

GOOD NEWS

Unlimited



The Victory That Overcomes – Faith(2)

A Scene That Evokes Ideas of Victory

EDITORIAL . . .

“Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one” (Ephesians 6:17).


There are two New Testament words that can be translated, **T**shield. One designates a small device that could be used as a target. The other was a larger frame behind which a soldier could conceal most of himself. It is this latter type that Paul refers to in Ephesians 6. He intends to teach that faith is not a partial protection for Christians. It is a comprehensive shelter.

In what sense, then, should we expect faith to keep us safe? We should allow Paul's own faith practice to inform us. We know from other writings of his, that he was not exempt from the natural hardships, which attend all human life. He was not protected from illness. He was awarded no special cover from unexpected, and dangerous weather conditions; heat, cold, and tempest. He suffered shipwreck, robbery, unjust imprisonment, betrayal by friends. All things that go to make life difficult, unjust, dangerous, and painful, were experienced by Paul who lived by faith. Yet, he insisted that faith is able to quench all the fiery attacks of the enemy.

Rather than guarding Paul *from* anything, or everything, faith guarded him *in* everything. Jesus' example teaches similarly. He was granted no discharge from life's unpleasant features. He was “a man of sorrows, and

acquainted with grief.” He was tempted in every way, just as we are. Yet, through it all he remained tranquil, unembittered, optimistic, loving, and forgiving. His faith was, for him, a victory that overcame the world. So it will be for us.

The one who, despite hurt, and unanswered questions, holds to the conviction that God is good, kind, and just, and that love will triumph, is more than a match for anything the world can throw at him.

We are admonished to **take up** the shield of faith. There is a faith we daily manage to exercise, which requires no conscious effort. By it, we worry not whether the sun will rise in the morning, or whether our spouse will still love us tomorrow. But the shield of faith which we are invited to **take up**, is deeper. On dark, harrowing days, when all hell seems to have broken loose, some action of the will; some moral exertion is needed, for faith to continue to work its miracle for us. And here we need not falter. God will never abandon even the weakest believer. Remember the desperate father in the gospel? “Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief.” Take up the shield of faith. May this challenge confront you afresh as you read through these pages. 



Ron Allen

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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.

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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.

September, 2002

Vol. 22, No. 5

Published by Good News Unlimited
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FAITH'S

Practical Benefits

by Ron Allen.

Faith and the rough and tumble of life.

On the eve of his coronation, Kiril, the pope, puts on his black cassock, and steps out of the Vatican, to roam the city streets. In the course of his evening jaunt, he meets a woman, a nurse called Ruth. He quickly realizes that he has encountered someone who can serve as a link between the high office of papal administration, and the 'rough and tumble' of daily life in the apartments, and alleys of the suburbs. Quite soon, Ruth tells him a story of real life, so stark, and terrible, that he must reach deep in his faith to meet it.

Ruth is giving midwife assistance to a woman. The woman has been the subject of drug treatments for morning sickness. A young doctor is present, and when the baby appears, Ruth is horrified to observe that it is seriously malformed, having flipper-like limbs, instead of arms. The baby is alive, but the doctor wraps it tightly in blankets, and takes it quickly away. Later, he returns to inform the parents that the child was stillborn. Afterward, he says to Ruth, "I've got twenty more deliveries like that in the next two weeks. All of the mothers have been taking the same drug; what am I going to do with all of them?" Then he begins to sob.

This was the story that Ruth told Kiril, the pope. Her plea to him was: "What can the church do for men and women who have to live in a world where well-intentioned medical science often gets it wrong, so that mothers give birth to disastrously defective infants? What can faith do for nurses and doctors who must make decisions every day that can issue in life or death for their patients? What can faith do for mothers and fathers who are robbed of their precious offspring? How can faith in God help in a world that is packed full of sick, maimed, grieving, confused, harassed, and hurting people, who are just trying to make do each day of their lives? who are battling steep odds? who are worried and afraid? What has faith got to offer?" This was Ruth's problem. It is everyone's problem—including the pope.

Faith and human nature.

In the Bible, faith is always faith in God. In the gospel, it is faith in the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For Paul, who wrote systematically about 'righteousness by faith in Christ,' faith has a specific meaning. Yet, in a more general way, it is true to say that faith can be seen as one of the native powers of human nature, like thinking or remembering. Without thinking precisely of faith as faith in God, we can say that faith is a God-given faculty that everyone has. If it is said that 'everyone believes in something,' this comes close to my meaning here.

Faith implies risk.

In the Gospels, we see faith at work as a force in human life. We observe the importance Jesus attached to faith. He spoke about faith often, and always in a way that showed what he meant by it. One of the things that stands out with Jesus, in relation to faith, is that he never placed God, God's existence, and his dealings with humankind, beyond doubt. He never overwhelmed anyone with evidence. Instead of staggering people with a battery of miracles to reinforce his claims, he came softly with: "Who do people say that I am? Who do you say that I am? In other words, "What do you see? What do you think? What is your response? When John was in prison, and about to lose his head, he began to doubt what he had previously believed—that Jesus was the Messiah. He sent a message to Jesus, in hope of some reassurance. Jesus replied, not with irrefutable evidence, but with: "*The lame walk, the deaf hear, the dead are raised. Blessed is he that is not offended in me.*" Thus, Jesus placed John in the position of having to venture all upon Jesus, without the luxury of absolute verification.

For Jesus, faith is not the acceptance of a proposition because it presses so forcefully on the understanding that there

No one really believes in impassivity. Great joys and sharp griefs are the healthy reaction of men who expose themselves to life, and open their hearts to their neighbors. . . . The truth is that grief and joy, like hunger and a full belly, have their alternate places in the rhythm of life, and the index of happiness is not found in weighing the proportion between them.

—Austin Farrer. *A Celebration of Faith*. P. 128.

can be no other recourse. It is not intellectual certainty. Faith, for Jesus, is not the same as knowing. Knowing comes after faith, and even then, never comprehensively. *“Whoever chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God, or whether I speak on my own” (John 7:17).*

Jesus did not permit faith in him, to consist in a reluctant, nonchalant admission that he was right. He did not allow faith in God to be careless, or casual. Witness the Canaanite woman, who came begging for mercy. In an apparently insulting way, Jesus told her, “It’s not right to give the children’s bread to dogs.” She replied: “Yes, but the dogs don’t mind the scraps that fall from the table.” Observing her resolution, her fervor, and her willingness to abandon herself to his mercies, Jesus said, “Woman, great is your faith.”

God does not choose to reveal himself in sky-splitting ways. Traces of him are muted, subdued. You think you see something, but your vision is blurred. For a clearer picture, you must press your search more vigorously; dig beneath the surface; reach as far as you can. *“You will seek me, and find me, when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13).* That verse expresses one of the essential characteristics of faith.

Most things that are of higher worth cannot be had without our willingness to bet our whole selves upon them, in the absence of empirical certainty. If God was to be had like groceries from the store, we would not respect or admire him, let alone worship him. For this reason, faith is powerful, because in faith, people chance themselves and destiny, on what they believe. Faith gathers together the scattered resources of personality, and wagers everything on its object. This is why believers are hard to shake. Men and women believe in many things that are bad, but having believed, they are a force to be reckoned with.

Faith cancels aimlessness.

Faith helps to make life coherent. It gives it focus, and cancels aimlessness. The Wright brothers had faith in flight. They had never seen human-engineered flight, but since they believed in it anyway, they put the full array of their muscle and brain power into achieving it.

