

CURRENT

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA




CONVERSION
THERAPY

HOW GREEN
SHOULD A
CHRISTIAN BE?

REGENERATION

VOL. 11/No. 2 Summer 2022

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Current is published quarterly by the Free Presbyterian Church of North America (www.fpcurrent.com). The annual subscription price is \$15.00 (US). To subscribe, please go to www.fpcna.org/subscriptions. You may also subscribe by writing to Rev. Derrick Bowman, 5865 Woodsway Drive, Pfafftown, NC 27040. Checks should be made payable to *Current*.

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SUMMER 2022

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“[JESUS] SAITH UNTO HIM, GO HOME TO THY FRIENDS, AND TELL THEM HOW GREAT THINGS THE LORD HATH DONE FOR THEE, AND HATH HAD COMPASSION ON THEE” (MARK 5:19)

TESTIMONY OF CONVERSION

FROM THE EDITOR

The theme of conversion meanders through this issue of *Current*. By conversion, I’m referring to the truth that by grace individuals are saved by God. They are turned from darkness to light. It is my conviction, based on the Word of God, that the gospel changes people’s lives. You should see that truth in these pages. You can read a biblical story of conversion and a modern story of God changing a life. You can also read about the threat to the Christian gospel from legal challenges regarding conversion.

It is an astounding thing to claim that the Almighty God, who made the world, works in an individual to bring them out of sin into salvation. We shouldn’t minimize the boldness of that claim. The Christian can say, “The God who holds the world, changed my heart!” The fact that God works in us individually gives us a personal testimony. It is a privilege to share that testimony. God is pleased to encourage us in that task by recording the practice of converts in the Scriptures. The Psalmist gives the invitation, “Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul” (Psalm 66:16). Though the blind man had much to learn about the Lord, “one thing” he knew and witnessed: “Whereas I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25). The Lord instructed the delivered demoniac, “Go home to

thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee” (Mark 5:19). Finally, Luke records the methods of Paul who, on various occasions, used his testimony of saving grace to demonstrate the power and truth of the gospel.

We should ask the Lord for opportunities to wisely tell others about how we have been converted by the power of the gospel. Our testimony should reflect the biblical doctrine of salvation. We should explain what God has done for us by emphasizing that it is the Lord who has done all the work in our salvation. Sometimes people talk in a way that draws attention to their works. Now undoubtedly someone who rests in their works doesn’t understand the gospel. It is also true that we are responsible to believe and be active in believing. But the biblical Christian will emphasize that their confidence of being right with God rests in Christ’s work alone. They will also make much of the grace of God in changing their heart and giving them the desire and the power to call upon the Lord.

In telling our testimony we should honestly explain the way that the Lord has dealt with our souls. As we want to be orthodox, it is possible to fail to do justice to the confusion that may exist when we first come to Christ. Our faith is often weak and marred by flaws. In our honesty we ought to be careful to show the glory of Christ and the horror of sin. Some, out of an understandable desire to show how God has worked, almost

glorify their sinful past and say little of the attractiveness of Christ. Remember that in testifying we want to bring glory to God, telling others of the power of God to save and to change. Let us not be shy in witnessing to the work of God in our souls.

FROM THE PAST

If we have anything to tell others about Christ, let us resolve to tell it. Let us not be silent, if we have found peace and rest in the Gospel. Let us speak to our relations, and friends, and families, and neighbours, according as we have opportunity, and tell them what the Lord has done for our souls. All are not called to be ministers. All are not intended to preach. But all can walk in the steps of the man of whom we have been reading, and in the steps of Andrew, and Philip, and the Samaritan woman. (John 1:41, 45; 4:29) Happy is he who is not ashamed to say to others, ‘Come and hear what the Lord has done for my soul’ (Psalm. 66:16).

From J.C. Ryle’s *Expository Thoughts on Mark 5:19*

..... A SURPRISING CONVERSION

The details of the apostles recorded for us in Acts 16 leave us in no doubt that Paul was being guided very definitely by God on his missionary journey to a specific place to reach specific people with the message of the gospel that they might be saved by the grace of God. Acts 16:6 reveals that, as Paul and those travelling with him had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia. It is true that the great commission is to go into all the world, and to preach the gospel to every creature, but at that time it was not God's purpose for Paul and his companions to preach in Asia. The Holy Ghost closed that door to them at that time.

Then we learn that they "assayed" (v. 7), or attempted to go into Bithynia, but "the Spirit suffered them not." Another door was being closed to them, but these closed doors were part of God's guidance to bring Paul and his companions to the place where God would have them preach the gospel. When they came to Troas, through a vision appearing to Paul in the night, God gave clear direction to Paul and his companions as to the place they were to be and the people they were to preach to. In the vision, "There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Luke records that after Paul had seen the vision, "immediately they endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called [them] for to preach the gospel unto them."

When they arrived in Philippi, a major city of Macedonia, it was not long until God began to work in hearts. The Lord was pleased to open the heart of a woman called Lydia bringing her to faith, and a certain damsel possessed by an evil spirit was also delivered in the name of the Lord Jesus. When opposition arose, Paul and Silas were brought before the city magistrates and were

accused of "troubling the city." Their punishment included being beaten and imprisonment.

Was this really part of God's plan in bringing them to Philippi? Yes, for there was a man in that prison—the jailor—who was going to be converted to Christ. Though Paul and Silas were suffering in prison for the cause of the gospel, they were heard praying and singing praises to God at midnight in their prison cell. Suddenly there was a great earthquake causing the foundations of the prison to be shaken and the doors to be opened; the bands of the prisoners were loosed. These circumstances were ordained by God to bring about the conversion of the jailor in the prison in Philippi. Let us ponder how this man was converted to Christ.

1 CONVICTION EXPERIENCED

The jailor was awakened out of his sleep by the earthquake, and when he saw the prison doors opened he concluded that the prisoners had all escaped. He drew his sword with the intention of taking his own life. He knew that if the prisoners under his charge had escaped, he would be held responsible and be put to death, so he intended to end his own life, but Paul stopped him by crying out with a loud voice, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas" with this question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Here was a man under conviction of sin. He knew that Paul and Silas had not deserved to be beaten or cast into prison. He realized that he could have died without salvation for his soul. It was not enough that his life had been saved from the earthquake or from his own sword, his soul needed to be saved from sin. He needed to be right with God. Such dramatic events are not always

necessary to bring conviction of sin to the heart of an individual, nor do such events bring conviction of sin to all, but unless you are convicted of your sin, you will never sense a need to be saved from sin and its consequences. On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:37 we read of those who were pricked in their heart when they heard of their guilt concerning the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. Have you ever been pricked in your heart concerning your sin?

