

Expository Files

Editors: Jon W. Quinn, Warren E. Berkley



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Edited by Jon W. Quinn & Warren E. Berkley

Front Page

Here's something I posted on [my blog](#) last month. First, I posted the quote and let visitors respond. Then I followed up with my thoughts about it.

Notorious Noise Noted

THE TOZER QUOTE: "Christians have fallen into the habit of accepting the noisiest and most notorious among them as the best and the greatest. They too have learned to equate popularity with excellence, and in open defiance of the Sermon on the Mount they have given their approval, not to the meek, but to the self-assertive; not to the mourner, but to the self-assured; not to the pure in heart who see God, but to the publicity hunter who seeks headlines." A. W. TOZER (1897–1963)

My Thoughts – Well, it really hit a nerve on the blog. My hope was it would make us think. A generality, yes, since not every Christian is guilty of this and not everyone who is popular wanted to be. The quote is a subjective observation of a one man, but shows some insight into how pride is packaged and how alluring noise may be. So my mind traveled in these directions . . .

1. **Noise and Notoriety is never a reliable mark of greatness.** Some who are great in the godly sense may unwittingly create some noise and notoriety, but they are not great because of those results.

2. **The idea of using noise and notoriety to determine who is “best” or “great” is a carnal, competitive, shallow exercise.**

3. **Popularity should never be our purpose**, though it could become a result, or by-product, as ____ highlights.

4. **The self-assertive cannot effectively be Christ-assertive.** A preacher, for example, cannot elevate self and Christ at the same time. And such attempts are generally transparent. {Self-confidence – for the Christian – requires careful definition. It is really God-confidence as applied by a dependant recipient of grace. Self-confidence, in the ordinary, worldly sense, we should well avoid.}

5. **The publicity hunter who seeks headlines often finds them . . . when he crashes.**

See Matt. 18:1-3; 23:1-12; Phil. 2:1-5; 1 Cor. 1:26-31; Gal. 2:20, 6:14; Prov. 27:2; Lk. 18:9-14; Jas. 4:6-10; Rom. 12:3.

It was also Tozer who said - “Humility is as scarce as an albino robin.”

God Is Still God

Psa. 88

Warren E. Berkley

It has been observed in Bible resource books and commentaries, that the 88th Psalm is the most mournful of all the psalms.

Barnes Commentary:

This psalm is altogether of a mournful and desponding character. The author is a sufferer; he is expecting to die; he fears to die; he longs to live; his mind is overwhelmed with gloom which does not seem to be irradiated by one ray of hope or consolation.

Adam Clarke:

The earnest prayer of a person in deep distress, abandoned by his friends and neighbors, and apparently forsaken of God, 1-18.

Matthew Henry:

This psalm is a lamentation, one of the most melancholy of all the psalms; and it does not conclude, as usually the melancholy psalms do, with the least intimation of comfort or joy, but, from first to last, it is mourning and woe.

Pulpit Commentary:

This is the darkest, saddest psalm of all the Psalms.

These conclusions do not represent just the first impression of these scholars. After much thought and study of Psalms 88, the typical commentary appraisal is *it is entirely negative, totally given to the expression of grief and despair.*

True (if you haven't already, read it now), it seems to be a picture of unalleviated misery, seldom found anywhere in the Scriptures. Often, in the book of Psalms, you will be able to find hope even in between statements of despair. In many of the Psalms there is lamentation and negative emotions honestly expressed, yet they are resolved by some statement of hope and trust. Not in Psalms 88, we may immediately conclude.

In Psalms 88, from verse 1 to the end of the chapter expresses the emotions of one who is writing from the pit, deep in despair. Even after you grant the writer literary license to use exaggerated poetic language, this poem cannot be lifted to any level of joy it seems. It is a continuous, bitter expression of one living deep in despair, sometimes with language that may seem to border on reproach against God.

The study of this may in some ways be unpleasant but like all Scripture, **there can be a positive result for us, as we explore the text and apply the message.**

The more I read Psalms 88, the greater my conviction, **this was written by someone suffering from their own sin.** {I'm going to show you how I arrived at this conclusion.} *First, let's deal with this briefly.*

The heading above verse 1 associates this passage with the sons of Korah, and a contemplation of a man called "Heman the Ezrahite." Beyond this identification, we have no definite history to connect to the Psalm. There is no circumstance written elsewhere that sheds light on this that I am aware of. The sons of Korah were those descended from Korah – according to 2 Chron. 20:19, involved in musical composition.

