

UPLOOK

MAY-JUNE 2008

Assess the Need • Catch the Vision • Take the Challenge

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THE CAUSE**
Shawn Abigail

**CENTERED
ON THE SON**
Larry Price

MEET TEAM C³
Plus East & West
Team Itineraries



What is the
GOSPEL?

www.uplook.org



"Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words."

— Saint Francis of Assisi

What is the Gospel?

God's good news

What is the gospel? There is a variety of ways we can answer that question.

Literally. The word "gospel" (*euaggelion*) means "good news." In a world of bad—often, terrible—news, how refreshing to have good news. But quite apart from world events, any honest assessment of ourselves will lead us to see that not all of the bad news is in the newspaper. Much of it is in our own hearts, and we are forced to wonder how we could ever face a holy God. So, when the Lord of heaven and earth declares that He has good news, we can be sure it's good, indeed.

Its character. What about the nature of the gospel? The gospel is from God, not man (Gal. 1:11f). As such, it stands in stark contrast to all the eerily similar religions of men ("Do fill-in-the-blank and God will owe you heaven"). Since it is from God, it is the channel of His power in crushing sin (Rom. 1:16). It is absolutely true (Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5); it is glorious (1 Tim. 1:11); it is timeless (Rev. 14:6); and it is as big as the heart of God: it is for all people (Lk. 2:10).

Its content. In fulfilling his desire to preach the gospel to those in Rome (Rom. 1:15), Paul wrote the book of Romans, which is enough to challenge the greatest of intellects. We will spend eternity plumbing the depths of the gospel. But when it comes to what a person needs to know in order to be saved, there is no need to complicate God's simple message of salvation. God wasn't interested in saving only scholars who, with enough training, could grasp some elaborate system of doctrine. He loves all—the simple and the wise, the old and the young—and so His salvation is understandable by all. Paul, although a deep thinker, describes the simplicity of the gospel message as follows, "*Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you ... For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures*" (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

If you're a believer in the Lord Jesus, I invite you to perform a test. We speak of living in such a way that people will ask us how they can have what we have. Here's the test: should that occur, what would you tell them? Can you explain, in simple terms, what a person must do to be saved? What does it mean to "believe in Christ"? How does one do that? Take the test yourself. Try it with your family or your saved friends or in your church. You'll likely discover that there are many Christians who have been saved for years yet are unable to give a coherent answer to that question—especially to someone unfamiliar with Christian-ese.

Its essence. The heart of the gospel is a Person. More than any other title, it is called "*the gospel of Christ*." Philip "*preached Jesus*" to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:35). Men of Cyprus and Cyrene preached "*the Lord Jesus*" to the Greeks (Acts 11:20). Paul preached "*Jesus and the resurrection*" (Acts 17:18) in Athens and He preached "*Him*" among the Gentiles (Gal. 1:16). The apostles "*preached ... Christ Jesus the Lord*" (2 Cor. 4:5). The early believers understood they weren't preaching rules, but one glorious Person.

The gospel is eternity's love story. In believing the gospel, we are forever united with the One who loved us and gave Himself up for us. In return, the more we are occupied with Him, the more we will want to tell others about the One we love.

A stylized red signature or flourish, possibly representing the author's name, James Martin.

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Outgrowing the Gospel

Do Christians need the gospel?

When you think of the gospel, the first thing that probably springs to your mind is salvation. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-3, we read that the Corinthians had received the gospel and been saved from eternal judgment: “...the gospel...by which also you are saved.” The gospel tells the lost of the only way to get to heaven. But are there other purposes that it serves?

The inquiry of the gospel

Do we, as believers, outgrow the gospel? That’s sometimes what it seems like. We know the unsaved need the gospel and that we need to give it to them, but do we still need it ourselves? Throughout 1 Corinthians 15, Paul preached the gospel to the saints: “*I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you.*” The saints in Corinth stood in the gospel and held fast to it: “*in which you stand...hold fast that word which I preached to you....*” As well, Paul wrote to the church at Rome, “*As much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also*” (Rom. 1:15). Because of these statements, we know that the gospel isn’t simply useful to the lost but also to the found. Now we have to ask: *how* is it important to us?

The security of our faith

We must first look at what the gospel is if we are to find out how it’s useful to us. If you don’t know what a lawn mower is, you won’t be able to use it to cut your grass properly. At the end of our passage, we read, “*Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.*” If either Christ’s death or resurrection were missing, there would be no gospel. If Christ never died,

He could not rise again; if He did not rise again, then our faith is in vain (1 Cor. 15:14). So the gospel assures us of our security because we know Christ has risen from the dead and that our faith is not in vain!

We know the unsaved need the gospel and that we need to give it to them...



...but do we still need it ourselves?


The reality of our position

“*For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel*” (Col. 1:5). From this verse, we see that the gospel gives us our hope. As unsaved sinners, we had no hope at all (Eph. 2:12). The benefit of a secure hope in heaven doesn’t come until after one’s conversion. Once we receive Christ as Saviour, we are able to dwell richly in the hope we have in Him. Scripture doesn’t give us a single reason to doubt eternal security; in fact, it tells us that it’s impossible to lose our place in Christ. Our hope can be

described as a present enjoyment of a future reality. In Romans 8:30, we see believers described as already glorified. In God’s eyes, it is an accomplished fact!

The intensity of His love

The saints in Corinth were holding fast and standing firm in the gospel even after their conversion. They could hold fast to their faith which, when placed in the death and resurrection of Christ, was secure. They could stand in certain hope because God viewed the finished result and considered them already glorified with Him.

So we must continue to embrace the gospel because Christ’s gift doesn’t stop at initial salvation. It continues the marvelous process of God’s plan for us through sanctification and on to ultimate glorification. 

—DAVID NICHOLSON



Short Term Mission in Canada

Summer outreach in two locations in Quebec, in conjunction with Cross Canada Cruisers.

Join with French and English speaking believers in the province of Quebec for Seed Sower's distribution Jul 6-12 in Mirabel and Aug 10-16 in La Mauricie. Assist with the distribution of John 3:16 texts, meet new friends, enjoy Bible study and singing, and help with the Good News breakfast. Camping and meals are \$75 per person or \$150 per family. Camp in your tents, tent-trailers, or trailers (there is limited space for those without camping equipment). Cross Canada Cruisers Team East will be helping in this effort as well. See pages 15-17 for more on the Cruisers' effort. There will also be free time for sports, swimming, and camp fires. Please join us if you are able!

Contact: Don Cox, 4026 des Outardes, Jonquiere QC, G7X 9B4 email: lizdon4@sympatico.ca phone: 418-542-5092

SKYLAND BIBLE CONFERENCE

The conference will be held at Brevard College, Brevard NC Jun 28 - Jul 4. The speakers are Tom Taylor (PA) and Roy Hill (Eng). This is a family conference with planned activities for all ages. Children's meetings will be conducted by Phil Guikema (FL). See www.SkylandBible.org for full conference information.

CAMP HOPE CA BIBLE CONFERENCE

The saints at Silica Bible Chapel of Sacramento, CA extend a warm invitation to their 6th annual family camp, Jul 8-12 at the Mount Hope Conference Center. Camp will be provided at no cost to you. The messages will be on the theme, "Perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God," 2 Cor. 7:1. **Contact:** Hyung Lee - Director 916-849-2562 email: hyung_l@yahoo.com or Heather Harris - Coordinator ph: 916-612-5492 email: SilicaYouth@hotmail.com web: www.SilicaBibleChapel.com

BUCKIT WEEK IN MARYLAND

Held in a hotel Jul 22-27, Buckit Week (*Bible University - Christian Knowledge - Intensive Training*) is neither a conference nor a camp. Rather it is

intensive classroom and hands-on training in key doctrinal areas. Craig Shakarji (MD) and Jabe Nicholson (MI) will be the main teachers. See www.buckitweek.org for details!

SOUTHEAST FAMILY CAMP

Camp Hope's family camp is planned for Aug 2-8. The speakers will be Steve Price (KS) and Nate Thomas (SC). Camp Hope is looking to the Lord to meet all expenses associated with the week of camp. **Contact:** Steve Roys ph: 678-316-7309 Camp Hope ph: 770-536-4787 email: camphopega@arilion.com or visit www.camphopega.org for a registration form.

WEST VIRGINIA BIBLE CONFERENCE

The WV assemblies invite you to their annual family camp Aug 3-8 with speakers Joe Reese (ON) and Larry Price (FL). Nursery and children's ministry are provided. The location is Bluestone Camp and Retreat near Hinton, WV, surrounded by beautiful mountain scenery. A brochure will be mailed to you per request. **Contact:** Brent Jones ph: 304-466-4738 e-mail: brentandhope@verizon.net

UPWARD BOUND

Upward Bound will be held at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, ON. Week one's focus is on intensive Bible study and practical teaching from the Scriptures, but there are also social and recreational activities. Week one runs Aug 10-17. Week two is a canoe trip into Algonquin Park from Aug 17-22. Speakers are: Brian Russell (UK), Charlie Tempest (ON), Craig Shakarji (MD), Dennis Leblanc (NB) and Sandy McEachern (ON). Attendees are welcome to attend either or both weeks. **Contact:** sandymceachern@hotmail.com

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY SEMINAR

Pine Bush Bible Camp, Bloomingburg NY, is planning an intensive Bible seminar "*Highlights in the Book of Genesis - Part two*" Aug 24-28 with Randy Amos for men who are serious about the study of God's Word. The cost is \$95. **Contact:** Charles Myers ph: 732-451-9444 email: Cvspeedie@aol.com

TENNESSEE LABOR DAY CONFERENCE

The 2008 Mid South Bible Conference will be held Aug 29-Sep 1 at

FRONT LINES *continued*

Visit the Guelph Bible
Conference Centre
web site at
www.guelphbiblecc.com



Horton Haven Christian Camp, Chapel Hill, TN. This is a family event with ministry and activities for all ages. Accommodations vary from tent/RV sites to private air conditioned lodge rooms. Dr. Steve Witter (IA) is the speaker. **Contact:** Horton Haven Christian Camp, PO Box 276, Chapel Hill, TN 37034 ph: 931-364-7656 www.hortonhaven.org

MINNESOTA LABOR DAY CONFERENCE

The believers in the Twin Cities area announce the 97th annual Conference Aug 29-Sept 1. Invited speakers are Craig Shakarji (MD) and Dan Smith (IA). Accommodations and meals provided. Nursery care, children's program & teen challenge are planned. **Contact:** Glen Ellis (general info) ph: 763-572-1379 Steve Schletty (housing) ph: 763-238-7099 email: sschletty@gmail.com

YOUTH CONFERENCE IN GEORGIA

Camp Hope, Dahlonga, GA will have their annual Youth Conference in the will of the Lord, Aug 30-Sep 1. Dwight Knight will be the speaker. Cost: \$50. **Contact:** Jamie Wolfgram ph: 706-650-2693

LABOR DAY IN 100 MILE HOUSE

Christians gathered at 100 Mile House, BC announce their conference Aug 30 - Sep 1. Entitled "Lord, I am Your Servant," the subject is Biblical Servanthood. Speakers invited are Jim McCarthy (CA) and Ken Fleming (IA). Youth speaker is Sam Oommen (ON). Missionary report by Don Cox (QC). **Contact:** Rob Brennan ph: 250-791-5657 email: rob_brennan@shaw.ca Don Street ph: 250-395-4230 email: don.street@shawbiz.ca

