

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

APRIL, 2000

SUFFERING *and the* WILL OF GOD

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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Guest Editorial

“JUDGMENT DAY STRIKE”

(God Leads A Pretty Sheltered Life)

At the time of the end, billions of people were scattered on a great plain before God's throne. Some of the groups near the front talked heatedly--not with cringing shame, but with belligerence.

"How can God judge us?" "How can He know about suffering?" snapped a joking brunette. She jerked back a sleeve to reveal a tattooed number from a Nazi concentration camp. "We endured terror, beatings, torture, death!"

In another group, a black man lowered his collar. "What about this?" he demanded, showing an ugly rope burn. "Lynched for no crime but being black! We have suffocated in slave ships, being wrenched from loved ones, toiled till death gave release."

Far out across the plains were hundreds of such groups. Each had a complaint against God for the evil and suffering He permitted in His world. How lucky God was to live in heaven where all was sweetness and light, where there was no hatred. Indeed, what did God know about what man had been forced to endure in this world? "After all, God leads a pretty sheltered life," they said.

So each group sent out a leader, chosen because he had suffered the most. There was a Jew, a black, an untouchable from India, an illegitimate, a person from Hiroshima, and one from a Siberian slave camp. In the center of the plain they consulted with each other. At last they were ready to present their case. It was rather simple: Before God would be qualified to be their judge, He must endure what they had endured. Their decision was that God "should be sentenced to live on earth as a man!"

But because He was God, they set certain safeguards to be sure He could not use His divine power to help Himself.

Let Him be born a Jew.

Let the legitimacy of His birth be doubted, so that none will know who is really His father.

Let Him champion a cause so just, but so radical, that it will bring upon Him the hate, condemnation, and eliminating efforts of every major traditional and established religious authority.

Let Him try to describe what no man has ever seen, tasted, heard, or smelled; let Him try to communicate God to man.

Let Him be betrayed by His dearest friends.

Let Him be indicted on false charges, tried before a prejudiced jury, and convicted by a cowardly judge.

Let Him see what it is to be terribly alone and completely abandoned by every living thing.

Let Him be tortured and let Him die! Let Him die the most humiliating death--with common thieves.

As each leader announced his portion of the sentence, loud murmurs of approval went up from the great throng of people. When the last had finished pronouncing sentence, there was a long silence. No one uttered another word. No one moved. For suddenly all knew. . .
GOD HAD ALREADY SERVED HIS SENTENCE

--Author Unknown

!>< >< ><!SUFFERING!>< >< ><!

and the Will of God

Alex V. Wilson

Teruko Nakahara dies, painfully, from cancer. In Mozambique, a robber-gang kills missionary Cecil Byrd. Then the floods come there, destroying roads, bridges, homes, crops, animals and humans--and causing a baby to be born while his mother is in a tree. In the U.S., a vibrant Christian student at the University of Louisville, who had planned to begin a regular Bible class in his fraternity, is struck and killed by a car. Just three days later, eleven-year-old Israel Houtz is struck and killed by a car. Joann Wright, a very diligent worker in the Borden, Ind., church and a spearhead for that church's team returning to Russia, is stricken with fast-spreading cancer. Eugene Schreiner, dedicated disciple who had resumed teaching at Portland Christian School, also is infested with fast-spreading cancer, and dies. . . .

From hearts ripped and torn we cry out, "O God, where are You?"

* * *

A young boy named Peter wrote a letter to God and sent it to a newspaper advice- columnist. He'd been taught that God would protect, preserve and heal. But Tommy, his brother, was dead. So he wrote, "Dear God, why did you let Tommy die? When he was hit by

the car, my mother prayed to you to let him live, but you *wouldn't*. My little brother was only two years old, and he couldn't have sinned so bad that you had to punish him that way. You could have saved my little brother but you *let him die*. You broke my mother's heart. *How can I love you?*"

* * *

An atheist said, "If I had the power to fashion the universe and re-make it nearer my heart's desire, there would be no blind, no deaf, no dumb; there would be no crippled, and each child born would live free of disease and possess a mentality capable of withstanding all the re-buffs of life. There would be no deaths by accident. There would be no earthquakes, cyclones or tornadoes. Unless and until such a condition comes to pass, when we may live free from disease, sorrow and suffering, *there is no God in this vast universe worthy of homage.*"

No Simple Answers

No sane person would claim to have easy solutions to the problems of evil and suffering. Sometimes we can only groan--which is very Biblical, by the way (Rom.8:22-23; 2 Cor.5:1-4; Jn.11:33; 12:27-28). But we might also glean helpful insights by examining Luke 13, where four types of suffering can be discerned.

Verses 1-3 tell us of some "Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices." We know both from inside and outside scripture that Pilate was a brutal, violent ruler. Obviously on this occasion his troops had invaded the temple itself and slaughtered some worshipers there. Here was suffering due to human evil.

Christ went on to mention eighteen people who died when a tower in Siloam fell on them. He implied that in both cases the sufferers were not especially wicked folks. In this latter instance we have suffering due to natural evil. A tower collapses while people happen to be nearby. Maybe its foundations were undermined by erosion, or maybe an earthquake made it fall.

Then Jesus told a parable:

"A man had a fig tree, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' 'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"

This story refers first of all to those Jews to whom Messiah came. They produced no good fruit of righteousness and faith in Him. That is

another example of human evil. But the Master's words, "*Cut the tree down!*" came to pass at the destruction of Jerusalem not one year but forty years later. After giving His people many chances to repent, the Lord sent punishment by means of the Roman army. That was **suffering due to Divine judgment.**

Next we read of a woman at a synagogue "who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all" (NIV). She "had been possessed by a spirit that left her enfeebled" (Jerus.Bible). Jesus later said that Satan had kept her bound for those eighteen years. Here was **suffering due to Satanic hatred.** Our Lord set her free and filled her mouth with praise. But think of the long, weary years she had endured because of disease caused by the Fiend.

Human evil. Natural disaster. Divine judgment. Satanic opposition. What a complex picture! Don't blame everything on God, as some do. Don't blame everything on the Devil, either. And don't think evil men are always to blame. Often we don't know which it is.

And often there is overlapping. Job's sheep and shepherds were destroyed by lightning, and his children were killed by a tornado. Those were natural evils, which were caused by Satan, but also permitted by the Lord. His camels were stolen by Chaldean raiders, a case of human evil; but they were incited by the Devil, yet allowed by God. Let's continue to examine these four kinds of suffering.

A Closer Look

Satan surely can and sometimes does cause natural catastrophes and also sickness, as we saw. Yet the Bible mentions these facts very rarely. Far more often we read of him as the source of false ideas and teachings, or of temptations to sin. Those are obviously his major weapons.

God's judgments are mentioned repeatedly. We read many examples of the principle, "Cut down the barren fruit-tree now--or at least next year, if they refuse to repent." Sometimes He punishes sin with **instant** punishment. David's child of adultery died soon after birth. Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead within hours of their fraud.

But sometimes punishment is **delayed.** We've already noted that Jerusalem's fall didn't occur till God gave its inhabitants four decades of opportunity. In O-T times, king Manasseh was the very worst ruler that Judah ever had, yet he reigned the longest--55 years! For God knew that toward the end of his life he would repent.

Sometimes God seems **not** to punish grievous sin at all in **this** life. Corrupt people may get away with their crimes and never be brought to justice. Indeed, base and depraved men often prosper and succeed more than others. The psalmists repeatedly complain of that fact, especially in Psalms 37 and 73. For while the wicked may have a ball, many of the godly suffer afflictions of all kinds. Joseph, Job and Jesus, among others, fit into that category.