One of them was Heman, who according to 1 Chron. 6:33; 15:17, was a grandson of Samuel. He was named as a “seer” in 2 Chron. 29:14,30, and apparently took a leading part in worship services. All of this is interesting – but fails to provide specific insight that would help us with Psalms 88.

That means our work in Psalms 88 depends mostly on the words – the content of the chapter, *plus – the general Bible principles we take with us into the study of any passage.* We take with us into this study what we have learned in Bible study outside of Psalms 88. What we know about **God.** What we know about *humans.* What we know about *sin.*

We take all that truth with us into Psalms 88, hopefully, to determine the meaning and message. So let me say again – my conclusion is, **Psalms 88 was written by someone suffering from his own sin.**

Notice, several statements in the passage and their accumulated impact:

In Verse 1, the writer addresses Deity: **“O Lord, God of my salvation.”** Whoever the writer was; whatever the personal context, the first thought in the opening sentence of the poem affirms two things: The writer needs salvation. The writer knows that only God can save him. Do not overlook the personal way this is expressed: The “God of *my* salvation.” What has been called “the saddest of all the psalms,” begins with this word of trust and hope; even if it be the only such statement in the chapter – **The “God of my salvation.”**

Next, I want us to look in verse 3, at the writer’s grievance: **“My soul is full of troubles.”** In this expression there is no complaint about some physical affection; and there is no claim that unforeseen circumstances are to blame. No direct evidence of being a victim of injustice.

“My soul is full of troubles.” This points to internal, spiritual trouble; turmoil of spirit having immediate impact on the inner man. In verse 5, the writer is “adrift among the dead.” Now remember, we take with us into this study everything we have learned from the Bible outside of Psalms 88 – what we know about God, about man, about sin!

What is it that would cause someone's soul to be full of troubles and adrift among the dead? I know of only one thing: **Sin!** When Paul wrote to the Ephesians about what the gospel saved them from, he said, before they obeyed the gospel they were **“dead in trespasses and sins,”** (Eph. 2:1). This leads me to believe Psalms 88 was written by one suffering under the guilt and bondage of his own sin – thus, “adrift among the dead.” If I’m right about this *by his choices to disobey God, he finds himself “adrift among” those who are spiritually dead.*

Verse 7: “your wrath lies heavy upon me.” Let’s ask ourselves – ***What is the wrath of God against?*** Is the wrath of God arbitrarily? Is the wrath of God unjust? For the answer, look at Romans 1:18 – “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”

If you are suffering with some physical infirmity it cannot be affirmed that the cause is the wrath of God. If you are suffering as a victim, or suffering for righteousness’ sake – It cannot be argued, the cause is the wrath of God. But, if you are violating God’s law; if you are living in sin, doing the devil’s will, the wrath of God lies heavy upon you. Col. 3:6 teaches, the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.

Verse 14a: “Why do you cast off my soul?” Why would God cast off a soul? Given all we know of God, we do not believe He would cast off a soul arbitrarily. But God has said He will not overlook; He will not endorse or fellowship that which is evil. Hab. 1:13 teaches his eyes are too pure to look on evil, and He “cannot tolerate wrong.”

Then, also in verse 14: “Why do You hide Your face from me?” Again our question remains: Why would God hide His face from someone? Turn over to Isaiah 59:1,2. Isaiah is telling the people, why they no longer enjoy the favor of God.

“Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save,
or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;
but your iniquities have made a separation
between you and your God,
and your sins have hidden his face from you
so that he does not hear.” (ESV, Isa. 59:1,2)

God will hide His face *from the sinner!* Do you see why I believe this was written by one suffering from his own sin?

I'm looking at each description of despair. I'm attempting to understand each phrase in harmony with everything else the Bible says about God, man and sin. And I'm giving force to the accumulated impact of all these phrases, set into the literary context of this poem. The writer's perspective is – *One suffering from his own sin.*

What this teaches us should be obvious: **The Bible teaches there is no problem that could invade your life worse than sin!** No illness or injury is as bad as sin. No suffering caused by injustice can bring into your life, the ruin sin can bring. There is no financial tragedy; there is no unforeseen tragedy as terrible as sin! Let me take you back into some of these statements in Psalms 88: Verse 4: "...a man who has no strength..." Verse 6: "...laid down in the lowest pit..." Also in verse 6: "...in darkness," (a common figure depicting evil or sin).

