



May 2017



GOOD NEWS *Unlimited*

Sharing in the Brokenness

By Bruce Burgess

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:1-3).

We live in a world where perseverance needs to be a life skill in order to cope with life’s challenges. Each week here at ‘Good News,’ when it’s time for prayer requests and praise items, the tragedies and struggles sometimes seem to outweigh the items of praise. Many of us have our own personal struggles that weigh on us heavily.

Ali Matthews wrote a song titled, “Break God’s Heart.” Part of the refrain goes: ‘Till I’m broken by the things that break God’s heart.’ Part of service to Jesus is to embrace brokenness—our own and that of so many in our world. It sounds counter-intuitive, but it can be quite freeing and

profound to accept the brokenness of the world and to place our hope in the healing power of God. When we accept the reality of the world’s sufferings, we don’t have to be surprised by the pain and distress surrounding us.

Perseverance is the capacity to keep going on, no matter what. But, it’s more than just not giving up, it’s a willingness to embrace whatever comes our way, believing that God will lead and direct our lives so that we grow through whatever challenges it may bring. It’s a way of living that reflects a deep trust in God, even though there is evil—man’s inhumanity to man—all around us.

We are followers of Jesus, and we know that the world was made by God, is being managed by God, will be fully redeemed by God, and all wrongs will be set right. So, we live in hope, believing in God’s promises, confident in our standing before God, aware and responsive to God’s gracious presence. When life is hard, we persevere in prayer, worship, and fellowship, knowing that our hope is not in vain.

The author of Hebrews writes in chapter 10:

“Therefore brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God” (Hebrews 10:19,20).

Through Christ, we have access to God in a new and fresh way, as the barrier we erected between ourselves and God has been removed. We do not need to come to God hat-in-hand, guilt-stained and unworthy. We enter God’s presence with confidence—not in ourselves, but in the work of Jesus—knowing that we are welcomed and loved.

Knowing that no matter what is happening in our lives, we are loved by God; that allows us to see the world with new eyes. It leads us to “Hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:23).

Perseverance is based on our belief that God is trustworthy,

Continued on next page



CHRIST ALONE • GRACE ALONE • FAITH ALONE • SCRIPTURE ALONE

www.goodnewsunlimited.org

EDITORIAL . . .



Pastor Ron Allen

“Let no debt remain outstanding except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law” (Romans 13:8).

A large proportion of all that it takes for us to exist is made up of things done for us by other people. This has always been so, and it is especially true in the increasingly urban environment where most of us now live. What has come to be known as “infrastructure” is really the hardware of common usage, which would never exist were it not for widespread communal effort. Public utilities such as water, gas, power, and transport systems are prime examples. In truth, personal security is our share of ‘social security.’ If my health is important to me, I must be concerned about yours. If I enjoy a clean environment, I have to think of it as your environment as well.

It is a simple fact that we all live off each other. We could not survive without giving due attention to a multitude of daily transactions in which our dues to each other are paid. None must be left outstanding, none, except one—the debt of love.

It would be a mistake to read Paul as if he was telling us that all societal obligations should be me, but there is no need to think about loving everyone. He means the opposite. Rather, he makes the point that the debt of love for our fellow human beings must be paid, but having been paid, the debt is not thereby cancelled. It continues full, insistent, and unmitigated.


What a disturbing idea! Strictly translated, our text reads: “He who loves the **other** has fulfilled the law.” ‘Other’ grants

this duty a very wide front indeed. The love I owe is not just to a few that I have selected since they are comparatively easy to love. Most people are able to identify at least one person they can love without too much effort (we usually marry on that principle). But, a debt of love to the ‘other’? Who might that be? It could be anyone, or dare we say it, everyone!

The world is well stocked with people for whom we feel no obligation whatsoever. Yet, here is an ethic that stands in the way of that somewhat limited and comfortable moral purview. We owe a debt of love to everyone, and no matter how often we do caring things for anyone, our debt to them remains.

There is deep insight here into human nature. Our love battery easily runs down. It is hard for us to persevere in love. Married folk all learn as they go that they must ever resist the inclination to end the marriage when small irritations begin to appear. Imagine the consequence for human life if the only love known was understood as a due to be paid, and hence eliminated altogether. I need but visit my sick friend in hospital once, and after that have done with him. I could help the homeless once, and wash my hands of them thereafter.

