



THE GOSPEL GLEANNER

Where Has the Time Gone?

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It will have been 365 days, 8760 hours, 525,600 minutes and 31,536,000 seconds when the year of 2007 comes to an end. Are you happy with the way you have spent the time this year? Is God? Yes, we needed the time to rest and relax and recreate, but did we do too much of that? Maybe we did not rest enough. Or perhaps we were busy but too busy to do the things that were really important. Was God the recipient of the first-fruits of our time?

The apostle Paul encouraged, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:15-17). There is a foolish way and a wise way to spend our time. The wise way is to conscientiously consider and use each of the nearly nine thousand hours of the year. The days themselves are evil in the sense that they are destroyed so soon; they come and go, never to return. Wisdom is knowing the Will of God and doing His will through the day.

Did you spend your days doing the Will of God?

Paul touched on the same thought in his letter to Colossae and was more specific about the use of time, "Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:5-6). When considering the fleeting time, Paul spoke of the urgency of influencing lost souls for Christ. How many this year did you influence for Jesus' sake? Does your answer reflect time well spent or time ill spent? Does your answer indicate "understanding" or "lack of wisdom?"

Whatever our answer, we can always do better tomorrow. But even tomorrow is not promised and perhaps that is part of the problem. The moment is now. What am I doing right now? When I start thinking about "now," then I will be able to reflect on yesterday in a better way. ■



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Bible Reading

Have you read any good books lately? Have you read the Good Book lately? A popular health slogan says, "You are what you eat." It is true, of course; it's true physically and mentally. A man can't just expect to grow in knowledge without feeding his mind anymore than he can expect to grow physically without feeding his body. Unfortunately, there's an ample supply of "junk-food literature" available in our world. Junk-reading leads to junk-thinking; and junk-thinking leads to junk-living.

The book I have in mind right now, though, is far from junk; it's a treasure book. It's been recognized for years as the surpassing book of all time. If people would take the time to learn more of the Bible, they would love it more and, without doubt, it would have a tremendous effect on their lives for the better. Those who have acquainted themselves with it have happily discovered that it is a storehouse of riches, excelling in wisdom and imparting strength. Psalm 119:50 declares, "This is my comfort in my affliction, For your word has given me life."

Down through the years the greatest of thinkers, speakers and writers have utilized and adapted the stories, terms and phrases of the Bible to their own works. The names of Shakespeare, Milton, Bunyan, Melville, Wordsworth, and a host of others fall into this category. This is not to say that the lives of these writers conformed to the teachings of the Bible; but it is to say that their lasting works (as the world's great masterpieces of literature) were saturated in Bible terminology, images and thoughts.

Abraham Lincoln is a good example of one who let the Bible influence his speech-making. Most have heard of the Gettysburg Address. His words and phrases are recognized to have a definite Bible flavor to them. Mr. Lincoln is also attributed as saying, "I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible. Take all this book upon reason that you can, and the balance upon faith, and you will live and die a better man." Of course, in years gone by, such remarks were addressed to a nation of people whose religious devotion was deeper than the current age.

Another example worthy of notice is Daniel Webster, who adorned his speeches with Bible allusions and quotations. Webster said of Alexander Hamilton, "He smote the rock of natural resources, and abundant streams of revenue burst forth; he touched the dead corpse of public credit and it sprang upon its feet." Webster said this in reference to Hamilton's providing funds for the U.S. treasury while it was still in its infancy. Webster's words helped Hamilton become a noted historical figure, but also revealed Webster's own knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. More than one famous figure from the past has demonstrated the rich storehouse of thought found in the Bible.

by Bill Dillon

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How many children through the years received their early impressions for good from Bible lessons and stories that dealt with the noble themes of courage, truthfulness, honesty and many other wonderful virtues? Paul reminded Timothy “that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15).

The book of Ruth is among the most charming love stories of all time; the book of Esther will always remind us of how important a woman was in saving God’s people in the days of ancient Persia; Joseph’s story, as related in Genesis, tells how a young man can go far in life even though several bad breaks befell him in his youth; David’s encounter with the giant of Gath has instilled bravery into many young persons who were up against some modern day Goliath; the story of Job has likewise encouraged numbers of souls in trying times of extreme distress and trouble. How many more lessons can you think of? Do your children know of these ageless truths?

The Bible is the book for all seasons. It is not a man-made book; it is the book that has made men! It is the Good Book. Read it! “To read it is to know it; to know it is to love it; to love it, is to live it.” Isaiah 34:16 says, “seek ye out of the book of the Lord and read.” May we all be better acquainted with The Good Book. ■

Begged, Borrowed and Begotten

I go out to preach with two propositions in mind. First, every person ought to give his life to Christ. Second, whether or not anyone else gives Him his life, I will give Him mine.

—Jonathan Edwards

I am confident that the Almighty has His plans, and will work them out; and, whether we see it or not, they will be the best for us.

—Abraham Lincoln

If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent an educator.

If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent an engineer.

If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent an economist.

But since our greatest need was forgiveness, God sent us a Savior.

These days there’s no arrest for the wicked.

The Greek text in 2 Corinthians 9:7 reads...“a cheerful giver loves God!”