ATLANTIC/LYMAN IOWA CONFERENCE

Atlantic Gospel Chapel, Sunnyside Gospel Chapel and Lyman Assembly will host their 95th annual conference Sep 12-14. Speakers will be Tom Taylor (PA) and Ken Daughters (IA). Children's ministry will be provided. and meals will be served. **Contact:** Dennis Oathoudt ph: 712-243-6303 email: koathoudt@hotmail.com

WORD ALIVE BIBLE STUDY IN GA

Studies are held at Washington Chapel, 808 East Robert Toombs Ave., Washington, GA. Scheduled times are 9 AM - 3 PM with lunch provided. Sept 13 - *A Dispensational Transition* Acts 1-28 Mark Hartley Oct 11 - *The Saving Gospel of Grace* Acts 12:25-16:5 Sam Thorpe Jr. Dec 13 - *Reaching the Known World* Acts 19:21-28:31 Mike Attwood **Contact:** Sam Thorpe 706-359-6297

LADIES CONFERENCE IN GA

Camp Hope in Dahlonga, GA announce their annual Ladies Conference Sep 26-28. Mimi Wilson will be the speaker. Cost: \$50. **Contact:** Barbara Thorpe ph: 706-359-6297 email: sambarb@nu-z.net Camp Hope ph: 770-536-4787 email: camphopega@arilio.com web: www.camphopega.org

ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN IOWA

Gateway Bible Chapel and High Point Bible Chapel will hold their annual conference Sep 26-28 at Grace Lutheran Camp, DeWitt, IA. The expected speaker is Scott DeGroff (KS). **Contact:** Jim Fullan ph: 563-242-4597 email: jimfullanh@ci.clinton.ia.us Jim Iverson ph: 563-391-3122 email: iversonhipt@netzero.com

PACIFIC COAST CONFERENCE

This annual conference will be held Sep 29-Oct 3 at the Mission Springs Christian Conference Center in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The conference begins Monday with dinner at 6:00 PM and ends Friday with lunch. Speakers: Mike Fitzhugh (MI) and Keith Keyser (PA). **Contact:** Max Krieger ph: 323-256-1992 email: maxnbethk@sbcbglobal.net

WITNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Roy Hill (Eng) is the speaker at a seminar Sep 25-26 designed to help men and women at every level of business deal with the numerous challenges faced in today's business environment. It will be held Thursday morning through Friday noon at the Willow Valley Conference Center & Resort, Lancaster County, PA (www.willowvalley.com). Provision for families available. **Contact:** Know the Word, c/o Mark Kolchin, P.O. Box 305, Lanoka Harbor, NJ 08734 web: www.knowtheword.com email: knowtheword@comcast.net

FALL FOLIAGE CONFERENCE

Know the Word will conduct its fourteenth annual Fall Foliage Conference Sep 29 - Oct. 3 with Roy Hill (Eng) speaking on the topic, "Tests in the Life of the Believer." Held at the Tuscarora Inn on the Delaware River in the Poconos (PA), the cost is \$325. per person and includes all meals, deluxe accommodations and an afternoon sight-seeing excursion. **Contact:** www.knowtheword.com e-mail: knowtheword@comcast.net To register, send fully-refundable amount to: Know the Word, c/o Mark Kolchin, P.O. Box 305, Lanoka Harbor, NJ 08734

NC LADIES MISSIONARY CONFERENCE

The ladies of Parkway Chapel, Winston-Salem, NC, will be hosting the conference Oct 4. Speakers will be Ruth Bloom from *Immanuel Mission* and Jane Wolcott from *CMML*. Clothing items will be collected at the conference for each of these ministries. Presentations will be given on behalf of *Good News on the Move* and *Mount Jubilee Ministries*. The project for the conference is to help purchase a van for John and Sunita Locklear, working with children with special needs in Mysore, India. **Contact:** Janice Bishop 2865 Gracefield Ct., Winston-Salem, NC 27127 email: JBishop11@triad.rr.com

MAINE BIBLE CONFERENCE

A cordial invitation is extended to all to join for the 50th annual Bible Conference at Spring Hill Gospel Hall, Westbrook, ME Oct 10-12. Speakers expected are Donald Cox (QC), and Harold Smith (NS). Overnight accommodations available upon early request. **Contact:** Daniel F. Chick, 95 Maple Street, Westbrook, ME 04092, ph: 207-449-1492

BIBLE LANDS TOUR

Join Rex Trogdon Nov 10-21 for the Bible Lands Study Tour to Greece and Israel. Request a brochure today for the trip of a lifetime. **Contact:** Rex Trogdon ph: 704-843-9632 email: Rextrogdon@carolina.rr.com

COMMENDATIONS

The elders of Forest Hills Bible Chapel commend *Don and Susie Van Ryn* to the Lord's work at Upper Peninsula Bible Camp in Little Lake, MI. Don and Susie have given their time to UPBC during the summer months

for many years, and will now be involved year-round.

Micah and Cristina Williams are in fellowship at the Lawrence Bible Chapel and both have worked at Turkey Hill Ranch Bible Camp. It has been their desire to serve the Lord at camp each summer and to assist the summer staff in an ongoing ministry.

The elders of Florence Bible Chapel, Florence, SC are pleased to announce the commendation of *Eric and Denise Shelley* to the Lord's work on a full time basis. He plans to devote himself to the work at Florence Bible Chapel and will minister at camp retreats and other assemblies as the Lord leads.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

The Calendar Project provides calendars with Scripture verses in twelve languages. The goal of the Project is to enable missionaries to get Scripture verses into homes. The calendars are available to assembly missionaries and nationals via a network of volunteer workers throughout the U.S and Canada. In 2007, more than 40,000 calendars were sent all over the world. New workers are always needed. Visit www.calendarproject.info

Guelph Bible Conference Centre, ON is looking for two born again, mature married couples who are interested in full-time ministry on a year round basis. One couple should have proven experience in a wide range of maintenance/construction/grounds keeping functions, office support and other areas as required. They are also looking for a couple who have experience in administrative functions, direct-

ing staff, team leading and general skills in assisting in the many facets of camp life. Good interpersonal skills are required for hosting mid-week and weekend groups. Housing is available. **Contact:** Bruce Dureno email: bdureno@mnsi.net web: www.guelphbiblecc.com

Parkside Ranch, located in Orford Quebec, Canada has a need for a full time cook, (single or couple). The cook position includes 8 weeks of summer camps with weekend and weekly groups during the year and the responsibility of ordering food. web: www.parksideranch.com email: registrar@parksideranch.com Fax to: 819-868-6730 c/o Mr. Dean Somers

Bethel Bible Camp, Woolwine, VA requires a maintenance man with mechanical aptitude. He will need to be commended by his home assembly. Lodging is provided. **Contact:** John Hand ph: 276-930-4289 e-mail: keptbyhim1936@va.net Bethel Bible Camp, P.O. Box 71, Woolwine, VA 24185

ADDRESS CHANGE

Rex and Nancy Trogdon, 7200 Winslow Dr, Waxhaw, NC 28173-8012 ph: 704-843-9632 email: Rextrogdon@carolina.rr.com Nancytrogdon@carolina.rr.com

MYRTLE BEACH, SC RENTAL

A spacious 4 bedroom, 3 bathroom beach-front condo which sleeps 8-10 people, is available for rent on a weekly or monthly basis. Readers of "UPLOOK" will receive a 10% discount off the realtor's price. **Contact:** John Spyralatos spyralatos_condo5f@yahoo.gr



Bearing Strangers

Exceptional evidence

In science, the exception is often more interesting and informative than the rule. And if these cases are examined through eyes of faith, one may also see evidence of God's knowledge and power on display. One such exception is found in the unique camouflage of the marine "carrier-shell" mollusk. Camouflage is a form of visual deception using color and pattern. Hunters wear "camo" clothing to blend into the surrounding environment. Animal camouflage is based on the same principle as that used by hunters, except that animals generally do not choose their camouflage. Instead, hair color and patterns are genetically inherited, although they may change with age or season of the year. For example, a white-tailed deer fawn is reddish brown with white spots at birth. This cryptic coloration is so effective that a doe can leave her fawn hidden in the grass for hours while she feeds. The spots later fade away about the time the fawn is weaned.

An exception to the rule of inherited camouflage is the family of Xenophoridae mollusks that live in the tropical water of the western Pacific.¹ Mollusks are soft-bodied animals without an internal skeleton. Some, like snails and clams, live in protective shells while others, like octopus and squid, do not. Xenophora (Greek for "bearer of strangers") mollusks are called "carrier-shell" mollusks because the animal deliberately picks up empty shells, fragments of shells, or small rocks and cements them to its own shell. Using its muscular foot, this mollusk can take up to 1.5 hours to select, clean, rotate, and fit an object onto the shell. Actual cementing may take up to ten hours! While this process makes the shell stronger, it is also effective camouflage against predators.



"Exceptions like Xenophora are hard to explain by sequential steps of natural selection"

Exceptional as this behavior is, it is even more incredible because the animal under the shell is essentially blind. While it may have some light sensitive pigment spots, they cannot form an image. Does this blind mollusk really know that other animals use their vision to hunt for it and, in response, camouflage its shell to avoid being seen? Probably not. Xenophora does not have a large brain so the camouflage behaviors are likely pre-programmed

instinctive actions.

"Bearing strangers" as camouflage does help Xenophora survive. But does this camouflage reveal more than it conceals? Perhaps this particular exception to the rule of inherited camouflage reveals the presence and power of a divine Designer who understands what Xenophora does not. Exceptions like Xenophora are hard to explain by sequential steps of natural selection since the behaviors of choosing, cleaning, rotating, and cementing are all needed simultaneously to create the camouflage. And if these behaviors have survival value, why do no other mollusk families exhibit these same behaviors? By contrast, a divine Designer would understand the survival value of camouflage for a blind animal hiding under a shell. An exception to the rule, yes, but also one in which we see the knowledge and power of the Creator on display before our eyes. 🌀

—MICHAEL G. WINDHEUSER, PH.D.

1 J. L. Douglass, John Douglass (illustrated by), Roger Tory Peterson (series editor), *Peterson First Guide to Shells of North American* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1998).

The Dispensation of the Gospel

A solemn duty

**"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me."
(1 Cor. 9:16f)**

I don't know about you, but I often view my responsibility to share the gospel not so much as an obligation but a common courtesy: I have extremely good news that can help someone, and I want to share it with them because they are nice folk. There is a measure of truth to that in our motivation to share the gospel. After all, the very word "gospel" means "good news." But it is so much more than just wanting to share it with someone out of courtesy. Souls are on the line for eternity.

Due diligence

In the United States legal system, there is a concept called "due diligence." It is the effort made by one party to prevent injury to another party. In other words, if you know something can cause someone harm, in some cases, you have the legal obligation to warn that person.

This is why we see warning labels on everything. The sign at the fast food drive through has to say, "Warning: Coffee is hot." There are even warning labels on bottles of sleeping pills that say, "Warning: May cause drowsiness." In our litigious society, companies have to put out these warnings in order to show due diligence in regard to people's safety.

As believers, we must perform our "due diligence" in sharing the gospel. I cannot think of greater

harm that can be caused than that of letting someone slip into eternity without knowing Christ as their Saviour.

While it is not a legal obligation, it is a moral obligation. It is not simply a matter of witnessing if I feel like it. Paul writes, "*Woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel!*" (1 Cor. 9:16). How can we sit by and watch people run headlong into hell and not lift a single flag of warning? As I write these words, I have a sense of guilt that I do not do my own part in sufficiently giving people a warning of the inevitable danger of living apart from God.

