

Expository Files

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Front Page 16.11 ~ By Warren E. Berkley

Preventive Teaching & Remedial Teaching

As you read through the Bible you encounter both **preventive teaching** and **remedial teaching**. The Bible tells us what to do once we discover we are guilty of sin: repentance and reliance on the forgiveness offered by God through Christ. That is remedial, teaching you what to do *after* you have sinned.

There is also preventive teaching; that is, instruction from God you take in, that builds and maintains your character in such a way, ***as you adhere to that instruction and keep your heart right with God, it keeps you from sin!***

There is considerable discussion in the news today about health care. It has made us well aware of the value of prevention vs. remedial health care, though both are necessary. Prevention simply means *taking care of ourselves with such good discipline, all other things being equal, we don't get sick; or we don't get sick as much*. We work every day on maintaining good health.

Remedial medicine means ***after*** you get sick, health professions are called in to diagnose, manage and cure if possible. And sometimes as

health care professionals engage in remedial medicine, they will say something like: “We wish we had caught this earlier.”

I would think most of us are convinced **prevention is preferred**. I would rather not get sick. If I get sick, I certainly want a remedy. But my preference is to become engaged in wise measures of prevention. Carry this over into spiritual life.

It should be our aim to avoid sin! The idea of doing little or nothing about spiritual discipline, and then when you sin – rush into prayer and get forgiveness, is not an honorable plan! This is very popular but not honorable. It is offensive to God – *when people never really commit themselves to Him . . . they enjoy their sin, but then “go to church,” “take the Lord’s Supper,” or “say a little prayer,” thinking they are clear now . . . but go right back into their sin.*

It is living in opposition to God most of the time, but then expecting Him to provide the remedy when they have an occasional spiritual or emotional moment.

Please understand, if and when you sin, you **should react** by seeking God’s forgiveness, accompanied by genuine repentance. **But there must be a vigorous intention to prevent sin in your life.** Prevention must be a priority. Building your spiritual discipline and growing in the activity of your faith – **is absolutely essential, to be a faithful child of God.**

Especially to Christians I am going to argue → **Don’t just wait for sin to happen . . . do something now to prevent it.** Now read Psalm 119 and mark out in your Bible or list on paper – preventive strategies to avoid sin!

God's Work Acknowledged – Man's Sin Confessed

The Background

Nehemiah has led the people of Israel back to their homeland after their exile and he has directed them in one of the most incredible building projects in history. The gates were secured and the walls put back in place with such impressive speed, the surrounding nations and enemies “were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of” their God (Neh. 6:16). A transition of government was enacted (Neh. 7:1-4), and a list (census with emphasis on genealogy) was reviewed and registered (Neh. 7:5-64). Soon after the resettlement, an assembly was called for one purpose: to read God's law and put His statues back in place in their individual and collective lives (Neh. 8). Then it was time for...

The Confession

The people assembled in customary apparel for grieving. They “stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of their Lord their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the Lord their God,” (9:1-3). Genuine confession of sin always comes from a heart that respects God and wants to honor Him. So as their confession of sin commenced, there is this poignant statement of God, supremely identified by His work:

Neh. 9:6-15

"You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.

You are the LORD, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham.

You found his heart faithful before you, and made with him the covenant to give to his offspring the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite. And you have kept your promise, for you are righteous.

"And you saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt and heard their cry at the Red Sea,

and performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants and all the people of his land, for you knew that they acted arrogantly against our fathers. And you made a name for yourself, as it is to this day.

And you divided the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on dry land, and you cast their pursuers into the depths, as a stone into mighty waters.

By a pillar of cloud you led them in the day, and by a pillar of fire in the night to light for them the way in which they should go.

You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven and gave them right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments,

and you made known to them your holy Sabbath and commanded them commandments and statutes and a law by Moses your servant.

You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger and brought water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and you told them to go in to possess the land that you had sworn to give them.

As the people addressed their confession of sin to God, they expressed His praise in terms of His perfect work of creation, preservation and construction (Neh. 9:6-15).

God's Work of Creation: "You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them..." This was their confidence in the basic truth that *we did not create ourselves, nor did we just appear or evolve.* "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host," (Psa. 33:6), and so "let all the earth fear the Lord," (Psa. 33:8).

