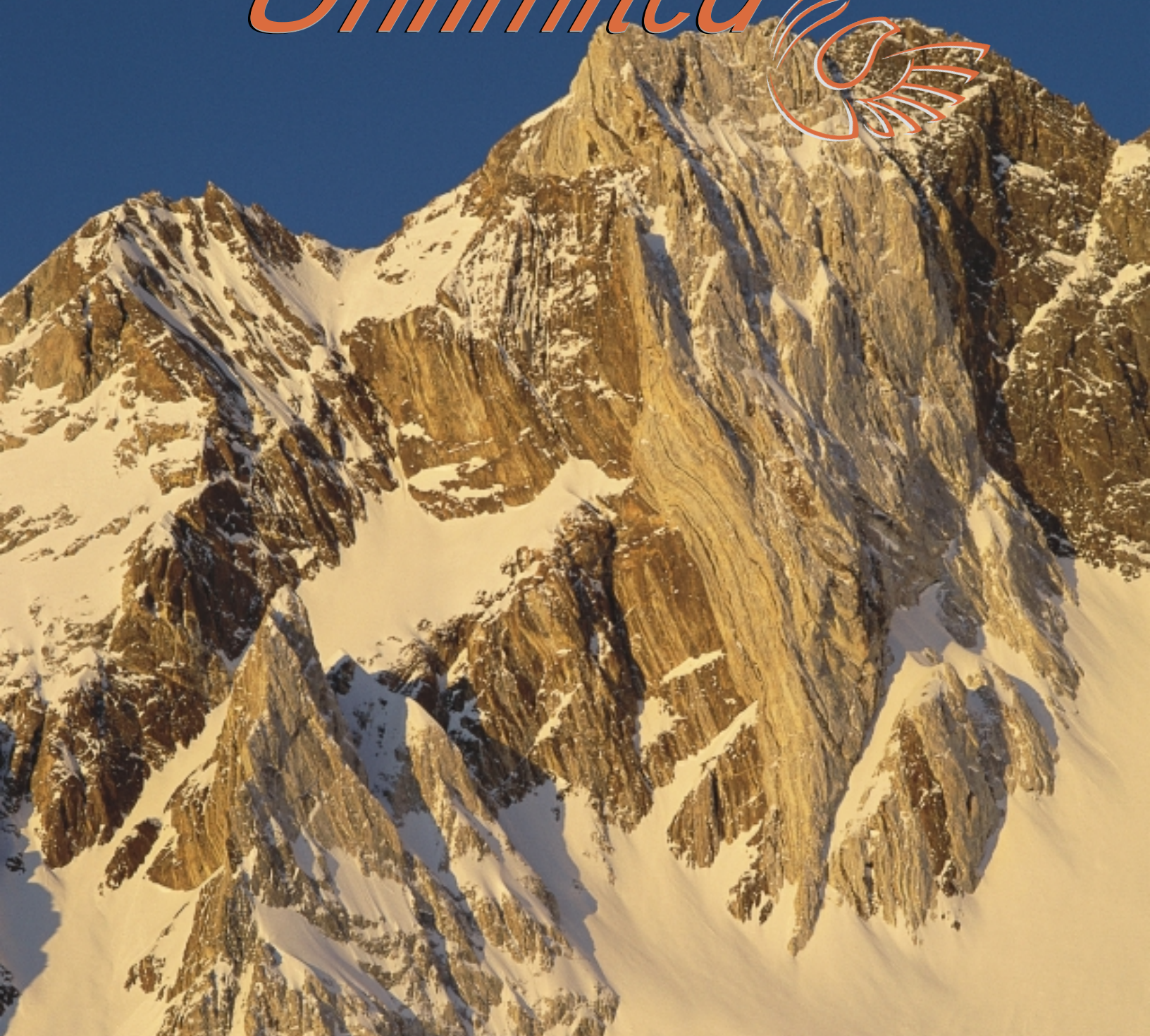


GOOD NEWS

Unlimited



“Something to Live For” – *Building on Christ in 2002*

CHRIST ALONE • GRACE ALONE • FAITH ALONE • SCRIPTURE ALONE

EDITORIAL . . .

Jesus said: *“Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:20).

The Bible teaches that a well-lived life is a ‘righteous’ one. Righteousness is seen as a worthy aspiration for any community. But Jesus points out that what is commonly accepted as righteousness does not pass muster in the kingdom of heaven.

For Jesus’ contemporaries, rigorous attention to the dictates of the law was the agreed way to righteousness. The Greek world also had a belief about righteousness. To them it meant living up to one’s civic duties; meeting the expectations imposed on an individual in community.

The righteousness of the Pharisees was a trivialized righteousness when compared with the towering concept embodied in Jesus’ teaching. For him righteousness was more than refraining from murder; it required also the absence of any sentiment that might lead to murder. Not merely eschewing the physical act of adultery, but disavowal of all mental fancies. Love, not just for family and friends, but enemies too.

The difference between righteousness in the popular view, and in the view of Christ, may be stated this way: In conventional righteousness, there is no sense of relationship to other persons. Refraining from killing someone, does not necessarily indicate a concern for that person. It may just as easily betray a concern for the one who refrains. A Pharisee gives alms for the poor, but the poor are not who he cares about. He cares about himself. He wants

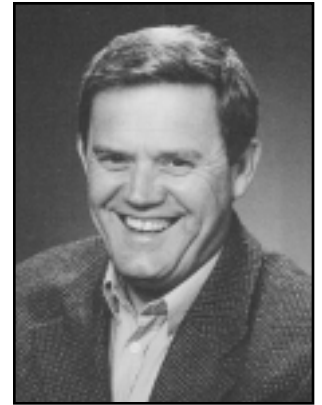
to be seen as benevolent.

