

# GOOD NEWS

*Unlimited*



*The Search for a Universal*

**CHRIST ALONE • GRACE ALONE • FAITH ALONE • SCRIPTURE ALONE**

# EDITORIAL . . .

In 1899, Stephen Crane wrote: "A man said to the universe, 'Sir, I exist.' 'However,' replied the universe, 'that fact has not created in me, a sense of obligation.'"

In recent times, human beings—in particular, their scientists—have accelerated and expanded their capacity to observe the world and comment on it. This has happened because of the arrival of computers. It is now possible to see more clearly than ever before, that the same laws of physics; responsible for simple patterns of order in nature, have also allowed for the development of highly complex organisms such as human beings.

The sophisticated organism, HOMO SAPIENS, has been able to formulate and express physical law, in the language of mathematics. Using mathematics, humans can construct models for actions and reactions that occur in the physical world. Mathematics is notoriously reliable. This is because the physical world reflects the computational properties of mathematics. There is a friendly relationship with physical laws and the mathematical theories that humans use to describe them.

The link between mathematical theory and physical processes is so real, that science can design space ships and send them to the moon and back on the basis of it. The confidence that the underlying order of the universe can be expressed in mathematical formulae lies at the heart of modern science.

Whereas 150 years ago, science was responsible for undermining the creationist argument from design, now science has resurrected the same argument on the basis of new evidence. Oxford mathematician, Rojer Penrose says: "There seems to be some profound reality about these mathematical concepts. . . . It is as though human thought is being guided to

some eternal, external truth." Brilliant British scientist, Stephen Hawking says; "Why does the universe go to all the trouble of existing? What is it that breathes fire into the equations, and makes a universe for them to describe?"

There is a stunning reciprocal relationship between the universe and the human mind. Einstein said, "The only incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible." Why do we possess the necessary intellectual apparatus to unlock the secret codes of the universe?

When Robinson Crusoe saw the footprint in the sand, he deduced that he was not alone after all; that there was someone else like himself, sharing his lonely island. The universe is vast and mysterious. But here and there we see a footprint; evidence that we are not alone. If nature yields evidence of a mind akin to our own, perhaps our mind is a significant clue to the meaning of the universe, and of ourselves in it.

To believe that the universe is indifferent to our presence in it, is death. There is scientific evidence to support the notion of a superior Being who is "mindful" of us. We are not homeless. The universe is not absurd. We are meant to be here. Above us, around us, and with us, there is One who breathes fire into our thoughts, our plans, our hopes and desires.

And we belong to him.

- Editor



**Ron Allen**

## GOODNEWS *Unlimited*

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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.)

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# The Search 1 for a Universal

by Ron Allen

**Everyone looks for a way of keeping everything in life together. We need a 'place to stand' from whence we can defend ourselves from everything untoward; from which we can launch our assault on life, and by which we can understand everything that happens to us. Jesus does this for us. He is a true universal.**

**O**n Sunday afternoons, Sydney's Hyde Park becomes the public domain. Anyone is permitted to stand on a soapbox and address the crowd on any subject. I walked there on one Sunday and was drawn to a group of students who were singing a song. This is the song they sang:

Oh the world is round and we are all inside.  
The world is round and we are all inside.  
It's very scientific, as everybody knows,  
And the world will soon believe it I suppose.

To add proof to the song's message, a spokesman stepped forward and said, "Look at your shoes. See how the toes turn upward and not down. If we were living on the external surface of a sphere, our shoes would turn downward at the toes. But since we are on the inside, the curvature of the world turns our toes up!"

He went on. "Furthermore, why is it that when you sit and swing on a swing, the swing follows a trajectory like the inside of a balloon? If we were living on the outer skin of the earth, the swing would follow a track similar to that described by the surface of a balloon—Oh the world is round and we are all inside."

The group of students were humorously proposing a universal; a premise, or a proposition bearing on everything else, to which everything is related.

The quest for a universal for life has been around a long time. Scientists, today, are working to discover what Stephen Hawking has called, "a theory of everything." "Then we will know the mind of God," he says.

People have always sought for cohesiveness in their living; a way of keeping it all together. It is useful to have a theory of everything for action, evaluation, and relationships. Religions have tried to formulate value systems that can be applied at all times. As the world shrinks, and as populations grow, the human race is under pressure to discover a universal that can be used in the USA, in Lithuania, and Burundi. No longer is it enough to say, "It works for me." We need something that works for "us." All of us; from the highest to the least. And it needs to work everywhere.

In our time, many have come to believe that the worthiness of any religion, may be judged by its readiness to admit the equal worth of all religion. Tolerance has become the sacred virtue. Indeed, tolerance has reached almost universal eminence. But how workable is this? Does this mean that the different value streams are all of equal legitimacy? Is racism as good as a thoroughly catholic humanism? Is a responsible and restrained use of nonrenewable resources no better and no worse than leaving everything to be decided by market forces? Are greed and philanthropy equal?

If you are going to have a universal, you have to jettison some things that are its opposite. An endlessly open mind will permit no fixedness of purpose or practice. If you want to have truth, you must to some degree accept exclusivity. In science, a theory is subjected to endless attempts to prove it false. The more you fail to falsify your hypothesis, the more it is confirmed. The more it approaches universal status.

When we come to Jesus, we meet someone with a religious view of the world, which bears an implicit intolerance to

contrary views. For example: “Whoever hears my words and puts them into practice, is like a wise man who builds on a rock.” On the other hand, “whoever hears my words and does not put them into practice, is like a foolish man who builds on sand.” Jesus is sure enough of himself to teach, “What I do and say is so grounded in reality, that human life will flourish or founder, depending how seriously you take me.”

Jesus seemed to believe that he represented values that were true for all time, and in every place. Those who embraced him, would thereby discover themselves to be in sync with the rhythms and impulses of God. They would have discovered the ‘ultimate’; the universal by which everything else could be understood, evaluated, put to use, and endured.

Silas Marner lived in the pre-industrial English countryside. When he was suspected of stealing money from a dying man, he was taken to the church, where the Vicar and Elders cast lots to determine his guilt or otherwise. The lot fell against Silas. Unable to prove his innocence, Sarah, to whom he was engaged, broke her promise, and a month later, married William Dane, who happened to be the real culprit. As Silas left town he said: “There is no God who is just, and who governs righteously. But a God of lies, who bears witness against the innocent.”


