

Expository Files

Editors: Jon W. Quinn, Warren E. Berkley



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Heartfelt; Heart Thought; Heart Purposed

By Jon W. Quinn

The Bible says concerning the conversion of Lydia that “the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.” (Acts 16:14). When the Bible uses the word “heart” in this way it does not refer to the organ which pumps blood through the body. Sometimes, the word “heart” refers to the center or core, like when we talk about getting to the “heart of a matter.” The spiritual heart refers to the center of a human being’s intellect, emotion and will, not to the muscle in the chest.

The heart includes our intellect and understanding. God invites us to use our power of reason as we consider His word (see Isa. 1:18-20). This is a vital part of conversion as well as continuing in the faith. A purely emotional experience without the intellect involved is not what the Bible refers to as “conversion.”

But the heart certainly does also include our emotions. Several emotions become involved. We begin to desire salvation and come to appreciate God. We love because He first loved us. We place our

trust in Him by obeying His gospel and are comforted and given peace as we do (see Matt. 22:37 and John 14:15).

Finally, the heart includes our will. This is where we make decisions and change our priorities. We, as disciples of Jesus, come to echo His own words to the Father, "Thy will, not Mine be done." We make a conscious decision to obey, and when we do, we "obey from the heart" (Rom. 6:17,18).

This is true "heart felt" religion. It is not vague; it is not cheap. It is precious, strong and enduring.

Just Passing Through
"Here we are but straying pilgrims..."
Hebrews 11:8-10
By Jon W. Quinn

Here we are but straying pilgrims,
Here our path is often dim;
But to cheer us on our journey,
Still we sing this wayside hymn.

On September 20, 1620, 102 English Separatists left Plymouth England on a difficult and dangerous 65 day sea voyage to Cape Cod. These pilgrims were fleeing religious persecution, social intolerance and economic depression inflicted due to discrimination. It took great courage and faith for them to commit life and future to God and to each other. They were content to be pilgrims journeying to a strange land in order to secure a better life. Imagine how odd they must have looked to the natives of North America when they departed the "Mayflower". Imagine how odd the North American natives looked to them (clothes, habits, food, language, faith...) Abraham endured a similar journey and left us a worthy example to

follow. The life of a disciple of Jesus is in many ways parallel to a pilgrim journey.

By Faith Abraham Lived as in a Foreign Land

“By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.” (Hebrews 11:8-10)

Just as the pilgrims who first made their way to this continent, Abraham did not always know where he was going, but he did know that wherever he happened to be on this earth that it was not a permanent residence. As a pilgrim he knew where he came from. He had left the city of Ur in Chaldea with his father, nephew, wife and children along with those possessions he could transport. He left a land which was known for its pagan worship. Astrology, superstition and the worship of a moon goddess. While it would be understandable if Abraham had left his homeland with some sadness, he nonetheless was leaving a spiritual waste land.

He was to be a stranger in a strange land as he wandered in Canaan. His faith was not the faith of the native Canaanites. He did not share a standard conduct and morality with the natives of Canaan. His purpose for living was foreign to the people of Canaan. He dwelt in tents and never attempted to build a permanent house or dwell in a city. While he maintained pleasant relationships with the Canaanites, did business with them honestly and fairly, and was known for his hospitality, he did not seek to assimilate with them and become as one of them. He was content to live as a nomad always on the move living in tents and fragile booths. He and his family did so for some 100 years.

His faith in the promise of God motivated him and helped bring contentment. He looked beyond this life to a celestial city. This vision kept him from being tied down to this life. With eyes focused on heavenly city, he was content to dwell as a stranger in a tent. He knew that God had a better inheritance in store for him than any found in a sin stained world.

The Bible says that Abraham and other men and women of faith were “seeking a country of their own... a better country, that is, a heavenly one” (Hebrews 11:13-16). In spite of not receiving the promise in actuality these remained faithful until death. They were willing to wander all their lives motivated by the promise of God. Returning home was always a possibility, but their eyes and heart were on a better country than the one they were in or had left.