2 COUNSEL GIVEN

Paul and Silas had the answer to the question the jailor needed to hear. The counsel they gave him was this, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. They spake unto him the word of the Lord" (v. 31). Paul and Silas counseled the jailor to place his faith and reliance upon the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved from his sin. They would have shared the reality and seriousness of his sin which condemned him before God. They would have shown him that the perfect life, sacrificial death, and resurrection of the Lord were sufficient to save him and provide for him a perfect righteousness and atonement for his sin. It was not enough for the jailor to believe the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ. He had to believe on the Lord in order to be saved. The Lord is the only Savior from sin. He is the Lord with authority to save; He is Jesus who is able to save; and He is Christ, the Messiah, the One anointed to save. The same counsel is for seeking souls today. It is not our good works or church attendance that will bring salvation to our souls, but faith in the Lord Jesus and His finished work.

3 CONFESSION MADE

After this, we read that the jailor believed and was baptized with his household who also believed



• CONVICTION EXPERIENCED • COUNSEL GIVEN • CONFESSION MADE • CHANGE EVIDENT

(v. 33). His baptism was a public confession of his faith in the Lord Jesus. He would have confessed to others that he had been converted to Christ. Romans 10:9 proclaims, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Have you confessed Christ to others?

4 CHANGE EVIDENT

The Philippian jailor took Paul and Silas "the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes...and when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house" (vs. 33-34). The jailor had a care and concern for those who were now his brethren in Christ, those who had shown him the way of salvation. He had joy in his heart. What a change from what he was when wakened up by the earthquake. He had now been awakened to his spir-

itual need and was now born again possessing spiritual and eternal life.

At a later date Paul would write to the saints in Christ Jesus which were at Philippi with the bishops and deacons and he would express his thanks to God for them as he remembered their fellowship in the gospel from the first day until the time he was writing to them. He would write of his confidence that the good work which God had begun in them would be performed until the day of Jesus Christ. God would finish and bring to completion the work begun at conversion in their glorification. As Paul remembered these believers, among them would have been this jailor and his household who had believed and been saved. Are you among the number of those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ? Can you say you are saved from your sin?

It was not long until Paul and Silas were released from prison, because

the purpose for which God permitted wicked men to wrongly imprison them had been accomplished. God had used them as His instruments to point the jailor to Christ. Writing to Timothy, Paul declared, "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:10). In a higher sense and with much more severe suffering the Lord Jesus endured the cross for the salvation of His people. He who was taken by wicked hands and crucified was at the same time delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23). Like the jailor at Philippi, make sure you have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of your soul.

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TESTIMONY OF REV. PAUL ANDREW BACKHURST



I was born in the Princess Mary's RAF (Royal Air Force) Hospital in Akrotiri, Cyprus on March 20, 1972 to a Yorkshire father and a mother of Viking descent. I was their third and youngest child; Susan, the middle child, was stillborn. My father, though an unsaved man, was a non-conformist chaplain with the RAF, prior to being a Welsh Presbyterian minister.

My mother, on the other hand, was brought up a conservative Lutheran in the Faroe Islands, and looked by faith unto Jesus through the many difficulties in her life. She settled in Liverpool, England with her two children. We attended a small Baptist chapel for a few years, until we started attending the local Anglican church. The minister was a conservative Anglican, although I don't remember the gospel being preached. Unfortunately, a liberal vicar replaced him, who brought in damnable heresies and encouraged unbiblical morality. When Billy Graham came to England in 1984, a couple of groups from the church went to hear him, and I went on each occasion, more looking to gain the "info-pack" than to gain forgiveness of sin. Although I was religious for a while, and read the material and attempted to pray, it was a mere phase, and not a true conversion.

In my later teens I got involved with a more "charismatic" group at school, and attended a small charis-

matic church on Sunday evenings, believing in their message that "lively" worship was the same as a living faith, which it clearly isn't.

Despite my professions and church-going activities, I got involved in improper relationships and the use of alcohol in my early adulthood. I no longer attended church, which revealed the bitter fruits of a false conversion. I was not indifferent to the faith, but became anti-Christian in my godlessness. I was foul-mouthed, immoral, drank alcohol frequently, and was a hater of Christ and His gospel (as much as I understood of it). This empty and dead existence continued throughout university as a mature student. In February 2002 at the age of 29, I finished a Classics degree from King's College, London, and moved to the Netherlands. The impurity of my life continued, and soon martial arts became my idol.

Two years later, I made a surprise birthday visit to my mother in Liverpool. My sister and I "had" to attend Mum's church. I did not think I had anything to fear from such a liberal church and its "preaching." I was wrong. That day, there was a visiting evangelical preacher, Rev. Alan Godson, who led the service. He presented the gospel and basics of the Christian faith in a very simple and conversational way. He emphasized the necessity of the rebirth. After the service, the preacher approached us and declared: "A group of believers!" My sister and I willingly disappointed him; however, he started talking to me about whether I went to church and had ever believed. I said that I had once believed, but no longer did. He replied that, just because I had given up on the Lord, did not mean that the Lord had given up on me! Words I did not want to hear. On parting, he impressed upon me that I should read the book of Romans, which, for some reason, I promised to do.

Back in the Netherlands, the follow-

ing week was a strange one. I noticed that my great animosity towards Christ had calmed and that I did not despise that preacher. I talked to a Christian colleague about the events of the weekend; he listened quietly, but wisely made no comments. That Thursday, I felt compelled to keep my promise and to read Romans, even though Thursday was karate lessons. My colleague helped me to obtain an English Bible and as soon as I arrived home, I found Romans and began to read avidly. I experienced a strange sensation of heat. I only interrupted my reading to go and train, but after training, I continued where I had left off and finished the sixteen chapters that evening. I did not understand all I read, nor could even say that it was all applicable to me, but I had a strong and abiding feeling that this letter in the Christian Bible for nearly two millennia had finally been delivered to its intended reader!

The next day, I had to confess to my Christian colleague that even though I was unwilling to believe, I still had to admit that I thought that God was behind all of this. That evening, I phoned my mother, who was overjoyed to hear the events of the week, and she prayed for me over the phone. While going to sleep, I began to think that there was a choice that lay before me—either death or abundant life (the actual imagery was the choice between a million Euros or a dagger in the belly!) There were no other options! I prayed for the first time in many years, confessing my sins and desiring forgiveness for Christ's sake. I remember explicitly asking for faith because I wasn't too sure that Jesus was a real person.

The following morning I awoke with a joy like never before! My first thought was, "Wow, I'm a Christian!" No animosity, no cynicism, no hatred of my Creator, who was now my Savior. I knew just joy at being His. Immediately, my foul mouth disappeared, which my colleagues commented on. I decided to go to

church and to read the Bible and no longer to sin against my God. A change indeed.

My colleague invited me to his church, and assured me that they believed the Bible implicitly. In the course of two years, I came to the sorry realization, that they merely held the belief that they believed the Bible. The Scriptures were neither taught nor understood well enough for anyone to say they truly believed God's Word. I met my wife there, and we were duly married. We began more earnestly to read and study the Scriptures. At the same time, we became more knowledgeable about the Reformed Faith, with its breadth and depth of Biblical truths and its revelation of the full glory of the gospel. This led us to see the errors and falsehoods being preached and peddled, which eventually led to our departure. We soon became part of a Reformed-leaning house-church before discovering the Restored Reformed Church.

