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Godliness. Reverence. Obedience. Worship.



a quarterly e-magazine designed to promote
growth in faith and service to God



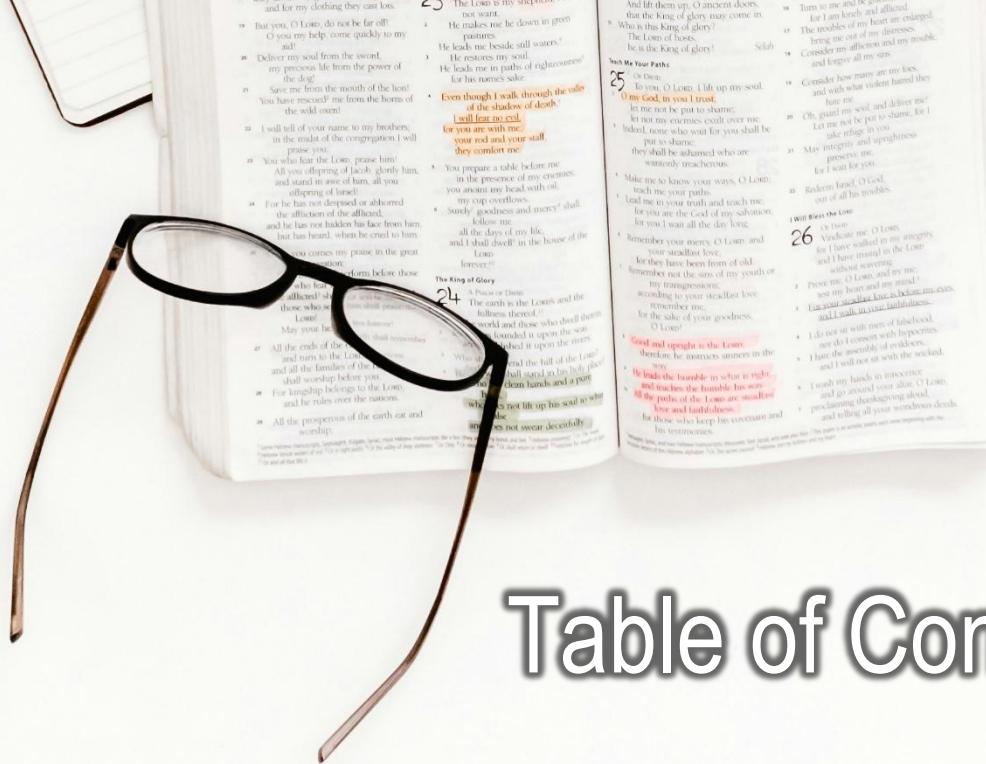


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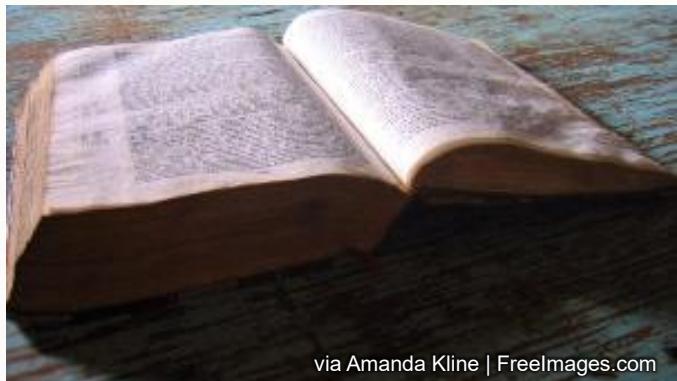
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From the **Editor...**

Happy New Year! I am excited for the year ahead and the prospect of GROWing in knowledge, understanding, and application of God's word. Thank you for being a GROW magazine subscriber. If you believe this e-publication is worthwhile, please share it with others. You can forward the notification e-mail or the PDF copy of this edition, post a link to our website or to a specific article on social media, or use the "printer friendly" button at the bottom of any article to print out a copy. You can access all past issues through the archive section on GROWmagazine.site.

I am thankful for the writers who have contributed to this quarter's magazine. Our aim

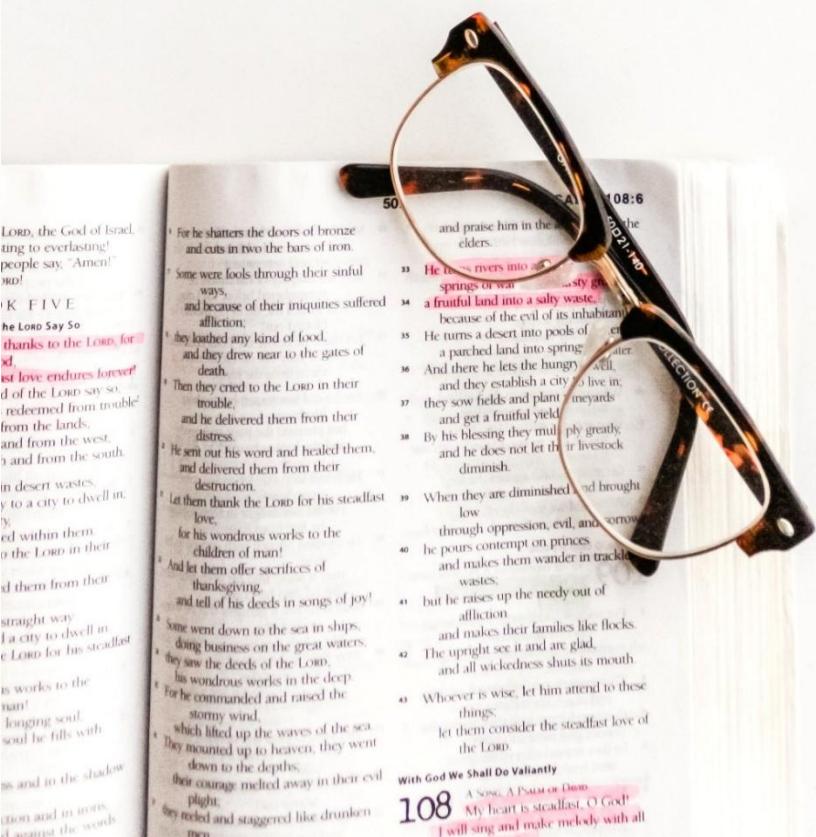


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has always been to provide material that will provoke us to think and dig deeper into God's word

Now, let's GROW together!

William Stewart
editor & designer



The Hall of Faith: Gideon

JEFFREY SMITH | MANASSAS, VIRGINIA

This is the eighth article in the Hall of Faith series and considers Gideon, the fifth judge of Israel. Thus far the series has considered twelve of those mentioned in Hebrews chapter eleven. Gideon is the first in the list of faithful that the author didn't take the time to describe in detail (Hebrews 11:32). That list includes five judges, King David, and all the prophets. Truly it would take many words to highlight all their individual acts of faith. The Hebrew writer only gave Gideon an "honorable mention." Let us dive into the heroic acts of this valiant warrior, as the angel of the Lord referred to him (Judges 6:12).

Overview

I'm new to the whole artificial intelligence (AI) thing and fascinated by what I've seen so far. I asked Claude.ai to summarize Gideon in 100 words. I'm sharing his summary with you by way of introducing Gideon (and perhaps Claude).

