

“A MERRY HEART DOES GOOD LIKE A MEDICINE”

By Danny Tunnel

Doctors have known for years that laughter helps to control pain. Norman Cousins served as editor of the Saturday Review magazine. He suffered from a very painful disease, “ankylosing spondylitis,” where the back becomes fused. The condition is extremely painful and inflammatory. The doctors tried all kinds of medicines on him, but they didn’t help.

Cousins read somewhere that negative emotions can cause more pain. He thought, “If I started laughing that would help relieve pain.” So he tried it. He started watching old funny movies such as the Marx Brothers. He found that by laughing it helped to control his pain for hours.

The Cousins Study was conducted by Harvard University and has been documented in medical literature.

“A merry heart does good like a medicine.” (Proverbs 17:22.) God told us that thousands of years ago. With a

merry heart comes joy, and the joy of the Lord is our strength. (Nehemiah 8:10.) It’s the opposite of stress, anxiety, fear, and depression.

In Luke 10:38-42 Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, listening to His teaching. Mary’s sister, Martha said, “Lord, doesn’t it seem unfair to You that my sister just sits there while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me!” (NTL)

Jesus said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.” (NKJV) The New Living Version says, “My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details. There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Let’s face it. Worry is wasted time! Studies show that 40 percent of what people worry about never happens; 30 percent concerns the past and can’t

be changed; 12 percent stems from criticism by others, most of which is untrue; 10 percent concerns health, which gets worse with worry; and only 8 percent is from real problems.

Jesus never suggested that we are not to worry; instead he gave direct commands that we are not to worry. (Matthew 6:25-34.)

A spirit of thankfulness for what God has already done for us greatly reduces worry. We can replace worry with joy.

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand.” (Philippians 4:6-7, NLT.)

— Miami, OK

“THE KIND OF WEATHER I LIKE”

By Cecil Burch

The traveler asked, “What kind of weather are we going to have today?” The old shepherd replied, “The kind of weather I like.” “How do you know it will be the kind of weather you like?” the traveler scoffed. The shepherd answered, “Having found out sir, that I cannot always get what I like, I have learned to like what I get. So I am quite sure we will have the kind of weather I like.”

We read about another shepherd in the Old Testament, named David, who said, “This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.” (Psalm 118:24.)

The Apostle Paul did not allow himself to be discouraged even though he knew he would face imprisonment, and he refused to let it affect the preaching of the Gospel. When he was on his way to Jerusalem he stopped at Miletus and met with the elders from

Ephesus. After he had given them instructions he also told them, “I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there . . . but none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy.” (Acts 20:22,24.) When Paul came to Caesarea, the prophet, Agabus took the apostle’s belt and bound his own hands and feet and said, “So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt.” They pleaded with him not to go. Then Paul answered, “What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 21:13.)

In this world of wars, conflicts, and heartaches that try the very depth of our souls we can still say with confidence that we do not know what

the future holds but we know Him who holds the future!

— Amarillo, TX

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling.” (Psalm 46:1-3.) “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. “ (Philippians 4:6,7.)

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

Doing And Not Doing

By Joe Slater

Little Johnny asked his teacher, “Can I be punished for something I didn’t do?” The teacher answered, “No, of course not. That wouldn’t be fair at all!” Johnny replied, “Oh, that’s good, because I didn’t do my homework.”

All joking aside, we empathize with the teacher who assumed Johnny meant not doing something bad. And we certainly agree that punishing someone for a bad thing they didn’t do is terribly unfair! Hardcore Calvinists teach that God holds babies accountable for Adam’s sin. But God’s own law under Moses forbade punishing children for their parents sins. (Deuteronomy 24:16.) Fairness is part of God’s nature!

In bygone days, actually committing sin (i.e. doing something God has forbidden, such as murder or stealing) was called a “sin of commission.” Realize, though, that God can and does hold us accountable for not obeying what He has told us in His word. These were commonly called “sins of omission” (i.e. omitting, or leaving out, what God told us to do).

In Matthew 21, Jesus told the parable of the two sons. Their father commanded both, “Go work today in my vineyard.” The first son initially refused, but later “regretted it and went.” The second “answered and said, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go.” (vv. 28-30.) That second son committed a sin of omission. Jesus applied that parable to the chief priests and elders who claimed to be faithful to God, but rejected Jesus and had turned up their noses at John the Immerser.