It is interesting that Abraham would not even allow Isaac to go back to Ur to look for a wife. Instead, he made his servant swear with a solemn oath to go for Isaac. They kept in mind that their focus was not on where they had come from, but on where they were going. The focus was not so much on “I am from Ur” as it was “I am going to heaven.”

As a result God was not ashamed of them. In fact, to future generations He would often proclaim, “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?”

Pilgrims Still Journey Today

Pilgrims leave something behind as they begin their journey. What have we left? Abraham was called out of Ur. The pilgrims left England. We are called out of sin, ruin, godlessness, and from a meaningless life leading to eternal death. It is to be called from darkness to light (Colossians 1:13).

Pilgrims change their location from one place to another. Where are we? By becoming the children of God, citizens of a heavenly kingdom, we become strangers and pilgrims on this earth. Like Abraham was said to “dwell in tents”, we understand that even our physical bodies are but temporary dwelling places for our spirits (2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1).

Pilgrims are heading somewhere. First, Abraham headed for Canaan. When he arrived there, he still continued to search for the heavenly city. Our pilgrimage today calls us to a life of purity and holiness (1 Peter 2:11; 2 Peter 3:10-11, 13-14). Like the English pilgrims who helped settle our country, our language, dress, manner of living and purpose of living should be different from that of the world. Live and walk by faith so that like Abraham, God can with joy acknowledge us one day in the same way as He did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Pilgrims find themselves in a sometimes hostile land during their journey. We live now in a land that is hostile to our faith and heart's desire. How we should long for the peace and comfort of our Father's home. We are bound for a beautiful celestial city. Abraham was excited to think about his ultimate destination. It meant everything to him and helped him complete the journey successfully. We are headed for the same city as Abraham sought, built by the hand of God, eternal, in the heavens, reserved for us.

But to cheer us on our journey,
Still we sing this wayside hymn:

Yonder over the rolling river,
Where the shining mansions rise,
Soon will be our home forever,
And the smile of the blessed Giver

Gladdens all our longing eyes.

What happened to the Apostles, Prophets and Demons?

1 Corinthians 13 ~ Zechariah 13

By Jerry Blount

It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Jude 3

Wow! What do the Apostles and demons have in common? Answer... They are both manifestations of miraculous activity within God's creation. They have also both ceased to operate in a miraculous way. How did this happen? Let's see.

Today as the overall knowledge of Bible related things has declined, I have noticed a rise in an almost mystical religion among those professing Christianity. As my involvement on the internet increased, I have become alarmed as I have realized how many folks are still floating around claiming to be prophets and prophetesses. Folks regularly claim to be "led" here or there. It is quite common for someone to just explain away some Bible precept on the basis of "God given" feelings.

One of the net effects of this rise is a mystically distorted version of "Christianity." Many well intentioned people have been floundering as they grasp at straws for often contradictory so called "truths."

Neighbor!

It doesn't have to be this way. In fact God has gone to a great deal of trouble to give us something better.

He gave us the word of God.

He also told us to GROW UP!

Long ago priests, prophets and eventually Jesus' apostles had the task of revealing the word of God. It was a time that was fraught with testing to see if it was true... This testing was often difficult. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." I Peter 1:21

This was during the infancy of the world and during the infancy of the church. Both the OT prophets and the Apostles described a better time when all could rely on something final, tested and completed. Paul describes this process thusly; "When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things." I Corinthians 13:11

Jesus promised the Apostles that, "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." John 14:26

Jesus later followed that promise up and added to it, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear {them} now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come." John 16:12-13

Compare this to the words of Jesus' brother, the prophet Jude, "I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints." Jude 3

So... it was delivered in a complete way during the first century. Notice that not only is this a "once for all" thing, but Peter makes a promise that we would all have access to it even after he was dead!

“I consider it right, as long as I am in this {earthly} dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, knowing that the laying aside of my {earthly} dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.” II Peter 1:13-15

From the forgoing reading, let’s craft a summary statement ...

