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Christian Shepherd • Vol. 5 • No. 7 • July 2000

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## Editorial

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### Collectibles—are they priceless or worthless?

I was recently sitting at a table in the activity room of a retirement home when two elderly ladies entered. One was pushing a large cart loaded with dolls, framed pictures, knickknacks, tiny antique statues—a most interesting potpourri of “collectibles”. Behind her in a wheel chair followed the owner, whose turn it was to display her accumulation of things at a monthly “collectors club” meeting.

Many other elderly ladies were excitedly making their way towards the room, obviously looking forward to seeing another’s *collectibles*. I overheard one remark with obvious envy, “Mary’s husband collected elephants. He had over two hundred of them!” Man by nature is a *collector* of a seemingly endless list of things—figurines, coins, china, antiques, dolls, toys, books, anything and everything.

While not condemning such hobbies if they are kept in proper balance, I did wonder, watching these dear elderly souls, if those things they had so diligently collected—and which seemed so important to them—provided any *lasting* joy, comfort, or satisfaction in these last, closing years of their lives.

Interestingly, the Word of God gives us a Divine record of many *collectors*—some whose collections were priceless, while others’ proved worthless.

A shining example of a priceless *collection* as we may say, was accumulated by the sweet Psalmist of Israel—David. He had desired to build a house of worship in which the God of Israel would dwell. But

Jehovah's word came to him through the prophet—*Thou shalt not build an house unto my name.* (1 Chron. 22:8) David submitted to the Lord's word, and then began *collecting* many of the materials he knew his son Solomon would need to build that glorious temple. (1 Chron. 22:2-5, 14-16) He built this collection—not to *keep* it for himself—but with the purpose of *leaving* it for the benefit of others.

Let us diligently *lay up* the treasures of *Divine truth* we have received—for our benefit and the benefit of our younger brethren. (Matt. 6:20, 2 Cor. 6:14) If the Lord carries these Divine truths must be used by all who seek to build in the assembly.

David's son, Solomon (the wisest man, apart from the Lord Jesus, that ever lived), was also allowed to become a *collector*. But his collections serve to teach us the *emptiness*—in view of eternity—of this world's treasures. He *collected* as it were many things—knowledge, possessions, businesses, agricultural holdings, and much more (see Ecc. 1, 2). Yet after acquiring all, Solomon characterized his *collections* as “vanity and vexation of spirit.” (Ecc. 2:17) Worse, some of his *collections* turned his heart from the Lord to serve idols. He *collected* 1,400 chariots, immense amounts of silver and cedar, and saddest of all, he *collected* 700 wives and 300 concubines. What was the result? His heart was turned away *after other gods* bringing Jehovah's anger and judgement upon him. (see 1 Kings 11)

Oh! may we, like the Apostle Paul, value everything in comparison to the incomparable Christ—our truly priceless Treasure! (Phil. 3:8) *Ed.*

### Remembering the Lord—a recollection

I remember the first time I attended a meeting when the hymn “*O Christ, what burdens bowed Thy head*” (#137, L.F.) was sung. There was a table in the center on which set one cup of wine, and one, large loaf of bread. Having been a cleric I wondered how would they get along? Who was going to take charge? Who would lead? One dear old brother gave out that hymn “O Christ, what burdens bowed thy head...” . They sang it with such feeling and I found my soul deeply touched.

I wondered who next would say something, who was going to take the next step. Well, another brother read from Psalm 102 and then Psalm 82 and sat down. After that another brother over on the side prayed. I had never heard a prayer like that— extolling the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary. How He had dealt effectually and absolutely with the question of sins, had borne all the judgment that was my due. He stressed sins, not sin, because the Lord dealt with that, definitely, eternally— “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” (1Pe 2:24) This was the form of the meeting.

I was wondering what would happen next when another note of praise—a hymn—was given out on the same theme, the suffering of Christ. After this a brother got up and broke the bread and they all partook of it except a group at the back. I asked another, “Why didn’t they partake?” The answer was “Because they’re not in fellowship yet, they haven’t

been gathered to His name. They're the Lord's but they haven't asked for their place at His table."