Out of love

While businesses give warnings to customers out of duty and for fear of being sued, we preach the gospel out of love. This love is for our Lord and our fellow man. In light of all Christ has done for us, and for the love that He has placed within our hearts, we should discharge our duties of preaching the gospel with gladness. God's love compels us to no longer live just for ourselves, but for others (2 Cor. 5:14). For us to do otherwise is to shirk our responsibilities as believers.

Yet, we may tell ourselves (and others), "but I don't have the gift of evangelism." Just because we are not gifted in a certain area does not absolve us from our responsibility. We are not told if Timothy was gifted in evangelism. It appears he had the gift of shepherding. But this did not let him off the hook in terms of the gospel. Paul told him to, "*Do the work of an evangelist*" (2 Tim. 4:5).

Our responsibility is to present the gospel. It is not to convince people or win arguments. What they do with what they hear is their own responsibility. Just as warning labels don't keep people from scalding their mouths with hot coffee, but they do keep the restaurant from being liable for it.



STAND IN THE GAP *continued*

In love

How should we share the gospel? The difference, once again, is in our motivation. If we preach Christ out of our love for Him and our concern for others, we will care how we present it. We will want to present it in a loving, concerned way, not in a manner where they feel we are simply doing a duty.

There is a song by a Christian songwriter that says, "Don't tell them Jesus loves them until you're ready to love them, too." I do not totally agree with that lyric. I may be in a backslidden, selfish state when the opportunity comes to tell someone about Christ, but I ought still to take that opportunity. We are to preach it in season or out of season (2 Tim. 4:2). Paul even says in Philippians 1:15 that some preach the gospel out of envy and strife. However, I do understand the point of the song. Our presentation of the gospel is much more convincing and much more effective when it comes from a genuinely concerned heart. That is the proper motive for sharing our faith. If we are letting Christ reign in us, this shouldn't be a problem.



Either way, it is our obligation. In 1 Corinthians 9:17, Paul goes on to say, *"For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me."*

I can preach the Gospel willingly and receive a reward. But even if I don't, I have a duty to perform, a commission to discharge, a responsibility to fulfill. I cannot evade my obligation to warn others of the impending doom that befalls them if they die without Christ.

When we look at evangelism in this light, it changes our outlook. Seeing it as our moral obligation should stir us all. Being motivated by the love of God and the concern that God places within us for others should move us to action. Being willing to move and share the Gospel brings us reward.

May we all do our "due diligence" in sharing God's love with a lost and dying world. 📌

"But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand." (Ezk. 33:6)

FOR YOUR STUDY



CHAPTER 1
...ning of the gospel of
...t, the Son of God;
...en in the prophets,
...y messenger before
...ll prepare th

THE GOSPEL OF...

- the kingdom – Mt. 4:23; 9:35
- Jesus Christ, the Son of God – Mk. 1:1
- the kingdom of God – Mk. 1:14
- the grace of God – Acts 20:24
- God – Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thes. 2:2, 8, 9; 1 Pet. 4:17
- His Son – Rom. 1:9
- Christ – Rom. 1:16; 15:19, 29; 1 Cor. 9:12, 18; 2 Cor. 9:13; 10:14; Gal. 1:7; Php. 1:27; 1 Thes. 3:2
- peace – Rom. 10:15; Eph. 6:15
- your salvation – Eph. 1:13
- Lord Jesus Christ – 2 Thes. 1:8

We Can't Say No

Everyday Publications—update on printing for D. R. Congo

In early 2006, Everyday Publications was presented with a challenge: in the ten years of savage civil warfare that had devastated the D.R. Congo, many of the believers in that country had suffered the loss of most, if not all, of their Swahili Bibles, hymnbooks, and Christian books. Everyday Publications (EPI) was uniquely qualified to meet this need as it is one of only a very few publishers who are able to produce literature in Congo Swahili. However, this project was much bigger than anything we had ever asked of our small, digital presses. And it was certainly bigger than anything we had ever asked of our small staff of commended workers and volunteers. Also, since the believers in Congo had no funds to speak of, the books would need to be printed and shipped free of charge. This would require us to trust the Lord for a far greater sum of money than ever before. Humanly speaking, it was impossible. But we just couldn't say "No!" to our brothers and sisters who had suffered so much for our Lord Jesus Christ. Besides, we serve the God of the impossible!

A brief history of EPI

Dr. Ed and Gertrud Harlow founded EPI in 1964 because they couldn't say "No." They could not say "No" to the need of the church in the D. R. Congo for doctrinally sound books about the Bible that were scholarly yet readable, written at the academic level of the reader rather than the author. Both of the Harlows had served as missionaries in the Congo and were well-equipped to meet this need. Additionally, they had a vision of the vast potential of Christian literature; Dr. Harlow was one of the co-founders of the Emmaus Correspondence School and Gertrud was one of translators of the Swahili Bible. Dr. Harlow developed a style of writing that he called "Everyday English." Everyday English, which can actually be defined as a distinct language, is characterized by a shorter sentence structure and a reduced vocabulary which focuses on defining complex terms. Dr. Harlow proceeded to write individual commentaries in Everyday English on every book in the Bible. As

soon as he finished writing each volume, Gertrud would translate the book into Swahili. Soon, these meaty yet easily digestible pieces of spiritual food were being shipped by the boxful to Africa. Other missionaries heard of these books and translated them into the languages spoken in their part of God's vineyard. Today, Everyday Publication publishes more than 350 titles in Everyday English, Standard English, Swahili, Spanish, French, and Portuguese. Work is also underway to translate EPI titles into Arabic and Chinese. Since 1964, God has been pleased to use EPI to send untold thousands of books to countries around the world.

Meeting the need

Faced with the need for Christian literature in the D.R. Congo, the gracious enabling of our munificent God allowed us to print over 13 tons of books and load them into a 20-foot container. This container, filled with 71,000 books, traveled from Port Colborne, Ontario to Montreal to Mombasa, Kenya to Kampala, Uganda to Bunia, Congo. Arriving safely in October of 2006, it took just three weeks for these books to be distributed to thousands of hungry believers.




When Gertrud Harlow was able to follow-up with the committee responsible for the distribution of the books in early 2007, she found that while the believers were ecstatic to receive the books, there simply were not enough to go around, no matter how much they were willing or able to share. The situation was clear: we needed to send another container with even more books. Once again, we couldn't say "No!", neither to our fellow believers in the D.R. Congo nor to the Lord we both serve.

Round two

Just over one year ago, another 20-foot container was ordered and placed behind the EPI print shop. Harold MacDougall, EPI's production manager, began work in earnest, printing another EPI-record book order. Our faithful volunteers have come in each week to help with the binding and trimming. Grace Spence, who handles all of EPI's shipping, has been busy shrink-wrapping the books and packing them securely into boxes. At the time of this writing, we have almost 78,000 books printed, packaged, and loaded into the container.

only number that stirs our hearts is \$0.00; that is the amount our brethren in Congo will be asked to pay for these books. We at EPI believe that God would have us print and ship these books free of charge. In fact, since 1991 it has been our privilege to send hundreds of thousands of books to assembly-commended missionaries and national workers around the world free of charge as the Lord enables. Countless other quantities have been sent to believers in North America and Europe at greatly subsidized prices.

Our reason for "pricing" our books in this way is very simple: unless a book can get into a reader's hands, it cannot be read. And unless it is read, the reader cannot be fed.

\$0.00 is also the amount that we are asking our fellow believers in North America and Europe to contribute to this project. It is our conviction that we should look to God and God alone for the provision of our needs, financial and otherwise. We would ask you to stand with us in prayer and to rejoice with us as we see the wonderful ways in which God will answer. Some might say that we should be more forthcoming about our financial needs and requirements. To those I would say that it is forthcoming enough for us to remember that we have sufficient for today and the certain promises of God for tomorrow. For those desiring more information for prayer about this project or about the ministry of Everyday Publications, I would encourage you to visit our website at www.everydaypublications.org or to email me at markbeach@everydaypublications.org 



1.4 Million sheets of paper, each one rich with the truth of God's Word, are on their way to Africa.



What does it take to fill a container with books? By the time the container is fully loaded and ready to ship, we will have used almost 1.4 million sheets of paper, 1000 boxes, and untold quantities of toner, glue, tape, and cellophane. These numbers may be impressive to some and quite insignificant to others. Yet the

The Defense and Confirmation of the Gospel

Another Jesus. Another gospel. Another Spirit.

"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel" (Gal. 1:6).

Paul not only preached the gospel but at times had to defend it, to re-affirm it to believers so that their faith would be resting in the right object, and they would be confirmed or strong in grace unto the coming of the Lord. He wrote in Philippians 1:17, *"I am set for the defense of the gospel."*

The defense of the gospel is necessary because of the work of the enemy. According to 2 Corinthians 11, Satan, the master of disguises, counterfeits "another Jesus," "another gospel," and "another spirit" so believers might be seduced from being purely devoted to the Lord Jesus.

Thus the attack is in three major areas:

Jesus	the One who saves	person	the Word of God
gospel	the way to be saved	performance	the work of Christ
Spirit	the way the saved live	practice	the walk of the believer

Let's briefly consider these three aspects of the gospel and the basic truths that are under attack. Sometimes it needs to be reconfirmed to the believer, even a Peter.

The attack on the Person of Christ

Down through the centuries, the question of who Jesus is has been perverted.

His virgin birth has been denied, making Jesus a child of Adam—a sinner, albeit an ethical one. This lie of course strips His sacrifice of its efficacy (substitutionary power to pay for our sins) for He would then be dying

for His own sin, not another's.

His deity has been denied. Others might acknowledge Him as a prophet but not God. Some present the Lord as just a good teacher or as the offspring (son) of God in a generic way, just as we are created by God but not actually God Himself in the flesh. This lie affects the veracity of what He said and, therefore, His authority over us. It lets every man determine what is right in his own eyes, becoming God himself. Thus the Word of God is neither binding nor accurate.

His inability to sin (impeccability) is questioned, putting His eternal promises at risk. For, if He could have sinned then as man on earth, could He now sin as man and nullify salvation's promises?

His character has been twisted into a gracious, loving person who tolerated everything and condemned nothing. Heaven but not hell; forgiveness but not fear; love but not obedience; care but not censure; grace but not truth; joy but not judging; acceptance but not repentance; praise but not punishment. Jesus is presented as the contrast to a hard, legalistic God. Thus the nature of God—which He, as the Word, revealed (Jn. 1:14, 18)—is corrupted.

The attack on the gospel of Christ

The Bible's teaching of what man must do to be saved is also constantly under attack. Here, the question is not the person of the Saviour, but the terms on which the Saviour saves sinners. It has to do with the performance necessary to fully obtain salvation: are we saved by our own performance or by Christ's blood sacrifice and subsequent resurrection? Grace or law? Faith or works—or faith and works (a bit of both)? God's gospel is faith alone, but it is a faith that works.



UNDENIABLE TRUTHS *continued*

In Acts 1-5, the issue is the person of Christ: *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ”* (Acts 2:36).

However, in Acts 15, the issue is the conditions on which God saves. *“Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved,”* was the new criteria being presented. These were people who believed in the person of Christ Jesus (v. 6) but proclaimed that more than faith in Christ was necessary to obtain final salvation. It was not a denial of Christ but an addition to His work. The formula for salvation was faith in Christ + something else = salvation.

