely an adult, still in full time education, and did not know who to turn to.

A young man (eight months younger than me so still seventeen years of age at the time), put a sympathy card through my door. We had gone to school together in junior school, so from age eight to eleven, as it was years four to six at junior school back then, not three to six like now. We'd lost contact when we went to secondary schools, even though they were right next door to one another, he at the boys school, me at the girls, and we also lived pretty much just across the road from one another. I went to thank him for the card a few days after, and the rest is history as they say. We have been together even since, twenty-three and a half years on. We have two beautiful daughters, one near seventeen year old, and an energetic eight year old who just loves life, like her daddy would if it wasn't for his health.

As distraught as I obviously was at such a vulnerable age, while doing my A levels too, and absolutely not looking for a boyfriend having just lost my mum, the Lord sent me my wonderful, devoted, loyal, kind, loving future husband to me. How patient Jonathan was, how compassionate he was, how loyal he was, through all of the hurt and trouble I was going through, but he never, ever left me. Why? All the Lord. It wasn't always easy, I'd lost my mum, my rock, my comfort, my go to, but my husband to be just seemed to know what I needed, day in, day out, all the time, and I very much believe that was all the Lord guiding him. I wasn't a believer at that point, it took me another year and a half to give my life over to Him.

As the years went on I lost more family members - my last grandparent that was my dear nan (mum's mum - she lost two daughters, my auntie and my mum, in less than a month), a year after my mum passed. Then over several more years, every last uncle and auntie (apart from one great auntie, ninety-four years of age, who dearly loves the Lord and is always a joy to speak to and a huge boost in low times). My husband and I lost his dear mum too seven years ago. My goodness I loved her like a mother. Before that, my dad, and my husband's last grandparent just prior to that. So, we have lost a lot of people, even though we're only in our early forties.

I feel deeply, I say it is a weakness. But the Lord used this seeming weakness to cause me to question as a child why people behaved and believed in confusing ways. Growing up, my dad would always tell us that we evolved from monkeys, but it just never sat right with me. It didn't make sense to me, and so seeing my dad be so disinterested and selfish with us, it affected that emotional sensitivity that's in me. Seeing how he lived made me think to myself there must be more to life than what he was showing there to be. His often unpleasant manner further pushed me to idolise my mum, who was also a flawed sinner. And so, as I said earlier, I bounced from one blind leader for guidance to another each day. Yet that seeming weakness of feeling deeply was used by the Lord to quietly witness to me of Him. You see as a child I was afraid of the dark and I would often huddle up under my duvet and pray to God for Him to look after me. That often felt fear of a child was soothed by a God who my father told me didn't exist. Yet, in my fear and worry, I was learning that He did exist, and He cared about me.

After years of struggling with grief, the Lord has used what I thought was a weakness (feeling deeply) to show me His constant care for me, even when I didn't see it. Looking back, I can see now that if my mum hadn't passed away that night, then Jonathan wouldn't have got back in contact with me (he doesn't mind me saying that he was too shy to say how he felt about me without that massive prompting). That would mean I don't have the amazing life that the Lord has blessed with me today. Indeed, the sermon given at our wedding was on how the Lord can make something wonderful come out of something sad and painful.

My goodness I miss my mum, my nan (mum's mum as I was close to her too), my husband's mum, (she was my mum I never had in adult life and my goodness did she treat me like a daughter). But if my mum hadn't have passed away, I may not still know of my Saviour and love the Lord. That's the biggest truth of it all. That in depth of my sadness, the thing I thought was a weakness, my depth of feeling, was used by the Lord used to show His strength. He brought me to a safety I'd had long craved for, all through His amazing grace. How good He is through pain and heartache. Pain is constant in life with loved ones passing, especially being as I think that all of my birth family are not with the Lord, but I may get one huge surprise when I get to Heaven. Even if they are not in glory, I will be, and Jesus will heal every last wound and wipe away every last tear I've ever cried over those lost. Even the ongoing pains left by 'loved' ones lost, (my dad's will is mess but that is a whole other 'story' too), can be dealt with peacefully with the love of our Heavenly Father. With Him we can get through it all, whatever comes our way, as it's all the Lord allowing it to happen anyway.

I learnt something incredibly saddening only this week of writing - a lady, near to my age, with a very young child (toddler age), took her own life. She didn't just have a young child, but also had a sibling, both her parents still alive, and a husband as well. Yet she felt she couldn't go on anymore and so she ended her own life, a life that the Lord had given her. It upset me to say the least. A couple of months ago I also learnt of a child, only six years of age die of a brain tumour. How cruel things can seem if we don't have the Lord in our lives to help us daily in everything. I knew of that little girl; she attended a school I used to work at and was a friend of a friend's daughter. She was only six years old! It shook the community obviously. It shook all that knew that little girl and her family and affected me quite a bit too as I continued to go to work and teach children of the same age as that little girl. But the Lord gave me strength, strength to keep going, strength to endure the hurt and the pain, just like with all my loved ones I have lost. The poor lady who took her own life sadly didn't feel that support, love and guidance we all can feel from our Heavenly Father. How very, very sad to learn of anyone feeling so permanently low to not feel worthy of life. I pray all reading this never, ever feel that.