The role of the Apostles and prophets was to take “all the truth” and to deliver “once for all time.” While alive, they would continue to “remind” or “stir up” ... But their final task (and Peter’s specific promise) was to be sure that after they were dead we would still have what they had delivered. We call the fulfillment of this promise “the Bible.”

The church is no longer in it’s infancy!

Jesus is at the right hand of God leading His church through this word. So, does the Bible speak of an end to the miraculous revelations when the Word was completed in it’s delivery? Actually, yes it does. It speaks directly.

The Corinthian church was a very worldly church coming out of paganism and struggling to shed the baggage of their background. Some of them had the miraculous gifts of prophecy, tongue speaking, interpretation (translation) and the like. Likely because of their background, for them the possession of these spiritual gifts became a badge of aristocracy within the church.

Paul pretty much chews them out over their attitude.

“All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not {workers of} miracles, are they?”

All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.” I Corinthians 12:29-31

Paul then uses the occasion to point out that the end of miracles, prophets etc. was already taking place. Let’s follow this discussion in it’s context.

I Corinthians 13

1. *If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*
2. *If I have {the gift of} prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.*
3. *And if I give all my possessions to feed {the poor,} and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.*
4. *Love is patient, love is kind {and} is not jealous; love does not brag {and} is not arrogant,*
5. *does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong {suffered,}*
6. *does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;*
7. *bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

After dealing with the attitude of chapter 12; now, notice the end of the “time of the prophets,” various gifts etc. . . .

8. *Love never fails; but if {there are gifts of} prophecy, they will be done away; if {there are} tongues, they will cease; if {there is} knowledge, it will be done away.*

Note... these are all dealing the partial revelation. Jesus promised a full one....

9. *For we know in part and we prophesy in part;*

Paul is describing the implications of Jesus' promise! What happens when they have it all?

10. *but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.*

Note the language used above about the church's infancy.

11. *When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.*

12. *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.*

Note the change in tense... it was already taking place as Paul wrote I Corinthians.... I.E. the church is growing up and the revelation of God is being completed! I Corinthians (this letter) is a part of that "perfect."

13. *But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

The main reaction of the modern day so-called tongue speakers and so-called prophets is to confuse the term perfect and very piously note that only Jesus is perfect. Jesus' brother James would correct them on this. James wrote. . .

“But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the {law} of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.” James 1:25

Note that Jesus’ own brother ascribes this “perfect” to the law of God!

This perfect law was once for all delivered first to fleshly men (Apostles, prophets, etc) but it was written down so that it would be remembered. Since it is completed, no longer in parts, the partial deliverers (Apostles and prophets) are no more needed. Paul has given us his part, so has Peter, James, and Jude. These all come together to complete the whole.

I Corinthians 13:10 But when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

Many are familiar with this New Testament passage.

Almost none are familiar with the fact that it had to happen.

What do I mean ... “Had to happen?”

Jesus made a promise that “Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Luke 24:44

The prophets had prophesied that with the coming of Jesus both prophecy and demonism would end! For Jesus to be the Messiah... prophecy had to end!

Zechariah 13

1. *"In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity.*

Note the phrase "In that day." In the Old Testament that is generally a heads up that you are speaking of Messiah, or the church etc. This is no exception. The fountain for sin must be the blood of the Lord Jesus....

2. *"It will come about in that day," declares the LORD of hosts, "that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered; and I will also remove the prophets and the unclean spirit from the land.*

Note that when the miraculous means of dealing with demon possession was taken away or ended so did the problem. Various aspects of scripture deal with Jesus reining in Satan.

Satan is still a vicious killer...

However, Satan's agents can no longer forcibly take over.

Note that "prophets" also occur in the I Corinthians 13 list already introduced. They are to cease to be active when the "perfect," mature or completed revelation is completed.

3. *"And if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who gave birth to him will say to him, 'You shall not live, for you have spoken falsely in the name of the LORD'; and his father and mother who gave birth to him will pierce him through when he prophesies.*

According to the prophet Zechariah What is anyone after the time of the New Testament claiming to be a prophet, tongue speaker etc. ?

Ouch! A Liar!