Silas never went to church again for fifteen years. He had subscribed to a universal that had let him down at a critical moment. He, and the community of which he was part, had subscribed to a religious viewpoint which envisaged a supernatural realm, inhabited by a good God plus other powerful influences, both good and bad. Besides prayer, church attendance, and the receiving of the sacraments, there were other things you could do to protect yourself. If worst

came to the worst, you could overturn a bad thing by casting lots. In a time of crisis, this belief system failed Silas. It did not apply in his situation. It was not a true universal.

Jesus proposes a worldview that does not have to be dismantled when bad things happen. He lived under the governance of a view of reality in which he did not expect any immunity from evil, and he encouraged his disciples to live the same way. “In the world you shall have tribulation.” Jesus gives us a God who does not have to be discarded during certain critical seasons. The God and Father of Jesus, is a God who stands in relation to everything—everything good as well as evil. There is no dark corner of the world, where God is just a useless idea.

The symbol of Jesus is a cross. It is part of his genius that Jesus provides us with a place to cast anchor, which we can use in life’s stormiest moments. The most thunderous reality of living is pain. It is no true universal that becomes irrelevant when ‘hard times come knockin’ on the door.’ If we cannot find a universal that covers everything that goes on in the world, then we have little choice but to join with Silas Marner and say, “There is no God but one who lies, and bears witness against the innocent.”

For Jesus, the ugly and daunting aspects of life are comprehended by God. They cannot be forestalled by magic, or even by the sacraments of the church. God is at the center of the drama of existence—a drama which includes evil and suffering. Indeed, impaled on the cross, Jesus reveals the ordeal of God.

Faith in the God of Jesus Christ, puts bedrock beneath one’s feet; a place to stand from whence both delight and disaster come to pass under the supervision of one who shares our lot, and whose love will never fail us. 

## ***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.

**Good News Unlimited**

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# The Search 2 for a Universal

by Ron Allen

**In Jesus, we see God wearing a different face. Jesus does all he knows to do to help the world believe that though God is a God of order, law, and judgment, there is something else in him that is greater than all of these.**

**B**y nature, truth is universal. If every proposition were equally valid, truth would be impossible. We deem things less true, the more limited their application. Two plus two equals four. That seems to be the case no matter where you go. Two plus two equals five, may be admirably inclusive, but it will not stand the test of surviving in a universe that appears to favor two plus two equals four.

When Paul preached at Athens, he stood on the principle that if Christ was true, then the religions of the Athenians were not. Jesus is intolerant in the same way that the truth about anything is intolerant. This article will contend that he has a right to his pretensions, for the universe appears to support him.

Jesus offers us the universal of mercy. "Be merciful as God is merciful." There is mercy in the Old Testament, but it fails to

dominate as it does in the Gospels. The Hebrew Scriptures contain material that appears not to support Jesus' characterization of God. For example: "*Happy is he that repays you for what you have done to us; he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks*" (Psalm 137:8+9). When Israel routed the Moabites, they were not content to defeat them on the battlefield, but with the apparent backing of the Lord, they went on to cut down every good tree; block up every spring, and ruin every field with stones (2 Kings 3:25). When the Iraqis set fire to thousands of Kuwaiti oil wells, thoughtful people around the world thought it was a vindictive thing to do. There is some of that vindictiveness in the Bible, and people believed that God sponsored it.

In Jesus, we see God wearing a different face. Jesus does all he knows to do, to help the world believe that though God is a God of order, law, and judgment, there is something else in him that is greater than all of these—mercy.

Chinua Achebe tells his story of Okonkwo, a powerful man among the Ibo people of West Africa. His father had been a weak man, and that was an embarrassment to Okonkwo, and he worked hard to make sure he was not weak. Soon he was wealthy with several wives. He raised his family tough. He did not show affection to his sons, for he considered that weakness. He beat his wives when they didn't do exactly what he said. He

**Throughout history, men and women have spoken well of mercy. They have liked it, and admired it, but no one ever raised it to a level of universality as Jesus did. We have not had the courage to make it preeminent.**

was fearless in battle, and had killed five men. He despised anyone who talked of peace, or of making terms with enemies.

Once he was asked to go and demand settlement from a neighboring tribe that had killed one of the Ibo women. As part of the settlement, Okonkwo took with him one of their small boys, whom he kept with him in his house for many years till eventually the elders decided that he must be killed to exact full payment from the offending tribe. By this time the boy, whose name was Ikemefuma, had begun to think of Okonkwo as his own father, and Okonkwo had begun to think of him as a son.

Okonkwo was very troubled, but he did not wish to look weak. So when the elders came, he accompanied them with the boy, into the forest. "You do not have to help us kill the boy because he calls you father," they said. But Okonkwo was too tough to back out.


They made Ikemefuma walk in front of them, and when he felt the first machete blow, he called out to Okonkwo for help. Not wishing to look weak, Okonkwo raised his machete and killed his adopted son.

After that Okonkwo never ate for many days. He became even harder and more intolerant. When British government officials and Christian missionaries came into the area, he advocated violence against them all. Once when a government agent appeared in his village, Okonkwo was so enraged that he chopped his

head off with his machete.

Troops were sent to arrest Okonkwo, but when they found him, he had hung himself from a tree. His world had fallen apart, and he no longer cared to live in it. His life had been dominated by fear and anger. He had tried to keep his world together on the same principle. Within the limited context of Biafra, he had seen some success, but his ethos was not a true universal. In the end, things fell apart.

How do you stop life from flying apart? Jesus suggests that mercy lies closer to the heart of reality than all else. Christ rises higher than other leaders of humanity because he takes us to a deeper truth. In his predilection for mercy, Jesus stands alone against the world's best social engineers. Throughout history, men and women have spoken well of mercy. They have liked it, and admired it, but no one ever raised it to a level of universality as Jesus did. We have not had the courage to make it preeminent.

Physicists have shown us that the material world is made in one particular way and not another. By ignoring the way the material world is made, it is possible to suffer ruin. Jesus posits that the world of persons is made in one particular way and not another. It is possible to wreck human life if we do not respect the true human condition. Jesus sees that human life will founder; fall apart, unless covered in an atmosphere of mercy. 

## GOD—WHO RICHLY PROVIDES

**O**n a recent business trip to Sydney, I took the cross-harbor ferry to the city. I was reminded why Sydney harbor is considered to be one of the world's finest. I was entranced by the spectacular blue water; the circling white gulls; the small boats sporting on the bay; and the magic of the city skyline. The ferry ride was a luxuriant pleasure for me. I thought of the Scripture:

*"Put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment" (1 Timothy 6:17).*

Appreciation of God's gifts is a habit that needs to be cultivated. Busy folk often miss plenty that would fortify them, if they would only train themselves to take advantage of what can be seen all around them. Perhaps you have, sometime, been visited by relatives, and during their stay they have remarked enthusiastically, on sights familiar—but long dismissed—by you. Your relatives have said: "How fortunate you are to live here."