The Reluctant Judge: Gideon

Gideon was a hesitant yet courageous judge of Israel who played a pivotal role in delivering the Israelites from Midianite oppression. Initially doubtful of his calling, he sought divine confirmation through the famous "fleece test," where he asked God to make a fleece wet while the ground remained dry, and vice versa. God later instructed Gideon to reduce his army from 32,000 to just 300 men to demonstrate divine intervention. In a dramatic nighttime battle, Gideon's small force routed the Midianite army by creating confusion with trumpets and torches, showcasing God's power through an unlikely military leader.^[1]

The Book of Judges devotes three chapters to Gideon (Judges 6-8); 100 verses. Fewer



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verses than some judges, more than most. We are going to focus on Gideon's calling and major victory which are found in chapters 6 and 7.

Gideon's Times

Gideon's era is introduced by describing the ongoing Midianite oppression (Judges 6:1-10). As swarms of locusts devastated Egypt during the eighth plague (Exodus 10:13-15), so marauding swarms of Midianites and Amalekites had devastated Israel for 7 years (Judges 6:3-5). Deeming themselves incapable of resistance, Israelites and took to living in caves (Judges 6:2,5). Israel's morale was abysmal (v 6), and, in their despair, they cried to the Lord for deliverance (v 6). Jehovah assured Israel that He was more than capable of delivering them, reminding them that He had brought them out of Egypt in the first place (v 8). He also reminded Israel that their disobedience was the cause of their suffering (v 10). They had brought this upon themselves.

After reassuring them that He could deliver them, God got to work delivering them. And the first order of their deliverance was enlisting a deliverer; Gideon. And what a complex enlistment it was.

Gideon's Call

Gideon was hiding from the Midianites. The normal place to beat out harvested wheat was the threshing floor. But that was the first place the Midianites who wanted grain would look. The last place to beat out grain was a wine press. Gideon beat out his grain in a wine press to avoid being robbed.

Gideon's recruiter was none other than the angel of the Lord (v 11). The one who had visited Hagar in her time of trial (Genesis 16:9), interceded to save Isaac (Genesis 22:11), rebuked Israel for not completely ridding Canaan of the squatters (Judges 2:1), confronted Balaam as he rode to help Balak (Numbers 22:24), and later announced the births of Samson (Judges 13:3ff) and of our Lord and Savior (Luke 2:9).

Exactly what Gideon had done to merit the title of "valiant warrior", which the angel used to greet him, we do not know (Judges 6:12). How amazing it would have been for Gideon to learn that the Lord was with him (v 12). Gideon used this open channel to express his frustration with the Midianite oppression. He asked why God was allowing it to continue (v 13). Next came revelation of Gideon's goal; "save Israel from the hand of Midian" (v 14). Since the entire Nation was incapable of resistance, Gideon couldn't imagine how he could deliver singlehandedly. He considered himself the least person in the least house of the least clan in the least tribe (v 15). The angel answered that God would be with him and that great hoard of Midianites and Amalekites would seem like a single man when Gideon struck them. He assured Gideon that his would be an easy victory (v 16).

Gideon's First Sign

At this point Gideon asked for the first of what would be numerous signs that God that was actually the author and enabler in these tasks (v 17).

Asking God for a sign is a tricky business. You never know how the request will be received. When Satan asked for signs while tempting Jesus, Jesus flat-out refused (Matthew 4:4-7). When the scribes and Pharisees asked for a sign from Jesus, he labelled them an adulterous generation and denied them any personal sign, saying that the only sign they would get is the same one everyone else would get; his resurrection (Matthew 12:38-40). When Zacharias asked for a sign, he was given one, but not a nice one (Luke 1:18-20); he was made mute until John was both born and named. God had little patience for Zacharias' request. The high priest should have known better than to doubt the angel of the Lord who appeared to him in the most holy place. But God was very patient with Gideon.

Gideon's first sign was nothing short of spectacular. The angel granted Gideon's request for him to wait while a sacrifice was brought (Judges 6:18). When Gideon returned with his offerings the angel told him how to present them on a rock (v 20). Then came the pyrotechnics. With a touch of the angel's staff fire sprang from the rock, the offerings were consumed, and the angel vanished (v 21). Gideon then knew that both the message and messenger were of God. He reckoned that he had seen the Lord face to face (v 22), and was moved to build an altar to the Lord (v 24).

Gideon's First Task

Gideon's first act of war was directed against pagan images, not people. Working at night with ten helpers, he used his father's oxen to pull down his father's altar to Baal then cut down the Asherah beside it (v 25-26). He used the wood from the Asherah as fuel and offered his father's oxen on top of it (v 26-27).

When the people of the town discovered the wreckage in the morning, they sought to find the perpetrator (v 28-29). When Gideon was

identified, they sought to kill him (vs. 30). At this dangerous juncture Gideon's father arose in Gideon's defense with a simple and effective argument (v 31). He asked the men why they would defend Baal. If Baal were truly a god, shouldn't he be able to defend himself? He also promised that whoever contended for Baal would be put to death by morning (v 31). Gideon earned a new name through this: Jerubbaal, which means "Let Baal contend against him" (v 32).

Gideon's first act of defiance provoked the Midianites and Amalekites to bring their armies against Israel (v 33), which seems to be the result the Lord desired. The invaders encamped in the valley of Jezreel, planning to advance on Israel shortly (v 33).

The Spirit of the Lord

At this point Gideon, without asking, was empowered for his next task. The Spirit of the Lord "clothed" Gideon (v 34). This is an interesting way to describe the Spirit's presence was also employed in Luke 24:49 where Jesus instructed the apostles to stay in Jerusalem until they were "clothed with power from on high." Same descriptions. With this help Gideon called for his own army to form to face the invaders (Judges 6:35).

More Signs

Even clothed with the Spirit, Gideon needed more reassurance. He asked God for two unique signs; dew on and dew off. Each involved a sheepskin and condensation. Gideon first requested that in the morning the fleece would be wet but the ground around it would be dry. God made that happen (v 36-38). Not content with that amazing manipulation of humidity and temperature, Gideon asked for the opposite the next morning. God made that happen, as well (v 39-40). Gideon was reassured.

Whittling the Army

32,000 men assembled to face the invaders. A substantial number, but less than a quarter of the

number amassed against Israel. If I were leading, I would want every man I could get to go up against an army of 135,000. But God said that 32,000 soldiers were too many. If Israel won with 32,000 soldiers, they might have concluded that they had defeated the enemy on their own. So, God told Gideon to whittle his army down. The determining factor for the first cut was each soldier's attitude. Gideon was to dismiss all who were afraid to fight. That resulted in 22,000 returning home, leaving Gideon with 10,000 (7:1-3).

God told Gideon he still had too many soldiers; more needed to go back home (v 4). This time the determining factor was manners. That is, how each soldier drank water. If a soldier bent his face to the water and lapped it up like a dog, he was excused. Those who brought the water up to their mouth with a hand could stay. By this criteria Gideon was left with 300 men (v 5-8). With just 300 soldiers, each man would need to kill 450 of the enemy. They were severely outnumbered.

One More Sign

This last sign was God's idea. He commanded Gideon to go by stealth into the enemy camp and eaves-drop on enemy soldiers' conversations, which Gideon did (v 9-14). One enemy was explaining a dream he had dreamed which described Gideon's sword destroying their camp. Gideon took this to be confirmation that Israel would be victorious. Gideon's response was to not only be encouraged, but to worship Jehovah. He then called his 300 men to battle and assured them God would give them victory (v 15).

