

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

Vol. 72 No. 2

FEBRUARY, 2005

"Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us looking unto Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith"

Editorial Confident Christians

It is often the case that what looks like individual brilliance on the surface is very much the product of the quality of the support that the individual receives. It's an old saying that behind every good man is a good woman (and most men would be reluctant to argue with that assertion) and whilst the statement isn't true, of course, we understand the sentiment that good support is important to personal success.

Some business leaders who have been remarkably successful in building profitable companies have been airlifted into struggling companies but have failed to make the same impact, maybe because the support team is not as strong as in the previous environment. It's common when football managers move clubs that they take with them their assistant and the coach they are secure and comfortable working with and whose skills they regard highly. What they are recognizing is that they are not as strong on their own as they are with the 'team' behind them. As Ellen MacArthur has sailed solo round the world in record-breaking time there has been a back-up team on dry land monitoring every move and providing information to help the effort (not that it was any help when the young lady was climbing the mast to effect essential repairs and battling with the elements). That support was no doubt critical.

GO IT ALONE – AND FAIL

As Christians we are in trouble when we 'go it alone'. The problem is that sometimes we do become falsely secure in our apparent success and believe that it is our individual brilliance that is important. What we often fail to see is that it is the strength and qualities of others that is providing the essential basis for what we achieve. How many times has it been said of a person, "I don't know how he/she does it." If you were to ask the honest person that question, more often than not they will say that it couldn't be done without... In this context it's informative to look at some situations when the back-up strength was crucial and the removal of it had disastrous consequences.

- Samson is renowned as a man of awesome strength. As a young man he tore a lion to pieces. He released himself from bonds. He tore away the very gate and posts of the city to escape. And each time the Spirit of the Lord was upon him. When he finally succumbed to the Philistines, he still believed that he could save himself. "But he did not know that the Lord had left him." It wasn't a shave that did for Samson, but **disobedience** toward God.

Contents: 1-Editorial; 3-Question Box; 6-Wonderful Womanhood; 8-Word Study; 10-Foundation of the Faith; 12-Road to Recovery 8; 16-News & Info.

- > Goliath was another fearsome physical specimen who no doubt revelled in his strength and power. To all intents and purposes it was no contest when he was ludicrously faced with the boy David with his sling but he reckoned without the strength of David's support team. "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God,?" was David's question. "The Lord will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And sure enough a boy, a sling and a stone – and a **conviction** to the Lord – prevailed.
- > The disciple Peter learned a huge and frightening lesson about faith in the 'back-up' team. We often forget that Peter did walk on water. "So Peter got out of the boat and walked on water." He walked toward Jesus until it seems it suddenly dawned on him what he was doing. No doubt in Peter's mind he suddenly said 'This is impossible, I can't do this'. His faith wavered and he began to sink to be rescued by Jesus. "Oh man of little faith, why did you doubt?" was Jesus' admonition. Later Jesus told his disciples "I am the vine you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

DEMONSTRATIONS OF JESUS ABIDING POWER

Time and time again Jesus demonstrated that it was His power and authority that was crucial to extraordinary feats being achieved and we do well to note again how what might be reckoned as weak and irrelevant offerings have been used for His glory.

- The widow's cruse of oil which, once the blessing of the Lord had been added through Elijah, never failed.
- Five loaves and two fishes that were used to feed the multitude;
- Faith as of a grain of mustard seed (the smallest of seeds) that God can use for great purposes;
- The weak things of the world that God uses to confound the wise;
- Five small stones that were used to slay the giant;
- The jawbone of an ass, that Samson used to slay his enemies.

WHEN I AM WEAK, I AM STRONG

Paul the apostle, learned that when he submitted to the Lord and accepted that the 'thorn in the flesh' was something that he was going to have to live with, he found strength and contentment. "Three times I sought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, **"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."** I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak then I am strong." Is Paul saying that he relies on his own strength? Rather he recognized that when his reliance is on God, then (and only then) did he have the strength to cope.

What then is the principle? In the early days of their ministry the apostles knew exactly where there strength and ability lay. **"Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence (sufficiency) is from God who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant..."** And for ourselves? **"While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly."** Let's ever remember that in spiritual terms at least we have no strength of our own but that all our spiritual and eternal hopes rest solely on the grace and love of God expressed to us through Jesus. And the strength that flows from our relationship with God is this:

- ✓ Through the Holy Spirit, God is revealed (Romans 8:16)
- ✓ It is the inner man that is strengthened daily
- ✓ Our strength is rooted in faith
- ✓ We have the power to understand and share God's love
- ✓ We have the sure knowledge of our eternal salvation.

God can only work effectively through those who are obedient, loving, trusting and faithful. **"And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets – who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness..."** Go it alone? Far better to go with God into eternity.



QUESTION - How can we explain the problem of suffering in the world?



I suppose it was inevitable that the problem of human suffering would be raised once again, as the result of the terrible - and terrifying - catastrophe that the 'Tsunami' has caused. The loss of so many lives, the almost incredible amount of material damage created, and, inevitably, the resulting depth of suffering, has quite clearly shocked most of the world and focussed men's attention on the question that has occupied the minds of thinking people for many centuries.

"Why do people suffer? And, particularly, why do innocent people suffer?"

An Unacceptable Islamic View.

