

WE NEVER KNOW WHAT A DAY WILL BRING

By Mark Lindley

I suppose I was a bit gullible in thinking it would never happen to me. I had heard of fishermen falling out of boats and had witnessed it, but I never thought it would happen to me. Why? Well, it would never happen to me because I was always “careful” when fishing from a boat, and “paid attention to what I was doing.”

Then, sometime ago now, my middle son, Brock, and I were fishing on beautiful Pickwick Lake. We had not been fishing very long when I noticed that the back of our boat was about to make contact with a green, lake buoy (there are many of these in the lake). I leaned over the edge of the boat to push against the buoy so that the boat would not bump against it.

I suppose I leaned over too much, lost my balance, and - you guessed it - down into the frigid water I went! I went all the way under the water and then popped back up like a cork. It must have been a sight for my son to

see. The cold water nearly took my breath away, but between gasps for air I managed to tell him to “pull me out.” He grabbed my arms and snatched me from the water, quickly pulling me over the side of the boat. No harm was done. I just had to wear wet clothes the rest of the afternoon.

I told this story to make a point: we never know what a day will bring! “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.” (Proverbs 27:1.) James wrote, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’” (James 4:13,14.)

It is for this reason that we should always be ready for death; ready to

meet God; ready for Judgment. It seems that everyone “plans” to make their lives right with God “someday.” Many have plans to “get started back to church” sometime. Many have plans to give up a sinful way of life. Many intend to give up drinking and adultery. Many have plans to obey the Gospel and get involved in the work of the church. But planning is not the same as doing it.

Notice this warning from Scripture: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts . . .” (Hebrews 3:7,8.) The only day we have is today, and “today is the day of salvation.” (2 Corinthians 6:2.) Don’t put off making your life right with God.

For 47 years I had never fallen out of a fishing boat. Things that we never dream will happen often do. Be ready!

— Ripley, MS

“THERE’LL ALWAYS BE THE LOVE OF GOD”

By Danny Tunnell

Think about what Jesus went through for our salvation. Knowing the time of His crucifixion was drawing near, Jesus prayed earnestly, and as He prayed, His sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood. (Luke 22:44.)

He was spit upon, blindfolded, and struck with fists. People shouted, “Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck you?” (Matthew 26:67,68.)

He was innocent and yet the crowd pronounced Him guilty. They shouted, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” (Luke 23:21.)

He was flogged by a Roman soldier. He was stripped of His garment, tied to a whipping post and beaten with a cat-o’-nine-tails that had bone fragments and glass shards twisted into the end of each cord. By His stripes we were healed. (1 Peter 2:24.)

They dressed Him in a purple robe, and put a crown of thorns on His head. They mocked and sneered, “Hail, King of the Jews!” (Mark 15:18.)

Soldiers drove nails through His hands and feet. They hoisted the cross upon which Jesus hung. The soldiers beneath Him gambled for His clothes. They continued to mock Him, saying, “He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.” (Luke 23:35.)

In all this, God is saying to you and me, “I love you! I love you!” The One who knows you best loves you the most! Think about how valuable you must be to God. You are worth as much to God as Jesus, because God gave Him in exchange for you. The price that was paid for our redemption was His precious blood. (1 Peter 1:18,19.)

God doesn’t just have love. He is love. (1 John 4:8.) If God only had love, He could possibly run out of it. But love is who He is. This same love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 5:5.) God showed His love toward us, while we were yet sinners, when Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8.) God’s love will

always abide. (1 Corinthians 13:13.)

Vep Ellis wrote these wonderful words about the love of God:

“The love of God has been extended to a fallen race; through Christ the savior of all men, there’s hope in saving grace.

The Love of God is greater far, than gold or silver ever could afford; it reaches past the highest star, and covers all the world.

Its power is eternal, its glory is supernal; when all this earth shall pass away, there’ll always be the love of God.

It goes beneath the deepest stain that sin could ever leave; redeeming souls to live again, who will on Christ believe.”

— Miami, OK

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

CARE FOR THE ELDERLY

By Joe Dale Wilson

Older people have lived their adult lives making their own decisions. They have developed an attitude or resolve of being their own boss. They have grown comfortable with the way things are at their home and are not quick to make changes. This makes them strong-willed because that is a part of their survival mode in life. At the same time they may have developed hearing and eyesight problems, and are often dependent upon medications. Others become disabled and unable to get around. Some begin to have memory problems and when this happens it is imperative that the children step in and help organize their life to a better plan. Others become physically unable to care for themselves and need help. In these cases they might not want help but they need it.