God's Work of Preservation: "...and you preserve all of them." The perfect power of the Creator is witnessed not just in His initial act of

creating, but also His continual act of sustaining what He made. The Creator sustains us moment by moment and keeps the universe running. The orderliness of the present universe is not an accident. And this truth manifest God's goodness just as His creative work.

God's Work of Construction: He called Abraham, choose his offspring and constructed a nation for His purposes, that would find fulfillment long after the nation's existence! God had a plan, formed in His perfect mind before creation. He created everything, called Abraham and constructed a nation through which His plan would be carried out.

Given this wonderful work of Almighty God, the response is appalling!

Neh 9:16-33

"But they and our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments.

They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them.

Even when they had made for themselves a golden calf and said, 'This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,' and had committed great blasphemies,

you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go.

You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst.

Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.

"And you gave them kingdoms and peoples and allotted to them every corner. So they took possession of the land of Sihon king of Heshbon and the land of Og king of Bashan.

You multiplied their children as the stars of heaven, and you brought them into the land that you had told their fathers to enter and possess.

So the descendants went in and possessed the land, and you subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gave them into their hand, with their kings and the peoples of the land, that they might do with them as they would.

And they captured fortified cities and a rich land, and took possession of houses full of all good things, cisterns already hewn, vineyards, olive orchards and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and became fat and delighted themselves in your great goodness.

"Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their back and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies.

Therefore you gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. And in the time of their suffering they cried out to you and you heard them from heaven, and according to your great mercies you gave them saviors who saved them from the hand of their enemies.

But after they had rest they did evil again before you, and you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so that they had dominion over them. Yet when they turned and cried to you, you heard from heaven, and many times you delivered them according to your mercies.

And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which if a person does them, he shall live by them, and they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey.

Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.

Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

"Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love, let not all the hardship seem little to you that has come upon us, upon our kings, our princes, our

priests, our prophets, our fathers, and all your people, since the time of the kings of Assyria until this day.

Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly.

God created, sustained, constructed, chose, gave, performed, led, came down, delivered, did not forsake them, warned them, fed them, multiplied them, defeated their enemies . . . on and on the story goes of His goodness. “Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against Him (26),” showing Himself to be “a gracious and merciful God,” (31). And thus their confession of sin was justified. (See also Psalm 78 and Ezra 9).

We Learn?

The apostle Paul nailed this down in Romans 2:4. **“Or, do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”** It is our deeply held belief in God’s goodness that makes our sin hurt so much. To whatever extent we appreciate God’s goodness, to that extent our sin leads to shame and confession (see Ezra 9:6). The reason for all genuine repentance and confession is, the personal, all-powerful, perfectly good God who loves us. He is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance,” and so He sent His Son that we might have a good life and an even better eternity.

If you want a explicit and honest view of the guilt of your sin . . . if you desire greater discipline to prevent sin . . . If you seek to help others see sin and come out of it – Spend more time getting acquainted with God and mediate more on His goodness and mercy. Pray for wisdom and strength and let not one sin go without full confession and repentance. The goodness of God, well considered, is the key here.

Beware of False Teachers

(Eph. 4:14,15)

Gary Henry

Few things, if any, contribute to lifelong faithfulness more than the combination of *discernment* (the ability to distinguish truth from untruth, based on a study of God's word) and *conviction* (the willingness to take a stand for the truth once it has been discerned). Stability in the truthful teaching of God's word is not only a mark of Christian maturity, the lack of it makes new converts vulnerable to the loss of their salvation. Paul wasn't wasting words when he said that "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head -- Christ" (Eph. 4:14,15).

Many modern thinkers hold to the concept that "truth" is totally subjective, and that the more mature a person is, the less dogmatic he will be about anything. But the New Testament view of maturity is different. Solid, stable truth is held up as a worthy goal, and Christians are urged to get past the stage as quickly as possible where they're apt to be blown back and forth by "every wind of doctrine." We're not to be stubborn, of course. But neither are we to be gullible. Although we're to hold our convictions gently and humbly, the fact remains that we are to *hold* them. And as time goes by, we're to become more skilled at seeing through deception. We can't acquire perfect knowledge, but we certainly can grow to "full age" and be among those "who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hb. 5:14). In short, we can *learn to discern* -- and we're in danger if we don't.