The puritan preacher Matthew Henry wrote, "We cannot judge about men's **sins** by their **sufferings** in this world; for many are thrown into the furnace as *gold* to be purified, not as *dross and chaff* to be consumed."

Does "Nature" Exist? Is it Free?

Well, what about "**natural**" calamities--those caused by **nature**. For me this is the most difficult category to grasp. For scripture makes no direct mention of "nature" as some independent force working in the world. After the massive earthquake in Turkey in 1999, John Piper went so far as to say,

No earthquakes in the Bible are attributed to Satan. Many are attributed to God. This is because **God is Lord of heaven and earth....**'He looks at the earth, and it trembles; He touches the mountains, and they smoke' (Psa.104:32).... Earthquakes are ultimately from God. **Nature does not have a will of its own.** And God owes Satan no freedom. What havoc demons wreak, they wreak with God's permission (Job 1-2; Luke 22:31-32). [*World* magazine, 9/4/99. Lest we leave a wrong impression, I hasten to add that Piper urged us to weep with those who weep, and to "step forward with sacrificial love" for victims of catastrophes.]

Well, I disagree with some of his statements, but his emphasis is correct. At least some and perhaps many natural disasters are definitely sent by the Lord. The locust plagues in Joel's day certainly were; God called them his great army! He also sent the famine, drought, blight and mildew mentioned in Amos 4. And we remember the flood in Noah's day, and the destruction of Sodom. Insurance companies call tornadoes, floods and lightning "acts of God." and a number of them are. But *all* of them?

Human evil (selfishness) or error (negligence) play a part in some natural calamities. In the Philippines many floods and landslides were due to denuding of forests by lumber companies, contrary to law. Commercial boats there sometimes capsized because selfish owners vastly overloaded them, contrary to law. And in the U.S. careless disposal of chemical waste has poisoned more than one community. People play a part. Again, recently in Tennessee defective or worn-out electrical wiring started a devastating fire at a fine Christian college. Materials were lost which were very valuable in exposing evolution and supporting divine creation. The electric problem was not deliberately caused, but could inspections have prevented it? It was ruled an "accident"; that word comes from a Latin term meaning "**it happened.**"

Satan may have a role too in natural disasters. We already saw that he caused the lightning and tornado that hit Job's family and camels. But our main question now is, *Does nature have a will of its own? Or does it have at least a freedom of its own, given to it by God in His sovereignty?* Someone wrote, "There is **randomness** in the universe. We live in an imperfect world, a place where even the universe has been affected by the fall! (Rom.8: 17-20)."

Maybe God gives to "nature" itself a certain degree of free will, as He does to humanity. Maybe to some extent God adopts a hands-off, let-it-alone policy towards the physical universe and the way it works (which He established at the beginning). Please notice how my statement is phrased: "maybe...a certain degree ... to some extent." Mysteries remain. Dogmatism is out of place.

Christians cannot be deists, believing in a "watchmaker god." He didn't just make the universe and then stand back as a passive spectator to see what would happen. If we believe the Bible we must believe in miracles, God's supernatural interventions in His creation. **He still can, and does, intervene. But only as and when He chooses to do so.** And most often He chooses to work "naturally."

More than that, perhaps as a result of human sin He sometimes(?) or often(?) lets the forces of winds, rains, temperature, etc. run their course without intervention or control. Maybe it was "La Nina" which caused the unparalleled flooding in Mozambique. After all, Jesus did not say that *God* made the tower of Siloam fall. And Eccles.9:11 says, "I saw that the race is not to the swift, or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned: but time and chance happen to them all." Hmmm; time and chance. There is food for thought.

Human Evil (including me?)

We have analyzed suffering from Satanic opposition, divine judgments, and the randomness of nature in a universe made disordered by sin. Last, consider human evil. People often say, "How can God do this to me?" and "Why did God let this happen?"

Yet God did not invent terrorists' bombs nor torture chambers; men did. **Men, not God**, distill and sell whiskey that pickles men's livers and ruins their brains, destroying health and homes. Men, not God, sell crack to kids, enslaving minds and bodies. Men, not God, sell and smoke tobacco that ruins lungs and lives. Men, not God, drive vehicles recklessly, crippling and killing. People, not God, abuse children, batter wives, nag-nag husbands, seduce girls, and entice boys. Not God! Not God, but people!

God gives us lots of freedom, for without it there could be no love. And in giving us freedom of will, God has given up some of His control over His world. He now **shares** His control of the world with imperfect beings. He has freely chosen to limit Himself to some extent. In His omnipotence He chose to limit His omnipotence! In giving us freedom of choice God grants us the right to misuse it; but when we do, we can't reasonably blame Him.

God brought Israel to the border of Canaan and said, "Here it is. Go in, and I'll give it to you. I will empower you to drive out its peoples." But they refused to believe Him, so they refused to obey Him. They thus doomed themselves to wander in desert lands for forty years--but it was neither the Lord's fault nor desire. Centuries later Jesus said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but! You! were! unwilling!" It was neither His fault nor desire.

The German philosopher Goethe said, "If I were God, this world of sin and suffering would break my heart." Yes, it **did!** That's part of what Calvary meant.

A sorrowing, bitter mother blurted out to a Christian, "Where was God when my son died?" The believer replied, "He was exactly where He was when His own son died. He was in heaven, with a broken heart."

When Joni Eareckson was an active, athletic teenager--who loved to ride horseback and swim--a dive into Chesapeake Bay one day broke her neck. That was over thirty years ago, and she's been paralyzed from the neck down ever since. For some time she wrestled bitterly with God about her condition, but then learned to accept it. Listen to what this beautiful, talented quadriplegic writes,

God began His earthly existence in a stinky stable. He got angry. He was lonely. He went without a place to call his own. He was abandoned by his closest friends. He wept real tears. **This is a God I can trust. I know my tears count with him.**

Luke 13 shows Jesus' **power** to liberate and heal a woman enslaved and enfeebled by the Evil One. Second, it shows His **compassionate eagerness** to do so, for He performed this miracle on the sabbath day. He knew that doing so would arouse heated opposition from religious leaders, and it did. He could have waited till the next day to heal her; after 18 years what difference would it make? But He would not hesitate.

Third, we hear His **insistence that we must repent**, all of us. We cannot fathom all the mysteries of sovereignty and suffering. We cannot determine the depths of others' sins by the amount of their sufferings. But since we too have sinned, we should repent. Twice He said it, for emphasis. "Do you think [they] were worse sinners...because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.... Do you think they were more guilty than all the others...? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

Jesus is compassionate, but He is not namby-pamby: He demands that all repent. True, we can trust Him; our tears count with Him. But when we come, let us come with submission: He is the King.

WHY ME? WHY NOT ME?

*In the fall of 1991 Gerald Sittser and his family were returning from a weekend trip when a drunk driver struck their minivan head-on. As a result he lost his mother, his wife of 20 years and a four-year-old daughter. He and his three other children escaped relatively unharmed. The following excerpt condensed from his book *A Grace Disguised* (Zondervan), chronicles a portion of his healing.*

My wife, Lynda, and I had a conversation once about an accident reported in our local newspaper. A station wagon with six children and their mother had skidded off the freeway and sunk in six feet of water, killing *three* of the six children. We both commented nervously that the problem was not simply that something bad had happened to innocent people, but that something bad had happened so randomly. We shivered with fear before the disorderliness of tragedy. If there were going to be suffering, we at least wanted reason for it, predictability to it, and preparation to endure it.