The same brother then gave thanks for the cup and they partook of it. Later a basket was passed around and they put in as the Lord had prospered each one. The meeting ended with a little exhortation from Psalm 102 which I've never forgotten.

It says there "I am like a pelican in the wilderness, I am like an owl of the desert, I watch and am as a sparrow upon the house top". The brother then turned to 2 Cor. 5:24 "He hath made him to be sin. . . who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him". Why had he brought that in? "Well", another said, "those are unclean birds according to the law of Moses, and that's what the Lord Jesus endured. He was without sin, but our sins were laid on him, your sins and mine were heaped upon that blessed one". That is my memory, beloved, of the first time I was able to observe a worship meeting. It was precious. Are we growing careless?

Now another thought I have enjoyed—Nearness to the Lord Jesus would keep us from sectarianism, the most natural weed of the human heart. The service of love will seek to give according to the need and because of the need we will never think of slighting the objects of the Saviour's love. "*Thine are we, David and on thy side, thou son of Jesse, peace, peace be unto thee and peace be to thine helpers for thy God helpeth thee*". (1 Chron. 12:18)

*Excerpt adapted from an address, E. Smith*

## ***“Looking upon Jesus as He walked”***

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Luke 9:7-50

Sin and conscience

Let us next look at Herod for a moment in [Luke] chapter 9. Do you think you have done with sin, when you have committed it? Well, one thing is certain, it has not done with *you*. The *charm* of sin is gone the moment it is perpetrated. That is *your* way of disposing of sin. But conscience which makes cowards of us all. Sin It lets you know that it has not done with *you*.

Herod had beheaded John long before, but now it was said of some the John was risen from the dead, and Herod is perplexed. Here is the *worm that never dies* (Mk. 9:44), doing its business. I am not seeking to make a determination of its eternity, but the Lord in such cases lifts the veil from hell and shows us the worm at its work. Herod could not rest. How could he!—he, the murderer of the greatest witness of God in the world at that moment!

The Lord's feast

Then we have the apostles returning to Jesus and telling what they had done, and then the feeding of the multitude. Here we get the largeness of the heart of Christ in contrast with every human heart. Even the lovable open-hearted, good-natured Peter stands in contrast with the heart of Christ.

*They* say, “Send the multitude away.” *He* says “No, Give *ye* them to eat.” And they in a sulky mood of mind say, “What! are we to go and *buy*?”

The Lord does not refuse to go on with His sulky disciples. He met with vanity, ignorance, heartlessness, bad temper. He always overcame evil with good. If *my* bad temper puts *you* into a bad temper, you have been overcome of evil. God never gives place to evil. This is a beautiful instance of it. The disciples said, "Send them away", Jesus said, "Make them sit down." Then, being Master of the feast, He must supply the guests.

Mark the moral beauty of Jesus' feast. He sits as the head of the table in the glory of God, and as the perfect Man. As God, He puts forth His creative powers, and was acting without robbery (Phil. 2:6). He not only *was* God, but there was no form of divine power that He would not put forth.

He took His place as perfect Man—an entire contradiction to Adam. What was Adam's offense? He did not give thanks, but assumed to be master of all. It was a man refusing to be thankful. The Lord as perfect Man gives thanks.

I see Him taking His place at the head of the table in the wilderness, as perfect God and perfect Man. The worship that God got in the Person of Jesus was richer incense to Him than if Adam had lived forever as a thankful man. Jesus came to erect out of the ruins, a temple for the glory of God that the creation in integrity would never have yielded.

Now our blessed God would have us to know that at His table there always more than enough. We know what it is to sit comfortably at a plentiful table. When I see very God *making* the feast, and very Man giving thanks, then leaving the *wagon loads* of

fragments, so to speak, what can I do but be thankful! We may, each one, be full and go away thankful that there is plenty for others.