Sin is Christicide.

—C.K. Spurgeon

The idea that Absalom, King David’s long-haired handsome son, got his hair caught in the branches of an oak came from Flavius Josephus not from the Bible. The Bible says his head was caught. See 2 Samuel 18:9.

There is no greater darkness than ignorance of God.

—John Calvin

None are to be more pitied than slaves to error.

Atheism

Question: How should a Christian witness to an atheist?

Answer: We should not. If by “witnessing” you mean give your own personal testimony of what you did to become a Christian, it would be meaningless to an atheist, and even to all people!

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We must share Paul’s understanding that “we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Corinthians 4:5), the reason being that “not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends” (2 Corinthians 10:18). It is only by obeying the Holy Spirit-inspired word that one becomes a child of God (Romans 6:1-7; 8:12-17). A “witness” is someone who personally has seen an event or been miraculously given its facts (such as past prophets had), but no one living today has seen Jesus Christ’s life and death in the flesh, or His resurrection, nor have they been given inspired knowledge of the Gospel apart from the written Word of God (1 Corinthians 14:37; Galatians 1:6-9). Peter preached the miracles in Jesus’ life and could claim:

...we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.

Acts 10:39-43

Only by preaching and teaching what is written in the Bible can anyone be converted to its faith.

The Bible Is a “Christian Evidence” Textbook!

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is based upon “evidence” and is a solid conviction of “things not seen.” Since “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17), then the best “evidence” for faith is “the word of God!” The Bible makes statements that point to external data, and thus becomes a “Christian evidence” textbook. For example:

1. *Every effect must have an adequate cause.* “For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God” (Hebrews 3:4); “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1); “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Hebrews 11:3). All scientific evidence proves that matter is not eternal and must have had a beginning.
2. *There is magnificent design and order to life.* Jesus pointed to the inherent order in agriculture when He said:

For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.

Mark 4:28-29

Such order is impossible without the imposition of law from a Higher Power. Speaking of the intricacies of human development and birth, David said:

You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. My frame

was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.

Psalm 139:13-16

The millions of details involved in each human's normal birth are mind-boggling, and faith-building, indeed. The birth of one human demands an imposing attention to details virtually impossible without God, the Maker.

3. *Life cannot/has not/will not come from non-living matter.*

It is the "God, who made the world and everything in it...[Who] gives to all life, breath, and all things" (Acts 17:24-25). There is no construction of material substance that has been brought to life without adding the living components to the experiment. Science shows life had to be added to the material earth from an outside source.

It is only prejudiced ignorance that would attack Christian faith without dealing with what the Bible, itself, says!

Atheism Equals Ignorance

Speaking of "prejudiced ignorance," one readily thinks of an "atheist," a word meaning, "without faith in deity," hence a person who is without faith in God. No one can be an atheist without denying all the evidence for God's existence and the scientific conclusion that it is fact. In other words, atheists are known for what they confess they do not or cannot know. "Ignorance" is defined as "the absence of knowledge." It is practically impossible, then, for any atheist to ridicule a believer's "faith" because a Bible-believer has evidence for that faith, but an atheist has reduced his or her intelligence to denial. The evidence for God is so abundant that an atheist can believe there is no God only by closing his/her mind to the factual evidence that would prove otherwise! Atheists have a big void throughout their core intellect, and are as Gentiles,

...in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart...

Ephesians 4:17-18

Atheists Are Not Consistently Moral

Those who do "not like to retain God in *their* knowledge" are also known for their lack of redeeming qualities. They are "disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful" and "deserving of death" (Romans 1:28-32). The "death" here is spiritual, not physical, because "God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting." It describes their spiritual separation from Him. The "un-" in the original text is an "a-" in front of a word, thus negating the term used, just like "a-theist." Listing sins of those who love themselves rather than God, Paul included "disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving" (2 Timothy 3:2-5). Atheists are known for what they lack because they have a big void throughout their moral core.

Christopher Hitchens Is *Not* Great

Christopher Hitchens, an atheist writer of some note, is listed in Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia on the Internet, as "known for his iconoclasm, anti-clericalism, atheism, antitheism, anti-fascism and anti-monarchism"—all negative attitudes! His objective case and kickative mood is manifestly "anti-." A petulant child must learn to accept authority imposed by someone greater than the child, but it's sad to see "adults" fighting against all authority but their own! It is, therefore, surprising to note that Hitchens gained his American citizenship on his 58th birthday (April 13, 2007), obviously not "for God and country," but only "for country." His British anti-religious upbringing wasn't distinctive over there, and he must have realized only in a "religious" country could his negativism make a splash and cash!