How much difference does it make to add works to faith as a requirement for salvation? Can one change the nature of something by adding to it? Consider the atomic world. The number of protons in the nucleus determines which element it is and is that element’s atomic number. The oxygen atom, which is essential to life, is 8. Add just one little proton (if you could) and it changes into fluorine. Add one more and it is neon, a gas that will not give life if inhaled but death. Add 23 more and you have arsenic. Gold is 79. Add 3 more protons and you have lead.

To add man’s work to faith in Christ and His performance on the cross and resurrection is not a minor adjustment. It completely changes the nature of salvation. It is now works and not grace (Rom. 11:6). This gospel will save no one but keeps men condemned in unbelief. It is another gospel and, thus, false. This is a major argument of the defense of the gospel in Galatians.

Peter counters the argument of adding works to faith and grace by pointing out the witness of God Himself in giving the uncircumcised Gentile believers the Holy Spirit before baptism or any kind of works. God does not put His Spirit in one who is still dirty in his sins. But the fact that God gave the believing Gentile sinners the Spirit instantly when they placed heart-faith in Christ Jesus (Acts 10:43-48) was proof that “purifying their hearts” had already taken place by faith alone (Acts 15:8, 9). Otherwise they wouldn’t have been given the Spirit by God.

God is satisfied with Christ’s performance alone. Are we? This is grace (faith alone to be saved)—the terms of God’s true salvation (Acts 15:11; Rom. 9-11). But as we will see in the next perversion, faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is never alone: it demonstrates itself by works (Jas. 2).



The attack on the Spirit of Christ


Living the Christian life has also come under attack. If, in addition to the gospel we have legalism, then here we have the opposite error, liberalism. Here the grace of God is not added to, but subtracted from, its purpose. It is *“turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness [liberty to do evil]”* (Jude 4).

Paul also had to defend this type of corruption which causes the Name of God and Christ to be blasphemed in the world and blinds men to the true gospel. As he said in Romans 3:8, *“And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.”* Also in Romans 6:1f, *“Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid!”*

The gospel also teaches that when a heart is purified by faith, the Holy Spirit enters (Gal. 4:4-6). The Spirit, though invisible, is not a silent resident. He manifests His presence in many ways: a new walk, love, joy, works of righteousness, understanding God in the Scriptures, the ability to serve God, warring against the sinful flesh, etc. (See Eph. 2:10; 5:9; Rom. 8; Gal. 5; 1 Cor. 2, 12; etc.)

Therefore, the Bible’s teaching concerning the Spirit and the gospel does not present the gospel as just some cold creed to claim. Rather, we are taught that when the Lord of the gospel is trusted, the dynamic of the Spirit will follow with works. God’s gospel is indeed righteous (Rom. 1:17). These Spirit works are not done in order to obtain God’s salvation but are the natural fruit of it, just like cherries do not make a tree a cherry tree but are simply the natural fruit from a planted cherry seed.

Yet today we see the work of the Spirit being replaced with political ideology, drug therapy, psychological counseling, cultural trends, professional training programs, music, and, of course, religious tradition and rituals. These novelties, rather than the Spirit of the living God, are what are now promised to produce behavioral change and spiritual growth.

Yes, the gospel in all three aspects still needs to be defended and confirmed today. 



As you may well know by now, Cross Canada Cruisers or "C3" is a Canadian ministry for college-age men to receive extensive field training in evangelism and to be servants to all people. In doing this, they will show God's love in an effective way. Another goal of this program is the encouragement of New Testament local churches to pray and to be more involved in their local communities.



The young men travel in two teams, each with experienced mentors. Their road trip extends over 5 months (May - October) from the East and West coasts of Canada towards Southern Ontario where they will be reunited for a final week of special events. One unique feature of this program is the use of restored 1950s classic cars to transport the teams. These cars are a natural attraction that draw people to talk, and they provide modern parables of each of the men's lives—they were ruined by sin, but reclaimed by Jesus Christ, and restored for proper service towards all people and for God's glory. At time of writing, the program is in full swing with both teams in the sixth week of their tour. Read more about each of the team members on the next two pages, and please continue to pray for blessing on these young men and all the assemblies and the lost souls they come in contact with this year.



TEAM WEST

May 6 – May 18	Orientation–Guelph Bible Conference Centre (Both Teams)
May 19 – May 25	Victoria, BC
May 26 – June 1	Vancouver, BC – Parkcrest
June 2 – June 8	Vancouver, BC – Aldergrove
June 9 – June 15	Vancouver, BC – 16th Ave
June 16 – June 22	100 Mile House, BC
June 23 – June 29	Kelowna, BC
Jul. 7 – Jul. 10	Salmon Arm, BC
Jul. 10 – Jul. 13	Harrogate, BC
Jul. 14 – Jul. 20	Lethbridge, AB
Jul. 21 – Jul. 27	Calgary, AB
Jul. 28 – Aug. 3	North Battleford, SK
Aug. 11 – Aug. 17	Regina, SK
Aug. 18 – Aug. 19	South-Central MB 1
Aug. 20 – Aug. 23	South-Central MB 2
Aug. 23 – Aug. 27	Winnipeg, MB 2
Aug. 28 – Aug. 31	Victoria Beach & Grand Beach, MB
Sep. 1 – Sep. 7	Winnipeg, MB
Sep. 8 – Sep. 14	Sault Saint Marie, ON
Sep. 15 – Sep. 21	Timmins (and area), ON
Sep. 22 – Sep. 28	Sudbury, ON
Sep. 29 – Oct. 4	Gospel Effort Prep Week (Both Teams in Georgetown, ON)

TEAM EAST

May 19 - May 25	Charlottetown, PE
May 26 – June 1	Dartmouth, NS
June 2 – June 8	Summerside, PE
June 9 – June 15	Moncton, NB
June 16 – June 22	Saint John, NB
June 23 – June 29	Fredericton, NB
Jul. 7 – Jul. 13	Mirabel, QC
Jul. 14 – Jul. 20	Jonquiere, QC
Jul. 21 – Jul. 27	St. Hyacinthe, QC
Jul. 28 – Aug. 3	Stanstead, QC
Aug. 11 – Aug. 17	Grand-Mere, QC
Aug. 18 – Aug. 24	Ottawa, ON – Bridlewood
Aug. 25 – Aug. 31	Ajax, ON
Sep. 1 – Sep. 7	Markham, ON
Sep. 8 – Sep. 14	Thorold South, ON
Sep. 15 – Sep. 21	Windsor, ON
Sep. 22 – Sep. 28	Heidelberg, ON
Sep. 29 – Oct. 4	Gospel Effort Prep Week



Oct. 5 – Oct. 11, 2008 • Georgetown, Ontario
REMEMBER the Major Gospel Effort
when both C3 EAST and WEST teams will
work together with local and visiting
Christians in the area just north of Oakville!

C3 TEAM EAST



Ben Canfield *Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island*

A native of Prince Edward Island, Ben, aged eighteen, was brought up in a Christian home. Saved at the age of eight, his desire to serve the Lord grew through the summers he spent at Emmanuel Bible Camp. He writes, "The summer I was sixteen, I began to desire to surrender myself to Christ and began to get more involved in my home assembly, Charlottetown Bible Chapel. When I heard about Team C3, I saw it as an opportunity to serve the Lord and learn how to be more of a witness for Him. I am excited to see the plans the Lord has for me, and I pray He will teach me how to live a life of evangelism."

Mitchell Jay *Fredericton, New Brunswick*

Mitchell has just finished his first year at the University of New Brunswick studying Kinesiology. Saved at the age of six, he looked to the Saviour out of a fear of hell. He writes that in his young years he was "content to be occupied with the world's trinkets." He came to realize that the life he had in Christ is real, satisfying and everlasting, and so gave these things up to follow his Saviour. Mitch writes: "I've been discovering the depths of the love of God, that He would love me—a sinner, guilty and unclean." This year he wants to learn to be an effective witness for His Saviour and a good steward of His gospel.



Joel LaPerriere *Mirabel, Quebec*

Joel, 20, grew up attending L'Assemblée Centre-Sud in Mirabel, QC. Although he professed to be saved at the age of thirteen, he says, "I did not understand how much of a sinner I was and the meaning of Christ's sacrifice for me." He spent most of his teenage years away from the Lord, family and friends. It was only when he sank deeply into sin that he realized how meaningless life was without the Lord. Eight months ago, he turned to the Lord in repentance and faith. He is now enjoying the assurance of sins forgiven and his new life in Christ.

Steve Owens *Rochester, New York*

Raised in a Christian home, Steve was saved at nine, but spent the next eleven years of his life "actively trying the Lord's patience." It was only a couple years ago that the Lord took hold of his heart, and drew Steve back to the Saviour. Since then, the Lord's love and faithfulness have been abundantly apparent in every aspect of his life. Steve has spent the last couple of years in happy fellowship at Northgate Bible Chapel, working as a machinist, and endeavoring to draw closer to the One whose faithfulness is undeniable, and whose love is without limits!



Daniel Scott *Ogden, Quebec*

Born into a Christian home, Daniel fellowships at L'Assemblée Chrétienne in Stanstead, Quebec. Although saved at the age of six, and baptized at 12, he was unconcerned spiritually for several years until he realized that the Lord had called Him to more than salvation. Daniel writes: "I realized that He had called me to live only for Him and to do everything for His glory." Daniel travelled on the second Good News on the Move team and this year will be leading the East Coast Team. In these months he looks forward to getting a better glimpse of Christ and developing skills as a soldier fighting for Him.

Stan Wells *Fredericton, New Brunswick*

Stan, 19 years of age, was born and raised in a Christian home. Saved at the age of thirteen, it took him a year to come to the realization of the true joy found in Christ, by reading His Word and spending time with Him. Stan wants to do whatever the Lord wants him to do and go wherever He wants him to go because his Saviour gave everything away for him. He says: "I just want to strive to be more like my Saviour, no matter what." Stan currently fellowships with the MacLeod Hill Assembly of Christians in Fredericton, NB.



Darin Yanisiew *Rockwood, Ontario*

Originally from Timmins, ON, Darin lives in Rockwood, ON and fellowships at Arkell Road Bible Chapel, Guelph. Darin, who uses a wheelchair full-time, has a special interest in reaching unsaved individuals with disabilities. He says: "We all have disabilities, whether they are visible or not, and I have come to learn that God can use all of our flaws in achieving His purposes, but only if we are willing to be used by Him." Saved at age ten, he didn't take his relationship with the Lord seriously until he was 22. It was then Darin finally understood that the Lord chose him to have a disability to bring glory to Himself.

C3 TEAM WEST



Jayson Ball *Kintore, Ontario*

Jay, age 24, lives in the small town of Kintore, Ontario. Saved at the age of 14, he fellowships at Tavistock Bible Chapel. He has been involved in Sunday School, camp ministries, and other activities in his local assembly. After his salvation, Jay did not fully appreciate the Christian life. A near fatal car accident five years ago opened his eyes to the fulfillment and enjoyment that can only be found in Christ. He is looking forward to traveling with Team C3 and is excited for the opportunities the trip will present. Jason says he wants this year to "change my life."

Joshua Caplan *Kelowna, British Columbia*

Joshua was only recently saved at the age of twenty after leading a life in which he describes himself as being his "own god." Since his profession of faith he has experienced the joy of his new life in Christ and the thrill of sharing the Good News with the lost. He is very thankful to the Lord for His love and grace that follows him daily. He attends Kelowna Bible Chapel and is thankful for the willing support of the believers there to stir up the gift within him. His encouragement to everyone is: "Never give up on the Church. Why? Because the Lord is there."



