

## LITTLE IS MUCH IF GOD IS IN IT

By Danny Tunnell

I was scheduled to preach on a Sunday morning when a friend said to me, "No one ever complains about a sermon being too short. They only complain when a sermon is too long!" That may say something about the speaker and the listener! But I got his point: more is not always better. A sermon does not have to be eternal to be immortal!

May God remind us of the power of His Word and His Spirit. Before Pentecost, Peter denied that he even knew Jesus. On Pentecost, he stood up and talked for about three minutes and three thousand souls were saved. (Acts 2:41.)

In Acts 20, Paul preached a long sermon. He continued preaching until midnight. A young man named Eutychus fell into a deep sleep as Paul was talking. Eutychus was sitting on a window-sill, fell from the third floor, and died. Through God's power, Paul was able to revive him. Then Paul kept on talking until daybreak.

Who is to say Paul's long sermon was better than Peter's short one?

November 19, 1863, Edward Everett, one of our country's greatest orators, was the featured speaker at the dedication ceremony of the Gettysburg

National Cemetery. Everett spoke for two hours - immediately before Abraham Lincoln delivered his famous two-minute Gettysburg Address.

Lincoln, in only two minutes, delivered one of the greatest addresses of all time. It was so brief that the audience didn't know how to react to it. Some of the news reports of his speech were very critical. The Chicago Times reported, "The cheeks of every American must blush with shame as he reads the silly, flat, and dish watery utterances of the man called President." The Harrisburg Patriot and Union reported, "We pass over the silly remarks of the President." But history is on the side of President Lincoln. He proved that a little done exceptionally well is sometimes better.

President Franklin Roosevelt is remembered for his famous "fireside chats" on the radio. His "chats" helped to restore confidence to our nation during the Great Depression. Roosevelt didn't want to over-do it, so he spaced his "chats" out, about one each four months, and some of them lasted just 13 or 14 minutes. And yet, he was very effective.

Is there a lesson in all of this for the Christian? Is it possible that a

Christian can over-do even a good thing, and wear himself out as well as others? Are there times when it is more effective to do less instead of more?

Think about the Scriptures that teach us to slow down and relax. Jesus said, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30.)

Jesus told His disciples, "Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile." (Mark 6:31.)

If we've over-done it, and our bodies are weary, we can call on God for help. Romans 8:11, "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you."

God is not opposed at all to a faithful child of His taking some time off from a busy schedule. And He will never fail.

— Miami, OK

## THE BIBLE STANDS ALONE!

By Milton Smith

One of the primary things that demonstrates the superiority of the Bible over other religious books is the amazing quality of its teachings. A few examples follow. The so-called "holy books" of Hinduism teach everything from evil gods to strange ideas about reincarnation. Buddhism's religious books actually contain teachings and ideas that are atheistic. Shintoism teaches nature worship, ancestor worship, and emperor worship. Zoroastrianism promotes such ideas as polytheism, dualism, and often even appears to dignify hatred. Confucianism, like Shintoism, elevates ancestor worship, and much like Buddhism, promotes certain atheistic concepts. Islam's main religious book (the Koran) promotes such disturbing ideas as fatalism, hatred, the degradation of women, and aggressive violence. Such violent

actions have dominated much of the news for many years now.

Compare the ideas and concepts above to the main doctrines taught in the Bible. Only the Bible presents God as a Being who is holy, kind, gracious, and very interested in the well-being of mankind. The Bible promotes universal brotherhood and the indescribable worth of all human beings. Mankind is dignified and presented as possessing immense value. Man's origin, purpose, and eternal destiny are all clearly presented within the pages of the sacred Scriptures. The concept of love dominates the pages of the Bible - the love the Father has for mankind, the love Jesus displayed when He went to the cross, and the love that God demands from us, His creation. Matter of fact, Jesus taught that the greatest commandment is to love God and the second greatest is that we should love

one another.

But nothing separates the Bible from other religious books more than the amazing story of the One who came to offer eternal life through His own blood. The Bible alone portrays Christ as being so loving that he left his home in heaven, became incarnate in human flesh, and died vicariously for the sins of lowly mankind. In a way, all religions present human beings as helpless creatures. But only one - Christianity - tells the story of the loving Savior who came to redeem us. And because of the central story of this Book of Books (i.e. the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ), its final pages end with a glimpse of an abundant, eternal life in a world yet to come. The Bible towers above all other religious books for one, simple reason: its author is God!

— Tulsa, OK

# Old Paths

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"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

## WHEN JESUS CRIED

By Richard Dent

"Jesus wept." (John 11:35.) What do we remember about this verse? Let's see . . . oh yes, it is the shortest verse of the Bible. But why did Jesus cry? Let us explore this a bit further. Jesus loved people. He loved the poor, the sick, those afflicted by age, children, and even sinners (not the sin, but the persons). He performed miracle after miracle to prove his love for people. Jesus was even willing to go to the cross for us. But he especially loved a man named Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha. (John 11:5.)

