

SPIRITUAL INSIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE

FAITH *for life*

*"The **life** which I now live...I live by the **faith** of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Galatians 2:20*

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WHAT JESUS DID FOR US

by pastor tony scheving

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God... For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." 1 Peter 3:18, Romans 5:6

It's easy to take for granted the story of Jesus Christ. We know that He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, opened blind eyes and raised the dead. Most also know that He died on the cross and rose from the dead. But most people don't really stop to think of the magnitude of it all. Please read on as we talk about "What Jesus did for us."

The Paramount of His Suffering

The Bible verse above tells us that Christ suffered for our sins. He suffered to pay for our selfishness, pride, stubbornness, lying, deceit, drunkenness, cursing, anger, sex outside of marriage and a host of other sins. No human tongue could speak, no mind could imagine, no poet could adequately write, no artist could effectively paint about the sufferings of Jesus. He actually suffered before He was even spiked to the timber of the cross. The emotional strain of dying

for our sins was so great that as He prayed beforehand, the Bible says, *"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground"* (Luke 22:44). This is a rare physical condition but can happen when emotional strain gets so great that tiny capillaries burst and blood mixes in with the sweat glands. The heart of Jesus was so heavy before going to the cross that He said to His disciples, *"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"* (Matt 26:38).

There was also the physical suffering. The soldiers took Jesus from the Garden of Gethsemane into the basement of the Fortress of Antonia and stretched His hands high over His

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What Jesus Did for Us

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head, lifting Him up on His toes. Then they scourged Him with two alternating soldiers each using a “cat of nine tails” consisting of a rod with nine leather lashes each containing razor-sharp steel on the end designed to lay the skin open. Nobody walked away from this scourging. No wonder Jesus would stumble and fall under the cross later on from the blood loss. The Bible also tells us that they beat the face of Jesus with their fists, and then spit on Him.

Then came the cross itself. The word ‘crucifixion’ comes from the Latin word meaning excruciating. It was meant to terrorize the victim and was so horrible that every Roman citizen was exempt from such torture. Cicero, the Roman author and orator, said, “Let the very name of the cross be far away from Roman citizens, not from their bodies only, but from their thoughts, their eyes and their ears.” But there was nothing preventing the Roman soldiers from crucifying the Son of God. They stretched out the hands of Jesus across the upper timber driving the spikes through the base of His palms aiming for the median nerve.

They then placed the tip of the right foot over the heel area of the left foot on the lower timber, driving the spike through both feet, fulfilling the first Bible prophecy in Genesis 3:15 (*“And thou shalt bruise his heel”*). The nails in the hands and feet hit the most sensitive nerves in the body. Every nerve-ending was a pathway to pain. The victim of crucifixion would have to lift himself up while pushing off his nail-pierced feet in order to take the pressure off the lung area to draw a breath. When shock, dehydration, and exhaustion set in, the victim could no longer lift himself and would die of suffocation.

In addition to the emotional and physical suffering, Jesus also suffered spiritually. For the first time in all eternity He would be separated from His heavenly Father. That’s why He cried out on the cross *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* (Mark 15:34). When Jesus took our sins on Himself he became the object of the Father’s wrath and judgment. Yet at the same time the Bible tells us the Father was suffering along with the Son. What did He not suffer himself when he sees his own son suffer? Some people have posed the

question of why God could allow so much suffering in this world. A greater question would be, “How could God the Father allow His own Son to suffer for the world?” Talk show host Phil Donahue admitted being disillusioned with Christianity when he said, “How could an all-loving God allow His son to be murdered on a cross in order to redeem my sins? If God the Father is so ‘all-loving,’ why didn’t He come down and go to Calvary?” In a way beyond our comprehension, the Father did suffer along with the Son on Calvary. The Bible tells us of a great mystery when it says, *“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself”* (II Cor 5:19). God the Father knew it was the only way to pay for the sins of the world. God’s justice cannot let sin

go unpunished. Jesus satisfied the perfect justice of a holy God by paying the price for sin. We normally suffer as a result of our own sin, but God had to suffer to pay for the sins of man, not His own. What else did Jesus accomplish on that cross?

The Permanence of His Sacrifice

The Bible verse above says, *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins”* (I Pet 3:18). Notice the word ‘once.’ There are those who teach that every time they partake of communion during a church service, they are crucifying Jesus all over again. But the Bible says, “Christ also hath once suffered for sins.” Not ‘once upon a time,’ but once for all time. Just before Jesus died on the cross He said, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30). What did He mean by that? The folly of most religion today is the teaching that the way to heaven has to be earned by doing certain works. But if you could earn your way to heaven, why did Jesus have to suffer such indescribable agony? Every religion has their own list of things that ‘must be done’ in order to merit their paradise for eternity. But Jesus said, “It is finished,” meaning the price for sin had been paid and God’s justice had been satisfied.

Back in the days of Christ during the Roman empire, when a criminal had committed a felony his crime was written on a document and hung over his prison cell door until he had ‘done his time.’ When it was time to release him the judge would write on that document *“Tetelestai”* meaning ‘paid in full’ or *“it is finished.”* That certified document meant the criminal could never face double jeopardy or be tried for that same crime again. It became a valuable certificate the man would safely guard as proof that the penalty for his crime had been paid. In the same way Jesus said *“It is finished”* when He died on the cross, and today in heaven He bears the nail scarred hands and feet to certify that He paid for sin, once and for all. The Bible says *“Christ also hath once suffered for sins.”* Furthermore the Bible says in Hebrews 10:12-14, *“This man (Jesus), after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; For by one offering*

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HOME

IMPROVEMENTS

HELP FOR YOUR FAMILY



One day, a rooster was staring at a pan of scrambled eggs when he said to a hen, "There's our mixed-up kids." A casual glance at society reveals that many families are a mess. We live in a nation with alarming teen suicide rates, teen pregnancies, youth depression, delinquency, crime, and a tragically high divorce rate. Parents are as confused about their roles as the children are about theirs. Society has portrayed men as bumbling and confused dads, with moms assuming the masculine role of the tough, savvy woman of the world. Maybe it's time to re-think the family. The problem with the children normally stems back to Dad and Mom. God originally stated, *"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him"* (Gen 2:18). Marriage between a man and a woman was God's idea and design. The expression *"help meet"* above speaks of the wife who would 'complete' her husband. Adam needed Eve like a violin needs a bow. Marriage is not something that evolved over the years, but something that was spawned in the mind of God at creation.

God made the husband and wife to complement each other as a partnership. At the same time, He made males and females very different and not just physically. Men and women are very different

emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Their brains are even 'wired' differently, with men being right-brained dominant and women being left-brain dominant. As a result, females tend to be more verbal in the area of communication. Their tendency is to observe something and then want to talk about what they've observed. The difference between males and females has even been proven with toddlers. If you give a little girl a dolly, she will tend to nurture it. If you give the same dolly to a little boy he'll probably use it for a hammer. If you give a group of grade school girls a jigsaw puzzle, they will chat while

putting it together. If you give the same puzzle to a group of boys they'll end up throwing the pieces at each other. Boys gravitate toward the dirt while girls gravitate to a tea party. When both are present at a birthday party you'll find the little boys smearing cake on each other while the little girls look disgusted. It's not a cultural thing, but a 'creational' thing.

