

Glad Tidings

of the Kingdom of God

1603

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Glad Tidings

of the Kingdom of God

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A monthly magazine published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters in Christ) and available throughout the world.

Its objectives are - to encourage the study of the Bible as God's inspired message to mankind; to call attention to the Divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn men and women that soon Christ will return to Earth as judge and ruler of God's world-wide Kingdom.

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Reflections

It can be very relaxing to sit and look at the reflections in a lake or river. We can see ourselves or our surroundings as in a mirror, but upside down. Sometimes the image is a perfect copy of the original, more often it is flawed by ripples or movement in the water. Maybe the definition is less clear or we cannot see the whole image, but there is a definite resemblance. We can recognise the picture and its characteristics.



This is an idea used in the Bible to explain what God is looking for in men and women. He wants to look at people and see in them a reflection of Himself, that is, His character. Speaking about the future role of Jesus in getting people ready to live in God's kingdom, one prophet used this description:

He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; he will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness (Malachi 3:3).

In the times of the Bible, a silver refiner had a very specific way of purifying the precious metal. The unrefined silver was melted down to liquid form, when all the impurities (or dross) would float to the top. The refiner would then scrape off the waste and continue to do this until the silver was pure. How could he know that it was pure? Because at that point he could see his reflection clearly in the molten silver.

The Closest Replica

The Lord Jesus Christ is the most perfect reflection of God's character there has ever been. He never sinned (disobeyed God), even though he could have done, and he always thought and did as God asked. The writer to the Hebrews described Jesus in these magnificent terms:

The brightness of His [God's] glory and the express image of His person (Hebrews 1:3).

This is why God could say:

You are My beloved Son; in you I am well pleased (Luke 3:22).

Imperfect, but Pleasing

Sadly, no one measures up to this perfect standard. The good news is that God knows that the image will not be perfect, because people are not perfect; they get things wrong and don't always match up to His standards, or even the standards they set for themselves.

One of the Bible characters who pleased God the most was King David. He lived during Old Testament times, and is described by God like this:

The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people (1 Samuel 13:14).

David pleased God because his heart was like a copy of God's own. His thoughts, desires and plans were in tune with those of the Lord God. God made promises to David and assured him that he would be raised from the dead to be part of the future Kingdom.

Was David sinless? In a word, no. He was faithless on a few occasions. He committed adultery and murder. Yet God loved him because his intent was right, and he tried with all his heart and strength to do the right things. When he did sin, he admitted it and asked God to forgive him.

The same was true of other great men and women who pleased God, such as Abraham, Sarah and Moses. You can read more about them and many more in Hebrews chapter 11.

Becoming a Reflection

What was true for them is true for us. We need to try to reflect God's character in our own lives. This may seem daunting; after all He is the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, whilst we are imperfect mortals.

But He has given us something to aim for, an image to copy. His character is described in these terms:

The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth (Exodus 34:6).

That may still seem too challenging for us; after all, He is God. However, in Jesus we have the example of a person who lived as we do, who could also fail, but did not. And he is there as an example for us.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth... For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared Him (John 1:14, 17-18).

Jesus is not God, but he is the closest image we have of his Father. The more we learn about Jesus, the better we get to know God. The better we follow his example, the better reflection our lives will be of God's character.

If we do so, then we can have a special relationship with God and share the promise to be in His Kingdom. Then our understanding of Him will be complete, and our reflection perfect.

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Editor

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Miracles of Jesus - 6

The Storm and the Madman

The sun was sinking slowly over the Galilean hills, and the disciples turned questioningly towards their Master. It had been a long day of teaching by the waterside. Surely it was time now to dismiss the crowds, and go back to their lodgings for food and rest. When his instruction came, it was unexpected: *“Let us cross over to the other side”* (Mark 4:35).