God has truly endowed us, not only by giving us daily necessities, but by richly providing us with delights, that are surplus to mere need. At GNU we have seen this generosity at work. During the last twelve months we have been passing through a serious financial downturn, that did impact on our income. Added to the stringency of recession, were the events of September 11, which further

dampened economic confidence. Yet, despite these adversities, God provided GNU with enough support to enable us to continue to speak the Good News of Christ, as he has called us to do.

To further delight us, God has given us growth in our Tape-of-the-Month ministry. We have had one of the best attended Bible schools ever held at Auburn, and, now, have been able to achieve new advances in our web-site development—an important part of our ability to interact with our public.

You see, we have much to be grateful for; not least among which, are our supporters. We think of you as our partners, and fellow workers in the gospel. We continue to marvel at the way gratitude does its work in your hearts, to make you want to add your gifts to our efforts. We do not hesitate, therefore, to tell you that GNU needs your continued generosity. As God directs you in your giving, GNU will occupy its appointed place, as a voice for the good, glad, and merry tidings, of God's infinite goodwill toward men.

May gratitude to God for giving us his Son, help us to realize, that all else that is good, has been richly thrown in as well.

Ron J. Allen



# The Search 3 for a Universal

by Ron Allen

In Victor Hugo's powerful saga, two men inhabit the same world, but with two different ways of living in it. Jean Valjean has served nineteen years in the galleys for stealing a loaf of bread. He is now a fugitive, and is relentlessly pursued by Javert, the inspector of police.

Because of a kindness shown him by a priest, Jean Valjean has given himself over to a life seasoned by mercy and love. He prospers in a small town, and becomes its mayor. It is during this time, that Javert begins to suspect the mayor. He contacts his superiors, but they inform him that the mayor cannot be Jean Valjean, because that very felon has been captured and identified by four other convicts, who swear they were in the galleys with him.

On receiving this information, Javert comes to the mayor and says, "You must dismiss me. I spoke against you. I thought you were Jean Valjean."

But the mayor waves him away.

Later, the two meet in a courtroom. The man accused of being Jean Valjean is to be tried. Javert is there. To his amazement, the trial is aborted when the mayor himself bursts into the courtroom, claiming to be the real Jean Valjean. He proves his claim by displaying his tattooed prison number. Javert is confounded.

Years pass. Javert is now an inspector in Paris. The city is in turmoil. Trouble is brewing; barricades are being built in the streets. Javert is commissioned to infiltrate a group of revolutionaries. But he is exposed and they decree his execution. Jean Valjean appears and offers to do the deed. He leads Javert, tied, down a back street, and there, fires his gun in the air, and cuts Javert loose; setting him free. "You irritate me; why not kill me now?" says Javert. "Go away," is his liberator's reply.

The two meet once more. This time it is by the riverbank, where Jean Valjean is bending low over the body of a young man he is desperately trying to save. Suddenly he turns, and there is Javert standing with a club raised, ready to strike. "Do whatever you want with me, but help me save this boy's life," is all that

Jean Valjean can say. Javert, struggling within himself, allows the boy to be taken to the safety of his father's residence, and then walks off into the night, letting Jean Valjean stay free.

The next time we see Javert, he is in torments. He cannot get over the fact that a fugitive gave him his life, when he might easily have taken it. Worse yet, he can scarcely believe that he, an officer of the law, whose sworn duty it is to bring lawbreakers to prison, has willfully let an outlaw get away.

One thing is clear, he owes his life to a malefactor; and now, he, seemingly, has been infected by this same 'terrible kindness.' What had made him do it? What madness had gripped him, that he had counted the liberty of a criminal something to be desired? What had possessed him, to make him think that there could be any higher allegiance, than allegiance to authority, civil or religious?

His mind traveled back to the many times he had encountered Jean Valjean. He remembered bringing a prostitute before him, when he had been mayor. He had recommended that the mayor take strong action against her. But Jean Valjean had taken pity on her. He thought of the meeting in the mayor's office, when he had demanded to be dismissed, and Jean Valjean had refused to be vindictive. He recalled the amazing day in the courtroom when old Fauchelevent was mistaken for Jean Valjean. The mayor had sacrificed himself; risked damnation to save someone who was a stranger to him. Then there was the astonishing incident at the barricade, when the hunted had the hunter in his grasp, and could have rid himself of the plague of his life right there, but he did not. Instead, he exercised mercy.

A compassionate convict! A hideous hero! A kind, long-suffering, helpful enemy of the public! "How can a man whom I have spent the greater part of my life trying to trap, make me feel that I should imitate him? We lock criminals away so the public will be protected from their influence. What code of conduct does Jean Valjean have that I should think to copy him?"

Yet, that is what I have done in letting him go! When he spared me, was he doing his duty? No, something more than

# Christ is greater than other teachers and leaders of the human race, because, in magnifying mercy, he takes us deeper into truth.


duty. When he let me go, was he obeying the law? No, he was obeying something higher than the law. When I did not arrest him, was I doing my duty? No, something more. Was I obeying the law? No, something higher, Something greater.”

Jean Valjean is a Christ-figure. He does not represent established norms for the well-ordering of society. He is beyond what is commonly seen as needful to make the world run as it should. He is a magnanimous wretch, who shows

Javert that his way will not stand. There is something mightier than legislatures that legislate; than police forces that enforce. There is something more powerful than courts that pronounce sentence. There is that which is wiser than official wisdom. There is something more infallible than legal infallibility. There is something grander than justice; more invincible, more universal than the logic that flows from any precept or code—mercy!

John Valjean is greater than Javert because his is a true universal. Christ is greater than other teachers and leaders of the human race, because, in magnifying mercy, he takes us deeper into truth. Mercy lies nearer to the heart of reality than almost all else. In his predilection for mercy, Jesus stands alone against the world's best minds; the world's best social engineers. Throughout time, men and women have thought of mercy; spoken of it; even liked, and admired it, but they have never raised it to a level of universality as Jesus did. They have not had the courage to make it absolute.

Physicists have shown that the world is made in one particular way, and not another. It is possible for humans to cause havoc when they do not accept the way the world is made. In his genius, Jesus posits a world of human beings, made in a particular way, and not another. It is possible to wreck human life, when we do not acknowledge the true structure of human life.