That conversation comes back to me with bitter irony. For the last few years my dominant emotion has been a nervous and doleful bewilderment. A pause at a stop sign, a last minute switch of seats before departure, a slower or faster acceleration after a turn would have spared us all unspeakable suffering.

I found myself questioning the orderliness of life. While nature displays an orderliness that scientists count on every day, order does not always prevail. At times the universe seems to make about as much sense as a little girl who thinks that her fleeting grudge against a brother is the reason he got measles.

THE TERROR OF RANDOMNESS

One of the worst aspects of my experience of loss has been this sense of sheer randomness. The event was completely outside my control--an "accident," as we say. The threat of *anomie* was and still is almost unbearable to me. I began to look with cynicism on the absurdity of life. Maybe, I thought, there really is no God and no meaning to life. I was tormented by an inability to discover any explanation that made sense of the tragedy. An answer to the "Why?" question eluded me.

Suffering may be fiercest when it is random, for we are then stripped of even the cold comfort that comes when events, however cruel, occur for a reason. To fall while attempting a dangerous climb

without ropes leads to one kind of suffering. We shake our heads at the tragedy but realize that the climber should have taken precautions or attempted a climb within his or her range of ability. But to be killed by a random bolt of lightning or a stray bullet engenders another kind of suffering, in which case we tremble because there is no satisfactory explanation, no sensible pattern. Death just happened. The victim was simply at the wrong place at the wrong time.

For a long time, I wanted to change the events of that fateful day so that I could alter the present reality the accident had thrust upon me. But my brother-in-law Jack challenged me to reconsider whether I really wanted that kind of power. Did I really want to know what was going to happen so that I could protect myself from the random accidents that inevitably occur in every life? And if I knew what accidents were ahead and could change the course of my life, would I want to know what new accidents would befall me? What I really wanted, he said, was to be God.

WHY ME?

I have asked the question "Why me?" often, as many people do after suffering loss. Most of us want control of our lives. And we succeed a great deal of the time, which is due in part to the enviable powers Western civilization has put at our disposal. The possibility of so much control makes us vulnerable to deep disappointment when we lose control.

Loss deprives us of control: Cancer ravages, violence erupts, divorce devastates, unemployment frustrates, and death strikes—often with little warning. Suddenly we are forced to face our limitations squarely. We resent the intrusion, the inconvenience, the derailment. We never plan on loss.

Loss also has little to do with fairness: There is often no reason for the misery of some and the happiness of others. Our universe is hardly a safe place; it is often mean, unpredictable, and unjust, resulting in our asking the question over and over, "Why me?"

Once I heard someone ask the opposite question: "Why *not* me?" It was not a fatalistic question. He asked it after his wife died of cancer, acknowledging that suffering is simply a part of life. They had been married for 30 years and had enjoyed many happy moments together. But then the time came to experience another, more painful side of life. He could no more explain why his life had turned bad than he could explain why his life had been so good up to that point. "Why not me?" is as good a question as any.

This man has perspective. Wars and plagues have claimed the lives of millions; poverty and deprivation abound among more millions. And millions of others endure abuse of one kind or another. "Why me?" seems to be the wrong question to ask. "Why not me?" is closer to the mark, once we consider how most people live.

My tragedy introduced me to a side of life that most people around the world know all too well. Even now I hardly qualify as a tragic figure, considering the good life I have been privileged to live for so many years and live even today. The accident was really a brief, albeit dramatic, interruption in an otherwise happy, secure, and prosperous life. To many people I am even heroic, which seems ironic to me, since I have only done what people around the world have done for centuries--making the most of a difficult situation. So why *not* me? Why should I expect to live an entire lifetime free of disappointment and suffering? That expectation strikes me as both unrealistic and arrogant.

GRACE UNDERSTOOD

Certainly, on a superficial level, living in a perfectly fair world appeals to me. But deeper reflection makes me wonder: In a fair world I might never experience tragedy; but neither would I experience grace. Grace is grace only when it is undeserved.

I prefer to live in a universe in which I get what I do *not* deserve--positive or negative. This means I will suffer loss, but I will also receive mercy. I dread undeserved pain but it is worth it if I can also experience undeserved grace.

If I have learned anything over the past three years, it is that I desperately need and desire the grace of God which has come to me in unexpected ways. Friends have remained loyal and supportive, in spite of my struggles. Quietness, contentment, and simplicity have gradually found a place in the center of my soul, though I have never been busier. I go to bed at night grateful for the events of the day, which I try to review and reflect on until I fall asleep, and I wake up in the morning eager to begin a new day. My life is rich and productive, like Iowa farmland in late summer.

And my children have become a constant source of joy to me, however demanding my role as a single parent. Almost every day I take a few moments to listen to them practice their instruments, play a game with them, shoot a few baskets, talk about the day, and read aloud to them. When they go to bed, I always follow them down to their rooms and tuck them in. And just before I crawl into bed, I sneak into their bedrooms and pray God's blessing upon them, a practice I learned from Lynda. These are precious moments, made more so by the tragedy we have experienced together.

Despite my having been a Christian for many years before the accident, God has become a living reality to me as never before. My confidence in God is quieter but stronger. I feel little pressure to impress God or prove myself to him; yet I want to serve him with all my heart and strength. My life is bountiful, even as I continue to feel the loss. Grace is transforming me, and it is wonderful. I have slowly learned where God belongs and have allowed him to assume that place--at the center of life rather than at the periphery.

So, God, spare us a life of fairness! A world with grace gives us more than we deserve. It gives us life, even in our suffering.

--From *Christianity Today* by permission; copyright 1996.

The Elephant in the Room

by Terry Kettering

There's an elephant in the room.
It is large and squatting, so it is hard to get around it.
Yet we squeeze by with "How are you?" and "I'm fine"--
And a thousand other forms of trivial chatter.

We talk about the weather.

We talk about work.

We talk about everything else--
except the elephant in the room.

There's an elephant in the room.

We all know it is there.

We are thinking about the elephant as we talk together.

It is constantly on our minds.

For, you see, it is a very big elephant.

It has hurt us all.

But we do not talk about the elephant in the room.

Oh, please, say her name.

Oh, please say "Barbara" again.

Oh, please, let's talk about the elephant in the room.

For if we talk about her death,

Perhaps we can talk about her life.

Can I say "Barbara" to you and not have you look away?

For if I cannot, then you are leaving me

Alone ... In a room ...

With an elephant.

Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller

The Bible instructs us to give thanks to God for everything. Does that mean even for something bad happening to us in early childhood, years before we obeyed the Gospel, and harming us physically for all our lives; or does it mean to give thanks for just things that happen to us after we are in Christ?

With our limited vision it is sometimes hard for us to see how it is suitable to give thanks to God in everything. On the day these lines were penned I had a funeral service for a man who had made no profession of faith of any sort. He was a "good" man, I understand, but he died out of Christ. Should I thank God for the death of that unregenerate man? Or more to the point should Christian loved ones give thanks that time ran out for him, and he died without hope? Perhaps the things that happened to us before we obeyed the gospel really present no greater problem than some of the things which have happened since.

Certainly the Lord's overruling of all things for good is especially for the Christian. The Christian is the one to whom the promise is specifically made. But let's not decide that all which happens to us before we became Christians is mere chance. Surely that One who knows the fall of a sparrow also knows and cares about what is occurring in the life of His highest, though disobedient, creation. He who sees the end from the beginning is often working in lives, preparing vessels for His use, long before there is a turning to the Lord. In my opinion, our thanksgiving is not just to be limited to the present but is to be retroactive to include all of our life. Likely some explanation concerning our thanksgiving is in order, however.