Verse 8: "...an abomination..."

Verse 15: "...I am distraught..."

Verse 16: "...your fierce wrath
has gone over me..."

I read these statements and ask myself – **What could cause this utter misery.** And the only answer I can give is – **Sin!** The writer's perspective is – *One suffering from his own sin.*

Back into the chapter, let me take us to verse 8, where the sinner says about his condition: **"...I am shut up, and I cannot get out..."** Here is something basic we must learn about sin. The Bible teaches – *Sin is a personal problem we cannot solve on our own!* We cannot save ourselves from sin on our own; through our own resolve and resources. This is the point made by Paul several times.

Titus 3:5 – "not by works of righteousness which we have done."

In 2 Tim. 1:9 – "not according to our works."

Or in Eph. 2 – “not of works,” and “not of yourselves.”

Once we begin to live outside of God’s will – in that disobedience and the guilt of sin, **we cannot fix that problem on our own!** Thus the sinner says: “I am shut up, and I cannot get out.” So my understanding is, Psalms 88 is designed to vividly show us the despair of one who lives in sin. The profound misery of the guilt of sin. Utterly forsaken; cut off; engulfed in darkness. “I am shut up, and I cannot get out.”

Is it true, there is no hope in the passage?

Where is the hope? There seems to be such stress on the sorrow; such unalleviated misery, no positive note can be found. I quoted Barnes earlier, who said “This psalm is altogether of a mournful and desponding character.”

I disagree; perhaps I disagree with most commentators in regard to this text. I think hope can be found in Psalms 88. Hope is discovered in one simple truth – **God is still God!**

Let us not overlook the first verse. Observe how the psalm begins, by addressing the Lord, “God of my salvation.” As bad as life was for the sinner God was still God, and the sinner was addressing God; crying out to Him, “day and night!”

Arguments can be made as to how close the sinner was to full repentance. But there is no question: he acknowledged the Lord as the God of his salvation, and he cried out to Him day and night.

Then, let me take us to verses 10-12, where you’ll find a series of questions. Whatever literary interpretation one might assign to the questions, they strongly imply the truth about who God is.

“Do you work wonders for the dead?
Do the departed rise up to praise you? *Selah*
Is your steadfast love declared in the grave,
or your faithfulness in Abaddon?
Are your wonders known in the darkness,
or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?”
(Psa. 88:10-12)

Let me say again, whatever literary interpretation one might give to the questions and their intent in the emotions of the writer, *they strongly imply the truth about who God is.*

Notice:

God is able to work wonders.

He can raise the dead.

He is worthy of praise.

*God has this quality – **Lovingkindness.***

God is faithful, and God is righteous!

In whatever state of despair the writer might be describing, he denies none of these truths about who God is! Remember – the writer begins with the affirmation that **God is the God of His salvation.** The writer suffers from the guilt of his own sin. But he knows who God is, and even in his despair – maintains clear concepts of who God is.

All of which leads me to this point for us today → **Who God is, does not change!** We change. We sin; hopefully we repent; *those are changes.* Sin is a change in the wrong direction. Repentance, change in the right direction. We change. But before we sin, after we sin; whether we repent or not - - **God is still God; and He is the God of our salvation.**

I'd like for us to notice one more thing in Psalms 88. Given the assumption, that the writer is suffering from his own sin, it is noteworthy – enough awareness of God remained for him to call upon God. In verse 1: “I have cried out day and night before You.” In verse 2: “Let my prayer come before You; Incline Your ear to my cry.” Whatever the writer's state of mind – he knew enough of God, to continue his struggle toward the God of his salvation.

Conclusion:

There is no kind of suffering equal to the ravages of sin. No physical problem; no financial problem; no lost relationship; no tragedy or fear of unforeseen trouble. There is nothing as bad as sin.

We cannot rescue ourselves from the peril of sin. It is not in man that walks, to direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23). We must look to God – regarding Him as the God of our salvation, willing to accept what He offers in Christ.

Today, to all who live in sin, God remains the God of our salvation. The story of the salvation He provides today is – **the gospel**.