Abraham Lincoln believed in freedom for the slaves. That belief was the controlling and guiding influence of his presidency. Louis Pasteur believed in immunization, though no such thing existed. This belief mastered him, and made him fruitful, and wonderful. Martin Luther King, JR believed in civil rights, and that belief steered him until his untimely death.

Because of its ability to assemble the various parts of personality, faith produces men and women who get things done. Faith marshals the soul’s forces, organizing them to campaign for things yet unseen. Faith creates pioneers, trailblazers; people with vision who bring about improvements in the human lot. Faith rounds up the loose ends of untidy brains, and lazy spirits, integrating them for noble purposes.

Faith strengthens.

Faith in God attacks weakness, making people strong, even in the face of fear. A lot of people feel powerless. Powerless against oppression. Powerless against market forces that drive their living standards down. Powerless before big government; before their boss; before other opinions. Powerless in the presence of illness. Powerless to save a relationship that is foundering. Everyone sometimes feels the need for inward strength to manage the forces that play upon him/her from the outside. The popularity of self-help seminars, and self-help books and videos proclaims our felt need. Many try to ‘screw their courage to the sticking place’; straining their wits, and bodies; managing on less sleep; working harder.

Some of the most tragic examples of this longing for power are to be seen among religious folk. Leo Tolstoy, being convinced of the truth of Christ, determined to rule himself accordingly. He devised endless regulations: No hunting, drinking, or eating of meat. He took several public vows of chastity, but was unsuccessful in keeping any of them. What Tolstoy thought would be power, turned out to be weakness. Nor was it faith. Faith looks outside oneself to an infinite source of moral strength. This nerves people for service, and for deeds not thought possible.

A police officer works the night shift. As the sun sets and

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the day fades, society's grim underbelly emerges. The officer sees greed and depravity not observed by normal folk. He witnesses men and women preying on each other. He recognizes men who hold respectable daytime jobs, doing unspeakable things in the dark. He enters homes where drugs and violence have reduced the inhabitants to animal levels. It seems to him that he is sinking in a tide of evil muck, and he finds it increasingly hard to trust anyone.

He decides to get away for a weekend in the mountains. There he breathes clean air, sees deer tripping lightly in the forest, hears the tinkling stream. He glimpses grandeur, and beauty. There is good in the world! His faith in goodness is renewed. The meanness and filth of the streets is not the whole story. He believes again, in what he can't always see, and it makes him strong.

Anyone who has a faith that humans are meant for goodness, and that they have a God-endowed capacity for it, will find an ability to do things beyond his/her own strength. Edmund Burke once remarked that slavery is incurable, and that it will never be stopped. It took people like Wilberforce, Lincoln, and a host of others less well-known, who, fortified by faith in Christ, acted as if slavery were a blotch on the human race that had to be stopped. Faith makes people strong.

Faith as insight.

Faith beats down cynicism. The most modern book in the Bible, Ecclesiastes (it reflects the modern disease of meaninglessness) says that all is meaningless; everything is vain; dogs, lions, and humans are all on the one level because they will all end up dead. That is how the world looks without faith in God. But faith is more than sight, it is insight. Faith holds that the universe is much more than what it seems to be on the surface. Nothing that can be observed through a microscope, or in a test tube, or with the aid of a mathematical formula gets to the bottom of reality. Landmark progress in science has usually come through individuals who believed that certain things were, long before they could demonstrate them empirically. Humans have always moved ahead on insight—faith.

We are all believers in spite of ourselves. We believe in God, or we believe in his nonexistence. Either way, we hazard all on our faith. But there is a long history of experimental evidence to show that faith in God has more to recommend it than its alternatives. Faith in the nonexistence of God involves accepting the vast indifference of the universe. Unbelief means that we are no more significant than bacteria. Our aspirations are doomed. We plan, hope, imagine, and love in vain.

Faith in God has another effect. In place of futility, it puts purpose. It removes bitterness, and puts in sweetness. Instead of despair, it gives hope. Rather than cut the nerve of creative endeavor, it pours in energy, and releases power to plan, strive, and improve.

Paul an example of the positive benefits of faith.

Faith in the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ generates perseverance. No better illustration of the power of Christian faith for positive and fruitful living is to be found than in the apostle Paul. For all his years of labor he carried a burden of

poor health. He faced ingratitude from those he worked so hard to help. He was persecuted by enemies, and betrayed by friends. He lived on the brink of poverty. After a long imprisonment, he was executed. Through it all, his morale was mostly high. Close to his death he wrote: *"I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness"* (2 Timothy 4:7+8). The practical consequences of faith, for human life, are enormous.

Believers and unbelievers alike must meet the shocks of fate, the ugliness of evil, the shame of man's inhumanity to man, the impact of sorrow, disappointment resulting from human weakness, and one's own moral blemishes. The individual who trusts in a loving, wise, and just providence is much better equipped to face life's challenges. To believe that there is a God with personal traits like those of Jesus, is to be furnished with confidence, courage, and hope—spiritual values with which to live well, no matter what happens. ✨

A foreword to "From Me to You."

From Dr. Desmond Ford.

Years ago, a former college professor, known for his purity and precision of language, interrupted our conversation by saying, "Ron Allen's letters! They

are splendid!" He was altogether right.

Countless families in the United States of America, Australia, and scores of other countries, have been blessed by the glories and implications of the New Testament gospel, as explained and applied to our day by this Australian pastor.

Ron's pastoral ministry in the USA and in Australia, as well as his early years in inland New South Wales, combined with the fruitage of more than his share of life's disciplinary trials, have yielded a golden harvest. A small part of that harvest is in the following pages, and they will bring to every reader, surpassing treasure.

"From Me to You" by Ron Allen.

Suggested donation \$6.00 U.S. funds (includes postage).

Good News Unlimited

11710 Education St., Auburn, CA 95602



by Ron Allen.

WALKING WITHOUT SEEING 1

Hope an important element of faith.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews celebrates the faith of revered persons in Jewish history. The writer is at pains to highlight a special aspect of faith. He states it in the first verse: “*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see*” (Hebrews 11:1). Hope looms large as an element of faith. In this letter, it almost means the same thing as faith. For example:


“*Let us draw near in full assurance of faith, let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess*” (Hebrews 10:23+24).

Everyone hopes, but hope seasoned with faith is a “*better hope*” (7:19). Such hope is “*firm and secure*” (6:19).

Hopeful faith takes as certain, what it cannot see. It has a future orientation. Abraham responds to God’s summons to go to a place he would *later* receive. Faith invests life with the character of a quest, an adventure. Abraham, and his family were “*looking for a country of their own*” (11:14). Those who traveled

by wagon, to Oregon, and California in the last half of the nineteenth century were pioneers. They too were looking for a place of their own. Faith is similarly daring. It envisions a better world. (The word *better* occurs twelve times in Hebrews.) “*By faith Moses refused to accept the luxury of Pharaoh’s palace. Instead he chose to endure suffering with the people of God—because he was looking ahead to his reward*” (11:24-26).

Faith is forward-looking. It refuses to accept that the world is a ‘tale told by an idiot.’ It maintains that God’s creation is moving to a denouement in which God will reward those who diligently seek him. In faith the patriarchs held that the world they knew would not always be. They beheld “*a city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God*” (11:10).

Drenched with hope, faith, knowing that the present journey is rough, nevertheless stays on the road because it sees that it leads to the promised land. 