Perhaps with a hint of resignation, they raised the sails, and took him into the boat. Jesus himself was exhausted. Settling down in the stern, head on the steersman’s cushion, he was soon soothed to sleep by the lapping of waves on timber. The distance across the Sea of Galilee was six or seven miles – a routine run for those professional fishermen, brought up from childhood to sail the lake at night. If they wondered why he had chosen to cross to the inhospitable eastern shore, their curiosity remained unanswered, for he lay wrapped in deep sleep.

A Rude Awakening

Soon, however, the wind swung round to the northeast. The sails strained violently as the breeze stiffened, then flapped hard till they had to be lowered for safety. Avalanching down from Hermon and the heights of Golan, a blast of cold, turbulent air bit into the surface of the shallow lake, like a vast hairdryer suspended over a puddle, raising short, violent, steep, crashing waves that threw the small boat about with dizzy power. It was the



infamous Galilee tempest a fisherman always dreaded, unpredictable, arriving with terrifying speed, and making widows as fast as Roman swords.

A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling (v37).

Courageous and resourceful, the disciples baled fast, but the water smashed repeatedly over the sides. Chilled, drenched, blinded by darkness and spray, they knew they had reached the limit of their strength. There was nothing more they could do.

Amazingly, Jesus himself slept peacefully in the back of the boat. The battering of the waves had no effect on him. If he felt the danger, he did not seem to care. It was too much for the sodden, scared seamen. Exasperated, they shook him awake.

Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? (v38).

Power in Action

Waking up eventually, Jesus called out to the wind and the sea, “Peace, be still!” (v39). Immediately the wind died away, the waves smoothed over, and a great calm fell over the lake. It was incredible. One minute they were staring death in the face, the next it was as if there had never been a storm at all. Were it not for their dripping clothes and the water sloshing around in the boat, it might have been a dream.

Both Mark and Luke remark that the disciples were afraid. Matthew says they marvelled. They were no longer afraid of the storm, but in awe of Jesus himself. They were made aware once more that this man, with whom they were living and travelling, was no ordinary man. He had at his command the power of God.

The psalmist, 1000 years before, had written of helpless mariners in a storm:

Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses. He calms the storm, so that its waves are still (Psalm 107:28–29).

Here was Jesus, doing just that. They gazed at him with a new respect. He had saved them from death, just by a few words of command. They wondered: “Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey him?” (Matthew 8:27).

Needing Faith

When Jesus first awoke, he had rebuked the disciples: “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” (v26).

What are we to make of this? Was it



not a little harsh, when anyone would be terrified in such a storm? His criticism carries a message for all who would be disciples. It was the implications of the situation that counted. They were in grave danger, out in a tiny boat, in darkness, wind and storm. There were no human resources left to them. But Jesus was with them in the boat. Jesus, they all solemnly believed, was the Messiah, who one day will be King of the world. As the chosen of God, he was surely not going to be drowned in a common storm! His life was sacred, cradled in God’s hand. So long as they were with him, they were safe. It was a simple, logical act of faith to believe they would not die, if they stayed in the boat.

But of course, there is a world of difference between believing in the comfort of the fireside, and believing when strength is spent and the storm is all around. That is what faith is all about – believing in God when things go wrong, when the evidence seems to suggest He has forgotten us, and is deaf to our cries. Perhaps that is why Jesus took so much waking up – God was testing their faith, teaching them not to give up, but to have confidence in Him. They would need that faith in later years, faced by howling mobs of

unbelievers, led to execution, dispirited by long gospel marches, or confined in damp prison cells.

We all need to learn to believe that so long as we are with Jesus, the storms of life will ultimately not harm us. And when he comes back again, in the day of his Kingdom, Jesus will silence the angry sea of nations with the same power of God, to bring tranquillity and peace for a thousand years.

A Frightening Sight

Dawn found the boat close to the eastern shore, the craggy hills ahead edged with pink and gold, and the disciples' clothing steaming in the warmth of the early sun. They must have wondered why Jesus had decided to visit Gergesa, peopled by the descendants of Greek settlers who had few links with the Jews.

However, he directed them to a bay with steep cliffs, and stepped firmly out onto the shore.