#### Thoughts of Christ

Now in v. 18 we get a very important part of the gospel story. The Lord was in prayer, and when he arose, He asked His disciples, “Whom say the people that I am?” There is a great deal to be learned in the *style* [manner] in which an event recorded in Scripture. Here the Lord’s question draws out the proof that the world was rejecting Him. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”

You are in the vestibule—the porch—of the mountain of transfiguration. Now He has ascended into heaven as the earth-rejected Son of man. Man would not give Him place here, So God took Him up to heaven. He asked, “Whom say the people that I am?” And they answered, “Some say . . . Elias, and others, . . . one of the old prophets.” “*What!* Is that the best thought that Israel has of Me? But whom say ye that I am?”

#### The glory of Christ

Then the Lord says to the disciples, as it were, “Do not be loving your life. come away up to the hill with Me, and there I will show the glory.” Now, what suits the man on his way to heavenly glory? Is it money and power, and such like, he should be seeking? Judge in yourselves if this is consistent in a man to load himself with clay on his way to a *place* where there is *no* clay? The Lord shows you the

path, and shows you the end of the path. It is only our love of present things that makes such a lesson difficult. My whole soul seals it; would that my whole heart adopted it.

#### The ability of Christ

After this, the Lord comes down (v. 37) and meets His disciples in their inability to cast out a demon. Now, on no occasion does the Lord express disappointment of heart more vividly than here. "O faithless and perverse generation," He says. The Lord had been tasting the joys of His own land, and He comes down to find faithlessness and defilement. He does not look for glory here, but He does look for the laborings and energy of faith. When He finds Himself unhelped by the disciples, He says, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you?" They were amazed at His glory, but while those rays of glory were shining still about His countenance, He says as it were, "let this be your understanding of Me . . . for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men."

*Notes on the Gospel of Luke, J. G. Bellet*

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#### Thoughts on law and grace

To mingle grace with the law changes nothing in its effect, except to aggravate the penalty that results from it by aggravating the guilt of him who violated the law, in spite of the goodness and the grace. The second descent of Moses from Mount Sinai, [took place after] he had heard the name of Jehovah

proclaimed, *merciful* and *gracious* (Ex. 34:6). God [had made] all His *goodness* pass before him, and the face of Moses reflected the glory which he had seen, partial as it may have been.

Though grace had been shewn in sparing [of the people] on Moses' intercession (Ex. 32:30), the requirement of the law was still maintained, and every one suffered the consequences of his own disobedience.

There are many Christians who make a law of Christ Himself. They think of His love as a fresh motive to oblige them to love Him. It is an obligation, a very great obligation which they feel bound to satisfy. That is to say, they are still under the law, and consequently under condemnation.

The ministry which the apostle Paul fulfilled was not this. It was the ministry of righteousness and of the Spirit—not as requiring righteousness in order to stand before God, but as revealing it. Christ was this righteousness, made such on God's part for us, and we are made the righteousness of God in Him. The gospel proclaimed righteousness on God's part, instead of requiring it from man according to the law.

*Excerpted, Synopsis, 2 Cor. 3, J. N. D.*

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#### Thoughts on Worship and Praise

*“And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshipping the Lord. And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites,*

*stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice on high.” (2 Chron. 20:18, 19)*

I have enjoyed thinking lately about the difference between worship and praise . Worship, it seems to me, is to bow before God for *Who* He is, while praise seems to have more to do with *what* He has done. There is a tendency in the church today to neglect worship, while emphasizing praise. Both are important, but these verses give the order, and position with regard to both.

It also seems to me that in singing, *worship* hymns call for a somewhat slower tempo than do *praise* hymns. Hymn 150 in the “Little Flock” is an outstanding example of a worship hymn. May the blessed Holy Spirit raise in our hearts worship suited to the greatness of our God and His Christ, and may we also respond to the call in Psalms 148, 149 and 150 in everlasting praise to the One who created us and has redeemed us from our lost condition!

*“Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.” (Psa. 29:2)*

*“Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD” (Ps 150:6).*

*R. K. Gorgas*

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It is a deeply solemn thing to learn Divine truth; for there is not one Divine principle which we profess to have learned which we shall not have to prove practically in daily life.