Stephen Dick *Victoria, British Columbia*

Stephen, 21, is from Victoria, BC and fellowships at Westview Gospel Chapel. Raised in a Christian home, he was saved at the age of five when his mom explained what the true meaning of Christmas was to him. He writes: "But I just coasted along in my Christian walk until the year after high school, when I realized that I needed to live my life for God and not just say I was a Christian." That spurred him on to be involved more in his local assembly and he began to grow in the Lord. He is extremely excited to see what the Lord will do in his journey with Cross Canada Cruisers.

Dale Martin *Waterloo, Ontario*

Born into a Christian home, Dale, 19, grew up attending Heidelberg Bible Fellowship. Attending all the meetings with his parents, at the age of five he accepted the Lord as his Saviour. Since then he has grown to understand more fully what he did on that day and the need to follow the Lord completely. He writes: "In the last two years I have become dissatisfied with being 'lukewarm' and have decided I need to take up my cross and follow Jesus." In the time with Team C3 he hopes to come to know what it is to love the Lord his God with all his heart, soul and mind.



Elijah Middleton *Sudbury, Ontario*

Now 21, Elijah has been saved since the age of 14. He was raised in a non-Christian home but knew of Jesus. It was not until an evangelist took a special interest in him that he was won to the Lord. He is enjoying the life that a Christian has and the privilege of being an ambassador for Christ. Although not being used to this kind of ministry, he has felt the Lord leading him to come on Team C3. He says: "I know that if I am not living on the edge for Christ, I am taking up too much room." Elijah now fellowships with the believers at Sudbury Bible Fellowship.

Keith Trevolt *Wichita, Kansas*

Keith hales from Andover, Kansas, near Wichita. He was born in 1985 and born again in 1994. He deeply appreciates his upbringing in a Christian home and in a solid New Testament assembly. He says, "Four years ago, I started to realize that sitting back and being served was not a Christian's job." His heart was stirred to be a servant. He travelled on the first Good News on the Move team and found it to be a challenging time serving the Lord while travelling across the United States. He asks the saints to pray "for submission and conviction to follow the Lord's leading."



Please
visit

crosscanadacruisers.com

To send an encouraging message to either team, email:
encourage@crosscanadacruisers.com

NAUGATUCK VALLEY OUTREACH UPDATE

Some of the saints involved
in the outreach (shown here
at the Naugatuck Green)



More than 100 believers (40 or so from CT) joined the Good News on the Move team and the Waterbury assembly for *Good News Connecticut*. The dates were May 31–Jun 7, but a great deal of work was done before. Over several months, with recon visits, conference calls, prayer meetings, and materials preparation, the outreach began to take shape. The team was hosted at a Holiday Inn with enough meeting space for our “mission control” and evening events. They provided accommodations at a reasonable rate (\$17.50 per night quad, including a hot buffet breakfast).

Unfortunately we booked too many rooms. We were hoping to see more join from the east coast (with its many assemblies), but that was not to be. But others made the journey (in spite of steep gas prices) from distant states and provinces like FL, SD, IA, CO, MI, WI, QC and BC. How grateful we were for their help!

Why there?

GNOM has worked its way across the U.S. during the last three seasons, but with no forays into spiritually needy New England. After prayer and discussion with the elders of the CT assemblies, we decided to plan an effort in the Lower Naugatuck Valley (Waterbury, Naugatuck, Seymour, Ansonia, Derby and Shelton).

What was done?

The GNOM team arrived on Tuesday, May 27, and spent the rest of the week preparing for the outreach. They mapped out the door-to-door areas, selected potential parks for kid’s clubs and noon lunches (provided by local assemblies and the Christian school), as well as posting fliers for the evangelistic evening events in the area. Also a bag-stuffing hour with 55 believers produced 5000 packets ready for distribution—a land speed record! (The hard-working crews used up the material in two days and we needed a special night run from the Good News Granary in ON for resupply.) In all, close to \$20,000 worth of gospel materials was distributed. May the Lord continue to germinate it, with eternal life sprouting in many hearts.

Things began in earnest on Saturday with a family fun day at a park in Naugatuck. It looked at first like the event would be rained out, but the Lord parted the

storm so it missed us. All around, it poured rain. One girl professed to put her trust in the Lord there.

On Sunday afternoon, we gathered in Naugatuck to reach out to the thousands of people who had showed up for a community event called “Duck Day.” We were able to hand out thousands of CDs and had many conversations as well. Two girls named Anjail and Nafiza professed to come to know the Lord.

On Sunday evening we had Orientation with prayer and a fellowship time. Our anticipation of the blessing of the coming week was real—and rewarded! And after a good sleep (for most of us), we woke to a busy week. Each day was similar. Breakfast was served from 7–8 AM followed by an 8–10 AM session for prayer after reports of the opportunities on the previous day. By 10 AM, most headed out to the “field.” Some went in teams of two door to door, while others manned a literature table in front of a “big box” store, ran a free car wash, or prepared for kid’s clubs. Others manned the prayer room, prepared literature as needed or worked in “mission control.”

Everyone broke for lunch and fellowship at 1 PM on the Naugatuck Green. Then it was back to work for the afternoon. After supper on our own in local restaurants, we all prepared for the evening events on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Attendance was good with perhaps 10-20 visitors in need of the Savior each night.

Was it worth it?

Uplook was enabled by the Lord’s goodness to invest approximately \$40,000 in the effort. Some believers contributed generously to other costs. But certainly more than 40,000 people were contacted with the gospel. Is \$1 per soul too much? About 7,000 homes were visited. Almost 15,000 CDs were given away. Perhaps a dozen have professed salvation so far and some have attended the assembly. Follow-up has begun with the 200+ contacts made during the week. This is key to consolidating the gains made during the outreach. Some Bible studies have been started and some neighborhood mothers are eager that the kid’s clubs continue. This is no time to flag. Please redouble your prayers, watering the seed and upholding those who continue the arduous work there. *To God be all the glory!* 🕊

The Furtherance of the Gospel

Display the Light in darkest times.

"But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel" (Php. 1:12).



It wasn't a prison in our modern sense of the word. There were no television sets, no exercise periods, and no ombudsman safeguarding prisoner's rights. There was no air conditioning on the hot summer days and no central heating for the cold winter nights. There was no cafeteria offering balanced meals and no sanitary facilities. It was a stinking, wretched, rat-infested dungeon. And there sat Paul, arguably the greatest Christian ever, waiting for earthly justice to have its say.

How would you have felt under these circumstances? Perhaps scared, defeated, and despairing. Why would God allow such awful circumstances in the life of His child? Where was the God of justice? Where was the God of love? What would the future hold? How could you make it through another day under such circumstances? Without distraction, entertainment, or comfort, these questions would rattle through your brain a hundred times a day. So where would that leave your mental state?

Paul's experience

Paul was no armchair general, demanding that others fight in battles that he

watched from the sidelines. When Paul used words like *"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound"* (Php. 4:12), he most certainly knew what he was talking about. Regardless of what a Roman prison would do to our mental state, we know Paul was not defeated by his circumstances. Indeed Paul could say, *"the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel"* (Php. 1:12).

Was this positive thinking? Was Paul merely hoping that his imprisonment served some higher purpose? Hardly. Both for his benefit and ours, Paul was made to understand the purpose of his imprisonment. In verse 13, we read, *"So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace."* The word translated "palace" sometimes refers to the governor's palace, but since Paul was most likely in Rome at this point, it probably referred to the Praetorian Guard. The nine Praetorian cohorts were roughly equivalent to a Roman legion and were made up of about 9,000 elite soldiers. The Scripture tells us that the whole Praetorian Guard knew Paul was in prison for the sake of Christ.

What about us?

What would we give for the opportunity to reach so many people for Christ? Most of us would earnestly desire the chance to reach thousands with the gospel. But would we be willing to give up our freedom? In fact, we can dream about opportunities for the furtherance of the gospel, but if these dreams are to be realized, it may cost us everything. Perhaps it will cost us our secular employment, our comfortable lifestyle, our freedom, or even our lives. But if we are serious about seeking the furtherance of the gospel, all this and more could be required of us.

The furtherance of the gospel doesn't always proceed in the ways in which we would anticipate. What if we were given the task of evangelizing a military unit of 9,000 elite soldiers? How would we go about it? Perhaps we would print tracts with the testimony of a former military man. Perhaps we would rent an outreach center close to the banks of the barracks. Perhaps we would order special

“military edition” Bibles. We would have a plan, and, certainly, there is nothing wrong with planning a gospel outreach. Indeed, some gospel outreaches should be better planned! But in all our efforts to plan an outreach, we must be open to the Lord’s doing something unexpected. He certainly had an interesting way to reach the Praetorian Guard!

Of course, Paul’s experience flies in the face of the modern “health and wealth prosperity gospel,” which is, of course, no real gospel. This false gospel clearly lacks the ability to save. Furthermore, its full focus is on the fulfillment of earthly desires. So what would this false gospel say to the imprisoned Apostle Paul? “You’re a failure because you lack faith!” “It isn’t God’s will that you should suffer!” Or how about this one: “It is God’s absolute will for you to live in a big house and never suffer a thorn in the flesh!” Yes, we can be assured they would be saying this to Paul because this is exactly what they preach today. But all of this is rubbish. It was God’s will that Paul suffer in prison for the sake of the furtherance of the Gospel, and all the twisted exegesis imaginable won’t change this fact.

Could it be?

Could the Lord be using the unusual and difficult circumstances in our lives to reach people with the gospel? Well, if it really is true that God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), then we can be assured that He is using difficult circumstances in our lives for the furtherance of the gospel. Experienced saints will be able to tell story after story of the Lord’s moving in difficult circumstances for the spread of the gospel. And in each of these stories, God is the hero! In each story, the Lord ends up with the glory. I know a woman for whom the tragic death of her son was the trigger for her to enter full-time Christian ministry. In a place that seldom hears the gospel, she calls people to be born again. But less drastic circumstances can also be used of God, like my own lack of preparation for a university exam. I was in the university cafeteria studying for an exam when a classmate came along and

asked, “So what do you believe?” I failed the exam but had an opportunity to share the gospel quite openly.

Is God being cruel in using difficult circumstances for the furtherance of the gospel? Are we helpless and tragic puppets that God uses for His own purposes? God forbid! When we go to be with the Lord Jesus Christ, will we regret the trials which were used to bring us to Christ? Will we begrudge any difficulty which results in precious souls being saved? What if imprisonment was the means by which 9,000 people came to hear the gospel? Would we criticize our Heavenly Father for even one minute of our imprisonment? Absolutely not. We would echo Eli in 1 Samuel 3:18, “*He is the Lord; let Him do what is good in His eyes.*”

The furtherance of the gospel may involve suffering on our part. So what will sustain us? The answer is found in Philippians 4:12f: “*I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound:*

every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Even when we are following the will of God, our own strength is insufficient to sustain us. We cannot do God’s will in the power of the flesh, much less have spiritual success. It is only through Christ who strengthens us that we can succeed in the furtherance of the gospel. The strength that Christ provides is not some ethereal hope. It is not our telling ourselves that it will all work out in the end. It is the real strength Christ provides day by day through the Holy Spirit, whereby we stand in the day of difficulty. This was the experience of Paul, and it can be our experience today as we seek to share our faith and stand for Christ. 🕊



It is only through Christ who strengthens us that we can succeed in the furtherance of the gospel.