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by Ron Allen.

WALKING WITHOUT SEEING 2

The absurdity of faith.

There is an aspect of faith, which, sometimes, is not to our liking. Some refuse even to acknowledge it, but the author of Hebrews frankly discusses it. The absurdity is this: faith sees what is not seen. How that paradox works out in the life of the faithful is well-documented in Hebrews 11. By faith, Noah, built an ark when God warned him of “*things not seen*” (Hebrews 11:7). Neither Noah, nor anyone else at the time, had ever seen an inundation. Yet, Noah built his ark. He saw what was yet unseen.

When God instructed Abraham to go to the promised land, “*he did not know where he was going*” (11:8). But did he not give him Canaan? Yes, but Abraham didn’t see it. That is, he saw it in that he went there and lived in it, but for all his life-long, he never actually possessed the promised land. He lived in it like “*a stranger in a foreign country*” (11:9). It was owned and inhabited by wild tribes. Abraham knew where he was going, but “*he did not know where he was going*” (11:8). He arrived at his destination without actually having arrived.

Still living by faith when they died.


The patriarchs were still living by faith when they died. “*None of them received what had been promised*” (11:39). When Sarah died, Abraham was obliged to purchase a piece of the ‘promised land’ from the local inhabitants, to bury her in. Despite this, they died in faith. That is, they did receive what was promised, “*from a distance*” (11:13). Their faith reached, penetrated the future, and welcomed the promise from afar.

There is a very real “from a distance” component to faith. I know God exists, but I only ‘know in part.’ I see ‘through a

glass darkly.’ In faith, I embrace the gospel promise, that I have been crucified with Christ, yet I am alive and seated with Christ at God’s right hand. But when my wife hears me arriving home at the front door, and she calls out, “Wipe your feet.” I know that I am still here in the world. Heaven is mine—from a distance. When Christ says, “Whoever believes in me has eternal life,” I grasp the privilege. There are loved ones of mine who also grasped it, but they sickened and died. They died still believing they had eternal life, even though their mortality was all too evident.

The realism of faith.

The giants of faith, in the ancient world, admitted that they had only received the promises of God from a distance. “*They only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. They admitted that they were aliens and strangers on the earth*” (11:13).

Do you know where you are going? Do you believe that you are heaven-bound, and that the Father has already given you the kingdom? If so, well, and good. But do not fail to admit and confess what is also true. Namely, that for much of the time, you do not know where you are going. That is, you do not know from one day to the next what will happen. Did you know you would lose your job? Did you know that your loved one would become ill? Did you expect your crop to fail? Did you know that your marriage would run onto the rocks? Didn’t you expect Christ to have come before this? In faith, we both know, and do not know, at the same time. We are often confused, and at a loss. For the time being, we are wanderers, and pilgrims—admit it. But the promised land is ours—confess it. 

**In faith, I embrace the gospel promise,
that I have been crucified with Christ,
yet I am alive and seated with Christ
at God’s right hand.**

by Ron Allen.

WALKING WITHOUT SEEING 3

What faith accomplished.

Far from being a religious form of self-deception, faith enabled men and women of old to accomplish things:

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the other prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. (Hebrews 11:32-34)

This citing of well-remembered exploits by the Jewish fathers is summarized by the phrase, “*gained what was promised*” (v. 33). Yet, that is not the whole story of their faith. A lot of us wish it were. There is a popular understanding of faith that says: provided you truly believe in God, and his promises, then the world is your oyster. You can have all that your heart desires. By faith, you will roll back disease, get out of debt, become rich. Your marriage will be the envy of everyone, and your children will become model citizens. That is the kind of thing many of us wish faith would do for us. But the Bible does not teach it. Note the rest of the story of faith, as told by the author in Hebrews, chapter 11:

Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins, and goat skins, destitute, persecuted, and mistreated . . . These were all commended for their faith yet none of them received what had been promised. . . .

Faith does not segregate believers from what is the common lot of humankind. Faith dignifies men and women by equipping them to endure the unpleasant, and difficult parts of life. Faith will not immunize you from trouble, but it will enable you to face it with grace, so that, instead of being destroyed by it, you are honed, polished, and sweetened.

In faith, the saints of old became bigger than themselves. They found resources they didn't have. Instead of staying close to home, and living safe and unrisks lives, faith transformed them from private to public figures. Instead of 'keeping their noses clean,' staying in the background, keeping in the comfort zone, they stepped out into the arena where they endured strain, and opposition. They became strong, and courageous. They were just ordinary people, but they changed their world. We read their names, today, because of their faith.

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A vision of the future.


The human race has ever been carried forward, by men and women who lived out of a vision of the world—not as it was—but as they expected it to become. When Galileo gave public support to the proposition that the earth moved around the sun, and not vice versa, he was put in jail. There he remained for ten years. He might have held his peace, but he believed that the future would back him up. We owe something to Galileo.

Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream. He dreamed of an inclusive society, where people of every color would be tolerated and valued. He gave himself to his vision, and he lived according to it. He put his faith in justice. He saw it and embraced it from afar. Not in his day, but now, later, most people know that Dr. King had greatness in him. We know that he had some blemishes, but who and what he believed in made him bigger than he was.

Who are the most significant people of our time? Are they the kings and moguls of the information revolution, like Mr. Bill Gates? Are they those who sow, and export terror? Is it the military strategists that excel in devising new ways to make war? Are these the people of the future? Or does the future belong to someone like Henri Nouwen; priest, writer, educator, who left an Ivy League school to work in an institution for severely handicapped people? He was given 24-hour-a-day responsibility for Adam. Adam was completely helpless. He could not dress, feed, or toilet himself.

He could only make grunting, howling sounds. Henri had to change him every time he soiled himself. Where lies the future? Is it in the hands of those known to us as power-brokers, kingmakers, movers and shakers, celebrities? Or does the future belong to those like Henri Nouwen, with a vision of a world in which sacrificial love, and difficult service, will be triumphant?

Faith and time.

Sometimes people of faith are seen by their contemporaries as unrealistic. But there is deep realism in faith. Faith accepts that anything really worthwhile usually takes longer than any lifetime to come to birth. The earth is part of a massive universe that did not reach its present state in a short time. It has taken incomprehensibly long ages for the conditions necessary for human life, to come into being. The universe is still developing. We who live in our small corner of it, want it to hurry up. It does not; it will not. God has not paced himself according to our hot little desires. He is not in a hurry; never has been. Therefore, a feature of faith is patience. Many Bible passages speak about waiting for God. In faith, we never lay hold on God in such a way as to procure an expeditious action from him. If faith worked that way, God would become our servant, instead of we, his. In faith, we never get our hands on God. By faith, we are in his hands. We can only 'have' God, through our not having him. He comes to us, and is present with us in our waiting for him. 

My precious truth is this: that Christian hope is not *one* thing, but two. It works on two levels, and they are equally vital. There's hope for this world; and there's hope for the world beyond it. There's hope for this world so long as it lasts, and so long as it's ours to play with. For our God is a God who does nothing in vain. He has not put us here to waste our time, or to suffer mere frustration; there is something to be done here for God's glory, and for man's well-being. Certainly our faith does not promise us that the world will last forever. . . . We are promised no such thing: we are promised that our world, while it lasts, and while we

last, will remain the sphere of God's creating and redeeming work; and that he will make us his workmen. So, in the short view, there's always hope; hope, that frustrated in one line, we can open up in another; hope, that if we have to suffer, our very sufferings can help the good cause; hope, that though we've wasted our chances, we may be forgiven, and allowed a fresh start. We have only to put ourselves into God's hands, for hope to spring fresh out of the present day, and reach forward to claim tomorrow.