About a year after my conversion, I began to be aware of a desire to teach and preach. James 3:1 impressed upon me the need to learn the truth before undertaking the serious responsibility of preaching. This desire for the ministry never left me and became a regular part of my prayer-life.

In 2013, through SermonAudio I listened to Rev. Gordon Ferguson speaking at the Easter Convention about the Whitefield College of the Bible having external students. This caused me to pray fervently to know the Lord's will and direction. During this time, Isaiah 51:12-16 was impressed upon me during a communion service in the Netherlands, and emboldened me to apply. After the necessary application and interviews, I was accepted to study at Whitefield

with the understanding that I would become a communicant member of a congregation, and make a secondary application to come under care of presbytery after 12 months.

After a period of much busy activity in order to prepare to move a family of eight to Ulster, and with many kind and gracious displays of the Lord's providential care shown unto us, we arrived in September of 2015 to commence the ministerial course. It was an intensive and blessed four years. In my fourth year, besides the theological studies, I assisted Rev. Andrew Patterson at Mourne FPC, one of our larger congregations. I have many happy memories of the people there.

In September 2019, after graduating, I was licensed by presbytery. I stepped out into the unknown, wondering and praying where the Lord would have me serve Him. In November, I arrived in Calgary as pulpit supply for three Lord's Days, again prayerfully seeking the Lord's will, praying the prayer of Moses from Exodus 33:15, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." It did please the Lord to bless my efforts and to feed and encourage His flock here in Calgary, whereupon a call was issued to me to be their minister of the gospel.

We arrived in Calgary in March 2020 to commence the ministry, and immediately everything came under the shadow of Covid. Yet, we have known the Lord's help and blessing throughout these strange and challenging two years. New faces have appeared and stayed, with the Word of Christ dwelling richly within His flock, for all of which we may humbly say, *Soli Deo Gloria* (to God alone be the glory).



Ministers present at Rev. Backhurst's ordination

CONVERSION THERAPY

“SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU: BUT YE ARE WASHED...IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS...” (1 CORINTHIANS 6:11).

Our world is reeling under the weight of sin as every form of sinful activity is taking its toll on people from every walk of life. The biblical definition of good is what humanity calls bad and vice versa. Tragically, our leaders are rejecting every vestige of God and His Word.

On January 7, 2022, *Bill C-4 Banning Conversion Therapy* passed into Canadian law, having been pushed through the Canadian parliament and senate with Royal Assent and no debate. The passing of this legislation makes it a criminal offense to ask another person to undergo “conversion therapy”, which includes promoting, advertising, or receiving financial or other material benefit from the provision of conversion therapy.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tweeted, “It’s official: Our government’s legislation banning the despicable and degrading practice of conversion therapy has received Royal Assent—meaning it is now law. LGBTQ2 Canadians, we’ll always stand up for you and your rights.”

In an article from the *Reformed Perspective* on December 24, 2021, Chris DeBoer wrote: “The ban on conversion therapy legislation passed in silence and was celebrated with loud clamor. This was a sad day in Canada’s history, and we pray that the Lord will stem the growing tide of secularism that is filling our land.”

SO, WHAT IS CONVERSION THERAPY?

Conversion therapy is defined as any attempt to change a person’s homo-

sexual or transgender orientation. So, if you were born a female and you self-determine you are a male, it is now illegal in Canada to take any steps to influence your thinking or behavior, even if you desire it.

The shame and disappointment of what happened in the Canadian parliament and the senate in December 2021, is that on both occasions conservative members introduced a motion for unanimous consent, which means that if only one member had opposed it, it would have failed to pass. This is astounding, as just months ago, more than sixty MP’s voted against a similar bill.

This unusual unity among politicians from all parties paved the way for this legislation to be fast-tracked, not allowing any time for debate, review, clarification, or consideration of the implications it will have. Those opposed to the bill for moral and religious reasons and those who are personally seeking help with their questions about sexual and gender orientations are now silenced.

A glaring omission in this legislation is that there is no mention of the counselling, persuading, manipulating, coercing, or indoctrinating of young children and teens toward a homosexual, lesbian, or transgender lifestyle foisted on them through current public-school, sex-education curricula as well as the promotion of “gay clubs” in schools, and the influence of the entertainment industry. These are not recognized as detrimental.

And what about the abusive and medically irresponsible prescription of hormone-blocking drugs and irreparably damaging sex-change surgeries that children and teens are

encouraged to receive? The failure to even mention the emotional and physical damage caused by these abuses is an intentional omission from this legislation.

Shame is upon the nation of Canada, as its government takes another giant step in the willful rejection of truth, decency, and protection of the vulnerable. Jesus said that it would be better for a person to have a millstone hung around the neck and be cast into the depth of the sea than to offend a child.

Conversion therapy also has a negative side in its long history which has included objectionable treatments such as electric shock therapy, lobotomy, and medication, all of which cannot be condoned, especially where coercion has been used. But to include questionable medical practices and forced behavioral treatment along with medical counseling, parental direction, and pastoral care, is to swing the pendulum far to the other side.

In a 2019 policy report on conversion therapy, the Association for Reformed and Political Action (ARPA) stated: “Unlike body-affirming counselling, sex-change treatments are physically invasive, and worryingly reminiscent of the pharmaceutical and surgical forms of conversion therapy practiced in the mid-1900s. They do irreparable physical and psychological harm.” The fact is that the biological makeup of humanity comes in two forms: male and female. The DNA cannot be altered no matter how many drugs or surgeries are prescribed.

Ryan T. Anderson, PhD of the Heritage Foundation wrote, “Sex reassignment doesn’t work. It’s

impossible to reassign someone's sex physically and attempting to do so doesn't produce good outcomes psychosocially. Changing sexes is a metaphysical impossibility because it is a biological impossibility."

The issue at the forefront of the controversy today is not so much related to the "objectionable practices" of conversion therapy, but the complete rejection of any need to change a person's homosexual thinking or from denying their birth gender. People justify their thinking by claiming they were "born this way"; however, the issue is not genetic but moral. Mankind suffers from the universal problem of total depravity which permeates the entire person: body, soul, and spirit. Every human being is morally, mentally, and physically under the impact of a totally sinful nature.

"It becomes clear then, that this Bill is not about banning conversion therapy, it is about allowing conversion therapy in only one direction—the unbiblical direction. Being gender fluid, transgender, homosexually active, etc. are celebrated and promoted in so many different ways in public schools and communities... This isn't about creating a safe space for struggling youths—it is about creating a cultural revolution where the standards of God's Word are continually being tossed aside" (Chris Deboer, *Reformed Perspective*).

