

Scripture Standard

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**Pleading for a
total return to
New Testament
principles.**

**contend
earnestly
for the faith**
Jude 1:3

Scripture Standard
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CANNOT BE DEPICTED part 1 - HAMAN

Allan Ashurst, Stretford

Why is the book of Esther in the Bible? There is no mention of God or the LORD; no spiritual topic is raised. On the contrary, it is about a Jewish girl named Esther who was chosen as a replacement for Ahasuerus' Queen Vashti, whom the Persian monarch had sacked. Esther was chosen from amongst many girls brought for his consideration.

Esther was an orphan in the care of her cousin, one of Ahasuerus' servants, a Benjamite named Mordecai. It was he who persuaded her to apply to be queen. However he told her not to reveal that she was a Jew. So having become queen, she was Mordecai's means of communication with the monarch.

Now Ahasuerus made a prince named Haman, his chief prince and commanded all his servants to bow to him. Mordecai stubbornly refused and Haman was enraged. Learning Mordecai was a Jew, Haman plotted to have all Jews exterminated and wanted Mordecai to be hung on a "gallows" he had made.

Through Esther's admirable bravery and Mordecai's shrewd manoeuvres, the decree to have all Jews exterminated failed and Haman finished up hanging on the very "gallows" that he had made for Mordecai. So the Hebrew nation was saved and the Messiah's lineage not curtailed.

The question might be asked: Does the good end justify questionable manoeuvring? Do results justify means? If they had lived righteously before God and trusted Him, would His purpose to bring forth the Messiah have been foiled?

The question remains why is the book of Esther in the Bible?

GALLOWS (Hebrew: גַּלְגּוּל. Strong's OT 6086)

Nowhere in the Greek New Testament is there a word meaning "cross". It is always *stauros* (σταυρός) or a derivative of *stauros*, which means a wooden pole, stake, post, or the trunk of a tree. The idea of it having a cross member came about in the 3rd century (See: Vine's Expository Dictionary). Jesus was nailed to the trunk of a tree deprived of its branches, raised up, dropped into the hole and made secure [cf. Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29, Galatians 3:13, 1 Peter 2:24 (3586)]. I doubt it would have been as high as Haman's. Probably no higher than required two soldiers to raise up, or for one to drive a spear into, yet one the crowd raised their heads to observe yet hear and mock the victim.

"He saved others. He is unable to save himself. If he is Israel's king he must descend now, from the pole and we will believe him."
Matthew 27:42

The Authorised Version uses the word "gallows" only seven times. This is in Esther and it is for something exceptionally similar (Esther 5:14, 6:4, 7:9,10, 8:7, 9:13,25).

What resemblance. What contrast:

Evil Haman's lifting up on that proud man's gallows - repels.
Humble Jesus' lifting up on His gallows - draws (John 12:32).

Is this why we need to know about both "gallows"?

And, having made peace through the blood of His gallows, by Him to reconcile all things to himself; by Him, whether the things on the earth or in the heavens.

Colossians 1:20

THE CHALLENGE OF TRUE LOVE

1 Corinthians 13

Graeme Morrison, Corby

This lesson was given at the online meeting of the Stretford congregation. Contact Graeme at graemestudy@gmail.com and enjoy his web content at <https://www.graemebibleresources.com>

What would it have been like to walk and talk with Jesus while He was here on earth? When we read of His busy life would it have been possible for us to spend time with Him? Would He have been always on the move and we would have to be quick to follow Him? Would His legs have been long and as He walked up and down the land, would our legs have got tired trying to keep up with Him?

When we come to some highlight in our Christian experience we don't want anything to change. We want to savour the moment, and stay in that place so that the mood never gets broken. Peter was like that in Mark 9 on the mount of transfiguration. Heaven on earth? Moses had appeared - the great law giver.

How many questions would you like to ask Moses?

How did it feel to stand before Pharaoh and defy him?

What was it like to try to control and move over a million people through the wilderness like you did?

Did the peoples constant grumbling never get on your nerves?

Or of Elijah - the great prophet of old?

What was it like to stand up against those 400 prophets of Baal?

What did you think of when you were running for your life?

What about Jesus - the greatest teacher of all time?

The one who spoke with authority.

The one who showed so much compassion for people.

The one who promises forgiveness.

Peter thinks, This is it! This is where I want to stay! Let us build three homes here and never move from this place.

It would be nice to always stay on the mountain tops but the reality is there is work to be done. If we are honest, most of the time we live in the valleys. We struggle with the challenges of life. We grow tired of trying to be like Jesus.