The best way I know to end this study is to call to our attention **the gospel of Christ**. You do not have to live in sin. You have to recognize that you have sinned. But the message of the gospel is **you do not have to live in sin!**

Nobody needs to experience the misery described in Psalms 88. If you know who Christ is, what He did – and you believe in Him – **no reason to live in the deep pit of sin; no reason to let disobedience to God ruin your life**. If you are willing to act on your belief in Christ – in obedience to the gospel – **you can be raised from that ugly pit out of sin, and into Christ**.

A King's Heart

1 Kings 11

Jay Taylor

Shocking And Tragic

Somehow, 1 Kings 11 is never expected. The chapter is always shocking and tragic to read. It is shocking due to the previous chapters that mention the wisdom and faith of Solomon. His speech and prayer of dedication at the temple in 1 Kings 8 is a remarkable address of admonition for the people and supplication toward God. We would never expect the events of 1 Kings 11 to transpire. But they do - and that is the tragedy. The writer sums up the tragedy in these words: "Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not follow the Lord, as did his father David" (1 Kings 11:6).

The Heart Of The Matter

How could this happen? How could this wise man turn away from God? The answer comes early in chapter 11. A commandment from God was disobeyed (11:1-2). What was the result? Solomon's heart was turned away from God (11:3). The writer seems to pay special attention to Solomon's heart (11:3, 4, 9). Solomon was no longer the servant of God (8:30, 52) that he once was. His heart was no longer right with God.

Lessons From Solomon's Heart

1. Practice What You Preach! Solomon had once said, "Let your heart therefore be loyal to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day" (1 Kings 8:61). He preached about loyal hearts, but sometime later, his heart was not loyal to the Lord (11:4).

2. God Wants All Of Our Heart! The ESV says that Solomon's heart "was not wholly true to the Lord his God" (1 Kings 11:4). A divided heart is at odds with God. He wants it all.

3. Disobedience Brings About Despicable Actions! God told Solomon that part of the kingdom would be given to his servant Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:11, 28, 31). What was Solomon's reaction to God's message? The writer says, "Solomon therefore sought to kill Jeroboam" (1 Kings 11:40). Sound familiar? Solomon is acting more like Saul than his father David. His despicable behavior is appalling!

4. A Father's Godly Instruction Should Be Obeyed! David told Solomon to walk in the ways of God and keep His statutes, commandments, judgments, and testimonies (1 Kings 2:2-3). Sadly, Solomon did not take heed to his father's godly instruction.

5. We Must Always Obey God! Solomon knew what God expected from him (1 Kings 9:1-9; 11:2). He could offer no excuses. He could not plead ignorance. Solomon directly disobeyed God.

Solomon's heart was not right with God. His life was not right as a result. "Get your heart right," a preacher from a generation ago told me, "And your life will be right." Applications abound. What about us? Will we learn from Solomon's heart?

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Snatching Victory From Defeat
Philippians 1:12
By Jon Quinn

Jesus spoke quite plainly of the costs of true discipleship and discouraged people who were unwilling to pay the cost from even starting (Luke 24:27-30). Paul always wanted others to know all the facts. He always told it like it is; the good and the bad. He never failed to face reality. He was certainly like the Lord Himself in this (Philippians 1:12-19). Paul was a prisoner at the time he wrote this letter to the church of Christ at Philippi. It wasn't right that he suffered as a prisoner of faith. Notice how he dealt with being in prison; while he never ignored this fact, but neither did he use it to play upon the sympathies of others. In fact, he did exactly the opposite. Instead of seeking sympathy because of his confinement, he took advantage of the situation so that he might be an encouragement to others. This section of scripture deals with the fact that even in the midst of burden and disappointment distinct advantages had come to him. What a powerful and helpful lesson that is for us!

"Now I Want You to Know"

"Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel..." (Philippians 1:12).

Many people miss out on great blessings/opportunities in life because they do not understand an event. Many times we assume something is true when it isn't. Sometimes we miss opportunities because think on a level beneath faith in God.

Since Paul was in prison, he could no longer move about freely preaching the gospel of Christ. We might assume that he is severely hampered in what he is able to accomplish. Suppose Paul had made that same assumption and that he had become bitter and blamed God for it. Suppose he had ceased to make any effort toward sharing the good news about Jesus Christ and allowed cynicism to take over his life?

Not Paul! He reasoned that if God had permitted him to be imprisoned there was a divine purpose for it. So, he looked for opportunities and found them by the wagonloads!