The Battle

Gideon divided his force of 300 into 3 companies. That is not an unusual tactic. What was unusual, highly unusual, was the weapons. Each man was issued a trumpet, and jar, and a torch (v 16). Have you ever heard of an army armed with those weapons? None of those is

considered an offensive weapon. They are nothing like swords, spears, or arrows. A rock would be more help in striking down a foe. Yet those were the implements the 300 were issued. Thus "armed", the plan was to 1) surround the enemy camp, 2) blow the trumpets, 3) smash the jar containing the torch, then 4) shout "For the Lord and for Gideon" (v 18). And so they did. The scriptures tell us that they actually shouted, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon" (v 20), which is ironic since none of them were issued a sword.

What ensued in the camp of the Midianite/Amalekite armies was complete chaos. Imagine being awakened in the night to find you were completely surrounded by an immense army. I say "immense" because a typical army would have one trumpeter for how many regular soldiers? I don't know the exact ratio. 1 trumpeter for every 100 men. Every 200? In the dark of night, just rudely awakened, their fuzzy calculation must have gone something like, if the surrounding army has that many trumpets, there must be an enormous army out there. Of course they couldn't see the Israelites, it being night. So they had no way to know that the surrounding army consisted of only trumpeters. Not a sword among them. What ensued was panic. And the Israelites did not initially need to strike any of the enemy; the enemy turned upon each other. The typical options in such situations are fight or flight. They did one, the other, or both. Midianite killed Midianite. Amalekite killed Amalekite. Midianite killed Amalekite. The Israelites watched from above then pursued the fleeing hoard in a kind of mopping-up operation (v 22-24). In the melee 120,000 of the Midianite/Amalekite army were killed, leaving only 15,000 of the original force (8:10). An amazing victory.

Gideon's Faith

Having reviewed the basic facts of Gideon's call and victory, let us see if we can determine what

act of faith qualified Gideon for inclusion in the Book of Hebrew's list of Hall of Faith.

Imagine how much faith it would take to step up and lead men to perform a violent, guerilla action when you knew it would ignite a firestorm. Gideon had the word of God spurring him to action. But he must have known that destroying his father's idols would make everyone mad, as it did. Destroying the images of Baal very nearly cost him his life. If not for his father's defense, it probably would have. Knowing the probable negative consequences for himself, Gideon trusted God and obeyed.

Imagine how much faith it would take to send 99% percent of your army home before going into battle. He started with 32,000 men and sent 31,700 home. That is the exact opposite of what common sense and good military strategy would require.

Imagine going into battle armed with only a trumpet, a torch, and a jar. Not one good offensive weapon. And imagine trying to convince 300 men that this strategy would work. How do you get men to trust a plan that is totally unproven? Never before employed in the history of the world.

Gideon had many reasons to distrust God and refuse to obey. But trust and obey he did, thereby receiving a place among the heroes of the faith.

Application

So what? What is our take-away from Gideon's most unusual calling and victory? Certainly we will never find ourselves in the same situation as he.

Here are three take-aways that may help us as we live our more usual lives.

1. Trust God's plan. Gideon was called to do great things employing very few resources and following dubious plan. A plan and resources that most would deem inappropriate and ineffective. Yet by obeying

God's plan and using the resources He specified, Gideon succeeded. Do you ever find yourself called to do much with little? We are called to follow God's plan to go into all the world and make disciples of every creature. What resources do we have? The Bible. Prayers of our brethren. Resources to go. A few helpers who will go with us. And God's help behind the scenes. If we recall how Gideon won his great victory with few soldiers and unusual helps, we may find courage to rise up and take the gospel to the world, winning souls for Him.

2. Seek reassurance when you need it. It is not wrong to need encouragement. In fact, it is quite natural to need to be reassured. If we ever find ourselves feeling doubtful or discouraged, remember Gideon. He repeatedly asked God for reassurance and got it. When we need it, we need only to ask God for encouragement as Gideon did. The worst thing we can do when we feel the need for reassurance is to either ignore the feeling or belittle ourselves for needing it, then do nothing to find it. Most often our reassurance will come from God's word or God's people. When in doubt, seek help from either or both. Ask, and it shall be given.

3. Finally, become a valiant warrior. The Bible doesn't say so, but I think that when the angel of the Lord called Gideon a valiant warrior he looked over each shoulder, in turn, then pointed to his chest and said, "Who? Me?". I don't think Gideon considered himself a valiant warrior. Would a valiant warrior be threshing grain in a wine vat? Likewise, we probably don't see ourselves as valiant warriors. But we can be, and we are called to be. Remember, it is not in ourselves that we find the strength or knowledge to become such. It is God in us, the hope of glory. It is being clothed in the Spirit. It is when we have our feet on the ground and our nose in the book that His strength becomes our strength, and we are empowered for our mission as Gideon was for his.

Gideon teaches us to trust and obey God's plan, to seek reassurance when we need it, and he inspires us to rise up and become valiant warriors in God's service.

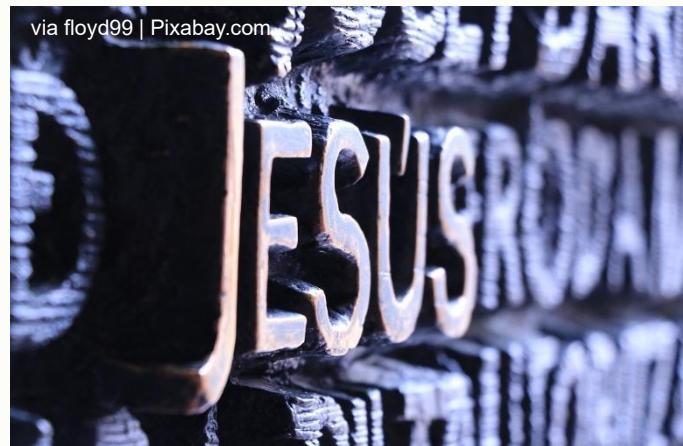
[1] Claude (AI assistant by Anthropic), personal communication, 12/5/2024

How Christ Relates to the Church: Our Mediator

BRIAN SULLIVAN | JORDAN, ONTARIO

The final words on the cross were “It is finished” (John 19:30). Indeed, very little remained for Jesus to accomplish on earth before His return to heaven. After the three days in the tomb (see Luke 24:21), He came forth a victor over death and the grave (Acts 2:27, 30-33; Revelation 1:18); was seen by witnesses (1 Corinthians 15:1-8); spent 40 days with the apostles further schooling them concerning the kingdom (Acts 1:1-3); before ascending on high (Acts 1:9-11) on His return to heaven. Jesus returned to heaven to be given “dominion and glory and a kingdom” (Daniel 7:13-14). As He stated in His prayer to the Heavenly Father before the cross, “I have glorified You on the earth, I have finished the work which you have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (John 17:4-5; NKJV). Yes, without a doubt the things associated with His role on earth in order to be our Savior (John 1:29); Redeemer (Ephesians 1:7); the Lamb of God (John 1:29) and the means of our Propitiation (1 John 4:10) had been lived, experienced, and fulfilled through Him. He did not return to heaven to sit in a comfortable recliner and await the day when He would return visibly in the skies to resurrect, redeem, and judge.