Jesus sees that the world of men and women cannot stand; will wither, disintegrate, unless drenched in one of love's richest features—mercy. Mercy received, and mercy granted. 

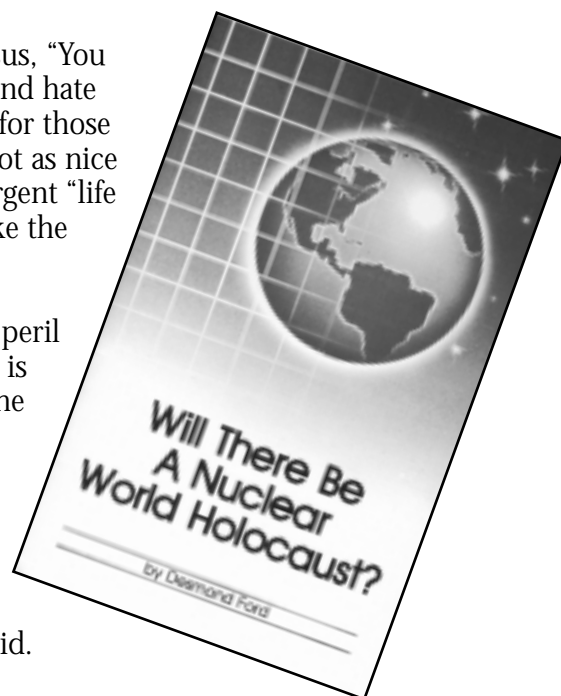
## WILL THERE BE A NUCLEAR WORLD HOLOCAUST?

*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 Postpaid.  
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# THE DELAYS OF LOVE 3

by Desmond Ford

## Our part is small, but indispensable.

God never does for us, miraculously, anything we can do naturally. People who think they can be careless of their physical habits and then invoke a miracle of healing, regularly and continually, have certainly misunderstood Scripture. God can and does work miraculously in healing, but it is not the case that you and I can flagrantly violate the laws of God in nature. Without us he will not, without him we cannot. "Roll away the stone." That's for us! Roll away the stone of ignorance! Study the word. Roll away the stone of selfishness! Give to the work of God

## There can be no dodging of sacrifice.

In the story of Jesus' anointing by the sinful woman, there was a man who was so upset by the sacrifice of Mary, that he cried out, "To what purpose is this waste?" In a short time, as a suicide, he was swinging from a tree. The angels who had come to the cross beheld the suicide and said, "To what purpose was this waste?"

In your life and mine, we are either like Christ or Judas. All must sacrifice. Judas sacrificed eternal life. All life spent on self, is sewage. Life must be broken that the fragrance will go forth. The pains and troubles of life are God's ways of breaking the surrendered vessel, that the fragrance of faith and hope and love might flow to his glory and our ultimate joy.

What do the delays of God mean? Why doesn't God come immediately to our rescue if he loves us? All of us have had the experience of desires for the removal of bitterness, or sorrows, or desire for the fulfillment of expectations and wishes which we believe to be in accordance with the will of God, but there has been no answer. Jesus has delayed. Our hope seems to have died like Lazarus, but it is part of the method of providence, that the lifting away of the burden, and the coming of the desire, should be a hope deferred. If God gave us immediately all we ask for, that's what we would always


expect. We would cease to see the marvels of divine interposition, and divine deliverance.

Sorrow is prolonged for the same reason that it is sent. Sorrow would be of little use to us if it came just for a short time. In most cases, time is an element in sorrow, working its right effect upon us. Time is an element in all the good that we get out of the discipline of life, and, therefore, the same love which sends it, must necessarily protract it beyond our desires.

The object of all divine discipline, and the highest blessing that any of us can obtain is that our will should be bent till it coincides with God's will. But that takes time. A will can be broken at a blow, but it takes a long while to bend it. It is because swift-passing disasters have so little permanent effect in molding our wills, that it is a blessing, and not an evil to have some standing fact in our lives which will make a continual demand upon us—the demand of continually repeated acts of bowing ourselves beneath the sweet will of God though it may often seem severe.

If you carry a lifelong sorrow, do not think it is a mystery as to why it should lie upon your shoulders when there is an omnipotent God in heaven. If your prolonged trial has the effect of bending you to his purposes, it is the truest token of his loving care that he can send.

God knows exactly the right hour for deliverance. A father may refuse a two-year-old, a razor blade to play with, but he has no reservations about lending his twenty-year old son his razor. If we are the best judge for our small children, is it not the same with God and us? That's why Jesus could say, "I was glad for your sakes that I was not there."

Sometime, take your concordance, and look at the passages where believers are told to wait. Read Lamentations chapter three which tells us about the mercies of God being new every morning. For there will always be a new morning, however dark the night. God's delays come to an end. His deliverance comes at the right time. 

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## GOOD NEWS FOR ADVENTISTS

The presentation of the gospel is the primary task of Good News Unlimited. However, there are times when it is necessary to defend the gospel against doctrinal aberrations that have robbed many of that assurance of salvation which the gospel brings. In *Good News For Adventists*, authors Desmond Ford, Noel Mason, and Brad McIntyre, critique the traditional Adventist doctrine of the Investigative Judgment. In a Christian Spirit, these writers point out this doctrine's inadequate scriptural basis, and its incompatibility with certain elements of the New Testament gospel.

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# *The Gospel and the Spirit*

## **2**

### *Preparing for the Spirit*

(Acts 1:12-26)

by Rodney Nelson

#### **A Long Walk Back.**

What would it have been like to return home to Jerusalem with the disciples after Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives? Was it a silent, or engaging walk? Was it an enthusiastic and optimistic journey, or a stunned and uncertain return? Whatever the emotions may have been on that three-quarter-mile walk (a Sabbath day's journey), one thing is certain: they traveled back with purpose and anticipation. They went back with the promise of Jesus fresh in their minds, that they would receive power from the Holy Spirit, that would empower them to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth (1:8).

#### **A Tight Fit.**

This handful of eleven followers immediately returned to the room where they had been together many days (v. 13). Obeying the instructions of their departed Lord, they stayed together awaiting the promised empowerment (1:4). They were now a group, reenergized by the resurrected Lord, having hope for the future; a hope anticipating the further work of God upon their lives. Togetherness was not only essential, but natural at this point.