Listen! The world will never adjust itself to completely suit our preferences. Some things will not go "right" and it will not always be fair. But, life can always be successful, and will be as long as we take it and fit it into God's plan. That is what Paul did. He was not ready to quit, and he didn't.

"For The Greater Progress of the Gospel"

"Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel..." (Philippians 1:12).

Paul frankly stated his feelings about the disasters that had come to him. He refused to be a defeated man at the end of a strenuous life.

He did not know for certain whether his imprisonment would end in death, or in release, but he refused to allow either possibility to deter him from promoting the gospel of His and our Savior, Jesus Christ. He said, "But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake." (Philippians 1:22-24).

Now, it could be that thinking he might be executed would cause him to become cynical and do little. Or, thinking that he needed to improve his chances of being released, that he would not be very active and keep quiet. But he didn't do that. He preached the gospel. He taught prisoners and slaves and soldiers and guards and governors and even a king. He by no means convinced them all; not even most of them; but only a few. But it was enough.

What makes this all the more wonderful is who Paul was, and who he had been. He had also been a persecutor of the Way, but had been changed so radically by the Lord he had met on the road to Damascus. A look at Paul's conversion and subsequent life shows the truth behind his words... he

lived as one who had seen Jesus. It is powerful evidence to the truth of Jesus and who He is. Make sure you share this with others! One of the reasons you believe is because of Paul's life, and how it fit his explanation of why he was so zealous in spite of imprisonment and other evil circumstances (Acts 22:4-16).

"My Circumstances Have turned Out"

"Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel..." (Philippians 1:12).

Similar to our own era, the time in which Paul lived was one in which people had become disillusioned with shallow substitutes for answering real human spiritual needs. This lack of true spirituality gave way to people searching for substitutes, just like today. They longed for something substantial, something that would give them confidence concerning the meaning of life and hope for the future beyond the grave. There were, and are today, all kinds of cults and occultism seeking to address those needs, or at least make money off of them.

Today, as then, true Christianity provides the only answer. Paul delivered the message with a certainty that caused people to realize their craving for inner peace would be met only in Christ. Paul's demeanor, as well as the demeanor of other Christians in similar circumstances, was convincing to others that Paul had found something special. Could his words about Jesus and salvation and eternal life be true? His actions strongly indicated that they were! What do your actions say about your words of professed faith?

Paul believed that life had a main issue which dwarfed all others. In the world of uncertainty only Christ can bring a steadfast hope and an anchor for the soul. As Paul delivered this message to the people around him, a wonderful thing happened. The soldiers, impressed by Paul's strength of character, wanted to know more about his Savior and Lord. As his guards were believing, the word was spread. Paul became an object of interest. Through those people whom Paul contacted, the gospel was spread even further.

This is one of the reasons why we must never compromise our beliefs, but also we should not become so mean and militant that we harm the message through an obstinate and haughty attitude.

Adversity can and will strengthen us if we have faith. We can turn our burdens into bridges. We simply do not have all the answers as to the dilemmas we face each day as far as why or what good may come from them, but by faith we shall face them as did Paul, and be confident of the final good outcome of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

The Old and New (1st and 2nd) Covenants

Jeremiah 31:31-34

By Dudley Ross Spears

Jeremiah 31:31-34 - "Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah.

This announcement marks a pivotal point in the history of God and his relation to his people. It is his promise of a new covenant, different from, and much improved, from the covenant made at Mount Sinai. This is the first biblical reference to a new covenant. The passage is quoted in the New Testament, Heb. 8:8-12. No amount of theological manipulation can make the "new" the same as the "old." The simple words, "not according to" forever separate the two.

From Mount Sinai came God's first covenant with Israel. That covenant was made to one nation, Israel. It did not exist prior to Sinai, except in God's purpose. Other covenants had been made, but this one marked a definite change in covenants. It was God's first written covenant, revealed in the form of the first written system of laws and statutes.

The word covenant in the Hebrew language is "Berith." The corresponding Greek word is "diatheke." The Greek term "suntheke" is a word for a covenant between two equals. It is not a New Testament word. "Diatheke" is the term the New Testament employs to translate either covenant or

testament. The reason is obvious; God made no covenant with man as man's equal.