Hardly had he begun to stride up the beach when there was a hoarse cry, and the shaggy figure of a naked man began to run towards them, strongly built and very frightening. From his bizarre appearance and loud shouts, it was plain the fellow was mentally deranged, and that Jesus was in great danger.

To their amazement however, he ran up to the Master and fell on his knees before him, almost as though he had been expecting Jesus to come. Jesus spoke firmly to the man, addressing him as though a demon had taken possession of him: *"Come out of the man, unclean spirit!"* (Mark 5:8).

The man's reply was instant and clear: *"What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I*

implore you by God that you do not torment me" (v7).

Talking quietly, Jesus calmed him down.

Then he asked him, "What is your name?" And he answered, saying, "My name is Legion; for we are many" (v9).

Insight from Madness

Mental illness has always troubled human society, and its effects are often strange and frightening. The lack of inhibitions and appearance of the madman, and his choice to live in the cemetery, indicate how unbalanced he was. Though modern medical science has removed the stigma of mental illness, and can prescribe drugs which speed up a return to sanity, the actual causes remain obscure. The sufferer frequently acts as though he or she has become a completely different person, hearing voices and conducting conversations which have no basis in reality.



What about Legion's insight? He may not have met Jesus before, but he could well have heard about him while begging for food. He recognised him as the one who could make him better. But in line with the thinking of the times, which insisted unclean spirits



could not exist in a vacuum, he now begged Jesus to transfer the demons into a vast herd of pigs, busily rooting up the pasture on top of a nearby cliff.

It would have been useless for Jesus to have explained carefully that demons do not really exist, and that Beelzebub, the lord of the demons, was a human invention (as he had earlier told the Pharisees when they used the same theory against him). The man believed in the traditional explanation for his illness, and needed to be cured in a way that would convince him he was better. The disciples watched in astonishment as, with a word of command from Jesus, hundreds of the animals rushed towards the cliff and fell into the sea.

The sequel to this dramatic healing, which is vividly reported in the gospels, is sad but telling. Streaming out to check for themselves the report of the strange behaviour of the pigs, the city dwellers found the former madman sitting quietly at Jesus' feet, fully clothed and perfectly normal. They heard how Legion had been cured at the expense of their precious livestock, and, frightened of what might happen next, begged Jesus to go away.

Instead of contemplating the blessing that had come to a member of their community, and the implication that the great teacher from Nazareth had indeed come from God, they shut their ears and thought about their

profits. It is easy to have the same distorted priority today.

Love in Action

There was no point in stopping. Jesus and the disciples sailed back across the lake. But as they returned to another busy day on a familiar shore, the disciples were left to reflect on the all-possessing love which had driven Jesus, weary to the bone, to sail across the lake and back through that long dark night, for the sake of Legion, the man who needed his healing power.

That same love still acts today, as Jesus calls through the words of scripture and the work of disciples. Many other 'lost' men and women are drawn from the darkness of death and the nakedness of sin to find new life in him. Legion was left behind as the boat sailed away, to obey Jesus' command:

"Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you." And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marvelled (v19–20).

Once again, as in the previous miracles we have examined, every reaction of the onlookers to the presence of Jesus accords perfectly with human nature, and convinces us that Matthew, Mark and Luke wrote down the truth. Their message fills us with wonder, awe and hope as we marvel with them at the miracles of the Lord.

David M. Pearce
(Concluded)

Resurrection

A very common belief amongst many people, and not just those of the Christian faith, is that they go to heaven after death. However, the Bible has no such doctrine; it contains no statement which tells us this happens.

When Paul was being tried by the chief priests and their council, he was speaking in his own defence and he declared to them:

Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged (Acts 23:6).

This was effective as it started an argument amongst his opponents because there were strong differences of opinion on the subject of resurrection (see verses 7–9). More importantly, it shows that Paul himself believed in the resurrection of the dead. We can find references and allusions to this in both Old and New Testaments, so let us start at the beginning to see what we can discover.