Conventional righteousness is individualistic; self-serving. Kingdom righteousness is thoroughly relational. Martin Luther spent monkish days in the cloister; scourging himself body and soul. He knew that God was righteous, and sought to purge himself of unrighteousness. One day as he was ransacking himself, to cleanse out any and all sin, he came upon the staggering realization that God, in righteousness, justifies the unrighteous. He saw that the righteousness of God had established him in relationship with God. Upon this realization, Luther left the cloister. His transformed understanding of righteousness, took him off his own hands, and out into the lives of others.

Jesus taught us to *‘hunger and thirst after righteousness.’* It will make a difference in the way we live, and in our usefulness to other people, if we understand that Jesus was thinking of righteousness that takes one out of the cloister, rather than the righteousness that keeps us locked away on our own.

As we stand at the door of a new year, the devastating events of September last, still weigh heavily on us. There is grief, alarm, and fear. In the face of such evil we are also angry. In his kingdom, Jesus gives us an indignation, seasoned by a righteousness that can keep us from a destructive withdrawal into mere self-preservation. Now is the time for Christ to shine; for *“justice to roll on like a river; righteousness, like a never-failing stream”* (Amos 5:24).

Ron J. Allen.



Ron Allen

GOOD NEWS *Unlimited*

Good News Unlimited magazine is published every other month by Good News Unlimited, 11710 Education Street, Auburn, CA, USA 95602-2499.

Good News Unlimited is an interdenominational Christian organization proclaiming the good news about Jesus Christ and his kingdom of grace. Special emphasis is placed on the message of salvation by grace through faith in Christ’s righteousness alone. GNU also links the gospel to the needs of the whole person, to life-style, and preventive medicine.

Good News Unlimited magazine also seeks to keep readers up-to-date on all aspects of GNU’s ministries. This includes news on national and international radio broadcasts; public seminars, congresses, and Bible schools within the USA (as well as public meetings

in Canada and overseas); the local GNU Fellowship; and the dissemination of literature, cassettes, and videos. (A comprehensive catalogue is available free on request.)

Good News Unlimited is a nonprofit religious corporation supported solely by donations from those who believe in its ministries. Gifts are tax deductible in the USA, Canada, and New Zealand. An annual review of GNU’s accounts is made by an external auditor. All regular donors to GNU may receive a financial statement on request.

Good News Unlimited is reached by phone at 530.823.9690. Fax 530.823.5338. E-mail gnu@goodnewsunlimited.org.

This magazine is free upon request.

November, 2001

Vol. 22, No. 7

Published by Good News Unlimited

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SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR

by Ron Allen

“But seek first his kingdom, and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33).

Some time ago a group of young Australian Christians set out to walk across the Nullabor Plain—a distance of about 1500 miles, and one of the driest regions in a dry continent. Their stated reason for the trek was to draw attention to their faith in God, and his ability to care for his own. A few days into their journey, they were plucked from the desert by search and rescue agencies. They were suffering from exposure.

What is involved in seeking God’s kingdom; in putting his righteousness first? Jesus’ statement is accompanied by other comments about the nature of righteousness. For example: *“Unless your righteousness surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20).* Righteousness was the special interest of the scribes and pharisees. For them it meant a life of rigorous obedience to the law of Moses. Their successes in meeting the claims of the law were well-acknowledged; yet, despite this, Jesus taught that the righteousness of God’s kingdom required much more.

The world has always been in need of a surpassing righteousness. Established religious authorities have often been content with a righteousness that does not reflect God’s intention. Here I will suggest three things about a lifestyle that reflects the righteousness of God’s kingdom.

Titles or Testimonies

Tony Campolo worships at a predominantly black church in eastern USA. Each year, at graduation time, the church acknowledges its young people who have graduated from colleges. They are asked to stand up front and make their people proud. At one of these celebrations the pastor addressed these young graduates thus:

Children, you are going to die. You may not think about it much now. But one day they will take you to the cemetery; drop you in a hole, and throw some dirt on your face, then go home and eat potato salad.

When you were born, everyone was happy, but you were crying. When you die, you alone will be happy, and I want to ask you, are you going to leave everyone else crying?

The answer depends on whether you like to get ‘titles’ or ‘testimonies.’ When they lay you in the grave, are they going to recite all the fancy titles that you earned while you were alive? Or will they give testimonies of the good things you did for them?

Titles are OK, but if it comes to a choice between a title and a testimony, go for the testimony.

Then this preacher launched himself into an inspired oration in which he went through the Bible naming people who had titles and others who had only testimonies.

Pharoah had the title, but Moses had the testimony. Nebuchadnezzar had the title, but Daniel had the testimony. Jezebel had the title, but Elijah had the testimony.

Established religious authorities have often been content with a righteousness that does not reflect God’s intention.

The preacher had now found his rhythm, and the audience turned right on to it; shouting encouragements: "Preach it, Pastor!" At last he mounted to a climactic finale: "Pilate may have had the title." The congregation joining him thunderously in reply: "But Jesus had the testimony."

To seek first God's kingdom, involves fixing ourselves into other people's lives through service.

Righteousness Is Fun

There is a reason why righteousness is fun. It is because it involves risk. When I was in college, I recall a late-night escapade in which I joined some other miscreants in a raid on a strawberry patch. In the moonlight we gathered a juicy harvest, and someone said, "Lets go across to the dairy. There might be some cream there." All agreed, but as we made our way across an open field, we were surprised to hear the bellowing of a bull, very close at hand. It was a Jersey bull—very bad-tempered. Picture half a dozen boys in full flight, with a bull pounding away at their heels. We found an athleticism not previously known, and all managed to make it unscathed through a barbed wire fence. We lay on the grass gasping. But, oh, the excitement! It was venturesome. We all felt very alive.

The most fulfilling seasons in any life, are those which require personal risk. You cannot be a friend without risking hurt. To bear another person's burden is to place your own comfort in jeopardy. You cannot love without exposing yourself to possible emotional trauma. But the rewards of love are too tempting. There is such joy to be had. Such fun.