God made husbands and wives different that He might make them one. It's a mistake to try and blur or skew the distinctions. It's also a mistake for a husband to want his wife to think like he does and vice versa. We should celebrate the differences instead of resisting them. There are also different roles given to the husband and the wife. God made the man to be the provider and protector, and the woman to be the assistant or the nurturer at home. God made the man to be the leader, and the woman the enhancer. In the music of marriage, the husband is to sing the lead melody, and the wife is to harmonize. Both roles are equally important. The Bible says, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Galatians 3:28). Yet the roles of the husband and the wife are as different as their physical and emotional make-up. God created Adam to tend to the garden as the provider while Eve was to be the *"mother of all living"* (Gen 3:20). As provider and protector, God made the man physically stronger, and the woman more gentle and tender. There are other differences as well.

Men tend to approach situations in life 'head-first', while women approach them 'heart-first'.

It's normally a matter of logic versus emotion. Men tend to be goal-oriented, while women tend to enjoy the moment. Men tend to look at the big picture, while women see the details.



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he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." False, manmade doctrine claims that Christ is crucified all over again every time people partake of communion in a church service. The Bible is clear when it says, "(Christ) *needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself*" (Hebrews 7:27). Jesus doesn't have to keep dying over and over again. His sacrifice was permanent!

The Picture of His Substitution

The Bible verse above states, "*Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust*" (I Peter 3:18). Notice that Christ "substituted" when He died in our place. The Bible says, "*For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly*" (Romans 5:6). Notice the substitution of Christ on our behalf in that verse. In Dickens' novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, a young French aristocrat was condemned to die by the guillotine during the bloody French Revolution. His punishment was based totally on his forefathers' crimes against the people. The hour before his execution he was visited by a young English friend who could have passed for his twin. After the guard had left, the friend overpowered the doomed man with an anesthetic and exchanged clothes with him. Then, pretending to be the one condemned to die, he called the jailer and asked that his unconscious 'visitor', supposedly overcome with grief, be removed and returned to his home. The nobleman was thus saved from death. On his way to the guillotine, the young Englishman spoke these final words: "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done."

Substitution is a very unselfish thing. The Bible tells us the "*Just (Jesus) died for the unjust (us)*." When Jesus was on trial the wife of Pontius Pilate told her husband "*Have thou nothing to do with that just man*" (Matt 27:19). Jesus Christ was the sinless, spotless, stainless, Son of God, and He was also our substitute. He was the substitute lamb of God who was slain in our place. The Bible says, "*Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things...received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of*

Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Pet 1:18-19). Please reread that verse again. That verse not only tells us that Christ was our substitutional and sacrificial lamb, but it also says you won't earn forgiveness and heaven by following the tradition of some church. Instead you must accept the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross as your substitutional payment.

The finest lambs were raised in the vicinity of Bethlehem to be sacrificed for the Jewish Passover. Days before the big event, the lambs would be brought to the Temple Mount to be examined by the Jewish priests. Those lambs would have probably passed by Jesus on that day, riding a donkey on His way down from the Mount of Olives as He made His entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday of Passover week. Once the lambs arrived at the Temple Mount, the Jewish priests would begin to examine them for any spots, blemishes or flaws. At Passover time, the spotless lambs would shed sacrificial blood while atoning for the sins of the people. Those lambs were a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and His substitutional death on Calvary. Substitution is also pictured in the Bible with two goats that were brought before the priest. The sins of the people were confessed over the head of one goat. That 'scapegoat' was then set free in the wilderness as a picture of us receiving pardon, while the other goat was promptly slain, which is a picture of Christ, our substitute. God also provided another beautiful picture of substitution with a man named Barabbas, who was condemned to die on that fateful day, but Jesus took his place on the cross. No doubt, Barabbas watched the crucifixion from a distance, realizing that the man on the cross in the middle had died in his place. Months later, Peter would tell the crowd, "*But ye denied the Holy One and the Just (Jesus), and desired a murderer (Barabbas) to be granted unto you*" (Acts 3:14). God provided many perfect pictures of substitution in the Bible.

After the U.S.S. Pueblo was captured by the North Koreans in 1968, the eighty-two surviving crew members were thrown into a brutal captivity. In one particular instance, thirteen of the men were required to sit in a rigid manner around a table for hours. After several hours, the door was violently flung open and a North Korean guard brutally beat the man in the first chair with the butt of his rifle. The next day, as each man sat

at his assigned place, again the door was thrown open and the man in the first chair was brutally beaten. On the third day it happened again to the same man. Knowing the man could not survive, another young sailor took his place. When the door was flung open the guard automatically beat the new victim senseless. For weeks, each day a new man stepped forward to sit in the horrible chair, knowing full well what would happen. At last the guards gave up in exasperation. They were unable to overcome that kind of substitutional love. Jesus was a perfect picture of substitution.

The Pathway of His Salvation

Notice the last part of the verse above, "*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*" (I Pet 3:18). Jesus is the pathway to God and salvation. The cross of Christ bridges the gap between earth and heaven. The Bible says in II Sam 14:14, "*Neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.*" The Bible tells us of Jesus, "*That he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross*" (Ephesians 2:16). The Bible further adds, "*When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son*" (Rom 5:10). While most people are aware of the sacrifice of Jesus, they have never personally applied it to their own life. That's why Jesus said most people are actually on the road to hell and don't realize it (Matt 7:13-14, 21-23). They somehow think the sacrifice of Jesus 'automatically' applies to them when it doesn't.

The first step in being saved or born-again (John 3:3) is to realize the seriousness of sin. The Bible says, "*Fools make a mock at sin*" (Prov. 14:9). Sin caused Jesus to suffer in an indescribable way. Christ and Calvary are the cure for your sin-sick soul. Christ is also the cure for the shallow and empty lives people are living. People turn to drugs, alcohol, extramarital affairs, or even hours of reality TV trying to actually escape reality. Many are looking for a sedative when they actually need a Savior. If God is no more than your imaginary friend, and if you don't truly have a personal relationship with the Lord, please take the time to study the Bible at: www.7StepsToGod.org. ■



WHAT MANY RELIGIONS FAIL TO MENTION

Eternity is far longer than your life time. Your soul is far more important than your body. Yet the average person spends very little time considering where their soul will spend eternity. The average person thinks "everything's ok, and I'm no worse off than anybody else, and actually I'm not as bad of a sinner as many others.... I'm a good person who believes in God." But consider the sobering words of Jesus Christ:

"Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction (hell), and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life (heaven), and few there be that find it." (Matt 7:13-14)

QUESTION: From the verses above... 'Are more people going to heaven or hell?'

Jesus also spoke of Judgment Day when He said the following:

Matthew 7:22-23, Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?' And then will I profess unto them, 'I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity'. (Please read that again very carefully and consider the following).

Sadly, the people above will miss heaven. Please answer the following questions based on what Jesus said in the verse above.

Are these people Moslem, Hindu, Buddhist, or Christian, and why?

Are these just a handful of "Christian" people, or a large number, and why?

Are there some "Christians" ministers and preachers in this group, and why?

Are there some in this group who 'thought' they were exorcists, and why?

Did the people above 'live a good life' and do good deeds and works?

Did Jesus recognize them as 'children of God'?

Is everything really 'ok'? Could you possibly be part of this group?

"Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev 20:15).

Apparently, "everything is not ok." Could it be that Satan has deceived the multitudes?

"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25). Multitudes of

people are religious and think everything's ok, but Jesus said: *"If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"* (Matt 6:23)

Imagine the spiritual blindness of thinking "I'm ok" but still being in darkness.