John 14:1-6 has much within it that appeals to a wide spectrum of Christ’s followers, each finding some element of its promises that helps them through the struggles of life and loss of loved ones. One part of that great promise that has always intrigued this writer is found in the words: “I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2, latter part of the verse). You may have reached a different conclusion and that is fine, but in my mind, it has suggested that the work



which Christ had begun by being physically present on this earth is now continuing in heaven on our behalf. Though there may be some linking between them, each of these roles is worthy of study and consideration. Think of Christ as His work continues in heaven on our behalf. After the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:1-3) He is both **King** (Daniel 7:13-14) and **High Priest** (Hebrews 6:20 and 7:1) on the same throne (Zechariah 6:12-13, one Person serving in two capacities, resulting in peace and harmony between the offices); and He is our **Mediator** (1 Timothy 2:5); and our **Advocate** (1 John 2:1-2). Though every life has days in which discouragement, trials and tribulations seem to overwhelm, when it looks like being defeated by the enemies of God is a real possibility, I can open my Bible and know with assurance that He who died to save me, is living to help me get through these challenges (over the mountains, through the dark valleys, across the raging rivers), and He is the same help of my younger years, my middle years, and now my aged years. He was there for the generations in my family before me and will be the same One in the unfolding of those generations that may yet be in our family of those who choose to follow and

serve God. Even when I have made the most pitiful mistakes, committed sin or engaged in shameful conduct I can come in repentance and with a contrite heart and know that He is there to help, to comfort and to encourage my return to faithfulness (Acts 8:20-24; 1 John 1:5-10).

God's plan is designed to lead me all the way home (John 14:6). It astounds me when I read the words "But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Romans 5:8-9, NKJV). Let's put our attention on Christ as our Mediator, as set forth in the Scriptures. Though there are many starting places, we have chosen to begin our consideration with Hebrews 8:6: "But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as **He is also the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises**" (NKJV).

One of the older gospel preachers in my early days of my preaching spoke of the seven-word curse of the Law found in Ezekiel 18:20: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (King James Version). Years later, I would graphically illustrate that principle by taking a brand new bright yellow painted pencil and purposely break it in half in front of a class of preachers in India. I would hold up the two parts that were fractured from one another and point out that it could not be mended, repaired, or fixed so that it would be like it was in the first place. So also, with the law of Moses, when you violated it, it condemned you. Christ was able to bring to mankind a message that would show how to return a man to God's favor and make him whole through His new covenant (see Hebrews 8:6 above; and Hebrews 10:5-10). The sacrifice He offered (Himself); the blood that He shed (Matthew 26:28) the new covenant that He brought in by His death (Hebrews 7:12) are all associated with the earthen visit of the Son of God. It was the Heavenly Father (through

Jeremiah the prophet) Who made known the new covenant that would be brought in by Christ (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-12). After showing the frustration and failure of the Law of Moses in Romans 7, Paul advanced to show the great blessings through Christ in the New Covenant in Romans 8. In fact, the very first two verses of that chapter state: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (NKJV). In and through the covenant that was brought to us by Christ (see Hebrews 10:5-10) we can find this glorious freedom from sin and the curse of the Law of Moses. And, then in verse 3, Paul stated: "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3, NKJV). The Book of Hebrews speaks often contrasting the sacrifices under the Law of Moses and the ultimate sacrifice of Christ's life and blood. At Hebrews 9:11-14, we are given background on the importance of Christ to our salvation and hope. "11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. 12 **Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.** 13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14 **how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?** (Hebrews 9:11-15; NKJV) Through Christ we can cleanse our "conscience from dead works to serve the living God". What about that person who faithfully attempted to serve God under the Old Covenant? Listen carefully to

what the Hebrew writer tells us in Hebrews 9:15: "And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15; NKJV). He is "**the Mediator of the new covenant**" and "by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance". As Mediator, Christ's sacrifice and shed blood was available to cleanse our sins and iniquities when we responded to the gospel (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15-16) and even more than that, He became the means by which the person who had tried to the best of their ability to live faithfully under Old Law (Law of Moses) in their day to find cleansing through His blood that would allow them to be counted among the saved and look forward to receiving "the promises of the eternal inheritance. We can conclude that if anyone of any time is going to be saved it will be through the willing sacrifice of Christ and the shedding of His blood and through that blood alone. That helps us understand why God was concerned about blood from the earliest days of man's existence, and why it always seemed to have a special value and place before God (see Genesis 9:4-6).

The work of a Mediator is that of bringing about peace where there was a fractured relationship. The ideal Mediator is someone who is familiar with both parties in a matter. We (mankind) by our own choice entered into sin and separation from God (Isaiah 59:1-2; John 8:31-36; James 1:12-16). Jesus as described before His earth-life in John 1:1-3 was completely acquainted with the Father's desires, hopes, and aspirations for man (Acts 17:27; Colossians 2:9). When He took on flesh and walked here on earth (John 1:14; Hebrews 10:5-10), He was acquainted with the challenges, temptations

(Hebrews 4:15) and matters that affect man. What better One could be a Mediator between the two parties than He? Before we close, we want to give a prime example of what He did and what resulted from His work as it is laid out in Ephesians 2:14-18: "**14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one**, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, **so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace**, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father" (NKJV). Picture if you will a simple hand-drawn cross. Above it put "GOD". On the upright pole write the words "The Law of Moses". On each side of the cross-arm write "Sin". Now at the bottom on one side below the crossbar put the word "Jews" and on the other side below the crossbar put "Gentiles". Now, let's see what a Mediator can do for us by His death and shed blood. He (Jesus) took away the Law that separated the Jews and Gentiles (Colossians 2:14-17), He through His sacrifice provided the means by which the sin that separated the Jews from God could be removed and forgiven, and by the same sacrifice provided the means by which the sin that separated the Gentile from God could be forgiven. The result for those who responded to the gospel was that they could be ONE, at peace with God, at peace with self, and at peace with their fellowman, rejoicing in the glorious freedom made possible by Christ. Thank you, Father, for such a glorious plan and for Jesus our Mediator. He who could resolve the conflict of the ages, can resolve whatever it is that comes between you and Your God if you will seek His help through prayer, and live in harmony with His will day-by-day.

Teaching Each Other In Song

KEITH SHARP | MOUNTAIN HOME, ARKANSAS

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Colossians 3:16)

I remember an old couple from over forty years ago. Neither could read a note of music. They sat about halfway back on the far left side in a congregation of over 200 members. He sang like a bull frog and as loud as one and added a unique little lift at the end of a note. She was shrill. A music teacher would shudder. I miss them. They were a godly, dedicated old couple who could teach and praise in song. I hope we can sing together in heaven.

One way all Christians regardless of education or talent can both teach each other and praise the Lord is in our congregational singing. Yes, we praise God in our singing. A hymn is “a song of praise to God” (Mounce. 1297). But the apostle specifically calls our worship in song “teaching.”

Surely we understand we are to teach the truth rather than error. The Lord plainly, forcefully condemns false teachers (2 Peter 2:1-2). We must speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). It is just as important that we teach the truth in our songs as it is in our sermons and classes.

Often songs become popular among brethren, not because they teach the truth, but because gifted, trained singers enjoy the music. They do little, if any, teaching of the truth.

It’s been years since I was in an audience which attempted “The New Song.” The congregation must have gifted singers for all four parts, it’s usually sung fast, and there are repetitions which require expert musical skill.



My memory is getting thrown off the carousel and trying to get back on when it came back around. Those who couldn’t read music were just left out. I don’t know that the song teaches any error; I don’t know that it teaches most people anything!

Some songs teach outright falsehood. “Jesus Is Coming Soon” teaches that the imminent appearance of the Lord is certain and even implies we have signs of that coming. Not even Jesus Himself knows the time of His coming (Mark 13:31-33), and the so-called “signs of the times” were fulfilled in the generation to which the Master spoke (Matthew 24:29-34).

I believe it was 1973 when I heard the late David Watts debate a premillennialist. The false teacher affirmed “Jesus will return in this generation.” Brother Watts masterfully answered his false doctrine.

When we sing “Jesus Is Coming Soon” we teach the very same error the false teacher defended in debate. False doctrine is false whether preached or sung.