But... how do we know this is really dealing with Jesus' time?

6. *"And one will say to him, 'What are these wounds between your arms?' Then he will say, '{Those} with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.'*

7. *"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, And against the man, My Associate," Declares the LORD of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; And I will turn My hand against the little ones.*

This is the passage Jesus quoted for Himself ...

Jesus applied this passage to all the Apostles on the night He was betrayed. In other words, according to Jesus, this is also the prophecy of the desertion of all His apostles and Peter's denial. (See Matthew 26:31)

One final thought. Note the warning of the Apostle Peter as he prepared for his own death and wrote saying goodbye to the church . . .

"But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves." II Peter 2:1

Did you notice that while the danger to the Old Testament people was false prophets... the real danger to the Christians of the New Testament will be false teachers. Why? Because among folks familiar with what the Bible teaches... everyone who claims to be a prophet will be known to be false. False teachers will be more difficult.

Joseph Smith was only a threat to the ignorant. That Jeffries fellow that is currently in trouble over polygamy is no threat to those familiar with Bible teaching. All prophets today are immediately known for what they are....

Anyone claiming to be a prophet of God today . . . Is actually stabbing Christ Jesus in the back!

Or perhaps we should say . . . Driving another nail into His cross...

The Blessings Of Following Christ: A Simple Study Outline (Matt. 19:27 ~ 1 Peter)

Warren E. Berkley

The unity of Scripture demonstrates beautiful and sometimes surprising connections. Here is one example. Simon Peter, early in his experience with Christ, wanted to know: "What shall we have?"

"See, we have left all and followed You," Peter said, "therefore what shall we have?" (Matt. 19:27). That's in the first book of the New Testament. Later in the New Testament, Peter himself answers his own question! The answers are given in First Peter.

What Shall We Have?

- **REDEMPTION:** "...redeemed with the precious blood of Christ," (1 Pet. 1:18-21; 3:18-22).
- **HOPE:** "An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you...rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ . . . Praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ . . . so that your faith and hope are in

God . . . and who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. 'And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled' . . . give a defense to every who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear . . . partakers of the glory that will be revealed . . . the crown of glory that does not fade away . . . that He may exalt you in due time," (1 Pet. 1:4; 1:13; 1:7; 1:21; 3:13,14,15; 5:1-4; 5:5).

- **JOY:** "In this you greatly rejoice . . . joy inexpressible and full of glory . . . rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings," (1 Pet. 1:6,8; 4:13).
- **GRACE:** "Things which angels desire to look into . . . Grace to you and peace be multiplied . . . who prophesied of the grace that would come to you . . . rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ . . . if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious . . . heirs together of the grace of life . . . good stewards of the manifold grace of God . . . God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble . . . But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you . . . this is the grace of God in which you stand," (1 Pet. 1:10-12, 2, 10, 13; 2:3; 3:7; 4:10; 5:5,10,12).
- **PROTECTION:** "...kept by the power of God . . . But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you," (1 Pet. 1:5; 5:10).
- **PEACE:** "Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus, Amen," (1 Pet. 5:14).

- **ENDURANCE:** “Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator,” (1 Pet. 4:19).

Who Has These Blessings?

The Elect, 1 Pet. 1:2

The Obedient, 1 Pet. 1:2,14,22

The Faithful, 1 Pet. 1:5,7,21; 2:7

Those who love Him, 1 Pet. 1:8

Those who gird up the loins of the mind, etc., 1 Pet. 1:13

Those who refuse to be polluted by their past sin, 1 Pet. 1:14

The Holy, 1 Pet. 1:15,16

Those born again, 1 Pet. 1:3,23

Those who are growing, 1 Pet. 2:1-3

Those who proclaim His praises, 1 Pet. 2:9

Those who abstain from fleshly lusts, 1 Pet. 2:11

Those who maintain good conduct, 1 Pet. 2:12

Those who submit to legitimate human ordinances,
1 Pet. 2:13-16

Those who are bondservants of God, 1 Pet. 2:16

Those who treat God and all men with respect,
1 Pet. 2:17 (3:8; 4:8,9)