Paul challenges us,

Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:9-10

We are challenged to live, not on the mountain top or in the valley, but on the hill side where we are needed.

Jesus could not stay always with the disciples. He had to go on to the cross so that others, more than just the twelve apostles, could share in the value of His life.

Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, Where I am going, you cannot come, so now I say to you. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love, for one another. John 13:33-35

Paul faces an almost impossible task as he challenges the Corinthians to love in word, in thought and in deed. The congregation was in a mess and full of selfishness, bad attitudes and bad examples. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul challenges them to understand what true love is and to apply it to all that they do.

The story is told of an old wood carver. He used to carve and whittle all sorts of marvellous things. He was asked how do you manage to whittle things so life-like. How do you make a dog for example? The old man said, It is simple, you just whittle away everything that does not look like a dog.

Paul does a similar thing in 1 Corinthians with the concept of love. He challenges us to cut away all the parts of our lives and

attitudes that do not look like love. He briefly tells us what love is, but more importantly he tells us what love isn't.

Love is not envious, Love is not boastful,
Love is not arrogant, Love is not rude,
Love does not insist on its own way,
Love is not irritable, Love is not resentful,
Love does not rejoice in wrongdoing.

That is a lot of material to cut away!

It is important that we note that Paul spends a lot more time telling the congregation at Corinth about what love isn't than he does telling them about what love is. Perhaps because they had put so much effort into that which was not really love. If we look closely at this chapter, we can see very clearly that Paul isn't just writing a poetic piece about how great love is! Like something on a Hallmark card for Valentine's Day. Paul is writing against those people in the assembly who are not acting with love as their guide. In the rest of this chapter, Paul continues to whittle away all the parts of the Corinthian congregation that doesn't look like love. Those who had the gift of prophecy and teaching were setting themselves higher than others whose gifts weren't as visible. Those who had given more to the congregation were setting themselves higher than others who weren't able to give as much. The list goes on and on, but Paul, in writing here about love, reminds the congregation that none of the gifts or abilities an individual may have is anything without love.

We often think we know what love looks like and how love feels. But in every place here, where Paul talks about love, it is used with an action in mind, not a feeling. This is something we forget so many times. Love is not some fuzzy wuzzy feeling we get when we think another person is just really nice. Love isn't primarily a feeling at all, love is an action. Love is a verb far more than it is a noun! Feelings come and feelings go! Feelings are temporary by their very nature. But love is not a temporary feeling. Love is a permanent and repeated action, even in spite of what others do to us.

There is a joke about a mother mouse that has her baby mice following behind her as they are moving across the farmer's field. All of a sudden, a big cat pounces on the mother mouse and her baby mice. The mother mouse lets out a big noise and screams, Bow wow! Bow wow, wow, wow! Whereupon the cat, runs away as fast as it can. The mother mouse turns to her children and says, Now you know the benefit of knowing a second language. Love, real love, love in action, is like knowing a second language.

Are we comfortable with how we love others at the moment? Does our understanding of love need some work done on it to enable us to love more like Jesus? Are we truly demonstrating in our lives the kind of love that Jesus challenges us to demonstrate? Someone once said that when a person becomes a follower of Jesus, even their dog should know the difference. We all know how to love the people we like. We all know how to love when things are going well. But to love our enemies? That is the real test of knowing this foreign language of love. What kind of husband are we? Is our love as a husband a demonstration of Jesus to the world? What kind of father are we? Is our love as a father a demonstration of Jesus to the world? When someone wrongs us and we forgive, that is love.

There is a poem that expresses for us a wonderful thought.

A New Leaf by Helen Field Fischer

He came to my desk with a quivering lip;
The lesson was done.
“Dear Teacher, I want a new leaf,” he said,
“I have spoiled this one.”

I took the old leaf, torn and blotted,
And gave him a new one, all unspotted.
And into his sad eyes smiled:
“Do better now, my child!”

I came to the Throne with a trembling heart;
The old year was done.

“Dear Father, I want a new year,” I said,
“I have spoiled this one.”
He took the old year, torn and blotted,
And gave me a new one, all unspotted.
And into my sad heart smiled,
“Do better now, my child!”

We are challenged by God to be better in each new day. We are challenged by God to demonstrate our love each day. When despite whatever ability we might have, we use our ability in a way that is not self-serving or arrogant, that is love. When we act in love it is almost as though a little chunk of us is being carved away and we are being whittled, piece by piece, into a new and better creation. The secret is not to let our hearts be hardened to the point that we don't let God carve on us and shape us and mould us into His Son's likeness. Are we willing, as the hymn says, to allow God to mould us and make us after His will? Jesus has something for each of us to do. How does God carve a person into the image of Jesus? We allow God to cut away everything that doesn't look like love.