On the other hand, we can be too picky about the wording of songs. Some people argue for poetic license. I prefer to say that poetry – and the

wording of songs and hymns is poetic – is filled with figures of speech. The hymn “I Know Whom I Have Believed” states in the last line, “Nor if I’ll walk the vale with Him or ‘meet Him in the air.’” The editors of the old song book Sacred Selections, changed this to “Nor will I walk the vale with Him.” Certainly we won’t literally walk a valley on earth with the Lord, but he’ll bring the departed saints with Him when He comes, and saints alive at the time will be changed and caught up to meet Him (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). But almost assuredly the writer of the hymn figuratively referenced going through the valley of death with the Lord (cf. Psalm 23:4).

But to be edified by such poetry in song, we must understand the figures. The song “Night with Ebon Pinion” has particularly complex figures.

*“Night with ebon pinion,
Brooded o’er the vale.”*

What in the world does that mean? “Ebon” abbreviates “ebony,” jet black. A “pinion” is a wing. Black winged night. Of course “vale” is valley.” So was it a dark night when the Master was betrayed? I don’t know physically, but spiritually it was the darkest of all nights! Was he in a valley? No, he was on the Mount of Olives. But he went through the valley of sorrow.

Brother Lowell Blasingame taught a series of classes in Grenada, Mississippi on the meaning of the songs we sing. Not a bad idea. Knowing Lowell, I’m sure the class was filled with Scripture.

Some of the old hymns we’ve known since childhood beautifully express divine truth and poignantly touch the hearts of those of us who have grown old. It’s been years since I joined with a congregation in singing “O Why Not Tonight.” That song brings back the pleasant memories of worshiping in little white frame

meeting houses on gravel roads in rural Arkansas.

But there are also excellent newer songs that we would do well to learn, since they too express profound, scriptural truths. “Thank You, Lord, For Homes” is an excellent sermon in song on the family as God ordained it. “Abiding Things” touchingly teaches the essence of First Corinthians 13:13. The lyrics of both songs were written by the late Huey Hartsell, and the music of both was by the late R.J. Stevens, two men who served their generation well all the way to the end.

Our song service when we assemble to worship is of sufficient importance that the last thing the Master did before He went to the garden to be betrayed was to sing a hymn with His disciples (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26).

“Do All in the Name of the Lord” was written in 1916 by Austin Taylor of Uvalde, Texas (my mother’s birth place and birth year). Of course it’s based on Colossians 3:17. Brother Taylor was leading singing for Foy E. Wallace, Sr., who preached a sermon based on Colossians 3:17. There was no song at the time to express the fundamental truth of that passage. Brother Wallace asked Brother Taylor to write such a song, and thus we have “Do All in the Name of the Lord.”

When my dad passed away in 1987, we had congregational singing at his funeral. The only request I made was that we sing, “Do All in the Name of the Lord.” It captured the essence of my dad’s life as a preacher and defender of truth, and it faithfully, poetically expounds Colossians 3:17.

Teach one another in songs, hymns, and spiritual songs. Teach each other the truth.

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Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words.

Becoming Like Jesus: Obedience

LEE EDGAR ELKINS | JACKSONVILLE, ARKANSAS

Without even realizing it, most people would condemn Jesus because of what he believed and practiced. This is a serious charge here. How can I make such a statement about what others believe? It is a logical conclusion to the things that they believe and say, that's how. In our article, we are going to be considering the realities of Jesus and His obedience. Not only would most people condemn Jesus, but many would verbally assault Him with "that is works-based salvation!" or "You are not teaching grace!" Allow me to state the obvious now. We cannot separate the realities of faith from obedience. Faith consists of belief, trust, and obedience (Hebrews 11:6).

Jesus is the ideal model for obedience within our faith. Obedience is a cornerstone of the Christian faith, and no one exemplified this virtue more perfectly than Jesus Himself. His life and actions serve as the ultimate model for believers, demonstrating what it means to live in full submission to God's will. I hope that this article will help us explore the life of Christ examining His teachings, actions, and sacrifice to illustrate the reality of what true faith looks like and what it consists of.

While Jesus is definitely our primary focus in this article, I believe it would be irresponsible to not include additional examples as well. It is important for us to understand that there is a centralized theme regarding faith and obedience that goes all the way back to Adam and Eve in the garden, Moses being given the law and given to Israel, and many other examples of God's people being called to live faithful, obedient lives. Throughout much of scripture, disobedience leads man to being separated from God. Obedience doesn't need to be viewed in some shallow sense of "do this



to avoid punishment". This certainly was not the driving force behind Jesus being faithful and obedient to God the Father. Jesus was willing to submit Himself to the Father because this was and is God's will for man (John 4:34, John 6:38). He obeyed God from the heart. Every fiber of His being was spent in service to God.

Throughout the scriptures, the concept of obedience includes not just adherence to law but also a heartfelt submission to God's will. Jesus Himself summed up the law and the prophets with the command to love God and love one's neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40), which inherently requires a spirit of obedience. It is unnecessary to think that obedience alone is all that is required. If we avail ourselves to water baptism and never repent of our sins, what have we done? If we are baptized in water and yet do not love God or our neighbor, what have we done?

I believe it is important for us to establish ourselves on a good foundation and this ultimately begins in the early stages of our lives. From an early age, Jesus demonstrates obedience to His parents and God (Luke 2:41-

52). In this instance, Jesus stays behind in the Temple to engage the teachers and as noted, he astonishes them with His understanding. The response that Jesus gives His parents when they expressed concern because they didn't realize he stayed behind was "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" What a sense of awareness to have at this early age and for Him to prioritize and align His will with the Father's will, even over familial expectations.

While recognizing that His will is to align with the Father's will, Jesus remained obedient to His earthly parents. He returned to Nazareth and was subject to them. Many of us would probably wrestle with this kind of decision as He recognized that He must obey both, God and human authorities.

Coming to the thought around the baptism of Jesus, one must be careful that we do not assume something that is not within the text. Jesus was not baptized for the same reason we are baptized. Jesus was sinless and not in need of repentance. Jesus was baptized to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). This was an act of obedience, but in no way for the same reason why we are baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Through Jesus' baptism, we see him submit to God and the instance when the Holy Spirit falls upon Him (Matthew 3:16, Luke 3:21-22).

Immediately after being baptized, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1). I can't help but think that this is another instance that we have in the life of Jesus where there is a test of His obedience. Unlike Adam in the garden and many others who succumbed to temptations, Jesus resisted the devil's allurements. Each temptation was met with scripture, revealing Jesus' knowledge and commitment to the word of God. "It is written," (Matthew 4:4, 4:7, 4:10) sufficed and emphasized the importance of scripture. Jesus demonstrated loyalty to God and never deviated

from His mission of service to the Father and to others.

Throughout the life of Jesus, we see His faith and obedience at work. The times that He would pray, the miracles, teachings, and interactions were always in alignment with God's will. He never sought to do His own or to seek His own. He said that He came to serve, not to be served (Matthew 20:28). Think about His interactions with others. Jesus always displayed the true sense of humility and servanthood. When He washed the disciples' feet, he set an example of serving and teaching them to do the same thing (John 13:5-17). The Lord is stooping down to wash the feet of others. What act of humility! What a beautiful demonstration of love for one another! We are commanded to love one another and the only way this gets accomplished fully is if we have this same sense of serving others selflessly.