Being Close to Jesus

Those who seek kingdom righteousness will discover communion with Christ. Jesus taught that he identifies himself so completely with needy people, that those who serve will encounter him, personally, in them.

A Jewish boy and his family were rounded up by the Nazis and ordered to dig a grave for themselves. Machine guns opened fire, and their bodies crumpled to the ground. Miraculously, none of the bullets hit this boy. Though covered in his family's bodies and blood, he was able to breathe. Late at night he crawled out of the shallow grave, and made his way to the nearest house in search of help.

A woman answered the door, but recognizing him as a Jewish boy, she shut him out, yelling at him to go away. He went to the next house, and the next, but was turned away by each. No one wanted to risk their lives to help a Jew. They knew it would mean their own death.

Finally, he stood at the door of another house, and something within him made him say words which were very odd for a Jew to say. He stood and cried out, " I am Jesus, whom you say you love. Don't you recognize me?" After a long silence, the door opened and a family swept him inside, to care for him and make his cause their own.

To seek the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven, is to seek and serve Christ, in the place where he promised us, he could easily be found—down in the marrow of human need. Among the broken-hearted and the dispossessed. Their pain is his pain. Their tears are his tears. 

Understanding The Spirit

By Ron Allen



In Romans, Paul teaches that the gift of God is *“by faith from first to last”* (**Romans 1:17**). He means that the gift is altogether by faith; never anything else but by faith. The righteousness of God, *and* the gift of his Holy Spirit, are the heritage of God's people, by faith from beginning to end. There is never any change in the way an individual receives the gift of God, or in the way it is retained.

—So says Pastor Ron Allen in **“Understanding the Spirit”**; a small book (42 pages), filled with good things. Many often asked questions about the Spirit are discussed in this book. What is meant by 'receiving the Spirit? What is the Baptism of the Spirit? The unity of the Spirit and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? These are important questions requiring answers.

Order your copy of 'Understanding the Spirit,' @ \$4:00 per copy.

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CHRIST THE OVERCOMER

By Charles Haddon Spurgeon

The Christian faces up to all that life presents, and offers, from the vantage ground that grace has provided. Here follows an extract from one of Spurgeon's sermons on Christ's Glorious Achievements. What better way to contemplate a new year, in these turbulent times, than from the perspective of him who has overcome the world. –Ed.

“But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Now, lastly, what cheer is there for us? Why, this first, that if the man Christ Jesus has overcome the world at its worst, we who are in him shall overcome the world too, through that same power which dwelt in him. . . He overcame the world when it attacked him in the worst possible shape, for he was poorer than any of his people; he was more sick and sad than any of them; he was more despised and persecuted than any of his saints are at this present. **He** was deprived of certain divine consolations which God has promised never to take away from **them**. And yet with all possible disadvantages, Christ overcame the world. Therefore be assured we shall conquer also by his strength.

Besides, he overcame the world when nobody else had overcome it. It was, as it were, a young lion that had never been defeated in a fight. It roared upon him out of the thicket, and leaped upon him in the fullness of its strength. Now if our greater Samson did tear this young lion as though it were a kid, and fling it down as a vanquished thing, you may depend upon it that now it is an old lion; grey and covered with the wounds which he gave it of old, and we, having the Lord's life and power in us, will overcome it too. What good cheer there is in his victory.


But then, next remember, he overcame the world as our Head and Representative, and it may truly be said that if the members do not overcome, then the Head has not perfectly gained the victory. If it were possible for the members to be

defeated, why then, the head itself could not claim a complete victory. . . Have courage then, for you must conquer. It must happen to you as unto your Head. Where the Head is, shall the members be, and as the Head is, so the members must be. Wherefore be assured of the palm branch, and the crown.

And now, brethren, I ask you whether you have not found it so? Is it not true at this moment, that the world is overcome in you? Does self govern you? Are you working to acquire wealth for your own aggrandizement? Are you living to win honour and fame among men? Are you afraid of men's frowns? Are you the slave of popular opinion? Do you do things because it is the custom to do them? Are you the slave of fashion? If

you are, you know nothing about this victory. But if you are a true Christian, I know what you can say: “Lord, I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bond; henceforth the world hath no dominion over me, and though it tempt me, and frighten me, and flatter me, yet still I rise superior to it by the power of thy Spirit. For the love of Christ constraineth me, and I live not unto myself, and unto things that are seen, but unto Christ, and to things invisible.”

So, brethren, let us go back to the world and its tribulations without fear. Its trials cannot hurt us. In the process we shall get good, as the wheat doth out of the threshing. Let us go forth to combat the world, for it cannot overcome us. There was never a man yet with the life of God in his soul whom the whole world could subdue; nay all the world and hell together cannot conquer the veriest babe in the family of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lo, ye are harnessed with salvation; ye are panoplied with omnipotence. Your heads are covered with the aegis of the atonement, and Christ himself, the Son of God, is your captain.

Take up your battle cry with courage, and fear not, for more is He that is for you, than all they that be against you. It is said of the glorified saints: “They overcame through the blood of the lamb”; “And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” Wherefore be ye steadfast, even to the end, for ye shall be more than conquerors through him that loved you. 

What better way to contemplate a new year, in these turbulent times, than from the perspective of him who has overcome the world.

Christ Crucified



All is woe and doom, I thought,
For even one as he.
I turned around, for room I sought,
Where I could quickly flee.

But something froze me to the spot,
A voice inside my brain,
*"I bid you stay, and leave me not,
My child, I know your pain.*

*I know your pilgrimage is hard,
I know you feel condemned.
Please listen now, and understand,
My words your life will mend.*

*This shame, you see, is for your sake,
For you, honour it will bring.
My life I give, your death I take,
I cry that you may sing.*

*My righteousness I freely give,
I place it in your stead.
Everything I said and did,
As though you did and said.*

*So do not let your worldly woes,
Defeat and cast you down.
Defeat I handed to your foes,
To you I hand a crown.*

*I do not promise there will be,
Sunshine and roses every day.
But every moment look to me,
And you will find the way."*

It was then that I did realize,
Why I had sunk so low.
Christ crucified before my eyes,
The mystery now I know.