The N.T. book of Hebrews presents "diatheke" as a last will and testament (Heb. 9:15-17). Whereas "suntheke" always means an agreement made on equal terms which either party can change. The terms of a "suntheke" covenant can be negotiated. Not so with "diatheke." W.E. Vine noted the difference saying "diatheke" "primarily signifies 'a disposition of property by will or otherwise.' In its use in the Septuagint, it is the rendering of a Hebrew word meaning a 'covenant' or agreement (from a verb signifying 'to cut or divide,' . . . In contradistinction to the English word 'covenant' (literally, 'a coming together'), which signifies a mutual undertaking between two parties or more, each binding himself to fulfill obligations, it does not in itself contain the idea of joint obligation, it mostly signifies an obligation undertaken by a single person." (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.)

Ephesians 2:12 describes the former condition of Gentile Christians as "strangers from the covenants of promise." The fact that Paul put covenants in the plural accords with the number of promissory covenants God made with various people at different times.

1. He made a covenant with Noah to never again destroy the earth with a flood -- a promissory covenant (Gen. 9:9-12).

2. The promise in Gen. 3:15 was a covenantal promise of God which he renewed from time to time -- a promissory covenant (see 2 Sam. 7:12, 22).

3. The covenant God made with Abraham was a promise to bless all nations through the seed of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 17:10-11).

All these are "covenants of promise." God alone makes these covenants. The Bible makes a distinction between covenants of promise and covenants of law. The children of Ephraim refused to keep God's covenant by refusing to walk in his law (Psa. 78:9-10).

Laws don't structure the covenant; the particular covenant contains laws and conditions that must be obeyed and complied with in order to keep the covenant. Covenant breakers are those who refuse to obey covenantal law.

This is true of the covenant God made at Sinai and with the new covenant promised in Jeremiah 31. Verse 33 clearly states this: "This shall be (future) my covenant . . . I will put my law in their inward part . . ."

Jeremiah prophesied of God's covenant, God's law. God said he would make the covenant. Man had nothing to do with "making" the covenant. Man has only to accept and enjoy its benefits or reject it and suffer consequences. God said of the covenant, it is MY covenant and said HE would make it.

God also said "it shall be my law for my people." The covenant God promised was his law he promised would come in the future, in "the latter days." It is by God's love and grace he was willing to make a covenant with his people.

Verse 3 of this chapter: "The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Here he promised his people a new beginning "in the latter days" (Jer. 30:24). His promise of a new covenant was intended to give them assurance of a wonderful future state.

Just as the prophecies of Isaiah (2:1-4), Micah (4:1), and Joel (2:28) promised a bright future, so the prophecy of this new covenant enhanced the hope of Jeremiah and the people of God. The prophetic future of all men rested on God making a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. This refers to the new age ushered in when Jesus, by his own blood, sealed forever the New Testament (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 9:19-23).

In the same act of grace, he nailed the old to his cross (Col. 2:14) thus breaking down the middle wall of partition and establishing a domain of spiritual rest and peace (Eph. 2:14-16).

Not only does God say the covenant is his to make, he also says it is ours to keep. Keeping the covenant means complying with the laws of that covenant. The old covenant, made exclusively with the Jews at Sinai, was broken. That covenant is described by inspiration as "weak through the flesh" (Rom. 8:3) and faulty (Heb. 8:7). Because fault was found with the first covenant (made at Sinai) a second was sought for and established. Hebrews 8:7-12 is a quotation from Jeremiah 31:31ff. There can be no

possible way to scripturally say God has never had but one covenant with his people.

Under the provisions of the first covenant, the fault was not the covenant, established by God, but in the lack of provision it held for full and instant remission of sins (Heb. 10:1-4). The law, the old covenant, made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did (Heb. 7:19). Notice the interchange in the words "commandment going before" and the old covenant ("diatheke") that was done away in Christ (2 Cor. 3:14). The new covenant is "a better hope," "a better covenant," being based on better promises (Heb. 8:6).

Everything taught in the Bible about covenants is against the idea that there is one, and only one, covenant God has anything to do with and that all other covenants are but "subsets" of that alleged one covenant.

No amount of theological manipulation can make the "new" the same as the "old," and the "first" the same as the "second." The simple words, "not according to" forever separate the two.

To say one thing is "not according to" another thing is to say they are not the same but different. God's statement that the new covenant is "not according to" the one he made at Sinai with those Jews who escaped Egyptian slavery has reference to two covenants, one old and done away, the other new and in effect till the end of time.