Those who submit to their masters, 1 Pet. 2:18

Those who suffer for righteousness' sake, 1 Pet. 2:19-25
(3:18-22)

Those wives who maintain chaste behavior, 1 Pet. 3:1-6

Those husbands who dwell with their wives according to
knowledge, 1 Pet. 3:7

Those who refuse to return evil for evil, 1 Pet. 3:9-12

Those who are followers of what is good, 1 Pet. 3:13-14
(3:16-17)

Those who sanctify the Lord God in their hearts, 1 Pet. 3:15-17

Those armed with the mind of Christ, 1 Pet. 4:1-6
Those who are serious and watchful, 1 Pet. 4:7
Those who are good stewards of the manifold grace of God, 1
Pet. 4:10-11
Those who rejoice in suffering – committing their
souls to Him, 1 Pet. 4:12-19
Those elders who faithfully lead, 1 Pet. 5:1-4
Those younger who submit, 1 Pet. 5:5
The humble, 1 Pet. 5:6-7

Ending Two Grudges **By Jacob Hudgins**

“But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept” (Gen 33:4)

Jacob is fervently praying. *“Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children”* (Gen 32:11). He dreads the next day when he will see his brother for the first time in twenty years. Like all brothers, Jacob and Esau had quite a history, but theirs included Jacob twice scheming to defraud his brother. Jacob’s fear is not unfounded. His brother had said, *“The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob”* (Gen 27:41). Hearing that, Jacob had run for his life, and had prospered in a foreign land. Now he is returning, at the head of a huge caravan, with his four wives and many children. Word comes that Esau is coming to meet him with four hundred men! Jacob thinks quickly and divides the group into two companies in case of an attack. In a final desperate act to assuage his brother’s anger, he *“bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother”* (Gen 33:3). The moment is tense; what will Esau do? *“But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept”* (Gen 33:4). Finally, gloriously, the grudge was ended!

Ten grown men are similarly nervous. They have just buried their father, yet their minds are not focused on grieving or remembering him. *“When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, ‘Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him’”*(Gen 50:15). Afraid to approach Joseph themselves, they send messengers to beg him to forgive their sin. Finally, they appear themselves before Joseph, *“fell down before his face, and they said, ‘Behold, we are your servants’”*(Gen 50:18). What will Joseph do? Has he been swallowing his anger for this moment? Was he waiting until his father died so he could get his real revenge? *“Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.’ And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them”*(Gen 50:19-20). Finally, gloriously, the grudge was ended!

As long as there have been people, grudges like these have persisted. We need to learn from these good examples of resolving the problems—even the long-standing problems—that plague our interactions with others. First, we learn that grudges are hard on all involved. When Esau and Jacob embraced, why did they weep together (Gen 33:4)? Perhaps they were thinking of all the time they had lost when they could have been together. Perhaps they were relieved that this feud could be ended. Perhaps it was the simple joy of seeing a loved one again after a long separation. But the fact that both men wept shows that both were overcome with the emotions caused by the hard feelings of so long ago. Further, when Joseph first sees his brothers in Egypt, he speaks roughly to them (Gen 42:7), then accuses them (Gen 42:9), weeps (Gen 42:24), frames Benjamin (Gen 44), and weeps again (Gen 45:2). He is clearly struggling with the emotions of seeing his brothers again. Yet the brothers also feel the brunt of the past events, assuming that their trouble is because of

their sin (Gen 42:21-22). The grudges were hard on both parties. Often grudges begin because one party wants to make the other party feel sorry for what they've done. The untold story of grudges is the wear it takes on the one wronged—bitterness, unresolved anger, and malice. Wrestling with the past is difficult enough without harboring such poisonous emotions in our hearts.