I conclude my article in saying to all, whatever you are going through, big or small, whoever/whatever it is over, go to your Heavenly Father for support. Go to your Father for strength. Go to your Father for guidance. He is the only one who can give you all you need day in, day out and never fail or mislead you. We (humans) are all flawed sinners, we fail one another every single day, whether we mean to or not. Sadly, even we Christians fail each other far too often and cause each other needless pain. We are to remember that we are made in His image, (Genesis 1:27), so we should strive daily to be as our Lord as much as possible. We are commanded to love one another, help one another, put yourself out there and support your fellow colleague, friend, family member. It may be difficult, it may be hard, it may be painful and even scary, but if you pull on the Lord for all you need, He'll not fail you. Walk with Him in everything and help others, as you never know what they are going through quietly (I know this by personal experience). It takes a lot to show weakness when we are believers in Christ, because this requires trust. And most of us carry big wounds when our trust has been broken by others we looked up to. Yet we can trust our Lord, as He's our rock (Psalms 31:3) and will never harm us as He is truly meek and loving. This is why we are to look up to Him and want to be like Him, because He loves like no one else! He loves with an everlasting love.

Lord be with you all! God bless.

Donna Marie Badger

The Tabernacle - Beauty Amidst Vulgarly

Many are familiar with the image of the Tabernacle dwelling amidst the people of Israel in the wilderness. Here amidst the assembled tribes of God's people, stood the dwelling place of God. Imagine a sea of dull coloured tents populating the plains of the Sinai wilderness. Row upon row of lifeless colours all melting into the background of the burning sands of the region. This sea of lifeless materials was all congregated around a singular, magisterial construction that rose up from the barren sands like a shimmering beacon of beauty and life. This construction was the Tabernacle.

The Tabernacle stood in the middle of millions of lives, all housed in tents bedecked with joyless browns and greys. Here stood the dwelling place of God, surrounded by a tall and exquisitely crafted fence of brilliant white linen. Here stood a monument to the purity of the Lord Jesus. Those tall, white linen panels declared the purity of God, a brilliance of sinlessness that stood so distinct from the dull and lifelessly coloured tents that surrounded it. For such is the manner of distinction between God and mankind. Our lives of sin and rebellion are like those dull, lifelessly coloured tents that timidly shelter hearts that fall so very far short of the brilliant purity and perfection of God.

Those high, white linen curtain panels, standing some nine feet tall, blocked all view of the inner grounds of the Tabernacle. The message of God is clear to all who surveyed this mighty fencing, that admission to the dwelling place of God requires similar purity of life as to what those white linen panels displayed. This truth was undeniable and unavoidable, for such is the seriousness of the perfection and purity of God. The height of those curtain panels made this undeniable, and so all those who gazed on those imposing panels, would tremble at how they could match the purity needed to enter the dwelling place of God!

Yet God did not call for the erecting of such an imposing structure just to highlight the chasm of existence and nature between God and man. That would be truly cruel and counter to His wonderful declaration that He is love! So those white linen panels were there to highlight the requirements of coming into the house of God, purity of heart and perfection of spirit! Yet who could claim to achieve such a thing on their own merits? As all the people of Israel dwelt in meagre and lifeless coloured tents, so too do we dwell in meagre and sin riddled lives of the flesh. Surely there is no way for such a chasm to be closed! Surely there is no way past those mighty and pure white linen walls of the purity of God,

so that we may stand before Him in peace and assurance of His forgiveness and love! Well, there was a way past those high panels of white linen, it was by a door!

The entrance to the Tabernacle pointed towards the one who would refer to Himself as 'the Door' (John 10:9), that being the Lord Jesus Christ. The door or gate to the Tabernacle was wide, twenty cubits or nearly forty feet wide! Such is the love of God, open to all who would pass through that singular door to the presence of God that is through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Old or young, strong or weak, man or woman, free or slave, all could easily pass through this wide opening to the courtyard of the dwelling place of God. This all pointed to Christ Jesus, in whom all are equal and welcome (Galatians 3:28).

The gate or 'door' to the Tabernacle courtyard was a majestic creation, thus pointing to the glories of Christ Jesus. Bedecked in resplendent colours of purple, red, blue and white fabrics, these four colours testified of He who would be the Incarnation of the Godhead in the flesh of man, so that Scripture would be fulfilled. That fulfilled prophecy being that Jesus would God amongst us, Immanuel, as He tabernacled with us in the flesh of man.

Firstly, purple was a costly colour, worn only by the wealthy and royalty, declaring the one wearing it has access to great power and splendour. Who else but the Son of God can claim to hold all power in Heaven and Earth, possessing its abundant riches and upholding it all by the authority of His Word! This is the awesome and majestic power we see being wielded by the Lord in Psalm 8, where all things are placed beneath His feet as a footstall. Purple was more associated in the ancient world with foreign courts and kingships, rarely spoken of in Scripture regarding ancient Israel. Yet here we again see how Christ Jesus is truly the King of kings, and that one day yet to come, He will rule all nations with a rod of iron (Revelation 2:7).

Secondly, we have the red or scarlet fabrics. Closely connected in Scripture with Israel, the precious dye was extremely valuable and associated with kings of the nation. This all pointed to the one who would come as the Messiah of Israel, and yet would be rejected of them. In their rejection and execution of Him on the Cross of Calvary, Jesus was mocked with an inscription above His head that read 'King of the Jews'. Though it was erected in mockery, that title will be honoured when the nation of Israel will at last see Christ Jesus as their Messiah.