His new book titled, *God Isn't Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, supposedly attacks the concept of religion altogether. It is interesting that he wants to ridicule every religion's "god," but singles out "God" for his title. He wrote:

There still remain four irreducible objections to religious faith: [1]that it wholly misrepresents the origins of man and the cosmos, [2]that because of this original error it manages to combine the maximum of servility with the maximum of solipsism, [3]that it is both the result and the cause of dangerous sexual

repression, and [4]that it is ultimately grounded on wish-thinking.

ibid, p. 4, **numbers added, jtpII**

[1] He further says, "...religion should simply add an apology for foisting man-made parchments and folk myths upon the unsuspecting..." (*ibid*, p. 205). He thus "waves his hand at" (ignores) the physical evidence for the creation and the flood in Noah's day (Genesis 1-3; 6-9), exactly what Peter said "scoffers" would do (2 Peter 3:1-9). The "origins of man and the cosmos" in the Bible is the only account that is scientific and factual! What has Hitchens to offer better than the Bible?

[2] It is precisely because of the Creation and Flood accounts, that the worth of humans may be ascertained. God breathed into man "a living soul" (Genesis 2:7) and after the Flood, murder is forbidden because God made man "in His own image" (Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6). Humans are not animals and should "have dominion" over the rest of the creation. No "solipsism" here; it must exist in atheist Hitchens' solipsistic mind! What reason can atheists give for the dignity of humans?

[3] Sex is repressed only to those who refuse God's plan for sexual happiness. Sexual intimacy is kept pure by: one man's and one woman's devotion to each other for life (Genesis 2:24; Romans 7:1-4); condemning sexual abuses before and during marriage (Hebrews 13:4; Matthew 19:9); and children being taught this purity (Ephesians 6:1-4). People who try multiple marriages often abandon God or blame His marriage pattern as unworkable rather than accept their own personal failure to work God's way thoroughly. Many seem to muddle through life without God's guidance, and when finally they find God, they think He failed to find them first and hold Him accountable for their sins! Do atheists respect marriage as constituted by God?

[4] Rather than accepting the factual evidence for one God, one wife, one religion, one worship, and one Lord, Hitchens is the "wish-thinker" who fantasizes it to be otherwise. Jesus warned against following "many" into common destruction (Matthew 7:13-14), and Peter warned against those who "promise them liberty, [while] they themselves are slaves of corruption" (2 Peter 2:19).

Hitchens wishes there was no God, no Creation, no end of

the world, no Judgment, no sins, no need for salvation, no Jesus Christ, no heaven and no hell; but these cannot be "wished" away! What have atheists "wished" in their place?

Take Off Those "Godless-colored" Glasses!

This writer has never personally known, or known of, an atheist whose criticism of God didn't center outside the Bible and almost entirely dwelt upon the paganism, ritualism, weaknesses, sins, hypocrisies and, yes, idolatry, of the false practitioners of God's Way. Scripture itself acknowledges these, from the Garden of Eden in Genesis all the way through to the churches of Asia in the Book of Revelation. Jesus Christ also condemned the Pharisees, hypocrites, and sinners (Matthew 23; 6; 15) who either ignore or abandon God's principles. How narrow-minded must one be to take some Scriptures as true accounts of the failures of faith and not consider other Scriptures as true accounts of the faithful? The religions that are based upon perverted Bible teachings, or teachings from outside of the Bible altogether, mean nothing as arguments against what the Bible actually teaches. Hitchens begins every argument from his knowledge of worldly corruption and then he brings in an often misrepresented Scripture to be interpreted! He may have memorized some Scriptures as a child, but has never learned to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15)!

Who Is "Greater?"

What makes the God of the Bible "great" is not the people who practice in His Name, but the great things He has done to distinguish His Name! Since "our great God and Savior [is] Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13), is Hitchens claiming that Jesus Christ is NOT "great?" Jesus' wisdom made Him "greater than Solomon," and His resurrection from the dead made Him "greater than Jonah" (Matthew 12:39-42). Hitchens is not as wise as Solomon, nor has he been delivered from "the belly of the great fish," so if Jesus is "not great," then Hitchens is not as great as those of whom Jesus is "greater!"

We can only pray that the eyes of Hitchens, and those like him, will be opened before it's too late. ■

(Free quantities of this article are available in tract form. Contact the author.)

Leadership: Christ-Like Leaders

How many people do you know who are Christ-like? How many of these are leaders in the church? Are you Christ-like? If this were a matter of little import, such questions could be readily dismissed, however, in a discussion of leadership from a Christian perspective, such questions may be the most significant to be considered. Who is Christ-like?

Any discussion of leadership in the church demands a thorough-going examination of the life of Christ. Our Lord epitomized the concept of spiritual leadership in His own example and in His teaching. He stated the nature of leadership in the following statement: “The Son of man did not come to be served but to serve;... I am among you as one who serves” (Mark 10:45; Luke 22:27). His method of leadership was in unselfish service. He chose to lead by humbly serving. He willingly served with love and dignity, with compassion and care.

Self-less service is Christ-like leadership. He willingly served those in need; helping, healing, guiding, and teaching. All marvel that He humbly served His own disciples, even washing their feet. He willingly gave His life in order to secure salvation for mankind. To study His life is to be impressed with the fact of His service, and to realize that the only example He left for His followers is one of simple and willing service. Jesus insisted both by example and in His teaching that greatness is not found in power or position, but in service (Matthew 20:20-28). Christ-like leadership is grounded in Christian love which manifests itself in Christian service. If leadership is not Christ-like in service, it cannot rightfully be called Christian!