We don’t hear much nowadays about “sins of commission” and “sins of omission.” But regardless of terminology, both are treacherous. Take heed, that you may not be ensnared by either!

— Justin, TX

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” (Matthew 7:24-27.)

SATAN’S BEATITUDES

By Dalton Key

Satan, that great deceiver of man, delights in turning truth on its head. He is both a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44.) The devil has no problem with our Lord’s beautiful beatitudes - just so long as he is allowed to tweak the language. Observe his twisted treatment of our Lord’s blessings:

“Blessed are the self-obsessed, for theirs is the kingdom of personal fulfillment.

Blessed are those who seek their own happiness, at any cost, even at the expense of others, for they shall enjoy an idyllic life of health and happiness.

Blessed are the overbearing, for they shall get their own way.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after entertainment, for they shall never be bored.

Blessed are those who demand to be served, for they shall bask in a life of ease and pleasure.

Blessed are those who avoid commitment and responsibility, for they shall enjoy a paradise of independence.

Blessed are the seekers of revenge, for they shall be seen as the heroes and role-models for the children of their generation.

Blessed are those willing to compromise their convictions in a relentless pursuit of popularity, for theirs is the kingdom of personal fulfillment.

Blessed are you when everyone knows your name, when your internet video goes viral, and when you have more money than a superstar in professional sports.

Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward here on earth, for this has been the true path to pleasure and happiness for selfish souls since the dawn of time.”

NEVER FORGET: These “beatitudes” are anything but blessings, are nothing but lies, and will definitely be hazardous to your spiritual health!

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones.” (Proverbs 3:5-8.)

LITTLE THINGS

By Richard Dent

We live in a world today where people are encouraged to dream big, plan for big things to happen in their lives, create big, gigantic projects, and plan big weddings or other occasions in life. Now do not think that I am against big things in life . . . but what about the little things in life? We cannot always be the biggest fish in the lake. There is room in our life for some little things. One of my favorite old songs had a verse that said, "Little things mean a lot." How true that is!

Do you remember that God has often used little things to accomplish big things? In the Old Testament book of Judges we read about Samson, a man of faith in God, who used the jawbone of an ass to smite a thousand men of the the enemy of Israel. (Judges 15:15-16.) It was such a small weapon . . . not like a machine gun or automatic weapon of today's era.

Then there is the story of a young man named David. Before he became a king, he was a shepherd of his father's flocks. When he went down to take some supplies to his brothers he beheld the Israelites being harangued by a giant named Goliath. No one dared to fight this evil man except young David. David could not use the heavy sword, armor, or shield of King Saul so he took them off and took into battle some small, smooth stones along and his slingshot. Who was victorious? The big old giant or the small and faithful challenger? We all know the answer. God used David to accomplish a big victory over his enemies. (1 Samuel 17.)

Let us recall God's prophet of fire, Elijah. After a great victory over Jezebel and her followers, he was threatened by her for immediate death if she could catch him. He fled from her presence and lived in a cave. God visited him there and on one occasion used a "still small voice" to get his attention (1 Kings 19:12), and instructed him as to what to do next. God did not have to speak LOUDLY to get his attention.

Last, let us consider a small man of stature named Zacchaeus. In Luke 19:1-10 we read that he heard about Jesus passing through Jericho. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus but he was such a small man that he couldn't see over taller people. Ah, but he could climb a tree . . . which was exactly what he did. Jesus saw him and said, "Come down, for today I must abide in your house." Being little did not hurt this man.

Think of all the many good things that have been accomplished by little congregations. Yes, we should always hope to grow in number but we should never diminish the importance of smaller churches of Christ.

— Liberal, KS

EDITORIAL . . .

GOT GUILT?

By Dalton Key

Who among us has not felt the icy pangs of a nagging, guilt-ridden conscience? Sleep is lost, food becomes unappetizing, relationships grow cold and life itself seems almost, if not altogether, unbearable. And why? Because we feel guilty. No punishment this side of the grave inflicts such tremendous pain, such endless aching of the soul, as does a conscience laden with guilt.

Like it or not, this is as it should be and as God intended. Though unfounded or misdirected guilt will do more harm than good, a genuine sense of guilt, emanating from a properly educated conscience, should be accepted and embraced as a blessing from heaven. The pangs of guilt assure us that the conscience has not become insensitive, "seared with a hot iron." (1 Timothy 4:2.)