*Food for the Desert*

## ***Meditations of a father***

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### **The Armor of God—Ephesians 6:13-18**

First piece of armor—Loins girded

*“Loins girt about with truth.”* Nothing strengthens a person like the truth. How important the daily reading and meditating on the Word of God. Lies are so common in our culture—and while at times from our limited perspective they may appear convenient, it always and only complicates and weakens us. The enemy well knows it and tries all he can to get us from the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus. Cultivate love of the truth—it will strengthen you.

Girding it on simply means making it practical in life. Don't just talk about it, do it. If you find you have been ensnared in some area by a lie, be truthful about that too—don't cover it up. Set your face toward the Lord Jesus for He is *the truth*. How wonderful to have in our hands written in black and white for us to read the *Word*. The Lord Jesus said to His Father, “Thy Word is truth.” In this way *truth* is completely objective and absolute. Remember, our experiences and feelings are not the norm.

Second piece of armor—Breastplate

*“Having on the breastplate of righteousness;”* This is simply keeping a good conscience. You know well that when your conscience accuses you of something wrong in your life, that you are in no shape to face the enemy. Paul said in Acts 24:16, “Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward

men.” He did not make a blanket statement, “I have a good conscience,” but rather “I exercise myself to have.” That is a continual exercise. Even in Hebrews 13 he says, “we trust that we have a good conscience.” Conscience is not a good guide—the Word of God and the Spirit of God guide—but it is a good policeman so don’t ignore its voice. Face things squarely in the light of God’s presence. You only hinder yourself if you refuse to judge yourself there.

Third piece of armor—Feet shod

“*Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.*” *Feet* speaks of our walk. It is important to walk what we talk if there is to be power in our testimony. If we walk in the peace of God it will be evident in our demeanor and people will listen when we give them the gospel of peace *with* God. The storm may be raging around us, but that cannot disturb the peace that surrounds God’s throne and our own souls as we walk with God.

Fourth piece of armor—Shield

The fourth piece of armour is very important: “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” It is, simply put, implicit and entire confidence in God. When every outward circumstance seems to indicate otherwise, but we have a positive word from God, we choose to believe God.

Paul in the midst of the storm in Acts 27 was told by an angel of God that “God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.” Based on that word from

God, he could further say, “be of good cheer: for *I believe God.*” You might have said to him, “be reasonable, Paul, look at where we are!” But God had spoken and therefore the storm had ceased in his soul even though it yet raged around.

Fiery darts are doubts that the enemy casts to knock us down. We should mistrust ourselves and may have reason to mistrust others. But we should never allow mistrust of God. Hang on to His infallible Word. He will always be true to it. We need to let Him fulfil His promises as only He can and will. Sometimes we get our ideas on how He should come through based on His Word. But His thoughts are greater than ours, His way far better all around.

#### Fifth piece of armor—Helmet

This is “the helmet of salvation.” In 1 Thess. 5:8, it says, “for an helmet, the hope of salvation.” Here it is broader. It simply means that when we enter the battle armed with this, we know (it covers the head) that whatever may happen, we will come out victorious in the end. We are “more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” This gives confidence and liberates us from fear.

Hymn 16 in the appendix puts it well: “*For every tribulation, For every sore distress, In Christ I’ve full salvation, Sure help and quiet rest. No fear of foes prevailing! I triumph, Lord, in Thee! O Jesus! Friend unfailing, How dear art Thou to me!*”

#### Sixth piece of armor—Sword

This piece is the only offensive piece (not

defensive as the first five)—“the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” It is not our sword, but the Spirit’s sword. When we learn to use it under the direction of the Spirit of God it is effective. The Lord Jesus used it in that way during His being tempted forty days of the devil. Even though as the very Son of God He could have used His reasoning power to defeat the enemy, He, as a dependent Man, only and always simply said, “*it is written*.” The devil could not stand before the piercings of that sword and left Him for a time.

It shows the extreme importance of not only reading the Word daily, but also letting the Word of God abide in us. It is what gives strength to the *young men* in 1 John 2:13 so that they can overcome. If we are walking in the power of an ungrieved Spirit, He can bring the right Scripture at the right moment to give us the victory.