All those who have obeyed the gospel need to be reminded that the devil's power to *destroy* people lies in his ability to *deceive* them, leading them away from the truth upon which their salvation depends (Jn. 8:31,32; 2 Cor. 11:1-4). His weapon has always been the lie (Jn. 8:44), and it is still the horrible means by which he defrauds people of their hope (Col. 2:8,18). For this obvious reason, the New Testament warns against what the devil can do. In particular, it warns against what he

can do through those human teachers who further his program by being *false* teachers. Let's look at some of these warnings.

(1) Jesus taught, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits" (Mt. 7:15,16).

(2) When Paul met with the Ephesian elders for the last time, he said, "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears" (Ac. 20:29-31).

(3) Paul said that he was afraid that some of the Corinthians might be misled. "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).

(4) To the Galatians, Paul expressed grave concern. "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6,7). "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?" (Gal. 3:1).

(5) Occasionally, Paul warned against specific false teachers. "Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words" (Phil. 4:14,15).

(6) The Second Epistle of Peter was written primarily to warn its readers about false teachers. A detailed study of this letter would in itself be an education in the importance of maintaining God's teaching and rejecting the devil's. For our purposes here, we can only mention one or two of Peter's points. In 2:1,2, he writes that "there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift

destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed." In 3:17,18, he concludes by saying, "You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen."

(7) In Revelation, Christ rebuked the church in Pergamos for their indifference toward the false teachers in their midst: "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam . . . you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate" (Rev. 2:14,15).

In numerous other passages, we hear of things like "false brethren" (Gal. 2:4), "false apostles" (2 Cor. 11:13,14), "false prophets" (Mt. 24:11), and even "false christs" (Mk. 13:22). Wherever we go in the Bible, we're confronted with this reality: *the existence of any true thing is always accompanied by the devilish possibility that it will be counterfeited*. Perhaps the Psalmist summed it all up long ago: "Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate *every false way*" (Psa. 119:104). Whatever is *false* is to be rejected, no matter who promotes it or under what circumstances. There is a great need for us to beware.

It seems to me, however, that we should try to keep our balance here (not to mention our humility). After all, a failure to be vigilant about doctrinal truth is not the *only* thing that can cause us to be lost. There happen to be some other *beware*s in the New Testament. One of them is in Ac. 13:40, where Paul warned his audience, "Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you." He then quoted Hab. 1:5, a prophetic condemnation of those who would reject God's truth, and applied it to his Jewish hearers. They were rejecting the truth because it didn't agree with the "official" position they accepted as normative, and they'd be lost for their failure to rethink their tradition. What about this possibility today? Are we so foolish and arrogant as to think that the *beware* of Ac. 13:40 applies only to our doctrinal opponents and never to ourselves? The Christian who has a healthy aversion to false teachers will never ignore the possibility that he himself may *be* the false teacher (2 Cor. 13:5). And even when the truth

is what we're teaching, there is still the *beware* in Gal. 5:15, where, after having warned his readers to remain doctrinally sound, Paul also warns them, "But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!" Having all the doctrinal truth in the world won't save the soul of the teacher who bites and devours his brethren.

But that said, let's come back to the point. *We need to beware of false teachers.* Though vulnerability to false teaching is a special problem for the inexperienced, all of us need to be alert. If any of us thinks we've never been led away from the truth, we're being silly. "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Let's face it: testing for truth requires more self-honesty and hard work than most of us are disposed to. When we're "listening" to someone else, we're often not really listening. And when the time comes to "evaluate" what's been taught in the light of the Scriptures, we often don't really test the teaching *against the Scriptures*. We test it against what we've previously believed or what certain others believe. William James once said that "a great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices." Most of us are personally acquainted with that tendency, aren't we?

Since what takes up residence in our minds is of great consequence with regard to our salvation, we must constantly be on guard. We mustn't just *say* we're being careful, we must actually *be* careful. We must really and truly apply the Berean test to everything we hear: "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and *searched the Scriptures* daily to find out whether these things were so" (Ac 17:11). As long as we live in this world, John's warning will always be needed: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 Jn. 4:1).

