

**GOD'S BLESSINGS**

By Danny Tunnell

Many fail to recognize the supernatural because they are looking for the spectacular. Many believe that God has wrought miracles in their lives, perhaps in a quiet, unobtrusive way, where it seemed unmistakably that God must have been involved in a healing or other marvelous outcome.

The miracles of God are wonderful and so are His blessings. To learn about the blessings of God, let's go back to Deuteronomy 28. To receive the blessings, God's people were commanded to hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord their God, and to observe His commandments. (vs. 1.) All these blessings would come on them and overtake them. (vs. 2.) God would bless the fruit of their body, the fruit of the ground, the fruit of their cattle. He would increase their flocks and herds and would bless them with victory over their enemies, blessings on their storehouses, and would make them plenteous in goods. (vs. 3-11.)

Miracles are marvelous, and when God performed miracles, there should always have been gratitude. But those experiencing the blessings of God are

not in need of a miracle. Adam and Eve were blessed by God in the Garden of Eden. They didn't need God to work miracles for them in Eden.

We know that Adam and Eve messed things up. They believed the devil and disobeyed God, and their sin opened the door for the curse to come on the earth. (Genesis 3:1-6; Deuteronomy 28:15-68.)

God's original intent was to bless man, not to curse him. For God to bless us fully, it is imperative that we cooperate with Him. It is God's desire today to bless us, that we prosper and be in health, even as our soul prospers. (2 John 2.) God gave us His written word so we could think like He thinks, so that we could cooperate with Him. (Isaiah 55:8,9; Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 2:9-12;16; Philippians 2:5.)

Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4.)

God's word teaches us how to walk in His blessings. His words are more essential to life than food. Job

said, "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." (Job 23:12.)

If we want blessings of God then we need to hearken diligently to His word, and then be a doer of the word. (James 1:22.)

When we have the blessings of God, that doesn't mean we'll never have any troubles in life. Satan is still the "god of this world." (2 Corinthians 4:4.) He'll still do everything he can to foul things up. But thanks be to God, that Jesus has overcome the world, and He enables His followers to triumph! (John 16:33; 2 Corinthians 2:4; 1 John 5:5.)

No one has ever merited or earned the blessings of God or His miracles; they have always been given by His grace. To God be the glory, great things He hath done! God is able to do things exceedingly, abundantly above everything we could ever ask or think! (Ephesians 3:20.) All praise, glory, and honor belong to Him!

— Miami, OK

**THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S LOVE**

By Bobby Key

Unrequited love is the story of man. It is heartbreaking to love someone dearly and not be loved in return, but the theme of unrequited love is a tragedy that runs through man's history upon the earth. Many of this world's most popular songs have dealt with the theme of unfaithful or unrequited love.

God has always loved His people. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.) "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us . . . Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (1 John 4:10; Romans 8:37.)

The history of God's dealing with man has been a one way street. The love of God which has been poured out

without measure has not been returned to any great degree. God has given us life upon the earth. He has showered us with many blessings. He has provided us with food, clothes, homes and friends. And most of all the Son of God loved man enough to die for him. Man was without God and without hope. Christ died that man might have his sins forgiven - that man might find a home in heaven. But man hardly said "thank you" for the salvation that Christ brought.

The story of unrequited love is the most disappointing story in the history of the world.

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another . . . We love Him because He first loved us." (1 John 4:11,19.) We show that we love God when we love each other. We prove our love for Him by keeping His

commandments. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:3.)

God loves you. Do you love God?

— DECEASED

"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. . . That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge." (Romans 8:38,39; Ephesians 3:17-19.)

**Old Paths**

Vol. 45, No. 9 September 2021

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

**LEGALIST!**

By Joe Slater

Words like legalist, legalism, and legalistic are not used in Scripture. Therefore, calling someone a legalist amounts to little more than name-calling unless you define the term. What is a legalist, anyway? What does it mean to be a legalist?

The Pharisees of New Testament days are often called legalists. They elevated human tradition to the status of divine law. For instance, they condemned Jesus' disciples because they did not perform a ritual washing of their hands before eating. (Matthew 15:2.) This had nothing to do with hygiene. It involved very little water and was intended only to remove ceremonial uncleanness. God's law for the Jews said nothing about it. The tradition itself was harmless, but making it mandatory and condemning others for not observing it was legalism. Legislating where God has not legislated is sinful!