—Austin Farrer.

A Celebration of Faith. P. 117.

by Ron Allen.

WALKING WITHOUT SEEING 4

What if man is not a beast?

In Dostoyevsky's tale, Marmeladov tells how Sonia, his daughter prostituted herself to help her ailing stepmother, and starving stepsisters. He related how in a frenzy of alcoholic desire, he had taken the money that Sonia had procured, and spent it on liquor. Raskolnikov walked home afterwards, thinking to himself, "Marmeladov has discovered a gold mine in Sonia. At first, he wept bitter tears over what he had done, but now he has gotten used to it. He is taking his daughter's earnings for granted. What a beast man is. He gets used to everything, no matter how disgusting it is." Then he checked himself, and wondered, "What if man is not a beast?"

Faith in God holds that human beings are not just beasts. Faith affirms that humans have a kinship with God. Therefore, everything they do, and what happens in their lives, has significance and tremendous consequence. But if unbelief is right; if God does not exist, then nothing matters. Honor and decency are no better than lewdness or deceit. If there is no God, the future does not exist. You may pledge yourself to values you think are noble. You may sacrifice yourself for the ones you love. You may work hard, be honest, and faithful to your spouse all down through your years together; but in the end, the universe will not care a hoot about your loyalty and faithfulness. The universe will mock your ideals. You will have been made to feel that love meant something high, and eternal, but it will all have been a huge hoax. Your love for your spouse, children, and neighbors will gutter out like a spent candle, and that will be the end of everything forever and ever.

Living hopefully.

But if God exists, and man is not a beast, you can live well, and live hopefully. You can say, "I believe in kindness. I believe that kindness is Godlike; that he is moving us slowly but surely to a place where kindness will reign. At present, kindness is having a hard time of it. Yet, I believe that kindness will prevail. I will be kind because I believe that God is building a future based on it."

If God exists, and man is not a beast, you can say, "I believe in freedom. At present, I do not see a lot of it. Sometimes, I feel that I am not free. I feel 'tied hand and foot' by debt. I am owned


by my work, my boss, my worries. But since I believe in God, I believe in liberty, and I will therefore work for freedom because that is the future.

If God exists, and men and women are more than beasts, you can say, "I believe in truth and righteousness. I, myself, am not very true, and often not right. But I see from afar, a world where truth, righteousness, and justice, will flourish unchallenged. So, for now, I will work for those values because the future belongs to them."

If God exists, you can say, "I believe in brotherhood. Though I am less a brother than I ought to be, though I often feel terribly remote from my own siblings, I still believe in brotherhood. I embrace it from a long way off. Because I am convinced that the creation is being moved toward a state of affairs in which the human race will be like a big family, and we will all be brothers and sisters to each other, I turn my faltering steps in the direction of brotherhood because that is where the future lies."

We see Jesus.

Quoting from the eighth Psalm, the author of Hebrews asks, "*What is man that you are mindful of him?*" (Hebrews 2:6). He meditates further on human dignity. "*You crowned him with glory and honour and put everything under his feet*" (Hebrews 2:7). But then he notes that "*at present we do not see everything subject to him*" (v. 8). Man's high destiny is yet obscured, "*but we see Jesus. . .*" (v. 9).

There is so much that is yet inaccessible to our gaze. Our vision is blurred by worry and tears. We do not have joy without sorrow. Pleasure is interrupted by pain. Our love is sullied by hatred. Life is canceled by death. Peace, interspersed with wars. But, we do see! We see Jesus. The eye of faith beholds in him, joy, peace, righteousness, truth, brotherhood, life. And we see that which the whole creation anticipates with its groans. We take as fact, that a day approaches, when all that Jesus was, is, and all he died to win, will be transposed to every corner of the universe. What we once saw by faith, we will see by sight and touch, and we will say to each other, "Home at last. The promised land at last." 

Faith in God holds that human beings are not just beasts. Faith affirms that humans have a kinship with God.



KEEPING IN TOUCH

A message from Des and Gill Ford

Dear GNU Friends,
Hitherto, in the busyness of our days, we have relied on telephone and written messages to the GNU office, plus cassettes of meetings taken here to assure all that we are alive and well.

Now, at the request of the GNU board, I will summarize Ford news—although it has little worth alongside the Good News, which occupies all our hearts and lives.

God has been exceedingly good to us, as ever. Through my daughter's manifold efforts, we were able to buy a unit by the sea. The views are delightful, the swims invigorating, and the walks joyous. As many as eight times a month, I am called upon to take meetings for one or several days. Usually, these are in Brisbane, or Sydney, and occasionally, Melbourne. (I do not, as a rule, now accept invitations to places which would involve much time in travel, as my program is more than full on Australia's east and southern coast.)

Not long after arrival, I was poisoned by fumigants to which our goods had been exposed before their release by Australian Customs. This was probably the result of closed sleeping quarters surrounded by these goods, newly arrived, in cyclonic weather. Mercifully, the enervation did not prevent me from preaching, and after two months I was back to normal. Gill stayed in the U.S. till she was able to wind up her obligations at the hormonal clinic for women, that she had launched in

earlier years. Though used to the cold of England, she enjoys our present locale, despite its typically warm weather, ameliorated, in our case, by sea breezes.

Among the most memorable meetings here have been some for the Uniting Church, at the invitation of a friend of decades, Dr. Gordon Moyes. At his request, I debated in Wesley Theatre, in Sydney, a well-known atheist, before 800 people. I also spent an hour with Dr. Moyes on Sydney radio 2GB. There have been Keswick conventions equally well-attended, meetings for Christian lawyers and professionals, as well as classes at a Baptist Bible college, and the Brisbane School of Theology.

I have worked on two new books, and am scheduled to take a dozen meetings at a nearby Baptist church, which plans to draw in as many of the public as possible.

Gill spends scores of hours each week, working on her new book, and also answering desperate requests by women for help with their hormonal problems. She also does much for me which I could not do for myself. For example, I always get into trouble with the computer, but she is an expert, and delivers me.

We know that all charitable organizations in the USA have suffered as a result of September 11, last year, and GNU has not found it easy to survive in the present economic climate. Please prayerfully put your dollars where your heart is. Ron Allen, and the small coterie of workers with him are worthy of your support.

Our love and blessings to all,
Des and Gill.

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.**’

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The Gospel and the Spirit

5

The Fellowship of the Spirit

by Rodney Nelson

A revolutionary concept.

During my schooling for a Master of Religion degree, I was introduced to a Greek word I had never heard before. It was koinonia, meaning fellowship, communion, partnership. It occurs several times in the New Testament, referring to the vertical relationship between God and man, and the horizontal relationship between God and man. At that time I was very interested in the dynamics that drive churches and their ministries. I was particularly interested in the biblical teaching on fellowship within the church. The concept of koinonia, subsequently, led to a written study of it that changed my understanding of how church is done.

The key text.

I was particularly challenged by Acts 2:42-47. The early believers 'devoted' themselves to fellowship (koinonia), the teaching of the apostles, eating together (probably including the Lord's supper), and prayer. They freely gave of their possessions, sold their properties, and donated the sum to others, opened their homes to strangers. All this while meeting together privately, and in public, praising God, and enjoying the favor of all the people (Acts 2:46,47).