The Bible says we can know for sure we're going to heaven when we die when it says, *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life"* (I John 5:13). But, there is a big difference in believing in Jesus Christ versus believing on Jesus Christ. God wants you to know for sure you are going to heaven (II Pet 3:9). The most important issue in your life is where you will spend eternity. 'Faith for Life' is concerned about your soul. We invite you to take a free on-line Bible study entitled "7 Steps to God" at: www.7StepsToGod.org.

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Who Do You Love?

by pastor tony scheving

"In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." 2 Timothy 3:1-2

As a kid growing up in the 60s and 70s, I remember the TV detective Kojak, and his famous motto, "Who loves you baby?" But there's a more important question: "Who do you love?" Selfishness is the darling sin of all time, and yet we especially live in a day and age of self-love as the Bible verse above describes.

I heard a story about a five-year-old boy and his little three-year-old sister, who together received a rocking horse as a present from their parents for Christmas. As they posed for a picture on the rocking horse, their mom ran out of film and when she left the room to go get more, the little boy said to his younger sister, "If one of us would get off this rocking horse, there would be more room for me." Self-centeredness begins at an early age, and survives on crutches until the grave. The Bible is full of examples of selfish people like Lot, who greedily took the best land instead of giving his uncle Abraham the choice. There was also Jacob who was always 'pulling a fast one' to get what was best for him. And then there was the priest and the Levite who selfishly passed by the wounded man in the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:31). Of course, who could forget the selfishness of Judas who betrayed the Lord for thirty pieces of silver? And yet, the 21st century has to be the most selfish of all, which is part of the last days prophecy described in the Bible verse above. This day and age is also summed up in Zechariah 7:6 where God says, *"When ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?"*

Uncharitable Regard

Self-centeredness has been called the "Mother of all Sins". Walter Cronkite once stated that he didn't know very many evil

people, but he sure knew a lot of selfish ones! Self-centeredness has reached an all time high in our nation. In the days of the early patriots, people said, "Give me liberty or give me death." Today many people simply say, "Gimme, gimme, gimme." The new Lord's Prayer could easily state, "Our Father who art in heaven . . . gimme, gimme, gimme." Many Americans are living life buffet style; self-serving. Most people with annual incomes of over \$50,000 give less than 1% to charities while keeping over 99 % for themselves. Truly, the words of Cain many years ago are still relevant today: *"Am I my brother's keeper?"* (Gen 4:9). The Bible says in I John 3:17, *"Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"*

People all wrapped up in themselves make a pretty small package. Many people spend the bulk of their time trying to 'discover themselves' and 'know themselves.' This is a dead-end journey. The Bible says, *"A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself"* (Prov 18:4). There are people who are consumed with everyone else understanding how they feel, and how they think, and why they act and react the way they do. The Bible calls them a fool in the verse above. They become very inward people who continually want their own way or self-glorification. Every discord in a home, business, society, church or nation can be traced to selfishness. Self-centeredness is at the core of all heartache.

Selfishness is seen in thousands of ways. Selfish people will take the biggest, the most, or the last piece of pizza. They will leave their hair in the sink or shower for someone else to clean up. They will leave a candy wrapper on the floor or walk around a piece of paper on the floor and leave it for

someone else to pick up. Selfish people will make others wait for them, but demand that everyone is on time when they're in a hurry. They will sneak away after a meal to let someone else clean up the dishes. The rest of the family has to always do what they are interested in doing. A selfish parent will buy things that will put the family in a financial bind. They will gamble or drink away the money while the family goes without. Selfish husbands or wives have affairs for their own self-gratification. Television depicts desperate housewives in a comical way, but in real life, it destroys marriages and is the essence of selfishness. Selfish people also have little time for the aged, the unlovely or the poor. If someone can't benefit them, then they don't want to be bothered by them. Self-centered people also spend the bulk of any conversation talking about their life, while not being very interested in your life. They lack compassion or real concern toward others. They struggle with road rage. They are takers and not givers. They attend churches to be ministered to, instead of ministering; and they leave when they don't get their own way. Selfish people don't want to be put out, but they sure don't mind putting others out.

Unhappy Results

The cowbird is quite an illustration of selfishness. The mother cowbird is too lazy to make her own nest, so she selfishly lays her egg in the nest of a sparrow and flies away. The sparrow nurtures that egg along with her own. After all the eggs hatch, the baby cowbird quickly outgrows his adopted siblings and throws them out of the nest. Then the baby cowbird mooches food from his sparrow foster parent until it grows big enough to fly away without so much as a thank you. Selfishness begins in people at an early age. The Bible says, *"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child"* (Prov 22:15). One of the first words a toddler learns is the word 'mine', along with 'I' and 'me'. The American culture doesn't help matters much in a nation where we make idols out of youth, while ignoring the elderly. Young people quickly become 'takers' and if the wise parent doesn't catch it and correct it, the child will grow up to be a pain to his spouse, his boss, and others. It all makes for

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Faith for Life

Who Do You Love?

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a stressful society. Our verse above tells us that just before Christ returns, it will be 'perilous.' Perilous in the original Greek language means "fierce or furious". Our society is becoming more hostile and rude all of the time due to self-centeredness.

The average person lives in their own little world with very little regard for others. It's never been easier to pull inward than in the current age of technology. With a headset and an iPod, you can tune out the rest of the world, or you can amuse yourself for hours with your Blackberry. Then there's Facebook, Twitter and various other networks where you can blog and tell everyone when you're clipping your fingernails, watching TV, or at the drive-up window. We have become pretty fascinated with ourselves. 'King Me' reigns supreme in many ways. Sexually, we live in a very selfish society where people aren't willing to wait or do it God's way, morally. The Bible says, *"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge"* (Hebrews 13:4). When a teen boy tells his girlfriend she should be willing to "go all the way" (if she really loved him), he's actually admitting that he really just wants his own selfish desires gratified. Many live as pirates of society; out to get what they want with no regard for others. Self-centeredness is a cancer in the gut of our nation. 95% of all abortions are a result of the baby being killed simply because he would be an inconvenience.

Our society thrives on self-enhancement as a multi-billion dollar business. Exercise coaches abound promoting everything from having six pack abs and buns of steel, to getting rid of the cellulite on your thighs. Then there's yoga, TM, and creative consciousness to help you look within and get further in touch with yourself. Our magazines are called Self, Us, Vanity, Cosmopolitan and People. The medical profession offers you everything from liposuction to breast implants. Wealth gurus tell you how to get richer, and the business world holds self-awareness workshops. All of these enjoy an avid following until something new and better comes along. The New York Times best-seller list is full of titles that guarantee self-success if you follow

their formula. Many of the talking heads continue to give you the endless 'daily drivell' of their own man-made opinions, as if they really mattered. Entertainment is now full of reality TV or whatever it takes to wow an increasingly fickle society. The world screams to our young people to follow the latest celebrities, movies, music, and whatever else is cool. Even the churches have tried to appeal to the 'spirit-of-me' by offering the "what's-in-it-for-me gospel" preached by the cool pastor in the hip clothes, along with the praise and worship dude leading the praise band complete with the rock show. Many churches today are doing whatever it takes to appeal to our self-centered, self-loving society. We've become *"Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God"* (II Tim 3:2).