In the Old Testament

A long time ago, the patriarch Abraham was told by God:

Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you (Genesis 22:2).

Such was Abraham's faith and trust in God, he set about doing His bidding without any protest – he trusted that

God would raise his son Isaac from the dead, no matter what happened. As we are told in the New Testament commentary on the event:

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense (Hebrews 11:17–19).

Although Old Testament references to resurrection are generally less explicit than in the New Testament, we do find them, and we see that this is not solely a New Testament teaching. For example:

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! (Job 19:25–27).

At that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:1–2).

Notice that the verse in Daniel refers to the dead as 'sleeping'. Death is only a temporary condition for the faithful, obedient believers in Christ who will be



‘awoken’ and granted immortality in the Kingdom of God, but the rejected will die again (see 1 Thessalonians 4:14–18, Matthew 13:36–43, Revelation 2:11).

Jesus’ Teaching

In John’s gospel, Jesus talked to Martha about her brother Lazarus, who had just died:

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:23–26).

Even now, God knows who are His, to whom He will grant eternal life through Jesus His Son. So, in prospect, any who truly believe in Jesus Christ in this life, will not perish but ‘sleep’, awaiting resurrection. In the same way, Jesus said this about how his Father related to the patriarchs, who by then had already been dead for a long time:

“I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” God is not God of the dead, but of the living (Matthew 22:32).

On one occasion when Jesus was preaching in the temple, he was confronted by the Jews about his healing on the Sabbath and saying that he was the Son of God. In his reply, Jesus said:

Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:25–29).

Resurrection from the dead is promised to all who truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who love him and obey his commandments.

This is the will of Him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son, and believes in him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:40).

Resurrection is a key word, a corner stone of Christian teaching and Jesus preached it, that whosoever believed in him would be raised to eternal life in the age to come. It is a matter of eternal life or death that we heed the words of Jesus and obey them as he asks us to.

Paul’s Time, and Ours

The doctrine of the resurrection from the dead was a radical teaching in

Paul's day, and not everyone he spoke to believed his words. When he preached to the Greek philosophers in Athens, they gave a mixed reaction.



"He has appointed a day, on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all, by raising him from the dead." And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, "We will hear you again on this matter" (Acts 17:31-32).

Surprisingly, in Corinth even the believers gave him trouble in this respect, because there were some who said there was no resurrection.

Now if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up — if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have

fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable (1 Corinthians 15:12-19).

These inspired words of Paul should have allayed any such doubts about the resurrection; and he continued emphatically:

Now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (v20).

When a baptised believer rises from being immersed in water, that is a symbol of being raised to a new life in Christ. The intention is to leave the old selfish former life behind. The new life has with the promise of bodily resurrection when Jesus returns. As Paul wrote:

Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection (Romans 6:4-5).

Grahame A Cooper



Things of the Kingdom and of Jesus the Christ - 3

The Old Testament in Acts

The ‘things of the kingdom and Jesus the Christ’ are preached throughout Acts: from the third verse to the last verse of the book. This series of articles on Acts explores these ‘things’.

A Revolution of Faith

The Acts of the Apostles is a dynamic and dramatic account of the spread of the gospel immediately after the ascension of Jesus Christ. He had been handed over by the Jews to be crucified by the Romans, but raised from the dead by God and proved to be the promised Christ and saviour.

The inspired account in Acts describes the words and activities of the apostles who witnessed to the gospel as instructed by Jesus himself. In addition to being personal witnesses they also had the power of the Holy Spirit to enable them both to do miracles and to preach the true gospel.

The gospel that they preached had a revolutionary effect. Apostles were described as *‘turning the world upside down’* (Acts 17:6). However, the gospel had been preached thousands of years before (Galatians 3:8) and many of the important events had been foretold in the Old Testament. This included the suffering, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, the disbelief of the Jews and the offer of salvation to non-Jews (Gentiles).