A significant passage is found in Heb. 12:2. ". . . Jesus . . . who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Jesus did not joy in the suffering and shame of the cross. He endured the suffering and He despised the shame. His eyes were on something else, the joy set before Him, the great things to be accomplished for man by His death. Does Jesus require of us what He did not practice Himself? Should I give thanks that Jesus suffered? In and of itself, no! But I can give thanks that through His suffering came certain invaluable results. It should grieve me that He had to suffer as He did and that my sins were a part of it, but I can give thanks for the love that was demonstrated toward me there. I see no reason to believe that

Jesus was thankful for His sufferings, but He was thankful for what was wrought thereby.

It seems to me that there is a difference between giving thanks in everything and giving thanks for everything. Let's use another example. Bro. X was sixty years old when he became a Christian. Should he give thanks for that? He certainly should be thankful that he came to know the Lord and the joys of being a Christian. He should be thankful that God's mercy continued so long with him. Etc. But should he be thankful for sixty wasted years, years spent for the devil? Should he be thankful for the bad example he set for others in those years? I think not. In the matter of his becoming a Christian, then, there is abundant reason for giving thanks, and it is fitting and expected that he should do so, but he will not necessarily give thanks for all features of the matter.

We may take an example from the life of Paul. He had persecuted the church, putting saints to death. For this fact itself he could never give thanks. In truth, after becoming a Christian he was ashamed of it and marvelled that the Lord could forgive him. But in this evil matter Paul did find occasion for thanksgiving (1 Tim. 1:12-16). He was grateful for the Lord's mercy in calling him in willingness to forgive any sinner. In the matter he found great reason for thanksgiving though he could not be thankful for every fact and detail.

Let's return to the case of the man who died out of Christ. Am I thankful for that in and of itself? No. But I'm thankful for a God who will not be trifled with and whose word can be depended on, for good or for evil. I'm thankful for the fact He may speak to others in the event, for a gospel which could have brought salvation if allowed to do so, etc.

This question is concerned with something which may have happened in childhood--an accident, a birth defect, sickness--I have no way of knowing what might be in mind. We may not be thankful for the evil thing itself, but has not God worked good from it? Many a so-called tragedy has been the turning point in the road that brought us to the Lord or to our work for Him. Some of the "evil" things have kept us relying on Him. The Christian is to develop the habit of looking for the hand of the Lord in all that comes his way and is to develop the habit of thanksgiving. He need not be thankful for every evil thing in and of itself, but he should be thankful for the abundant good to be found in the whole matter.

Praising God in a Russian Prison

Ivan S. Prokanhoff

[Editor's Note: We Christians ought to know about a strong Biblical movement that impacted Russia in its late czarist and early communist years. Around 1900 the Russian people were being pulled in various directions by four conflicting powers. Most people know about three of them: the czarist dictatorship, the ancient and ritualistic Russian Orthodox Church, and the young-but-growing Marxist movement. But there was also a gospel-believing (or "evangelical") crusade which sought to proclaim the living Christ and the need to be born again and follow the Bible. Despite opposition, these believers grew in number and influence till around 1930, when savage persecution struck them.

The following article is an excerpt from the exciting book **In the Cauldron of Russia**. Its author, Ivan Prokanhoff, was the leader of that crusade to unite Christ's disciples and spread the gospel. He was born in 1869, and truly converted to Christ at the age of 18. Years later the back-to-the-Bible unity movement he helped to spearhead consisted of over two million disciples of Jesus Christ. He was a man of outstanding faith and works, being a gifted preacher, editor and writer, hymn-writer, organizer and leader. Imprisoned twice for his faith, he finally was banished from Russia around 1929. His book, from which the following excerpt is taken, is available from One Body, P.O.Box 645, Joplin, MO 64802. --avw]

In the beginning of 1921 I was asked whether we were going to have our Young People's Conference in that year or not. You will remember that the general conditions were not at all propitious for such an undertaking, but I said:

"Of course we are going to have it!" "Will you be there?" I was asked.

"Yes, if God wills, I intend to be there," was my reply. The date for the Conference was fixed: May 5; programs were written, and letters of invitation were sent over the country. This Conference proved to be a time of triumph of the optimism of my faith, though viewed from the entirely human viewpoint it seemed as though we suffered the greatest calamity possible, for the entire Conference ended within prison walls and all delegates were in durance for a long time. It took the leadership of the Holy Spirit to interpret what happened and to capitalize on our troubles.

Meeting Where Food Was to Be Had

It was the time of greatest trouble and hardship. Everywhere there was a shortage of food, especially in the larger cities like Petrograd

and Moscow. For that reason we chose the smaller city of Tver as the place for holding the conference. We hoped that our Evangelical village groups in the Tver province would be able to supply us with some bread and potatoes during the Conference.

Secondly, it was a very hard time for transportation. Just in those days travel on tramways and railroads was declared to be quite free of charge. On the tramways there were only motormen, but no conductors; on the railway trains there were only engine drivers, but there were no conductors. There was, as might be supposed, a shortage of cars in running condition, so those in use were filled to more than capacity, what with everybody wanting to get to almost any place except where they were and able to do so at no cost for railroad fare.

As a result of this condition, when I arrived at the Nicolaevskaia Station half an hour before the train was scheduled to leave, all the cars were comfortably filled. All the glass in the car windows was missing, having been broken out by hoodlums. People entered not only by way of the doors, but also through the windows. It was with great difficulty that I was able to secure a seat for myself, though in my weakened condition it was quite a necessity. Soon the cars were overfilled. All the passages were packed with people; passengers were riding on the bumpers, and even on the roofs of all the cars. Some boys even crawled under the cars and found places on the rattling trucks. It was known that accidents happened on every train, passengers falling from their precarious perches and from the roofs, usually losing their lives. The atmosphere in the train was so stifling that I could scarcely breathe. What would it have been with glass in the windows! Almost all the passengers looked sad and gloomy.

Singing a Welcome to Their Leader

When our train finally approached the city of Tver I heard singing, and soon I saw on the platform a crowd of young people engaged in a burst of song. They were the delegates to the Young People's Conference and members of the local Evangelical churches. They had come to the station to meet their president and escort him to the place of meeting.

Although they were very poorly clad and many of them lacking anything like proper food in quantity or quality they looked cheerful and even full of joy. The station was at a distance of about two miles from the city; and as we walked along to the place of our Conference there was singing all the way. This scene was in violent contrast with the surroundings and the times, where everything was dark and gloomy, but thus God deals with His own. We have joy and peace in our hearts in spite of calamities and hardships, knowing that "He doeth all things well."

Sixty young people had arrived from other places to attend the Conference, coming from different parts of European Russia--from the Caucasus, Crimea, from the Volga Provinces, Ukraina, etc. Considering the times and the great difficulty of transportation, the attendance was remarkably good.

We opened our sessions as usual, choosing the presiding officer (myself) and vice presidents and secretaries. The first day the sessions passed quickly and quietly, without any especially outstanding incidents. We discussed the items on our program for the day and decided various questions.

On the second day of the Conference, however, about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, while I was delivering an address, we heard a noise in the street. Soon our room was entered by armed men in quite a company. They were of three kinds, soldiers, police and officials from the Cheka, those terrible political police. We were in peaceful religious gathering, but thus the soldiers came for our Lord, even while He was praying.

One of those Cheka officials pointed his revolver squarely at me and said: "Do not move!"

A Whole Conference Goes to Prison

Then they began to search us, looking through all our conference papers and minutes, gathering them up as they went about. They also searched all corners of that and the adjoining rooms. Then the same official said:

"Now you must all go with us!"