We argue that this legislation not only fails to stop reverse solicitation by the LGBTQ community, it promotes it. The public education system is already targeting children and youth, teaching them to question their gender. Kindergarten boys are encouraged to pretend to be girls and cross dress. Impressionable primary children are being exposed to books and media about such things as "drag queens" and "gay pride" in cross-gender activities. This is an evil abuse of trust.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians who had been converted to Christ, changed from their immoral, homosexual lifestyles and

were now new creatures in Christ. He reminded them: "Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (2 Corinthians 6:11). There is hope in Christ for every sinner. Jesus said, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand", which is a call for all mankind to turn from sin and embrace the free gift of salvation, only found in Him as Savior.

What the homosexual person needs is the same as the adulterer, the thief, the liar, and the so-called "good living" person. It is repentance, healing, and a radical change—the true conversion therapy of the Holy Word of God.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS LAW FOR THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Bill C-4 creates two major problems for Christians. First, it rejects the clear biblical teaching that God created man in His own image in two distinct, unchangeable genders: male and female (Genesis 1:27), and that the homosexual lifestyle is sinful and will bring the judgment of God as will all immorality (Romans 1:26-32). Second, that any counseling or advice given to people to "convert" from such lifestyles is deemed a criminal offense.

The implications are serious because there is no allowance in this legislation for pastoral counseling or the preaching of the gospel which calls people to repent of their sinful lifestyles. How it will be prosecuted is yet unknown for it has not been challenged in court. Indeed, it is one more attack against the truth of Christ. It is also a further attempt to silence the evangelist, the gospel preacher, and the Christian personal worker.

The question arises: Who is really being indicted with a criminal charge? Who is the one on trial in the court of Canada? It is the One who gave the

Moral Law. It is the Holy Spirit who through conviction of sin, brings a person to conversion in Christ. And this conversion is so profound that God says, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The threat to our freedom of expression and right to practice our faith and teach the Word of God purely and without hindrance is real. The gospel freedoms Canada once enjoyed and the blessing of God are in the balance. Canada and its political leaders have set themselves against the Lord and His Word. This does not bode well for the future of the nation.

WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

- **BE INFORMED ABOUT THE ISSUES.**
- **BE COMPASSIONATE TOWARDS SINNERS OF EVERY KIND AND PRAY FOR THEIR SALVATION.**
- **BE WILLING TO TAKE YOUR STAND FOR TRUTH.**
- **PRAY TO THE LORD FOR HIS INTERVENTION.**

.....
Rev. Larry Saunders
Minister, Toronto FPC
.....

..... HOW GREEN SHOULD A CHRISTIAN BE?

Some Christians believe that everything from seeking a zero-carbon-footprint to saving an obscure lizard from extinction is part of a Satanic plot to overthrow the government. There are Christians who hold that veganism and doing nothing to disturb the environment should be Christian goals. They claim these practices would afford God and His creation the reverence they deserve. Are such positions scriptural?

Other than the fact that God created the physical universe, that it belongs to Him, and that He placed it under man's dominion to meet our physical needs, few ecological principles are dealt with in Scripture. Even those passages that appear to address ecological ideas are questionable.

For example, Deuteronomy 22:6-7, one of the few Jewish laws tied to a specific promise, is often cited as an ecological guideline.

"If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days."

Early commentators indicated that, while recognizing man's dominion over animals, this law shows God's special concern for birds. Some commentators address its ecological logic: if one takes both parent and offspring, eventually the population size can be damaged. If one takes the adult, the young have a low chance of survival, which could decrease the population. But if the parent is spared, it can reproduce, and the potential for population damage shrinks.

It is the promise of well being and long life that gives most commentators concern. Is the promise for the

individual, or is it for the nation of Israel? Are the prolonged days a special blessing for the person who obeys the law, or is it that a sustained bird population will continue to supply human needs? Could it be both?

Today some seek to make the application broader. If a group of people take from nature all that they can get, depending on what they are taking and how, their greed can significantly harm the environment. One can point to areas of poor ecological practices that are no longer habitable. Drawing on the presumed logic of Deuteronomy 22:6-7, one can justify doing only that which permits the environment to sustain itself.

Why did God wrap this major ecological principle in an obscure bird example? Some suggest that one of the few ways Old Testament people could significantly harm the environment was to cause bird population declines. Statements regarding other potential ecological abuses would not have been applicable or comprehensible to them. Supposedly future generations could see the wisdom of this law and apply the principle to other uses of the environment.

So, the way to prolong our days (maintain our supply from the physical world) is to take what we need, but not so as to harm the environment. Putting this into modern jargon, man's use of the physical should be "ecologically sustainable." Applying the principle of the bird law in this way, Christians could justify being extremely green.

Another Old Testament law which some suggest teaches an ecological principle is the sabbath of the land described in Leviticus 25. Once the Jews were in Canaan, each seventh year their fields and vineyards were to lie fallow. God would provide abundance in the years prior to the sabbath year so His people would not be in want during the sabbatical year. Letting a cultivated land peri-

odically go fallow may be ecologically wise in some areas. This law, however, was given specifically to Jews for when they were in Canaan.

While many of the Old Testament laws made physical sense, they were not intended as guidelines for health and safety. For ancient Jews these laws were, in part, a test of obedience. Consider the ban on pork. If properly cooked, pork is as safe and nutritious as other meats. Pork is "unclean" because God proclaimed it "unclean," not because it was unhealthy. Jews seeking to please God ate no pork because God told them not to. Galatians 3:24-25 tells us the purpose of the law was to be a schoolmaster, teaching about sin and the need of redemption. Humans cannot be justified by keeping the law: we need a Savior.

While the bird law makes sustaining-bird-population sense, and a periodic fallow field may be good ecological practice in some areas, God did not tell Jews to apply these principles to other aspects of the creation. Reasoning that God intended these concepts to be universal is significantly extending their stated application.

THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH

We were taught to pray "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." God has a plan for what we do with natural resources. Not doing His will is sin. But God chose not to give us details regarding *how* to use the physical world. How then can we know what will please God in these matters?

Since how to deal with the environment is a physical problem, it can be addressed through science. Essentially, science involves humans observing the physical world and then making predictions of what will happen if certain things are done. Using scientific knowledge, we can make wise decisions regarding the

use of the physical resources God has placed under our dominion.

In the past, human ability to use the physical was limited, and practices were relatively straightforward. To feed the family, great-grandpa cleared a piece of land and planted a crop. To heat the home, he burned coal. On the scale these practices were done in his day, they were environmentally insignificant. They answered his prayer of “give us this day our daily bread” in what were then best practices.

Today our clearing that land and burning coal may not be wise. The inner workings of nature are often complex, and our ability to manipulate the environment has increased. Great-grandpa’s land may be better used as an orchard or a subdivision. Obtaining and burning massive amounts of coal to power vast cities may not be wise. Best practices to supply “our daily bread” may have changed.

When making decisions about practices beyond the moral law, God

judges “the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12-13).

Great-grandpa’s use of the land and coal being acceptable and my doing the same thing not being acceptable is not because the immutable God has changed; the situation has. Why do I want to plant that crop and heat with coal? Because it is cheaper? For convenience? Out of respect for grandpa? To make a statement to authorities about telling me what to do? The question is, does God want me to plant that crop and burn that coal? In the end, it is my desire to please Him that matters.