To study the life of Christ is to be impressed with the fact that the will of the Father was of supreme importance to Him. He lived to do the will of the Father. He faithfully taught and exalted the final authority of the Father’s will (Matthew 7:21). He exalted the truth of God and insisted it to be the only basis of hope for mankind. He spoke and taught authoritatively—averring that what He taught was the will of the Father (John 8:12-19). He knew that the truth of God was to be perpetuated, and to that end He taught and trained His disciples. He committed the message of salvation to His disciples, and trusted them to proclaim and teach it faithfully (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-48). Christian leadership is Christ-like only as it holds fast to the truth of God and faithfully proclaims it. The truth of God qualifies Christian leaders.

Jesus called His followers to obedience. He Himself was obedient (John 10:16ff; Hebrews 5:8-9). He consistently taught the necessity of obedience (Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21-27). He insisted that it was only as they obeyed His word that they could abide in Him (John 15:1-8). Christian leaders do not originate doctrine, they hold fast to the teachings of Jesus. Christian leaders are themselves Christ-like as they are obedient to the will of God.

Jesus’ service to mankind was not only exemplary, compassionate, and centered in the will of the Father; His service was also redemptive. That which Jesus taught was not simply counsel for daily conduct, it was to the end of delivering eternal souls from sin. His word, His truth, has the power to make men free from sin (John 8:31-32; Romans 1:16-17). Those that embraced His word and followed His example not only came to possess eternal life, they were also transformed—changed into His likeness. Jesus did not drive them to conform, nor did He endeavor to control their actions. He taught them; He lived simply and consistently before them, and He loved them so fully that they chose to be with Him, and desired to be like Him. Redemption is obtained in vital-life-union with Jesus Christ; it is never conferred as a mere legal technicality. All that Jesus did was to draw men to redemption. He made it possible for them to see the Father (John 14:6ff), and to know deliverance from sin (cf. John 17:3). Christ-like leaders are ruled by a love for the Redeemer and for the redemption He alone provides. They live under the sway of the motive of helping others come to the redemption that is in Christ. It is only as leaders are redemptive in their role and ministry that they are Christ-like.

It is apparent, even on the surface, that Christian leaders must be Christ-like. In fact, Christ-likeness is the common denominator for the people of God. If they are not Christ-like they fail to qualify as Christians. If leaders are Christ-like, they serve as did He. Like Christ, they also love and hold fast to the will of the Father. Like Christ, they are obedient to the Father. Like Christ, they love the souls of men, and they love God’s plan and purpose of redemption. They delight in bringing souls to the Savior. Their deepest desire is to be Christ-like. They long to “grow in the grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Peter 3:18). ■



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Hard Preaching

Recently someone told me that I am a *hard preacher*. This could be either good or bad, depending on what is meant by *hard preaching*. In context to the conversation, I took it as a compliment to my firm stance for my convictions.

Many people deplore hard preaching that may prick their consciences, but rather cry, "Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us *smooth things*, prophesy deceits" (Isaiah 30:10). They demand smooth things that will lull them into a spiritual sleep. They want easy listening sermons that will tickle their ears just as predicted by the apostle Paul: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Sometimes someone will say to me, "You sure stepped on my toes in your sermon." My friend, if I step on your toes, I missed, because I was aiming at your heart.

In John chapter six, after hearing a sermon from Jesus in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum concerning His being the bread which came down from heaven and that those who would eat of His flesh and drink His blood would live forever, "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" (John 6:60). Yes, Jesus, the master preacher, was a hard preacher! Why should I consider it anything less than a compliment if I am accused of being a hard preacher, regardless of the intent of the one making the remark, because that puts me in very good company.

PETER WAS A HARD PREACHER

When the first gospel sermon was preached in the New Testament on the day of Pentecost, Peter was talking to a group of Jews who had been guilty

of crucifying the Son of God. He said, "Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). Peter could have preached any number of sermons to that audience and never have mentioned their sins. He could have preached the truth for a long time, he might have even held a gospel meeting in their midst and never mentioned the fact they had been guilty of crucifying the Son of God. But he didn't do that. In the very first sermon, he said, "Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." That sermon might have been good preached **to** someone who was not guilty **about** those who were, but that is not the place the apostle preached it. He preached it to those who were guilty and left no doubt as to what he was saying. He said, "Ye have taken." They knew that he was preaching the truth and they knew that they were guilty. That sermon brought conviction to their hearts and converted them to the truth. Today the church is the body of Christ (Colossians 1:18). People today can crucify the Son of God afresh (Hebrews 6:6), and when we begin to crucify the spiritual body, that's worse than crucifying the fleshly body of Christ. And when we find those who are guilty in our audience and tell them that they are crucifying the spiritual body of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is hard preaching, but it needs to be preached just as firmly as the apostles did on the day of Pentecost.