There will never be a time when we have loved enough. If the mantle of oxygen that shrouds planet earth drifted off into space, we would smother. Just so, if love stopped just because it had been ‘done,’ we would wilt and perish.

Jesus Christ means that love is here to stay. It will continue as a nourishing gift by which we thrive, and as a duty by means of which we are called into the beating heart of reality—the love of God. 

Continued from previous page

that God’s promises are true. Only in this belief can we allow ourselves to feel the pain of the world and not be overwhelmed. Our enemy always seeks to overwhelm us: ‘God can’t be trusted, just look around you, look at the suffering of those you love, it’s hopeless.’

I was talking to Winston this week. He’s going through a situation he didn’t ask for, dealing with limitations and restrictions he never orchestrated. It would be easy for him to cry foul, to feel hard done by—and sometimes we don’t know

how we will react until we are in the midst of it. That’s when faith and hope are the hardest; but I was pleased to hear that Winston is persevering, keeping the faith, aware of and grateful for the concerns and prayers of his Good News family, and grateful that God is with him.

What use is our faith if we cannot turn to it in times of struggle? Christian history is replete with examples of people of faith who had to deal with persecution, hatred and violence, and their faith actually grew through those trying circumstances. Were they remarkable people with a faith head →

GOODNEWS *Unlimited*

Good News Unlimited magazine is published every month by Good News Unlimited, P.O. Box 6687, Auburn, CA, USA 95604-6687.

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); and the dissemination of literature, audio and video material. (A comprehensive catalog 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 and Canada. 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. E-mail gnu@goodnewsunlimited.org.

This magazine is free upon request.

**May 2017
Vol. 36, No. 5**

Published by Good News Unlimited

Copyright © 2017

Editor

Pastor Ron Allen

Graphic Designer

Debbie O’Brien

Proofreader

Philip Rhodes

Molly Clayton

AFFILIATE ADDRESSES:

Canadian office:
222 Olive Avenue
Willowdale, ON M2N 4P6
Canada

A Brave Heart

By W.O. Weldon

John Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, wrote:

*To be weak is miserable,
Doing or suffering...*

Surely, he referred to one's will, to one's attitude towards suffering.

It is also true, so I have found through experience and observation, that to be strong in doing or in suffering is to drink at life's sweetest well. Those who are weighted with disadvantages of body, of family, of illness, of finances and yet who keep their courage inspire all of us to fight more bravely.

Someone once wrote to Ian Maclaren, the Scottish preacher: "Through the goodness of God, I am confined for life to a chair." "That made me," said the preacher, "ashamed of my thousand petulant complaints." The happiest people I know are those who have not surrendered to heavy odds, who have not succumbed, but who are carrying on, confident of ultimate victory. It all depends upon how brave one's heart is.

Dr. Alfred Adler, the eminent psychologist and psychiatrist, had an experience that shows the difference our personal attitudes can make. He came to know two men who, on the same day, had to have their right arms amputated at the shoulder. Two years afterwards, they both visited him. One said: "Dr. Adler, I am helpless without my right arm; I cannot work, and marriage is

impossible to me. I am a log of wood and not a man."

The other man said: "Dr. Adler, I find that I can get on beautifully without this right arm. I have a better job than before I lost it. I am happily married. I sometimes ask myself why nature provided us with two arms when one suffices. You may have only one arm, but you can be brave. You may have a broken wing, but you can sing.

-W.O. Weldon: A PLAIN MAN FACES TROUBLE, pp. 74, 75. 



and shoulders above ours? They would not say so. They would simply say that they acted on their beliefs. They chose to trust God in the midst of their very human fear, doubt, anxiety, and uncertainty. When our faith is tested, we discover what we are made of—or what our faith is made of. Each time we fumble and bumble our way through a challenge or a tragedy—perhaps wrestling with God as we go—our faith is deepened.

This is what the author of Hebrews reminds his readers of: *"Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publically exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions"* (Hebrews 10:32-34).