We cannot overlook the garden of Gethsemane. This has to be one of the most profound displays of obedience in all of scripture. The reality of His crucifixion now stares at Him and must pierce through every fiber of His being. Jesus knows, recognizes, and welcomes the coming suffering that is upon Him. "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." (Matthew 26:39) We need to see this moment for what it really is. This encapsulates the essence of obedience. Jesus submitted to God's will even when it involved an immense amount of personal suffering. This doesn't do away with communication and seeking honest communication. Jesus expresses plainly His current distress and desire for the suffering to be removed – that does not negate obedience. "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done." (Matthew 26:42). He submits to God, prioritizing it over His own desires.

Jesus crucified – willingly laying down His life in obedience to the Father's plan for the salvation of all who obey Him (Philippians 2:8, Hebrews 5:8-9). Many would describe this to be the ultimate act

of obedience, but I want to challenge you about how we may often describe this. I wouldn't describe it in that manner, "the ultimate act of obedience." Jesus willingly sacrificed His life – Amen! Think about all the other instances that we considered in this article. Jesus willingly went to the garden, willingly washed His disciples' feet, willingly faced temptations, willingly baptized to fulfill all righteousness, willingly went back to Nazareth with His parents, and willingly remained at the temple to engage the teachers there. We do not need to minimize all these other instances of obedience within the life of Christ. His sacrifice and resurrection are the culminating work that further accomplished the will of God. Every instance of obedience in the life of Jesus accomplished God's will and we need not to dismiss or overlook them. These are the things

that assure us as believers of our salvation and eternal life. The obedience of Jesus Christ serves as a powerful model for us as believers.

From the early years to His resurrection, Jesus proves the necessity of obedience within our faith. His life clearly demonstrates the importance of living in complete submission to God. As believers in Christ, we too, are called to live our lives in obedience. By seeking to align ourselves with God's will, through study and application of scripture, we will cultivate hearts of love, embracing the realities of being servants, and persevering through hardships that may come our way – we can show people how to truly glorify God and further His kingdom through our obedience to Jesus – the author and perfecter of faith (Hebrews 12:2).

He Who Wins Souls Is Wise

KEN WELIEVER | BEVERLY HILLS, FLORIDA

In the comic strip “Peanuts,” Lucy tells her brother, Linus, that she has “converted” a school classmate to her way of thinking religiously. Linus is surprised, especially knowing how Lucy operates.

“How did you do it?” Linus asked.

“I told him everything I believe and asked him if he believed it, too.” Lucy explained. “Then when we came to something he didn’t see my way, I just hit him over the head with my lunch box until he believed it!”

I suppose we’ve all witnessed that kind of evangelism. Oh, not literally hitting someone over the head with a lunch box, or anything else. But evangelism that is aggressive. Belligerent. And even insulting.

In Proverbs 11:30 the wise man reminds us that “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who wins souls is wise.”

This verse speaks to the influence of a godly man. His character, charity, ministry, piety, and heavenly focus are like the good fruit of a tree. He supplies and contributes to the spiritual growth and development of those around him. He touches the lives of others both in word and in deed.

There is a phrase used today called “Lifestyle Evangelism,” which was popularized by author Joseph Aldrich in a book with the same title. Lifestyle evangelism is being the salt of the earth and the light of the world. When we bear the fruit of righteousness, we are showing the world who Jesus is and what it means to be his disciple.

Aldrich asks, “What kind of person do we want to deploy into the world?” He answers with, “A learning, fellowshipping, worshiping, serving



person.” Furthermore, Aldrich adds that for this person “Evangelism...is not a Tuesday night event; he is on duty twenty-four hours a day. His whole life is a living and willing sacrifice, a sweet-smelling savor to God and men.”

In a world that says we ought to keep our faith private, God wants us to take the saving Gospel of Christ into all the world (Mark 16:15-16). We should not be ashamed of the gospel, or Jesus Christ. When first century Christians were persecuted they did not recoil or recant, but went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts 8:4).

However, there is a right way to seek converts. And a wrong way. The apostle Paul gives this inspired advice that would improve our evangelistic efforts and help us win souls.

“Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.” (Colossians 4:5-6, NASU)

In these two verses there are four things we can do to be more effective in winning souls.

(1) Exercise wisdom.

The wise Christian seeks to win souls, but he realizes wisdom must be employed in order to be successful. Knowledge is obviously important in teaching others about Christ, but effective outreach also requires wisdom. Sound judgment. Prudence. Understanding.

Wisdom is an application of our knowledge. But not just a knowledge of the Word itself, but insight into human nature, people needs, and the techniques and approaches best suited to reach each individual. Wisdom seeks to understand others. Their point of view. Background. Religious experiences. Spiritual problems. And biblical understanding.

(2) Be Aware of Opportunities.

There are many seekers in this world today. Hurting souls. Depressed souls. Lost souls. They are searching for something, but not sure what it is. Many are trying to find fulfillment and purpose through material means. Possessions, popularity, pleasure, and power offer the promise of a successful life. Yet, many who have achieve these goals still feel empty on the inside.

Christians have the opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus. And to lead people into a spiritual relationship that will change their lives and bless them eternally.

We need to seek opportunities to share our faith. See the opportunities when they present themselves. And then seize the opportunities that we see. Look around. There may be opportunities in your neighborhood, at work, in your social circle, in your family, with those whom you do business, or even a casual, random encounter with a stranger. Jesus told the apostles to open their eyes because the field were white unto harvest (John 4:34-45). That's good advice today.

(3) Employ gracious speech.

Hypercritical, unkind language does not win people to Christ. While we are commanded to "speak the truth" to those who need to hear it, the Bible says to do it in the spirit of love. (Ephesians 4:16).

I can contend for the faith without being contentious. I can disagree without displaying a disagreeable spirit. I can affirm the truth without being obnoxious. I can differ without being difficult. And I can persuade without being pushy.

Jeff Strite tells a true story that actually happened in a church years ago. The local preacher had been preaching on the importance of evangelism. In the congregation was a young man who was mentally challenged who took these lessons to heart. Consequently, he began telling everyone who would listen about Jesus and asking if they wanted to become a Christian.

One Sunday a man visited who really didn't want to be there. He was invited by a family who were members. He was a skeptic. But attended just to be polite.

At one point, the young man approached the visitor and asked, "Do you want to be a Christian?"

"NO!" the man exclaimed.

The boy looked at the skeptic for a moment and then responded:

"Well, then you can go to hell."

And then he turned and walked away.

While that story sounds extreme, it does illustrate the wrong way to evangelize. Rude, crude, judgmental, and condensing language is not a wise way to win souls.

(4) Respond instead of reacting to others.

When I react to what someone with whom I disagree, it is almost always negative. Without forethought, it is too easy to spout off and hurt another's feelings. Antagonize them. Or erect a

barrier that can never be eradicated.

Responding wisely takes work, forethought, and really listening to others. A Barna survey posted on their website revealed there is “a stark gap between who non-Christians want to talk to about faith and the Christians they actually know.”

As you wade through the statistics and data the research basically says that Christians are not good listeners. Too often we are so focused on sharing “our story” that we don’t listen to “their story.”

Since “our story” is the Good News of the Gospel about God’s saving Grace, it is easy to excitedly short cut the process. To talk before we listen. To quote Bible verses prior to really developing a relationship. To try to bring the prospect to Christ before we learn where he or she is in life.

Several years ago in an Outreach Magazine article, a non-Christian made this observation about those who tried to convert her. “I’d say 75% of these people don’t really care who I am. They just want to build up their church or something. They don’t even ask me what my name is.”

In the Barna survey, 50 percent of non-Christians and unfaithful Christian respondents said they wanted to dialogue with someone who “does not force a conclusion.” However, only 26 percent said that applied to practicing Christians they knew.