According to Islamic religious leaders who have been airing their views on Arabic t.v. and in radio sermons since this disaster occurred, the people who have been injured or killed, have died as a punishment imposed by Allah.

Fawzan al-Fawzan, professor at al-Imam University, in Saudi Arabia, said, in a broadcast on Dec. 31st 2004; *"The fact that it happened at this particular time is a sign from Allah. It happened at Christmas, when fornicators and corrupt people from all over the world come to commit fornication and sexual perversions"*.

Apparently he has even less understanding of what Christmas is supposed to signify, than has the general Western public which just makes it a holiday.

Another Islamic authority, Ibrahim al-Bashar, who is the 'advisor' to Saudi Arabia's Justice Minister, claimed, on the al-Majid TV channel on January 5th 2005, *"There is one reason: they lied, they sinned and were infidels."*

So, Muslims are told by their religious leaders that whenever an earthquake, or any other natural disaster occurs, it is because those who suffer as the result, are *"liars, sinners and infidels."*

Again, another prominent Muslim of the militant '*Islamic Defenders Front*', made an even more outrageous claim. He rejected the idea that the Tsunami was a natural disaster. Instead, Maulana Yusuf declared that it happened because a group of off-duty Indonesian policemen were drinking alcohol with girl friends on a beach near the city of Banda Aceh. He claimed; *"The next day after the party the disaster happened"*.

More than 150,000 men, women and children, from more than a score of different nations, died because a handful of Indonesian off-duty policemen were drinking alcohol on a beach! Surely, intelligent Muslims cannot force themselves to believe this!

The 'Tsunami'.

Since the 1960s, seismologists have followed a theory called 'Plate Tectonics', which has revolutionized geological teaching. They now tell us that earthquakes, of which a Tsunami is a consequence, are caused by the shifting of the 'tectonic plates' that form the Earth's crust.

These 'plates', on which both the continents and the seas rest, may be from up to 25 miles thick under the continents, but only 3 and a half miles thick under the oceans, and it is when the plates shift, or rub against each other, that earthquakes, volcanoes and other geological phenomena occur.

I think this is a more intelligent explanation for the Tsunami than the one favoured by Muslim leaders. But, of course, as it stands, it does not fully explain why people suffer, or why God permits catastrophes to occur, and explaining never going to be easy.

A Suggestion: the Origin of Suffering.

For example, how do we begin to explain suffering to a mother who holds her dead child in her arms? In fact, there is nothing that one can say at such a time which will sound reasonable, or be acceptable to her; nothing, indeed, to which she is even capable of listening. Only when the pain has diminished and the grief is less sharp, might she be able to listen to what we have to say.

This is not the first time I have been asked to deal with this problem, and my first suggestion always is that we must understand that, today, Mankind's life on Earth is not as God intended it to be. In other words, this is an imperfect world, the origin of whose imperfection is explained simply and graphically in the first few chapters of the Book of Genesis.

To understand the origin of suffering, sickness and death itself, we must think about the origin of Sin.

“In the Beginning.”

Genesis tells us that, when Man was created, he was placed in an idyllic environment. The earth and everything in it, is described as being 'very good'. God was satisfied with what He had created.

Nothing in the world of our first parents was vicious or dangerous or cruel. Man was given authority over the rest of creation, even to the naming of the creatures in it. He was not afraid of them and they did not fear him. There was harmony in the natural world.

Consequently, Adam built no altar, offered no sacrifice, needed no priest and had no 'religion'. The word '*religion*' comes to us from the Latin; 're' = *again*; and 'ligo' = '*I bind*'. Religion, therefore, is that which 'binds one back' to God.

Adam needed none of these things, because he enjoyed perfect fellowship with the God Who had created him.

The First Human Sin.

But Genesis also records what went wrong. Just consider.

Man had been placed in what the Bible describes as 'a garden, eastward in Eden'; an ideal home! But he must be taught to recognize his dependence on God and his accountability to his Creator. God had made no demands on him and had imposed no law. But, to serve as an abiding reminder of the fact that there was One Whom Adam must acknowledge as Master, God placed a prohibition on one of the trees in the Garden.

It is irrelevant to debate what kind of tree it might have been. We need only be told that Adam and Eve were allowed to eat the fruit of all other trees provided by God, the only exception was that one tree. And, any tree upon which God placed a prohibition would have become to them, a '**tree of the knowledge of good and evil**'.

The consequences of disobeying this rule were spelled out for Man. "**The day in which you eat thereof you shall surely die**", A,V, The Hebrew text translates as, "*dying you shall die*".

We need to understand that this was not intended to be a threat of punishment, but rather an explanation of the inevitable consequences of failure to obey the will of God. The word 'death' describes those consequences. It means '*separation*'.

Death always means 'separation'. Our first parents did not die physically on the day in which they sinned. The consequences of their sin were much more serious than that. 'Death', first, meant spiritual separation from God - they lost His fellowship.

It meant *environmental separation* - they were banished from their perfect home. And it meant *physical separation* - the process of dying began in their bodies. (see Luk.15:24, 2nd Cor. 5. 1 - 4, and 2nd Pet.1;13-14).

The Universal Effect of Sin.