The author is reminding his readers of these things because out of their suffering, new knowledge was discovered. Namely: spiritual possessions far outweigh material ones. It was their faithful perseverance in the face of challenge that helped them discover a deeper level of God's grace, and of what is truly important in this life. Each time we come through a struggle by the grace of God, we are further equipped to recognize that our lives are so much more than the ups and downs we experience. Rather than seeking to escape the challenges that life and faith bring, we know deep within that each one will bring us closer to God and help us to be more mature in the way we live and love.

Truth be told, we would probably rather not have to develop our skills in perseverance, thank you very much. Most of us

don't want to have to wade through trials—even if Scripture tells us doing so builds character. You remember Paul's words in Romans:

"Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character, and character hope" (Romans 5:3).

This same idea is taken to what might be called a new degree of absurdity by James:



"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:3,4).

I don't know about you, but I suspect that many of us would

Continued on the next page

Grave, But No Serious

There is ample evidence that humor heals. Norman Cousins devoted a book to his own experience of curing himself from a debilitating undiagnosed disease by using little more than old Marx Brothers movies. It makes sense that the



Continued from previous page

rather find ‘pure joy’ elsewhere. We would be content to have a little less character than the kind that seems to require trials and suffering and perseverance to attain. The bar is best set when it is set a little lower!

We know deep down that such an attitude is one of denial and delusion. It is what it is. Life is hard. When we dare to allow ourselves to feel the brokenness of our world and of those around us, we open ourselves up to pain. But, we also open ourselves up to the heart of God. We open ourselves to the influence of God. We see the pain in others and resolve to spur one another on toward love and good deeds.


Make no mistake, love is hard work. Love is dangerous work. To love as Jesus loved is to stand in the line of fire. It would be much easier to stay uninvolved, to argue that there’s nothing we can do, stay in the background, gather for worship, sing God’s praises and do nothing.

I do not believe that is an option for followers of Jesus. We can’t follow Jesus and not love the people around us. Jesus died for them on the cross. We can’t stay silent when we see the abuse of our planet which God created to be good, and gave us the privilege and responsibility of dominion over it. We can’t hide in the background when we see prejudice and hatred tear our nation apart. We may not have some simple answer to the world’s ills, but we can provide an alternative to what is prevalent.

Jesus showed the people of his day a new way to what a truly intimate relationship with God could be like. So much so, he was able to say: “Anyone who has seen me has seen the father.” That is part of our task, to show to a confused and hurting world that we are loved, valued, and treasured by the creator, and we don’t need to hate, destroy, or impose our wills on others. We can find true security in the God who gave himself up for us. We can demonstrate what love looks like. We will not do it perfectly, of course, but we can do it well

internal chemical changes brought about by laughter have a salubrious effect...

I saw a patient with his wife recently. “He never laughs anymore,” she complained. The man agreed, “My sense of humor is gone.” They had recently been on a trip and she had lost her wallet and credit cards. “The same thing happened to my wife,” I said. “Her credit cards were stolen, but I haven’t reported it yet because the thief is spending less than she does.” The man laughed. My wife, when I told her the story, did not...

We usually smile when we meet people for the first time. When we do so, we are conveying more than friendliness. Smiling is an indication of good humor, and represents an acknowledgement of the joke embedded in our common humanity: *Things may be grave, but they need not be serious.*
-Gordon Livingston: TOO SOON OLD, TOO LATE SMART, pp.156, 157. 

enough to make people sit up and take notice.

We can show that there is hope by resisting temptation to despair in the face of suffering and injustice. We can persevere, holding unswervingly to the hope we profess as we await the day of Christ’s returning.

All of us know that one day we will face the faith’s final hurdle: death. We also know that along the way, in addition to



the wonderful moments and triumphs, there will be trials and sufferings in varying degrees. It’s not a matter of whether, but when. How we choose to face these is what produces character. We are not alone. We are being guided by a gracious God who is more than sufficient. So let us place our hope in this God; embrace whatever comes our way, knowing as we persevere, God will bring good to us and those around us, whose eyes are open to see God’s work.

Trying to follow Jesus is difficult. Loving takes its toll. Faithfulness comes at a cost, but the reward is more than worth it. The reward *now* of hope, love, and joy as we go through life with our Suffering Servant at our side, and the reward of everlasting life when all will be made right at Christ’s glorious return. 