A memorable lord's supper.

I remember the time I tried to incorporate some of the lessons I had learned in my koinonia studies, at a small fellowship my wife and I attended. Because there were less than thirty people, the experiment was cosy. We celebrated the Lord's supper during our potluck lunch after church. I must say the experience was certainly rewarding for me, and very different for most in the room. The chief enjoyment was to eat and drink the emblems during a time of eating and fellowship; not during a traditional church service. I picture the early church gathering around their fellowship meal, and observing the Lord's supper in the context of that meal. The idea of spiritual and physical fellowship joined together.

One cross, two directions.

The cross displays two types of relationship: one vertical, the other horizontal. Christ's death represents the horizontal, and vertical reconciliation necessary for the redemption of mankind. The idea of salvation is typically understood in vertical terms. However, it is more profound than this.

The cross also restores relations between men that resulted from their separation from God. In Eden, as soon as the relationship with God was harmed, spousal relationships changed, with offspring affected in the death of one at the hand of another.

Paul declares the reconciliation of the cross in Ephesians 2. Gentiles are now "*in Christ*" (v. 13). Christ "*made the two one by destroying the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility*" (v. 14+15). His intention was "*to create in himself one new man out of the two (Jew and Gentile), thus making peace*" (v. 15). And "*In this one body reconcile them both to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility*" (v. 16). In reconciling Jew and Gentile to God on the cross, Jesus reconciled them to one another. "*For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit*" (v. 18).

The first test.

The first test of reconciliation is seen in how Jewish believers treated each other immediately after Pentecost. The Jewish basis for the new Christian community had to be established before the Gentile segment could be brought in. The gospel would be taken to the Gentiles through the Jewish church (Romans 1:16; Acts 10:1-11:29). Before the Gentiles would respond to the gospel message, the Jewish church must provide an example as first recipients of the gospel.

Setting the standard.

The community of believers was unlike anything ever seen in history. They demonstrated the attributes that would set a

The cross displays two types of relationship: one vertical, the other horizontal. Christ's death represents the horizontal, and vertical reconciliation necessary for the redemption of mankind.

standard for believers throughout the Mediterranean world, and continue to challenge Christians throughout history.

These earliest Christians were “devoted.” They did not give up in adhering firmly to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship with each other, to eating with one another, and to prayer (2:42).

Their devotion required them to be “one in heart and mind” (4:32). They were emotionally and intellectually engaged in one direction; to each other, and in the glorification of the Lord.

They were a community that put first things first. The believers witnessed the apostles testify about the resurrection of the Lord; confirmed by many signs and wonders (2:43; 4:34+35). They understood the power of the gospel.

They exhibited the same selfless giving that the Savior demonstrated in his life and death. They claimed nothing as only theirs, but shared with all believers who had need (2:44-45; 4:34+35).

They demonstrated their faith in public and in private. Privately, they practiced hearty hospitality. They ate together with glad and sincere hearts. It has been pointed out that in Luke’s gospel, Jesus is often seen eating. This certainly can be seen in Acts as well. Their selfless giving to one another caught the attention of the public, from whom they gained respect and favor.


Their devotion to God and to one another (vertical, and horizontal), resulted in a harvest for the Lord (2:47). Evangelism was both proclamation and demonstration.

What about us?

Some approaches to church growth seek to find formulas for success in these examples from Jerusalem. A better approach is to view the believers as sincerely, and honestly living out their new life in Jesus Christ. It affected every area of their lives. Practicing by formula will not yield automatic results, but genuine lives lived in devotion to the gospel produce results God can use for his purposes (2:47b). Marketing principles are not as important as life principles. Changed lives set the stage for God’s work in the hearts of unbelievers.

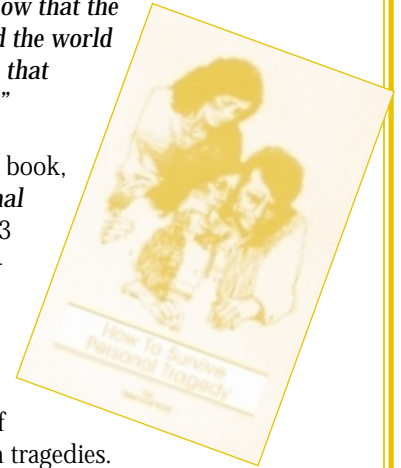
Acts reveals the Christian community as a basis for the extension of God’s grace to members, and to the world. Through devotion to the teachings of the apostles, fellowship in eating, and in communal prayer, and care for those in need, the church is guaranteed to have an impact on the world.

The springboard.

The Jerusalem church was the springboard from which gospel witness extended throughout the entire Roman Empire. The devotion of believers there to the gospel, and to each other was an anchor, and an encouragement to future missions. Later, Paul would request Gentile churches to aid the Jerusalem believers in their time of need (Acts 11:28-30). Their witness provides believers today with a standard of conduct and community many have never seen or conceived. The great lesson is that Jesus gave all, and we should be prepared to do likewise. True fellowship of the Spirit produces genuine fellowship among believers. May we open our lives as conduits of grace to one another. 

“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.”

So says Dr. Ford in his book, *‘How to Survive Personal Tragedy.’* Within the 83 pages of this small volume, the reader is introduced to Dr. Ford’s simple, yet profound philosophy of life. He writes out of the crucible of his own tragedies.



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July 16, 2002

To the Editor, Staff and Dr. Desmond Ford,

*Good News Unlimited
– July 2002 Vol. 22, No. 4*

To me this edition was sent to me by the grace of God. It answered my No. 1 question – Why can’t I love (unconditionally) and trust God? I have been a Christian all my life. I listen to Christian broadcast stations, go to church, pray often, and read the Bible, and support my church and some charities. For me this has been a booklet of perfection, every article a gem of wisdom straight from the mouth of God.

*Thank you
Prayers and love
M.A.*

PROPHETIC VOICES. . . .

Bob Dylan, and Others.

by David Sandercock

One of the most beautiful truths known, is that our God became man. He was the God-man. Never did a hyphen mean so much. God took our nature so that he could feel, and empathize with the human dilemma. In humanity, God reconciled the human race to himself. In Adam, all sinned; in Christ, all are made righteous. There is, now, no condemnation. Past, present, and future sins are all forgiven. The judgment has come, and we have come out on the winning side.

We are all seated with Christ in heavenly places. Jew and Palestinian, American, Australian, and Afghan. Male and female. What a wonderful loving father!

There are those who oppose this message, and its Spirit, as witness recent criticisms of Dr. Desmond Ford. How could anyone who sees the grace of God want to oppose such divine love?

Bob Dylan has opened his concerts with songs that draw attention to this

love of God. Like Dr. Ford, and so many others, Dylan sees Christ as the hope of a world that is largely given over to despair. Note the words from two of his songs:

This world it can't stand long
Be ready, don't wait too late.
We should know it can't stand long
For it is too full of hate.
—From *"This World Can't Stand Long."*

I am the Man, Thomas.
I am the Man.
Look at these nail scars,
Here in my hand.
They drove me up the hill,
Thomas.
I am the Man.
They made me carry the cross
Thomas.
I am the Man.
—From *"I am The Man, Thomas."*

David Sandercock lives in New South Wales, Australia. He is a husband and father, and he serves as a director of Good News Unlimited in Australia.