But in the process of 'me-ism,' our society has swallowed counterfeit values which promised fulfillment "if you just look within." The actual result is a society full of self-absorbed, shallow, hollow people who are full of frustration instead of fulfillment. The number one rock and roll song of all time is, "I Can't Get No Satisfaction," which says it all. The seeking of fame, success and materialism along with the preoccupation of self, has only led to a bogus value system. The whole "King Me" philosophy only leaves people in dire straits. Each promise of pleasure only leads to a mirage of disappointment. Sadly our society is looking for satisfaction in the wrong place...within. Instead of the 'fuller life' that was predicted, me-ism produces an industrial strength letdown. Sadly, people have missed the whole point of life and if they were honest, they haven't found happiness in the process. Around 1000 BC, Solomon conducted an experiment to seek the purpose for living. He tried every selfish pleasure imaginable, and when he was done he said it was all vanity (empty and worthless) and vexation of spirit (Eccl 1:14). The Bible says we were actually placed on planet Earth to bring God glory and pleasure (Rev 4:11). Sadly, there are very few who are seeking a loving relationship with their Creator. They're too busy loving themselves. "Self" is a dungeon, and the greatest slave is the one who lives for self. Jesus Christ never once thought of Himself. He said, *"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"* (Matt 20:28). Sadly the Bible says, *"For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's"* (Phil 2:21).

Unparalleled Recipient

An old Jewish Proverb states, "There's no room for God in a man who's full of himself." A 'what's-in-it-for-me' attitude squeezes God out of the picture. The Bible book of Jeremiah describes the nation of Israel just before they were destroyed by Babylon. They had become extremely self-centered and had turned to loving self instead of God. There are many scary similarities to America today. The self-centered journey through life without God is a dead-end. Unless God is the major pursuit in life, people are in for a major letdown. Self-love is evidenced by what takes up the bulk of your time, money, and thinking. What do you find yourself thinking about most of the time? Is it you? Who do you really love? The Bible says in Deuteronomy 6:5, *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."* Do you live for God, or yourself? The Bible says in II Corinthians 5:15, *"He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."* This verse is simply telling us that we should wake up everyday with the motive of living for our Creator.

To know God is to love Him. Many don't love Him because they don't really know Him. To most people, God is like an imaginary friend who they talk about with their mouth, but don't intimately know in their heart. He's no more than the "big Guy in the sky" or the "Man upstairs". They have never found God through true Bible conversion (for more information on this, please refer to the website entitled "7 Steps to God" at www.7stepstoGod.org). Once you've become a true child of God, you will desire to know the One you love. You will desire to be more like Him as His child. It's a totally natural thing for a child to want to be like his dad. The more you seek to love and live for Him, the more the self-love will shrink and vanish. That is the goal...for our self-centeredness to die. It's been said that he who is in love with himself has no rivals. May we learn to die to self and love God supremely. God should be the unparalleled recipient of our love. It's not a matter of "who loves you", but "who do you love"?

GOD IS GOOD!

"O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him" Psalm 34:8

by pastor tony scheving

We live in a day and age when God is taking a 'bum rap'. He is being blamed for the tragic things that happen in the lives of people. At the same time, we listen to the humanists telling us how 'man is basically good.' So in other words, man is essentially good, while God is not. This is totally opposite of what Jesus told us in Matthew 19:17 when He said, *"There is none good but one, that is, God."*

The main reason mankind is experiencing so much heartache is not because of God, but because people aren't listening to God. Our Creator has set the parameters to keep man from self-destructing, but people aren't following them, and as a result they're paying the consequences. In the very first of the Ten Commandments, God tells us not to place anything ahead of Him as a greater priority in life. Yet most people have God on the 'back burner' behind money, materialism, relationships, entertainment, music and a host of other things. The fifth commandment mentions honoring mother and father, yet many of the rebellious youth of today dishonor their parents by sidestepping mom and dad's guidance and messing up their lives. The seventh commandment condemns immorality and yet most today are having sex outside of marriage and thinking it's a joke. The commandments also address lying, stealing, cheating and coveting among other things. The Bible goes further in addressing selfishness, pride, stubbornness, lust, greed, manipulation, rudeness and a host of other things. All of these things make up the sin

which is the underlying problem in the world today (something you never hear mentioned on the evening news).

If God were to eliminate the tragedies in the world today, He would have to get rid of mankind, which is the source of sin. If a man gets drunk and kills others in a car accident, it's not God's fault. God has warned many times in His Word about the woes of alcohol. If someone has a baby

"The Bible is the best gift God has given to man. All the good Savior gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it, we could not know right from wrong."

out of wedlock, or commits adultery and breaks up a marriage, it's not God's fault. God has already warned against immorality in His Word. If someone is covetous and overspends, it's not God's fault if he ends up in bankruptcy court. If someone is selfish and destroys relationships around him, is it God's fault? If nations ignore the principles of the Bible and cause problems and heartache with war and bloodshed on a national or world scale, is that God's fault? Normally, it's 'sin' that wrecks everything.

God has already warned us about sin. God originally set the parameters with "thou shalt and thou shalt not." If mankind violates those parameters, there will be problems. God's not out to spoil everyone's fun with His commandments; He's trying to keep people from ruining their lives and self-destructing. He does so because He is good! A great prophet in the Bible said, *"I will mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord... according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us... which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses"* (Isaiah 63:7). God is good, and He reveals to us His goodness in different ways.

His Individual Attention

God knows you as an individual. He knows the number of the hairs on your head (Matt 10:30). God even thinks about you! He says in Jeremiah 29:11, *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end."* God actually is aware of you and thinks about you. God has individual thoughts about your needs, your future, your plans, your job, and your relationships with others. God told Jacob individually in Genesis 32:12, *"I will surely do thee good."* Satan lies to the multitudes and convinces them that God doesn't care. Satan's goal is to get people bitter at God and cause them to blame God for all the misfortune in the world. Sadly, God's goodness and blessings are neither self-proclaimed nor self-pronouncing, and as a result people often take them for granted. The Bible says, *"Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness"* (Acts 14:17).

His Intentional Aim

God initially created mankind as a cherished object to love and fellowship with. He wanted to show His kindness and goodness toward someone so He created man. God wants to reveal His goodness toward you. But if God wants to show His goodness toward us, then why do bad things happen to us? This confuses many people.

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Sometimes bad things happen as a result of our past mistakes. Sometimes we are 'reaping what we've sown.' Gideon once asked God the question, "*Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this (evil) befallen us?*" (Judges 6:13). Unfortunately, the Jews were reaping what they had sown. Likewise, Jacob had done some bad sowing and finally, the chickens came home to roost when Jacob exclaimed, "*all these things are against me*" (Gen 42:36). The Bible says, "*Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way*" (Psalms 25:8). The psalmist further added, "*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord... Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. Thou art good, and doest good*" (Psalm 119:65-68).

But sometimes we haven't done anything to deserve the junk in life that comes our way. Joseph would be a good example of someone who was living right, but still suffered in a dungeon and slavery. He watched his dreams go up in smoke, but continued to trust God until he made a comeback and became the ruler of Egypt.

NOTABLE QUOTES

"It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me; it is the parts that I do understand."

— Mark Twain

"It is not so much learning how to get along with others as taking the kinks out of ourselves so that others can get along with us."

— J.C. Penney

"Everything is funny, as long as it is happening to somebody else."

— Will Rogers

"When a little bird tells you something, don't repeat it until you find out whether he is a little cuckoo"

— Sparks

The man Job also went through the mill, but hung on to see the blessings of God return to his life once again. These men and others continued to believe that God was good, no matter how bad the situations became. How about you? When things don't go your way, do you begin to doubt the goodness of God and become angry and upset with Him? Much of the philosophy of humanism and atheism can be traced back to someone being bitter at God for an unfortunate tragedy in their life.