Sometimes the Pharisees' traditions even contradicted God's word. For example, they invented a tradition by which they evaded their obligation to honor their aged parents with material support. Jesus rebuked them, saying, "You have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition." (Matthew 15:6.) That is legalism.

Legalism in the New Testament also included the belief that one could earn or merit God's favor by law-keeping. The parable of the Pharisee praying in the temple illustrates that error. (Luke 18:10-14.) He proudly recited a list of good things he had done. Surely he deserved God's approval, right? Wrong! While all of us ought to strive to obey God, let us never forget that even our best efforts fall short. We always need God's mercy and grace.

I have been called a legalist for insisting on careful study and application of God's word. For example, I pointed out to a friend that "a bishop must be . . . the husband of one wife." (1 Timothy 3:2.) In my friend's church, bishops are required to be celibate. When I pointed out the difference, he said I was being legalistic! Yet it is the tradition of his church that has made the word of God of no effect!

If careful study and application of the Scriptures makes one a legalist, then I plead guilty as charged. I guess I would rather be a legalist than an "illegalist!" In the final analysis, though, searching the Scriptures and following them closely, while relying on the grace of God and the blood of Jesus to wash our sins away, simply is not legalism.

— Justin, TX

**EVERYTHING GOD SAYS IS TRUE**

By Ron Stough

Because we have become so accustomed to dishonesty and half-truths expressed by men and women of much renown, many tend to read the Bible with the same attitude with which they listen to these voices.

Too often we think God didn't really mean what He said, or else He will change His mind when the final moment comes.

Titus 1:2 promises, however, that God cannot lie. Thus, everything that He has told us in His word is true. The Bible is a dependable book, even in a world of undependable men.

In the 50th chapter of Jeremiah, God promised his people that their captor, Babylon, would one day be one a desolate, barren land. At the time the promise was made, Babylon was almost an invincible city with walls 85 feet thick, 100 gates, and 250 towers.

Later, though, an army did come down and conquer Babylon, causing it to become a wasteland.

Time after time God promised things in His word that man thought impossible. Each time, however, man was the one who was wrong; God's promises were always fulfilled.

The Bible is the book to live by because its author is dependable. It is our only source of man's beginning, his purpose, and his destiny.

— Duncan, OK

"For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, 'Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.' And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end to all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast . . ." (Hebrews 6:13-19.)

## YOUR THOUGHTS

By Dalton Key

Quick! What are you thinking about this very instant?

Those experts who spend their days investigating matters of the mind have estimated that fifty-thousand thoughts pass through the human brain each day.

You just might be a thinker after all!

Sir Isaac Newton was once asked how he had discovered the law of gravity. "By thinking about it," he replied.

In a sense, I suppose we are what we eat; in some fashion, we may be said to be what we wear; but in truth, the most accurate appraisal of the human condition is this: we are what we think.

In the inspired words of Solomon's wisdom, "As he thinks in his heart, so is he." (Proverbs 23:7.) And again, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23.)

What we think determines our course of conduct, our strength of character, and yes, even the quality of our speech. Jesus taught, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things." (Matthew 12:34,35.) You need to clean up your language? You desire that your words be more encouraging and less negative? Go to work on your thoughts!

Is it any wonder why the apostle Paul exhorts us to think on things true and honest and just and pure and lovely; things virtuous, praiseworthy, and of good report? (Philippians 4:8.) He was simply paying tribute to an obvious truth which so many of us too-often forget: we are what we think!

Now what were you thinking about?

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God . . . Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion." (Romans 12:1,2,16.)

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING . . .

## STRANGLER BY WORRY

By Dalton Key

As divine commandments go, this one is rarely mentioned or understood as such. But the Scriptures are both forthright and unambiguous concerning the too-often sidestepped issue of worry, about which Jesus Himself said clearly, "Do not worry." (Matthew 6:31.)

Notice that Jesus did not merely advise His followers against worrying excessively; He mandated against worrying altogether.

Sometime later, the inspired Paul would write, "Don't worry over anything whatever." (Philippians 4:6, Phillips.)

Heaven's message is inescapable: God does not want His people to worry!

