

Standing Still, Going Forward

By Joe Slater

The Israelites felt boxed in at the Red Sea. Mountains loomed on both sides with the water ahead. Pharaoh's host was closing in behind them. Where could they go? As they had done before and would do again, the people complained, blaming Moses for leading them to disaster.

"Do not be afraid," Moses exhorted them. "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." (Exodus 14:13.) Not long ago they had witnessed the Lord's power over Pharaoh and his idols in ten plagues that devastated the land of Egypt. Oh, how quickly we forget!

There is a time to stand still. But two verses later God ordered Moses to "tell the children of Israel to go forward." (Exodus 14:15.) But wait! "Forward" led straight into the water! No worries – the Lord will simply part the water. You'll go through on dry

ground. Problem solved!

We, too, must stand; and we, too, must go forward.

"Take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13.) As a soldier must stand and fight, so we must engage in spiritual warfare. The Lord fought for Israel (Exodus 14:14), and He will fight for us too!

Yes, we must stand – but we must also go forward! Even the great apostle Paul acknowledged that he had not yet "arrived." "But one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13b-14.)

The goal is up ahead. Let us stand

THE REALITY OF SIN

By Danny Tunnell

In the early 1970's, prominent psychiatrist Dr. Karl Menninger wrote a book entitled, "Whatever Became of Sin?" He noted that the word "sin" had almost disappeared from our vocabulary, but a sense of guilt remained in our hearts and minds.

Forty-plus years later, things seem to have only gotten worse. Recently, a preacher told his congregation, "In this sermon we are going to talk about the 'S-word,' that nobody wants to discuss. Today we do not say that someone has sinned; instead we say he or she has issues."

Few today are willing to admit publicly that they have sinned. During his administration, President Clinton became a rare exception. After his inappropriate conduct while in office, he told a group of ministers attending a prayer breakfast at the White House, "There is no fancy way to say this. I have sinned." The president used exactly the right words to describe his behavior.

David is described as a man after God's own heart, not because he was sinless, but because he acknowledged his sins and repented. He told the

Lord, "I have sinned greatly." (2 Samuel 24:10.) "I have sinned, and done wickedly." (2 Samuel 24:17.) After he sinned against Bathsheba and her husband (Uriah), David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." (2 Samuel 12:13.)

Whatever became of sin? Today many are calling evil "good" and good "evil." (Isaiah 5:20.) The world talks about the "stupid good people" and the "clever wicked ones."

In the Bible, when people sinned, they always exercised bad judgment. Wisdom deserts a person when he sins. He has accepted a lie for the truth. It is like he is driving on the highway, ignoring all the signs with his eyes shut! Is that a wise way to travel?

Those who sin do not take into account their souls. They give their souls little thought as they transgress God's laws, or fail to do good when they know they should.

Sin is never the wise thing to do. It always ignores consequences. Don't buy the world's notion that the sinner is the "smart fellow," and the righteous individual is "stupid." We have peer pressure throughout our lives, not just

still (remain calm), stand fast, and go forward! Soldiers of Christ, arise and put your armor on!

— Justin, TX

"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:57,58.)

"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'" (Hebrews 13:5,6.)

in high school. Always remember there is nothing smart about wrongdoing and nothing stupid about righteousness. The one who sins against God is not the bright rebel he fancies himself to be. Rather, he is showing his weakness and stupidity.

Our country has many intelligent people whom God has helped to build a great nation. But so many today seem to be greatly lacking in moral wisdom. Isn't it time to bring back the "S-word" (sin) into our vocabulary? The first step in solving any problem is to properly identify it. If in our minds sin does not really exist, what would ever motivate us to repent of it?

— Miami, OK

Old Paths

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

SHINE ON

By Dalton Key

The darker the night, the dimmer the day,
As embers of memories flicker away,
When the brightening goodness of life seems long past,
When the worst from the best of us leaves us aghast,
This truth I continue to settle upon,
My choices are mine and I choose to shine on.