Consequently, the text of the book and words of the apostles often refer back to the Old Testament. The table opposite lists the Old Testament verses which are quoted directly in the book of Acts, and the events to which

they refer. This shows that the gospel message was not new to the first century; it was very firmly grounded in the Old Testament. It is therefore essential to study the Old Testament because it is the foundation for the New Testament.

A Constant Source of Truth

A prime example is the speech of Stephen just before his martyrdom. This is outlined in Acts chapter 7, and taken in its entirety from the Jewish scriptures – our Old Testament. There are over 50 references to writings of Moses and David, the history books and prophets. Stephen was speaking to Jews but these scriptures are just as relevant to Gentiles.

In his letters to Jewish and Gentile converts (e.g. Romans, Corinthians, Galatians) the Apostle Paul makes continual reference to the Old Testament when teaching basic principles about Christian belief and conduct. You would not expect to understand a novel if you started reading it part-way through. You would not know the context, characters or their history. Similarly, it is impossible to understand the gospel message without knowing the Old Testament prophecies and promises.

It does matter. There is only one true gospel message, and people who change it are in danger of being accursed (Galatians 1:8–9). So let us base our faith on the whole Bible.

Anna Hart

Old Testament passages quoted word-for-word in Acts

Setting	Acts	Old Testament	Subject
Apostles replacing Judas Iscariot	1:20	Psalm 69:25, 109:8 Psalms named	Prophecy about Judas Iscariot
Peter's speech on Day of Pentecost	2:17-21	Joel 2:28-32 Joel named in v. 16	Prophecy about Holy Spirit gifts
	2:24-28	Psalm 16:8-11 David is named	Resurrection and ascension of Jesus
	2:34-35	Psalm 110:1 David is named	Exaltation of Jesus
Peter's speech to Jews	3:22-23	Deuteronomy 18:15,18,19 Moses is named	Moses' prophecy of Christ the special prophet
	3:25	Several verses in Genesis 12:3, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14	'In your seed shall all families of the earth be blessed' – promise of God to Abraham which was repeated
Peter to the Jewish rulers	4:11	Psalm 118:22	Exaltation of Jesus
	4:25-26	Psalm 2:1-2 David is named	Prophecy of Jesus being opposed
Stephen's speech before his martyrdom	7:2-59	12 Old Testament references from Moses and prophetic books.	History of Jewish people, especially disobedience, culminating in their rejection of the promised anointed one
Words read by Ethiopian eunuch	8:32-33	Isaiah 53:7-8 Isaiah named (v 30)	Prophecy of sufferings of Christ
Paul preaching at Antioch	13:22	Psalm 89:20	God's testimony about David
	13:33	Psalm 2:7 Second Psalm named	The exaltation of Jesus
	13:34	Isaiah 55:3	Resurrection of Jesus
	13:35	Psalm 16:10 Referred to as 'another psalm'	Resurrection of Jesus
	13:41	Habakkuk 1:5 Referred to as 'the prophets'	Warning to unbelievers
	13:47	Isaiah 49:6	Salvation extended to Gentiles
James with the apostles	15:16-17	Amos 9:11-12	Gentiles can be saved
Paul before the council	23:5	Exodus 22:28	Part of the Law
Paul to Jews in Rome	28:26-27	Isaiah 6:9-10	Disbelief of Jews

The Gospel and Young People

Youth plays a significant part in the life of our world today.

We know that young people have played important roles in the changes in the world: the fall of the Berlin Wall, the defiance in Tiananmen Square, protests against war and poverty, the technological revolution and the rise of social media, to name but a few.

In the world of fashion, and especially in Western countries, youth is well catered for. Here is a big spending group that so many advertisers seek to attract, and no day goes by without reports of youth in trouble, in drug taking, sex issues and violence. Many young people in these countries are succumbing to the temptations of a materialistic society and look for short-term “kicks” out of life, whatever the risks.