#### Seventh piece of armor—Prayer

The seventh and final matter concerning the armor of God is “*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit*.” In the warfare that we are in each and every day, we only advance in the spirit of continual dependence on God. Someone has said we advance on our knees. It is so important that nothing should take precedence over this. Martin Luther was known to say, “I have so much to do each day, I dare not spend any less than three hours in prayer.” No wonder God used him as a mighty instrument during the reformation.

*adapted, B. Thonney*

## **Four Men**

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### Faultless Man

*“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”* (Psalm 1:1-3)

There is but one Man of whom these verses could speak in perfection— Jesus Christ our Lord, the Son of God. He alone walked in perfect righteousness before God. His moral character was perfect, pure holiness. He was not a *scorner* for gracious words proceeded from His mouth. (Luke 4:22)

Those sent to arrest Jesus returned in wonder saying, “Never man spake like this man.” (John 7:46) Though he had scourged Him, three times Pilate proclaimed that he could find no fault in Jesus. (Luke 23:4,14,22) Standing at the foot of the cross the centurion glorified God, saying “Certainly this was a righteous man.” (Luke 23:47)

The apostle John wrote: “*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*” (John 1:14) Peter wrote of his Lord and Master: “*Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered,*

*be threatened not*". (1 Peter 2:22-23)

God testified to the perfection of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. From heaven His voice proclaimed for all to hear: "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*." (Matt. 3:17) And again, on the mountain where Jesus was transfigured before His disciples, we hear the voice of God declaring "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Matt. 17:5)

#### Fallen Man

*"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."* (Psa. 14:1-3)

God looks down on fallen man declaring all are sinners—and the fool defies God by saying, "There is no God!" Yet the evil heart of man is evidence that he is a sinner. Man devises all manner of evil, God holds him accountable, and man hates God.

Over the centuries men have created religions and philosophies that exclude God in order to convince themselves that there is no God. Fatalism (Eccl. 3:1-9), Epicureanism (Eccl. 3:12-13), Deism (Eccl. 3:14-17), Evolutionism (Eccl. 3:18-19) and finally, Universalism. (Eccl. 3:20-22) Thus man does not feel accountable to a God he does not believe exists. There is *no God* in his thoughts.

But God has not left himself without witness. Creation itself clearly declares His eternal power and Godhead, leaving man without excuse. (Rom. 1:20) Man professes himself to be wise, but God says he is a fool. Not wanting to acknowledge God, he turns to his own imaginings. There is no fear of God before his eyes. (Rom. 3:18)

#### Forsaken Man

*“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.”* (Psa 22:1-6)

This Psalm refers to the faultless Man who, at Calvary became the forsaken Man. In the Gospels we read what He suffered at the hands of man. Isaiah wrote *“he is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him: he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”* (Isa. 53:3)

But the cry from Calvary, foretold in this prophetic Psalm, came because God forsook the faultless Man. During three awful hours when the sun was forbidden to shine in the middle of the day, God poured out His wrath against sin upon the

sinless One—the faultless Man who always did God’s will. Why? We hear the glorious answer from the eternal councils of God. There we discover that the faultless Man gave Himself a ransom for all. (1 Tim. 2:6) Having offered Himself a sacrifice for sins, He is now seated in heaven at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 10:12)

#### Forgiven Man

*“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.” (Psa 32:1-5)*

The faultless Man Who become the forsaken Man teaches us the love of God for fallen man. God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that any one who believes in Him receives eternal life and freedom from the eternal consequences of their sins. God, righteous and holy, forsook the faultless man that we, fallen and dead in trespasses and sins, (Eph 2:1) might be reconciled to God.

A Fool or Forgiven—Which are you?

We have seen how the faultless Man became the forsaken Man, that He might redeem us to God. The

choice that now stands before you, dear reader is this—will you remain a fool, and die a fool’s death, to bear the just judgement for your sins by a righteous, holy God? Or will you become a forgiven man, by accepting God’s loving and great gift of eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ?

A fool . . . or forgiven, which will it be?