I know I can't turn all the darkness to light,
I know I can't change every wrong into right;
My voice is so feeble, my life is so small,
Confronted by darkness confronting us all,
But still this one truth I will settle upon,
My choices are mine and I choose to shine on.

You can have all your glasses half-empty with gloom,
Your hopeless despair draining hope from the room;
The world, to a soul, may trade darkness for light;
There may be none left yet to take up the fight,
But still, here is truth that I'll settle upon,
My choices are mine and I choose to shine on.

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16.)

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord . . . Therefore He says:

'Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.'" (Ephesians 5:8,14.)

JESUS PRAYED FOR ME

By Milton Smith

One of the most intriguing chapters in the Bible is the seventeenth chapter of John. It is in this chapter that we read Jesus' magnificent prayer to the Father for his people. Over the years, this prayer has been referred to as Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer" and "The Real Lord's Prayer." I've always liked that latter title because, technically speaking, this is indeed the Lord's prayer. The other prayer that we often refer to by this title could probably be more accurately called "the disciple's prayer" or "the model prayer."

In this amazing prayer in John's seventeenth chapter, Jesus pours out His heart to the Father and includes you and me in his requests! While praying for the apostles, Jesus quickly adds, in verse 20, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word."

What an amazing thought! It encourages me to know that Jesus prayed for me two thousand years ago. And he prayed for you as well, because our Lord prayed for all who would believe on Him through the inspired words of the apostles. I do not profess to fully understand the Divine mind, but I rejoice to know that Jesus included you and me in that wonderful prayer to the Father. Before the world began, Jesus loved us, and 2000 years before we arrived in this world, He prayed for us. This is truly an amazing thought.

You and I belong to Jesus in a very unique way via the new birth. It is a very personal relationship that we share with our Savior. Jesus loves all the world, but He has a special love for those who make the choice to become a member of His spiritual family.

How could Jesus love us before we were ever born? The same way parents who are anticipating the birth of a child already love that child before he/she is physically born into this world. When parents pick out a name for a yet-to-be-born child, they already love that child! Jesus already loves the future sheep of his fold.

As Paul pondered so many years ago in his Roman epistle, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?" (Romans 11:33, 34.)

— Tulsa, OK

WE ARE WEAK BUT HE IS STRONG

By Bobby Key

It is good to acknowledge our weaknesses. We are all weak in certain areas and the devil tempts us at our weakest point. Let us never allow Satan to take advantage of us; we must be fully aware of his schemes. (2 Corinthians 2:11.)

Many times there is strength in weakness! The Lord told Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." The apostle then wrote, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:9,10.)

In time of grief, suffering, and struggles, we sometimes ask, "Lord, where were You?" When Lazarus died, his sisters, Mary and Martha, wondered where Jesus had been and why he had not been present when they needed Him. Both sisters said, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." (John 11:21,32.) Many sincere souls have asked the same question and made similar statements down through the years.

Jesus prayed for the cup of suffering to be removed. On the cross, he asked, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Don't be afraid of your weakness, your doubts, your fears. It is alright to feel anxious, empty, lost and alone. Struggling with weaknesses forces one to turn to God for strength.

In 1948 J.R. Baxter wrote the song, "Just a Closer Walk With Thee." He wrote, "I am weak but Thou art strong. Jesus keep me from all wrong; I'll be satisfied as long as I walk close to Thee. Through this world of toils and snares, if I falter, Lord, who cares? Who with me my burden shares, if I walk close to Thee. When my feeble life is o're, time for me will be no more, guide me to that peaceful shore, let me walk close to Thee."

When life tumbles in and we feel weak and helpless, may we be assured that God is near by. God is always present, and ready to help His children in times of struggle. (1929-2018)

"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 . . . The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." (Psalm 46:1-3,7.)

EDITORIAL . . .

REJECTING JESUS

By Dalton Key

As we treat the words of Jesus and as we treat His church, so we treat Jesus Himself.

Jesus' words are as true as they are unmistakable: "He that rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12:48.) Jesus viewed a rejection of His words as tantamount to a rejection of Himself.