These examples teach us that long-term grudges can be forgotten. The length of these feuds is astounding. Jacob lived with Laban twenty years (Gen 31:41) while fearing Esau, and while we do not know the exact length of time of Joseph's separation from his brothers, it seems to have been around twenty years as well. Think of twenty years of unresolved conflict and bitterness toward someone who is your brother! Yet these grudges ended swiftly—with hugs and weeping—when the parties finally came back together. No grudge has been happening so long that it cannot be mended. The deep regret of all these men, though, must have been of the time wasted in such evil feelings. Jesus' words fit well here: *“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift”* (Matt 5:23-24). God's desire is swift reconciliation rather than letting problems continue. However, the good news is that even long-term grudges can be forgiven and forgotten.

Most of all, these men show us that really difficult things can be forgiven. Jacob had finagled Esau's birthright and blessing, and Esau had threatened his life. Joseph's brothers had tried to kill him and had sold him into slavery. These were not the trifles that we often fight over, yet these men showed the tremendous capacity we have to forgive when we are determined to do so. Perhaps we are not able to be reconciled in the joyous way these men were, but we can let go of the bitterness and malice we feel toward others—as we are

commanded to do (Eph 4:31). These men do not show us that such forgiveness is easy, but that it is possible.

There is great joy in forgiveness. The relief of a pressing burden and the happiness of restoring a close relationship are just some of the benefits we experience. Most of all, we must hear the alarming words of the Lord Jesus on the matter: *“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”*(Matt 6:14-15). Let us learn from these men. Don't let grudges continue.

The Miracle Worker

“Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?”

Topical Article

By Jon W. Quinn

Jesus worked miracles for a reason. The chief purpose behind the miracles was not to alleviate suffering, although that did happen, and Jesus was happy to do so. But that was not the primary purpose of miracles. Instead, they were done to show the world He was from God. We wish to see Jesus, the miracle worker.

Jesus Claimed to Work Miracles

If this is true, then Jesus is the Son of God. A true “miracle” is an event that has no other explanation except that God is behind it. It cannot be explained by natural means. We either have to say “I don't know how that was done.” or, in faith, say “God did that.” If Jesus did miracles, then that would mean that He is from God (John 3:1,2; 5:36; 10:25; 37-38). The purpose of miracles was to validate Jesus' claim to be God's Son (Acts 2:22).

When John, in prison, wanted to be sure that Jesus was the One, he sent messengers to Jesus to make inquiry (Matthew 11:2-6). Jesus told the messengers to go and reassure John by reporting to him about the miracles Jesus was doing. Jesus gave His apostles power to accomplish miracles as well. Again, the purpose was to show that God's power was in Jesus, and that included power to save from sin and give everlasting life (Acts 4:8-12).

Jesus' miracles were varied and done in various circumstances. Jesus did many, many more miracles than just the thirty-plus ones recorded in the Bible, but the ones that are recorded are representative of the things Jesus would do almost constantly (John 20:30,31).

Jesus did not do miracles for selfish reasons. They were never done for Himself. (Matthew 4:2-4; John 4:6,7). Some have categorized His miracles as showing His power:

- a). over nature (calming the sea);
- b). over disease (healing the sick);
- c). Over demons (casting out unclean spirits)
- d). over material things (feeding the 5000)
- e). over death (raising of Lazarus).

Definition of Miracle

Genuine miracles have several characteristics. A miracle is a supernatural event (it must have no other reasonable explanation - it is not simple a lucky escape or an amazing coincidence).

To be a miracle, an event must be witnessed - it cannot be a "sign" to anyone if it is not seen by anyone. These events were signs that God was with Jesus, or with the prophet or apostle doing the

sign; and this meant that their words were to be received as the word of God. The Greek word translated “miracle” means “sign.”

Miracles were not contrary to nature, but a circumvention of nature. In other words, natural law calls for “cause and effect”. A miracle is where the power of God causes an effect that would not have occurred if God had not intervened.

Not every powerful thing God has done is a miracle. God may answer a prayer and heal someone who is ill, but that is not a sign.