When you study the one on one methods of Jesus, he asked questions. He listened. He

helped the prospect see where they were, and then gently led them to see where they needed to be. A wonderful example is found in Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4.

A wise soul winner really cares about the lost, listens to them, seeks to understand, and patiently guides them to a knowledge of the saving Truth about Jesus. People need to see an authenticity in your life. To quote Aldrich again, “you must be the Good News before to share the Good News.

“He who wins souls is wise.” Are you wise?

BIO – Ken Weliever has been preaching for over 50 years. He, and his wife Norma Jean of 56 years have lived in 6 different states, doing local work with 9 different congregations. Although Ken resigned from fulltime local work in June 2018, he has not retired from preaching, teaching, and writing. He and Norma continue to travel, hold meetings, work with churches in Ontario, Canada, in the summer, and be used to minister as opportunities are offered. When at home, he preaches most Sundays for the West Citrus church in Crystal River, Florida.

The Weliever family have two grown children—Kenny Jr. and Rachél Thompson. They are the proud grandparents of two grandsons, Roy and Miles, and two granddaughters, Katherine and Fern. Ken publishes a daily devotional blog. You can read his daily posts and contact him at www.ThePreachersWord.com Email him at preacherman@weliever.net

Life in Transition from the First to the Second Covenant

LARRY FULLER | BANCROFT, ONTARIO

INTRODUCTION

Paul effectively argued against Israelites who still disbelieved in Christ, insisting incorrectly they maintain Judaism with its Law of Moses. Romans 7:12-25, Paul puts forth a personal example as an Israelite under the old covenant that was very relatable. First, he recognized the law of Moses was in fact spiritual, holy and good. He had a great desire to do what he knew was right and good, yet the worldliness he hated, he did! Creating an uncontrollable “tug of war” within his members leading to a wretched feeling from which seemingly there was no remedy.

There certainly was no remedy within the law of Moses in terms of complete forgiveness. Oh, the futility and exasperation of it all! Fellow Israelites could relate to Paul’s dilemma put forth; they too were restrained under sin with no forgiveness available in the law of Moses. Who will save this wretched man, Saul? Who could similarly save fellow Israelites? Christ! Their faith pointed to fulfillment and salvation in no other than Christ.

Knowing Paul through the lens of his stalwart character presented in the new covenant under Christ, it is hard to imagine Paul at one time struggling in the old, wanting to do right but eventually succumbing! An example of his life in Christ, is when he called the Ephesian elders to Miletus in Acts 20:18, “you know from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you”. Such a statement paints a far different picture than this wretched man of Romans 7:24! It exudes strength, integrity, and stalwart example!

This leads me to my thought, if the Old Testament Law was holy and good, and Paul



frequently succumbed to sin to be self-professed as wretched, what is totally different in Christ and the law of it, that would make such a dramatic difference? May we explore some reasons:

TOTAL RELEASE FROM BONDAGE OF SIN

The Old Testament law was holy and good, if one kept it perfectly. Only trouble was, only one did, Christ. When sin occurred in the old there was no forgiveness. Sins were “remembered”, Hebrews 8:12. Remembered by God, and remembered by the offender to seriously consider and grapple with. In such reflection of sin, as the High Priest intervened annually with the blood of bulls and goats, could the condemnation of sin not grow ever more burdensome; the possibility of added cumulative pressure; further weakening the mood and state of mind to a level of wretchedness; perhaps affording less inclination to strive against sin?

Conversely in Romans 8:1-2, a dramatic difference existed, for “there is no condemnation for those in Christ, as He had come in the likeness of sinful flesh” (such as the dust man Adam and our ensuing sinfulness). Although tempted in all points like us, yet without sin, He

paid the penalty of our sin, and through His shed blood every sin could be washed away, enabling us to stand un-condemned. Quite an exhilarating difference between the first and second! Romans 3:26, through the righteousness of Christ, God is both just and justifier to the one who has faith in Christ Jesus. No such avenue existed in the Mosaic law, Acts 13:39.

In Romans 6:6, in the process of baptism symbolized by Christ's death, burial and resurrection, our old man of sin is "crucified" with Him. Again, a tremendous advantage over the old covenant, as nowhere in the old covenant is the old man of sin "crucified". We are raised a new creature, affording us a new and "living" way, Hebrews 10:20. Notice the terminology "living" way, as compared to the ministry of death. Such a new and living way offered a newfound liberty and joy and was welcomed heartily by Paul! Who would not attempt to live wholeheartedly by the perfect law of liberty?

AN ADVANTAGE TO UTILIZE

The Israelites had the Old Testament law, an advantage over gentiles not having such, who at the very best had only an unwritten law unto themselves, ruled only by conscience knowing very basic right and wrong. The Israelite written Old Testament law expanded greatly that knowledge base. For example, Paul did not know the full extent of coveting until Old Testament law revealed it, Romans 7:7. For Paul, such knowledge brought an increase in what he knew to be sinful, and with it, the resulting condemnation. One might think, doesn't sound like an advantage?

However, the Old Testament law preserved the lineage of a faithful remnant until Christ was born, (Galatians 3:19), and it also served as a tutor to bring them to faith in Christ. A tutor increases the learning curve of a student, affording a better opportunity, a smoother route

to transition. For example, they were already accustomed to being God's covenant people and observing a law within it. In fact, when extended families of Israelites were converted, the possibility existed already for elders meeting qualifications that could be appointed in every Church! So, Mosaic law did have an advantage after all, even though for a time being it could make you feel wretched.

Transitioning to the second and better covenant should have been a slam dunk. They knew the many prophesies about the Messiah coming, had miracles to attest to Christ being that Messiah, and even a prophet in the spirit and power of Elijah, whom they regarded as a prophet, to testify of Him and prepare His way. In Luke 1:17, John was to "turn hearts, make people wise, to make a people prepared for the Lord. Did the Israelites indeed have an advantage, yes in every way! Advantage to life in Christ!

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

John 1:17 says, "for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth comes by Jesus Christ." There was grace and truth in the law of Moses, albeit in a more limited way as necessary for His first covenant people. However, the fullness of grace, truth and life was made manifest in Christ! The first covenant had a "colder beginning", starting with necessity to be born into it, circumcised fleshly the eighth day as an outward symbol of belonging to it, and then being told to know God. It was imperfect compared to a purposeful personal choice to be circumcised of heart. Israelites were born physically the first time, but now would be "born again" spiritually. In retrospect, that aspect of re-birth is truly significant. Peter describes it as a "season of refreshing", Acts 3:19.

Aside from this refreshing state of mind, was a marked change from the letter of the law itself, or ministry of death, to what is known as in Romans 8:2, "the law of the Spirit of life in

Christ Jesus". The difference was so great that Paul explains in Galatians 2:20, "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God". Could Paul make that claim in the Law of Moses?

A biblical definition of justification by Britannica: the act by which God moves a willing person from a state of sin or injustice to a state of grace or justice. Galatians 2:16, "no flesh shall be justified by the works of the law (old), and repeated in Acts 13:39, "you could not be justified by the law of Moses". Per 2 Timothy 1:10, Christ abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel! Christ is the light of life of men, although we bear the image of the dust man with all its futility, we can bear the image of the Heavenly Man. Yes, there were Old Testament worthies highlighted in Hebrews 11, "they obtained a good testimony by faith, but did not receive the promise." But God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us", (Hebrews 11:39-40).