“But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.” (1 Timothy 5:4.) The word translated “parents” means generally any living relative and is not limited to parents or grandparents, although that seems to be in agreement with the beginning of the verse. Such actions are considered “good and acceptable” in the sight of God. This is the reason that McCord translated the passage, “But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show respect for their own family, and to repay their parents. This is pleasing in God’s sight.” The inspired writer went on to say, “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Timothy 5:8.) No matter how faithful a person claims to be, faith is only seen when it is active and productive in the family setting. (James 2:14-17.) A person can do many things that are great works, but if he does not show care and concern for his family, he is in worse shape than an unbeliever. Many excuses are often offered for not caring for parents or grandparents: “I’m too busy;” “I live too far away;” “My family needs me;” “You know we did not always get along well;” etc. Excuses will not save us! If you are the only one living near the relative that has a need, you will need to keep the others informed and ask them for help.

Caring for an older person is not an easy task because they can be a real handful at times. It is easy to lose patience with them. “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” (Galatians 6:9.) We have to keep in mind our labor of love for those who cared for us when we were young. We are bearing “one another’s burdens” and fulfilling “the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2.) If you are the only caregiver find someone who can give you some time off and allow you to take care of yourself. It is a very difficult thing to take care of failing parents or even a husband or a wife. Ask for help from your family, and from the church. It is not a sign of weakness but shows that you need to be refreshed so you can do the best you can for the ones you love.

It is a good idea to remember the Golden Rule in dealing with the older ones, as one day soon we will be there too. (Matthew 7:12.) As we grow older we should also strive to grow more understanding and sweeter, especially toward those who are trying to help us!

— Vernon, TX

INDEBTED TO THE OLDER GENERATION

By Milton Smith

The Psalmist has written, “Now also when I am old and gray headed, O God do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, your power to everyone who is to come.” (Psalm 71:18.) We quickly note the concern that the inspired writer had for the generations that would follow him. He wanted to show God’s strength and power to “this generation” and “everyone who is to come.”

Our attitude should be the same. It was not so many years ago that I was young, and the older generation was there to teach me the strength, power, and ways of God. I will always be indebted to that “older” generation for doing so.

May we never forget that God’s truth must be taught and re-taught to each generation. The aged apostle Peter wrote to the young and old alike, “I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.” (2 Peter 1:12-14.) In this passage, Peter strongly emphasizes the need to always remind people of divine truth, even though they may already know these things.

I belong to a generation that has witnessed a change in direction within the church. Beginning several decades ago, attitudes started to change. Less emphasis was given to what the Bible calls “first principles.” (Hebrews 5:12.) The Hebrew writer lamented the fact that such “first principles” had to be taught over and over again to some in the church who should have been “teachers” themselves. This tells us that we do not need to teach only first principles - especially to those who know and honor such simple truths. But if first principles are not being followed and respected, it becomes necessary to teach and re-teach them.

We will always owe the next generation the knowledge of fundamental divine truths. Failure to do so today will bring nothing but trouble tomorrow.

— Tulsa, OK

“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4.) “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” (Deuteronomy 6:6,7.)

“NOW I KNOW”

By Joe Slater

Despite being a leper, Naaman the Syrian army commander retained his pride. Didn't his status merit a dramatic healing ceremony from Elijah? *“Behold, I thought, ‘He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.’”* (2 Kings 5:11.) Instead, Elijah had sent a servant to instruct Naaman to dip seven times in the Jordan River. How undignified! But when he set aside his prideful anger and obeyed, the cleansed leper's *“Behold, I thought”* became *“Now I know.”* (2 Kings 5: 15.)

This wasn't the first time someone's think-so turned out to be wrong. When Abraham and Sarah journeyed to the Philistine city of Gerar, Abraham told King Abimelech that Sarah was his sister (just as he had done in Egypt many years earlier). Abimelech promptly took Sarah into his harem, but the Lord just as promptly ordered him to return her to her husband. The indignant king demanded an answer from Abraham: *“Why have you done this thing?”* Abraham's excuse was, *“I thought surely the fear of God is not in this place, and they will kill me on account of my wife.”* (Genesis 20:1- 11.)

Yes, he thought – but was dreadfully wrong.

Looking back at the time he had been a Jesus-hating abuser of Christians, Paul said, *“Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”* (Acts 26:9.) Like Abraham and Naaman, Paul had to come to grips with how utterly wrong he had been.

What a difference between *“Behold, I thought”* and *“Now I know”!* The line of demarcation: Learning and obeying God's will.

— Justin, TX

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall 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.)

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path . . . The entirety of your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.” (Psalm 119: 105,160.)

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING . . .

THE ONLY TRUE PATH TO UNITY

By Dalton Key

Our world seems as divided now as it has ever been. Nations are divided, ethnicities can't get along, political parties are at war, and yet, by and large, this has always been the case. More disturbing than all that is this: the religious world claiming allegiance to Christ is no less fractured.