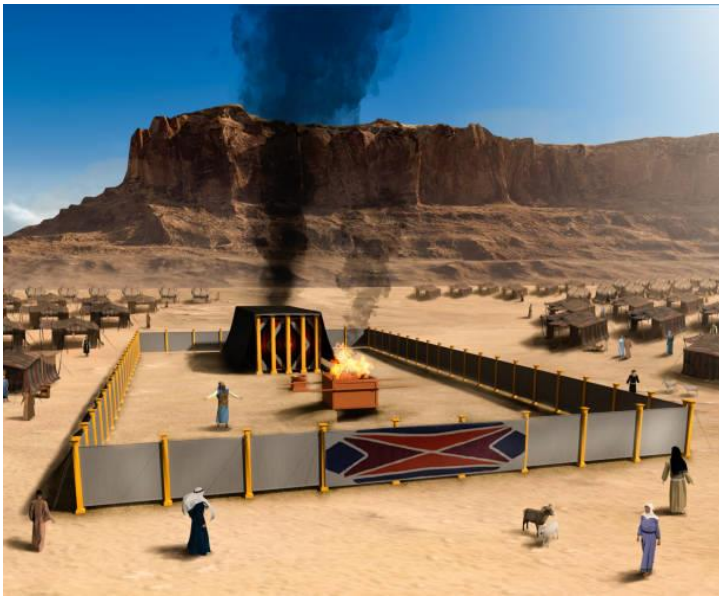
As Christ Jesus gave His life for we sinners, His sinless and perfect scarlet coloured blood flowed from His body. His

blood was shed for the remission of our sins, whilst His red robe was gambled over by His Roman executioners. This was done to fulfil prophecy, to show all Creation that the giving of His life was by His choice, to display His authority and His love.

Thirdly, blue shone from the doorway to the Tabernacle grounds. This dazzling blue reflected the beauty of the heavens, and pointed towards the one whose Kingdom is of Heaven. It spoke so softly yet so powerfully of the one who would come down from Heaven to give His life for repentant sinners (John 3:13). It further speaks of the might and power of Christ, He who would be the fulfilment of the Tabernacle as the dwelling place of God amongst men. For such is the awesome scale of the heavens that stretches out far above we mortal souls. The majesty of the heavens makes the single life seem insignificant in comparison. And yet the one who created those same

expanses of the heavens, came in the flesh of man to know our frailties and offer Himself as a full and final payment for our sins. All so that we might know peace and glory with Him forever.

Then the shimmering white of which we have already spoken. That Scriptural marker of purity and righteousness, it all pointed to the one who sits upon a great white throne of power and glory (Revelation 20). But such is the wondrous love and humility of Christ Jesus, as that just as any of the people could come within those white panelled curtains surrounding the Tabernacle grounds, so too are the saints in Heaven bedecked in the same pure white linens (Revelation 19:8). Those in glory who have been made welcome before God by the gifting of His righteousness, as they stand in pure white gowns of glory. That same glory awaits all the faithful, for He promised us that He will come to take us where He is, and that we will be as He, glorified and pure before our Heavenly Father. The construction of the Tabernacle was all a beautiful picture of all these Heavenly truths.



All these beautiful monuments and prophecies of the Lord Jesus Christ as seen in the doorway to the Tabernacle, were accessed by that one, singular entryway. The only way to come into the dwelling place of God was by that one door, and nothing has changed. This fulfils Scripture wonderfully, as God has revealed to us that only by the Son do we have access to the Father (John 14:6). And that as God does not change, this way of salvation and entry to the presence of God has never altered, not even a jot (James 1:17). The way to salvation has never altered since Genesis 3:15. It is by 'the Door' that is Jesus Christ and by Him alone! Praise the Lord for the consistency and simplicity of the path to redemption. It is by this singular way, that all redeemed souls sing the same, singular name in the courts of Heaven (Revelation 19). That name being the name above all names, the Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.

Healing In Thy wings

'Come not in terrors, as the King of kings; but kind and good with healing in Thy wings.' So goes part of the beloved hymn *Abide With Me*. When we are exhausted, sorrowful, doubtful, scared or many of these combined, we do indeed seek that our Lord comes to us with healing in His wings. Sometimes, our exhaustion, sorrows, doubts or anger can become so strong, that they threaten to move us to self-destruction. Though we know of His readiness to help all struggling hearts, we can become so ensnared in our hardships that we do not seek after Him. Instead, we prefer to wallow in our sufferings.

So, it was one Friday in mid-January. I had done my usual routine of ignoring my health and had ploughed on with jobs and tasks as though I am a fit and strong man. To long time readers of this publication, you will know that I'm not. Yet, all too often I let my frustration and jealousy of others strength and success boil over and I push far beyond what I can physically withstand. I am more guilty than many of the wicked sin that is petty jealousy. It often fuels an anger in me that has no place in a Christian. This jealousy of others health and success that has come from being able to push far beyond what my body will allow me, fuels a sinful anger in me. This anger then turns against me and pushes me to work far beyond what my body can withstand. And so, I become deeply ill. My body betrays me further because they soul was living in a quietly sinful manner.

I had determined that Friday to not let myself get to that state again, as I hate seeing how I affect my family when I am in such a way. So, I reluctantly sat down and decided to look for some sport to watch on TV. It's ironic that I find escapism from my physical battles in my lifelong passion for sports, oftentimes the more intense and extreme the sport the better. You see in my younger days I used to love downhill mountain biking. One time I tried to pull off an impressive trick by riding my bike down a small and narrow sloped wall. The problem however was that I catapulted myself over the front wheel of my bike when I landed awkwardly coming off the wall. I landed on the top of my head, cracking my newly bought helmet right down the centre because of the impact. By the mercy of God, I didn't suffer any injuries, no bruising, no scratches, nothing. I rode home quite shaken up and didn't tell anyone what had happened. The Lord protected me that day from myself, and He has continued to do so in His faithfulness all the days of my life.

I digress, however. Going back to that Friday in question, the Lord moved once again to protect me from myself and lead me to know His peace and strengthening once again. You see, even though I had set about to make sure I would not fall into my usual self-inflicted misery, I was still finding myself growing angry with my situation. In short, I was getting nowhere. My anger and frustration were going to break me down a little more unless someone stepped in. Sadly, I was home alone, and so I had free rein to ignore my condition and go on breaking myself down. Such stupidity confirms the words of Spurgeon when he said, 'Kill your anger or it will kill you!'