They had been through much together. They had enjoyed the company of one they believed to be the promised Messiah. They had seen their hopes dashed by the unexpected crucifixion of this promised One. They had shuddered in fear of being killed—or worse—for their association with their dead Messiah. Peter, himself, had denied his Lord three times. Their emotions exulted in the realization that Jesus had been resurrected, yet still not fully understanding what it was all about. Now they had journeyed back once again, not fully understanding what Jesus had in store for them. They had been together for three and a half years, learning from Jesus, seeing miracles, and anticipating the revelation of Messiah. They had been together during Passion Week, when all hope had been destroyed. They had been together in fear and

exultation. Now they were together in anticipation. Their modus operandi was prayer.

#### **Prayerful Preparation.**

"They all joined together constantly in prayer" (v. 14). They were not alone in this endeavor. Joined by all the women who had been associated with Jesus, they formed a praying group, united in obedience to the Lord. This was prayer of faith. Not understanding how the promise of Jesus was to be manifest, one can imagine them praying that God would prepare them to receive the promise. This was preparatory prayer; unceasing prayer of a kind that could only arise from a deep anticipation of the Lord's purpose in their lives. "There is no effective witness without the Spirit, and the way to spiritual empowerment is to wait in prayer" (1). Prayer was central to the life of the early church (Acts 1:24; 2:42; 3:1; 4:24; 6:6).

Prayer can be a difficult habit to form. Difficult because in communicating with the Creator, we approach a deity who actually cares about what we pray. Prayer is trained—not naturally engendered in human beings. Indeed, we do not know what we ought to pray (Romans 8:26). My youngest daughter is still learning how to speak clearly. She is often difficult to understand, though she certainly seems to know what she is saying. With growth and maturation, my daughter's speech will develop to where I may not want to know what she is saying! Prayer is a bit like this. As young Christians, we utter simple, sometimes incoherent prayers. With growth in the faith we develop better fluency in prayer, yet, we can still get tongue-tied.

The group in the Jerusalem upper room were prayer-conscious. They understood its importance and relevance to their lives. They also understood that prayer was an admission of powerlessness. The importance of prayer to the small band of believers in Jerusalem can instruct us in how to pray. They prayed consistently; they prayed fervently; they prayed expectantly; they prayed faithfully; they prayed frequently.

They prayed together. Prayer is powerful when done in the company of others praying the same thing.

### Filling the Void.

The gospel requires feet to spread it, and voices to preach it. The core group of twelve apostles was missing one member. Judas had forfeited his relationship with Jesus by betraying him, and his position needed to be filled.

The first to stand up to begin the process was Peter, the 'rock' of the church (Matthew 16:18). As the appointed head of this small band of believers (numbering 120), Peter referred to Scripture's prediction that Judas would betray his Lord (Psalm 69:25), and that another would take his place (Psalm 109:8). Prior to betraying Jesus, Judas had been considered as apostolic in his calling, as any of the others. His apostasy is a significant indication that the gospel is a precious possession which can be lost by someone who once possessed it.

It is sometimes argued that Judas was never truly converted to Christ. Such a position cannot be proven. Nowhere in the Gospels is Judas pictured as not believing in Christ. Rather, as a disciple of Jesus, Judas went to the Jewish authorities only after Satan entered into him (Luke 22:3+4).

### The Criteria.

Peter laid out the criteria for who should fill the vacancy. First, the candidate must have been with the disciples during Jesus' three-and-a-half-year ministry (vv. 21+22). Second, the candidate must have been a witness of the resurrection (v. 22). Two men fit the criteria: Barsabbus and Matthias.

The selection criteria were grounded in historical fact. Christianity is grounded in the life-death-resurrection-ascension of Jesus Christ. The gospel is not a theoretical framework awaiting proof through the scientific method, or verification by experience. The gospel is based on objective, historical fact. No other religion does this, except Judaism. The

faith of the early church was built on real-life observations, and experiences of Jesus' life-death-resurrection, and ascension.


The apostolic gospel was conditioned by the events which birthed it. The church was established by men who were personally involved in the events they would describe. They professed belief in historical events. Justification is certain, not by mere faith, but by faith grounded in fact. Faith does not invent the reality, it confesses it.

### The Procedure.

Prayer and the drawing of lots was the method by which Matthias was selected. I recall a former pastor of mine asserting that Matthias' selection was a result of sin, not sincere godly methods. I cannot support such a claim. Nothing in the text indicates explicitly that Matthias was a mistaken choice. Though nothing is heard of him after Acts 1, it remains to be shown that this proves his illegitimacy as an apostle.

Paul is sometimes seen as Judas' replacement. However, Paul did not defend his apostolic calling in terms of replacement, but in terms of **revelation** outside the criteria used to select Matthias (Galatians 1:1, 12, 15-17; 2:2,7-9). God called Paul to be an apostle outside the circle of the twelve. He was specially called to a ministry to the Gentiles.

### A Solid Foundation.

The gospel is founded on the historical work of Christ, and the testimony, and witness of the apostles to that event. Christians today can rest assured in their belief in the New Testament record. The very foundation of the church in Acts 1, is the resurrection of Christ. It was the criterion for selecting a new apostle, and it is the assurance of our salvation today. 

(1) John B. Polhill. "Acts." The new American Commentary 26. Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992; p.90.

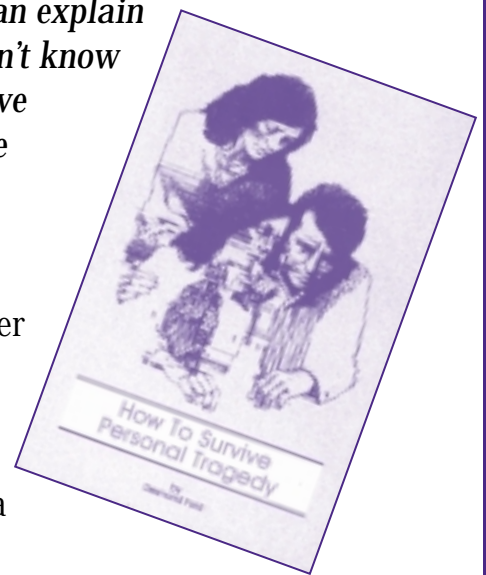
*"There are many things we don't know. There is no one who can explain all the mysteries of trouble. This shouldn't worry us for we don't know much about anything, but we do know that the people that have helped the world the most are the people that have suffered the most."*

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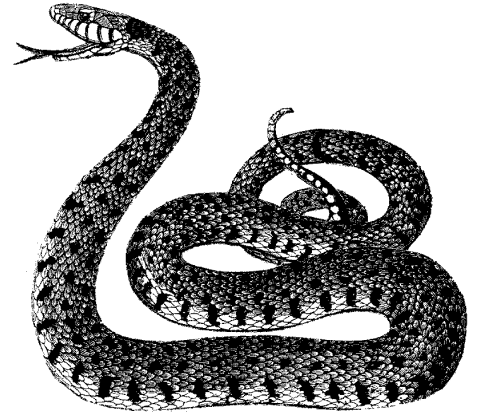
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# Looking Beyond the Snake Venom

by Gillian Ford



There is a moment in every life when reality strikes. Recently, I met a man whom reality struck in the form of a rattlesnake. As I went to shake his right hand, he pulled it back and offered his left instead.