Absorbed in the Faith

“...so that your progress will be evident to all. ”

1 Timothy 4:15,16

By Jon W. Quinn

Today there is an obvious need for much more personal involvement of parents in the lives of their children. There simply is no substitute for that. A parent simply cannot buy a child enough food, clothing, toys, and "stuff" to replace the parent's need to be involved in the daily life of the child. Personal attention takes time and effort. But great are the rewards! When parents are too busy providing things to provide opportunities to develop a good relationship with the child, bad things happen. Neglect can take many forms, and has many evil consequences.

The goal of preaching is to proclaim "Christ and Him crucified." Christianity, like parenting, must be a deeply personal matter. Just as we cannot just buy a child more gadgets to fill up his time because we're too busy to be a real part of his life and be a successful parent, neither can we find an adequate substitute to take the place of our own personal involvement in developing our faith and relationship with Jesus and be a successful disciple! Again, neglect can take many forms, and has many evil consequences.

We are not called to be spectators but rather to be participants. Christianity is not a "spectator sport". To be adequately involved in our faith means that we must be focused on living by faith on a daily basis. Paul wrote to Timothy and said, "Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you." (1 Timothy 4:15,16). There is no substitute for this absorption if we are to find ourselves successful as disciples. It is through this means that we truly "proclaim Christ and Him crucified"

to others - it is not just the things we say, or claim (as in parenting) but what we actually do, and this includes in spite of present difficulties, distress and other inconveniences (Philippians 1:20,21).

Who is Like the Lord?

There are many different descriptions of the Lord given to us in the Bible. The Scriptures sometime pose the question, "Who is like the Lord?"

Of course, the answer is no one. Interestingly, we find descriptions of the Lord that are polar opposites of one another. For example, which of the following descriptions is accurate? "The Lord is high and mighty." or "The Lord is lowly and humble."? Neither of these descriptions best fits the Lord because they are both equally true (Psalm 113:5,6)! And perhaps we are better equipped to recognize the validity of both of these statements than even the Psalmist because we have witnessed the extent of His humility in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth (Matthew 20:28; Galatians 1:3-5).

"Who is like the Lord?" Certainly those who come the closest are those who realize that there simply is no substitute for rolling up one's sleeves and becoming personally and actively absorbed in matters of faith. If I humble myself, God will exalt me when He is ready (Matthew 23:11, 12; Colossians 3:2-4). Humility includes submissiveness unto God as we actively become absorbed in personally applying His will to the days of our lives (1 Peter 5:6)

Personal Involvement and its Perks

When we become personally involved with our faith, no longer content to sit on the sidelines and complain, then our focus will become clearer as we see life's purpose being fulfilled in us (Galatians 2:20). How ambitious are you about the most noble purpose in life? (2 Corinthians 5:5-10; 11)

How smart are you? Some might reply, "That depends. Are you talking about 'Book Smarts' or 'Street Smarts'?" What's the difference?

Well, to illustrate, if you want to learn a foreign language; Can it be learned well from reading a book ["Book Smarts"]? Or must you actually start speaking it? ["Street Smarts"]. Who wants a doctor or mechanic who has only read about their craft, but have never actually worked on person or car? Or, how much value would you place on a book giving parenting advice written by someone who has no experience being a parent?

To be successfully “absorbed in the faith” we will need a good dose of both Biblical knowledge as well as practical application on a daily basis.

The Point of All Divine Commandments:

Personal Application!

Few parables are better known than the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Why did Jesus tell it? He told it because people familiar with the Scriptures and the commandments of God were not so familiar with applying those Scriptures in a meaningful way to their lives and attitudes. Jesus' point is that it is not enough to know the Book. The Book is meant to be done (Luke 10 :25-29).

A lawyer had put Jesus to the test, but ended up being the one who flunked. First, Jesus dealt with the lawyers "Book smarts" by asking: “How does it read to you?” The lawyer answered correctly. He knew the truth... sort of... as far as knowing what is written. He had “Book smarts”. He knew from the Book that the greatest commandments were to love our God and to love our neighbor.