But the consequences of their sin were not limited to themselves. Banished from the Garden and the caring of it, an activity which had been a pleasure rather than toil, they were told that the earth would no longer produce its fruit as freely as before. 'By the sweat of his brow' Man would acquire his food, because the Earth itself lay under the curse, as the result of the entrance of sin.

What was that sin? It was the sin of disobedience to the will of the Creator. Man had chosen to assert his own will in the face of God's will, and the tragedy is that every human being who has ever lived - with only One exception - has been guilty of similar disobedience.

Of course, God could have created Man in a totally different way. He could have designed a robot, programmed always to obey His commands and to act in a predetermined manner from which

deviation was impossible. God could have produced a creature incapable of independent thought or action, and incapable of arguing with its Creator. But such a being would also have been incapable of emotion; unable to love God or to respond to God's Own love. And this is not what God wanted. He created a being capable of exercising choice and making decisions, because He did not desire obedience that arose out of compulsion, but rather out of reverence and love. In short, God created intelligent, rational, emotional beings who could obey and serve Him out of choice because they loved Him, and on whom He could lavish His own love.

But here lies the problem!

When you grant a person a free will and the liberty of choice you must be prepared to face the possibility that he may not use it in the way you wish.

He may choose to exercise his will in opposition to your own. And when, in Eden, this concerned the will of God and the will of the first human beings, Man chose to disobey God, and the first human sin was committed; and human suffering was sure to follow.

If you ask why suffering follows when Man disobeys God, I have to say that it is not because God decides to inflict punish, because He always seeks our good. The fact is that suffering inevitably follows disobedience.

We warn our children not to play with fire. If they refuse to listen, they suffer. Our 'command' was intended to be a safeguard, preventing suffering. If they refuse to obey, suffering will be the consequence. In life God has laid down certain rules and prescribed certain limits beyond which we must not go. He has not forbidden us anything that is for our good, and has only prohibited that which is harmful.

The Curse of the Earth.

Gen.3:17 tells us that God informed Adam, **"The ground is cursed because of you"**, and Paul echoes the same thought in Rom, 8:19-23, when, referring to the final salvation which Christ has made possible, he states that, **'the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God.'** He explains that **'the creation was subjected to futility'**, and that, **'creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God'**.

The final chapter.

The final chapter in the story of this Earth of ours will be written when the Lord Jesus returns. In 2nd Pet.3:1-13 we have a passage which every believer should consider carefully, because in it the apostle reminds us of what happened in the days of Noah, when mankind was destroyed by the Flood and then predicts that, whilst God will never again allow such an event to occur, the time will come, at the end of the Gospel age, when, at the return of Christ, not only will His people be removed from this planet, but;- **'the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall be dissolved with fire, and the Earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.'** (verse 10) (the word is 'katakaio' and it means 'to burn down'). **"Nevertheless we, according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."** (v.13)

This will be the time when the curse of sin and its consequences will finally be resolved. Writing about this glorious time, John states that, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." **(Rev. 21:3-4)**

This does not answer all our questions about the problem of suffering, but it certainly helps to put suffering in perspective for those who believe in the Lord Jesus.

If we have hope only in this life, Paul tells us, we are indeed miserable people.

But because Christ suffered, died and rose again, His followers have a sure and certain hope that makes the sufferings of this present world bearable, in view of the glory that is to follow.

Questions to: Frank Worgan, 11, Stanier Road, CORBY, Northants. NN17 1XP.

WONDERFUL WOMANHOOD

(Una Birch, Morley)

Recently in a young brother's closing prayer at the end of the morning service, I hear to this effect: "*Heavenly Father, I thank you for all those present, that they have managed to take the time out of their day to come and worship you.*"

After the meeting closed, this phrase disturbed my thoughts and it started me thinking if indeed any of us do just that! Take time out of 'our day' to remember the Lord. It was January the 2nd 2005, and it was Sunday.

I grew up in a Church of Scotland environment, when Sunday was called the Sabbath, an error I recognise now. Sunday, according to the New Testament, was the first day of the week. Others refer to it as the Lord's Day and this along with the Sabbath (as some still call it) is being swept away by an indulgent, hyperactive society. On hearing those words, 'their day', or to personalise it, 'my day', I thought it would be an excellent exercise if I analysed my own conviction and activities.

Whose time is it?

I ask the question then. What does Sunday mean to me? Is it the day when I give a few hours of my time in the morning, personalise the afternoon, and, maybe, depending on circumstances make a return for the meeting in the evening?

When training to become an Adviser for a National Women's Group, we were reminded that requests for our services could be quite demanding, and as it was voluntary work, and to avoid related stress, we should start by filling in a few **MT's** each month on days of our choice – MT meaning **MY TIME!** This would, when approached for a booking help us to say without feeling guilty, '*No, I am sorry my diary is full for that day.*' It does work.

As most of us in the senior group remember, especially those of us of Scottish birth, Sunday was the Sabbath Day set aside from the rest of the week. I grew up in strict Presbyterian religious traditions. No singing, no Sunday newspapers in the house, no playing the piano, no knitting and no games etc. Most shops were of course closed.

It was a sober day. In the afternoon we were all taken out or sent on a restrained walk and woe betide us if we got ourselves dirty. In our best clothes we had to walk obediently beside our parents. Can you imagine not even being allowed to run? Puddles were taboo. I acknowledge now that they were trying to encourage respect for the Almighty but it filled me a fear of this God who demanded such a stern routine! I knew about Him, but He was almost unapproachable, and I never ever had a close relationship with Him in that environment!