The Israelites seemed so proud of their physical genealogy traced back to Abraham, but it means little now. The olive tree of ancestry could have wild branches grafted in (Gentiles) and natural branches (Israelites) grafted out, depending on one's obedience to the gospel. The covenant given 430 years later cannot annul the promise given to Abraham, (Galatians 3:17) and that promise was fulfilled in Christ, and thus we become Abraham's seed who put Christ on (Galatians 3:29), whether Jew or Gentile. Could they not see the old covenant and law they so desperately clung to as only a part of the bigger picture?

STRUGGLE DOES NOT RESUME AUTOMATICALLY

Galatians 5:17 specifies, "the flesh lusts against the Spirit, so that you do not what you wish". This scripture on its own, suggests an

automatic continual struggle still exists in the new, and with it the same level of wretched state Paul declares in the old. But where in the New Testament is one considered as rendered wretched automatically? Yes, there can be a struggle, but only if you personally allow the flesh to reign, as opposed to being led by the Spirit. The old man of sin was crucified with Christ, not only the very act, but also the propensities and thought processes toward it. The possibility exists to resurrect this old man of sin from the waters of baptism. In that instance, the choice between life in Christ or the flesh has been sadly realized. Romans 6:12 therefore, do not let sin reign, that you should obey its lusts. We do have a choice! If we allow it, the flesh will overpower the Spirit, like the thorny soil allowed to choke out the word. We can choose to have either a "thorny heart" or a "good heart". Galatians 5:16 would further indicate "I say then, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of flesh. Choosing to be led by the flesh bears evident lusts such as in 19-21. But in comparison, to be led by the Spirit, we bear the fruit of it in vs 22-23 which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness. The "good heart" bears fruit for God some thirty to ninety-fold. Which will you choose?

The covenant of Christ is glorious, where the first was not perfect and vanished away. Jesus is known as the light of the life of men; He is the bright and morning star able to dawn in our hearts; He is the living manna which we imbibe fully; a river of water of life flowing from our hearts. It inspires a confident heart that was not available in the old. We are quickened from the dead, made alive to spiritually to bear the image of Christ, raised to sit with Him in heavenly places, Ephesians 2:5-6.

CONCLUSION

We tend to see things filtered through the new covenant we live in. Do we then really appreciate, how Paul transitioned from the

LIFE IN TRANSITION FROM THE FIRST TO THE SECOND COVENANT | LARRY FULLER

colder letter of the law to life in Christ? From the wretched man to the Spirit of life? Do we understand the plight of the Gentiles, hopelessly lost before The Christ and their excited grasp of life after? Concerning the lands of Zebulun, Naphtali, Galilee in Matthew 4:16-18, “they have seen a great light, a light has

dawned in the region of shadow and depth, and Jesus preached, repent for the kingdom is at hand”! Are we excited too, about being “born again” ourselves, to live according to the light of life of man, Christ? If we truly are, will we choose to live by the Spirit, rather than let sin reign?

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APRIL 2025 PREVIEW

EXPOSITORY ARTICLE

Chadwick Brewer will write our next article in the Hall of Faith series from Hebrews 11, focused on the faith of Barak.

CHURCH ARTICLE

Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba will give us the opening article for a new series looking at the seven churches of Asia. His work will focus upon the church at Ephesus.

WORSHIP ARTICLE

Shawn Chancellor will dig into the significance of Jesus being our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7).

APPLICATION ARTICLE

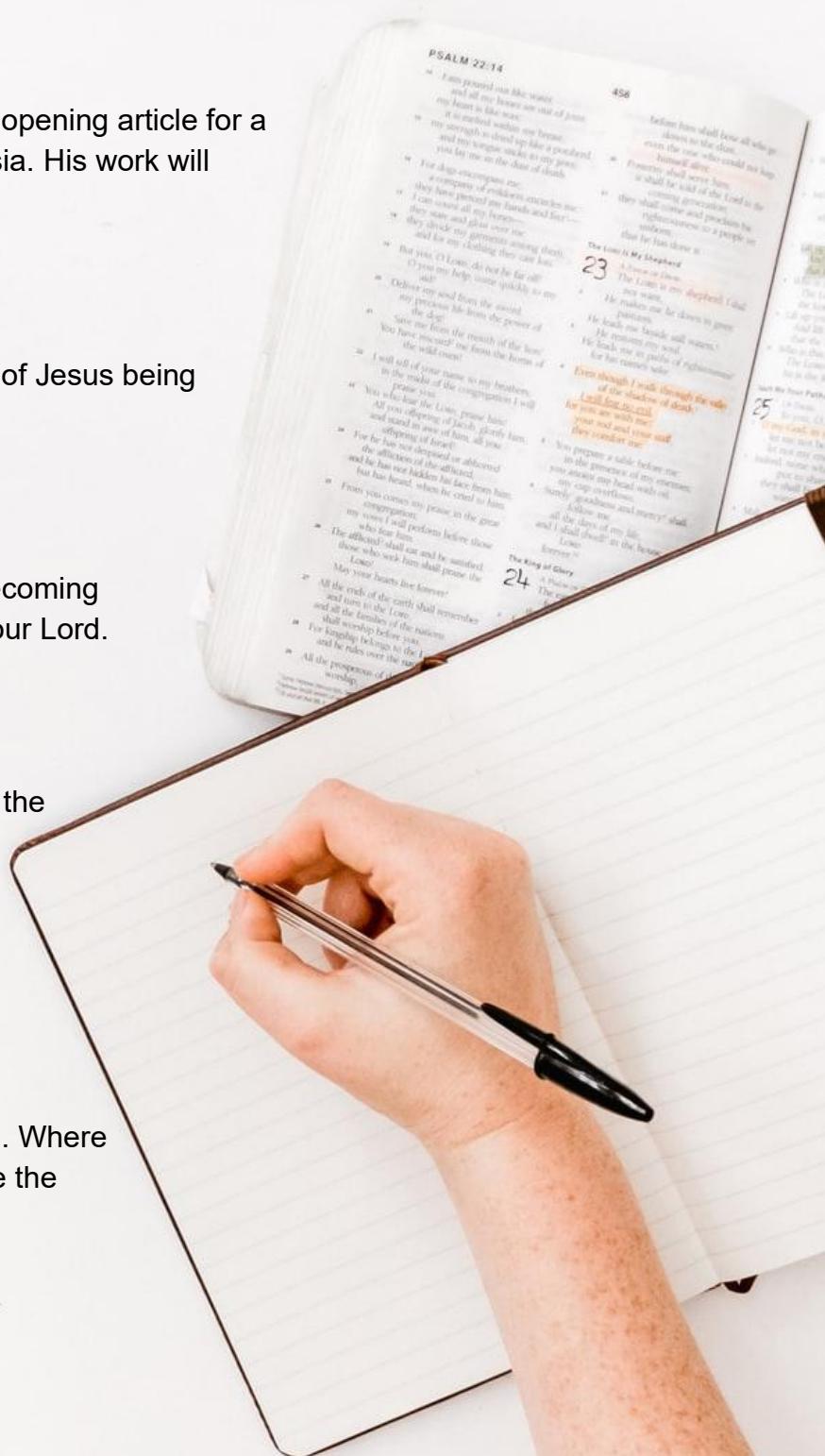
Don McClain will pen our next article in the “Becoming Like Jesus” series focused on the patience of our Lord.

EVANGELISM ARTICLE

Jim Mickells will use Mark 6:34 to speak about the Lord’s compassion which led Him to teach the people, and draw lessons for us as we seek to teach the gospel to the lost.

BEYOND THE BASICS ARTICLE

William Stewart will consider the letter to the Laodiceans mentioned by Paul in Colossians 4. Where is the letter? Do we have it? Is it lost? What are the implications of such.



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