But then Jesus said, "Do this!" The panicked lawyer's response: "Who is my neighbor?" Obviously he has not been obeying this commandment because he still has not figured out who his neighbor is! His problem is not that he had not known the right thing to do. It was that he had not been doing it. He lacked “Street smarts”.

Loving God and loving neighbor were not abstract theological ideas to be debated, they were commandments to be obeyed and

applied. They demanded involvement. The commandments of God for us today are the same way! (James 2:14-17).

Don't follow the example of the lawyer who sought to test Jesus. It does not lead anywhere you want to go. He sought to justify himself. Any of us can do the same... neglect the doing part, be absorbed in other things but not in knowing and applying the word, and then justify our lack of involvement by employing a list of excuses conveniently supplied by Satan.

There is a much better act to follow. Who is like the Lord? Those that follow Him to the wonderful eternal victory of faith.

“Going Along” With Jesus

Luke 14:25-33

By Karl Hennecke

Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. “Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. “For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? “Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ “Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? “Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. “So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

“Now large crowds were going along with Him;...” Early in His ministry, Jesus attracted large crowds who were “going along.” They were not identifying themselves with the Teacher as disciples, they were simply curious. There was no cost to listen and observe. They were “window shopping.” They were “kicking the tires.”

Curiosity is necessary but is it enough? Jesus demanded more of them than just “going along.” Contrary to modern sales techniques, Jesus did not focus on the positive results of following Him, and there are many, but rather He explained to them that it would cost them something to be true disciples. When we have opportunity to teach the curious it is neither our job to minimize the cost nor to negotiate the cost. The cost has already been determined. The “sticker price,” the Word of God is set by God.

Jesus said to them, “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. “Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple... “So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions” (Lk. 14:26, 27, 33).

Notice in these verses the personal nature of discipleship. Discipleship has to do with things that are one’s “own.” He must hate is “own” family and his “own” life. He must carry his “own” cross and give up his “own” possessions. Since discipleship requires decisions about one’s “own” things, I cannot make those decisions for you and you cannot make them for me. In Mt. 20:15 the landowner answering the complaint of the workers who worked all day and received the same wage as those who worked only part of the day said, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish what is my own?” Yes it was his right. If a person does not want to give up what is his “own” he cannot be forced to do it. A disciple must willingly and voluntarily relinquish that which is his “own.”

If God demands that we love one another, that husbands love their wives and their children, how is it that one must “hate” his family? A similar statement in the book of Matthew clears up any misunderstanding. “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me;...” (Mt. 10:37). To “hate” is to “love less.” To be a disciple, the Lord must come first, even before family. The same is true of one’s “own” life. Maintaining our life cannot be more important than serving the Lord. The result of such devotion is equivalent to carrying one’s own cross. Carrying a cross implies exposure to a horrible death, a willingness to suffer the greatest evils in His cause. That is quite a cost and it must be counted before one contemplates becoming a disciple.

Jesus also said that to be a disciple one must “give up all his own possessions.” Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell his possession and give to the poor (Mt. 19:21). While that is a specific command to the rich young ruler it still is necessary for a disciple, every disciple, to give up his own possessions. We sing a hymn, “Trust and Obey.” One line in that song, I believe, expresses what the Lord was requiring. “But we never can prove the delights of His love, until all on the altar we lay.” Everything must be laid on the altar. A disciple is one who commits all that he has. He puts all under the control of the Master.

Jesus’ demands are radical, but they are necessary for one to be a disciple. The cost is great but the benefits are greater. We should consider discipleship as a commitment to a prolonged spiritual warfare. Many decide to follow because of emotions or empty enthusiasm but those will not sustain discipleship. Being a disciple will continue to cost us. That is what we need to understand when counting the cost. Finishing is important. Someone said that stopping at third base adds no more to the score than striking out. Jesus said, “You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved” (Mt. 10:22).

We need to ask ourselves the question, are we just “going along” with Jesus or have we become His disciples?