So, I sat down ready to rest, but my frustration of needing to rest after comparatively little exertion compared to most people, drove me to search for a deeply intellectual documentary to study. I looked for some academic studies on the Bible to watch, all in an effort to tell myself I was still working, keeping up with others and therefore not ill (its staggering how we can use the Lord's Word as a vehicle to justify our own selfish and stupid endeavours!). My desire to find such a video was not in service to God, it was to keep up with man. That's how subtly sinful actions can invade a life! The Lord though would not have a servant of His behave so angrily whilst claiming to be working for His glory. So as I turned on the TV, what came up though on the 'recommended viewing' tab was a short video on seven different NFL coaches and their respective faith in God. Intrigued I selected the video and watched an uplifting piece on how these seven different men were openly applying their faith in their workplace.

The NFL is one of the world's biggest sporting leagues, with the Superbowl championship game being the highest viewed sporting event in the world every year. Each team or franchise is worth several billions of dollars, and so the scrutiny and pressure on the 32 coaches of those differing teams is in a different league (pardon the pun) in comparison to the scrutiny and pressure most of us face in the workplace. If those coaches don't do a good job or do something unpopular in the media's eyes (thus affecting the team's 'brand'), those coaches will not only lose their jobs, but often must move their family to a completely different US state to find work again! They know that their names could be forever tarnished

if they fail to perform or do something unpopular in the world's eyes, and it could cost them and their families future. In short, one wrong move can be extremely costly!

With all that being said, now consider how one of these seven coaches, Aaron Glenn (New York Jets Head Coach) regularly leads his team in Bible study. Not only that, but he gives the fifty-three men on the team roster regular Bible quizzes to reinforce what was discussed at Bible study. Aaron has received a lot of extremely negative attention from atheists and the like through social media, but he remains steadfast in his task to not only mould a team, but mould good men before God.



Then there's Sean McDermott, former Head Coach of the Buffalo Bills. He had to watch one of his players collapse on the pitch mid-game due to a cardiac arrest (see picture). Bill's faith led him to gather the whole team on the pitch and lead them in prayer for their stricken teammate as they watched him be rushed to hospital. Many in the massive stadium joined Sean and the team in those prayers. By the grace of God, those prayers were answered as that player returned to the stadium alive and well just a few days later.

Also, there is Mike MacDonald of the Seattle Seahawks. Mike turned down a well-paying consultancy job offer to accept an NFL coaching role on a temporary basis. Mike commented how he turned down financial security for his family as he believed that after much prayer, the Lord wanted him to pursue the coaching avenue. Mike has gone on to make the Seahawks one of the Superbowl favourites in just his second year of coaching.

As a final entry, Nick Siriani of the Philadelphia Eagles (the 2025 Superbowl winners), used the massive, worldwide media spotlight that is afforded the Superbowl winners to give all glory to God for the victory that day. Normally coaches speak about the team effort, the work they've put in, the loyalty of their families etc. However, Nick used that moment that aired to hundreds of millions of viewers, to give all the glory of the moment to His Lord and God.

Having watched that little video, I was amazed at how good to me my Lord is, and how He so lovingly but so quietly intervenes to save me from myself. He didn't want me to use Him and His Word as a vehicle to further break myself down, just to satisfy my pride and the demands of others. He instead used my great interests in sports, to remind me that every moment, every breath, no matter what your work environment is, that is your ministry. Those NFL coaches view their coaching roles as a platform to teach those men in their teams of the goodness and love of God. They are utilising their opportunities gifted to them by God to speak of Him, to teach others of Him and the Gospel. They are not simply leaving it to the church leaders to do this role, instead they are living out their faith in the workplace. A workplace with an extraordinary amount of pressure and scrutiny! Yet they are standing steadfast and thankful for the Lord.

Coming away from that video, my body was still in a lot of pain. My physical condition was barely altered. But my heart was alive again! I had been stirred up again and so I wrote this piece immediately, such was my desire to share with you all the amazing tenderness and love of our Lord!

He came to me with healing in His wings, and so my spirit was healed! Not only healed but set alight! For such is the wonder of God that He reminds us in all manner of ways that we are His, and that we are called to serve Him with joy and thanksgiving! Whatever our arena may be, use the gifts you are given for God's glory. Do not be jealous of other's arena, that is theirs and yours is yours. Whether it be a humble one or a great one, all is done for Christ and that is all that matters. I may never reach the heights I think I can reach. What does it matter really? I pray the Lord forgives me for my jealousy and anger, and that He blesses me with a joyful and thankful heart for all the blessings He has given me. The greatest blessing being that through my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I shall stand in the courts of Heaven as a beloved child of God. Oh, come that happy day! Whilst I wait, I will use those days to live my excitement over that certain day so that all may see the hope that resides in the embrace of Christ Jesus. Amen.

Leaving Haran

In Genesis 11:35-35, we see the events that precede the calling of Abraham by God. We read that Terah, Abraham's father, had moved his family which included Abraham, Sarah and Lot, from Ur to a place called Haran. This Canaanite city was a rich and bustling trade city filled with all the pleasures of the world. Shielded by massive walls to give its

wealthy, powerful and well-educated population protection from attackers, the city was a comfortable place for its numerous inhabitants.

Haran was most well known as the centre of the worship of the moon god *Sin* (also known as *Nanna* or *Nannar*). There is a sermon waiting there for anyone to utilise on how God called Abraham out of city led by Sin! How the Gospel was foreshadowed throughout the Old Testament!