THE GENTLENESS OF GOD

by Marlin Sampson

I have chosen to use an illustration from the days when I was a young boy in West Texas—although the illustration is not perfect. Rodeos and bronco riding were exciting things for me to watch. I even dreamed of the day when I would be able to “break” a wild bronco. “Break” was the word I always heard used, and it was the word I used at that time. The word seemed to describe what I had observed in movies, and at rodeos in west Texas, and New Mexico, as men tried to ride wild horses. The word seemed to fit with the use of spurs, and whips, and forceful retention of control.

Then, one day, I heard a different word used. A man said the goal was to “gentle” the horses. He also said, “We do not want to ‘break’ a horse.” He said that we wanted a horse to retain its “spirit,” and that meant we must “gentle” the horse, and win its trust so that it would like us, and enjoy our presence. That thought, and that word “gentle” still sounds better to me. Even at that young age, I had been around horses and realized that they liked me. And I realized that they also liked the adults who took care of them. There was trust, and a willingness to obey. The verb, “gentle” became the word to use, and not the verb, “break.”

Even at that young age, I realized that those two verbs created very different feelings and attitudes in me concerning horses. Somehow, I seemed to lose interest in rodeos. Even now, I would say that the words we use for anything are very important.

How important are words? Jesus did not come into the world to break us. Jesus came into the world to gentle us. We, who were wild by nature, have been won by our Father in heaven through the life, death, and resurrection of his holy Son, Jesus. Saying we are saints, is saying we have been won by him, and his love for us. We are not saying we are perfect or without defects. We have been gentled by him. We trust him, and respond to him, and to his love. We are defective saints, but we are God’s saints because he claims us as his own in love.

What do I mean by defective? Permit me to stay with my limited experience with horses as an illustration. I was in my teens when I participated in moving a herd of cattle seven miles to a different grazing area. I was provided a mare, which the owner had previously used in track racing. The other men knew how she had been trained or conditioned, so they asked me to ride her. The effort exhausted me. I spent the whole day trying to keep her in control, and prevent her from passing every horse and cow in front of her. We were there to drive the herd, not to pass it up, and pass all the other horses in front of us.

Could some of us defective saints be conditioned to behave as that beautiful mare had been conditioned? Or do some of us try to condition our children that way?

Some horses tend to kick anything carelessly moving behind

them. One boy I went to grade school with had a silver plate in his head because of that. I do not know if that kicking was a conditioned or learned trait, or if it was genetic. Likewise, I do not always know how to evaluate our defects as saints. The publication, EARTHWATCH ran an article with the captioning: “How Do Dominant Horses Reap the Benefits of Their Rank, And What Implications Does That Have for Other Societies?” I grant you permission to deal with that sentence, applying it to defective saints. But may we who know God’s love always show God’s love.

God’s love seeks to “gentle” us. Let us be gentle. A horse that had been gentled must have loved me when I was four or five years old. It tried to “gentle” me, and I still love the memory of that horse. It always stood next to me. Today, I try to stand next to my God who “gentled” me.

** Marlin Sampson studied theology at Concordia Seminary. He was ordained to the gospel ministry in a congregation at Watgonga, Oklahoma. Most of his years of ministry were spent in the deaf mission work. He retired to Georgetown, California in 1978, and was asked by a small Lutheran congregation there to preach to them. He continued thus till 1995, and now lives in Placerville, California. —Ed*

DOES GOD EXIST?

This question was debated by Dr. Desmond Ford, and Mr. Brian Wilshire at a public venue in Sydney in 2001.

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HEROES OF FAITH—JOHN WESLEY

by Darren Marsden

John Wesley traveled 250,000 miles on horseback, wrote 233 books, and preached 42,000 sermons. He was a small man who lived from 1703 to 1791. During that time he was at the forefront of a spiritual revival that brought Methodism to birth.

Disciplined beginnings.

Wesley was the son of Samuel and Susannah. His father was rector at Epworth in England. His mother was a scholar in her own right. Susannah Wesley was a great disciplinarian, as well as a compassionate mother. She schooled her boys at home. This involved three hours of study each morning and afternoon. At age five, John had begun to read Genesis. He moved quickly beyond to Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and mathematics.

Plucked from the flames.

On February 7, 1709, the family home burned down. Samuel and Susanna hurried their children outside, and began to check to see if any were missing. It was found that John was still inside the burning house. Just then, John's head popped out of an attic window. In a moment, three men had formed a human ladder atop which the highest pulled John to safety just before the roof fell in. In later years, John referred to himself as a "Brand plucked from the burning."

At Oxford, John proved to be an above-average student. In 1724, he took his degree but was still undecided as to what he should do. He was elected Fellow of Lincoln College, Greek lecturer. At about that time, his father was ailing, and he asked John to come and help him. There followed three years of pastoral ministry, which were all that he would ever have.

A holy club and a mission to Georgia.

When John returned to Oxford after helping his father, his brother Charles had set up a group whose professed aim was to fervently seek righteousness. John joined this group which was named, scornfully, by some, "The Holy Club." Other nicknames were awarded, including, "Bible Moths," and "Methodists." The Holy Club set aside two days a week for fasting and prayer. Three of the first four members of the club were John, his brother Charles, and George Whitefield. All three became world famous.

Not long after his father's death, John Wesley left England on a mission to evangelize the Indians in the colony of Georgia in America. He wrote: "My chief motive in going is the salvation of my own soul." During the voyage a fierce storm came up, and the ship seemed in danger. While the ship rocked crazily, a group of Moravian passengers, whom John described as 'heavy-minded, and dull-witted folk,' began to sing Psalms. When a wave broke over the ship and began to fill the cabins with water, the English on board began to scream, but the Moravians continued with their Psalms.

The next day, Spangenburg, the Moravian pastor, asked John: "Do you know Jesus Christ, friend Wesley?"

"I know that he is the Savior of the world," replied John. "But do you know if he has saved you?" "I hope so," John answered.

The mission in Georgia did not go well. John returned to England less than two years after his departure. He felt he had failed. "I went to America to convert the Indians, but who shall convert me?" he wrote.


By grace through faith.

Back in England, John and his brother Charles began a friendship with a Moravian missionary, Peter Bohler. Wrote Wesley, of his friendship with Peter Bohler: "I found Peter Bohler with my brother at Oxford. He clearly convinced me of my want of faith." On Wednesday, May 24, 1738, he opened his Bible and read, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." That evening he attended a meeting of a society of evangelical Christians. While listening to the reading of Luther's preface to the letter to the Romans, he felt his heart "strangely warmed." "I felt I did trust in Christ alone for my salvation." A few weeks afterward, John Wesley preached his famous sermon before the university of Oxford, "By Grace are ye saved through faith." The sermon sounded the keynote of the Wesleyan Revival.

Criticism and opposition.

From that time forward, John Wesley took every chance he could to preach the simple message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Many were converted, but there was opposition from the established church. By the end of 1738, only three or four churches in London would open their doors to him. By April of 1739, Wesley had adopted George Whitefield's practice of preaching in the open air.

Samuel Wesley, John's elder brother was shocked at his preaching in the fields. When John visited his father's old parish, he offered his services to the rector, Mr. Romley. He was refused. A crowd had gathered at the church in anticipation of hearing John Wesley preach. Instead, they heard a sermon on the evils of religious enthusiasm. As the crowd left the church, they were greeted outside by an announcement that John Wesley would preach that evening, in the churchyard. On that occasion, John used his father's tombstone as a platform from which to preach. For six evenings in a row, he climbed onto his father's tomb to preach the gospel.