PAUL WAS A HARD PREACHER

Paul went to a place where the cultured and educated people of the world had come together. In the city of Athens at Mars Hill, there was a group of philosophers and men who had nothing to do except tell and hear some new thing. They were the educators of the day. They were the ones who prided themselves on their wisdom and their philosophy. When Paul began to preach to them, he mentioned the fact that they were idolaters. He said, "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE

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UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you" (Acts 17:23). Now Paul did not say that to a group of ignorant people, nor did he say it to people who were untaught concerning the affairs of this world. He said it to people who were educated and enlightened according to the customs of the day, telling them that they were ignorant of God. He said, "Him declare I unto you." Today we must preach hard to those who do not know God and those who do not know how to worship God according to His will. It takes hard preaching to reach those who are conceited and vain in their wills.

Paul was a hard preacher in preaching to his own brethren. Peter had been acting a hypocrite with others. He had been teaching one thing in one place and practicing something else in another. Now Peter was a brother in Christ. Not only that, but he was a gospel preacher. Furthermore, he was an inspired preacher, and yet he was to be blamed. "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" (Galatians 2:11-14). So you see that Paul, when he found his brethren in error, corrected them—**withstood them to the face!** That was hard preaching! It takes hard preaching today to reprove and correct brethren who are in error. The instructions for doing this are found in our preaching manual: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:1-2). Also, "Them that sin [elders, gfh] rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (1 Timothy 5:20-21). Hard preaching? Yes,

indeed! These instructions scare the gospel preacher almost to death! However, it is his unpleasant duty to teach brethren who are in sin, withstand them to the face, before others, if need be. If we are preaching to an audience where hypocrites are to be found, we shouldn't try to cover-up their hypocrisy and make their sin look respectful. We need to preach and teach against the sins of which they are guilty.

JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS A HARD PREACHER

The scripture reference is Matthew chapter fourteen. John had been imprisoned, and while he was in prison he had the opportunity to talk to Herod. Herod was living with his brother's wife. Now John could have preached much truth and never mentioned the sin of adultery. But when he looked at Herod and saw the sin of which he was guilty, he said, "It is not lawful for thee to have her" (Matthew 14:4). In other words, he pointed out the specific sin that Herod was guilty of and said that it was not lawful for him to live like he was. He could have preached a sermon on baptism, or a sermon on love, or a sermon on any number of good things, and maybe would not have bothered Herod very much. But he preached on **adultery!** He told him he was living in sin. That one sermon finally cost John his head, but nevertheless, he preached the truth to those who needed to hear it. That was indeed hard preaching! Today, gospel preachers must do some hard preaching to those who are living in adultery. We should not skip over it and say maybe it will be all right (as many preachers are doing). We need to cry the same thing that John did long ago. We need to say, "It is not lawful for thee to have her" (Matthew 14:4; 5:32; 19:3-9).

Regardless of the consequences, we need to preach the truth today to those who need to hear it. To those who are guilty of some sin, that sin needs to be pointed out and specifically condemned when there is need. We need to say, as did John to those who are living in adultery, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." That is hard preaching, but it may save a soul from being lost in hell.

When my preaching seems hard, it is not just because I want to be a hard preacher, but because I love you. Some of my brethren wish that I didn't love them so much. My friend, I love you too much to see you lose your soul if there is anything that I can say to prevent it. If you are lost, I want to make hell so real to you that you can almost feel the heat and smell the sulfur. ■

God's Ways vs. Man's Ways

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8,9

Naaman the leper is an example of man's thinking in conflict with God's way. When Naaman arrived at the house of the prophet Elisha in Israel, hoping to be cleansed of his disease, the prophet just sent a messenger out to tell Naaman, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times..." (2 Kings 5:10).

Naaman "was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought..." (2 Kings 5:11). He had expected something entirely different. But his servants asked him, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?" (2 Kings 5:13). Only then did Naaman come to his senses and obey the simple instructions of God's prophet.

These are some other examples of how man's thinking differs from God's:

- Man often emphasizes **birthdays**. Yet neither the month nor day, nor even the year of Jesus' birth is mentioned anywhere in the Bible.
- The **place** of Jesus' birth was not where man would have chosen. It was not Rome, the world capital; or Athens, the center of learning; or even Jerusalem, but little Bethlehem: "Bethlehem... little among the thousands of Judah" (Micah 5:2).
- Furthermore, man would probably have had Jesus enter the world as a full-grown man, not as a newborn baby.

Not Politically Correct

Jesus' selection of His apostles was not based on what man considers most important in building a successful organization, such as political power, educational status, social standing, financial wealth, or important positions of religious leadership. Furthermore, Jesus' choices were not according to modern ideas of "political correctness."

There was no ethnic or gender balance. There was no "diversity." They were all Galileans (Acts 2:7).

Consider, too, God's choice of preachers, in sending Moses to Pharaoh, and Jonah to Nineveh. Man would not likely have selected preachers who were so reluctant to go.

The Plan of Salvation

God entrusted the preaching of the gospel to the apostles, and then to all Christians. As Paul said, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7). Man might have thought it better for God to speak to each person directly, perhaps through some kind of a direct operation of the Holy Spirit who would go to each individual to tell him or her what to do to be saved.

Man would also have tried to present the gospel plan of salvation to make it appeal either to worldly lusts, lavish bright displays, and pomp and ceremony, as the heathen religions did, or to worldly wisdom and human reasoning. God did not do this. (1 Corinthians 1:23).