Like physical pain, the inner discomfort of guilt serves as an internal warning signal, indicating something may be wrong.

God's people during Jeremiah's day had become numb to sensation of guilt. "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time I punish them, they shall be cast down." (Jeremiah 6:15.)

Simply put: No guilt, no repentance; no repentance, no forgiveness.

Nearly two millennia ago, three thousand lost souls were saved from sin in a single day. The sin-stained hearts of those Jews redeemed on the day of Pentecost were cleansed as heaven's call to repent and be baptized was "gladly received." (Acts 2:41.) But first, they all were made to feel the spiritual pain of guilt. Luke records, "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:37.) Their guilt was real, well-founded, and promptly put to rest by their submission and obedience to heaven's commands.

The clarion call of Scripture is for "all men everywhere to repent," something impossible in the absence of "godly sorrow." (Acts 17:30; 2 Corinthians 7:10.)

The next time you feel the pangs of a guilty conscience, be thankful you can still feel! Then do what you must to biblically right the wrongs causing your pain.

(Don't forget: Old Paths Family Camp, May 30-June 2 at the site of Flint Hills Christian Camp, just north of Sedan, Kansas. I hope to see many of you there!)



FINDING GOD'S BOOK

By Bobby Key

In the 18th year of Josiah's reign, when that good king of Judah was only 26 years old, he sent Shaphan the scribe to the temple of God in Jerusalem to arrange needed temple repairs with Hilkiah, the high priest.

Before Shaphan left, Hilkiah gave him a book he had found in some dark, seldom-used recess of the temple. It was the book of the law of God, long lost and forgotten by God's people. Shaphan immediately took it to Josiah.

Josiah discovered commands from God that were unknown, disregarded or forgotten. The young king called for repentance for the nation's disregarding God's divine pattern and urged the people to return to keeping God's law. (2 Kings 22.)

Perhaps we of more-modern times have a similar problem. We

haven't lost the book, for the Bible is still intact and easily at our disposal, but God's word has been neglected, misused, misquoted and disregarded by the masses. We must find the book of the law with all its purity - without addition or subtraction - and restore New Testament Christianity as it was given by Jesus Christ and his apostles.

Like Josiah, we have been given solemn warning about changing God's word. "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8, 9.)

Our great need today is to go back to the original pattern and make sure

the church of our day conforms to that pattern. We need more Josiahs, who will rediscover the word of God in its purity and who will preach it and follow it.

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12.)

"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching." (2 Timothy 4:2.)

THE BLESSINGS OF HAVING FINAL AND COMPLETE REVELATION

By Milton Smith

It is most interesting to note the progressive revelation given by Jesus Christ in the gospel account of John. For example, at the first Passover our Lord asserted His divine authority over His "Father's house" while in the temple. It was on this occasion that Jesus drove those greedy money changers from the temple area. But it was at Jesus' second Passover that he demonstrated his power over disease and gave intimation of His coming dominion over the grave. In his amazing miracle involving the loaves and fishes he revealed the undeniable fact that His very hands gave increase to the earth. And it was the dramatic incident of Jesus walking on the churning waters of the Sea of Galilee one stormy night that showed that even nature itself must bow and submit to Him. In the discourse that followed, we find Jesus proclaiming Himself to be the bread of life.

Jesus said that day, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes on me shall never thirst." (John 6:35.) We quickly recall another incident

in which Jesus used a very similar metaphor. It was the occasion in which He met the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well and spoke those beautiful words, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, give me drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water." (John 4:10.) Whether it is the "bread of life" or "living water," Jesus is the great provider.

I have long been amazed at the manner in which Jesus progressively taught His followers. Shortly before going to the cross, at the final Passover that He would experience before His death, He said to the apostles, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth." (John 16:12-13.) How fortunate we are today to have God's complete and final revelation! While the apostles themselves had to receive revelation in a progressive sense - even receiving further revelation following our Lord's ascension - we possess "all things that pertain to life and godliness." (2 Peter

1:3.) How blessed we are that we do not have to "wait" for future revelation today. Read your Bible! What a blessing it is to be able to open this most Holy Book and receive that final, divine light that fully illuminates our pathway to eternal life!

— Tulsa, OK

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