The Hope of the Gospel

No God, no hope. Know God, know hope.

From ages past, God had a message of good news, a gospel of hope.

The situation is hopeless!" Such statements of despair can be heard in every people group of the world, any hour of any day. There is likely someone in your neighborhood who is currently seeing life this way—maybe even in your own home. Is this what God intended when He created humans? No, but it became one of the hardest consequences of sin since Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden. The good news is that there is indeed hope!

"The creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope, because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans ... in pain together until now. ...even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man

sees, why does he yet hope for it? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (Rom. 8:20-25)

A promise in the past

Having reached many Gentiles, the day came when Paul found himself on trial before a council of unbeliev-

ing Jewish leaders, with whom he himself had been closely affiliated just a few years earlier. In fact, such a group had commissioned him to go to persecute Christians in surrounding territories. His life had been

magnificently and eternally changed by his personal encounter with the resurrected Christ. When he got the brief chance to explain himself, what did he choose to tell the Council? *"I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"* (Acts 23:6)

Later, on trial before Agrippa and Festus, he elaborated further and said, *"And now I stand ... for the hope of the promise made by God unto our fathers: Unto which promise our twelve tribes ... hope to come. For which hope's sake ... I am accused of the Jews"* (Acts 26:6-7). He concluded his defense by saying, *"Having therefore obtained help from God, I continue unto this day ... saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shed light unto the people, and to the Gentiles"* (Acts 26:22-23).

From ages past, God had a message of good news, a gospel of hope. He offered it as *"the hope of Israel"* (Acts 28:20). But it was also true, even in the Old Testament, that this hope was also intended for the Gentiles (cf. Mt. 12:21 and Rom. 15:12¹). God was pointing to a resurrection to eternal righteousness (Acts 24:15) and the proof of this promise was given by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This historical fact was to give them hope.

A possession in the present

To the apostles, this hope was not just some vague form of wishful longing. Rather, it was absolutely sure; it was a confident anticipation. Though not yet fully seen, it was a possession they had in their day, as do we in ours. The writer to the Hebrews would say, *"That ... we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*



Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters ...within the veil” (Heb. 6:18-19).

The gospel proclaims the resurrected and ascended Christ who has gone ahead of us into the most holy place. This fact makes the soul of the believer completely secure, regardless of the storms that may threaten our peace. Our hope is in Christ, the bedrock into which we are embedded. Furthermore, the Spirit reminds us that our “hope of glory” is “Christ in you” (Col. 1:27).

That is why Paul could say so confidently, “you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (Col. 1:23). Being a minister of the gospel, Paul was thereby a minister of hope. This has present day implications.

The Spirit led John to write, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that has this hope [fixed on] Him purifies himself, even as He is pure” (1 Jn. 3:2-3). The Scriptures teach that God takes His people through a lifelong process of purification. John implies that the hope of the gospel will be a catalyst for it. In a chemical reaction, a catalyst is a substance that makes the reaction occur more effectively, without being used up itself. So it is with hope: if we truly appreciate what the Father has in store for eternity, we will be transformed far more effectively here and now. Yet our hope is not consumed in the process; it is always there—in fact, it is laid up in heaven (Col. 1:4-5).


Peter, too, shows its practicality: “In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Pet. 3:15, NIV). The assumption here is that if this hope is real to us, it will be noticeable to others who do not have such a hope; there will be opportunities to tell them of Christ. How confidently and joyfully the apostles spoke of this hope! How about us? Do we appreciate that we have something that others don’t have? God intends for our confidence to be an evangelistic tool.

A fulfillment in the future

The most exciting component of the hope of the gospel is the future that we eagerly anticipate. Romans 8 tells us that we possess the hope but do not yet possess that in which we hope. True, and yet we do, since our hope is in God, and He indwells us by His Spirit until the day when all aspects of who we are (spirit, soul, and body) will be united in redemption. It is the hope of righteousness (Gal. 5:5) that is yet to come, though it has begun now. It is the hope of His calling (Eph. 1:18), even though we have already been made His children.

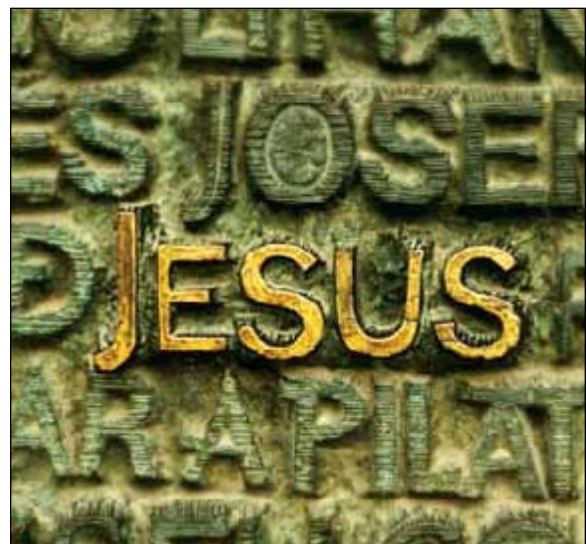
Our future in heaven is a future with Him. It is not about having our circumstances changed from this fallen earthly scene to one of celestial beauty. Rather it is “hope of the glory of God”

(Rom. 5:2). It is “He on whom we have set our hope” (2 Cor. 1:10). “We have fixed our hope on the living God” (1 Tim. 4:10; 5:5; 6:17). Our “blessed hope [is] the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

As 1 Peter 1 summarizes, it is a living hope that was promised long ages ago and that the prophets of old and the angels long to look into. It is meant to carry us through our present trials and struggles. We can be girded and ready for action, as we “fix [our] hope completely on the grace to be brought to [us] at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” He Himself is our hope (1 Tim. 1:1). Therefore, the good news of Jesus Christ is indeed a gospel of hope. 

endnote

1 These NT passages quote from the OT; the word “trust” in the KJV is translated “hope” elsewhere.



...it is a living hope that was promised long ages ago...

The Gospel: A Literary Marvel

Four invaluable portraits

“What is most important is to see and know through these narratives Him whom they reveal.”

God understands our natural limitations to comprehend spiritual and eternal matters. So, in grace, He used various literary forms in the Old Testament, including word pictures, prophecies, shadows, types, allegories, symbols, and plain language, to preface the revelation of His supreme gift of love to the world: His own Son. This would allow humanity to recognize Christ when He arrived. Then, in the New Testament, God demonstrated His infinite wisdom by creating a vivid literary form to express the grandeur of His Son's life and sacrifice. The new literary form is called “the gospel.” So great would be this love revelation to the world that only the gospel could declare the “mystery of godliness”: God manifest in the flesh.

The meaning of gospel

The word “gospel” is found 101 times in the New Testament. In the original language, the noun form *euaggelion* simply means “a good message,” while the verb form *euaggelizo* refers to “announcing the good news,” or “to evangelize.” The gospel message is good news from heaven to all humanity: through Christ, God's peace has come to mankind, or, as the angelic host declared to the bewildered shepherds near Bethlehem so long ago, “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will, toward men*” (Lk. 2:14). Samuel Ridout comments on the significance of this message and the unique fashion in which God conveyed it:

It is the consideration of such amazing and wondrous themes as these which make the four Gospels unique in the entire Word of God. These give us the history of the incarnation, and show us “that Eternal Life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.” The Epistles give us the precious truths which

flow from the great fact of the incarnation and the Cross, but the Gospels show us the Person Himself, how He lived and how He died. There must therefore be a special importance attaching to this narrative. No other part of the New Testament could be substituted for the Gospels.¹

Uniqueness of the Gospels

As one examines the four Gospels, it is quickly observed that deliberate variations, exclusions, and inclusions of content exist. There are different styles of language and arrangement of subjects. The Spirit of God never intended the Gospels to be a multiplication of narratives, but rather a necessity for completeness.

Likewise, the Holy Spirit made no attempt to convey a complete biography of the Lord's life, for lengthy gaps of personal history are apparent. A brief breakdown of the content matter within the Gospels clearly demonstrates this point. Of the eighty-nine chapters in the four accounts, eighty-five pertain to the Lord's last three years on earth, and twenty-eight of these focus solely on His final week. Therefore, roughly one third of the four Gospels is devoted to the specific details surrounding the events of Calvary. The gospel focus is a Person, not a biography of a person. The Gospels reveal what the Father longs for us to appreciate: the profound excellencies of His Son. C. I. Scofield summarizes the main purpose of the four Gospels:

The four Gospels record the eternal being, human ancestry, birth, life and ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus the Christ, Son of God and Son of Man. Taken together, they set forth, not a biography but a Person. The fact that the four Gospels present a Person rather than a complete biography



FACETS OF PERFECTION *continued*

As we view the
Lord Jesus Christ
by the light of
divine revelation,
we learn to appre-
ciate the fullness
of His matchless
splendor...



indicates the spirit in which they should be approached. What is most important is to see and know through these narratives Him whom they reveal. It is of less importance to endeavor to piece together a full account of His life from these inspired records (John 21:25).²

Harmony of the Gospels?

God's written "good news" to mankind is presented from the four unique vantage points found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Many have tried in vain to fully harmonize these accounts, but they cannot be fully harmonized; each gospel stands alone as an inspired testimony of a unique theme of Christ's life and ministry. A. T. Robertson wrote a classic reference work entitled *A Harmony of the Gospels*. He acknowledges the difficulty of harmonizing the Gospels in the preface of that book:

A harmony of the Gospels cannot meet every phase of modern criticism.... No effort is made to reconcile all the divergent statements of various details in the different Gospels. The differences challenge the student's interest as much as the correspondences and are natural marks of individual work.³

The intended purpose and distinct content of each of the four Gospels must be understood to more fully appreciate what God has spoken to us by His Son (Heb. 1:2). J. G. Bellett notes:

The four Gospels are coincident testimonies to the Lord Jesus Christ, and valuable as such. But we are not to read them as merely explanatory or supplemental. We get a complete view of our Lord Jesus Christ only by discerning their distinctness in character and purpose. Even in the histories of men we may perceive this. One biographer may give us the man in his domestic, another in his political life; but in order to be fully acquainted with him, we must see him in both of these, and perhaps in many other connections. And one of such biographers will not only select particular facts, but notice distinct circumstances in the same facts. The same thing we see in the four Gospels.⁴

Construction of the Gospels

Mark provides the most concise and chronologically accurate gospel account; He is presenting the "doings" of the Lord. John would be the next most chronological account of the Lord's ministry but is characterized by vast gaps in the life of Christ.

Generally speaking, Matthew and Luke do not strive

to record events in sequence, but in accordance with their associated themes of royalty and humanity, respectively. For this cause, miracles, discourses, events, and related facts are grouped together to ensure the fullest development of deliberate themes. For example, there is a variation between Matthew and Luke's record of events in Christ's temptation (testing) account. Why? Luke's order of temptations is chronological, while Matthew arranged it climactically unto kingship, which is the vantage point of his gospel record.

God employed quite a variety of writers and styles to portray His Son to the world. Matthew and John were personally disciples by Christ, while Mark and Luke were not. Two authors were apostles, one was a Gentile believer, and one a later Jewish convert to Christ. One of the apostles and one of the non-apostles recorded the events, generally, as they happened, while the remaining two demonstrated the richness of unique presentation.