Eternal life we have right now,
The moment we believe.
At Jesus' cross we kneel and bow,
Our burdens there we leave.

Now nothing that this world can bring,
Will part us from his love.
We shout, we dance, we laugh, and sing,
Our hope in Christ above!

—Terry Gaw.



HOUSEBUILDING— FOR DUMMIES

1

By Ron Allen

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine, and puts them into practice, is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” (Matthew 7:24)

I find that I don't like computers very much; don't enjoy them. A few years ago, when it was apparent to me that I would soon be unemployable without basic computer skills, I asked my son if he could recommend reading, that would impart to me what was needed. “Windows For Dummies,” was his quick reply. When I located the aforementioned volume in a bookstore, I thought it prudent to scan it briefly, just to be sure it would be useful to me. I found myself completely unable to understand any of it. “Any other suggestions?,” I asked again. “Windows for Idiots,” he said. After thumbing through Windows for Idiots, I gave up. I knew I was beyond help.

Jesus teaches that we are in the business of building. We may not wish to be builders, but in the same sense that I do not wish to be a computer user, we are builders none-the-less. There is no choice.

Everyone is engaged in building a life. When we are born, we are given tools with which to build the house of a mature personality. Our parents confer these on us, and bring us only so far. They may continue to do much for us, but as time passes, our life will be fashioned by less and less of them, and more and more of us.

Humans are special in the known universe. In them, self-consciousness is developed to a degree far in excess of other creatures. This makes them unique. People can think about themselves; they can evaluate, choose one thing over another, plan, and envisage the future. In the rest of nature, things happen without their having been the topic of prior consideration. Events simply occur and push nature around. To a degree, this happens to humans too, but only humans have an ability to conceive an idea, and project it into the future while striving to make it real. Humans can imagine things that are not, and allow themselves to be drawn toward their vision.

There is a view that human life is as thoroughly determined as all other life forms. In this view, people think and act entirely out of causes beyond their control. It is easy to see that there must be some truth in this. For example, if I had been born in India, I would very likely be a Hindu or a Muslim, and not a Christian. Born into the world every day, are thousands

of children whose choices will be very few. They will never be scientists, educators, or doctors, simply because they will be malnourished, and their intellect will not develop like that of well-fed children.


Though there is much about us that is decided by people we have never met, and factors over which we have no control, I still believe that Jesus speaks truly when he states his conviction that men and women are builders of their own destiny. Is Pavarotti a great singer because he had no choice? Or do we hear the voice of one who made a response to something he was given? Do other musicians make beautiful music only because they cannot help it? Or does their music express something they personally, independent of all else, have put into it?

There is evidence that humans are in possession of a 'terrific' freedom. One is born into privilege and luxury; the child of intelligent, respected and successful parents. He has everything going for him, yet he ends life at an early age; mangled by drugs, or else in prison. Another begins life, in terrible want and degradation, yet he manages to shine in spite of his squalor. Personal failure or success simply cannot be explained alone by environmental factors. Every individual has a capacity to respond to his/her circumstances. To be human is to be a builder. None can be divorced from this. To develop what we are, and what we will be, is ours to do. Even if we judge ourselves to be dummies, there can be no relief from this responsibility. We must join in the task of our own development.

Taking Life Seriously

The parable of the two builders assumes that life is meaningful. Living is not merely something that happens to us. It is something we do with what happens to us. That is what lifts it up; making it into an exalted enterprise. Your life is a creative opportunity. Your God-given freedom means you are an artist. Every human being is a work in progress. There is this tremendous project going on, that invests living with dignity and high purpose.

It Matters How You Build

It is possible to arrange life in such a way, that people will thank God that you exist. It is possible for a person to so live, that he/she becomes larger than life. You can build a personality that will be a blessing. On the other hand, you can so build that your existence will become a matter of regret, both to yourself and others. Instead of being mourned when you die, people will be relieved, and you will pass into oblivion. 



HOUSEBUILDING— 2 FOR DUMMIES

By Ron Allen

The Importance of a Good Foundation

In the art of building a mature personality, nothing counts as much as a good foundation. A life well-lived needs a sure footing. The thing about foundations is that they support everything else. They are prior to everything else. The whole superstructure has a relationship of crucial dependence on the foundations.

As a boy, ten years of age, I built a stool for my grandma to sit on. I nailed it together, and painted it two shades of blue. Proudly, I presented her with it, and asked her to sit on it. I was aghast when the legs gave out, and she was spread-eagled on the floor. The foundations were no good.

Later, as a youth, I worked on my father's farm. On one occasion there were several thousand bales of alfalfa hay to stack. I took charge of building the haystack. The first few layers were critical. I reckoned I knew how to do it. Others tried to give me advice but I knew better. The haystack grew, and looked grand. But months later, to my shame, it fell in all directions. Passersby pointed to it and remarked that "The person who built that haystack, knew nothing at all!" My haystack was poorly founded.

The Importance of Choice

Life is founded on the choices we make. Choices state what we consider to be most important. That which a young woman

centers her life around; that which motivates her planning; which bears on her choice of career; where she will live, and whom she will marry; how she will apportion time and energy—these choices express her values, and values are the foundation of life.

No one can choose not to choose. We must evaluate (just as we must build), but some values are too poor, too weak and beggarly to carry a whole person. For example, in conducting funeral ceremonies for young suicide victims, I have heard the motto of a wasted life repeated too many times: "I'm not here for a long time; I'm here for a good time." Unfortunately life turned out to be neither long nor good. It was founded poorly.