SOME THOUGHTS FOR MAKING ECOLOGICAL DECISIONS

Although there may be no direct scriptural instructions regarding human use of the environment, Christians should wisely apply biblical concepts to their decisions. Just as “best practices” have changed over time, we must also recognize that appropriate ecological decisions can be different in different areas and under other conditions. Below are some biblical principles that should

be considered.

God abundantly supplies good things. God is not stingy. Beauty may not be essential, but God made things beautiful. Nourishment does not need to taste good, but God made tasty things. Hearing may be beneficial, but God made music to enjoy and praise Him. When seeking to bless and encourage, God supplies abundance. We can assume that a “bare necessity” existence advocated by some ecologically minded individuals is not His plan. And as image bearers, He expects us to be generous. When Christ was asked, “Who is my neighbor?” a Samaritan’s generosity was His answer (Luke 10:25-37). As God has abundantly blessed us, we are to be “good neighbors” with the resources God has given us.

Misuse of resources is not a good testimony.

We would condemn someone who seeks to justify a pet sin by saying, “It’s okay for me. Since I’m saved, God will let me into heaven.”

Likewise, one cannot justify personal



wasteful or harmful ecological practices by saying, "It's okay for me. Since God has promised to supply my needs and He never breaks a promise, I'll be fine." We are not to "tempt the Lord" (Matthew 4:5-7). Such practices would bring reproach upon the name of Christ. Some modern ecological practices are wise; others are not.

Sometimes a good ecological practice makes obvious sense, and not practicing it would be a poor testimony. For example, recycling aluminum cans falls into this category for most people. God only made so much aluminum. Aluminum cans recycle easily. If put in a landfill, the aluminum is essentially lost. Seeing Christian neighbors recycling aluminum may enhance their testimony. On the other hand, most plastics are not in limited supply and do not recycle easily or well. Recycling most plastic is not ecologically a best practice. Cutting back on plastic use will send less to the landfill. Seeking to use less plastic can be part of a good testimony.

Predicted consequences should only be a part of a decision. If dire consequences are not imminent, few people willingly change their actions, especially if the changes are costly. To encourage mass ecological changes, media and academia emphasize the most dire consequences, even if their likelihood is questionable. For example, coal, gas and oil supplies are limited and if used in large quantities can harm environments. Using less fossil fuel and being willing to use renewable energy sources

makes ecological sense. Whether the predicted consequences of fossil fuel use are accurate or not, being willing to support the development of new energy sources is wise. Objecting to extreme predictions of fossil fuel use does not make insisting on fossil fuel use a good testimony.

How GREEN SHOULD A CHRISTIAN BE?

People often want the clarity of black or white statements. God often gives them. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23) is quite clear. Other statements from God are less clear. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15) is clear, but how each Christian should do it is not. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3) is clear when it comes to worshipping idols of wood or stone, but less clear when possessions, a vocation, relationships, or some other aspect of a normal life reaches idol status.

The answer to how green a Christian should be is similar. Examples used in the articles in this series are simplifications of complex situations, and the scope of the articles permits few examples. These contribute to the vagueness of the answer to this article's title question. God expects us to have a good ecological testimony, but what constitutes a good testimony is not always the same. The wise use of one physical environment is not the same as the wise use of another. And man's understanding of an environment and his ability to use it may also change the answer.

Ecologically, we must do the following:

- **understand our physical environment (obtain knowledge);**
- **not be swayed by the opinions and predictions of others (practice discernment);**
- **make decisions about what is the best practice (exercise wisdom), and above all,**
- **desire to be a good testimony for Christ (have the right motive).**

A Christian wanting to have a good testimony, but needing wisdom regarding it, should claim the promise of James 1:5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

When we pray for patience, we should expect tribulations (Romans 5:3; James 1:3). Likewise, when we pray for direction regarding a good testimony of our use of physical resources and are willing to make the changes necessary to have that testimony, we should expect lifestyle changes. We may encounter some trials as we strive for a good ecological testimony, but when we yield to Him, the outcome will always be for our good and His glory.

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Mr. William Pinkston served as a science teacher at Bob Jones Academy for 50 years.

He is a charter member of Faith FPC, Greenville, SC.

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The personal nature of salvation begins with God choosing His people individually, before time began. “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand... As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (Romans 9:11-13). We also know that Christ’s death had the individual believer in view. Paul can speak of the “Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

In time, we come to know the grace of God when God works in our hearts individually. This work is regeneration. For any man or woman to be saved he or she must be born again. “Jesus answered and said unto [Nicodemus], Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Christ says we must be born again. It is vital that we understand the rebirth and assess our experience in light of God’s Word.

Sin has so impacted man that he cannot effect the change necessary to be saved and enter the kingdom. “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw

him...” (John 6:44). Indeed, the sinner is dead in sin and must be made alive, i.e., born from above. “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)” (Ephesians 2:5).

One result of this new life is faith. Faith is like the first breath of the newborn. We leave our sin and trust in Christ alone. “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born...of God” (John 1:12-13).

The Holy Spirit is the One who effects this change. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit... The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John 3:6+8).

The Spirit uses the Word. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (James 1:18). “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and

abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23).

This rebirth radically changes the individual. The new heart that we are given in our new birth is a heart that loves the law of God. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you... And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

What happens when an individual is born again? He hears the Word of Christ. He believes that Word to be true and gladly trusts Christ to save Him. That starts him on a path of happy obedience to the Word of God. He is saved and lives in hope of heaven. The newborn believer says with Peter, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3-4).

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Rev. Stephen Pollock (Editor)
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TC TEEN CONNECTION

By Rev. Derrick Bowman

DISCERNMENT Part Two

In part one of this series on discernment, I quoted a definition of discernment as being “the skill of understanding and applying God’s Word with the purpose of separating truth from error and right from wrong.”

In Hebrews 5:11-14, Paul writes to us about spiritual maturity as it relates to discernment. He says that his readers were not mature enough for the strong meat of the Word of God, so he had to give them spiritual milk instead. The implication is that because of their immaturity they were not as discerning as they should be. He tells them in verse 14 that those who are spiritually mature are able to use their spiritual senses “to discern both good and evil.” Discernment is something that can be learned, and it is like a muscle that can be strengthened.

Let’s dig a little bit deeper into what Paul is saying in these verses. I would encourage you to pause for just a moment and read Hebrews 5:11-14 from your Bible before we go further. Go ahead, I’ll wait . . .

One of the first things that jumps out from these verses is that a lack of discernment is proof of spiritual immaturity. The Lord has asked us to have childlike faith when we come to him.

While our faith should be childlike it should not be childish. What I mean by that is that we are not to remain in a state of spiritual immaturity. We are supposed to be growing. Our catechism tells us that we are to be in the process of dying to sin and living unto righteousness.