Topic Page

Where Are You In The Sermon On The Mount? Warren E. Berkley

You are familiar with the Sermon on the Mount. This discourse is located in the book of Matthew, chapters 5, 6 & 7 with parallel teachings in Luke. It is a discourse delivered by Jesus and His subject is the good character that is the standard in His kingdom. This is the passage where you find the beatitudes, the model prayer Jesus gave, the Golden Rule and the warning, "Beware of false prophets." This is valuable teaching for every one of us.

Who can be found in the sermon on the mount?

The scribes and Pharisees are in this sermon, but not without condemnation. The perfect Preacher said, "...unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven," (5:20). Jesus went on to show, these "religious leaders" maintained a standard that wasn't high enough nor deep enough. It was their own "righteousness." So zealous were these men, they became the religious police of Judea. We are called to do better.

Hypocrites are in this sermon. When Jesus taught about giving, fasting and praying He used their practices to illustrate wrong motive (6:1-18). These men were driven by personal ambition or "vainglory." "Christians have fallen into the habit of accepting the noisiest and most notorious among them as the best and the greatest. They too have learned to equate popularity with excellence, and in open defiance of the Sermon on the Mount they have given their approval, not to the meek, but to the self-assertive; not to the mourner, but to the self-assured; not to the pure in heart who see God, but to the publicity hunter who seeks headlines," A. W. TOZER. We are to do better.

The Gentiles are mentioned. They seek after material things without the confidence in God that Christ's disciples are to live by. "For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things," (Matt. 6:32). In the NIV, "For the pagans run after all these things."

False prophets are in the sermon on the mount. "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves," (Matt. 7:15). We are warned of religious error; the deliverers and, of course, the message. Not every message is from God (see 1 Jno. 4:1-6). Not every messenger is worthy of our confidence (2 Pet. 2:1).

Where do you find yourself in this master of sermons? I hope you are *the poor in spirit . . . the salt of the earth . . . the lover of your enemies . . . the forgiver of trespassers . . . the servant of God, not mammon . . . the seeker of the kingdom . . . the finder of the narrow path and the builder who builds on rock.*

Plan of Salvation
By Jon W. Quinn

Plan #1

Announced by the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to new believers in Christ who asked what they must do:

Acts 2:36-38

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

(Acts 2:36-38).

Plan #2

On the back page of a tract, sinners were urged to pray this prayer to be saved. This prayer is not found in the Bible; nor were alien sinners commanded to pray for their forgiveness.

The Sinner's Prayer:

"O' Lord, I accept that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now accept Him into my heart as Lord and Savior asking for your mercy and forgiveness in His name. Amen."

The editors of Expository Files are happy with plan #1 and thankful to the God of all grace for it. We cannot recommend Plan #2 at all, but will change our minds when this prayer can be shown to us in the Bible.

The Final Page

Saul: An Enemy Becomes a Friend

Acts 22:1-16

By Jon W. Quinn

He is called by two names in the New Testament. He is first referred to as "Saul" which is his Hebrew name. But he is best known by his Roman name; "Paul." He was born in Tarsus as a Roman citizen and instructed in Jerusalem under Gamaliel, one of the leading teachers of the day. He was a Pharisee and a leader. He was entrusted with authority as a defender of the Jewish traditions to arrest and imprison any Jew who had converted to Christianity (Acts 22:3,4). He had it all: status, privilege, power, education and the respect of others. His career had great potential, but he blew it. Well, not really, but he did give it all up.

He was also trustworthy, loyal, zealous and noble. He had integrity and had been brought to the humbling, and startling, conclusion that he had been wrong, and that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Acts 22:4-10). He had to make a choice; do what he knew was right and sacrifice his career and become a Christian, or to keep all his worldly ambitions intact and give up his integrity. Paul chose to become a disciple of Christ.

Saul had seen and talked with Jesus, the risen Lord. He had seen a great light and was blinded by it. He had come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. He was led to the city of Damascus, and after praying about it all for three days, the Lord sent a disciple to Saul who told him of the plans God had for his life. Then, he said to Saul, "And now, why do you delay? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16). Saul did that, and thus began his life as a believer, a disciple and an apostle of Christ. By God Saul's sins were washed away as he called upon the name of the Lord by His obedient and trusting faith. This happened three days following the blinding incident on the road to Damascus.