Attitudes and priorities

I am not advocating that we go back to austere Presbyterian Sundays being aware that we all like to relax on the first day of the week, go off to the local park, meet up with friends, enjoy ourselves or just socialise. And I fully appreciate also that for the Christian every day should be devoted to the Lord. This item is only partly about what we do or do not do on the Lord's Day. It's our attitude to it that matters, the purpose being to highlight and bring awareness to that which is quietly seeping into our Sunday's and drowning us.

Many years ago, when buying a new car, I was in the showroom on a Saturday afternoon. Wanting time to think, I said to the salesman, 'I will come back'. He responded, 'Why not tomorrow?' 'Oh, no', I said, 'tomorrow is Sunday and I don't do business on a Sunday. It's the Lord's Day.' His reply was to say how much he admired me and what a witness I had made to him. That was then and regretfully I must admit that I seem to have changed, and occasionally, I find myself popping into the Co-op on my way home from the meeting for the odd tin of cat food, milk or bread. So soon my mind is on other things. Am I Martha-ing? Am I in danger of leaving my shopping until Sunday when I am passing anyway, and doing the whole shop? After all I could save on fuel and time. YES, I probably am.

Am I the only one? In so doing am I showing the world that it is alright? Am I stating in my actions that like many of the 'Sunday staff' I too am a part-timer? Am I doing that? What a gross thought – that I am in danger of becoming a part-timer on His day! I sometimes even find myself toying with the idea of having an afternoon in IKEA (*an extremely dangerous pastime as recent events have proved – Ed!*). And that is just hours after declaring to that same world that I have been remembering the Lord on His day! **"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he come."** (1 Cor 11:26)

There is a need for some of the old Sunday ways to come back i.e making sure on Saturday that I will not require anything on Sunday. *Or doing without!* Setting aside worldly business until Monday. Socialise, yes, but for my spiritual maturity and worship to God, I need to keep focused. Car boot sales and out of town shopping are the norm now, and it is very easy to be drawn into it. MT increasingly takes precedence in our lives.

If you were to take a look at your church register would we find it sad reading and hear ourselves saying, 'I wonder what happened to that brother or that sister?' Perhaps the world has taken hold of them and their lives filled with MT? I don't know.

'HT' therapy

It is tempting and sometimes we would just love to 'dip our toes' into the ocean of worldliness. If we do, we are in danger of becoming caught up in the undertow and being dragged right under. Much as we would like to paddle, it is much safer to stay out of this water altogether. I have purposely in this year's diary, along with my usual MT's, placed in large letters on each Sunday of the month, **HT**. This enables me, when planning my week to keep in mind that Sunday is His Time. That way it is easier to say no to anything that would keep me from the Lord's Table. *'Sorry, my diary is full for that day!'*

At a Church fellowship weekend, a brother told us that he believed, and taught his son, that certain things were NO GO on the Lord's Day. The son witnessed another brother doing the very thing that his father was trying to instil in him should not be done. He left the Church. I need to heed and make sure that my attitude towards the Lord's Day is not such that family and neighbour's witness an approach that says, 'the meeting's over, I have satisfied my obligation, the rest of the day is mine.' If I do, I am letting them down, letting my Saviour down, letting my brethren down and letting myself down.

New Year's resolutions are negative. Who keeps them anyway? So, to encourage you to **"proclaim the Lord's death until he comes"**, let us accentuate the positive and, pens at the ready sisters, write **HT** in our diaries. I thought I had a positive approach too, but it is amazing what analysis can reveal. Love to you all.

Word Study MEDITATE

(Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell)

I attended Secondary School during most of the 1960's. It was a decade of great change in the U.K. and throughout the world. So much was going at the time that it was truly difficult to keep pace with all that was happening. This was especially so in the field of popular music. However, I had an advantage over some. I had access to a large tape recorder, which I used frequently to copy all the new releases broadcast mainly on the radio. I still have many of the tapes and have been enjoying listening to them once again after a very long gap.

The Beatles and the Beach Boys especially interested me. I quickly realised that there was exceptional talent behind both these groups. I tried to emulate them on the piano, but, of course, soon realised I was way out of my depth. Then both these groups introduced me to a very strange character. He was known as the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and his "bag" was Transcendental Meditation. He came over as a rather funny little man with a somewhat squeaky voice. The Beatles and the Beach Boys appeared to be happy in his company. Soon they were describing the Maharishi as the "Giggling Guru". Then pictures began to be published of their visit to his camp in Rishikesh, India where they spoke of learning the techniques of TM. Later, I shall never forget seeing Mike Love of the Beach Boys on stage in Glasgow following this India trip. He looked like the arch-disciple with the long hair and the garb to match. But he still had that Californian sense of humour!

I read quite a bit about TM thereafter and listened to a lot of TM-influenced songs. However, I was not about to change my lifestyle because, by that time, I had already made the change for Jesus and was beginning to meditate upon His word. I found Jesus to be more exciting than anyone or anything else. Sir Paul McCartney later said of the Maharishi: "We made a mistake. We thought there was more to him than there was. He's human. We thought at first that he wasn't." But I had come to believe that Jesus was not only human, but also Divine. No eastern guru could compare with Him.