Many persecutions attended the gospel preaching of John Wesley, but wherever he preached, the Lord provided an audience, even at five in the morning. He preached an average of 800 sermons a year. He was certainly used by God to give England a moral and spiritual washing in a century when she desperately needed it. 

TO and FRO with the Editor

Question:

I've been in discussion for some time with a friend of mine, about hell; specifically, whether it is eternal torment, or permanent destruction. A Scripture that my friend repeats is Revelation 20:10. It seems to support the idea of endless punishment. I look forward to your thoughts.

S.K.

Answer:

In my view, what the church has taught, and still teaches in some quarters, is medieval, and primitive in the extreme. It allows for a God who is even more vindictive than sinful humans; willing to apply capital punishment, eternally, for temporal wrongs.

The language of Revelation 20:10, is typical of other passages within that book (see 14:9+10). It represents a stream of thinking on the subject of death; current in Jesus' day, and present in the Gospels. We should keep in mind that the Bible is not uniform in its teaching about the hereafter. From Old Testament times, people thought of the dead as going to a huge subterranean cavern, where they were completely lost to the terrestrial world, without being entirely obliterated. These ideas are reflected in the New Testament, but with some developments. For example, Luke 16 has mention of Sheol with two apartments; one for the righteous, and the other for the wicked. Jesus variously refers to the abode of the righteous as 'Abraham's bosom' and 'paradise.' Though the rich man ended up in a torment of flames, it was still in Sheol, the place of the dead.

The tradition of a Sheol of flames was, for many Jews, represented by the fires of Gehenna. Gehenna was a valley just outside Jerusalem. It was a place where human sacrifices had been made during a time of national apostasy, and which, by Jesus time, had become a garbage dump, with continually burning refuse. It was a place of uncleanness and destruction. (See Matthew 5:22; 18:8+9.)

The expression in Revelation 20: 9 seems to echo the language used of Gehenna elsewhere. We also need to realize that the phrase "forever and ever" need not mean an extension of time without end. It is more likely a superlative expression meaning something like our "to the 'enth degree," or "to the max." (See Jonah 2:6.)

Comment:

To all at Good News Unlimited. Thank you so much for your ministry. My husband and I were really excited to see Dr. Ford, and Pastor Ron Allen in person, a few months ago. Thanks Ron, for the huge bag of GNU tapes you passed on to me at that meeting. They have found their way into many homes; becoming part of my very active tape and book library

My husband and I are in our early thirties. In the past year, our lives have changed dramatically. Only since the awesome insights, and encouragement delivered by Good News

Unlimited, have we discovered the gospel. Thank you! We feel as if sometimes we could almost fly. It's as if we found our wings; our purpose. We are confident of our salvation, and have entered into a more personal and intimate relationship with Jesus.

Along with this, we feel a responsibility to pass on the good news—which we can't help but do—to all that we can. The exciting part, in this facet of our lives, is that we have been blessed with an enthusiastic, and passionate group of similar age-group friends.

I'm grateful for my brave and pioneering Mom, who challenged her own beliefs, and conditioning within the Catholic church, and ventured beyond the boundaries of her religion, into a deeper relationship with Jesus—inspiring us to follow. I'm grateful—so very grateful—for Dr. Ford, who also went against the grain of tradition, and man-made rules; questioning them, despite being ridiculed, and rejected by men who should have known better. But mostly, I am eternally grateful for Jesus. My wonderful Jesus. Our wonderful Jesus. The Lord of lords, and king of kings, who left his perfect home, and came to our messed-up world; willing to take up the cross, so that I could have eternal life with him. Amen!! He is my ultimate inspiration, and encouragement. And, I dare say, the inspiration of every man and woman who has made a difference in this world, that went before me. Praise God forever for Jesus Christ his Son.

M.+P.

Reply:

Thank you for your encouraging message to all of here at GNU. For us who spend a lot of time sitting at a desk reading and writing, and creating printed and audio material for the gospel, it is wonderful to learn that the message of God's grace has struck roots in some good soil. Your story is a joyous one; well worth telling. We thank you for it. May Christ continue to enrich, and satisfy you both.

. . . There are those courageous, imaginative, and innovative individuals who are coming to faith. But they are often perplexed by the church that they encounter. They take the message of the Christian gospel seriously, and wish to see society radically reshaped in accordance with that message. Such people cannot always be contained by the church which already exists, and they often launch out to create new forms of the church. Martin Robinson. *The Faith of the Unbeliever*. P. 197.

The Tale of a Tail

Nanna, Gill's mother, came from New Zealand, and was staying at the house. One night Gill was rubbing Nanna's arm with liniment. This was because Nanna had fallen in the gutter. Her arm was very sore from the fall. This night, Jasper came flying over the bed. Although it was a big bed, Jasper's feet and the tiny jar of liniment happened to meet by accident. The liniment flew off the bed. And, of course, it landed upside down. Big blobs of liniment fell on the carpet. But it was all right. Gill was there to clean it up.

The toilet roll.

The next morning when Gill went to get Nanna out of bed, there was a roll of wet toilet paper in the rubbish bin. It was Jasper who liked to jump on top of the cupboard in the middle of the night. That night he had kicked the toilet paper into the toilet.

Well-Behaved in Brisbane.

When Jasper stayed in Brisbane with Elenne and Peter, they didn't have all this trouble with Jasper. He could get outside the apartment there, and play in the conservatory. If he was tired of the conservatory, he could get out of the apartment, and go down the street. The apartment was in the middle of the city of Brisbane. Jasper saw a lot of city life. By the time he came in at night, he was really tired, and he slept through the night.

The end of her rope.

Back at Caloundra, Jasper soon got into his old habits of flying around the bedroom at night, and leaping on cupboards. "That does it," said Gill. She took Jasper, squirming, downstairs and put him outside. Gill stayed up and cleaned house for a while. Then she went back to bed to get some sleep. At 5 a.m. Gill was awakened again by a catfight. It was Jasper and someone else's cat. Gill ran down the stairs and opened the door. In ran Jasper. He was covered with dirt. Gill had to wash him in the laundry sink. His tail hurt, and he growled at her. He didn't like being washed (cats hate water). Gill wiped him gently, and put him down. He fled upstairs.

A miserable day.

Through the morning, Gill checked on Jasper. He didn't look very well. His tail was completely limp. In the afternoon, Gill was out driving in the car for a long time. When she came home, and checked on Jasper, she saw that he looked worse. His eyes were narrowed. He looked glum. His tail was thin and limp. His fur was flat.

Gill knew that cat bites are very septic, and can abscess. That night Gill called the vet. Even though it was near to closing time, he said to bring the cat over. Gill put Jasper in

his carrier, and put the carrier in the car. She drove over to the vet at Moffatt Beach.

Jasper sees Alison.

Gill took Jasper into the examining room, and let him out of the carrier. Alison looked at his tail and gently touched it. "His tail has been damaged," she said. "Normally, it should have 'tone' but it is just lying limp." Alison was very concerned. "He could have broken his tail. He could have nerve damage. The only way I can see, is if I X-ray it."

Bad behavior costs.

Alison told Gill, "Jasper might have permanent damage to his tail, and if it keeps dragging on the ground, we might have to cut it off." Gill said to Alison, "Go ahead and give him a sedative, and X-ray his tail." Gill went away for half an hour, and came back when Alison was finished. The tail wasn't broken. It was nerve damage. "The next 48 hours are critical," said Alison. "If the tail is going to mend, it may take a week, but the signs of the outcome may be sooner."