Not asking for any permission, which I felt sure would be refused anyway, I said:

"We will pray!" All present arose to their feet and I prayed, in the midst of our dear group of young people, now fully surrounded by soldiers, police and the Cheka. One can easily imagine what a lasting impression this prayer made on our hearts, especially when remembered with all that followed.

It happened that in this session of the Conference not all the delegates were present, some committees being absent, but there were about 47 delegates, including seven young ladies. All of us came out to the street, where a crowd of awe-stricken people stood watching what was happening and wondering at the arrest of the Evangelical young people. We were put into rows like a small company of soldiers, and then surrounded with the three kinds of guards (you can

see how dangerous we were!)--the militiamen with drawn sabers, the red soldiers with their guns and the Cheka officials with their revolvers drawn and ready for immediate action!

Prisoners On The March

Then the command was given: "March"! Just at this moment all of us began to sing a very popular hymn: "We are marching to the battle, with Jesus Christ"! We were not forbidden to sing. Possibly some of our captors were secretly enjoying the music, and especially the novelty of having captured a group who were so unafraid that they raised their voices in praise! After this first hymn we began another, then a second and so on, singing all the way to our place of confinement. A great many people were attracted by the singing, and stood on the sidewalks looking at us with wondering eyes. We heard voices calling out to each other:

"These are Evangelicals arrested!"

We came at last to the headquarters of the Cheka, a three-story building, and according to the usual arrangement of these institutions were placed in the prison department in the basement. This consisted of two large rooms for the male prisoners, and a smaller one for the women. When we entered our rooms we saw a young man lying on one of the wooden platforms, and we knew at once that he was not a prisoner, but was placed there for spying purposes, being one of the agents of the Cheka, planted to make observations and report on our behavior and conversation. He certainly had much to report!

We Resume Conference Sessions

Those wooden platforms, by the way, are to be found in all the places of imprisonment, and are the substitutes for beds. On them we were to sleep for some time to come.

I suddenly felt a strong inflow of joy, and exclaimed:

"Brothers and sisters! All come here!" When all had gathered around me, I said: "We are now in a place where the Apostle Paul and Silas were. They prayed and sang praises to God. (Acts 16:25.) Let us sing praises."

All sang a hymn of glory to God, with a great inspiration. After that I said: "Let us pray. Let us thank God for the great honor which He bestows upon us, in allowing us to be placed where His Apostles were. Ask Him to bless our stay here to His glory. Ask Him to bless the chiefs of this institution, and the guards, and especially all the prisoners."

It is unnecessary to add that the prayers which followed were full of warmth and deeply spiritual, cheering all our hearts with overflowing joy. After that, examining our quarters, I said:

"Here are spacious rooms. We can continue the sessions of our Conference." Unanimously we decided to resume the interrupted meeting of the afternoon, and without delay the presiding officer, vice presidents and secretaries took their places and the routine business of the session began.

During the next two days we finished all our work in the greatest detail, according to our program, though when we planned it the place of meeting was certainly not chosen in a prison. The minutes were all carefully written, read and approved. Everything was done with as much orderliness and neatness and despatch as though we were still in the conference room and had spent our nights peacefully sleeping in the quarters provided for us by the Christian brethren in Tver, instead of by the Cheka. Needless to say, that in the story of the Christian Church this fact of a Young People's Conference in prison is unparalleled in the history of persecutions.

I felt continually a great triumphant joy, and so also did my fellow-prisoners. My young people were singing all the time, and how our hearts were knit closer and closer together in these days of our imprisonment.

Christian Prisoners Are "Noisy"

However, on the second day the chief of the Cheka came to our cell. He was a short fellow, somewhat lame, and of a stubby, rather uncouth appearance. He said:

"We have had all kinds of prisoners here, but we have never had such noisy fellows as you are! You sing all the time. You disturb us in our work. The people gather in the streets and around the building. We cannot allow you to continue this noise any longer!"

We argued with him saying: "If we are deprived of the possibility of singing at liberty we must have the right to sing in prison where there is no liberty." But he would not listen to us. Finally after some negotiations, a compromise was reached, We were allowed to have our meetings for prayer and singing twice a day, two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening. Possibly it was the provision of the Lord for our welfare, for in our enthusiasm and joy we were likely to burn ourselves out in praise at high pressure.

We now had our meetings in the court yard, and we availed ourselves of this opportunity to its utmost capacity. We sang, read the Word of God, and prayed. The red soldiers, militiamen and even the officials of the Cheka who were in this institution came and listened to us. We even saw some of them, red soldiers at that and supposed to be atheists, trying to learn the hymns of

praise to God and making an effort to sing with us. It only illustrates how our Evangelical hymns have been taken up even by non-Christians, who thus aided in proclaiming the Gospel over Russia.

We saw men and women on the roofs of adjacent houses, where they had climbed to see who were daring to sing in the presence of the terrible Cheka. Many people gathered in the street outside to listen to our singing. Was there ever such a testimony! It was unusual, it was wonderful! Who could ever forget it! We used to come out of our basement cells into the court yard in rows of two in a solemn procession, like the processional of a large choir in the cathedral, and two by two we marched back again to our cells, singing as we came and went.

The guards of the prison had great sympathy for us, and no wonder, for we were young and at the threshold of life, clean and upright, and not at all like the hardened criminals which they were used to guarding. In their pity they permitted us to receive visits from our friends, who brought us our letters, food and books, and also permitted us to send letters to our friends and families. Imagine the fathers and mothers of some of the delegates receiving word that those who had left their homes in pursuit of further education in the Word of God, and to plan for the enlargement of the work among Russian young people were now in prison for the Gospel's sake.

Cheka Chief Gets Rid of Us

The chief of the Cheka did not relish such joyous prisoners, and endeavored from the beginning to hurry the procedure of our trial and to get rid of us in some manner or other. After three weeks of imprisonment every one of the prisoners was called upstairs into the hearing room of the Cheka, where it was declared that the trial body of the Cheka had considered our case and had passed a resolution that the twelve oldest were sentenced to hard labor at the Suzdal Monastery, in Yaroslav Province. Of course, that included me. This monastery fortress was very old, and under the old regime of the highest members of the Greek Orthodox clergy when guilty of wrong doing and of heresies were confined in the monastery and died there.

According to the resolution which was read in our hearing, the rest of the prisoners, thirty-five in number, were to be sent to their homes after giving a written promise that they would remain there until a Law Court trial over their cases could take place in regular order. Soon everyone of our young fellow prisoners left the place and departed to their homes. With every one of them I parted with a prayer. Some of them I never saw again, but I am assured even now that their days and nights in prison were well invested in training their minds and hearts for future service for the Master. What testimonies these young people could and did give in after days and years!

What the Bible Teaches about...

GOD'S Sovereignty, SATAN'S Power, and HUMAN Freedom

by Alex V. Wilson
Part I

Introduction: The following -- in three installments -- is an extensive but not exhaustive survey of what God's Word says about the sovereignty of the Lord, and the power of the Devil, and the freedom of choice of mankind. Scripture gives many examples of each of these three facts. But the relationship between the three -- "Aye, *that's* the rub."

Our limited understanding cannot fully grasp the ins and outs of these seemingly contradictory truths. But we must face up to all three facts, and not let the passages supporting one of them cause us to overlook or evade scriptures supporting the second or third truth. Most important of all, we should ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom in knowing how and when to *apply* them. Taking a clue from Ecclesiastes, we might say, "There is a time to remember and apply the reality of Satan's grim power, and a time to emphasize the comforting truth of our Father's sovereignty, and a time to stress human freedom and accountability."