TRUE MEDITATION

What had the Bible to say on true meditation? I checked my Cruden's Concordance. I noted these passages: **"This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate therein day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success."** (Joshua1:8); **"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law he meditates day and night."** (Psalm 1:1,2); **"Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation."** (Psalm 5:1); **"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my Strength, and my Redeemer."** (Psalm 19:14); **"My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart**

shall be of understanding.” (Psalm 49:3); **“I will meditate also on all your work, and talk of your doings.”** (Psalm 77:12). Also, Psalm 104:34; 119:15, 23, 48, 78, 97, 99 and 148; 143:5; I Timothy 4:15. Certainly, the Psalmist liked to meditate!

I later discovered something very interesting. The humble cow can teach us a thing or two about meditation. The reason is simple. In Hebrew, to meditate means, literally, “to chew the cud”. A cow eats grass. Later, as she lies down in the meadow, she regurgitates the food she has collected in her first stomach and chews it over and over to derive every particle of nourishment from it. We are to do likewise when it comes to the truth. After all, we are the flock of God. We are the sheep of God. We are God’s ruminants. As one writer has said: “Only as we ruminate upon truth can we survive.”

THE WORD OF GOD

There are many books around. Solomon once said: **“...of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.”** (Ecclesiastes 12:12) I think he had in mind man-made books. The same cannot be said of the Word of God. It gives true nourishment to the soul. The devil knows this and will do all in his powers to make sure that God’s people will starve to death. ‘Keep them from the Word!’ That’s his motto. If the good book stays on the shelf and is never read, studied and digested then he has won. This is why all believers everywhere must be determined to feed daily on God’s Word. The spiritual food should be regarded as more important than the physical food. But is it? Jesus once said: **“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”** (Matthew 4:4)

Think of what is involved in food production today. Think of what is required in bringing all that food to the masses. Think of the difficulties that could arise without the efforts of thousands of people throughout the world. But consider also the work that has been undertaken to bring God’s manna to everyone. Of course, the endeavours of the Holy Spirit immediately come to mind. Paul wrote: **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”** (2 Timothy 3:16,17) But the efforts of many human beings should also not be overlooked; and they include the very writers of the Bible itself – too numerous to mention.

I was reading the other day about John Wycliffe, Martin Luther and William Tyndale. The sacrifices of these men should put us all to shame. They gave us God’s Word in our own vernacular and they did so despite suspicion, fear and persecution. Melvyn Bragg has written: *‘Wycliffe, Luther and Tyndale...wanted ordinary people to have direct access to God, and a Bible in the language of the people was the way to make that happen...To a priest who challenged him, Tyndale replied, ‘Ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough to know more of the scriptures than thou dost.’* Brothers and sisters in the Lord, may our aim be at the beginning of 2005: to know God’s word better; to feed on it so that we might all grow in the grace and in the knowledge of the Lord; and to meditate upon it daily unto the nourishment and salvation of our souls.



Foundations of the Faith

*A series of studies into the foundational truths
of the Christian Faith*

THE RESURRECTION OF THE CHRIST

The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is the historical basis, along with the crucifixion, of 'the Way' and of Christianity. A short article, as this, may only point the reader to further investigation of this momentous event of some two thousand years ago. This article then in essence is a summary.

The Resurrection of the Christ is the basis of all scriptural doctrine, and is:

1. pre-figured in the Old Testament Job 19:26, Ps.16:10, Ps.49:15, Isa.26:19, Dan.12:2.
2. preached by the Apostles, Acts 4:2, 17:18, 24:15.
3. expected by the Jews, Joh.11:24; Hebs.11:35.
4. not contrary to reason, 1 Cor.15:35-49,
5. a credible event, Mk.12:24, Acts 26:8,
6. foretold by the Prophets, Ps.16:10; Acts 13:34-35; Isa.26:19,
7. foretold by Jesus, Himself, Matt. 20:19; Mk.19:9; 14:28, John. 2:19-22;
8. the fulfilment of scriptures, Luke. 24:45-46.

The awesome power which effected this event in an unknown tomb of a rich man was the same which resulted in the creation of the cosmos at the dawn of creation. Before 'the commencement of the ages' the wisdom and the love of God had fixed the resurrection as the beginning of the end process in His redemptive plan for His creation. The resurrection is revealed to us, as:

1. an act of God, Ps.16:10; Acts 2:24; Roms.8:11; Eph.1:20; Col.2:12; Hebs.13:20.
2. an act of the Christ, Himself, John.2:19; 10:18; 5:28-29; 6:39,40,44,
3. an act of the Holy Spirit, 1 Pet.3:18.

The Resurrection as a Foundational Truth

Christianity is a history-based religion and rests on the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah. Jesus was indubitably dead when He was placed in the tomb, and on the third day, by Jewish reckoning, after the murder, the tomb was empty. **This event guarantees that:**

1. Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, Roms.1:4.
2. the Father accepted the atoning sacrifice and approved it as effective for the redemption of mankind, Romans. 4:25,
3. the believer has an Advocate with the Father, Romans. 8:34,
4. the believer has the assurance of eternal life, 1Pet.1:3-5
5. believers will also be raised, with a glorified body, like their risen Lord, 1 Cor. 15:49; Phi. 3:21; 1 John. 3:2.