You might ask, “As a teenager, how mature can I be?” In our society, most people don’t expect much maturity from teenagers, but when they see it, they are surprised and impressed. I have often asked my own children and the young people in our youth group, “Do you really want to be considered a “normal” teenager?” By our broken culture’s standards, most teenagers are pretty irresponsible. They are consumed with frivolous things. Sadly, it is often the case that their parents and other adults around them don’t set a good example, but that does not excuse their immaturity. As a teenager trying to follow the Lord, you are responsible for your own actions. Immature children are the ones who do what looks and feels good. With spiritual maturity, you learn that sometimes what looks and feels good is not really good at all. In fact, sometimes, what looks and feels good, or what comes easily, is actually harmful. It is often even sinful. With discernment, we distinguish between good

and bad and also between better and best! Philippians 1:9-10, “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent.”

A second valuable lesson from Paul’s words in Hebrews 5 is that a lack of discernment is proof of backsliding. Backsliding is worse than spiritual immaturity. Paul’s readers in Hebrews were supposed to be growing, but they were not. If you are not growing, then you are falling behind. You are backsliding.

Backsliding is not necessarily going backwards into old sins. If everyone else is moving forward, and you are staying in the same place, then you are falling behind. Imagine a first-grade student who learns to read 100 new words. If in second grade he does not learn any new words while all the other students in his class learn 100 more, then he has fallen behind. Even if he never forgot the 100 words he learned in first grade, he still has slid backwards in relationship to his peers who now know 200 words. I use that illustration to prove my point. Backsliding is not necessarily falling into sin. Sometimes backsliding is simply not growing. We are to be daily growing in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. If we are not, then we are backslid-

ing from where we should be. You might ask, "At what pace should I be growing spiritually?" I don't know the answer to that question other than that I do know that you should be growing. It might be slow, but it's growth nonetheless.

The third lesson from Hebrews 5 is the most sobering because we learn that a continued lack of discernment is proof of spiritual death. If you have never had any spiritual growth or if you don't care about spiritual growth, then that is proof of spiritual death. It is just a fact that things that are alive grow, and things that are dead do not grow. If you continue to

make wrong choices, and the Lord by His Spirit does not correct you, then you are not a child of God. To use the biblical language, you are still dead in your trespasses and sins.

Exercising discernment does not make you a Christian, but if you are a Christian, then you will grow in your discernment. You will learn how to understand and apply God's Word for the purpose of separating truth from error and right from wrong. You will grow away from the simple milk of the Word and move up to the strong meat and have your senses exercised to discern both good and evil.



Question: "How can I overcome inconsistency in my Christian life?"

Answer: This question is one that does not apply only to teenagers. I think sometimes teens have the wrong idea that the older you get the easier it is to live as a Christian. If you talk openly to your parents and even your pastor about this question, they will tell you that they struggle with being consistent themselves. Spiritual consistency does not come with age; it comes with spiritual maturity and discernment. Unfortunately, there is no magic formula to make you more consistent, but let me give you three practical things that will help you. First, be filled with God's Word. Lack of daily Bible reading might be part of the inconsistency you are asking about. Don't get discouraged and beat yourself up for missing a day. If you miss a day, try not to miss the next day. Reading large portions of Scripture is always good, but sometimes quality is better than quantity. Meditate on one verse or one central truth from what you have read and ask the Lord to help you incorporate that into your life and daily routine. Second, go to church! Make up your mind that if the doors are open, you are going to be there. Even if your friends don't go on Sunday night or attend prayer meeting, decide that you are going to go anyway. God has promised to bless His people when they gather together. A third suggestion is to surround yourself with godly influences. Part of spiritual maturity and discernment includes separation from ungodly influences. I wrote about this in "part one" of the article on discernment. Ungodly friends will pull you down and not help you be consistent in your walk with the Lord. With the Lord's help you can grow in Christ as He enables you to "die" to sin and live to righteousness. Consistency will follow.

If you would like to submit a question, please email Rev. Derrick Bowman at dbowman@gracefreepres.org. If your question is selected, it will be presented anonymously.

BOOK REVIEW

OUR CHIEF OF DAYS

How are your Sundays? Are you profiting spiritually from them? Is there evidence that you are growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord?

“Not long ago many Christians were talking about keeping Sunday special.” With these words, Pastor Jeremy Walker begins his excellent book, *Our Chief of Days*, a refreshing look at keeping the Lord’s Day holy. This small book of just over 100 pages is easy reading and can be finished in a few hours, but its content deserves much reflection and even periodic review. Here is a useful tool for some regular examination of the soul.

Pastor Walker explains that in the same week in which God created Adam and Eve, the very next day was the Sabbath. It was one of the creation ordinances. He skillfully demonstrates the Bible’s unified testimony regarding God’s special day every week. God ordained a distinct day for Himself and for His people’s spiritual good, blessing one day in seven and sanctifying it (setting it apart) for rest and for worship.

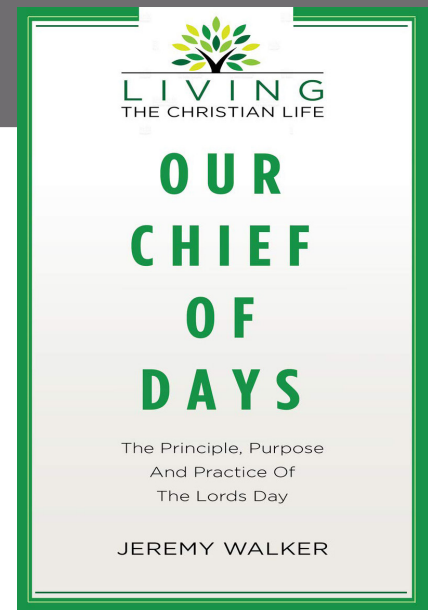
The Lord taught Israel to keep the Sabbath day long before the two stone tables of the Ten Commandments were given to them for their keeping. Exodus 16 instructs Israel regarding the gathering of manna, which was forbidden on the Sabbath day, since there would be none. Yet some of the dull hearers went out looking, and thereby desecrated the holy day. God the Creator has always claimed ownership of His creatures’ time and how it is spent. As Redeemer of His people from Egyptian slavery, He gave rest to those who previously had no rest. Therefore, how reasonable it was to command rest and holy worship from a redeemed people.

The Lord Jesus Christ did not come to abrogate that law, but to fulfill it. He often came into conflict with the ritualistic scribes and Pharisees whose view of the Sabbath was extremely legalistic. For centuries, the Hebrew rabbis had wrongly assumed that they were protecting God’s law, particularly the Sabbath day, by loading it with hundreds of man-made rules. In fact, a total of 1,521 unbiblical stipulations were added to the fourth commandment.

After Christ’s resurrection, the church began gathering for worship on the first day of each week in commemoration of Christ’s great victory over the grave, sin, and hell. The testimony of the church in the remainder of the New Testament, along with the words of the church fathers, martyrs, and even pagan enemies prove that the day of new covenant worship was the first day of the week. Opposition to keeping the first day of the week holy to the Lord has been raised almost exclusively by the enemies of the gospel.