A Remarkable Claim

The most arresting thing about Jesus' parable of the two builders is his explicit recommendation of himself, as the foundation of a satisfying and lasting human life. It is an impressive claim; quite breathtaking to hear someone speak with such confidence about himself and his ability to bless the rest of humanity.

The Story of Christina Noble

Christina Noble was born in a Dublin slum. Her mother was a Catholic Christian, her father was almost always drunk. Every night he would come home late, pull his wife and children from bed, and beat them.

When Christina was ten, her mother died of abuse and neglect. Since her father had no money for a funeral, relatives paid; but afterward, they came to Christina's home and took the remaining few sticks of furniture to re-sell, and so compensate themselves. Her Dad took virtually no responsibility for his eight children. Christina, being the oldest, did her best to feed them. At night she would walk the streets with a bucket in hand calling out: "Slops for the pigs." What little she gathered, she would take home and share with her brothers and sisters.

About a year after her mother's death, Christina and the family were taken by their father to the home of a relative, while he underwent surgery. During her time there she and her sister were sexually abused by the male relative. Months and years of horror passed. Child services came and took all the children into foster care. They were separated from each other, and told that their brothers and sisters had died. Christina was sent to a harsh convent in western Ireland. She escaped from there and lived in a Dublin park for years.

The most arresting thing about Jesus' parable of the two builders is his explicit recommendation of himself, as the foundation of a satisfying and lasting human life.

During that time she was gang-raped, and when she gave birth to a child, it was taken from her and she never saw it again.

She made her way to England where she married a man who abused her terribly for thirteen years. At the end of that time she was completely demoralized and almost dehumanized. It took many years of patient psychiatric attention to help her on the way to normality.

As a little girl she had dreamed of going to Vietnam. In 1989 she found herself there. On her first day, she was met in a street by two scabby, flea-bitten little girls. As she looked at them she felt torn inside. They at once filled her with revulsion and pity. She saw in them her own homeless self, and her orphan brothers and sisters. Overcome with emotion she sat with them; holding them, in the gutter, as tears cascaded down her face. Then and there she pledged herself to saving the homeless children of Vietnam.

When she approached local authorities, telling them of her plans, they asked her, "Why do you, a Westerner, want to help our children?" She replied: "Because I was once a child of the streets. No one wanted me. I was dirty, miserable, sick, and sad. I desperately needed a friend. I had absolutely nothing. No other children would play with me. I needed someone, just one person, to love me."


So began the Christina Noble Foundation which salvages hundreds of Vietnamese children. In working for the children of Vietnam, Christina Noble found something solid to build her new self upon. In the values of compassion and loving

service, she felt the world begin to firm beneath her feet. In giving herself to the children, she began to realize, for the first time in her life, that God really did exist. She found herself linked to *Someone* greater than herself. She discovered a way to be; a way to build. She may not have recognized it at first, yet she was allowing herself to be taken over by the values of Jesus. Those values grounded her, and lifted her, and made her life beautiful.

Every Building Will be Tested

The houses of both the wise and the foolish were tested. For us, existence itself is a test. No one can escape duress. No life will be exempted from some kind of storm that will examine its footings. Anyone hoping to escape from such storms might just as well hope not to live at all. The trials of life are a sign of our dignity. We have this glorious prerogative of playing a part in our own destiny.

Those who choose to build according to Christ, are helping to craft a temple for God to live in. They are building an edifice; a habitation for eternal values—mercy, compassion, justice, patience, gentleness, kindness, goodness, brotherhood, forgiveness, grace, peace, hope, joy, and LOVE.

He who builds *with* Jesus, builds *on* Jesus. A day will come when the Savior will stand forth in the kingdom of the Father; tempest and trial will be over; the clouds will draw away, and those who belong to him will witness the glorious fulfillment of the parable. Christ and his love will reign forever. 

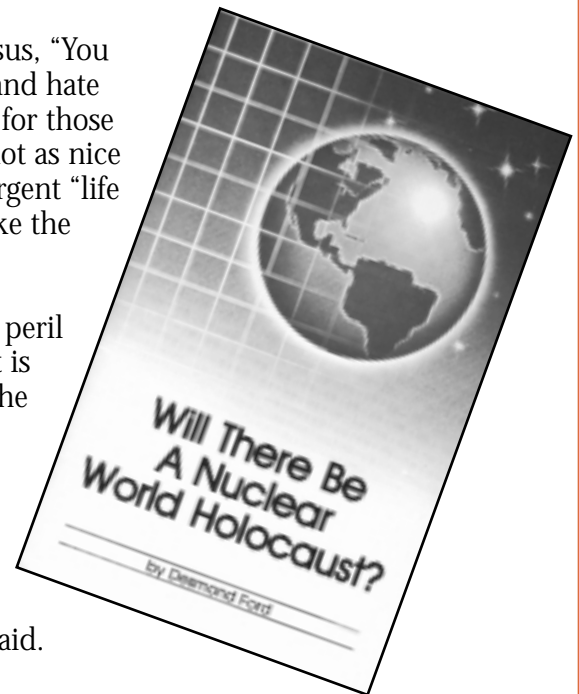
WILL THERE BE A NUCLEAR WORLD HOLOCAUST?

a book by Dr. Desmond Ford.

In the light of the events of September 11, the words of Jesus, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, . . ." (Matthew 5:43) have to be seen not as nice little aphorisms to be framed and hung on a wall, but as urgent "life or death" imperatives for us to be more like God, who make the sun to rise on the evil and the good (Matthew 5:45).

This little volume by Desmond Ford examines the nuclear peril in the light of the radical love of God expressed in Jesus. It is full of faith and hope. For example: "The problem is not the nuclear weapons. It is the nuclear man. No one would be worried about nuclear war if Mother Theresa was put in charge of the nuclear weapons. It's not the hardware, it's the heartware." "The bomb is limited in its range. The worst it can do can only last until the resurrection."