Sin was considered as the 'father of the gods', and was richly associated with wisdom, study of the stars, and agricultural cycles. There is also some evidence to suggest that he was also revered as the judge of the dead in the underworld. He was often represented in ancient Mesopotamian records through the symbol of a crescent moon as seen in picture below (consider also the usage of this symbol still in Islamic states).



Religious rituals of this lunar cult were centred around the *en priestesses* of *Sin/Nanna* most famously fulfilled by Enheduanna, the daughter of King Sargon of Akkad. Shrouded in mystery, the intricate rituals of this lunar cult are largely unknown to this day, although they focused through the *en priestesses*, showing an approach to the 'father of the gods' through a female mediator (strikingly similar to Catholicism today!).

This is the city in which the father of Abraham moved his family to dwell in before God called Abraham to His service. For many years, Abraham, Sarah and Lot were surrounded by all the luxuries, comforts and indeed depravities this world could offer. As inhabitants of a bustling, scholarly, and 'religious' city, any person living within its strong walls would've likely felt comfortable and secure. Yet God would call Abraham to lead his family out of such a worldly but comfortable existence and follow Him into an unknown land to become the father of a great nation. This Abraham did in faith, and so all history would change dramatically with this one decision. For from that decision to believe God's Word, the Saviour of the world would come to free us from death everlasting due to our many sins.

Abraham, however, is the exception not the rule. Most people when they find themselves in a situation that affords the comforts, securities, status and provisions of a Haran, will dismiss any call to leave and remain happily entrenched no matter the evil that lurks amongst them. Tragically, this is often the case with many Christians. As one preacher on the radio recently put, too many Christians today find themselves in a Haran and compromise their faith enough so that they can remain in this place of ease and worldly security.

One of the greatest weapons that Satan can wield against the believer in Christ, is to offer them a peaceful and prosperous existence in this life if we just compromise our faith a little. It doesn't have to be much, just enough to not cause a fuss so that we can slip into the general manner and ways of the lost before God. As we take our place in this spiritual Haran, we become comfortable with our life and its ease and so we soon find ourselves becoming more and more like those around us. And so, the light of our witness is snuffed out. The further tragedy is that those around us in such a place are at enmity with God! As Christ Himself said, 'No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other.' (Matthew 6:24).

So, if we are astute of discernment, we can see that the devil has lured such compromising souls into a personal Haran if you will. A place where they are forced eventually to choose between their love for Christ and His Pure Word, or the pleasant existence they have been offered by deceptive spirits. Again, many today love the gilded cage that Satan has craftily constructed too much to be willing to leave it, and pursue a life of likely loss and suffering in the service of Christ Jesus and the Gospel.

God's call to Abraham was to get out of Haran, as He could not use a heart that holds to a life rooted in a world of sinful living. Again, as a preacher recently pointed out on the radio, too many Christians today are seeking to 'know the will of God and serve Him but are refusing to leave their personal Haran!' To leave such a comfortable existence and wait upon the promises of God is of course very hard to do, it requires true strength of faith. This is most accurately rendered as 'virtue' in the King James Bible, as strength of faith is how we can know Christ Jesus who is the fount of all virtues!

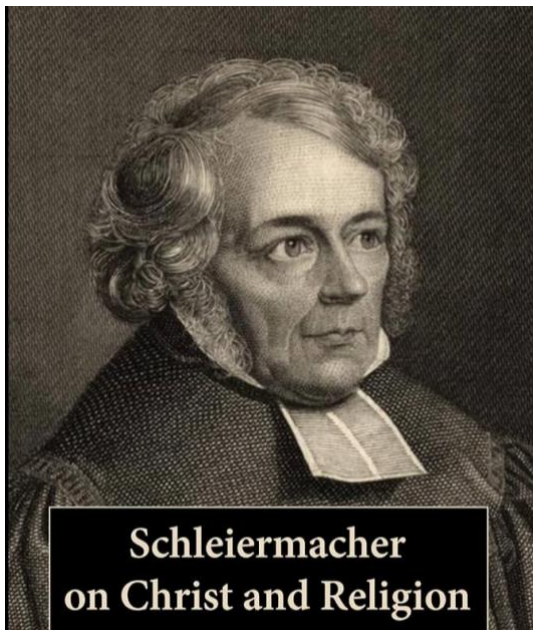
So, yes leaving such an easy life of compromise is hard, but God is calling you to do this very thing in faith that what He has in store for you is far, far better than anything your Haran can offer you! Consider this. Abraham could've ignored the call of God, or even tried to serve God whilst remaining part of the pagan world of Haran. The outcome of that would've been what it will be for most lives lived. He would've had a probably perfectly pleasant existence in the world, died and been forgotten to history and worst of all, be lost before God forever had he ignored His call. However, because he followed the call of God, he went through times of blessing but also many hard and painful tests and trials in

his life. Yet he ended his days knowing he would see the fullness of God's promise for all eternity! His name will be celebrated for all eternity as an example of true faith in God. All because he chose to believe the promise and call of God and left Haran.

Your Haran will be different to mine. I have squandered many days dwelling in my personal Haran, and the Lord did not want that for me. He does not want that for you either. Do not compromise your stand for Christ Jesus and the Gospel just to attain the pleasures and acceptance of this world. It isn't worth it! Losing eternal rewards for temporary pleasures is a stupid choice, yet one we make with troubling frequency. Go to the Lord today and enquire of Him earnestly, 'What would you have me leave behind Lord so that I may know and serve you truly?' The reply will cost you. It may cost you family, friends, money, health, status. But all these losses are but losses of temporary things. What you'll reap from that decision to leave your personal Haran, will be a heart of peace and excitement! A heart that awaits each day as an excited child thinking, 'Will this be the day that I will go home!' Or 'What glories of the Lord will I see today?!' Don't let fear of loss blind you from sight of what you will gain. Abraham left Haran, an impressive city undoubtedly. But all the temporary glories of Haran are nothing in comparison to the eternal splendour of Heaven!