“My right hand is useless,” he said. Pulling up his shirtsleeve, he showed me the long cruel scar of a scalpel wound, extending from the wrist to above the elbow. His white, jelly-like hand hung below, lifeless and numb.

Imagine if that were your hand. You would know the reality of the snakebite every time you went to use your hand. Each time it was needed, a snake would rise up and strike you in your memory.

Everyone has been bitten by a snake, to use biblical imagery. Everyone of us has present experiences, past failures, thwarted desires, that rise up moment by moment to taunt us. Sometimes we feel that someone up there is wielding a big carrot, which is pulled away from us each time we nibble it.

**This should be our motto—  
Look up, not down.  
Look forward, not back.  
Look out, not in.  
Count God’s reconciling love more real, than all the snake venom of the world.**

I have a wonderful Christian friend, who is seriously sick. We thought she had Lupus, which is an immune disease, killing its victims off at a rate of 5 percent per year. It involves either a short, and sudden death, or a protracted illness with severe pain, and crippling. The person I refer to is a physician, which fact makes it harder to bear. Ignorance is bliss. Doctors know too much.

After thinking she had Lupus for a year, she now finds that it is a less severe disease, which is curable, but it will take some time. But before she knew this, she said to me, “Reality has struck. I have never been so depressed in my life.” How bleak the future can look when you are sick and depressed.

At some time in each life the reality of earthly suffering strikes. Nobody escapes trouble. Trouble is our earthly reality. But there is another reality—and that is found in heaven. It’s our cosmic reality. When it is seen, it throws a different light on the sorrows of life.

Let me illustrate—it’s daylight. The sun is up—warming your face like wet puppy licks. The air is fresh and clear. Your eyes close in sheer joy. The breezes sift through your hair. You open your eyes to see the distant blue hills, clear lake, trees close at hand, praising the sky. You feel you can see to eternity. Your toes curl barefoot in the soft crumbly soil. Birds sing, dogs bark, traffic flows. How real, and pleasant it is. It’s reality!

But now it’s night. The sun has gone, and the moon, cloud-covered, sheds no light. You shiver in the silent coolness. Your feet are covered, imprisoned to keep out hidden enemies—insects that bite, spiders that crawl, snakes that strike blind, at hidden body heat. All is shadow; freedom is gone. All vision is short-sighted. The joyous reality of the early day has disappeared. Your earthly vision is bleak.

Then you happen to look up. And there is another reality. Can you see it? Star upon star, galaxy upon galaxy. Not just another world, but world upon world. In the joyous, warm, and far-seeing daytime, could you have seen or imagined this hidden world? No, it took the night; the cold, silent, bleak night to block out the reality of this world under the sun, and bring the cosmic reality into view. You see, suffering is the Christian’s night; his passport to higher joys, unseen when the sun is high on the horizon. The darker the night, the clearer the view, if only we will look up.

Paul spoke of this cosmic reality in Ephesians 1. The basic difference between the earthly reality we endure, and the heavenly one, can be expressed in the word, “peace” (v.2).

William Barclay says of this word:

In the Bible, peace is never a purely negative word; it never describes simply, the absence of trouble. Shalom means everything that makes for man's highest good. Christian peace is something quite independent of outward circumstances. A man might live in ease and luxury, and on the fat of the land. He might have the finest of houses, and the biggest of bank accounts, and yet not have peace. On the other hand a man might be starving in prison, or dying at the stake, or living a life from which all comfort had fled, and be at perfect peace. (The Letter To The Galatians and The Ephesians p. 76)

For the Christian, there is a higher life, a loftier plane where his real living takes place. The whole focus of this higher reality in which the Christian functions is what God has accomplished through Jesus Christ. We are told that this accomplishment is lavish, and complete. Note the words that indicate richness, and plenty:

*Every spiritual blessing (v3).*  
*Glorious grace, freely bestowed (v6).*  
*Riches of his grace (v7).*  
*Lavished (v8).*  
*Riches of his glorious inheritance (v18).*  
*Immeasurable greatness of his power (v19).*

Note now, in more detail, the nature of these riches, that God has given us in Christ:

*He chose us to be holy and blameless before him (v4).*  
*He destined us to be his sons (v5).*  
*He freely bestowed his grace on us (v6).*  
*He ransomed us through his blood (v7).*  
*He extended to us forgiveness of sins (v7).*  
*He has given us wisdom and insight (v9).*  
*He made us to know the mystery of his will (v9).*  
*He has united all things in heaven and in earth (v10).*  
*He has destined us to live for the praise of his glory (v12).*  
*He sealed us with his Spirit, guaranteeing our inheritance (v13).*

What a glorious reality. It acts as an antivenom for the snakebites of this life. It heals, like medicine, the incurable diseases of this world. It sets the disenchanting mind on better thoughts. But how do we keep it in mind, when the earthly reality is closer than skin, and the heavenly reality seems as far away as the stars? Ephesians 1:13+14 tells us. We hear the word, and believe it. Then the Holy Spirit impresses it on the mind like a seal on an ancient scroll.

From verse 16 through 18, Paul intercedes for all the saints—that's us! He asks God to help us see the heavenly reality; to live above the darkness of this world, with eyes set on heavenly places.

This should be our motto—

Look up, not down.

Look forward, not back.

Look out, not in.

Count God's reconciling love more real, than all the snake venom of the world.