It was in the redemptive nature of the love of God that the resurrection of Jesus provided for:

1. a faith which is efficacious, Phi. 3:9, John 5:4,
2. the forgiveness of sins, 1 Pet.3:18, 2:24, Matt.8:17.
3. the justification of unbelievers who came to accept Jesus as both Lord and Saviour, Roms.5:1, Phil. 3:9, 1Cor. 6:11.
4. the assurance of the judgement, Acts 17:31,
5. the new birth, the beginning of a life of sanctification for believers, Romans 6:4; Col. 2:12 to 3:1; Eph.2: 1,5 and 6,
6. the authenticity of the claims of Jesus, John. 2:19, 10:17,
7. a pledge for the resurrection of believers to eternal life, Romans.8:11; 15:47-49; 1 Cor. 6:14; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2.

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Christians in Corinth argues from negativity to positivism that if there was no resurrection of Jesus from the dead that:

- ❖ not even the Christ, the Anointed of God, was risen;
- ❖ the preaching of the Apostles was futile and by implication their sacrifices in this life were also futile;

- ❖ the faith of the disciples is vain and futile;
- ❖ the Apostles would be false witnesses and liars;
- ❖ the followers of the Christ would not have had their sins forgiven;
- ❖ there will be no resurrection of the 'just and the unjust' and it thus follows that there will be no judgement;
- ❖ those who have 'fallen asleep in the Christ' are already lost;
- ❖ if only in this life we have hope in the Christ we are to be pitied more than anyone.
- ❖ Please read 1 Cor.15;12-19.

BUT:-

'THE CHRIST HAS INDEED BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD, THE FIRST FRUITS OF THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP.'

"Since, then, you have been raised with the Christ, set your hearts on things above, where the Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things, for you died and your life is now hidden with the Christ in God. When the Christ, who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

HE IS RISEN – and alive!

When 'the Way' was fragile and in an alien and perilous environment in Jerusalem, with hostility from the occupying forces, the priestly class, the residue of the animosity from the foot of the cross and from the Great Sanhedrin, the resurrected and glorified Christ appeared ALIVE. With wounds in His wrists, His ankles and side He appeared to His family, close and intimate colleagues and strangers alike. Thirteen appearances of the glorified Christ are recorded in the scriptures, beginning with Mary Magdalene, (Mk.19:19), and including that remarkable confrontation on the way to Damascus, (Acts 9:5 and 1 Cor. 15;8). The appearances provoked mixed reactions – disbelief, fear, overcoming joyous emotion, joyous and worshipping faith.

Saul of Tarsus in no way could be regarded as a friend or disciple of Jesus. Saul despised and hated the people of 'the Way', his curriculum vitae showing a period of persecution of the disciples as the 'new religion' threatened the hegemony of the Jewish theocracy. James the brother of the Christ seems not to have been an early believer and yet these two men became icons and prime movers in the early history of the Church. Such a 'volte face' may only be explained by an event of awesome significance – THE RESURRECTION.

The appearances of the resurrected Christ occurred in different circumstances and environments – early morning, afternoon, late evening; on a road to a dusty village; in closed and locked rooms; on the lakeside shore; on the open way; in vision form as an ascendant Saviour on clouds. Of real significance is the appearance of the glorified Christ to some "five hundred brethren" at one time. (See 1Cor.15:5,6). Paul is implying the unasked question – 'if you do not believe me ask those contemporaries of yourselves who are still alive?' Take the case for the resurrection into a modern day courtroom and you will have over five hundred 'eyewitnesses'. Allowing a ten minute testimony for each witness the jury would be overwhelmed by the evidence i.e. approximately six thousand minutes or one hundred hours of first hand witnessing.

WITH GREAT POWER THE APOSTLES CONTINUED TO TESTIFY TO THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD JESUS, AND MUCH GRACE WAS UPON THEM ALL...

"We (the apostles) are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen, by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead."

"But God raised him from the dead freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."

The above article is incomplete when one reasons about the implications of the resurrection of Jesus for His disciples.

Believers who are called 'saints', and who are allowed the privilege of being 'sharers in the divine nature' have been begotten to a lively hope. 1 Pet.1:3 and 21. They will rise to eternal life, (John 5:29) as they are glorified with the Christ, (Col. 3:4) and they will have a body like the glorified Christ (Phi. 3:21 with 1 John 3:2). Since the 'resurrection of the just' is also a foundational truth, as well as the resurrection of the Christ, and the former is totally and absolutely conditional and dependent on the latter, both should be considered as a foundational unity. Future writings will consider this unity.

"THE CHRIST WILL SUFFER AND AS THE FIRST TO RISE FROM THE DEAD WILL PROCLAIM LIGHT TO HIS OWN PEOPLE AND TO THE GENTILES."