Thumbs (tails) up.

The next day Jasper looked better. He was eating normally. His tail was still limp, but later in the day, when Gill asked him how his tail was, he lifted it slightly, twice in a row. He seemed to be saying, "On the mend, thank you."


Over the next two days, Jasper's tail improved dramatically. When it stood up on its end like a tall, feathered plume, Gill knew Jasper's tail was fully healed.

God is good.

Cause brings effect, which means we reap the results of what we sow. Jasper had caused the catfight, and he might have lost his tail as a result. It would have been his own fault for being such a naughty boy. Though we all deserve punishment when we do wrong, God is very good to us. We don't always get into as much trouble as we might. God was good to Jasper. He did not have lasting nerve damage. He didn't lose his tail.

When we are naughty, and bad things happen to us as a result, they are meant to teach us lessons in life, so that we will improve. In Jasper's case, the pain was short-lived, and he soon forgot the lesson. He soon was back to his old tricks of keeping everyone awake.

Unconditional love.

Elenne heard about the naughty things Jasper was doing. She asked Gill: "Do you want me to find him a new home?" "Oh, no," said Gill. "I couldn't do that." Even though Jasper was naughty, and Gill didn't like his naughtiness, she still loved Jasper, and didn't want him to go away to another home. God knows our naughty ways, and he wishes we'd try harder. But he still loves us. 

GOSPEL ON THE RADIO

Appointments

RADIO GUIDE

USA

CALIFORNIA

Sacramento

KFIA 710AM

Monday-Friday 5 a.m.
11 a.m.

Auburn

KAHI 950AM

Sunday 8:45 a.m.
Ron Allen

HAWAII

Honolulu

KAIM 870AM

Monday-Friday 6:05 p.m.

WASHINGTON

Blaine

KARI 550AM

Monday-Friday 12:15 p.m.

Saturday 8:30 a.m.

Sunday 1:00 p.m.

RADIO GUIDE

CANADA

ALBERTA

Edmonton

The Light

Sunday 9:30 a.m.
5:00 p.m.

High River

(covers Red Deer to Lethbridge)

CHRB 1140AM

Sunday 5:00 p.m.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

100 Mile House

CKBX 840AM

Sunday 8:30 a.m.

Penticton

CIGV 101.7FM

Saturday 8:05 p.m.

Quesnel

CKCQ 920AM

Sunday 8:30 a.m.

Williams Lake

CKWL 570AM

Sunday 8:30 a.m.

Blaine, Washington

KARI 550AM

Monday-Friday 12:15 p.m.

Saturday 8:30 a.m.

Sunday 1:00 p.m.

MANITOBA

Winnipeg

CKJS 810AM

Sunday 11:30 a.m.

Dauphin

CKDM 730AM

Sunday 9:00 a.m.

NEW BRUNSWICK

Fredericton

CFNB 550AM

Sunday 7:30 a.m.

ONTARIO

Oakville

CHWO 1250AM

Sunday 7:30 a.m.

Oshawa

CKDO 1350AM

Sunday 7:00 a.m.

SASKATCHEWAN

Estevan

CJSL 1280AM

Sunday 7:00 a.m.

Weyburn

CFSL 1190AM

Sunday 9:00 a.m.

2002

The Auburn Bible School, "Scripture Alone" previously announced for August 9-11, 2002, has been cancelled for organizational reasons. Watch this page for information about future GNU Bible schools.

WILL YOU WILL?

Nearly two million people die in the USA every year without leaving a will. Approximately 600,000 of these are evangelical Christians. In the majority of cases, they were good Christian stewards in life. But they made no provision to continue their stewardship after death. They left their lifetime savings for court distribution. While alive, they would never have sanctioned the decisions on distribution made by the court.

None of us will die any the sooner for making legal provision for the final allocation of our goods. These are goods God has loaned us. Legal provision should not be delayed for even a day, especially now, when the making of a will can be both simple and inexpensive.

If you have not already done so, will you pray and act on this matter of a will, or a living trust? Will you remember the work of the gospel, that others may come to share the eternal life in which you now rejoice? It is within your power to make provision that some find the treasure to which our Lord referred (Matthew 13:44). That gospel treasure illuminates the shadows of death, points to the everlasting gates of pearl, and reveals a welcoming savior (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

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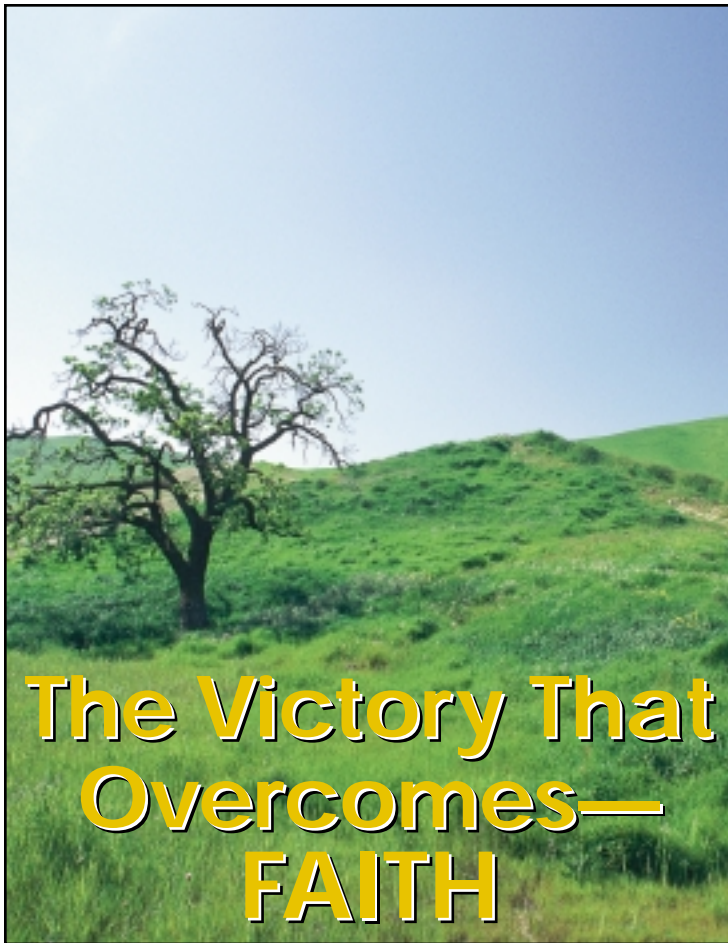
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Christ himself faces the constricting riddles of life. . . . His final word on the cross is: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” It is characteristic, however, that he does not address this cry of despair into the night of Golgotha. He calls to his Father: “My God, my God.” He holds the Father’s hand firm in his own. He brings the anxiety to his Father. He has brought it once and for all. If I am anxious, and I know Christ, I may rest assured that I am not alone with my anxiety; he has suffered it for me. The believer can also know that Christ is the goal of history. The primitive community knows that this One is not gone forever, but will come again. It thus has a new relationship to the future. This is no longer a mist-covered landscape into which I peer anxiously because of the sinister events which will there befall me. Everything is now different. We do not know what will come. But we know who will come. And if the last hour belongs to us, we do not need to fear the next minute.

—Helmut Thielicke. *The Silence of God.* p. 115.

GOOD NEWS
Unlimited 

September/October 2002

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