Love is the true language we need to learn.

SCRIPTURE NUGGETS

Do these wonderful nuggets from Scripture prompt other passages to spring into your mind? Enjoy...

Light in a dark place

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and **darkness** was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be **light**: and there was **light**. And God saw the **light**, that it was good: and God divided the **light** from the **darkness**. Genesis 1:1-4 KJV

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the **light** of men. And the **light** shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. John 1:1-5

That was the true **Light**, which **lighteth** every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. John 1:9-11

She said, No man, Lord. And **Jesus** said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more. Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the **light of the world**: he that followeth me shall not walk in **darkness**, but shall have the **light of life**. John 8:11-12

Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the **light** which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. 1 Timothy 6:16

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a **light** that shineth in a **dark** place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts. 2 Peter 1:19

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Adrian Limb, Eastwood

This is an article as published on my personal facebook page on behalf of the church meeting at Seymour Road, Eastwood, Nottingham, England -

Kind regards, Adrian Limb

We are continuing to meet and break bread. All those that have returned to fellowship have done so desiring to be mask free and sing praise to God. As some will know we use the one cup, a practice that has been maintained for many years going back to the very first meetings in the area of Eastwood and Newthorpe in

the 1800's and possibly earlier, but there are no clear records further back. In the current situation we have continued to do so as Daniel did; he continued his normal practice following the decree -

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

Daniel 6:10 KJV

We have, by faith, decided that that is what we should do and have been doing so since May 2020. God has called us to fellowship and to remember Jesus. We have a duty to God to do his will as before, as we normally would, putting our faith in God, that he knew this virus was coming, how it was generated/brought about or spread, and he knows what the outcome will be.

Therefore as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego said, If we die or if we live, God will be glorified.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Daniel 3:16-18 NIV

The world is holding people in fear of doom and gloom and of mortal death from climate change, terrorism and now Covid 19. If we fear God and keep his commandments we have nothing to fear, not even death. Could it be that these are the gods of today that we are being asked to serve?

Law has been made around preventing the spread, by reducing contact, wearing masks, staying at home, and not going to work. This is all the solution that man can come up with. This is contrary to the principles of Scripture and an insult to God's creation. God

created us to be social. Social distancing is contrary to this principle, isolating well people and breaking the bond of social interaction. We are commanded to work and examples are given that work is right and healthy. Hard work is a result of sin entering into the world and not to work is taking away the punishment for sin. We are not just isolating the sick, which is a God given principle in the Old Testament for dealing with infectious disease, we are isolating the whole of mankind. Families are being separated at times of crisis, loved ones are unable to say farewell to their dying, families are unable to grieve together, children are unable to see grandparents: this is the wisdom of man. The system of isolating the sick has been used all the way down the ages, the tried and tested principle that God gave us, until now, until the 21st century. This is because all the powers that are making the decisions are no longer related to God, otherwise they would know by faith that this virus is not out of control. It is not beyond the hand of God and we should trust God in all things and above man at all times.

We are being ordered not to meet for fellowship or to sing, two very important principles of worship to God almighty as we acknowledge him before men and principalities, before Heaven, earth and hell. We sing praise to declare his majesty and authority, but being prevented to do so by law is asking us to stop declaring God as Creator and almighty God and praising His name. This was done several times in scripture, until God's people repented and turned once more to his holy name.

We are commanded to wear masks to prevent the spread, but this prevents the sight of facial expression and clear communication. Whilst this may have an appearance of preventing the spread, there is no scientific basis due to the size of the virus (masks generally are dust masks filtering to $3\mu\text{m}$, the Coronavirus is 50 to 200 nanometres - Ref the World Economic forum News Letter 15 October 2020). All the elements brought into law have an appearance of wisdom and light, yet have direct harm to continuing in the paths of Righteousness. The Bible tells us that the Devil masquerades as an angel of light. Is it not possible that

all of the current measures are the light brought by the devil as he did in the Garden of Eden to deceive Eve? The Bible tells us that in the last days even the elect may be deceived (Mark 13:22). Was this just speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem? Or was it indicating the events going forward that this would be the nature of events throughout the last days up until the end?

For over seventy years in schools and places of higher education, the theory of evolution has been taught with increasing assertiveness. This is slowly eroding the commitment to God almighty and His creation, and man's knowledge of how things came into being and are sustained by God himself. Now even Christians who are teachers find excuses to maintain the trend, finding ways to marry the theory of evolution with the divinely revealed knowledge of creation, instead of saying enough and no more.