Pastor Walker effectively answers the various objections that are raised against the Christian Sabbath. With compassion and wisdom, he gives many suggestions for keeping the Sabbath holy in the context of the twenty-first century and in the hostile environment where many of God’s people live.

In the final part of the book, he expounds the four main points in the answer to question 60 of the Shorter Catechism. “How is the Sabbath to be sanctified?” Answer: “The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God’s



worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy.”

Due to the recent pandemic, faithful attendance at public worship on the Lord’s Day has been pitifully reduced. Yet the needs of the soul and spirit continue unabated. How are your needs to be met so that you may thrive in sanctification and service? Hebrews 10:25 teaches that these needs are met by being present in the assembly of believers. The Larger Catechism #155 declares that “The Spirit of God makes...especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of...drawing sinners to Christ...and establishing their hearts in holiness.”

This encouraging and informative book is available from Reformation Heritage Books for only \$5.00.

Rev. Myron Mooney
Minister of Trinity FPC, Trinity, AL



CALLING OLDER WOMEN

God's plan for the spread of the gospel and the building up of believers in their most holy faith is wonderfully good beyond what most of us think. We glimpse the plan in the book of Titus where the great missionary Paul left his young colleague Titus to set in order things lacking in the church organization. Titus was to hold fast the faithful Word and speak sound doctrine both to rebuke false teachers as well as to ground the believers in the faith and in the way they lived. As the gospel countered Cretian paganism, Paul was concerned that every part of the church body "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things (Titus 2:10), be a testimony, and honor (not blaspheme) the Word. After addressing the aged men in Titus 2:2, Paul speaks several instructions for the "aged" or older, mature Christian woman in Titus 2:3.

First, older women are to **"be in behavior as becometh holiness."**

The behavior of older women should be fitting or proper to live out the gospel.

The phrase "becometh holiness" is interesting because this Greek word for holiness refers to "sacred, reverent duties of a priest," using the same root as in 1 Peter 2:9, "a royal priesthood." God's sacred calling for His older daughters is to be priest-like: knowing, praying, and living out the Word of God. Generations of Jewish people likely would have recognized the older woman Anna when they came to Jerusalem for the feasts. Widowed young, she served

God with continual fastings and prayers in the temple. Not only did Anna pray, but she rejoiced to see the Christ child and "spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38). Today's older women in the empty nest season of life can establish new routines of Bible study and prayer, entering the throne room of heaven to intercede for young women, for children, and for the spreading of the gospel!

To be a priest-like prayer warrior is a high calling for God's older daughters!

Many of us know and love beautiful, godly, prayerful older women exemplifying this high calling.

In glaring contrast to the lofty privilege of praying for others, Paul also warns older women against falsely accusing others—gossiping, speaking critically, and slandering. The Greek word for accusers in this passage is "diabolos," a word used for the devil many times in the New Testament. Using her tongue for accusatory purposes is doing the devil's work and should have no place in a Christian woman's life. Rather, as the Proverbs 31 woman, older women should speak with wisdom and their tongue be governed by the law of kindness. Not to be taken lightly, older women need to heed this warning.

Thirdly, older women are to **"not be given to much wine"**: they are not to be drunkards, nor enslaved to or in bondage to alcohol, nor any addictive substance, (according to commentators). God's special servant

John the Baptist didn't drink wine, and when Jesus was on the cross, He refused the wine mixed with vinegar. Rather than being drunk with wine (Ephesians 5:18), believers are to be filled with the Spirit. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25) and not give place to indulgences that lead to bondage.

Finally, older women are to **be teachers of good things**. God's goodness experienced through a walk of faith and studied from the Scriptures supplies the content. Stories of God's provision, answers to prayer, and trusting Him are invaluable to sharing. Teaching includes encouraging, mentoring, and informal chatting in ways that build relationships. Encouraging young women—teen girls, single women, young married women, and young mothers—provides rewarding and beautiful friendships.

Hear the call of God to you, dear older godly woman! Adorn the gospel, honor God's Word, and exemplify a worthy walk with God in your mature years!

Pray for the Lord to make you the older woman of God He wants you to be.

Pray for opportunities to encourage young women in your family and church. Thereby, God's gracious call to you will be fulfilled in your life for His own glory!

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Mrs. Barbara Mooney
Trinity FPC, Trinity, AL
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★ THE SECRET WEAPON ★



We are all hearing a lot about wars and battles and armies. **Did you know that you are a soldier and you're in a battle?** The Lord tells us that we need to fight as soldiers against the enemy of sin every day. I want to tell you about a secret weapon that only God's people can use in battle—it is the weapon of praise!

Recently I've been in a battle with a sickness that has made it difficult for me to get enough air. I learned about a secret weapon to help me breathe. If I start to sing, it will fill my lungs with the air I need. So I praise the Lord with singing and all is well.

This reminded me of a story in God's Word. In 2 Chronicles 20 we read about a battle. The enemy was coming to fight God's people and take away the land that God had given them. It was a large and strong army. God's people didn't know what to do because they knew they weren't strong enough. The men, women, children, and little ones all began to pray. **God told them not to be afraid**

because the battle was not theirs but the Lord's. God told them to stand still and watch and He would save them. They believed the Lord's promise and that made them want to sing. When they began to sing and to praise, the Lord fought against the enemy and defeated them. God's people were victorious! They used the secret weapon of praise because they believed God.

Every day you and I fight a battle with the enemy of our soul. This enemy is sin. It may be anger, disobedience, selfishness, unkindness, or even fear. Just like God's people in the story, you aren't strong enough to defeat this enemy. When the enemy comes against you, you must trust God and take out your secret weapon—begin to sing to the Lord in your heart and the enemy will lose its power and you will have strength to conquer sin. As the Lord has promised, His joy will be your strength!