Order your copy of this inspiring book now. \$3:00 Post paid.
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CHOOSING YOUR FIGHT WISELY

By Mike Nelson

“To quarrel with a neighbour is foolish” (Proverbs 11:12)

Several years ago we had a running tension with a next-door neighbor. Every time we left our house, we had to see the other house. Just the sight of their house or car would cause tension, and anger. Finally, we were able to agree to allow each family to raise its children the way it wanted, without judging the other.

Over a period of time, we became friends with our neighbors. Years later, I can hardly remember what caused all the tension, but I have clear memories of how each family was able to be there for the other in times of serious illness.

Conflict is never as satisfying as friendship.

In business I find there are people who fight continually with other people within their company. They seem unable to let any supposed insult go by. At a former company, one of my associates told our CEO that I brought no perceived value to the company. When told what had been said, my first impulse was to attack that person, and remind him of the foolishness of speaking badly about his boss.

Instead I did nothing for several days. I waited till the two of us were alone on other matters, and casually asked my associate, “How can I bring value to you in your role in our company?” My associate looked me in the eye and said, “I honestly don’t know. I am new in this position and cannot understand which of your strengths can help me.” We spent an hour looking for ways I could help this person succeed, and found several. I had not been attacked at all. My associate had simply

expressed his perspective. His comment led to my becoming more effective as a manager, and helped me develop a particularly strong relationship with him.

Both as a parent and manager, I have to watch myself because sometimes I find myself wanting to demonstrate my authority, just because I want to. I have learned that virtually every time I think I am not being respected, and start to pick a fight to prove my power, I am mistaken.

In sales, I have learned that you never win a sale by winning an argument.

When you get into an argumentative situation with a prospect, the best thing to do is close it down as quickly as possible. I am not suggesting being a wimp, or a coward. Rather I am suggesting using discernment to know when it is time to force an issue. I am suggesting that a person who is continually in conflict, had better look inside himself/herself for the reason.

A person who picks fights wisely, is a person who wins most of his/her fights, and wins respect from peers. Paul wrote these words to a young pastor he was mentoring:

“Don’t get involved in foolish arguments which only upset people, and make them angry. . . . Things will be said that will hurt for a long time to come. Mymenaeus and Philetus in their love of argument are men like that.”

Prayer: God, help me to avoid needless arguments. Teach me how to make peace, whenever possible. Amen.

A person who picks fights wisely, is a person who wins most of his/her fights, and wins respect from peers

THE DELAYS OF LOVE 2

By Desmond Ford

There is no greater blessing than when there is some standing fact in our life, which disturbs us, troubles us, makes a continual demand upon us, and which God does not hurry to remedy.

We are far more concerned, in our dealings with people, with making them comfortable, than with telling them the truth, but God is not like that. We are tempted to spoil our children rather than give them discipline. But a child who is not occasionally frustrated is very likely to have mental breakdown in adulthood. Unless a child learns to adjust to frustration by being told there are limits, he cannot stand the limits which the world enforces upon him when he leaves the cocoon of the family. The best way for a man to spoil his son is to give him everything he asks for. God doesn't make that mistake with us.

God sometimes throws us into the stream so that we will learn to swim. Scripture says that he wants us to learn to run with the footman, so that, one day, we can contend with horses. If we cannot survive the days of peace, what will we do in the days of the swelling of Jordan?

"I'm glad for the delay," said Christ. "I'm glad for your sakes." The delays of God in lifting our burdens, in solving our problems, in getting us what we long for, are the delays of

love. Any cost is merited if it yields us a stronger faith in God and heavenly things.

There will never come a time when the flashing sword of the angel of Eden is not turning on all sides. We are God's children and he is not going to spoil us. He wants to give us something better than we ask for.

Jesus came to Bethany, and when Martha heard that he was coming she went and met him while Mary sat in the house. And Martha said to Jesus: "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died." If only. If only! This is a phrase so common for all of us. It is the heresy of the full cup. All of us feel we would have been so different, if only.

The worst thing that could happen to you and me would be for us to get all we want. "If only," says Martha. See her diminished vision, her limited insight. And notice that all along the way the Lord does not speak so precisely that the element of tension is removed. God will never take the tension out of life. He wants us to learn to trust him where we cannot trace him. He wants us to learn to interpret the circumstances of life by what we know of his heart, and not to do the reverse. Believing is seeing, for the Christian, never the reverse.

From D. Ford. 'Worth More than a Million. pp. 671,672 

God will never take the tension out of life. He wants us to learn to trust him where we cannot trace him. He wants us to learn to interpret the circumstances of life by what we know of his heart, and not to do the reverse.

LIVING DANGEROUSLY

By George Morrison

Epaphroditus had undertaken to convey to Paul, the offerings of the Philippian church. And of the risks involved in such a journey, and in visiting a suspect and a prisoner, we have sundry hints in the apostle's words. *"He almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me"* (Philippians 2:30).

No compulsion had driven Epaphroditus. He had taken all the hazards cheerfully. The strain of it all had told on him so terribly, that he was brought down to the gates of death. . . .

It is a very interesting word which Paul uses when he says that Epaphroditus *"risked his life."* It is a word from the language of the gambler. In the long hours of his imprisonment Paul had narrowly watched his Roman guards. He had heard them talking about boxing matches; he had been a spectator when they had played at dice. And as he saw them gambling with their money, and taking risks in a reckless kind of fashion, his thoughts went winging to Epaphroditus. That was the kind of thing which he had done. He had deliberately gambled with his life. For Christ's sake, and for the church's sake, he had flung caution to the winds of heaven. . . . Had he played for safety he would have stayed at home. He would have plead the urgencies of work at Philippi. Probably, his health was none too good, and he had doctor's orders against going. But Epaphroditus took the risks—lived dangerously—gambled with his life—and so lives within the word of God forever.