It takes faith to still believe that God is good when things go bad. The Bible says, "*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths*" (Proverbs 3:5-6). What 'pleases' us is not always the most 'profitable' for us. What appears to be good, and what is actually the best are two different things. After Joseph reflected on his brothers' evil deed of selling him into slavery, he said, "*As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive*" (Genesis 50:20). The apostle Paul went through the mill while suffering one thing after another, yet he was able to say, "*The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel*" (Phil 1:12). Paul knew that God was good no matter what!

Maybe you have questioned God's goodness while going through a trial or while watching others suffer. Sadly, the human mind determines 'goodness' by how much prosperity and ease we experience. People are 'missing the boat' in this area. God may be currently using a heartache in your life to either get your attention or cause you to consider eternal matters. There are some things more valuable than 'prosperity and progress'. Jesus said, "*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*" (Mark 8:36). There are some things money can't buy. The Bible says in Romans 11:33, "*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*" Be careful not to question God when there's problems at work, or get miffed at God when there's problems with the car, or turn bitter at God during a financial reversal, or give up on God when the doctor says, "It's cancer." God always has a 'big picture plan' if we will only

trust in His goodness. The Bible says, "*We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*" (Romans 8:28).

His Infinite Ability

Many years ago, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said, "I believe that in the end, good will triumph." Her friend and fellow world leader President Reagan spoke of his strategy on the cold war when he said, "We win, they lose." For a Christian, we believe that when it's all said and done; God is good and will eventually triumph. God not only aims to do good, but is able to do good. The Bible says in Zechariah 9:17, "*For how great is His goodness...*" "*He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. The goodness of God endureth continually.*" (Psalms 33:5/52:1). God is not only inclined to do good, but is powerful and able to bring 'good' to pass. The prophet Jeremiah said, "*Ah Lord God! Behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee: Thou shewest loving kindness unto thousands*" (Jeremiah 32:17-18).

True Christians are to be a fulfillment of God's goodness. God wants you to trust Him. The Bible says, "*Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power*" (2 Thess 1:11). An optimist says, "Life is good!" while a Christian says, "God is good!" Then there are those who think they are heaven-bound Christians, but have never truly found salvation God's way. Sometimes, God will put a person 'through the mill' in order to get them to finally look up. The Bible says, "*The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance*" (Rom 2:4). Sometimes, the Lord will shake up someone's 'perfect little world' in order to get him to seek Him. The Bible says, "*The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him*" (Lam 3:25). Have you ever had a time when you made Christ the Lord of your life and trusted Him with all your heart? Psalms 86:5 says, "*For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.*" If you would like to know more about receiving Jesus Christ as your Savior, please go to: www.7stepstogod.org.

GOD'S EXCHANGE RATE

by David Dennis

Living this close to the Canadian border, we are familiar with something called the rate of exchange. It is the exchange rate between two different currencies such as the Canadian and the US dollar. On a given day, the varying rate may be 1.23 Canadian dollars for 1.00 US dollar.

Well God is an economist, and in a sense, He also has an exchange rate. But God's rate is not based on money; it is based on righteousness: on whether a person has sinned or not.

God is sinless, so by His nature He is incapable of sinning. On the opposite extreme, there is man. The Bible says of man, *"There is none righteous, no, not one... they are all gone out of the way, there is none that doeth good, no not one,"* (Rom 3:10, 12). Then in Romans 3:12 the Bible give us man's estimated value when it states, *"They are together become unprofitable."* What that statement is saying is man's value is zero, which is not very flattering. Yet it only stands to reason because in God's economy man is a sinner and therefore void of any value. Now at this point, don't put the paper down just yet without reading further. There is a happy ending.

Let's first define two words. They are 'value' and 'worth'. While you may hear these words used interchangeably, they are different. 'Value' is simply the 'cost of the object', taking into account the material, time and labor. The price is based on how useful or profitable it is. 'Worth' on the other hand is very different. It is based purely on what you are willing to pay for

the object and this price may rise or fall based on your desire or sentiment for the object. While 'value' is simply the cost, 'worth' is based on what you are willing to pay. That is why on the Antiques Roadshow, you will see an old item that has little use (no value), but may be priced at three or four thousand dollars. Why? Because it is old, it is unique, and there is someone out there who is willing to pay for it. It means something to his heart, and he's willing to pay big money for it.

Put yourself in the place of the following person and see the difference between value and worth. Sandy is at a flea market. As she is looking through the various items displayed, an old doll catches her eye. The dress is tattered, a leg is missing, and there are scratches all over it. She's wondering why this is even for sale. It belongs in the garbage, not on the table. But as she looks it over, there is something familiar about it. This doll is just like the one she and her sister used to play with – it looks exactly like it! The memories come flooding back. The applesauce she fed it; the rides in its own special car seat and her brother tying it to the railroad tracks. What are the chances it would be hers? She looks it over, and to her utter amazement, she sees her initials written on the back. "I don't believe it" she exclaims! Out loud she explains that this is the very doll she grew up with. The owner of the booth now knows her story. Now he knows what it means to her. Guess what? The price just went up!

"How much for the doll?" she asks. "Fifty dollars" he says. She's shocked. "What? Fifty

dollars? For an old beat up doll?" Wanting to get the best price, she adds, "That's a rip off. You know this has no value." The truth of his next brutally honest words strikes her. "I know it doesn't, and you know it doesn't. But I know what it's 'worth' to you. I own it, and if you want it; you have to pay the price." So she reaches into her purse and gives him \$50. As she walks away, her son asks, "Mom, why did you pay \$50 for an old beat up doll? You're never going to play with it, and it looks like it's ready to fall apart." "You're right son; its value is zero. But there are so many memories. I combed and braided her hair. Your aunt and I fed her, changed her diapers, and tucked her in at night. When she was sick I took her temperature; I gave her medicine. It was a part of me; a part of my life. I know it's kind of silly." With her eyes watering, she continues, "While this old doll has no value, because of the memories I have with it, it means so much to me; to my heart. Fifty dollars? It was 'worth it'. In fact, you want to know something crazy? I'd have been willing to pay a few hundred dollars for this old doll!" A few hundred dollars for a useless doll? But to Sandy, it was 'worth' it.

Mankind at one time had value. He was sinless. But of their own free will, Adam and Eve chose to sin, and their value in God's economy became zero. Remember what the Bible said about man? We had *"...together become unprofitable"*. Unprofitable means of no value. Man is useless in God's economy. Well, what do you do with something that has no value? You throw it away. God has a garbage pit. Because of our sin, God has no choice but to cast us into a place called hell. – *"...for the wages of sin is death (hell)..."* (Rom 6:23). But wait! While our value is zero, there is a price tag on us, that if paid will buy us back and get us out of this predicament.

But who would be willing to pay the asking price? It must be someone who really cares a lot for us. Why? Because to this person, we are 'worth' it? Remember, worth is of the heart, what someone is willing to pay. It is based on a sentiment toward a cherished object. The person who wants to buy us back is our Creator. After man's leap into sin, God still loved us. He remembered why He created us. He remembered man's purpose. He remembered the fellowship, the memories

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Faith for Life

God's Exchange Rate

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of love and joy. As God recalled memories of creation, of His investment, the sentiment came flooding back to Him. In a sense, God carved His initials into us by making us in His image. Man's value might be zero, but what was man worth to God? ...everything! God was willing to do anything to rescue his beloved treasure – man. But the asking price was high. God loved man and didn't want to send him to this 'garbage pit', yet in order to judge sin, He had to. God wanted man in heaven with Him, but He cannot have sin in heaven. What could He do? God was in a dilemma.