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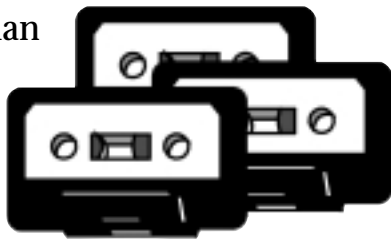
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# THE POWER OF THE RISEN SAVIOR

C.H. Spurgeon

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” Now think a moment of these words, “*All power.*” Jesus Christ has had given to him, by his Father, as a consequence of his death, “all power.” It is but another way of saying that the Mediator possesses omnipotence. For omnipotence is but the Latin for “all power.” What mind shall conceive, what tongue shall set in order before you, the meaning of all power? We cannot grasp it; it is too wonderful for us. The power of self-existence, the power of creation, the power of sustaining that which is made, the power of fashioning and destroying, the power of opening and shutting, of overthrowing or establishing, of killing or making alive, the power to pardon and to condemn, to give and to withhold, to decree and to fulfill, to be—in a word—“head over all things to his church,”—all this is vested in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Since all power is lodged in Christ’s hands, he can also clothe any and all of his servants with sacred might, by which their hands shall be sufficient for them in their high calling. My brother, the Lord Jesus can make you eminently prosperous in the sphere in which he has placed you. My sister, your Lord can bless the little children that gather at your knee through your means. You are very feeble, and you know it, but there is no reason why you should not be strong in him.

If you look to the strong for strength, he can endue you with power from on high, and say to you as to Gideon, “Go in this thy might.” Your slowness of speech need not disqualify you, for he will be with your mouth as with Moses. Your want of culture need not hinder you, for Shamgar with his ox goad smote the Philistines, and Amos the prophet was a herdsman. Like Paul, your personal presence may be described as weak, and your speech, as contemptible, yet, like him, you may learn to glory in infirmity, because the power of God doth rest upon you.

You may be dry as Aaron’s rod, but he can make you bud and blossom, and bring forth fruit. You may be as nearly empty as the widow’s cruse, yet will he cause you still to overflow towards his saints. You may feel yourself to be as near sinking as Peter amid the waves, yet will he keep you from your fears. You may be as unsuccessful as the disciples who toiled all night, yet he can fill your boat till it can hold no more. No man knows what the Lord can make of him, nor what he may do by him. Only this we do know assuredly, that “all power” is with him by whom we were redeemed, and to whom we belong.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Taken from **Free Grace Broadcaster**. Issue 175, pp. 9-11

## A foreword to “From Me to You,” from Dr. Desmond Ford.

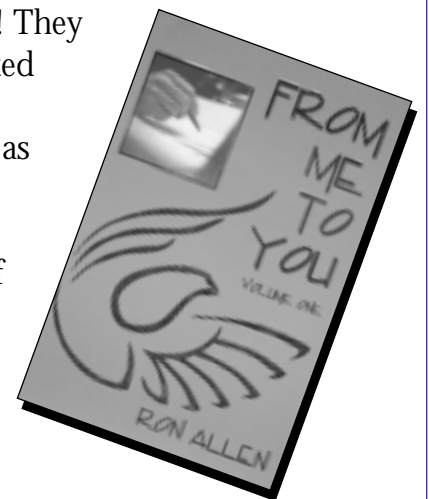
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# AN OTHER-WORLDFLY LOVE

*You have heard that it was said,  
'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil  
person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. . . .  
You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell  
you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be  
sons of your father in heaven (Matthew 5:38-45).*  
by Ron Allen.

**Jesus' ideal for human relationships is very different to the way things are usually done. Human institutions and civil instruments are based on the idea of 'law and order.' Jesus puts forward a deeper and greater principle—love.**

**I**t is difficult to read these words of Jesus, without having them blunted by an instinct of cynicism. What is this talk of a world where people, when they are abused, calmly turn and expose their other flank to their aggressor? A world where those who have had goods stolen from them, run eagerly after the thief to say, "Here, I want you to take this as well."

We know that this is 'other-worldly' behavior. People who think they can live this way are useless idealists. They end up getting run over by the remorseless advances of the strong and the cunning. We have advice for those who call for this gentle kind of response to the dog-eat-dog realities of society: "Thanks for your lovely idea, but it's not one that we can use. We have been around a bit, and we know what works."

Jesus' teaching is startling. He refuses to go along with the way the world is organized. In his opinion, God and we who run things here, are at cross-purposes. We conduct business and get things done, but something vital is missing from our affairs. The way respectable men and women ordinarily conduct themselves reflects a value system no better than that of paganism (Matthew 5:47). In asking us not to resist evil in kind, Jesus critiques all relationships. Every recognized legal and judicial ordinance, both public and private, is examined in the light of his new standard.

We would mistake Jesus' intention here, if we understood him to be calling for the abolition of all law. Jesus knew, as we do, that there can be no civil order in this world without laws. Yet, he seems to be saying that human laws and justice are incapable of regulating life as God would have it.

On the beaches of the Australian Gold Coast, lifesavers post signs to warn the public that the beaches are unpatrolled during bad weather or at night. Despite this clear warning, some revelers insist on a late-night swim after leaving their favorite nightspot. Often these nocturnal dips result in drowning. When the tragedy is reported, some in the community say, "He should have obeyed the warning. She knew the beach was closed. We can't be worried about their

folly." But others, including the lifesavers, cannot be content with such an easy assessment. They feel that the warning was not enough. Perhaps there was more to duty than the mere posting of a city decree.

In Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice," Antonio pledges a pound of his own flesh for security, to Shylock, the money-lender. He carelessly agrees to the deal, thinking he will soon be able to repay the sum. When misfortune prevents him, Shylock looks for his pound of flesh. The law is on his side. Justice says he should have it. There is nothing in the civil code to prevent Shylock from cutting Antonio's heart out. Portia, Antonio's lawyer, makes a passionate appeal for Antonio's life.

"I crave the law; the forfeit and penalty of my bond," says Shylock.

Bassanio, Antonio's friend, is there with money of his own to pay the bond three times over. Yet, since the loan was not repaid on time, Shylock wants the law enforced. "An oath, an oath. I have an oath!"

Bassanio begs that the law be changed in this one instance. But Portia says that must not be. There is only one way Antonio can be saved, Shylock can show mercy. "Mercy becomes the mighty better than his crown," says Portia.

"The sceptre shows the force of temporal power, but mercy is above this sceptred sway."

"And earthly powers show themselves most like God, when mercy season justice."

There can be no useful and rewarding human association, unless we are able to find a way of relating to one another, that is in advance of legislations and decrees. A litigious society is a depersonalized, and unhappy one. A sad indication of this, is in the emergence of prenuptial agreements. How can love warm a household founded on a mutual 'pound of flesh' agreement?

No party is ever really satisfied when human interaction is conducted on legal terms. Who really wants his life reduced to the level of a market, where everyone is out to find a bargain, and to ensure the other party does not get away with too much.