The unique gospel themes preclude a full harmony of facts but serve as an invitation to appreciate the distinct glories of Christ: Matthew presents Christ as the Jewish Messiah—the rightful heir to the throne of David. Mark conveys the selfless ministry of Christ as the Servant of Jehovah. Luke portrays the humanity and holy character Christ. John affirms the divine essence of the Lord Jesus as the Son of God.

As one slowly rotates a prism in white light, various colors are refracted through the prism such that the color one actually sees will depend upon one's viewpoint. Same prism, same light, but distinctions in radiance are observed from various vantage points. As we view the Lord Jesus Christ by the light of divine revelation, we learn to appreciate the fullness of His matchless splendor from the diverse gospel illuminations. The Son is thoroughly and altogether lovely, as the Father fittingly proclaims to us through the four gospel records. 📌

Endnotes

1 Samuel Ridout, *The Serious Christian* (Charlotte, NC: Books for Christians), p.12.

2 C. I. Scofield, *The New Scofield Study Bible* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.987.

3 A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1922), Preface.

4 J. G. Bellett, *The Evangelists, Meditations on the Four Gospels* (Addison, IL: Bible Truth Publishers), Intro.



ELDER HELPS *To feed, to take heed, and to lead*



Leadership Starts at Home – Part 2

Am I aiming high enough?

In our last column, we considered the fact that as wonderful as it is to have saved, moral children, that is but the beginning of their lives of faith. The Lord desires that we raise our children to enjoy a vibrant, transforming relationship with Him and to be whole-heartedly involved in His work. Leadership in the home entails the father's God-given responsibility to foster spiritual life, fruit, growth, devotion, and service in his family. To this end, we should ask ourselves two questions.

Is my primary goal for my children secular or spiritual?

Many parents are eager to see their children succeed academically, athletically, artistically, or materially. But what about spiritually? "Of course I want to see my children prosper spiritually!" we say. Good, but that isn't the point. The point is, do we want to see them prosper spiritually more than we want to see them prosper in other areas? Does our desire to see them prosper spiritually eclipse all of those lesser goals, and are we working to that end? Consider some examples:

Do I invest more time, money, and effort in my children's hobbies than I invest in their spiritual lives? Do they see a passion in me for their hobbies that exceeds my passion for their spiritual growth?

If I allow my children to miss meetings for reasons that wouldn't justify their missing other activities (like school), I'm teaching them that spiritual service is of secondary importance.

When my children's other activities conflict with assembly meetings, what is characteristically given the priority? Allowing them to regularly miss meetings for other activities (like a part-time job) is teaching them, albeit unintentionally, that spiritual matters are optional in life and need only be engaged in when we don't have more important things to do.

Children are uncomfortably perceptive. They notice what we give precedence to and draw conclusions from that about what we value most.

Have I set my sights high enough? Have you ever considered that it is possible to have a spiritual goal that still

falls short? We are deeply burdened about their salvation, and rightly so! We are also eager to see morality produced in them, and that, too, is certainly a noble and essential goal. But do we go beyond these first steps?

Paul's desire was first that people be saved, but then that they press on to maturity. He speaks of such maturity as Christ-likeness. "*My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you*" (Gal. 4:19). He longed to see believers grow spiritually and he labored—hard—to that end.

But we have a greater example than Paul. Our heavenly Father has shown us what real fatherhood is and He, too, describes His purpose for us in terms of Christ-likeness. It is His desire that we be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). Galatians 4 contrasts children (vv. 1-3) with sons (vv. 4-7). Sonship refers to that maturity of role and character that is seen in those who are no longer merely children. Our Father wants His children to grow and prosper spiritually.

Once our children are saved—and, in many cases, that occurs at a very young age—do we have definite further spiritual desires for our children? Or are we aimless, hoping in some vague way that they will do well spiritually, but not even clear in our own minds as to what that might mean? The Lord may graciously overrule and enable our children to grow beyond the goals we have for them. But surely the path to spiritual growth in their lives will be smoother if our desires for them are in line with the Lord's.

Let us, as fathers, honestly examine the true nature of the goals we have for our children. Can we truly say that we desire them to prosper spiritually above all else? If so, are we working to that end? Such spiritual leadership is necessary in all fathers. But it is particularly necessary in elders, for a man who is unconcerned or unable to foster spiritual growth in his own house will not be able to encourage it in the house of God. 📌

We appreciate the comments and questions we receive. They help us deal with current needs. Please keep them coming to elders@uplook.org

The Word of the Gospel

What's in a word?

"And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe." Acts 15:7



What is this word of the gospel? In a word, it's an expression. We say, "May I have a word with you?" Of course, we mean a complete conversation and not just one word. We read in the Scriptures about the word of this salvation, the word of grace, the word of faith, the word of reconciliation, the word of truth, and the word of life. These all have to do with expressing the fullness of a message, yet they are referred to as just a word. So, if you had to sum it all up in a word, what would that word be?

The context in which this word of the gospel is given was that the message had gone forth and many Jews trusted in the Lord Jesus as their promised Messiah. The Word of God spread, grew, and multiplied. But when the door opened to the Gentiles through the ministry of Paul and Barnabas, some Jews sought to bring these Gentile converts under the law through circumcision. Thus, Paul and Barnabas traveled to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles about this question (Acts 15:2). The question would be answered in a word.

It was amidst this dispute that Peter declared, "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe" (Acts 15:7). The word of the gospel refers to the message of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter, the one to whom the Lord had promised the "keys of the kingdom," had used those keys on three separate occasions. First, on the day of Pentecost, he opened the door to the Jews. Next, he opened the door to the Samaritans through Philip's ministry. Lastly, at the house of Cornelius, Peter unlocked the door to the Gentiles. It was only fitting that he answered this question with the word that he

had preached. It was the word of the gospel.

It is also certainly clear by the expression "the word" that it was the same word given all three times Peter preached. The Jews, the Samaritans, and the Gentiles all heard the same message. Read Peter's sermons in the book of Acts. His word, the message of the gospel, was always the same. He presented Christ crucified, buried, and risen again, according to the Scriptures. What a word it was!

The word and the Word

If you had just one word to say, what would it be? Ask John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, for a word on this matter. He wrote, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* Follow the thought as John revealed, *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"* (Jn. 1:1, 14).

Even in his first epistle, John still wrote of the Lord Jesus saying, *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life"* (1 Jn. 1:1).

Not only John, but throughout the Old Testament, all the promises and all the prophets spoke of the Messiah. Their word was that He was coming. After all was said and done, the writer to the Hebrews concludes, *"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son"* (Heb. 1:1-2). In other words, God had the last word, and Jesus is God's final Word!

After nearly two thousand years, it's the same today. The word of the gospel, and the gospel in a word, is Jesus. 🕊

The Preparation of the Gospel

The conversion of Cornelius

“While God was privately working in the life of Cornelius, He was also privately working in the heart of His servant.”

The conversion of Cornelius in Acts 10 provides every serious student of the Word with further insight into the way that God works in people’s lives to bring them to Himself—both by preparing their hearts to receive the gospel and also by preparing the hearts of His people to share it. It is a magnificent example of how the Lord brings these two works together, and how He conveys and confirms the gospel message.

Acts 10 is a pivotal chapter in the unfolding drama of the early church. First, it represents the fulfillment of the Lord’s words to Peter when He stated in Matthew 16 that to him would be given the “keys of the kingdom heaven.” This statement did not refer to some mysterious power or ritual but rather to the simple fact that, through his witness, Peter would be the first to open the door of faith to both Jew and Gentile. This occurred with Israel at Pentecost in Acts 2 and with the Gentiles here in Acts 10.

Further, this chapter demonstrates the power and extent of the gospel. Cornelius’ conversion was the last in a series of three prominent conversions extending back to

Acts 8. Each conversion represents salvation through three different means to three different people groups originating from the sons of Noah. The first was an Ethiopian eunuch who came from the line of Ham. He came to the Lord through personal means, the result of the faithful witness of Philip the evangelist. The second was Saul of Tarsus, who came from the line of Shem and who came to the Lord through providential means, being struck down on the road to Damascus, apart from human instrumentality. The third was Cornelius, a Gentile from the line of Japheth.

He came to know the Saviour through Peter’s preaching of the Word. Taken together, they remind us that the gospel is for all people, and we have been commissioned to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all nations through a variety of means. But what makes this passage extremely practical is the insight it gives into how God works through His Spirit in the preparation and proclamation of the good news of Christ.

How God prepares the heart of the sinner (vv. 1-8)

A centurion of great authority, Cornelius enjoyed a good reputation with the Jewish nation (v.22), quite an anomaly considering he worked for the much-despised Roman army. Eight noble qualities characterized this man (vv.2, 22), who is described as a devout person who feared God, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. From all appearances, it might seem he was a believer, having repudiated the false gods of his nation. But according to Acts 11:14, he must “*hear the words by which he and his household will be saved.*” In other words, as good and moral as he was, Cornelius still needed to be saved—a good point to keep in mind when witnessing to “nice” people: they need the Lord Jesus too, and, because they do, God works in their lives even before their salvation. With Cornelius, this work came through an angel who instructed him to send for Peter who was in Joppa.

How God prepares the heart of His servant (vv. 9-16)

But while God was working in the life of Cornelius, He was also working in the heart of His servant. While praying at noon in the house of Simon the tanner, Peter saw a vision of a great white sheet coming down from heaven filled with both clean and unclean



The remains of the ancient seaport of Joppa (Yafo).

PIECES IN PLACE *continued*

Illustration of
Cornelius and his
household hearing
the gospel through
the Apostle Peter.



animals (vv.10-11). A voice came out of heaven instructing Peter to kill and eat. Despite Peter's vehement objections, the voice repeated the instruction two times before the sheet was taken back into heaven.

What a disturbing picture it must have been to Peter whose personal convictions were being challenged by the Lord. God was breaking down Peter's prejudices in order to prepare him to take the gospel beyond his own people. Perhaps He began that process with Peter's visit to the house of Simon the tanner, a person who worked with the skins of dead animals, totally abhorrent to any God-fearing Jew. Now He was further preparing Peter with a vision that was equally challenging. The Lord was setting the stage for the events that would soon take place, helping Peter understand that He was bringing together both Jew and Gentile into one new entity, the church, made up of every type of sinner whom God would cleanse through the blood of Christ. Those sinners ranged from the "domesticated" animals and high-flying birds of the air, right down to the wild beasts and "creeping things" that our world is filled with today. We may also need to change our attitude toward those outside our comfort zone. The Lord used this vision to realign his servant's thinking and prepare him for his divinely-appointed encounter with Cornelius.

How God brings the two together (vv. 17-33)

While Peter wondered what this vision meant, the servants sent by Cornelius arrived at the door. Had they arrived earlier, Peter would not have been prepared. Had they arrived later, the impact of the vision might have waned. God's timing is always perfect! In response, Peter left the next day for Caesarea. What a sight it must have been as Jews and Gentiles traveled together in harmony, another precursor of things to come. How unlike Jonah who, centuries before, left the same place—Joppa—and fled from the presence of the Lord, unwilling to bring God's message to a despised nation. But such is the work of grace in the life of a believer when the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts (Rom. 5:5).

Arriving at Caesarea, the apostle found many gathered together awaiting his much-anticipated visit. It was evidence of the extent of Cornelius' popularity among his family and friends, and it is a reminder of the vast spiritual potential that awaits every witnessing opportunity. Declaring that they were present *"to hear all things that are*

commanded thee by God" (v.33), their hearts were fertile ground for the gospel seed.