*“[Jesus] said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.”* (Luke 5:20)

*“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;”* (Col 2:13) *Adapted, K. Heslop*

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A straying believer was once asked by another, “if it were a crime in this country to be a Christian, is there enough evidence in your life to convict you?”

### ***Answers to June 2000 Bible Challenger***

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<b>Rain</b>	Ex. 9:34
<b>Arm yourselves likewise</b>	1 Pet. 4:1
<b>Great calm</b>	Mark 4:39
<b>In the temple</b>	Acts 5:42
<b>Night and day</b>	Acts 20:31
<b>Gavest me no kiss</b>	Luke 7:45

“So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her **RAGING.**” (Jonah 1:15) *R. Erisman*

## ***Feed the Flock***

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### **His mysterious ways**

*“God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform. He plants His footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm.” (#44, Appendix, LF)*

A servant of the Lord, preaching the gospel in a foreign land, was kidnapped by those who hated him and his gospel message. Locked into a small, dark room with nothing but a trickle of water escaping from a leaky water pipe, he soon realized his wicked captors were not going to give him food.

As he suffered the increasing agonies of hunger, he prayed that the Lord would somehow provide food so that he would not starve.

Very soon after, he began to hear a persistent scratching behind one of the walls of his cell. At first he thought he was imagining things, but the scratching continued. He began intently watching the place from where the noise seemed to be coming. Suddenly he saw a few tiny pieces of dusty wall board fall to the ground. Then a tiny hole appeared. As it slowly grew larger, he finally saw a fat little mouse stick its head out of the hole.

Though suffering from great hunger, the man shuddered in revulsion. Then closing his eyes he prayed, “Lord, I asked for food and you have sent me this mouse. If you help me catch it I’ll eat it.”

He made a desperate lunge for the little creature, but in his weakened condition missed and the mouse quickly vanished into the hole. But as the man grabbed for the disappearing mouse, his hands

struck against the hole it had made with extra force. This caused the hole to become larger. To his glad surprise, he watched a steady stream of corn begin to pour out of the opening. Unknown to him, the room in which he was imprisoned, was connected to a granary storage building, separated in that place only by a very thin wall. God had answered the servant's prayer by sending the little mouse to guide him to an abundant supply of food—more than enough to last until he was finally set free.

Our blessed God Who in love, gave for us the dearest Object of His heart, always does *exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.* (Eph 3:20) We know that His ways are not according to our thoughts for He has said that "*my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*" (Isa. 55:8,9)

What a wonderful God and Father we have Who shows the "*exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe*" (Eph 1:19) and Who, in a coming day, will display *the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.* (Eph 2:7). while at this present time desiring that His children might "*know the (surpassing or exceeding) love of Christ*" (Eph 3:19)

"... *prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.*" (Mal 3:10)

*Ed.*

## Practical Reflections

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Acts 7:1-20

v 1, 2 *“Then said the high priest, Are these things so? And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,”*

Ever since Adam sought excuse for his sin — “the woman whom thou gavest to be with me. . .” (Gen 3:12)— man has been defending his sin. So, though well knowing that the charges against Stephen were lies, the high priest expected the accused to defend his innocence. Such a course would have given credence to the false charges, and made the wicked religious leaders appear to be desirous of the truth.

But dear Stephen, *full of the Holy Spirit* begins to talk about God rather than himself. What a lesson! Let us ever speak well of Christ, while never seeking to defend ourselves before the world.

v 3-5 *“And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child.”*

The Jews were clinging to a *place* and *customs* (Acts 6:13, 14) but lacked faith, without which it is

*impossible to please God.* Stephen, guided by the Holy Spirit takes them back to Abraham in whom they also boasted, showing that he moved by faith, not by sight.

v 6, 7 “*And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years. And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.*”

It should have touched these hard hearted religious leaders’ consciences that they too were now in bondage (to the Romans), and like their fathers in Egypt, they too needed deliverance.