When discussing this matter with other Bible students, whether in a Bible Class or as part of a more private conversation, the same question keeps coming up. "What about concern? What is the difference between concern, which is necessary to a productive life, and worry, which is clearly condemned of heaven." The question may be the result of genuine curiosity. It may be an attempt to avoid the Lord's expectations. But regardless the motivation, the question deserves an answer.

Both worry and concern are alike in that they require a certain, focused attention directed toward a situation of interest. While there is certainly nothing wrong with holding interest for the "nuts and bolts" of life and living, this interest can easily morph into a consuming, life-draining preoccupation. Concern, which is normal, too often becomes worry, which, for the Christian, should not be.

Here lies the fundamental difference. Our cares and concerns are easily cast aside. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7.) Our worries, though, take on a life of their own, taking control of us. The word "worry" comes to us from a Middle English term meaning, "to strangle."

When concerns begin consuming us, strangling our very souls, we have entered the dangerous domain of worry.

But there is more. The Lord, in His condemnation of worry, reveals the real root of the problem with the words, "O you of little faith." (Matthew 6:30.) Faith may be involved in a healthy attitude of concern, but it has nothing at all to do with worry!

Simply put, worry is concern permitted to control us in the absence of faith.

As we focus on life's problems, real or imagined, we have a choice to make. We may choose to obsess over them, allowing them to dominate our minds and strangle our very thoughts; or we may choose to live as people of faith, casting our cares upon the Lord.



## THE SIN OF PREJUDICE

By Mark Lindley

we have common origins.

It was not until the time of Genesis chapter 11 that different languages and nationalities developed. (Genesis 11:1-9.) God caused the people of that day to be scattered upon the earth, and He confused their language. However, it was never God's intention for men to begin discriminating against one another. Rather, God commanded his people to love their neighbors as themselves. (Leviticus 19:18.)

Not only does the Bible teach that we have common origins, but also that we have a common fall. Scripture reveals that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23.) Red, yellow, black or white, all have sinned and need the forgiveness of God.

The Bible makes it clear that God loves all and sent His Son to die for all. (John 3:16.) Therefore, there is equal opportunity for all to be saved. Paul wrote: "For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus . . .

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:26-28.) This text shows what is taught throughout the Bible: that God is no respecter of persons. (Acts 10:34-35.) Since God does not show partiality, neither should we.

Racism and prejudice are ugly and sinful before God. James set the record straight when he wrote, "But if you have respect to persons, you commit sin, and are convicted of the law as transgressors." (James 2:9.)

Yes, prejudice is a "sin!"

Let us resolve to love and respect all people everywhere, recognizing that each has been created in the image of God. (Genesis 1:26-27.) Further, God's people everywhere should pray for our country that we might turn to God before it is too late.

— Ripley, MS

## ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY

By Wayne Robbins

to Him in dying on the cross.

Though we may never have such monumental tasks as given to these men, we do have responsibilities given to us. The local church has constant needs where people of responsibility must accept, shoulder and relieve the need. We must see our works through faithfully. Someone said, "We measure ourselves by the responsibility we shoulder successfully."

Being a preacher, I have seen my share of people accepting responsibilities but never completing them. No one likes to see irresponsibility in others; why should we tolerate it in ourselves?

When we see something that needs doing, or if the elders give us a particular job to do, let's be determined to see it through and do it right. Let's be responsible.

— Arkansas City, KS

"Let a man so consider us, as

A young man answered an advertisement for a responsible worker. "What makes you think you're responsible?" asked the employer. "On every job I have ever had so far," the youth answered, "whenever anything has gone wrong, the boss has always said to me, 'You're responsible!'"

Responsibility is a great virtue to be seen in others, especially if they are being depended on. To give someone a responsibility, and then have confidence that the job will be completed and done right, brings contentment to the one delegating. That is one less problem to be dealt with.

The Bible is full of illustrations concerning responsibility. Moses led the people to the promised land. Abraham carried out all his instructions and is noted as the father of the faithful. David was so faithful in his duties that he is called a man after God's own heart. Jesus completed the task given

servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." (1 Corinthians 4:1,2.) "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Revelation 2:10.)

### Old Paths

829 S. Rockford Ave. ,  
Tulsa, OK. 74120

On a nonprofit basis.  
Published monthly and  
supported by Churches of Christ  
and individuals.

Dalton Key Editor  
"Subscription Free;  
Prayers Requested;  
Contributions Appreciated."