How God conveys the message (vv. 34-43)

Opening his mouth, Peter began to preach the Word to his attentive audience. The components of his message included the attributes of God (vv.34-35), the moral character of Christ (vv.35-38), His crucifixion (v.39), His bodily resurrection, (vv.40-41), the Great Commission (v.42), and an offer of salvation to whosoever believes (v.43). His preaching was personal, powerful, and to the point. This is the type of preaching that yields results. As stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1), we are not to tamper with the Master's goods, but faithfully dispense what we have been entrusted with, like cold water to a thirsty soul (Prov. 25:25).

How God confirms the message (vv. 44-48)

God confirmed the reception of the gospel message in a number of ways. While Peter was still preaching, the Holy Spirit fell upon those who heard the Word (v.44) without the need for "arm-twisting" or long, drawn-out emotional appeals. They magnified God with their speech (v.46), were immediately baptized, and enjoyed Peter's fellowship, requesting him to stay a few more days (v.48). It was proof positive of the reception of the salvation of those who heard and received His Word.

The conversion of Cornelius speaks to believers today in many ways. It tells us that God is preparing people privately to hear the gospel message, that there are many God-fearing people who are without Christ, and that while God is working in the lives of the unsaved, He may be at work in our lives as well, breaking down our prejudices so that we go will into all the world with the good news of salvation.

Centuries before, King Solomon floated large cedars down from Lebanon to begin the work of building his glorious temple in Jerusalem, a work that included the city of Joppa (2 Chron. 2:16). Now God was building a new temple, the Church, a habitation of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:22) made up of Jew and Gentile, a work that also included the city of Joppa. Peter was one of those whom the Lord had promised, *"I will make you fishers of men"* (Mt. 4:19). With the conversion of Cornelius, Peter caught a very big "fish" that did not get away! And so will we, if we let God have His way with us. 🔗

The Person of the Gospel

"The gospel of God ... concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 1:1, 3)

Mankind's primary need is not for a teacher or a problem solver or even a miracle worker, but a Saviour to die in our place.

The central element of the gospel is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Unlike the many religions of the world, true Christianity cannot be disassociated from its founder. It is not enough to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is not enough to seek to emulate His character. It is not enough to attempt to put into practice His moral principles. The Bible reveals that true salvation is found in a relationship with a living Person.

An examination of the world's religions shows that they are systems attempting to somehow link man with God, of man attempting to reach God. As such, religion is a system based on merit or works, enabling a human being on earth to reach God or heaven. The true gospel is a revelation from

heaven to man. It is that God came down to become a man and make a way for man to be forever with the God who created him. Essential to this plan is the unique person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You may ask, "Why was it necessary for Him to take

on a body of flesh?" The answer lies in part because He came to die for the sin of the world. In order to die He had to become man. Yet, in order for His death to have eternal significance, He had to be more than just an ordinary man. He had to retain His deity. Truly, this is a great mystery and the Bible states that it is so. While many have questioned the validity of such a plan, there is no question that this is the plan the Bible reveals.

Truly man

Paul, an apostle, begins his great doctrinal treatise known as the book of Romans by stating, *"The gospel of God ... concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh..."* As far as the earthly lineage of the Lord Jesus is concerned, He was "made of the seed of David."

One might choose to start a religion, but one cannot choose to be born into a particular family. "Seed of David" refers to the earthly, human lineage of the Lord Jesus. His entrance into the human race came through the royal line of David, giving Him the legal right to be king. *"The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David"* (Lk. 1:32). However, since He was virgin-born (Mt. 1:23-25), He was not corrupted by mankind's sin.

Truly God

Philippians 2:6 says, *"[Jesus Christ] being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God."* Since He eternally exists as God, the rights of deity were not something to be grasped at or taken as though they were not already rightfully His. Yet, He came into this world and chose to subject Himself to the will of the Father. The passage goes on to say that the One who *"took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men"* and, ultimately, died the death of the cross, was none other than God the Son.



CENTERED ON THE SON *continued*

He never ceased to be who and what He was before. These verses show that He added something He was not before (very man), but He never became less than what He always had been (very God).

Fully God and fully man

Mankind's primary need is not for a teacher or a problem solver or even a miracle worker, but a Saviour to die in our place and deliver us from the condemnation under which we abide (Jn. 3:36). This Saviour must be man, for only man could die. Yet He must also be God, for only in being God could His death be of sufficient worth to have value for the whole world.

He must also arise from the grave, proving that the corruption of sin did not reside in His humanity. To this the Scriptures give clear and ample witness. This is the very heart of the gospel: *"Therefore He saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But He, whom God raised again, saw no corruption"* (Acts 13:35-37).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest proof of His deity. While on earth, He claimed to be God, and, had He not been raised from the dead, His claims would have proven to be false. But He was *"declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead"* (Rom. 1:4).

The historical record

The followers of the Lord Jesus first made a public proclamation on the day of Pentecost. Peter's words are recorded in Acts 2. In the English Bible, this rather lengthy message takes up 26 or so verses and almost half of these verses refer to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. While there is passing reference to His miracles (v. 22), the sum and substance of this message is that Jesus has been raised from the dead and that God has made Him both Lord and Christ.

This early message is representative of the preaching of the followers of the Lord Jesus. They walked with Him for the years of His earthly life. They heard His teaching and some of them would go on to detail that teaching in written form. Yet, they preached the Person, alive from the dead and ascended into the heavens. He was alive and because of who He was and what He had done, forgiveness of sins was available to



all who placed their trust in Him.


In the message of Paul at Antioch we find the same emphasis: *"And though they found no cause of death in Him, yet desired they Pilate that He should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre. But God raised Him from the dead: And He was seen many days of them which came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people"* (Acts 13:28-31).

Paul presented the historical facts of the gospel, and then stated that it was through Jesus Christ, the One raised from the dead and now alive, that forgiveness was to be found. *"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses"* (Acts 13:38-39).

Salvation found in a Person

When the early church set out to preach the gospel, they preached the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you ever wondered why they didn't proclaim to people the ethical teachings of Christ or make more than a few passing references to His miracles? Instead, they preached Christ as a living Saviour, crucified and raised from the dead. The gospel is not just a message about the Lord Jesus Christ; He Himself is the message. *"Philip ... preached Christ to them"* (Acts 8:5). *"We preach Christ crucified"* (1 Cor. 1:23).

The apostles and early followers of the Lord knew what many in our times seem to have forgotten or discarded: the moral and ethical teachings of the Lord Jesus can save no one. It was not a common view of morality or "family values" that bound those early believers together, but a fellowship in the great redemptive truths of the gospel, the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. With this as their foundation, they launched out to proclaim the reality of a living Saviour to a lost and dying world.

So it is in the day in which we live. The heart of the gospel message is Jesus Christ. He died for our sins, yet, because of His essential nature, death could not hold Him and He rose from the grave, victorious over sin and death. He extends His offer of forgiveness to all who come unto God by Him. Salvation is found in a Person, and that Person is the Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man. 



PhotoDisc

Laser light is used as the measure of things today. In 1983, the metre was redefined as “the length of the path traveled by light in a vacuum during a time interval of 1/299,792,458 of a second.”

Someday everything will be measured by The Light.

God’s Measuring Tape

Benchmarks of blessing

The human race has always found it helpful to know the size of things, and especially handy if one could measure by a body part—since such a measuring device is always nearby. Thus the foot, the span, and the cubit (the length of the arm from the fingertip to the elbow). There was also the hand (at 4 inches, still used for the height of horses) or the finger. The difficulty, of course—we are not all issued the same sized body parts.

During the reign of Richard Lionheart, the Assize of Measures in 1196 stated that “Throughout the realm there shall be the same yard of the same size and it should be of iron.” I won’t bore you with the continuing evolution of increasingly accurate ways of calculating such things. But man keeps trying to perfect his measurements of finitude.

Who knows the true measure of things? The Maker of all things, of course. Who has not been nonplussed by the words: “*The nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing...All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity*” (Isa. 40:15-17).

And yet... And yet He *does* measure His creature man as more than nothing. The Saviour gave us a little hope (without inflating our egos) when He said, “*Ye are of more value than many sparrows*” (Mt 10:31). And, frail clay pots that we are, He poured into us out of His own bounty, a treasure so breathtaking that it was in every way beyond human calculation.

There are hints, however, that this lavish gospel gift can be at least approximated, but in ways that shrink light years to the insignificance of a glow worm’s beams. The apostle Paul shares with us, by divine inspiration, some glimpse at the Metre of the Divine Archives.

For example, we read: “*Having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will*” (Eph. 1:5). If you can calculate the delight of His infinite heart in accomplishing His own perfect will, you may begin to grasp the wonders of His predetermination of the believer’s sonship, His joy in bringing us to glory.

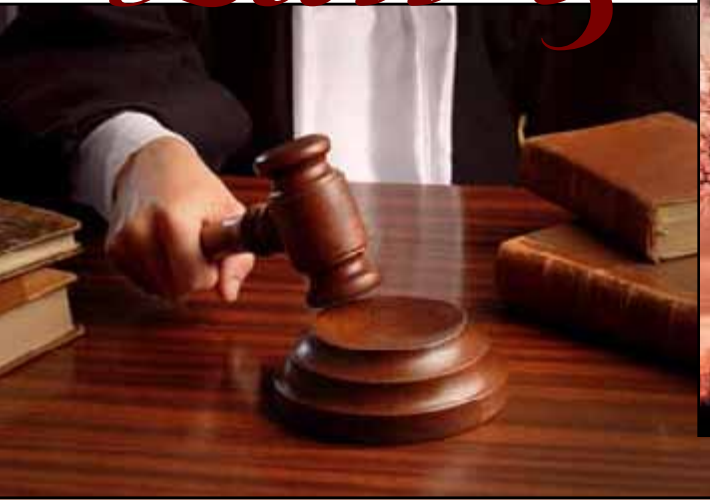
Or think of this: “*In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*” (v. 7). You may attempt computing the redemptive value of the Saviour’s blood only if you can measure the “*the breadth, and length, and depth, and height*” (3:18) of the storehouses of Love’s unsearchable grace. You won’t even come close.

Then try to calculate this, if you can: “*Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself*” (1:9). In other words, if you think you can reach back far enough to grasp God’s predestination, then plumb the depths of Christ’s redemption, do you dare attempt to scale the heights of His inscrutable plans?

In all of this vastness, one thing we do know for sure. The plans designed for our eternal bliss have been made “*according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will*” (1:11). What He wills, He works. What He plans, He performs. Rest assured.

One more thing we know: “*...the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power*” (1:19). Behind His purposes there is power (*dunamis*), exceeding great power; it is according to the working (*energeia*, efficiency) of His mighty (*ischus*, strong) power (*kratos*, force). Power, power, wonder-working power, the real strong force—all to accomplish His will, to lavish His grace, to reveal His mystery to us. 🔴

Law & the Gospel



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THE LAW COMMANDS and makes us know
What duties to our God we owe;
But 'tis the Gospel must reveal
Where lies our strength to do His will.

The Law discovers guilt and sin
And shows how vile our hearts have been;
The Gospel only can express
Forgiving love and cleansing grace.

What curses doth the Law denounce
Against the man who fails but once!
But in the Gospel Christ appears,
Pardoning the guilt of numerous years.

My soul, no more attempt to draw
Thy life and comfort from the Law
Fly to the hope the Gospel gives;
The man that trusts the promise lives.

—ISAAC WATTS, 1674-1748

It is finished!