When God sent His only begotten Son into the world to die for sinful man, He did for us what was wholly contrary to man's nature to do. As Paul told the Romans: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:7,8).

The Scriptures

If man had written the Bible, he would have de-emphasized or even omitted his own favorite sins. He would have lowered the lofty standard of the Scriptures. But the Holy Spirit wrote the Bible. He did not downplay anybody's favorite sins. If man had written about David or Abraham, or other men and women in the Bible, he probably would have slanted the biographies according to his personal feelings, but God told it exactly as it really

by James R. McGill

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was—bad and good—with no partiality!

When the mob challenged Jesus to “come down from the cross” (Matthew 27:40-42), man would have had Jesus accept that challenge in a dramatic demonstration of His miraculous power.

The infidel Robert Ingersoll used to dare God, in front of large audiences, to strike him dead in sixty seconds—if He really existed. Then Ingersoll would take out his pocket watch and count off the seconds. If man had been in God’s position of power, he would likely have stricken Ingersoll dead the very first time he issued that challenge. Yet God did not lower himself to intervene that way.

A human military adviser would have told Gideon that, in order to win, he needed an army much larger than the three hundred men God instructed him to lead (Judges 7). Yet, through God’s power, Gideon won.

The Widow’s Mites

Jesus said of the poor widow who gave two mites—all her living—that “this poor widow hath cast in more than they all...” (Mark 12:42; Luke 21:2). Man would have considered two mites the smallest of all the gifts and might even have advised her to keep her two mites, since she was herself so poor and needy.

Of Jesus it was said, “The common people heard him gladly” (Mark 12:37). But man would have said that the only way to promote and advance a movement is to meet

the “right” people, the “important” people.

The Cross of Christ

The cross itself was considered an emblem of shame—reserved for those who were not even Roman citizens. Yet it came to be glorious, so that Paul could say, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...” (Galatians 6:14).

Jesus said, “But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:11). Peter’s original negative attitude toward this way of thinking represented typical human reasoning.

To carry out something as big as the command to “Go... teach all nations” (Matthew 28:19), man’s mistaken thinking would be: “This job will require a very large organization, an impressive headquarters, a central clearing house, an elaborate chain of command, pooling of resources, and big finances—in other words, an organization like a Missionary Society.”

God looks at people as they truly are, but man often draws his conclusions from superficial outward impressions: “...for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

Probably every Christian can think of other examples in which typical human reasoning clashes with God’s perfect way. ■

What Is Faith?

What is *faith*? Some say faith is trusting God to do everything for you. Some say faith is believing that you can change the world. The Bible says, “Now Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is an essential ingredient in the plan of salvation. But the faith that saves is the faith that obeys (John 8:24; Romans 6:3,4).

Think about the house you live in or the car you drive. What substance is it made of? Is it a strong substance or a weak substance? If it is weak then you are not safe. Now think about your faith—is it strong or weak? It is important for

you to know that you can control how strong or how weak your faith is. How can you strengthen your faith? The Bible says, “So then Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). You strengthen your faith by learning about God’s word. When Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness he simply said, over and over, “It is written... It is written... It is written...” Matthew 4:1-10. Jesus knew the scriptures, and this protected him from the Devil. Remember Psalm 119:1, “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord.”

Abundant faith builds the abundant life (John 10:10). ■

by Mark Dillon

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Christ, All in All Colossians 3:11

Introduction:

1. In this chapter the Apostle is contending for holiness. The dead man with his grave clothes have been laid aside. We are new people with new garments to wear. Our manner of life becomes a distinguishing characteristic.
2. Albert Barnes makes this thoughtful comment on this text: "The great thing that constitutes the uniqueness of the church, is that Christ is its Savior and that all are His friends and followers. Its members lay aside all other distinctions, and are known only as His friends. They are not known as Jews and Gentiles; as of this nation or that; as slaves or freemen, but they are known as Christians, distinguished from all the rest of mankind as the united friends of the Redeemer."
3. This is a truth that Paul constantly emphasized. (Galatians 3:26-29)
4. In what way is Christ all in all?

I. Christ Is All in All in Creation and Providence.

- A. He made all things "for Him" (Hebrews 1:2; John 1:3; Colossians 1:15; Revelation 4:11)
- B. He upholds all things. (Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3)
- C. If it were not for Him, things would not be; nor would they be able to continue as they are.

II. Christ Is All in All in The Message of The Bible.

- A. His glory guilds the sacred page from Genesis to Revelation.
- B. All things converge on Him. All typology and prophecy. (Luke 24:44, 45; Acts 8:34, 35)

- C. The New Testament is the history of His life, mission, work and kingdom.

III. Christ Is All in All in The Great Plan of Salvation.

- A. It was His wisdom that planned it out.
- B. It was His power that executed the plan.
- C. It was His love that made possible the sacrifice.