I. SATAN'S POWER

A. His Influence over the Nations

Dan. 10:12-13, [An awesome, mighty messenger from the Lord appeared and said,] "Daniel, since the 1st day [3 weeks ago] that you set your mind to...humble yourself before God [by fasting and praying], your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. **But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me 21 days.** Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me because **I was detained there with the king of Persia.**"

[This chapter reveals the vast behind-the-scenes sway which Satanic angel-"princes" hold in international affairs.]

Lk.4:5-7, The devil showed Jesus in an instant **all the kingdoms of the world**, and said, "I will give you **all their authority and splendor**, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours."

[This was a real temptation to Jesus, a genuine offer which tempted Him to gain control of the world and yet bypass the cross. If Satan was making only a fake offer, an offer of authority which he did

not really possess, would Jesus not have known it? The “pull” of the temptation depended on the validity of the offer made by the devil.]

B. Insightful Titles of Satan and his Troops

1. The prince [ruler] of this world:

Jn.12:31, ...Now [at Jesus' death] the prince of this world will be driven out.

Jn.14:30, I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me.

Jn.16:11, ...the prince of this world now stands condemned.

[Interestingly, all 3 verses using this dreadful title also show Satan's downfall!]

2. The god of this age:

2 Cor.4:4, The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel....

3. The ruler of the kingdom of the air...now working in disobedient people (various translation are quoted):

Eph.2:2, The prince of the power of the air/ ruler of the kingdom of the air/ commander of the spiritual powers of the air/ evil ruler of the spiritual realm ---- the spirit that is now at work in those who are disobedient/ among God's rebel subjects -- who now controls the people who disobey God/ who is fully operative today in those who disobey God.... [rsv/ niv/ neb--tev/ jbp.]

4. Grim Titles of Various Kinds and Ranks of Beings in his Armies:

Eph. 6:11ff., Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God....

C. Other Dreadful Descriptions of his Power

1 Pet.5:8-9, Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.... [Compare James 4:7, Submit yourselves...to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.]

1 Jn. 5:18-19, We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. We know that we are children of God, and that **the whole world is under the control of the evil one.**

[Dreadful phrase! But notice the preceding sentence too.]

Rev.11:15, & 17-18a, The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever....We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty...because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come....

[This tells of Christ's victory. B-u-t it refers to a time yet future. So it implies that at present God *has* power but has not yet *taken* it, has not yet begun to reign *fully*.]

Rev.12:7-9, [Satan] and his angels...lost their place in heaven....[He] was hurled down -- **Satan, who leads the whole world astray [the deceiver of the whole world -- asv].** He and his angels were hurled to the earth.

[The emphasized clause is one of the saddest in human literature. Yet, again notice the joyful context!]

II. MAN'S FREEDOM (& RESPONSIBILITY)

Josh.24:15, If serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then *choose for yourselves* this day whom you will serve....

Psa. 94:3-7: How long will the wicked be jubilant? They pour out arrogant words; all the evildoers are full of boasting. They crush your people, O Lord; they oppress your inheritance. They slay the widow and the alien; they murder the fatherless. They say, "The Lord does not see; the God of Jacob pays no heed."

[The context of this section of psalms includes those repeated affirmations found in Psalms 93, 96, 97 and 99: "The Lord reigns" or "The Lord is King"!]

Ezek.18:5 & 9; 10 & 13b; 14 & 17c,d; 20. This chapter emphasizes **man's personal responsibility**. We are individually accountable to God & cannot blame others for our sins. Verses 1-20 show that **the chains of trans-generational sins and guilt can be broken**. Because your father was bad doesn't mean you must be bad. That seems obvious to us now, but the Jews seem to have misapplied Ex.20:5, "punishing the children for the sin of the fathers, to the 3rd & 4th generations of those who hate me." What *does* that mean? Probably

that sin brings suffering not only to the sinner but to innocent people too, including his loved ones. For example, consider hardships suffered by the children of gamblers, or of drunkards, or of the slothful, etc.

BUT 1-20, though true, are incomplete--even simplistic. What if a good man turns bad, or vice versa? Verses 21-29 teach that the chains of sins/guilt accumulated within an individual's life can be broken (21-23)--or forged (24-26).

The Conclusion: vss. 30-32, God's High Demands & Gracious Provision.

[Even this raises questions, for **How Much** good or bad makes a man good or bad? But God knows when one has truly repented or not (30), & when he has "turned away from all his offenses" (31). And the main point of this chapter is clear: **I am individually responsible to God for my conduct.** I cannot blame Adam and Eve, nor Dad and Mom.]

Matt.23:37, O Jerusalem...how often I have longed to gather your children together..., but **you were not willing.**

1 Tim. 2:3-4, God our Savior...wants all men to be saved. [Those who are not saved can only blame themselves, not God's sovereignty nor refusal to save.]

2 Pet. 3:9, The Lord...is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance.

[Having given man freedom, God allows *His* "want" to be overruled by *man's* "want." He honors their freedom, so that those who choose to live without Him in this life will not have to live with Him in the next one either.]

Rev.22:17, Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Man's freedom and responsibility are also unmistakably implied in...

All the Gospel **invitations**: man may accept or reject them.

All the Gospel **promises**: man may trust them or turn them down.

All of God's **commands**: man may obey or disobey Him.

All of God's **warnings**: man may heed them or ignore them.

May we use our freedom--His gift--wisely.

(To be concluded)

W. Eugene Schreiner

December 4, 1936 - March 30, 2000

Eugene Schreiner was called home to be with Christ at the age of 63. To quote Earl Mullins, Sr. at the memorial service for Eugene Schreiner, "Oh, what a man!" Hebrews 2:6-8 brought this idea to Brother Mullins. Eugene was a gifted man of God who used his gifts faithfully all of his life. He was one who would often say when asked to take on a task for our Lord, "I will give it a try."

From his youth he showed great love for the Lord that was noticed by others. Eugene was a gifted singer with a beautiful tenor voice. He inspired others to sing when he led singing. He taught at Portland Christian School for 27 years. He taught Bible, mathematics, science, and directed the PCS Choir for several years. When he spoke at a chapel service he always gave us something helpful in our Christian life. Over the years Eugene preached for several churches. Among them were Rowan Street, Iroquois, Bryantsville, and Highview Churches of Christ. He served as an elder at the Southeast Church of Christ.

He took on the task of coaching basketball as well as being athletic director at PCS. Glenn Baber and I assisted him in coaching basketball for several years. We saw a coach who often reminded his boys to think of their Christian example as they played. These jobs demanded a lot of time over and above his teaching. He also drove a school bus during many of those years. He lived simply and humbly, setting a great example for others. He had a "loose connection to material things." If he had something that you needed he would say, "Here, take mine, it is yours to use."

Eugene married the former Patricia Ann Clark on December 27, 1955. His wife Patty, along with Dale, Andrea, Valerie, Betty Ann and Laura will treasure in their heart his example as a wonderful husband and father. He was a contented man that reminded me of the scripture, 1 Timothy 6:6 "But godliness with contentment is great gain." The last lesson I heard him teach was stressing the JOY we have ahead of us at the soon coming of our Lord from the Revelation letter. Eugene put serving God as the top priority in his life. Let us remember him as "What a man!" — "What a servant" and "What a friend!"

--Nathan L. Burks

VOICES From The FIELDS

Paul & Virginia Kitzmiller

April 7, 2000

We continue to be excited by the outstanding opportunities for outreach here in Russia and we are very encouraged by the great things that God is doing. Here are some highlights and insights taken from the last six weeks.