God's Law demanded death. *"The wages of sin is death,"* (Romans 6:23)

God's law demanded that innocent blood be shed, *"...without shedding of blood is no remission,"* (Hebrews 9:22)

God's law demanded that sin be punished, *"...as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law,"* (Romans 2:12b).

But wait a minute; there was a way. If God could find someone with value (Someone sinless) that could meet the requirements, then that One could pay the asking price. But in this case, the One with value isn't just forking over some cash; the asking price is the sacrifice of this One with value! The One who was sinless would be the exchange. God would take our sins, place them upon this Sinless Sacrifice, punish this Substitute, shed His blood, and put Him to death instead of us. In exchange, we could receive this sinless man's righteousness. We could then be forgiven. Man could be rescued from hell, and could spend eternity in heaven with God. God's justice would be satisfied, and man's sin would be paid for. God's justice would be satisfied by judging the sin. God's mercy would be revealed by providing a way out. The scales would be balanced and everything would be even. If an individual accepted this gift, he could receive eternal life.

But the asking price was high...very high. This person must first be born without the sin of Adam (this first criteria is impossible already, since all of us have inherited the sin nature of Adam – Rom 5:12). He must also live a sinless life. He must then have the sin of every man, woman and child of every age

placed upon Him. He then must have God's wrath poured out upon him in judgment for the sins that others committed. His innocent blood must then be shed, and then finally, he must die. Where would we find someone who was willing? If I had to scour the entire earth to find that One human being that was sinless, would I do it? With everything at stake, of course I would! And when I found him I would tell him "I don't deserve it, but I'm begging for myself, my friends and loved ones, in fact for the sake of nearly seven billion people, would you please be willing to give your life for all of us?...please?"

But sadly, we can forget about looking for someone who is willing, because we can't even get past the first requirement. There is no human being with that sinless 'value'. All of mankind's collective value still adds up to zero – "unprofitable". What about an angel? Could he pay the price? Angels in heaven may be sinless. But an angel was created as an angel, and can't become a man. It was mankind that sinned; therefore it must be a man that pays the price. All was hopeless and there was nothing mankind could do about it. Man was condemned.

That is when God Himself stood to His feet. All of heaven must have breathed a collective gasp, when the Creator - with the same voice that spoke the universe into existence exclaimed, "I will go." Man needed a sinless sacrifice, someone with 'value'. Only God was sinless. This was His creation and this was His investment. God wouldn't ask anyone else to die for His own creation. Jesus Christ who has always existed as the physical member of the Trinity (Colossians 2:9) would be born of a virgin and become that sinless man, live a sinless life, be punished for mankind, shed his blood and die in exchange for man.

You can tell how much an object is worth by how much a person is willing to give. In our story Sandy was willing to give over a hundred dollars, but God gave everything. Think of that...He gave his own son. God must think a lot of you; And what about

Jesus Christ? He took your sins and was punished for something he had never done, so you and all your loved ones could be with Him in heaven...if you choose. How about You? Though you are still a sinner, you will have your sins washed away and receive the righteousness of Jesus on your record. God will look at you as if you have never sinned. Sin will no longer have control over you and Heaven will be your future home. On top of all of that, you will have a relationship with God. Was the price heavy? Yes, incredibly so. But to God, you were worth it. Never has there been such a paradox. The God of infinite value dies for His creation, which has a value of zero. That's God's exchange rate... everything for nothing. Please consider the following wonderful verses of scripture.

"For he (God) hath made him (Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor 5:21)

"He (Jesus) was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: ... and with his stripes we are healed. ...the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.... Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him... He (God) shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied... for he (Jesus) shall bear their (mankind's) iniquities." (Isaiah 53:5-11)

"All things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission (of sin)." (Hebrews 9:22)

"We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb 10:10-14)

"Unto him (Jesus) that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev 1:5b)



THE BIBLE AND *sex*

We live in a sex-saturated society. There was a time when the word “sex” was said in hush tones. Today it screams at us from televisions, radios, movie screens and billboards. The saddest part is most of the time our society is engaged in illicit sex! Our culture laughs about housewives cheating on their husbands. The boundaries of our society keep moving, but God’s opinion is timeless. The Bible addresses all forms of sex very clearly. Please consider the plain scriptures on sex in the following areas:

MARRIAGE (Legitimate sex)

Genesis 1:28 “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth”.

Genesis 2:24 “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (intimacy).

Proverbs 5:18-19 “Rejoice with the wife of thy youth...and be thou ravished always with her love.”

1 Corinthians 7:2,5,9 “Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife and...defraud ye not one the other (ie, don’t withhold intimacy from spouse). for it is better to marry than to burn” (i.e., be inflamed with lust)

Hebrews 13:4 “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”

FORNICATION (Sex outside of marriage)

1 Corinthians 6:9 “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators.”

1 Corinthians 6:18 “Flee fornication...he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.”

Ephesians 5:5 “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person...hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ.”

1 Thessalonians 4:3 “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.”

Revelation 21:8 “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers...shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

ADULTERY (Having an “affair” within marriage)

Exodus 20:14 “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

Leviticus 20:10 “And the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife, even he...the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.”

Matthew 5:27-28 “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

1 Corinthians 6:9 “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither...adulterers.”

Galatians 5:19, 21 “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness...and such like: of the which I tell you...that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

PORNOGRAPHY (Visual immorality)

Exodus 28:42 “And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach.”

Revelation 3:18 “That thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.”

POLYGAMY (Having more than one spouse)

Genesis 2:24 “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife (singular): and they shall be one flesh.”

Deuteronomy 17:17 “Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away.”

Matthew 19:5 “For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?”

1 Timothy 3:2 “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife.”

SODOMY (Homosexuality or lesbianism)

Leviticus 18:22 “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.”

Leviticus 20:13 “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.”

1 Kings 14:24 “And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations.”

Romans 1:26-27 “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet (disease).”

1 Corinthians 6:9 “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of

Only sex within a meaningful and committed marriage relationship can bring true satisfaction.

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God? *Be not deceived: neither...effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind.*"

2 Peter 2:6 *"And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes (God) condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly."*

Jude 1:7 *"Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about...going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."*

PEDOPHILIA (An adult molesting a child)

Matthew 18:6 *"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."*

BEASTIALITY (A human molesting an animal)

Exodus 22:19 *"Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death."*

Leviticus 18:23 *"Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion."*

Leviticus 20:16 *"And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them."*

Conclusion: Our culture is trying everything possible to find fulfillment in illicit sex. Someone said, if illicit sex really brought satisfaction, our society would shine like the noon day sun. Only sex within

a meaningful and committed marriage relationship can bring true satisfaction. God gave sex within marriage as a blessing and also to replenish the earth (Gen 1:28). According to the verses above, illicit sex is strongly condemned. The eternal consequences for such sins are very serious (Eph 5:5, Rev 21:8). Is there a remedy? Thankfully there is hope. Please carefully read pages 14 and 15 for the answer. ■

Gentle Thoughts for Today

The older you get, the tougher it is to lose weight, because by then your body and your fat have gotten to be really good friends.

The easiest way to find something lost around the house is to buy a replacement.