One understands how the great heart of Paul clave so closely to Epaphroditus. The spirit of that inconspicuous delegate was the spirit that burned in his own breast. Like all great missionaries, Paul did not dwell on dangers. He only spoke of them when he was forced to. In his tremendous eagerness to spread the gospel, he almost forgot the risks that he

**To live by
faith is
always
to live
dangerously.**

was running. But if ever a man gambled with his life; lived dangerously, and took the hazard, it was the great apostle to the Gentiles. He, too, might have played for safety. He might have advanced a score of reasons for it. That lacerating, and gnawing thorn, for instance. Would not that justify the nicest caution? But Paul forgot his caution, and took risks that might well have appalled the stoutest heart, in the ardor of his love for the Lord Jesus. The love of Christ constrained him. He lived dangerously for the Lord. The motto of Paul was never, "Safety first!"

From the beginning to the end it was, "Christ first." That was why he found a kindred spirit in this obscure delegate from Philippi. . . .

. . . A certain joy in living dangerously, is one of the firstfruits of the Spirit. In the upper chamber, before Pentecost, the disciples were very careful of their lives. The doors were shut for fear of the Jews. They trembled at every step upon the stair. But when the Holy Spirit came on them in power, there was a kind of reckless gaiety about them, which made men think that they were filled with wine. . . .

. . . To live by faith is always to live dangerously. My old professor, Lord Kelvin, once said a very striking thing. He said that there came a point in all his great discoveries, when he had to take a leap into the dark. And none who is afraid of such a leap from the solid ground of what is demonstrated, will know the exhilaration of believing. To commit ourselves unreservedly to Christ is just the biggest venture in the world. And the wonderful thing is that when we take Lord Kelvin's leap into the dark, we discover it is not dark at all, but life abundant, and liberty, and peace.

—From G. H. Morrison. Gateway To The Stars pp177-181. 

The Picture Gallery

Lost and Found

By Dorothy O'Neill

STORY:

I am telling you the truth: a grain of wheat remains no more than a grain of wheat unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, it produces many grains. Whoever loves his life will lose it: whoever hates his own life in this world, will keep it for life eternal (John 12:24).

PICTURE:

You are a grain of wheat; small and vulnerable, and you have been placed in the earth. It is dark, and the soil is heavy. There are insects, and alien creatures near you. They menace you with their curious eyes, and shiny shells. Earthworms crawl past, shaking you. You are afraid. You wish sunshine, ease, and calm. But the farmer has placed you here. He has high hopes for you. You have a great future, for you will become bread, and feed others. This is your true destiny. This is the place of growth.

What are you going to do? You can remain within your husk, where you feel safe as you refuse to yield to the soil and its nutrients. You can cower before the enemies around you. You can shrink from the shaking. But if you do, you will shrivel and die.

Or, you can respond to your earth, and allow yourself to be changed. Your husk will crack; shoots will break through and grow; roots will thrust down into the soil. You will not understand, but you know that you must trust the farmer. He knows what he is doing, and he hopes for a great harvest. What will you do? The choice is yours.

It's getting darker. Fears are closing in on you. You wish you were dead. It is all too much—but, listen, the farmer is singing. He is happy for he has great hopes for you, and the other seeds he has sown. Can you join him in his song?

If you can, your fears will leave you. The creatures around you will no longer threaten, for you will see them as part of your growth. And the soil as your nourishment. Sing a song of thanksgiving. You have a great future.

CONVERSATION:

ME: Yes, I see that I am indeed the grain of wheat. I am in a dark place; a place of sorrow and loss. Here are fears and sudden shakings and confusion.

VOICE: Yes, my child, I know.

ME: It would be easy to remain alone; to stay within myself



and nurse my grief and grievances; to daily remind myself of my loss, and to cherish the reminders; to court self-pity.

VOICE: (Sadly) Yes.

ME: Or I can ignore my dark earth; deny it, and seek distractions in people, pleasures, travel—whatever. In fact, refuse to accept what is happening to me.

VOICE: Yes, you can do so.

ME: But your story tells me that if I choose either of these paths I will not grow. I will not fulfil my destiny.

VOICE: The destiny planned for you by my father.

ME: It is so hard, Lord. So hard to accept the pain. So hard to accept the challenge to change.

VOICE: Truly, but remember that you are not alone. You are never alone. I am with you. Do not doubt it.

ME: But doubts crowd in on me. They are the menacing creatures in the soil.

VOICE: Doubts and fears will be put to flight by faith. Faith will enable you to overcome your difficulties. It will work miracles.

ME: I can do with a miracle or two.

VOICE: Sing your song of confidence, and joy in the father's plan for you, and they will happen.

ME: I will try.

REFLECTION:

Life constantly offers choices: to go on or to turn back; to accept or refuse; to forgive or not to forgive; to love or to hate.

Our choices decide our destiny. Right choice will bring growth in character, and self-esteem. Wrong choices stunt growth and freedom. In the Kingdom, choices can mean life or death. *"I am giving you the choice between life and death. . . . Choose life"* (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Dorothy O'Neill has authored several books. For ten years she was editor of ENCOUNTER, the magazine of ACTS International, based in Adelaide Australia. She lives in South Australia. –Ed.

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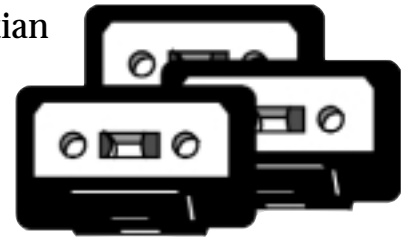
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Letters We Love

Dear GNU,

We really enjoyed the Ashville conference. Roy + Ron were both so clear and understandable. We've listened to the two tapes you gave us several times. Our new motto is: "To make the main thing, the main thing!" That was a bit humorous, but so pertinent to our lives. Please put us on your tape mailing list.