Friedrich Schleiermacher – Part Two

We left our investigation of Friedrich Schleiermacher having seen Friedrich embrace the notion that God is made known to us through an inner religious instinct. This religious instinct connects us to what Friedrich called the 'spirit of the universe', and that by this universal religious spirit that unites humanity, mankind can access salvation through this inner spirituality. Friedrich attempted to blend this mystical idea of spirituality that is in tune with eastern mysticism and New Age teachings, with Christianity. He looked to suggest that whilst Christianity is the 'most sublime' of faiths, other religions can also utilise this religious instinct to access God. Let us also remind ourselves that Friedrich's work became the foundation for much modern theology that underpins most denominations and churches today.



**Schleiermacher
on Christ and Religion**

These deeply confused and extremely damaging attempts to blend Christianity with Enlightenment rationality, continued to permeate Friedrich's writing. In 1805, when he was a professor of Theology at Halle University in Germany, Friedrich showed his dabbling's with orthodox Christianity. These flirtations with orthodox Christian teaching came through in a letter to a friend where Friedrich wrote, 'Through my lectures on doctrinal theology, my views in regard to separate points of Christianity are developing themselves more clearly'. One would hope that as a professor of Theology, Friedrich's views of Christian doctrine would be developed not developing! Friedrich's growing interest in orthodox Christianity moved him to write to a friend that he hopes to 'contribute to an ever clearer understanding as to the meaning of our Evangelical faith.' I believe the Holy Spirit made it very clear through the apostles and the Word of God as to what a clear understanding of faith should look and act like. He doesn't need any help from academics as the potency and power of the early Church showed to all history!

With that being said, in this phase of Friedrich's life and his apparent interest in developing the understanding of orthodox Christianity, one might be able to draw some hope that his earlier mystical musings might be rightly abandoned. And to a point, there were grounds for optimism regarding the development of Friedrich in his doctrinal understanding as he began to move in the direction of the pre-eminence of Christ Jesus. When reflecting on the work of the Reformers, Friedrich noted that the Reformers were instruments of God 'to bring forth in renewed glory the Evangelical Church, which is guided and governed by Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. He is the quickening centre of the Church; from Him comes all, to Him all returns: He is the Beginning and End: in Him we believe, and through Him alone we are blessed.' Some promising comments and observations by Friedrich. Yet there were cracks in the doctrinal walls of Friedrich's understanding that would soon become apparent.

Friedrich taught that devotion to Christ was the essence of true religion. He asserted that all that is needed to feel devotion is faith. However, faith according to Friedrich does not rise from truth and knowledge received from outside the individual (i.e. God and His Pure Word). Instead, it comes from within us via our own intuition, consciousness and religious instinct. To have faith therefore requires no revealed truth and no authoritative Bible, as faith is centred in the

inner consciousness. Friedrich had blended Christian terminology with eastern mystical teaching and rationalism, creating a mongrel of a faith that as noted earlier, became the recognisable foundation of many Christian settings today.

As Friedrich postulated that no outside revelation of truth was required to experience true devotion to Christ Jesus, sizeable theological questions must be put to his deeply flawed thinking. For instance, how can we Christians know of the virgin birth, or Christ's atoning death and His triumphant resurrection unless we have them revealed to us from an outside source? No remote Amazonian tribe has displayed an inner awareness of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. No Artic Inuit has shown an inner intuition as to the Incarnation of God in the flesh of man as seen in Jesus Christ, nor His virgin birth. These are key doctrines of the Christian faith, without them there is no Christian faith! Knowledge of these fundamental doctrines of Christianity cannot be accessed via any sort of inner consciousness of religion!

Friedrich attempted to sidestep this massive problem of dismissing fundamental theological understanding, by claiming something extraordinary. Friedrich would assert that whether these doctrines are true or not, or whether they are known or not, is not necessary for evangelical devotion. Read that sentence again. In this shocking statement, we can see the baseplate for all the weak and poor Biblical teaching and preaching that sadly exists in many quarters of Christendom today. According to Friedrich Schleiermacher, devotion to Christ and the experience of true religion does not rest on what you know of Christ and His Word, merely what you feel towards Him. Here we have found the rotten root of the modern notion that all you have to do is love Jesus to be saved. As secular psychotherapist Dr Jordan Peterson comments on such an assertion, 'What does that even mean?!' Anyone could claim to love Jesus and yet live like a truly wretched sinner. Yet they cannot be challenged on the validity of their claim to love Jesus, as it is based upon what they feel according to people such as Schleiermacher. You cannot know what they truly feel and so you have no right to judge them.

Friedrich Schleiermacher tried to assist God in His work of redeeming souls, believing that the Word of God was not authoritative. As a result, Christianity needed defending against the rise of rationalistic/humanistic thinking by man's intellect and efforts. So, he attempted to blend rationalism and Christianity together. This ill-advised blending brought about a Christianity that had been stripped of everything that gave it power to save lost souls. It created a 'faith' that was based upon subjective experience and needed no objective knowledge. Whilst this may have pleased the sensibilities of many deceived souls since its inception, it has angered the Lord God greatly as it has led many blind souls into everlasting darkness.

To say we love someone and then show no regard for what they say and ask us to do is not love, it is self-love. It is self-love ultimately as we are taking what we want from that individual without ever giving back what they ask, even if it only be a fraction of what we receive from them. Our Lord made it very clear when He said, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments.' (John 14:15). To keep any commands, we must know objectively what that command is, it must be revealed to us outside of any inner awareness. Or to put it another way, a lady wrote in a local church newsletter recently, 'God never said follow your heart. He said follow me.' The intellect and scholarly respect of Schleiermacher would have you follow your heart, for there is the essence of true religion and devotion to Christ. That wise old lady would have you follow Christ Jesus through His Word. Which one do you think is more beloved of God?