The *place* (Jerusalem, the temple, and the nation) of which they were so proud, was not now where they by faith *served* Jehovah, but a place of *pride* to them (John 2:16). How sad when Christianity—that which in the reality of faith brings a soul to the *place* of nearness to God in Christ—becomes only a source of faithless, fleshly, religious pride of heart.

v 8,9 “*And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him;*”

Though they might take pride in their *heritage* as having Abraham for their father (John 8:53), the Spirit of God was using Stephen to exercise their conscience about the fathers’ *rejection* of God’s deliverer—due to envy and unbelief.

These same fleshly feelings may cause believers today, to reject one of God's servants, sent in grace to help them—because they are passing through difficulties or so that the difficulties may not have to be experienced.

v 10 *“And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.”*

It should have been apparent to these hard hearted religious leaders that if God were *with Joseph* (see v. 9) in blessing and raising him to a place of prominence in Egypt, He could *not* have *been with* the Patriarchs who sold him into slavery.

Was Jehovah *with* them now in their false accusations against Stephen? How sad for a person to take a stand in direct opposition to the mind of God.

v 11 *“Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.”*

Jehovah's promise to bless Jacob was unconditional (Gen 27:11-15). But the Patriarchs were going to be passed through a time of reaping the consequences of their wicked treatment of Joseph, before they could enjoy the promised blessing of God.

v 12-14 *“But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.”*

If those religious leaders would have listened with *ears of faith*, they too would have heard the blessed, life giving message—*there is corn in Egypt*. But to receive that blessing, they must humble themselves, admitting their guilt in betraying their *Joseph*—delivering Messiah to be crucified by the Romans. The time is yet future when He will be *made known* to a repentant nation of Israel.

Joseph called *all his kindred* to himself. How God desires the blessing of whole families! (Acts 16:31)

v15-17 “*So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem. But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt.*”

The one part of this world that Abraham seems to have owned was a place to bury his dead. (Gen. 23:4) He “looked for a city. . . whose builder and maker is God. (Heb 11:10) May it be so with us. The time when we shall be caught up to be *forever with the Lord* draws nigh. He has promised mansions in the Father’s house for those who trust Him. Faith does not fear that the *Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation* as did these unbelieving Jews, for we belong to a *better country* (Heb. 11:16).

v 18, 19 “*Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.*”

Satan is ever the same in his hatred of Christ, and those redeemed by His precious blood. He uses every means at his disposal to bring Christian parents into such cruel slavery and bondage in this *present evil world*, that they cannot display the *energy of prayer* or the *courage of faith* in the preserving their beloved children. His most successful means are often very subtle —hidden under an attractive and harmless appearing surface. But this wicked *angel of light* has one object—spiritual devastation, often achieved through the destruction (moral more than physical) of believers' children.

*Ed.*

### ***Bible Challenger***

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The first letter of the following responses form the words from the word which describes a negative attitude that was exchanged for a believing one, when a disciple was invited to strengthen his belief through physical contact. The number in the brackets indicates the number of words in each answer.

1. An intercessory prayer concerning the activity of God toward each one who is now believing the Christian doctrine. [5]

2. An open ended provision Jesus gave His disciples, concerning a “whatsoever” that, when accompanied by believing, would be honored. [3]

3.The conclusion to “whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ”. [4]

4.A unique building material for the foundation of the millennial Jerusalem (Zion) as appreciated by anyone that believeth, in the absence of haste. [2]

5.An unusual place where a believing jailor entertained two prisoners with food. [2]

6.The place in the O.T. Scriptures where a one-time strict Pharasic Jew confidently asserted that, now as a Christian, he continued believing and had not become an heretic. [3]

7.The degree of gladness in a heathen king because a subject of his, who believed in God, was delivered from wild beasts. (2)

8.The clothing material which all people, living in an ancient city, put on when they believed an eight word pronouncement of coming judgement to their city. (1)

9.The place of death where a disciple believed the truth of the Lord’s ressurection. (1)

Answers to these questions will be found, Lord willing, in the next issue of the *Christian Shepherd*.

*R. Erisman*

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A reliable test of true, Divine (“agape”) Christian love is to consider how we treat those who can do us absolutely no good. (see 1 Cor. 13)