How can we lead the world to the unity of our Lord if those of us claiming to follow Him can't be united among ourselves.

How do we go about the business of uniting our divided, fragmented religious world?

We know that Jesus prayed to the Father asking for such unity (John 17: 20,21), but how did He intend for such unity to be accomplished?

Should we ignore our faith-based differences, disregard our conflicting doctrines, and simply agree to disagree? As appealing as this approach might seem, it simply will not work. While it could result in some semblance of disjointed union, true unity would be impossible. Genuine unity depends upon fundamental agreement, as Amos suggested in his inspired question, *“Can two walk together except they be agreed?”* (Amos 3:3.)

Perhaps we could all unite upon some common creed or manual. But who has the influence or the authority to devise such a document? And doesn't the Bible teach, *“There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death?”* (Proverbs 14:12.) Even if it were possible for all of us to agree upon one common, human creed, we would find it full of mistakes and in constant need of revision.

Garbage in, garbage out comes to mind.

This leaves us with but one possible alternative. We determine to throw off all party names, discard all party platforms, reject all humanly devised doctrines and unite upon the Word of God alone.

As the very body of Christ, as His church, we make and bind no laws; we leave that to the Lord and His inspired message of truth. From the earliest days of the church, Christians *“continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine.”* (Acts 2:42.)

As disciples of Christ, we strive simply to do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names. Our platform is simple and based upon God-breathed Scripture: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.” (Ephesians 4:4-6.)

Simple? Yes. But then, that may well be why the scriptural plan has always and continues to be so very unpopular.

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise . . . And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly with all wisdom . . . And whatever you do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Galatians 3:26-29; Colossians 3:15,16a,17.)



MUSIC IN WORSHIP: WHO DECIDES?

By Bobby Key

A preacher of some renown was asked, *“May a church use a piano in its worship service and be pleasing to the Lord?”* He replied, *“I do not know; it would depend on the feeling of the majority of the members and the decision of the elders.”*

This answer is completely out of harmony with the doctrine of the New Covenant. Enoch had this testimony that he pleased God. (Hebrews 11:5.) This man walked with God, and he did so by faith. In order for one to please God today, he must walk by faith. (2 Corinthians 5:7.) Faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Romans 10:17.) Thus, to please God, one must walk in faithful obedience to the word of God.

The word of God teaches Christians to sing and make melody in their hearts to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.) Quoting from

the 22nd Psalm, the author of Hebrews says, *“I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praises unto thee.”* (Hebrews 2:12.)

I know of no act of worship acceptable to God unless the Bible authorizes that act to be done. Christians are told to sing. I know of no passage of Scripture in the New Testament that talks about mechanical instruments of music in New Testament worship. Therefore, I can have no faith on this subject. *“Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”* (Romans 14:23.)

Since when did God allow the majority in a congregation to determine the kind of worship that pleases Him? When did He ever give elders the authority to legislate concerning the type of music to be used in New Testament worship?

The only way we can know what

pleases God in the New Testament age is by reading what God has revealed in the New Testament. It is never wise to speak where God has not spoken.

— Deceased

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord. Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Colossians 3:16,17.)

NEVER HAVING TO SAY GOODBYE

By Hershel Dyer

As a very young preacher, fresh out of college, I was sitting near the bedside of a man who was an unbeliever. He was nearing the time of his death and I was most anxious to convert him to the Lord. Sadly, there seemed to be nothing that I could say which would change his thinking. However, he did lament that in his death he would be leaving behind his wife and this was truly a grief to him. He had no hope of ever seeing her again.

As the years go by we are compelled to bid farewell to those who have become so close and dear to us in this life. Although we know that death is just as natural to mankind as birth, the sorrow of the first is not mitigated by the joy of the last.

There is, though, a great difference in the departure of a Christian and the death of an unbeliever. When the friends of Dorcas gathered with the apostle Peter to weep at the passing of this dear sister, they could not help but be comforted by the blessed hope of her glorious resurrection and eternal life. Yet, to say goodbye to this beloved saint was most distressing even to

those with strong faith. (Acts 9:36-42.)

During World War I, a father went with his soldier-son as the young man prepared to board ship for the war zone in France. Knowing that when he passed through the swinging gates to go aboard, he might never see his father again, the son commented, *“Dad, if I never meet you again here, I'll meet you where the gates never swing outward.”* While riding the train back to Chicago, Charles Gabriel meditated upon the parting words of his son and then wrote those memorable lyrics for the song, *“Where the Gates Swing Outward Never.”*

To say goodbye to those we love is not so hard if we have hope that we will see them again. What balm it is to our aching hearts that *“over there”* the dear ones will never be leaving us, for then we shall be *“where the gates never swing outward.”*

— Deceased

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:18.)

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