L. H. Tennessee

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Your magazine is appreciated.
Assurance of salvation is often lacking. Why?
God's word is very clear in this matter.
Yours because of Calvary's Grace,
P.J. PA.

Dear GNU Family,

I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoy the GNU magazines. They have encouraged me many times over the years. I miss the TV series: "Worth More Than a Million," that was hosted by Pastor Ford and Pastor Gee. The wonderful teachings I have received through GNU have helped me to keep a balanced Christian life, resting in the finished work of Jesus Christ—and not my own performance—which is personally disheartening.

Love to all of you, and please keep the magazines coming. The Lord is truly with you all.
J.I. CA.

Dear GNU Folks,

We enjoy those "Dear Friend," letters very much. They contain food for thought about matters which make life meaningful. And believe it or not, those little 'thank you for your gift' notes at the bottom of the letters, makes us feel as if we actually matter—a rare and welcome sense in this age of institutional depersonalization.

Being able to be part of your gospel work is an encouragement to us. God bless you and your efforts.
EM. N.M..

Dear GNU,

I really enjoyed the Tape of the Month you sent me: "The Good Shepherd." I have listened to it three times. Thank you so much.
K. B. CA



GNU CHAT ROOM

COMMENT:

There are two atonements. The first atonement is for the whole world to have access to God. Christ has made atonement for the sins of the whole world. The second, or final atonement, is Christ's work as high priest, which completes the divine plan of redemption by making final atonement for sin. This only applies to the sins of the truly penitent, which are to be blotted out. –Gene.

REPLY:

We are aware of several parts of the Bible that contradict your assertion about two atonements. For example, Hebrews teaches that what the Jewish high priests did repeatedly, Jesus did but once. *“Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself”* (Hebrews 7:27). Compare Hebrews 9:26; 10:1-4, 10-12.

The author's plain intention, in Hebrews, is to show that Jesus accomplished effectively and totally, what all other priests did, ineffectively, and partially. This exhaustive priestly ministry is said to have found its completion when Jesus rose from the dead, and entered heaven once for all. The only thoroughgoing blotting out of sins acknowledged in Scripture is the one here referred to. *“By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever; those who are being made holy”* (Hebrews 10:14).

QUESTION:

What is the meaning of Philippians 2:12—“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling?”

ANSWER:

The statement in Philippians 2:12 does not cancel all else that Paul wrote to show that salvation is God's work, and not ours. Verse 13—*“It is God who works in you”*—makes that clear. Also note the context. Preceding, is some of the New Testament's most exalted language, describing Christ's work.

The chapter begins with observations regarding the ethical implications of union with Christ (v.1). From verse five through eleven, Christ is set forth as the model for Christian attitude and practice. Verse twelve resumes the admonition begun in verse one.

The advice “to work out your own salvation,” is a call to personal responsibility. The Philippian believers had leaned on Paul's personal presence and spiritual giftedness. In his absence they must learn to be self-active in their pursuit of the will of God. Though no believer will be lost, there is no other way to be faithful than by personal effort to realize the virtues of Jesus, as exemplified to us in his life and death.

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www.goodnewsunlimited.org

DEALING WITH the INEVITABILITIES of Life

J. D. Jones

**Rather, as servants of God,
we commend ourselves in
every way: in great
endurance; in troubles. . . .”
(2 Corinthians 6:4)**

There are certain hardships which come to some, but which others escape. Some, for example, have to suffer far more from physical weakness than others. There are in our country, at this time, a couple of million unemployed. They suffer anxieties and hardships from which the rest of us are happily free. But there are other hard experiences which are common to us all. And how we face up to these inevitabilities reveals the measure of our faith in God.

Take the matter of physical weakness to begin with. As I said a moment ago, some enjoy a much larger measure of vigor and health than others do—but sooner or later, all of us become acquainted with the touch of pain. Well, how do we bear it when it comes? Some become querulous and fretful. Some people just set their teeth, and go through with it. But the man who has a real faith will bear it all with a certain cheerful courage. He knows he is in his father's hands, and though no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, yet afterwards it yieldeth peaceable fruit.

When Job, sitting on his ash heap, smitten with boils and reduced to beggary, rebuked his frantic wife who, in the bitterness of her soul, wanted him to renounce God, and gave utterance to that noble expression of faith: *“The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord,”* he was commending himself in his necessities as a man of genuine faith in God.

I had to turn up *Silvester Horne's Life*

the other day, and glancing through its pages, I came across the account he gives of a few days he spent with a house party at Llanfairfechan. And, among the guests, there was a young fellow that was helplessly and hopelessly crippled. He could go on none of the excursions. He could take part in none of the games. But Horne says of him that he was the life and soul of the entire party. He made no fuss about his disability. He carried himself with a gay and cheerful courage. And it wasn't a case of animal spirits. Back of it all was a quiet and simple faith in God. There wasn't a person in that house party that was not impressed by his sheer gallantry.

In life there are some things we have just got to accept. We can't escape them. We can't alter them. And half of the art of life lies in learning to accept things with a brave and cheerful spirit. . . . The world would be an infinitely happier place if we learned to accept things. That is hard, I know, for a man who has no faith in God. But it ought not be impossible for the man who believes in the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ; who believes that love rules, and therefore all things must work together for good to them that love God.

Robert Hall, the great Baptist preacher, used to be subject to paroxysms of pain, in the course of which he would roll on the ground in sheer agony. But when the paroxysm was over, the first words he used to say were these: “I hope I didn't complain.”

We prove the reality of our Christian faith, and we help or hinder the progress of our gospel, by the way in which we comport ourselves in the face of life's necessities. My prayer is that we may have such a vivid sense of the love and keeping care of God, that we shall be able to bear life's inevitable troubles with serenity and faith, that we may stand up to its temptations with a cheerful courage, and then go down to the valley singing, and with everlasting joy upon our heads.

— From Rev. J.D.Jones. Morning and Evening. pp. 23-28.

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