MARCH WORKSHOP IN REVIEW. For a few brief days in mid-March a team of five Bible teachers from the States (two, by way of London) joined with us to help with our teaching program. Billy Ray and Mary Lewter, Ben and Linda Rake, and Earl Mullins, Sr., participated in a program that was designed for some very specific needs of the Narvskaya congregation. Billy Ray, Ben and Linda presented lessons on family relationships (in church and home) and all of the team members shared informally with church members and guests. Our church folk were very impressed by the discussions and all the lessons; Linda's classes on teaching the Bible to children were a real hit with our ladies. We believe that the good teaching that was given will bear good fruit. One immediate result: two women who attended the program (and who have attended many of our regular evening Bible studies) have a background in the Russian Orthodox Church; both of these women attended our Sunday worship service for the first time during this workshop. It is also a great encouragement to the Russian Christians when they see such love and support from their brothers and sisters in America. Remarks from our American visitors indicated that they were also encouraged by their time here.

On the last Sunday of March when we changed to Daylight Savings time in Russia, NONE of our song leaders was present. Now I have led singing under many circumstances, but never in another language and I was not prepared to do so at this time either. So, I offered a plan to the congregation: If I led the singing, then I wouldn't ask them to sing in English if they wouldn't ask me to sing in Russian. They agreed and we sang together--sometimes making a truly joyful noise--concluding that the Lord was fully able to sort out all the words.

CHANGE OF HEART. Recently, another young man, a Christian, returned to the church after being away for many months involved in sinful behavior. He stood before the congregation expressing his repentance and asking for the forgiveness of the brethren for his actions. We rejoiced and surely our Heavenly Father rejoiced over this change of heart and this renewed desire of loyalty to Jesus. This young man

still faces many difficulties and temptations. Please pray for "S" that he will be able to overcome and remain steadfast.

George C. Galanis Drapetsona, Greece April 11, 2000

We have had a very hard time trying to evangelize our people because of the imposed State religion in this country who has issued laws to forbid any efforts of any "heterodox" to proselytize any member of the State Church. Ninety eight per cent of the Greek people supposedly belong to the State Church by force, with the method of infant baptism.

Here is how the Byzantine autocrat State established by force the Church as a State religion in 380 A.D. Here is the edict which Theodosius the Great issued together with two other co-emperors:

"We, the three emperors, will that all our subjects steadfastly adhere to the religion which is now professed by the majority of our people. We order that the adherents of this faith be called Catholic Christians "

"We brand all senseless followers of other religions with the infamous name of heretics and forbid their conventicles assuming the names of churches. Besides the condemnation of Divine Justice, they must expect the heavy penalties which our authority guided by heavenly wisdom shall think proper to inflict." This enforced religion after sixteen hundred years has not changed a bit the religious dictatorship to give religious freedom for us the Evangelicals. The clergy teach the Greek people to hate us, slandering us that we are not real Greeks but agents of some foreign propaganda and also dangerous to our Country and religion. Even the Archbishop sends secret circular letters to governmental organizations ordering them to apply discriminations against us the Evangelicals.

In spite of the fact of all these reactions of the state religion, we the believers struggle hard going around evangelizing and witnessing that Christ is the only Savior who saves by grace alone every one who repents and believes in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Please pray for us as on the 23rd April 2000 I will be 78 years old. Thank God I am still preaching with the power of the Holy Spirit. Sophia's health is getting slowly worse. Thank the Lord she still can move around doing some house work and fixing our meals. I keep myself busy preaching at our Church and some other congregations in the area of Athens. I cannot travel in the country since I cannot leave Sophia by herself alone.

Counselor's Column

MY DAUGHTER'S BOYFRIEND

Dennis Kaufman

Question: My daughter is 16, and she is dating a boy that I do not feel good about. I am convinced it is not a healthy relationship, but they are getting very serious. I would like to force her to stop seeing him, but I am concerned about what that would do to our relationship.

Answer: I think this is probably one of the toughest decisions parents make. The Bible does not give us much specific help, because dating is a foreign concept to both Old and New Testament cultures. In fact, the challenge of your decision probably causes you to want to adopt a system where the parents pick their children's future spouses. Maybe someday we will return to such a concept, but for now we have to deal with the dating thing.

As is often the case in knotty problems, you are facing two guiding principles that are coming into conflict with one another. First, there is a strong desire to protect your daughter, and guide her in a way that leads to abundant life. We typically have so much invested in our children that we are vigilant about anything that threatens their future joy. Our parental perspective usually encompasses more experience and wisdom, and we anticipate that our teen would readily listen to our input. However, we also want to respect the growing autonomy of a 16 year old. She undoubtedly feels a right to be making more of her own decisions, not to mention that most teenagers are convinced in their heart that they know what they are doing. If we force our will on them during a time when they are attempting to experience more freedom, we wonder if we will provoke a rebellious response that might drive them further toward defending the "one they are convinced they can't live without."

Balancing these two principles may at times feel like walking a tightrope, but hang in there, because the Spirit of God can provide a discernment for you to negotiate through this. From my counseling experience, forcing a teen to break off a dating relationship is more of a last resort. The threat to the parent/child alliance is high, and I feel there would need to be a clear and present danger to intercede in this way. Examples of reasons to pull the plug on a relationship might include physical abuse, your child's faith being ridiculed by the dating partner, or a direction that is going to be sexually damaging. Short of these types of red flags, there are some other strategies that may work more effectively.

I do believe it is appropriate to let your teenager know how you feel about the person she is dating. If there are concerns that need to be spelled out, do so as concisely and calmly as possible. High drama is rarely effective here. Let them know you are praying for their wisdom, and want to give them as much space as you can to make their own decisions. Most parents at this stage of the game feel like Abraham placing his child on the altar and trusting God to save him. It is an incredible challenge to our trust, and our ability to release control.

Most teens do not marry the one they are dating at 16, but many important things do take place in this pivotal time of life. Therefore, it makes sense to pray often, observe closely, stretch your ability to trust your teen as much as is wise, communicate honestly, and take drastic measures only if the evidence is clear that you need to protect your beloved offspring.

REWARDS WILL COME

Joyce Broyles

In March, 1981, as my husband and I were settling into our room at the Continental Hotel in Auckland, New Zealand, I thought I heard band music outside. Looking out the 20th story window, I saw what was indeed a band marching in a parade down the main thoroughfare, complete with confetti, horses, and such. Laughingly, I commented to Douglas, "I didn't realize they were going to give me such a welcome!"

Downstairs, in the same hotel, with his entourage, was newly engaged Prince Charles of Great Britain.

I was reminded of that incident several years later when I heard a story about a missionary who was finally returning to the states for a much needed furlough. On the same ship with him was a President of the United States. When the boat docked, bands played and the President disembarked amid much fanfare and shouts of "Welcome Home!"

No one was there to meet the missionary.

After a few moments of sadness and frustration, the missionary smiled and said to himself, "It's all right. I'm not 'Home' yet!"

The story inspired a poem I wrote that evening.

I'M NOT HOME YET

When all my labors seemed in vain,
And my works went unnoted;
When others were praised for new ideas
And mine were all out-voted;
When my family took me for granted,
Neither praised nor thanks outpoured;
When mind and body were weak with fatigue
And sighs were oft' ignored;
I simmered inside for all those years,
Waiting to gather my debt;
But I learned today that rewards will come
I just haven't reached Home yet!

This is the time of year that leaders, sponsors, teachers, and parents spend countless hours preparing for banquets, award nights, camps, and even Vacation Bible Schools. Hours spent planning, painting, and pouring soul into making each event a memorable occasion.

Many individuals enjoy the benefits of all the organization and hard work, much of it labors of love, but few remember to thank the ones responsible for it. Not just youngsters, but oftentimes adults seem to disregard presentations that have taken hours to prepare. Just a word or a nod of appreciation can mean so much.