However, this is only part of the scene. We must underline the fact that so many young people of our generation have fine ideals, are willing to lend a hand, and are clean-living individuals, working firmly with a purpose in view. We simply cannot generalise and put youth in one category, any more than we can predict what all middle-aged or elderly people in our society will do or not do. What meaning does life hold

for this important part of our world’s population?

They will inherit a world which has an increasing emphasis on material values. Wise men and women can see that the bubble of prosperity could one day burst, resulting in uncertainty and often unmanageable economic trouble. We can add to this social change and unrest, and a lack of trust in political leadership.



Seeking Direction?

What sound, sane advice can the Christian faith give to the young person anywhere in the world, whether in Europe, Australia, India, USA, Africa or elsewhere? We can say with confidence that anyone seeking a purpose in life should turn to the Bible, whatever their age. A Bible-based faith is directed by God and the Bible has a crystal-clear message. It tells us:

- ❖ why our world is so sick
- ❖ what is the challenge of Christ
- ❖ what real believers must do today
- ❖ where our world is heading
- ❖ where we can be heading.

In short it gives to all, young and old, a message of hope and confidence; a

chart for navigating the treacherous and difficult waters of life.

For young people in particular, note the wise words written by Solomon 3000 years ago, but still valid:

Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

This is a call to action. Put God first and remember Him even when we are young; make it an early habit to practise belief in Him. This will ensure a growing awareness of His purpose in our world, and in our personal lives.

Jesus showed the way. We read of him at the age of 12 years, asking questions and discussing with the wise men of Jerusalem.

Now so it was that after three days they [his parents] found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. So when they saw him, they were amazed; and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Look, your father and I have sought you anxiously." And he said to them, "Why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:46-49).

The Challenge

The Bible says that the world is sick because it has turned its back on the true God. Disobedience to God brings only suffering and, ultimately, death. The ills of today's world are brought about in part by men and women



ignoring God and His purpose. Many deny His existence and will mock those who do believe.

The challenge of Jesus Christ is to think for ourselves; to study the Bible and learn to obey God and put Him first. The Gospel says that there must be repentance for sin, and belief and baptism into His family. Then we try to follow Jesus' example and live God-centred lives.

There are so many gems of thought in the Bible, particularly applicable to youth. The Apostle Paul wrote two letters to Timothy, a young man who believed the Gospel and was trying to please God, working in several of the early churches. He told Timothy not to let his youth be an obstacle, but to put his energy to good use:

Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 2:1-3).

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing [handling (ESV)] the word of truth (v15).

He also explained that we must accept God's Word as it is the guide to right living and being equipped for life.

From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

It is of great benefit to spend an hour with the Apostle Paul and to read these two letters. They contain wonderful advice for a young man or woman.



Warnings and Help

There is a particular passage in 2 Timothy which gives a remarkably accurate picture of our days, as well as those of 2,000 years ago.

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be

lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Other modern versions translate the perilous times as “times of stress”, and that is part of our modern society, as well as loving money, being disobedient to parents, being lovers of pleasure. In particular, these days it is common for men and women to have a form of religion – moral codes or belief systems – whilst denying the divine power which should be behind them.

What is the answer that the Apostle Paul offers? It is a call for all of us to get back to the Bible; to let it instruct and direct us. By putting our trust in God, we can have firm faith and purpose in our activity.

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching (4:1-2).

Young Examples

The Bible sets practical standards by which we are able to judge whether or not something is right or wrong. The standard is, ‘What does the Bible say?’ or ‘What would Jesus do?’. It is full of examples from the life of Jesus, and also of other godly people, many of them young. We can read about how, even under stress, they remembered

God's principles and put them into practice.

There are some fascinating stories to inspire us to action. The tale of Joseph and his adventures tells about the 17-year-old favourite son of Jacob, who underwent severe trials in



slavery and prison. But he kept his faith in God, and ultimately was greatly blessed in Egypt. You can read this story in Genesis chapters 37 to 46.