He had spent some time in their home no doubt. Remember that He had no house of his own. He once said that foxes have holes and birds have nests but the son of man has not a place to lay his head. (Matthew 8:20.) Maybe He had been given some rest at Mary's house. Yes, Jesus loved that family.

We remember that Lazarus got sick and word was sent to Jesus about that sad fact. Jesus told his disciples that Lazarus was asleep (John 11:11) and that He needed to go to him to awaken him. His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well." (vs 12.) Then Jesus told them that Lazarus was dead and that he was glad for their sakes. (vs. 14-15.) Why?? Because Jesus knew what He was going to do.

As they came closer to the home of Mary and Martha they saw many people trying to comfort them at the loss of Lazarus. Martha said, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." (vs. 21.) Just a little later, Mary came to Jesus and said the same thing. (vs 32.) Jesus was caught up in the emotional expression of pain and anguish on the faces of Mary and Martha and the people surrounding them. Scripture states that Jesus "groaned in the spirit and was troubled." (vs. 33.)

We know how the story ends. Lazarus was brought forth from the burial tomb. He lived to laugh and love his friends again. That would include Jesus.

Does Jesus shed tears over you and me today? Perhaps, when He sees our weaknesses, knows our sins, or knows when we lose a loved one. Would Jesus shed tears for you or me? I remember the words of that old gospel hymn, "When the road is rough and the way is dim, Jesus knows, Jesus cares." In my mind I can still imagine the tears Jesus shed over Jerusalem. (Matthew 23:37-39.)

Yes, John 11:35 is a special scripture that shows our Lord loves us, just like He loved Lazarus and his sisters. Let us remember that God so loved the world that He gave Jesus to be our Savior so that we might have eternal life. (John 3:16.)

— Liberal, KS

## FROM THE ARCHIVES . . .

### WE OWN NOTHING

By Bobby Key

God is the sovereign creator and owner of all things. God created all things, upholds all things, and gives all things.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1.)

"The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein." (Psalm 24:1.)

"The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine," says the Lord of hosts." (Haggai 2:8.)

Of course we Christians belong to God not only because He made us and cares for us, but also because He redeemed us, and because we have voluntarily and gladly given ourselves to Him. "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:19,20.)

We are stewards or trustees of what we have and what we are. There is a difference between ownership and possession. As between man and man, we may claim to own things; but as between man and God, we own nothing. God owns all things. We may use them, temporarily, but ultimately they are to be returned to Him and an accounting must be rendered. God has never given a deed to any man for anything.

We brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out, hence we are not absolute owners of anything.

The doctrine of stewardship is taught from Genesis to Revelation. The words "steward" and "stewardship" may be found over twenty times in the King James version of the Bible.

"Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." (1 Corinthians 4:2.)

— Miami, OK

"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created." (Revelation 4:11.)

## BE A REGULAR BIBLE READER!

By Dalton Key

Bible reading, once a regular practice for Christians, a daily pastime for families of the Lord's people, and, further, a personal and daily regimen of the masses, has more recently fallen upon hard times. Sadly, the reading and study of the Bible is now too-often ridiculed as amounting to nothing more than the wasted efforts of those with small minds and even smaller intellects.

The ablest leaders and most brilliant minds in history would beg to disagree.

Sir Isaac Newton, renowned scientist, mathematician, and philosopher, once confessed, "I find more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history whatsoever."

William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, declared, "The Scriptures contain a declaration of the mind and will of God. They ought also to be read, believed, and fulfilled in our day. We accept them as the words of God Himself."

Martin Luther, whose determination sparked the early fires of the Reformation, was a man in love with God's Word. Though we believe him wrong on many counts, he was "spot on" in observing, "Holy Scripture is a sweet-scented herb, and the more you rub it, the more it emits its fragrance."

Our country has been blessed with leaders at the highest levels of government professing deep respect for the Bible. George Washington once said, "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible. He is worse than an infidel who does not read his Bible and acknowledge his obligation to God." John Adams stated, "The Bible is the best book in the world." Thomas Jefferson declared, "I have always said and always will say that the studious perusal of the Sacred Volume will make better citizens, better fathers, better husbands. The Bible makes the best people in the world." And Abraham Lincoln, perhaps the most admired and loved of all past presidents, once acknowledged, "I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible," further advising, "Take all of this book upon reason that you can, and the balance by faith, and you will live and die a better man before God."

Today's Bible scoffers are on the wrong side of history!

Why not resolve now, at the beginning of this new year, to make the reading and study of the Bible a dedicated priority in your daily routine! The time to begin is now!

## EDITORIAL . . .

### A NEW HERMENEUTIC DOES NOT CREATE NEW TRUTH

By Dalton Key

When Jesus promised, "you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," He provided the much-needed answer to so many questions of biblical interpretation troubling His people today. (John 8:32.) These few words from the lips of our Lord make it clear that truth - absolute spiritual truth - exists and can be known or understood.