We may not get our roses while we can smell them, but one thing we can be sure of. If our works are of the gold and silver kind, they will not burn as wood, hay, and stubble, and the rewards will come! (1 Corinthians 3:12-13)

We must remember that promise, especially on those days when we are hurt, sad, or frustrated. The day is coming when we will have many hours to enjoy rewards as we reflect on our personal expressions.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

Zimbabwe, Africa: You probably know from the media that the political situation there is horrendous at present. Pray very much for **Robert & Joy Garrett** as they are scheduled to fly to Harare from the U.S. on April 26. Robert needs to renew his residence permit with the govt, & will then evaluate the feasibility of staying there or leaving temporarily till things simmer down.

At his request (before the situation deteriorated), **Jerry Carmichael & Mike Abbott** of S.B.S. plan to visit Zimb. in August to teach & train church leaders. Pray about this too.

Brooks are Home for a While: Due to the tragic murder of a close missionary co-worker, plus continuing danger to the family at their mission compound (the violent robber-gang has continued striking a number of churches & foreigners' homes in that neighborhood), plus exhaustion from welfare ministry because of the flood emergency in Mozambique, **Martin & Susan Brooks** & their 3 children have returned home for a while. Pray that the Lord will continue renewing them physically & emotionally, & will guide them about future ministry. You may reach them temporarily at 502: 957-3553.

Now with the Lord: **Ed Sherwood** of the Bryantsville Church (Ind.), after long, drawn-out sickness, went Home on April 12. Ed was songleader and a church leader for many years. Pray for his wife, Dottie, and his brother **Hollace** (still limited in communication due to strokes), and the congregation.

A REPRIEVE for *Great Songs of the Church*, #2 - **Frank Preston**, preacher at Mackville Church of Christ, has made an arrangement with the large printing establishment for which he works. They will reprint at least 3,000 copies, perhaps more, of **Great Songs of the Church!** (By permission of ACU Press, the copyright holder, of course.) Not all the details have been worked out yet (such as exact price), but the plan seems firmly in place.

Frank, not the Word & Work office, will handle the orders, shipping, etc. Now he needs to know **Who** wants to order copies, & **How Many**--so he can tell the company the number to print. Call Frank Preston at 1-859-262-5161. By the time this issue gets to you, he may know the cost. Make sure to place your orders so you won't miss out.

Pray for Yoriko Nomura "I found Yoriko feeling pretty bad physically this morning. She is too tired and weak. She did not

feel well but did not mention it to anybody but quietly served those folks who came to the service and fellowship. I am really concerned her physical strength is rapidly departing from her body. She has extremely low blood pressure. She needs prayer of His saints.”--Moto Nomura, April 10

A Trip “Back Home”: Victor & Mae Broaddus plan a visit to the Philippines in late April. They were missionaries there for many years, & their many friends are eager to see them. Pray for his health & strength, also travel mercies.

Graham McKay, who recently led an excellent hymn-appreciation meeting at Gallatin church, is available to do so elsewhere too. He shares stories of hymn-writers or incidents related to the writing or message of various spiritual songs. This makes them even more meaningful than they already are. You may contact him at 931-388-1759 (nite) or 486-2274 (day); 2255 Clara Mathis Rd, Spring Hill, TN 37174.

Modesty--a 1999 Reminder from Gallatin, as hot weather approaches: “The issue of modesty in the way we dress is always an issue in the summer. This is especially true for girls and women. Parents have a responsibility to teach modesty and help their children learn how it applies to their clothing. In addition, they must set the example. It does no good to reprimand a girl for a low neckline while

mother’s skirt is so short she is improperly covered when she sits down. (Thanks to our youth staff for demanding proper apparel when our teens go swimming.)

“In 1 Timothy 2:9 Paul calls for ‘modest apparel’ or as the Modern English translation says, ‘suitable apparel.’ Times and styles have certainly changed since Paul’s day. However, the call of God for modesty in dress has not gone out of style.”--Julius Hovan

Salem, Ky. Want to go to the Holy Land but can’t afford it? Focus on the Family video tapes are available at a small cost featuring “Faith Lessons on the Promised Land.” Both Salem and Cramer have viewed several volumes and highly recommend them. They can be purchased at most Christian bookstores or ordered directly from Focus on the Family at 1-800-232-6459. **Also from Salem:** Bro. Alex Wilson will be holding a series of meetings from June 26 to July 2.

LeCompte, Louisiana: The weekend of April 7th through Wed. the 13th, Bro. Bennie Hill held a revival meeting with the LeCompte church. It was a time of real revival as God’s message was revealed through the seven churches in Revelation 2 & 3. This message is just as relevant today as Satan continues to attack the small church. God’s message is for His people to **remain faithful unto death.** Thank God He continues to call His people together, to bless them, to encourage them, to fill them with His Holy Spirit, and then to send

them out where they will reach others with the gospel. I was greatly blessed in the home of Dillard & Doris Fontenot who love the Lord and are determined to keep the light burning there for Jesus! Please remember the Lord's work there in your prayers that they'll not grow weary. It was also encouraging to have the support from other churches and preachers in the Central Louisiana area.

S.C.E.C (Southeastern Christian Education Corporation) is interested in young people who want to attend Christian colleges. Their purpose is to provide financial assistance to those needy college students from within the group of churches formerly associated with Southeastern Christian College. For information, applications, & other questions, please contact Cecil Garrett, 399 College St., Winchester, Ky. 40391

Lilly Dale, Indiana: A short term mission trip is being planned by the Lilly Dale Church of Christ to Monterrey, Mexico on June 10-16. Cost is \$300.00 per person. They will be conducting V.B.S. for children.

Fellowship Week in the Ky/Ind area is scheduled for the week of August 7-10. Speakers this year include: Paul Estes, Dale Offutt, Julius Hovan, David Tapp, and Harry Coultas. See you in Louisville for a great time of Christian Fellowship.

PCS Diamond Anniversary Building Project completed! The completion of this project now gives us the ability to have additional classroom space to accommodate anticipated enrollment increases in our junior high and senior high school. If in the Louisville area - stop in and see what the Lord has done!

Ralph Ave. Church of Christ, Louisville, had 55 in Sunday school and 132 for worship on Easter. And the next Sun. night its building was crammed for the Louisville area 5th Sun. singing meeting.

Bill Smallwood preaches and along with Allen Brown & Joe Jones serves as elder. James Embree leads singing & helps teach.

Welcome to "New" columnists. Both Joyce Broyles & Dennis Kaufman have written articles for W&W before. But we are glad that now each of them will have a column for us on a regular basis. Joyce draws helpful lessons from everyday experiences, & Dennis answers questions asked him as a counselor.

A Stimulating Book: Philip Yancey's *Disappointment with God* challenges & comforts at the same time. It deals with the theme of this month's W&W, more specifically, Is God unfair? silent? hidden? Paul Knecht recommended it years ago. I found it so helpful that we used it in a class.

JUST OFF THE PRESS! A great gift for your church friends

R.H. BOLL

CONTROVERSY and ACCOMPLISHMENT

by TOM BRADSHAW

Few people were neutral about R. H. Boll. Many people thought he was a false teacher and an evil divider of the church. Some even called him and his followers "wolves in sheep's clothing." Yet others hailed him as a great man of God and a superlative preacher and teacher of the Bible.

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[Readers who want to receive the 253 end-notes plus the author's two bibliographies should request them when ordering. Otherwise, if you ask for them later, please send \$1.00 for copying, postage and handling.] Postage for the book costs \$1.24.