IV. Christ Is All in All in The Ordinances of The Gospel.

- A. In the matter of preaching. (I Corinthians 1:23)
- B. In water baptism.
 1. He commanded it. (Matthew 28:18, 19)
 2. He gave it significance. (Mark 16:16)
- C. In the Lord's Supper.
 1. He instituted it. (I Corinthians 11:23)
 2. The elements used are symbolical of Him. (I Corinthians 11:24-25)
 3. The duration of its observance is with Him in mind. (I Corinthians 11:26)

V. Christ Is All in All in Our Blessings and Privileges.

- A. Justification. (Romans 5:1)
- B. Adoption. (John 1:12)
- C. Sanctification. (I John. 1:7)
- D. Peace. (Romans 5:1)
- E. Protection. (Hebrews 12:1, 2)

VI. Christ Is All in All in All Christian Graces.

- A. In faith. (Acts 16:30, 31)
- B. In hope. (Colossians 1:27; I Peter 1:3)
- C. In love. (I John 4:19; I Corinthians 16:22)

by M. W. Kiser

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Who Can Evangelize?

VII. Christ Is All in All in Our Expectations.

- A. That the saints will have a happy death.
 - 1. He has taken the sting out of death.
(I Corinthians 15:55)
 - 2. He has taken away the fear.
(Hebrews 2:15)
- B. That the saint will have a glorious resurrection.
 - 1. It will take place at His return.
(I Thessalonians 4:15, 16)
 - 2. It will be in likeness to Him.
(Philemon 3:20, 21)
- C. That we will have a blessed entrance into Heaven.
 - 1. He will judge and welcome us in.
(Matthew 25:31-34)
 - 2. He will lead us through the gates.
(John 14:1-3)

Conclusion:

- 1. We have seen everything that is holy and heavenly, pure and abiding, and saving is of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2. I know that Christ is not “all” to all men. To many in this world Christ is nothing. To some, he is something, but not much. To others, he is much, but not sufficient they think for their awful case.
- 3. Truly, for the Christian Christ is all and in all. “All in All.”
- 4. My brothers and sisters in Christ, let us live for Him; talk about Him; glorify Him in all we say and do; trust always in Him; and prepare to meet Him and live with Him one day.
- 5. “Christ is my everything, He is my all.” What about you? He bids you come to Him even now.
(Matthew 11:28-30) ■

Jesus knew the growth of His church was dependent upon every member of His body being mobilized to teach, preach, and reach the lost. As far as is known, not a single priest or Levite was among the originally selected apostles. Jesus used ordinary disciples as couriers of the message of saving grace.

One of the most astonishing statements uttered by the Lord was, “the labourers are few” (Matthew 9:37). The priests in Jerusalem were so numerous they took turns performing temple ceremonies, yet Jesus said, “...the labourers are so few.” The entire tribe of Levi was dedicated to religious services, yet Jesus said, “...the labourers are few.”

If ever the world is going to be won to Christ, it will be done by the devout disciples in the pews. Much of the church today has become too “professional.” We have promoted the “let-the-preacher-do-it-all” syndrome to the point of discouraging ordinary Christians from using their diverse talents to the glory of God.

The attitude of every Christian must be, “my business is winning souls and I work at my job to pay expenses.” Satan’s subtle strategy has always been to convince common believers that mission work is so complicated and winning souls so complex that only university trained experts (preachers) could do it. Are wars so complex that only generals can fight?

May God give us grace to see the fields are still white unto harvest and labourers are indeed few. Let us pray that every Christian be involved in “the Kingdom’s sure increase” both on foreign mission fields as well as evangelistic efforts at home so that “the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Habukkuk 2:14).

Every Christian, every day, evangelizing in every way is the spirit we are to have if the gospel is to be shared with the lost world. ■



by Bill Dillon

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Reader for Many Years

I've just finished my latest *Gospel Gleaner*. It always feels good when I read it. Thank God I'm in the Lord's family. This is a very uplifting copy. I pass it on to a lady in the nursing home. She waits for the next copy. Thank God for people like you. Take care and hang in there. In Christian love,

*Betty Johnson
Lauderdale, MS*

I have been a reader of *The Gospel Gleaner* for many years. When I lived in Illinois, our congregation received bundles (Marion, IL). I remember very clearly seeing our preacher's name and picture in the publication when he had an article published (Gerald Cowan). Unfortunately, I only have a few copies of the publication since moving. Is it possible to get back issues? Someone from Hickory Ridge (secretary perhaps?) mailed me the latest two issues at my request this past week. Thank you for your time and effort!

Bradley Cobb

We enjoy receiving *The Gospel Gleaner*. Keep up the good work. It is a good publication. God speed in all of your work. 3rd John 2.

M.D. Kirkpatrick

We enjoy *The Gospel Gleaner* so much; look forward to getting it. I read it from cover to cover. Thank you. In Christian Love,

*Thelma Minach
Deming, NM*

I am a reader of *The Gospel Gleaner*. I enjoy the magazine so much. Please send copies of the magazine to... I've enclosed a small donation to help with the magazine.

*Ila Masters
Joppa, AL*

Gratified Readers

I love receiving *The Gospel Gleaner*. Hope this little bit will help.

In Christian Love,

*Geralene Bearden
Jonesboro, AR*

I am sending a small amount to help on the postage and mailing of the paper. Use this in whatever you see fit.

*Nannie Philpot
Wartrace, TN*

Efforts Appreciated

We appreciate your efforts. Thanks for sending *The Gospel Gleaner* to us.