Practical Christianity

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

LESSON 8 - RECYCLING MY PAIN

(David Yasko, USA)

2000 years ago Jesus Christ went up on a hillside and preached the greatest sermon that has ever been and will ever be preached. It was called the "Sermon on the Mount." We call the 8 principles he talked about the beatitudes. They are attitudes we need to adopt if we want to find happiness. This is the last lesson of 8 called the Road to Recovery on overcoming the habits, hurts and hang-ups that are hurting our lives. One surprise was how similar our eight steps and the beatitudes are. When you look at them you find that the beatitudes Jesus gave 2000 years ago are really a summary of the steps of recovery. I want to reinforce what has been the biblical basis for the past eight lessons. Refer to *Matthew 5:3-12*

1. "*Blessed are the poor in spirit,*" **Realize you're not God; admit you are powerless to control your tendency to do the wrong thing and your life is unmanageable.** Those who know they are spiritually poor, know they don't have the power to make the changes that need to be made in their lives.
2. "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*" **Earnestly believe that God exists, that you matter to him, and that he has the power to help you recover.** You can look inside you all you want and you're not going to find all the power you need to recover, because it's not there.
3. "*Blessed are the meek.*" Meek just means "strength under control." Meek doesn't mean weak. It's like a horse that has been broken to the will of it's trainer. The strength is there, it's just under control. **Consciously choose to commit all your life and will to Christ's care and control.**
4. "*Blessed are the pure in heart.*" **Openly examine and confess your faults to yourself, to God, and to someone you trust.** In order to have a pure heart, you have to clear out the garbage.
5. "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*" **Voluntarily submit to every change God wants you to make in your life and humbly ask him to remove your character defects.**
6. "*Blessed are the merciful, ...Blessed are the peacemakers.*" **Evaluate all your relationships; offer forgiveness to those who have hurt you and make amends for the harm you've done to others (except when to do so would harm them or others). Reserve a daily time with God for self-examination, Bible reading, and prayer in order to know God and his will for your life and to gain the power to do it.**

Which leads us to the last step. **Y** in the word recovery stands for:

Yielding yourself to God to be used to bring this Good News to others by both example and words. God wants to use our experiences to help other people. God

wants to use you. He wants to recycle the pain in your life for the benefit of others. God uses the ordinary and accomplishes the extraordinary. God doesn't use our strengths to help others, he uses our weaknesses to help others. People aren't helped by your strengths, they're helped when we are honest about our weaknesses. That's what step eight is all about. When we understand that God uses our pain as a tool to help others, then our life takes on a whole new meaning. The proof of recovery is when we start to focus outside of ourselves. My needs, my hurts, my problems become recognized as self-absorption and the desire starts being to help others. Let me qualify that... we can only help others when they want to be helped. This month we reflect on two different things.

1. WHY GOD HAS ALLOWED MY PAIN.

There are a lot of reasons, but here are four to consider.

□ HE'S GIVEN ME A FREE WILL.

We are made in the image of God and that's why we have a choice to live how we want to. We can choose good or bad, right or wrong. It is our choice to reject God or accept God. Why did God give us that choice? Because God doesn't want a bunch of puppets. God could have made us where we had no free will at all. He didn't because he wanted our love for him to be voluntary. You see, you can't say you love somebody unless you have the opportunity to not love them. So God has given us a free will in our life. That's not only a blessing, it's a burden. Because some times we make dumb choices and dumb choices bring about major consequences. And, not only does God give you a free will, he gives everyone else a free will, too. Sometimes they don't do the right thing and we get hurt as innocent victims. We have blessings from a free will, but we also have burdens. God refuses to overrule our will. God doesn't send anybody to hell. We send ourselves to hell by rejecting what he has to offer. He loves us and wants us to be part of his family. When we say "thanks but no thanks," and suffer the consequences of that, we can't blame anybody but ourselves. *Deuteronomy 11:26-27, "I am giving you the choice between God's blessings or God's curse. There will be blessing if you obey my commands."* God allows pain as a result of our free will. God also allows pain...

□ TO GET MY ATTENTION.

He does that all the time. Pain is our warning light. The pain, the anxiety, the depression, that's not the problem. That's the warning light to the greater problem. *Proverbs 20:30, "Sometimes it takes a painful situation to make us change our ways."* We get back to the difference between seeing the light and feeling the heat. Pain is the heat that brings about change. *2 Corinthians 7:9, "...yet now I am happy, not because you were sorrowful (hurt), but because your sorrow (hurt) led you to repentance."* The hurt led to change because it got our attention. Just look at Jonah. He was going one way and God was going another. God sent him on a Mediterranean Cruise and one day, at the bottom of the ocean, Jonah finally came clean. It was when he said "I don't have any hope left" and at that point he turned his thoughts to the Lord. God uses pain not only to get our attention, but God uses pain...

□ TO TEACH ME TO DEPEND ON HIM.

2 Corinthians 1:8-10, "We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us." Paul is saying, we don't know God is all we need, until God is all we've got. If we never had a problem, we'd never come to appreciate God's role in our lives. *Psalms 119:71, "It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees."* The truth is, some things we only learn from our pain. Pain is our life's greatest teacher. Finally, God allows my pain...

□ TO GIVE ME A MINISTRY TO OTHERS.

Pain makes us humble, it makes us sensitive to others, it makes me sympathetic. This is what step eight is all about. Only God can turn our pain into a complement to serve. *2 Corinthians 1:3-4, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."* I'm still young, but I've been around long enough to know that we all have our share of hurts. We all have enough pain to go around. Nobody is perfect. But who better to lead an alcoholic to Christ than somebody who has struggled with alcohol. Who better to help somebody deal with abuse than somebody who was abused themselves. God wants to recycle the pain in our lives so we can help others, but we have to be open about it. If we keep the hurt to ourselves, we are wasting it. God uses those hurts, hang ups and problems to help other people.