Faith is indeed a personal relationship with Christ Jesus. But any worthwhile relationship is based on objective knowledge of the other individual. Problems arise in any relationship when we live in disregard of what the other person tells us they like and don't like. We cannot dare claim that we love them if we wilfully ignore what they have expressly told us of themselves and what they ask of us. Yet thanks to Friedrich Schleiermacher, many 'Christians' are living in ignorance of just who the one they claim to love truly is! This has brought about a truly weak Church and one that will rightly be spewed out of Christ's mouth (Revelation 3:16). For through blind men such as Schleiermacher, the pure heat of the Gospel has been dampened by the cold, lifeless waters of the world's wisdom. What we are left with is a tepid, tasteless 'Christianity' that leaves mankind weak and hopeless, and God angered. So let us pray for a return to a faith that is based upon the knowledge of the truth of God's Word. For then we may again see the wondrous glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and remind ourselves of the coming glory that awaits all those who delight in His precious name. Go and read 2 Peter chapter 1. Let this remind you of the need for a faith based on knowledge of God and not our claimed experience of Him.

A Melting Heart Before The Light Of Christ

Recently, I looked out my kitchen window and saw a wonderful picture of the Gospel unfold before me. The night had been cold and crisp, leaving a deep frost on everything. As the early morning hours gave way to the rising sun, its unusual warmth considering the coldness of the preceding night, caused something very distracting to happen.

I walked into my kitchen to make myself a cup of coffee, I was mulling over what I could write about in this piece. As I thought, I became somewhat alarmed when I saw what appeared to be smoke coming from the driveway where my car was parked. So, I looked out the window down at the driveway (we're in a first floor flat) and saw that the surprising intensity of the rising winter sun, was making the deep frost evaporate with eye grabbing intensity. The evaporation of the

deep frost against the brilliance of the sunlight, was so marked it really did look like many fences were on fire!



Looking at that unusual sight, it brought to mind how such a scene is a tremendous picture of the salvation of a sinner. We sinners once had a heart that was truly cold towards God. Thick layers of sin built up over a lifetime had numbed our heart to the love of God, much like thick layers of frost cling to and numb all that it touches.

Yet the light of Christ Jesus rises on the icy and sin numbed heart, causing it to be freed from that cold grip of sin and death. The joy of that freedom from those bitter chains of our sins, prompts us to live joyfully in thanksgiving unto God for our delivery from

death unto life. That joy of salvation animates our words, thoughts and deeds, making our lives a visible witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ. This is much like the rising mist from those frost-bitten fencing panels. That mist climbs high into the air and draws the eye due to its unusual nature and potency. It appears as smoke, yet much like the fire of God that moves a heart to His service, it doesn't harm or stain. It is like gentle steam, pure and eye catching. And so, the joy of salvation declares the fullness of freedom we enjoy in Christ Jesus to all who bear witness.

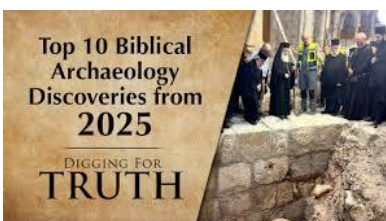
Then we can draw another lesson from those frost-bitten fences in the winter sun. The panels that had the thickest frost affecting them, produced the most intense steamy mist. Isn't this a tremendous picture of what Christ showed Peter in Luke 7:40-43! Those whose hearts were affected deepest by the bitter numbing cold of sin, would be those that would go on to show the truest, humblest and mightiest service to Christ. Such is the manner of salvation throughout time, as God used great sinners such as Mary Magdalene, the Apostle Paul, John Newton and Billy Bray to name a few, to become some of His most effective servants. They were so because they had been forgiven much, and so they loved Him deeply.

There are pictures and reminders of the wonder of the Gospel all around us. To look for them is a great guard against backsliding in faith. For when we see such powerful testimonies of the mercy and grace of God, we are moved to awe and thankful reverence for the provision of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Resource Corner

Top 10 Biblical Archaeology Discoveries of 2025

<https://youtu.be/vCH1poeU8TM?si=PyI644zZoPInAR8P> - click on link to go to video



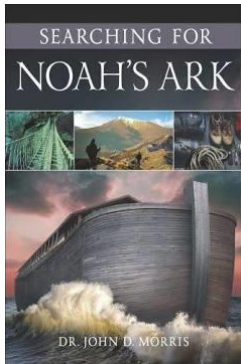
A thirty-minute video that looks at ten exciting archaeological discoveries made in 2025 that all highlight the historical validity of the Bible. A good resource for teens and adults to bolster extra-biblical knowledge to stand alongside Biblical studies.

The Preserved Bible: History of KJV Bible



https://youtu.be/tma3Mew_iV0?si=058fPMQKBnkydUVK – click on link to go to video

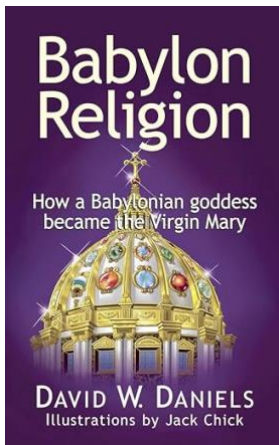
An in-depth study of the amazing movements of God to bring about the monarch standard of Bible translations. At two hours long, this feature length production is broken up into helpful chapters that takes the viewer through a wealth of information covering the translators; the work of the counter Reformation and the Jesuits; the corrupt work of Westcott and Hort and much more. Filled with insightful interviews from a range of Bible scholars, pastors and historians, this documentary is an excellent resource for all Christians on a truly important subject.