Topic Page:

The Oldest Book Ever Written

Kent Heaton

The Bible is the most wonderful book anyone could ever read. Contained within its frail pages is found the eternal message of the One who has existed before time began. Holding the wealth of sixty-six books man is able to explore his beginning, his reason for living and his hope beyond the grave. No book ever produced by man can make that claim. The Bible reveals the creation of the world by the hand of an Almighty Creator. Explained upon pages of holy writ man learns of his nature and his needs. As a light shining in darkness the words of God open for man the revelation of grace, mercy and saving love. History marches through its pages as sentinels of time marking the progress of man and the failures of men seeking wisdom apart from God's word. The Bible is a most remarkable book.

Written by different men spanning hundreds of generations with diverse backgrounds this simple yet complex manuscript of eternal wisdom unfolds the character of the Creator. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1) declares the mysteries that will be unfolded in the thousands of stories that range from a garden of paradise to the wilderness of man's struggle with obedience to his creator. There will be times of great victory when men stand for truth and righteousness; yet many times when men turn from God's word and find destruction and death.

The Bible is a book of grace. Measured from the love of a graceful Creator man finds he is not alone in the world. Grace is given for man's potential and not for what man shows himself to be. A promise is given early of a seed (Genesis 3:15) that will redeem the failed nature of man and explodes upon the pages of the Bible in the nature of Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16). The early disciples of Christ describe in detail upon ancient parchments the words, deeds and character of the Creator's Son. Jesus becomes the revealed hope of all man's failures. The Bible sets forth the path of peace leading to the throne of God.

There is no book found among men today that can rival the depth of the Bible. Nothing written by man can go before creation and see into the mind of God; nor delve beyond the grave and peer at the endless expanse of eternity. All books are second nature to the Bible. “Many, O LORD my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done; and Your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to You in order; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered” (Psalms 40:5). “He has made His wonderful works to be remembered ... The works of His hands are verity and justice; all His precepts are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness” (Psalms 111:4,7-8).

The oldest book ever written still finds itself forgotten upon the tables of neglect and carelessness as men fail to listen to its message. How sad that in the Bible God has revealed “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3) and yet as a people we spend little time among the pillars of its wisdom. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17) and lacking the wisdom of the word of God we have little faith. We blame God for the failures in our lives when truth reveals the failure is our neglect in listening to Him. “Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble” (Psalms 119:165).

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Plan of Salvation

By Jon W. Quinn

Plan #1

Announced by the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to new believers in Christ who asked what they must do:

Acts 2:36-38

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

(Acts 2:36-38).

Plan #2

On the back page of a tract, sinner were urged to pray this prayer to be saved. This prayer is not found in the Bible; nor were alien sinners commanded to pray for their forgiveness.

The Sinner's Prayer:

"O' Lord, I accept that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now accept Him into my heart as Lord and Savior asking for your mercy and forgiveness in His name. Amen."

The editors of Expository Files are happy with plan #1 and thankful to the God of all grace for it. We cannot recommend Plan #2 at all, but will change our minds when this prayer can be shown to us in the Bible.

Why We Celebrate Jesus' Death

The Final Page 16.11

By Jon W. Quinn

Think about this for a moment.

Suppose a group of admirers of Abraham Lincoln got together and decided that they were going to celebrate him. They would remember his work, his wit, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Gettysburg Address, how he fought to keep the nation intact. Perhaps they would also remember his death at the assassin's hand, but that would be an acknowledged tragedy but not a part of any celebration., but it might be pondered what more he could have accomplished had he lived.

Similarly, if John Kennedy's admirer's got together to do the same thing, they might remember his charisma, his work in civil rights, his confrontation of the USSR with regard to the Cuban Missile crises. But again, his death would be a tragedy and, again, they might wonder what more he could have accomplished had he lived.

How unusual - what we remember about Jesus as His admirers and disciples. His death. We do not ponder for a moment how much better it might have been had He not been crucified. This is because His death was not a waste at all. In fact, it is the primary reason we gather on the Lord's day - to remember His death and its significance. His death was not the end of hope, but rather paved the way to redemption and hope and eternal life. This, we do celebrate as we commune with him and appreciate His love for us and contemplate His victory over the grave.

There are probably several reasons why disciples, even those who were with Him, treat His death so differently than we do the deaths of others. I believe the chief reason is because Jesus lives again, thus giving us an eternal hope.

1 Cor 11:23-26

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;

24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

25 In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.