Christians are a people bought with a price, born again unto salvation, a new creation in the name of Christ with a hope of eternal salvation. We are to live by faith, and we have to show our faith by our works just as did Noah at a time that the world had never seen rain and had probably never seen a boat. For a lowly farmer to set upon a 100 year project to build such a feat of engineering must have been ludicrous to the utmost to the people of his day. Abraham was asked by God to sacrifice his son of the promise, his special gift. What sense, what logic, what theory could Abraham come up with to carry out such an awful request, but of course the one requesting it had already determined His only begotten son was also to go to the cross as a living sacrifice. Why was Jonah so willing to be cast into the sea? He knew God and he trusted God, even though he had run away from the task and tried to hightail it to Spain. He knew deep down that God knew all things and he declared to his shipmates that his God was the creator of all things. When Paul was asked to stop speaking about Jesus, he continued to do so and ended up in prison. There he continued to preach to a whole new group.

In conclusion, how do we show our faith today? What are the works of our faith that James talks about? Do we continue as

normal as did Daniel or do we fall silent and change to something compatible to the world and detrimental to our walk of faith and righteousness? Do we resolve these issues by fact checking and logic or by faith in God that he knows all things and that he is the Alpha and the Omega, or do we just speak the words?

Paul instructs us never to grow weary from doing good. Is he talking about good deeds or is he speaking about continuing faithfully when all things around us are falling apart? Encouraging one another to good works is another of Paul's comments to the Philippians. How do we do that? By sharing happy snaps or by sharing God's Word in times of crisis, and by reminding one another about the awesomeness of God almighty (El Shaddai), our creator and our sustainer? We must remain faithful and diligent in our service to the master. He died for us on the cross. What have we done for him?

Are we serving man or are we serving God? Saul had the sheep bleating in the background, and we must ensure that we have no bleating sheep. Joshua declared -

But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD

Joshua 24:15 NIV

Many people when they were following the kings in the Old Testament would have had every perfect reason why it was right to do so, but the Bible declared those kings did evil in the sight of God. Not all people will see that today we have this choice. Many will justify following the law of the land. Many will be confused and wonder what they should do. Zoom will be held up as the answer to all things fellowship, but people forget that there are those without such technology, living alone, that cannot break bread by government decree - is that lawful? Is that not something that should prick the conscience about what is actually going on?

Are we to remain mute and not continue in the things that Christ has commanded us to do?

QUARANTINE IN THE BIBLE

Allan Ashurst, Stretford

The Law of Moses had strict quarantine rules on aseptic practice for people and clothing and places where there was pathological risk. Here are some examples, some preventing them from being with others in the Temple.

Quarantine after childbirth: Leviticus 12:2-5

Leprosy: Leviticus 13:1-46; 14:1-32

Leprous garments and house: Leviticus 13:47-59; 14:33-57

Bodily discharges: Leviticus 15:1-12

Quarantine of ceremonially unclean persons and people in contact with a dead body: Numbers 5:1-4; 19:11-12

Quarantine of people involved in war: Numbers 31:11-20

Decontaminating a campsite: Deuteronomy 23:9-14

In hospitals barrier nursing is practised. Some have isolation units. All for preventing the spread of pathological infection. Our “powers that be” lay down “social distance” laws. Should we, like Daniel, disobey them? (cf. Romans 13:1-7; Acts 5:29)

Daniel’s dilemma was different. His was the King's law for all his subjects to pray only to him (Daniel 6:7). Our dilemma is how to worship safely, without exacerbating the Corona plague dilemma. When for my employment we moved to Trafford, we found no church based on New Testament principles. Our church in Scholes, Wigan, gave us their blessing to worship as a family in our home. Persecution scattered early Christians.

What can we do in the present dilemma? How could we worship scripturally without compromising the quarantine? One way could be to worship at home as families. Those who live alone could be helped to form “bubbles” that worship together. Also, if we do have symptoms, to have a test and isolate ourselves.

And at all times,
to turn to our Father
in prayer and thanksgiving.

QUESTION BOX

Brother Frank Worgan has expressed an interest in answering your Bible questions. He can be reached by post or email as shown in the box below.

For example, wouldn't it be interesting to hear his views about the current situation with the virus lockdowns?

He has a wealth of knowledge gained from many faithful years of service. There will be few who read this who have not enjoyed the wonderful benefits of his work.