*Henry Terrill, MSLS, Professor
Serials, Govt. Docs, and Special Collections
Librarian, Brackett Library, Harding University
Searcy, AR*

Commendations

I am writing to inform you of a change in my address. I also want to thank you for your stand for the truth. May God bless the work you do through the *Gospel Gleaner*. I am sending money to help with the cost of mailing.

*Lyndell Henson
Red Boiling Spring, TN*

Article Appreciated

Dear Guy F. Hester:

I wanted to drop you a note thanking you for your article ("God's Covenant with Man") in the last publication of *The Gospel Gleaner* (Volume 22, Number 1, January-March, 2007). It gave me more ammunition to fight the false doctrine that some believe, and teach, in the churches of Christ, and that being, that all are in the new covenant and under/bound by all of it's laws... I have sent a copy of this letter to Bill Dillon to his email address so he may know how good your article was in defense of the truth.

*Rea Buttermore
Youngstown, Ohio*

Faithful Reader Passes

Houston Stiles, a faithful gospel preacher, has passed away. He enjoyed reading *The Gospel Gleaner* and appreciated its soundness and strong stand for the truth. Thank you so much for sending it to him for many years.

*Mrs. Houston Stiles
McMinnville, TN*

Campus Ministry Helped by *The Gospel Gleaner*

My name is Scott Elliott and I am the campus minister in Wilburton, OK. We try to make sound publications available to the students. Please add us to your mailing list. Thanks,

*Scott Elliott
Church of Christ Student Center
Wilburton, OK*

New Readers

A fellow Christian sent us a copy of *The Gospel Gleaner* and we have read it through. It is very powerful and we would love to get it on a regular basis. We are very small in number and this would be a great help to our congregation. We are the Fairview Church of Christ, Fairview, NC. We will be sending you a small contribution to help with the expenses of mailings and so forth. Thank you so much.

Herston Owenby

I would like to have *The Gospel Gleaner* sent to my home. I am a member of Linville Forest Church of Christ.

*Carolyn L. Cox
Winston-Salem, NC*

If it is not any trouble, I would like to subscribe to *The Gospel Gleaner*. My address is... Thank you very much!
God Bless,

Shane Carter

I saw one of your *Gospel Gleaners* this past week and enjoyed it very much. Would you please add my name to your mailing list?

*John & Betty Taylor
Pall Mall, TN*

I am the church secretary at Highland Park Church of Christ in Muscle Shoals, AL. I would love to receive your publication.

*Rhonda Cole
Sheffield, AL*

I was given a copy of *The Gospel Gleaner* dated July-December 2005. I found it to be very informative with a lot of good reading material. If it is still being published, would you please put us on your mailing list? We hope it is still in circulation because it seems to be a sound and firm-in-the-faith publication. Thank you,

*Jimmy & Viola Copeland
Flat Rock, AL*

I received a copy of *The Gospel Gleaner* and I especially liked the shorter articles mixed in with the longer ones, and there were a variety of other inserts that made it interesting.

Henderson, TN

Please put me on your mailing list.
Thank you,

*Veronia Merriweather
Fairview, TN*

New Names

Would you please send *The Gospel Gleaner* to Mrs. Tommy Key, Jr., McRae, AR. Here is a contribution of \$20.00.
Thank you,

*J.W. Robbins
Reeds Spring, MO*

Contributions Received During the Last Quarter

Geralene Bearden Jonesboro, AR	\$50.00
Antioch Church of Christ Blue Springs, MS	\$100.00
Elizabeth Church of Christ Elizabeth, AR	\$150.00
Bradford Church of Christ Bradford, TN	\$450.00
Cotter Church of Christ Cotter, AR	\$300.00
Church of Christ Sylacauga, AL	\$3,600.00
Daniel Page Wynne, AR	\$5.00
Carolyn L. Cox Winston Salem, NC	\$80.00
Betty Johnson Lauderdale, MS	\$10.00
Ila M. Masters Joppa, AL	\$20.00
Harold Stover Union City, TN	\$25.00
Church of Christ Tiptonville, TN	\$25.00
Lyndall Henson Red Boiling Springs, TN	\$20.00
James/Linda Robbins Reeds Spring, MO	\$20.00
Ronald/Susan Bryant Metropolis, IL	\$100.00
Carroll Bennett Camden, AR	\$30.00
Thelma Minach Deming, NM	\$10.00
Nannie M. Philpot Wartrace, TN	\$5.00

TOTAL \$5,000

Bible Quiz

1. Is the phrase "cleanliness is next to godliness" in the Bible?
2. Who was "without blemish" in the Old Testament?
3. What Bible character was the father of 88 children?
4. Who had 12 fingers and 12 toes in the Old Testament?

1. No, John Wesley said it. 2. Absalom (2 Samuel 14:25). 3. Rehobam—he had 28 sons and 60 daughters (2 Chronicles 11:21). 4. A giant at Gath (2 Samuel 21:20-22)

Sylacauga Church of Christ
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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday Morning Bible Class	9:45 AM
Sunday Morning Worship	10:45 AM
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00 AM
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00 AM

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