Let me use Joseph as an example.

He was a good guy who was so mistreated. He didn't deserve the stuff that happened to him. One day his brothers decided to gang up against him and sell him into slavery. Then they went back and told his father that he had been killed by a wild animal. He was resold when he got to Egypt and the man who bought him gave him a job taking care of his house. He was minding his business, keeping himself pure and the man's wife tried to seduce him. He said, "no" and ran. Then she told everybody he tried to rape her. So he goes to jail for something he didn't do. He thought, "God, what is going on?" But God knew just what he was doing. God was setting him up for great power in Egypt and used Joseph to save two great nations from destruction through famine. Later his brothers came to him to get food. It was his chance to get even. When they found out the guy they were begging from was the one they got rid of, they thought he was going to cut off their heads. But look at how Joseph looked at it: *Genesis 50:20 "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good."* God is bigger than those people who hurt you. Write this down: "God never wastes a hurt." We can waste it if we don't learn from it or share it with other people.

2. HOW TO USE MY PAIN TO HELP OTHERS.

1 Peter 3:15 **"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."** This is the guts of step eight. Peter is saying we need to be prepared to give an answer when somebody asks us, "how did you make it?" Or "how are you recovering?" Here's how you get ready for it. Go home and make a list of your life's experiences. Positive and negative. The ones that were your fault and the ones that weren't your fault. Then ask yourself, "What did I learn from that experience?" And, "How did God help me make it through that tough time?"

Then you write your story. After you've written your story ask yourself, "Now who could benefit best from this?" The answer is people who are going through, right now, what you've already been through. Then you say to God, "God, I am available." There are people who need to hear your story who are going through what you've gone through. Sometimes God wants us to take the initiative. That's called intervention. Look at *Galatians 6:1-2*, **"If someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted (In other words, it could be you next). Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."** If we are believers we have a command to share in the troubles and problems of others. If we aren't doing it, we are disobeying a direct command of God. Now, let me give you three suggestions for sharing your story. They come from 1 Thessalonians 2:3-12.

- > **BE HUMBLE.** We're all in the same boat and when you share your story it's just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.
- > **BE REAL.** Be honest about the hurts and the faults. We help others by being honest about our hurts. When we share our story not only does it give hope to the people we are sharing it with, it gives healing to us. When we heal we grow. People join recovery groups because of their pain. They stay in them because of their growth.
- > **DON'T LECTURE.** Just tell your story. God wants you to be a witness, not an attorney. We can't argue anybody into heaven. So don't lecture anybody. Now, as we wrap up these eight lessons, I want to challenge you to take three action steps:

1. **If you have not yet made Jesus your Lord and put him on in baptism, do it today.** If you haven't given your life to Christ, what are you waiting for?
2. **Write your story out.** Take some time to look at your life. The good, the bad, and the ugly and ask God how he can use it to make a difference in somebody else's life.
3. **Ask God to give you somebody you can share your story with.** The world is full of people who need your story and if they don't hear it from you, who will they hear it from. The only bible they are going to read is you. And you have a story to reach them with and God wants to use you! Remember there are only two things we can't do in heaven. One is to sin, the other is share our story with someone who needs it. Which of those things does God leave us on earth to do? Kind of obvious, isn't it?

Baptism

Kirkcaldy, Scotland

The Church in Kirkcaldy is delighted to announce the baptism of Allan Hughes, younger son of Fay and Robert Hughes on 31 October 2004.

Robert Hughes, Secretary

Coming Events

Tranent, Scotland

The Tranent Annual Social will be held on **26th March 2005** in the **St. Martins Hall, Tranent.**

The meeting will start at **4.00 pm.** The speaker will be Bro. Robert Hughes from Kirkcaldy and the chairman Bro. John Colgan.

Peterhead, Scotland. Special Weekend Meetings

on 2nd & 3rd April 2005.

Saturday 2nd April at 7.00pm

Speaker: David Murray (Aberdeen)

Sunday 3rd April

10.00 am Bible Study
11.00 am Breaking of Bread
6.00 pm Gospel meeting

Speaker: David Murray

A warm welcome awaits all.

Peterhead Annual Social

Saturday 1st and

Sunday 2nd October 2005.

Saturday

3.00pm start followed by refreshments
6.00pm Evening Service

Sunday

10.00 am Bible Class
11.00 am Breaking of Bread
6.00 pm Gospel meeting

Speakers: Frank Worgan (Corby)
and Mitch Vick (Stirling)

A warm welcome awaits all.

“Love your enemies”

Doing an injury puts you below your enemy. Revenging an injury makes you but even with your enemy. Forgiving an injury sets you above your enemy.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICE PER COPY – POST PAID FOR ONE YEAR

UNITED KINGDOM. £10.00

OVERSEAS BY SURFACE MAIL. £10.00 (\$16.00US or \$20.00Can)

OVERSEAS BY AIR MAIL. £14.00 (\$22.00US or \$28.00Can)

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO "SCRIPTURE STANDARD"

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY.

E-mail: john@kkneller.freeseve.co.uk

Tel: 01875 853212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: ROBERT MARSDEN, 4 The Copse, Orrell Road, Orrell, Wigan, England, WN5 8HL. Tel: 01942 212320 E-mail: Marsdenrob5@aol.com