We are blessed to have him and we are thankful that he is willing to share from his abundance.

We trust many will take advantage of this opportunity and get Scriptural answers to those nagging questions.

BIBLE QUESTIONS?

Brother Frank Worgan

is happy to receive Bible questions

by e-mail or letter.

frankworgan@outlook.com

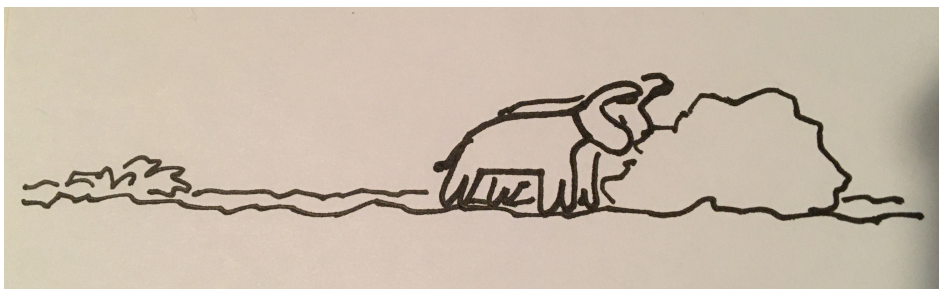
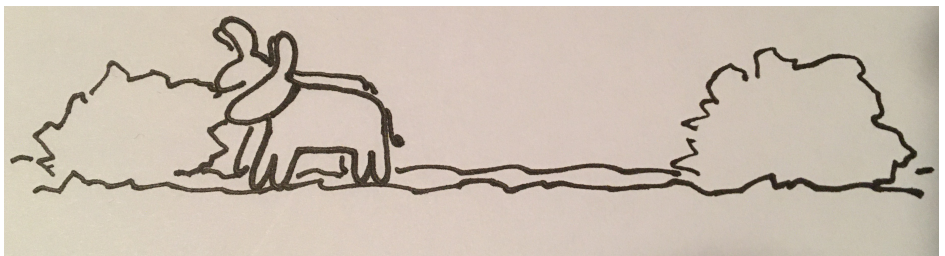
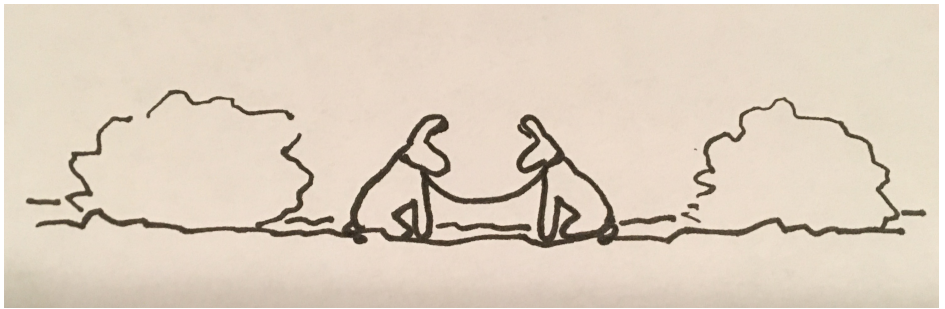
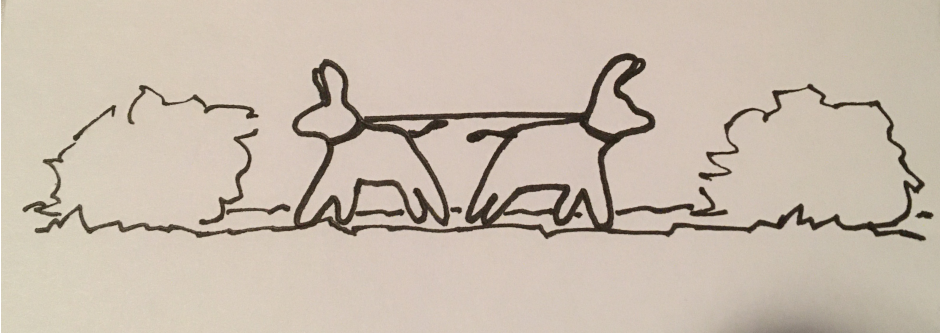
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STORY WITHOUT WORDS

We recently heard a sermon illustration about two donkeys. It is depicted below. Can you figure out the message?

Sketch by Jonathan Ashurst, adapted from a drawing on biggsuccess.com



GHANA APPEAL

The Church of Christ at Dennyloanhead is very grateful to all sister churches, individual brothers and sisters who contribute to the Ghana Appeal. Please send donations to:

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