The inspired John clearly taught that our fellowship with both the Father and the Son depends upon our abiding "in the doctrine of Christ." (2 John 9.) And this "doctrine of Christ" is not meant to describe only those red-lettered words found in the four gospel accounts or the singular conviction that Christ has come in the flesh. Paul declared that the inspired words he wrote and spoke had been received "by the revelation of Jesus Christ," and affirmed such words to be "the commandments of the Lord." (Galatians 1:11,12; 1 Corinthians 14:37.)

Yet here is one of the more disturbing quirks of today's post-modern pseudo-disciple: A professed enthusiasm for Jesus unequally yoked with an obvious distaste for both His teaching and His church. Too many of those claiming faith in Christ are willing neither to submit to His teachings nor align themselves with His body.

And many preachers are encouraging such nonsense.

Nothing is more oxymoronic than the image of disciples attempting to embrace a Master wholly excised from His own teachings. Didn't Jesus once say, "If you love me, keep my commandments?" (John 14:15.)

Whether the matter before us concerns salvation from sin, personal conduct, pure and proper worship, or any one of the myriad spiritual concerns with which we grapple day by day, we who voice allegiance to Christ must heed His word.

And neither should Christ and His church be divided. Those voices crying out, "Jesus, yes! The church, no!," fail to acknowledge the following: Christ promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18); the church is His spiritual body over which He rules as head (Colossians 1:24); the church has been built upon Christ as foundation and has been purchased by His very blood (1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 20:28); and there is but one body - one church - recognized of heaven as belonging exclusively to Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 4:4; 5:24,25.)

To speak favorably of Christ while disparaging, discrediting, or dismissing His church is neither fair to the facts nor honest with the truth. Never forget: When Saul of Tarsus persecuted the church he persecuted Christ. (Acts 8:3; 9:4.)

Simply put, when we reject the Lord's word, when we reject the Lord's church, we are rejecting the Lord Himself. May we never be guilty of such.



"I WANT TO BE A WORKER"

By Joe Dale Wilson

have opportunity. (Galatians 6:10.)

We sing: "I want to be a worker every day; I want to lead the erring in the way, that leads to heaven above, where all is peace and love, in the kingdom of the Lord." Do we really mean EVERY DAY? How many can actually sing with meaning, "I want to be a worker every day?"

Desire is what is lacking in so many lives! Desire comes from a heart that appreciates what Jesus has done! Jesus said, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work." (John 9:4.)

The grave is coming to all of us and we have no idea when it will take away our opportunities. The wise man, Solomon, said, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are

going." (Ecclesiastes 9:10.)

With all this in mind, we need to be workers for the Lord every day!

— Vernon, TX

"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." (Romans 12:1,2.)

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:9,10.)

ADDICTED TO SERVICE

By Danny Boggs

"Now I urge you, brothers - you know the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints - be subject to these, and to every fellow worker and laborer." (1 Corinthians 16:15,16, ESV.)

Nobody in Corinth was a Christian before Stephanas and his family. And what did that family think being a Christian was all about? They "devoted themselves to the service of the saints." As the KJV puts it, they "addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." Nobody had to beg them to do good works. They served and served to the point of exhaustion but never wanted to stop.

Is that the way you think about service?

Take note that "service" and "ministry," and "servant" and "minister", are interchangeable terms. Nobody is a minister without being a servant. And everybody who is a servant is a minister. The lines drawn in religion between ministers and the

rest of the church are unbiblical in that regard. Some of the best ministers would never claim that label or have it applied to them by other people. Their work may not get much attention. But God knows who they are, and His work in the church and in the world depends on them. (Hebrews 6:10.)

Service, especially toward their fellow Christians, was a way of life for the household of Stephanas. They followed in the footsteps of Jesus, who "came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45.) Stephanas probably led the way with his wife and children as eager partners.

What should we do when we see such Christians? Be subject to them. Be like them. If they say they could use some help, jump in eagerly.

Who are some fellow Christians you know who have this good addiction? "There is much to do; there's work on every hand!"

— Neosho, MO

"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in

lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:3,4,12,13.)

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