Searching For Noah's Ark (Book)

Join the Quest to Find Noah's Ark Noah's Ark played a leading role in the book of Genesis, but after safely carrying its passengers through the Flood, the Ark disappears from the pages of the Bible. What happened to it? Join Dr. John Morris on the adventure to find the Ark on the icy slopes of Mt. Ararat, where Genesis says it came to rest after many months of violent storm and destruction. You will learn Chronicling more than 45 years of personal accounts and offering geological, historical, and biblical evidence of the Flood, Searching for Noah's Ark will inspire you to take confidence in the Bible's historical accounts and its trustworthiness to us today.

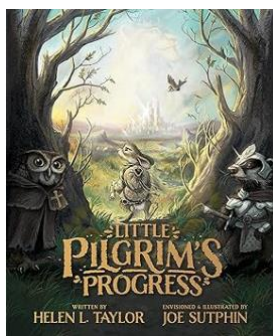
Available from Answers in Genesis



Babylon Religion – How a Babylonian goddess became the Virgin Mary (Book)

This is a history of goddess-worship. Written like a graphic novel, this well-researched book shows how goddess worship "morphed" through the centuries until it climaxed in its present most common form: the worship of the Virgin Mary. In different cultures, the names were different, but the goddess was the same. She was the Queen of Heaven, the mother of the god. She became the Mediatrix through whom all must go to reach their god. Author David Daniels is a stickler for research, so no one will be surprised to find a 30-page section of End Notes, as well as annotated bibliography. You can check out his facts for yourself! It's a heavy subject, but the illustrations by Jack T Chick help to make the story flow, and a lot easier for the casual reader to understand.

Available from Amazon



Little Pilgrim's Progress (Book)

A classic work of literature, adapted for children and beautifully illustrated.

Perceiving the need for a simpler version of a timeless classic, Helen Taylor faithfully adapted John Bunyan's allegory of the Christian life, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, for young readers—hoping to bring its treasury of wisdom nearer to children's hearts and minds. That version has sold over 800,000 copies! It preserves the original plotlines of Bunyan's classic while telling the story of Little Christian and Christiana in a way that kids can understand.

In this fresh, imaginative new edition, bestselling illustrator Joe Sutphin portrays the characters of Bunyan's tale as furry creatures living in a woodland realm. Children will delight in the lavish illustrations, reading alongside their parents or interacting on their own with the timeless words and beautiful imagery that they discover on every page.

This book will help children see the trials and triumphs of faithfulness with fresh eyes, leading them to declare along with Christian, "I am going to the King!"

A Final Thought

We have considered the nature of love and its enemy that is fear a great deal in this issue. We must ask ourselves how often do we accept a fearful existence and yet say to all that we are in search of love? To seek after love, real love, requires the setting aside of fear. As the old saying goes, 'Faint heart never won fair lady.' To obtain a substantial love, all must be risked. This has been true since the Creation of the heavens and the earth. For God gave us freedom to choose to love Him, and with that freedom came risk, as risk of rejection. Yet He did not create man in fear of what we would become, even knowing how we would Fall. This would be contrary to the Spirit of God (2 Timothy 1:7). For the Spirit of God moved above the waters (Genesis 1:2) not in fear of what rebellion would soon occur, but in hope. The hope that the love He had known within the Godhead for all eternity, is far greater and more powerful than even the deepest of fears.

We are given this choice to love God or deny His love. He offers His saving hand to all in hope that His love will not be dismissed, yet He knows that so many will spurn His everlasting love. As the millenniums flowed from one to another, tragedy upon tragedy of lives gifted in love were cast to the eternal flames of Hell. This was not out of God's choosing, but by those who pushed His loving embrace away. How truly glorious that it is that He is a thrice Holy God, and that His ways are not like our ways. For if He were like us, the scale of woundings to His rejected love over those millenniums would've proved too great to bear! If He were like us, He would've removed Himself from His Creation, leaving souls such as we forever lost from peace and hope.

This is why we should praise God forever that He is a thrice holy God, far removed from the weaknesses of love and living that we mortals are so desperately prone to. He stands in strength of perfection, determined to offer His everlasting love to every soul, no matter how many may have denied His call to redemption and eternal peace. Adore your Lord! For His love is undiminished by the betrayal of we wretched sinners. It stands strong, and able to save for it rests on His eternal righteousness and faithfulness.

And so, He stands bestride the waters of mortal life, like a strong man standing on a sure rock next to a thundering ocean. He stands ready and able to pluck out with greatness of power all those that are drowning in the tempests of sinful, mortal living. He grabs hold the floundering arm of those who know they are drowning under the weight of the floods of life, as they throw up their arms in hope having seen the strong frame of the one who stands tall on the rocks. And so, He pulls them out of the torrents that sweep all away to certain death, and sets them upon the same sure foothold upon which He stands. We find ourselves stood with the one who saved us, alive and certain that we shall know peace never ending, for we have seen His eternal might in action. How we worship Him, as we see how many are still swept away forever in those waves of unrepentant sin. We worship Him because He had no need to save us. He came to our aid not fearing the storm of our sins, for He knew with eternal wisdom, that His virtue was mightier than any storm and no wave of sin could trouble Him.

Praise the name of the Lord, for it is a name all true believers adore. It is the name of the one who pulled us from the tempest of our sins. It is the name of our Saviour, our strong deliverer, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thank you for reading Truth To Wonder Magazine – Numbers 6:24-26

Truth To Wonder Ministries