When Jesus speaks of turning the other cheek and going the second mile, he introduces something new. Something that would change society, radically, if embraced. He is suggesting a love that is willing to love its enemies. Most people know that the highest value is love, but few accept that it is Jesus' kind of love that revolutionizes human life.



To love as Christ loved is to love at great cost. When Jesus was crucified, others taunted him saying, "He saved others, himself he could not save." Never was a truer word spoken! It is simply not possible to be life-giving, without giving some of your life. If you will save others, you will not be able to save yourself too. All goodness has its wounds. All that is admirable bears scars. We are helped, enlivened, redeemed by those who bear the burden of other people. The mother who keeps the night watches, worrying and waiting for her rebel offspring. The father who wears himself out to ensure shelter and food for his family. The charity worker who opens up her home to the destitute. The most beautiful thing in the world is the costly spirit that says, "No matter who you are or what you may have done against me, I will not resist evil with evil. You may have forced me into hardship, but I will seek your welfare. Let me go the second mile with you." That is love divine.

Godfrey Cass, the Squire's son, was spoiled and irresponsible. He wanted to marry Nancy, but he had fathered a child in the village, and was secretly married to its mother. He promised to look after them both provided the poor girl kept quiet. Because of this maltreatment the girl died, and Godfrey's little daughter, Eppie, wandered into the home of Silas Marner. When no one came to claim Eppie, he raised her as his own.

In the meantime, Godfrey married Nancy; but years later, he was obliged to reveal to her that he had been married before, and that he had a daughter who had been raised by Silas Marner.

Godfrey and Nancy determined to bring Eppie to live with them. They approached Silas and Eppie:

"I want to take you to live with me now, Eppie," said Godfrey. "I will give you everything. You will have dresses and

society, and schooling."


"I have a claim on you, Eppie," Godfrey continued. "The very strongest of claims. I am your father. Your mother was my wife. I have a claim on you that must stand before all other claims."

Then Silas spoke: "Well, why didn't you say so sixteen years ago, and claim her before I came to love her, instead of coming to take her from me now. You might as well cut my heart out of my body."

Godfrey: "You are putting yourself in the way of her welfare. I want to do my duty."

At last Eppie spoke. "Sir, your offers are great and far above my wish. But I should have no delight in life if I were forced to go away from my father, and I knew he was sitting here at home, thinking of me. I can't think of no happiness without him. And he has took care of me and loved me from the first. And I'll cleave to him as long as he lives, and nobody shall come between him and me."

There are many regulatory authorities and many jurisdictions, which order life, and to which we look for protection, redress, and due process; and by which we think to measure duty. They have strong claims on us. We are apt to think they have the strongest possible claim on us. Yet, if we let them have our deepest loyalty, we will live loveless lives. We will be living, but we might just as well be dead; might just as well have our heart cut from us.

There is an allegiance that deserves our undying faithfulness—the allegiance of Christ's brand of love. Other rules are not always right, but the rule of Christ's love is never wrong. Christmas helps us remember that this love has come into the world. It has reached us, retrieved us, lifted us. And now it is not possible for us to think of a happiness without it. 

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# TO and FRO with the Editor

**Question:** *If I am divorced from my wife, is there a biblical way permitting me to remarry? Also, is it okay if I support the war effort, and join its cause; defending our country in time of trouble?*

J.H.

**Answer:** First, your question about divorce. Christians live under the law of Christ. They are bound to him in grateful and loving service. This point needs to be made because your question was framed in terms of obedience to the Bible. We serve Jesus, not the Bible.

In Scripture, we do see Jesus condemning divorce on all grounds except adultery. He was speaking to religious casuists who had found a way of meeting the letter of the law, while still being able to get rid of their unwanted wives. In other words, they achieved a legalistic obedience to the law, while denying its spiritual intention. The same wooden obedience to the biblical record of Jesus' teaching on divorce, has locked many good people into marriages that are cruel and unjust. This is why we must live as unto the Lord himself—who is greater than the Bible. Clearly, the author of marriage did not intend that victims of a bitter and abusive union, should never be free to leave and marry again, unless and until extra-marital sexual intimacy had occurred. The individual who is serially unkind, or absent from a marriage, has already been unfaithful to the union of which sexual intimacy is the sacrament.

As to your second question about war: the Christian will need to be much in prayer with regard to his duty in this matter. There have been fine Christians on both sides of the debate about pacifism versus the just war. Martin Luther

King, Jr. suffered much at the hands of militant white conservatism. Yet he refused to use violence as a means to fight violence. Dietrich Bonhoeffer perished at the hands of the Nazis. He reached the conviction that it was his Christian duty to show love to the Jews by standing against Hitler. He was hanged for his part in a plot for Hitler's assassination.

Do not look for a simplistic answer to this question. For myself, nonviolence seems the better course. I take the method of Jesus on the cross as my guiding star in this matter. If Jesus had taken up arms against his persecutors, there would have been no gospel.

How to love someone, especially if he/she is attacking or violating someone else, is a question that will only be answered for most people, in the heat of the moment. Finally, I would add that most wars are not just. Christians would be better to stay right out of them.


**Question:** *In the first few chapters of Galatians, Paul talks to the church, and says we can't be saved by living the Jewish law. In other words: 'saved by grace.' Do we ignore the Jewish law or stay with the Ten Commandments we have always believed in?*

C.S.

**Answer:** In Galatians, Paul is dealing with Jewish Christians who agree that salvation is in Christ, but they have adulterated the gospel by insisting that such salvation can only remain intact, through attention to the claims of the law. This accounts for Paul's question about the reception of the Spirit in 3:2+3. "Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?"

The Christian life begins with the gift of the Spirit. The moment a person has faith in Christ, he/she is one Spirit with him. (See Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 6:15+19.) This is a privilege that cannot be surpassed. It comes to faith, apart from obedience to laws.

In Galatians, the law means the Jewish religion. But Paul's argument could be applied to any religious code. It would be just as vain to attempt an ascent to heaven by obeying the Sermon on the Mount. In the New Testament antithesis between faith and works of law, 'law' equals any human effort to achieve the blessings of salvation, while 'faith' equals God's salvation freely granted. Hence: "Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ" (2:16).

None of this means that the decalogue has no relevance for Christians. The New Testament everywhere respects it. But since Christ, himself, is a more searching; more profound; more exhaustive revelation of God's will, Christ, and not the decalogue ought to be the Christian's primary reference point for faith and practice. 

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