Did you ever notice: The Roman Numerals for forty (40) are 'XL.'

Home Improvements

continued from page 3

Men tend to be 'success-oriented', while women tend to be 'security-oriented'. A woman has a 'nesting', or nurturing, instinct and likes to create beauty while the man is more interested in the 'meat and potatoes'. A man sees his work as an extension of himself while a woman's home is an extension of herself. In a world of danger and nastiness, the man has to be a bit thick-skinned. As the protector and provider, he tends to be a bit insensitive in the process. The woman, however, leans toward being sensitive. The bottom line is that God made us different so He could make us one. The Bible says, *"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour"* (Eccl 4:9).

The role of the husband is to meet the needs of his wife and kids. Sadly, instead, many husbands selfishly live to have their needs met. God made the man the head of the house (I Cor 11:3). That doesn't mean he's to act like King Kong, throwing his weight around. Too many men want the glory without the grunt work, and the headship without the hassles. As the head of the house, it is the husband's responsibility to serve his family. Jesus said, *"Whosoever of*

you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all" (Mark 10:44). A good husband will serve his wife and children as a servant leader. Respect and trust is not demanded but earned. A wise husband will not terrorize his wife with irresponsible behavior like not paying the bills, or forgetting to renew the house insurance, etc.

The role of the wife is to be a nurturer of her home (Prov. 31:27). She is also to be an example of a 'godly, meek and quiet' spirited woman (I Pet 3:4). The Bible also teaches that she is to be as submissive to her husband as he is to serve her (Eph 5:22). Wifely submission doesn't mean she is subservient or inferior. Jesus is eternally equal with His Father (Phil 2:6-7), yet eternally submissive. With a husband and wife, it's likewise a case of one equal willingly placing herself under another equal, that there might not be a two-headed monster in the home. Every team needs a leader like a quarterback or a coach for the team to run smoothly.

A wise husband will send a message to his wife that she is 'number one'; coming before his job, his hobbies, his friends and even the children. He should especially assure her that he is not interested in any other woman. He needs to be sure that he doesn't commit

emotional adultery by getting close to any woman at work or in the neighborhood. He should never share personal or intimate information with any other woman than his wife. Emotional adultery often eventually leads to physical adultery. A wise husband will also refrain from dumping his burdens on his wife. Many men come home grumpy and unload on the family. A Christian man will take those burdens to the Lord to find grace to help in times of trouble. A wise husband will shield his wife from the trauma of the world.

Finally, a marriage shouldn't end at the wedding altar. The same behavior should continue that was used to pursue the other spouse before marriage. Sadly, such behavior changes after the wedding when couples stop their 'dating attitudes' and go into 'auto-pilot.' Someone said to 'keep the honey in the ongoing honeymoon'. Most of all, remember that a marriage is actually a covenant between a man, a woman, and their Creator. It's not a duet, but a trio. It's very important to have God in the equation. Is your home truly a spiritual home? Do you really have a relationship with the Lord? If not, please go to www.7stepstoGod.org. ■

I Have A Question

What is God's Plan for Getting to Heaven?

Jesus said, *"Except a man be born again (spiritually), he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (heaven), (John 3:3). This is because we were all born with a sinful nature, spiritually dead. Just as we've all had a time and place when we were born physically, we must also have a time when we are born again spiritually. We are not automatically Christians (born again or saved) just because Jesus died on the cross for our sins. Jesus said, *"Except ye be converted... ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt 18:3). No one has always been a Christian. John 1:12 says, *"But as many as received him (Christ), to them gave he power to become the sons (children) of God."* No matter what anyone else says, the Bible teaches a conversion experience. The Bible is full of examples of people who had a spiritual conversion such as Zacchaeus, Matthew, Nicodemus, Pentecost converts, Paul, the prison guard, Cornelius, Rabbi Crispus and others. 2 Cor 5:17 says, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* This is the spiritual pivotal point of life.

Steps to Being Born Again

The first step is the hardest one. We must recognize our sinfulness. Most people don't see themselves as that bad of a sinner. They are like the Pharisee in Luke 18 who recognized the sinfulness of others, but was blind to his own sin. The Bible says in Romans 3:10, *"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one."* Isaiah 64:6 says, *"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."* Yet, most people fail to see themselves as that bad.

They feel they are a good person, but they are comparing themselves to others, instead of God's standard: the 10 Commandments. Let's see how you rate compared to the 10 Commandments.

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

#1 "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

No one can claim they have never put anything ahead of God such as money, a career, self centered goals, pleasure, sports, entertainment, sin, vice, a relationship with another, etc.

#2 "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image (of God)" (Exodus 20:4).

Many have been guilty of inventing a "God of their own imagination" and liking... a God who suits them. People want a God that overlooks sin and takes everyone to heaven. They have improvised and dreamed up a God of their own image.

#3 "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Exodus 20:7)

Reread that carefully. God is keeping record of every time you've used His name as a curse word and you will answer for it one day.

#4 "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8)

Have you always honored the Lord's Day or been faithful in church attendance? (Heb 10:25)

#5 "Honor thy father and thy mother." (Exodus 20:12)

Have you ever disrespected or disobeyed your parents? Have you ever argued with them or dishonored them? Have you always obeyed them immediately with a good attitude?

#6 "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13)

Although most people have never committed murder, they are guilty of "murder of the heart." Jesus explains this commandment in Matthew 5:21-2 by saying, *"Whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother... shall be in danger of hell fire."* Have you ever been mad, bitter or resentful toward someone?

#7 "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14)

While many have never committed adultery, Jesus said, *"Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart,"* (Matt 5:27-8). Have you ever lusted after the opposite sex? This is adultery of the heart according to Jesus.

#8 "Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15)

Who could claim they've never taken anything that doesn't belong to them?... something small or even the boss's time?

#9 "Thou shalt not bear false witness" (Exodus 20:16)

No one could honestly claim they have never told a lie!

#10 "Thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:17)

Have you ever desired anything you didn't have or didn't need? Have you ever longed for what belonged to someone else? Have you ever been discontented or ungrateful?

Most people are guilty of breaking most or all 10 commandments! Even more alarming are the many places in the Bible which reveal that liars, adulterers, thieves, the covetous, etc., will spend eternity in hell! (Rev 21:8, I Cor 6:9-10, Gal 5:19-21). How could you ever expect to get to heaven by living a good life? Romans 3:10 says, *"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one."* Romans 3:23 says, *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* Most don't

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Faith for Life

God's Plan for Getting to Heaven

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realize that sin has a penalty. Romans 6:23 says, *"For the wages of sin is death"* (Hell).

We cannot possibly get to heaven by keeping the law (10 Commandments). The law was given by God to show us how desperately we need forgiveness by accepting the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for our sins. The Bible says, *"The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith"* (Galatians 3:24). We are condemned on our own, and need a Savior! Once we recognize this, we are qualified to be saved. Jesus said, *"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost,"* (Luke 19:10). We must see ourselves as lost. This is the key to being born again!

Many foolishly attempt to make themselves acceptable to God by their works. In Romans 10:1-3, Paul says, *"I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge"* (Bible truth). *For they ...going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God,"* (the payment of the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary). After everything Jesus suffered for you on the cross, trying to work your way to heaven is an insult to God. It's like saying that the sacrifice of Jesus wasn't adequate to pay for your sins. Many self-righteous people think they're good enough to work their

way to heaven. Jesus said, *"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not ...in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity,"* (Matt 7:22-3). Sadly, these wound up in hell because they were trusting in their own goodness and works instead of the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins.