It may seem odd, at least in light of more modern theology, that Christ did not speak of this hermeneutic or that hermeneutic. He spoke openly, unabashedly, of truth; and of truth which is available to be understood.

The inspired writers of the New Testament continued this same attitude toward truth. To the Ephesian brethren Paul wrote, "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." (Ephesians 5:17.) He commended the early spiritual training of Timothy, his own son in the faith, by urging, "But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and 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 3:14,15.)

Take note of Peter's words as well. He allowed little sympathy for those "untaught and unstable people" who were twisting the inspired Scriptures "to their own destruction." (2 Peter 3:16.) Though Peter recognized there were in God's Word "some things hard to be understood," he nonetheless expected his readers to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:16,18.)

Inspired New Testament writers did not pen their letters as discussions of this interpretation compared with that interpretation. They wrote, and wrote of scriptural truth which could be learned, understood and agreed upon.

Paul never suggested that we all have the right to handle spiritual truth as we choose; he never spoke of truth as absolute but our understanding as relative; he never sacrificed truth at the altar of the latest poll-tested, pseudo-intellectual hermeneutic. No, the peerless apostle expected workmen in the "word of truth" to rightly divide it, to handle it aright. (2 Timothy 2:15, NKJV, ASV.)

Divine truth could be learned and understood, known and handled aright in the first century. Are we to believe the same is not possible for those of us living in the twenty-first century?

One last thought: perhaps we would make better use of our time, in the pulpit, in the classroom, and in our own personal study, by centering more upon the truth, and less upon what others have said about the truth.



## ORIGINAL SIN?

By Mark Lindley

Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord." (verses 3-6.) Based on this passage some have said that "babies speak lies" because they have inherited "Adam's nature."

Let me assure you that babies are pure, innocent, and are not born in sin! Further, babies have never inherited a "sinful nature" from Adam! This is an ugly, false doctrine that should be opposed by all who respect God's Word.

Well, what about Psalm 58? I affirm that Psalm 58 does not teach Original Sin as seen by the following: 1) The passage is describing David's enemies, not innocent babies; 2) The passage says that the ones under consideration "go" astray, not that they "are born" astray; 3) Newborn babies cannot talk, much less "speak lies"; 4) The ones David describes have "teeth," but babies do not have teeth;

5) Neither Adam nor Adam's "nature" is mentioned in this passage; 6) This passage is an inspired exaggeration, designed to show the wickedness of David's enemies who were also God's enemies. Obviously, the language is not to be taken literally. Babies do not "literally" go astray "as soon" as they are born; rather, wicked men make wicked choices early in life and go astray. That is all the text teaches. No passage teaches that babies are born sinners!

Adam did not have a "sinful nature." God created him pure and sinless. But Adam chose sin. This is precisely how people become sinners today. We choose sin and therefore commit sin. "Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4.) Sin is committed, not inherited.

— Ripley, MS

## Self-Imposed Famine

By Joe Slater

God isn't sending us inspired prophets to teach and warn us in this age. But we have His inspired word in written form, and it is complete. (2 Timothy 3:16-17.) You can purchase a copy online or from any of dozens of merchants right in this county. You can read it online for free; or this church will give you a Bible at no cost to you.

I fear, though, that there is, indeed, a famine of the word of the Lord; and it is a self-imposed famine! When God's people will not discipline themselves to study His word, hear it taught and proclaimed, and conform their lives to it, is that not a famine?

One can starve to death because there is no food; or he can starve himself by refusing to be nourished with food that is readily available. So it is with God's word. The first is a disaster; the second is foolishness.

— Justin, TX

"Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. . . How sweet

The old doctrine of Original Sin is still alive. Every now and then, one might hear a preacher state that we all have "Adam's nature," and that we are "born in sin." The doctrine is referred to as Original Sin or Total Hereditary Depravity. Many denominations of our day believe it.

The doctrine suggests that after Adam sinned in the Garden, he passed on his "sin nature" to all people. Every baby is born "defiled in body and spirit," and is "totally depraved," not because the baby has sinned but because Adam sinned.

Some believe that Psalm 58 teaches this doctrine: "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf adder that stops her ear; Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.

"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord God, "that I will send a famine on the land. Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11.)

God's people weren't listening! In fact, one high-ranking official had told Amos in no uncertain terms to hush up and leave the country. (Amos 7:12-13.) God's man refused to be intimidated.

The time would come, however, when the Lord would simply say, "Enough!" He certainly was under no obligation to continue sending His prophets only to have them ignored. Sometimes people don't appreciate their blessings until they lose them. When God quit speaking through His prophets, the Israelites would sit up and take notice. "They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but shall not find it." (8:12.)

We would never do this, would we?

are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth." (Psalm 119:97, 103.)

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