David, who would later become king of Israel, spent much of his youth as an outlaw. As a young man, he went through the highs and lows of life: from adulation after he killed Goliath to depression as a fugitive when he was chased into exile. He stood firm, trusting his God in spite of great stress and physical threat. Read about it in 1 Samuel chapter 16, 17 and onward... you won't be able to stop reading! David's advice is clear:

How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to your word (Psalm 119:9).

Young women also feature in the Bible as examples of godliness. Two great stories of this are found in the Books of Ruth and Esther; each can be read easily at a sitting.

Ruth gives inspiration to us, especially if we have been brought up in a

home without Christian principles. She was a Gentile who learnt to love and believe the God of Israel. She married into His people and promises, and became an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Esther was a devoted Jewish girl who remained faithful even when confronted with difficult and dangerous situations. She was part of His plan to look after His people after she rose to a powerful position as queen in a Persian court.

We could go on, with lesson after lesson in how a young believer can succeed in a difficult world. In the examples given, we have the message of practical faithfulness where the believer was able to judge whether or not a course of action was right or wrong, and decide how to respond to events around them. The key is reading and following God's Word.



As we said at the start, these messages are as valid for the old as for the young. Whether we read our Bible on a tablet, computer, smartphone or as the traditional book, let's absorb its message and put it prayerfully into practice.

Ken Quixley

A Message from Paul

The Apostle Paul could be described as a 'giant of faith'. Was there ever a greater follower of the Lord Jesus? He listed all that had happened to him since he embraced that way of life, including beatings, wrongful imprisonments and shipwrecks (2 Corinthians 11:22-28).

He was prepared to stand before kings and rulers, proclaiming the Gospel, and to be in chains for the hope he preached:

And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers (Acts 26:6).

For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain (28:20).

In 2 Timothy 3:14-17 he showed Timothy that there was a set way of life for men and women, outside of which there is no salvation. He stated that the Bible was given through inspiration, meaning that God had breathed out His Word, an infallible message. All who read it should realise that the mightiest of beings in the universe is speaking to us.

Therefore, how could we possibly ignore it? What is its purpose? That we might be part of the family of God, following Jesus and his example of how each Christian should live.

Active Faith

Paul told us to go out and preach this word, just as he did, to dispel ignorance about the Gospel. He encouraged his fellow preacher, Timothy:

Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers (2 Timothy 4:2-3).

Accepting that he was about to die a martyr's death, Paul showed his wonderful faith, when he said:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved his appearing (v7-8).



Most are frightened to die, but Paul showed another view. To him, death was just a sleep with the prospect of being 'awoken', raised from the dead, by Jesus at his return. He looked forward to the reward of eternal life.

If we knew that we were to die shortly, could we give such a powerful résumé of our faith about the future ?

The Future

Paul was looking forward to when Jesus is to return as king over all nations, and when he will bring dramatic changes to mankind's way of life. Crime, violence, war and death will disappear under his wise rule. Disease and disability will become things of the past. Sinners seeing all the wonderful changes will learn with joy the wonderful way of salvation. There will be marvellous effects everywhere. The desert will blossom with superb fragrance. Jew and Gentile will work together gladly for it will be a true brotherhood. Unemployment will be no more and famine will have disappeared. God's plan will come to its predetermined end.

Now let us listen to this message from near the end of the Bible, a prophecy of the Kingdom of God:

I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:3-4).

Could there be a more exhilarating message? This promise is for everyone who believes God's Words:

He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son (v7).



The Lord Jesus Christ concludes:

Behold I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book... Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every one according to his work (Revelation 22:7, 12).

The words of the Bible were written so that we might search for and find its great truths. We are dying creatures, but offered a vital way of salvation. We can only be in God's family by faith and baptism. There is no other way. But if we follow it, we can live a life of hope and purpose, waiting for the return of Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

Here then is the supreme message of the ages, the message which Paul preached and wanted everyone to share. It is a marvellous invitation, one we can share with Paul and those other faithful believers of all ages. We can share his confidence:

For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day (2 Timothy 1:12).

Ken Clark

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