The Critics Attack

Jesus' early critics have made many attacks. His enemies began by saying that He did miracles by Satan's power (Mark 3:22-25). They would have preferred to deny that He did miracles at all like their modern day counterparts, but did not have that option because everyone saw Jesus do them. (See also Mark 6:14; 15:31; Luke 23:8). Early Jewish writers refer to Him. The non-Christian historian Josephus refers to His “marvelous deeds” and The Jewish Babylonian Talmud (compiled in the 5th century from earlier writings) referred to Jesus as a “magician” in order to discount His miracles. Early Roman sources also refer to His miracles. Though the writings are not from first hand witnesses, but rather from those who had heard of Jesus, they do not try and discount Jesus' miracles by denying He did them... but by suggesting, much as did Pharaoh with Moses, that Pagan magicians were better. These are the propagandists of the Empire. There was Porphyry of Tyre and Hierocles, governor of Bithynia who both make this argument in some of the many books they write against Christianity.

While the early critics simply could not deny the miracles because of the many, many witnesses, critics today can because all the witnesses are now dead. There is no one here to say, “I saw them happen!” except in their writings.

So, modernists and atheists; humanists and skeptics; Voltaire, Hume, the Jesus Seminar... and so forth do not have to face the early witnesses. Most of these take the position that Jesus didn't really do miracles at all. Yes, the witnesses are dead, but they do still speak! Through their writings, they do say, "I saw the miracles happen!" (2 Peter 1:16-18). Through their examples of faith in the most difficult of circumstances and persecution, they give further evidence that their testimony is true.

The Characteristics of Jesus' Miracles

The miracles of Jesus signify many important spiritual truths and realities. Not only do they confirm the Deity of Christ and that He is from God, but also He has the power/authority to forgive sins (Matthew 9:5,6).

His miracles were compassionate. We see in Him tender care and concern. (Luke 7:11-17). But the fact remains that His mission was to bring salvation from eternal anguish. That is the ultimate compassion, because to be lost in eternity is much worse than losing anything here in this life.

The miracles testify as to the importance of faith (Mark 9:22-24). Not only was faith a necessity demanded by the Lord in the case of miracles, but also in the case of our salvation (Romans 10:9,10).

Conclusion

So, what do we do for those who would like to see Jesus? We show them the miracle worker who proved His claim to be God's Son, for "no one could do the signs" that (He) did unless God was with Him. For those who want to see Jesus, they will find in Him the power to overcome (1 John 5:1-5).

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.

Final Page:

(Below, one chapter from my recently published book, FOR HOWEVER BRIEF A TIME. The book can be ordered from Spiritbuilding.com and with the sale of each book, a donation is made to Sacred Selections – to help Christian couples adopt babies.)

The Coat hanger at Morrilton

During the depression there were many orphans. In response to their needs, churches, individuals and agencies formed orphan homes. One was located first in Ft. Smith, then in Morrilton, Arkansas. It was established in 1926 when two homeless children were brought to James E. Laird, who was preaching at Park Hill. With the help of Mrs. W. T. Bush, the effort began as the Arkansas Christian Home. The name was later changed to Arkansas-Oklahoma Christian Home. It was then moved to Morrilton in 1936, to the former campus of Harding College.

After Charles Berkley died, there came a time when the family moved to Morrilton to be house parents in one of the cottages. Grandma Berkley, Alice and Hazel were involved in cooking, cleaning and supervising small children. Daddy and Sherman had various chores. One job Daddy said he hated.

Daddy and Sherman would visit the infant cottage three or four times a day, to help with feeding time. Sherman had a coke case loaded with baby bottles. Daddy would take coat hangers and fashion them into bottle holders. The crude device would be placed in the side of the crib, the bottle inserted, so the baby could be moved

over in the bed to be fed. These institutions often suffered with a deeply bothersome absence of essential material care.

It was a mechanical, assembly-line process. Fashion the hanger, install the bottle and move the baby over to the nipple. Even as a boy, Daddy knew this was not the best way to feed a baby. He hated the job, and later developed very strong feelings about the institutionalized care of children.

Later in life, Daddy would remember this and tell people about it, often citing Paul's observation about a gentle, nursing mother cherishing and holding her children close (1 Thess. 2:7). It was a powerful life lesson.