Jesus is our substitute sacrifice for sin. The Bible says, *"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures"* (1 Cor. 15:3). Jesus paid for our sin on the cross. We cannot be born again by earning it. Titus 3:5 says, *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."* Ephesians 2:8-9 says, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."* All your faith must be in Jesus Christ 100%.

Getting to heaven cannot be by both grace and works. Rom. 11:6 says, *"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified (saved) by faith without the deeds of the law,"* (Rom. 3:28). Any verses in the Bible eluding to doing good works are always addressed to someone who is already born-again, encouraging him to faithfully serve the Lord after being saved! Titus 3:8

says, *"They which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works."*

Baptism has nothing to do with getting us to heaven. In fact, St. Paul said, *"Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel,"* (1 Cor. 1:17). The thief on the cross went to heaven without ever being baptized. You won't find a baby baptized anywhere in the Bible, nor anyone else getting baptized before being born again. However, after someone has been saved, he should follow the example of Jesus by being baptized (immersed) in a true Bible-practicing church. But remember: we are saved by the blood of Christ, and not the water of the baptistery. Ephesians 1:7 says, *"We have redemption through His (Jesus') blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace,"* (a favor from God). Romans 5:9-10 says, *"Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him (Jesus). When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."* Romans 5:1 says, *"Therefore being justified by faith (in His blood), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Part 2 of this article will be continued in the next issue of Faith for Life. If you would like more information please go to: www.7StepsToGod.org.

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Pastor's Perspective

DE-CLUTTERING OUR HEARTS

When it comes to a speedway, the pace car sets the pace. But sadly when it comes to life, society seems to set the pace. I'm afraid the days of sitting on the front porch with grandpa and grandma on a quiet evening, are a thing of the past. Scientist Dr. Joseph Buckley spent eleven years studying rats to prove that the term "rat race" actually hits a little too close to home. Dr. Buckley subjected thousands of rats to 'pressure chambers' which simulated the modern life of humans, with bright flashing lights, honking horns, jet plane roars, jostling, continual motion, and many other things similar to the 'human rat race.' After weeks of this, the rats developed high blood pressure, noted stress and irritability along with anger.

The Stress

"It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling" (Proverbs 20:3).

When I was a kid, I remember my mom taking black and white pictures with the Brownie camera and an attached flashbulb. She would then take the film to the drug store and wait a few weeks for it to come back developed. At today's breakneck pace, we can take a picture from our smart phone and send it over to Africa without moving from the spot we're standing. On May 24, 1844, Samuel Morse sent the first telegram from Washington to Baltimore quoting from the Bible when he exclaimed, "What hath God wrought!" Today we can surf the worldwide internet from the middle of a wheat field in ND without any wires (I'll never forget sending my first email or getting my first fax)!

I still remember the 'old days' of sitting in the living room waiting for the black and white TV to warm up. Mom had an old wringer washing machine and a wooden dowel clothesline in the basement for drying. Today, we have all the modern inventions designed to be time savers. So where is all of that extra time? I'm afraid we've filled it with more running and activity. Science and technology are wonderful, but they certainly haven't simplified life. Life keeps getting more complicated. Our nation has functioned for hundreds of years governing hundreds of millions of people off of a Constitution made up of 21 pages, while the operating manual of a Toyota Camry (which seats five) contains 228 pages!

Did God ever mean for it to get this hectic or has man messed up things? The Bible says, *"When He (God) giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?"* (Job 34:29) The answer is mankind! The early settlers to this area lived very simple lives. Most men had three outfits. Two of the sets of clothes were coveralls for working the field, and the third outfit was a set of go-to-town clothes.

Ecclesiastes 4:6 says, *"Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit."* The Bible speaks about getting entangled with the things of this life (II Tim 2:4).

The Silliness

"(God) said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear" (Isaiah 28:12).

Sometimes people subject themselves to the stress of 'life's treadmill' because it makes them feel like they're needed. Our insecurity pushes us to meet our own emotional needs this way. We thrive on 'feeling better about ourselves' by going a 100 miles an hour through life. We crave that pat on the head we get from others for being so busy. We become sickos having to fill our days with stuff. We run ourselves ragged and have a nervous breakdown striving for that emotional 'runners high.' We live for the temporal joy of accomplishment. We start feeding off of all the people who need us and everything else that's pulling at us. But you can only tighten a violin string so much before it snaps. We eventually become tense and angry.

Sadly, the pride of being busy with tons of stuff going on ends up draining us, and leaving us hollow. We almost become afraid to be still and 'face ourselves.' Activity becomes a cheap anesthetic to deaden the pain of an empty life. There's nothing wrong with slowing down, nor do we need to feel guilty. Jesus told His disciples in Mark 6:31, *"Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat."* Simply put, "if you don't come apart, you'll eventually come apart." We claim that we'd rather burn out than rust out as if it has to be one or the other. In truth, we simply need to filter out the nonessentials.

The Simplification

"Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord" (Zechariah 2:13).

Hours after a baby was born, his mother began flipping the nursery light off and on. "That will strengthen his eye muscles," she said. Days later, she held him gently in her arms and twirled in circles. "That will improve his balance," she said. When he was 21 months old, she flashed word cards - "Mommy" and "Daddy" - before his eyes. That would teach him to read earlier. This all comes on the heels of studies which suggest that parents should make their toddlers 'little Einsteins' from the womb. Supposedly, the road to Harvard begins at birth, and so accelerated learning is gaining disciples nationwide. But according to a leading psychologist Dr. West, parents who emphasize a baby's intellectual growth rather than psychological growth will find that their child eventually suffers from a number of emotional disorders. The child may either become emotionally withdrawn, aggressive, socially stunted, and at the very least will be a prime candidate for lifelong stress.

Jesus Christ kept it simple. He owned one robe, never traveled more than 175 miles from his birthplace, focused on mentoring 12 men, and finished His ministry in about three years. The apostle Paul told a group of Christians, *"I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ"* (II Cor 11:3). Paul also wrote, *"That in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation (lifestyle) in the world"* (II Cor 1:12). Great Christians of the past all led very simple and uncluttered lives. Their main focus was to walk with God. Today, the devil loves to keep us on a treadmill, busy with anything that will block out God. If we're living a complicated life, we really have no one to blame but ourselves. We don't have to live a tense and complicated existence, frittering our lives away on things that will be trivial in eternity.

The Serenity

"Surely I have behaved and quieted myself" (Psalm 131:2).

In Hillsdale, New Jersey, the head of the Department of Public Works resigned as superintendent. But before he did, he hired himself as the new garbage truck driver. He said he was "tired of the pressure of being the head administrator." Is it really necessary to go through life multi-tasking while trying to be in two places at one time? The most important thing in life is God our Creator. He says in Jeremiah 29:13, *"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."* Unless we provide little pockets of silence in our lives, we won't make an effort to find God. Job 22:21 says, *"Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee."* When's the last time you sat still long enough to just think about your Creator? Psalms 4:4 says, *"Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."* God could have made us robots to tend to the earth, but He made us humans to have a relationship with Him. The world has lost its way and is trying to solve its problems by going faster. God help us to keep it simple! Jesus said, *"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid"* (John 14:27). Too many people only know God from the chin up. The noise of 'busy-ness' drowns Him out. We live in a chatty society that makes little effort to find the Lord. But our Creator says, *"Be still, and know that I am God"* (Psalms 46:10).

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