Who would have thought that singing could be so powerful? We

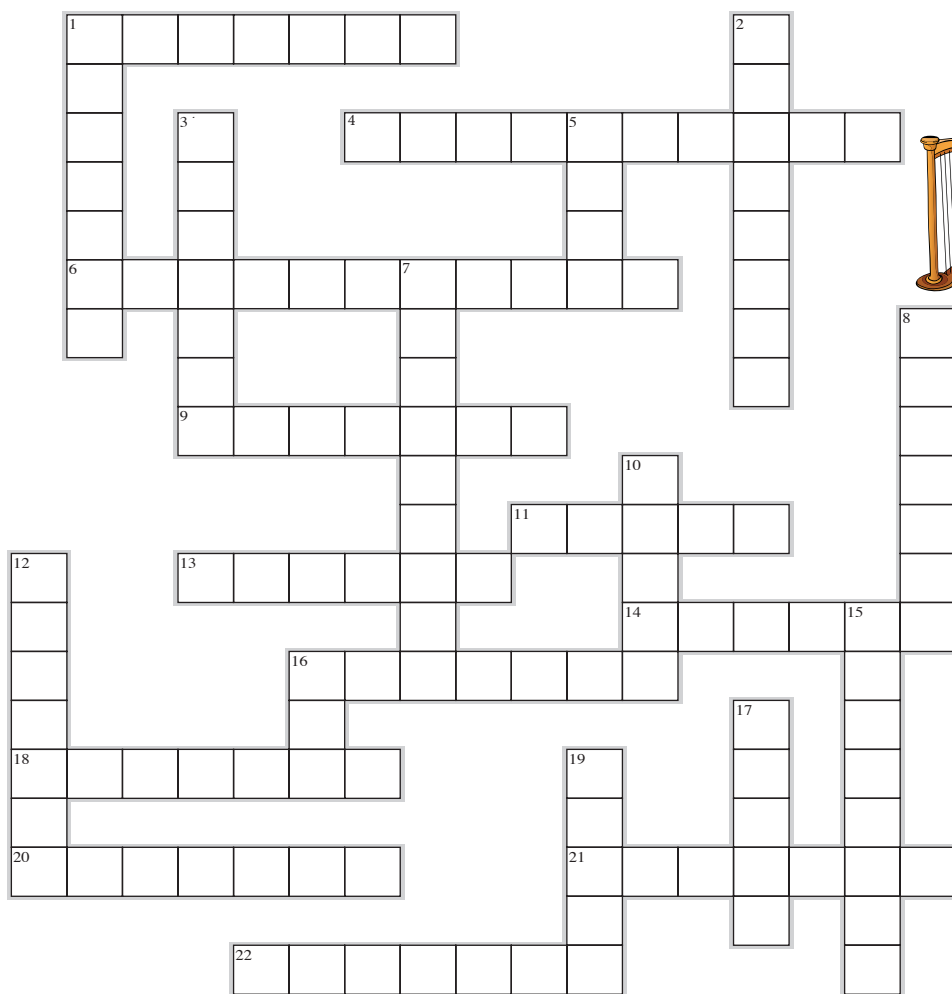
see many examples in the Bible of God's people singing before, during, and after their battles. In our story the Israelites sang before the battle even started. The Apostle Paul sang during his battle when he was beaten in prison. Moses sang after God's people had won the battle at the Red Sea. No matter what battle you face, praising God will always give you strength and joy to be victorious.

**"BUT I WILL SING OF
THY POWER: YEA I
WILL SING ALOUD
OF THY MERCY...
UNTO THEE, O MY
STRENGTH, WILL I
SING: FOR GOD IS MY
DEFENSE!"
(PSALM 59:16-17A)**

.....
Mrs. Jan Kimbro
Grace FPC, Winston-Salem, NC
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WINNERS
of the spring crossword puzzle:

Thomas Backhurst, Calgary FPC
Rose Pollock, FPC of Malvern
Alana Rose, Toronto FPC
Liam Rose, Toronto FPC
Annabelle Stonger, Reformed Baptist Church of Coleman, Texas



ACROSS

1. Psalms 120 through 134 are called Songs of ____.
4. This happened after Paul and his companion sang in prison.
6. Paul said that singing is useful for teaching and ____.
9. Instrument played by Aaron's sister Miriam
11. God told Job that the ____ sang together at creation.
13. What kind of "noise" are we to make to the Lord?
14. The songbook of the Bible
16. Where did captive Israelites hang their harps?
18. In addition to instrumentalists, what other musicians were part of temple worship?
20. We are to come into the Lord's presence doing what?
21. The Israelites found it hard to sing the Lord's song in a ____ land.
22. Their tribe provided musicians for the temple.

DOWN

1. Prophetess who sang a song after Sisera was defeated
2. David was the "sweet ____ of Israel."
3. Wind instrument
5. At the Last Supper, Jesus and His disciples sang what?
7. What kind of songs does Paul recommend?
8. Percussion instruments used in Old Testament worship
10. Stringed instruments used in Old Testament worship
12. Psalm 47 tells us to sing what?
15. At what time of day did Paul sing in prison?
16. In the song at the Red Sea, the Lord is called a "man of ____."
17. Who sang with Paul in prison?
19. He sang a song at the Red Sea.

SUMMER 2022

Music in the Bible!

Answers are found in these passages (KJV):
Exodus 15; Judges 5;
2 Samuel 23; 1 Chronicles 15;
2 Chronicles 29; Job 38;
Psalms 47, 100, 120-134,
137 & 150; Matthew 26;
and Colossians 3.



PLEASE NOTE: Send your completed puzzle to Current Kids' Corner, c/o Judy Brown, 651 Ponden Dr., Greer, SC 29650 or to ljsbrown2@gmail.com by **July 31, 2022**. Include your name, address, age, and the name of the church you attend. Please also include an email address in case we need to contact you about your entry. Five winners will be drawn from all correct submissions received. **The contest is open to young people ages 5-12.** Winners will receive a \$10 cash prize.

..... THE BLESSING OF ASSURANCE

The believer cannot manufacture his own assurance, anymore than he can produce the salvation of his own soul. It is the special work of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, to assure the heart of that work of grace which God has done. This blessing has been referred to as one of His most precious gifts. Consider the following truths concerning the Holy Spirit and true assurance from Romans 8:14-16.

The Teaching of The Holy Spirit—His WORD

There is an external aspect to the Holy Spirit's activity: He speaks of Christ in the Word. He reveals sinfulness and hopelessness outside of Christ (John 16:8-10) and witnesses to the Lord Jesus in His saving work (John 15:26; 16:14). There is also an internal aspect to the Spirit's work: He applies the gospel to men's hearts as they are "born of the Spirit." They become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus and cry "Abba, Father!" (Galatians 4:6) Sonship lies at the very heart of true, biblical assurance. Paul teaches us that the inclination to call God our "Father" is the work of the Spirit in us.

After we are saved the Spirit continues to open the Scriptures to our hearts. Through the ministry of the indwelling Spirit as believers read the Word and hear it preached, truth is applied to the heart. The Spirit witnesses to its truth in the mind of the Christian and his life is transformed by it. The Holy Spirit leads saints to rest upon the testimony of Scripture. His "bearing witness with our spirit" takes place, not apart from the Word, but through the Word.

The Testimony of the Holy Spirit—His WITNESS

Not only does He give us faith to believe God's promises, but the Spirit also witnesses in our hearts giving direct confirmation within (Romans 8:16; 1 John 5:10). He is called "the Spirit of adoption." The Christian has the inner conviction that he has been made a child of God!

How do you know you are really saved? A Christian will answer, "I believe God's Word, and I also know it in my heart!" This inward assurance enables a Christian to rejoice in his adoption as a child of God. At times it is more discernible than others and joy in God may ebb and flow. Nevertheless, in a true believer the spirit of sonship is present. In some, no doubt, it is sudden; in many it is more gradual and progressive, but the Lord witnesses in all of the hearts of His people to the truth of their salvation.

The Puritan John Owen illustrated the witness of the Spirit in the heart of a Christian using the image of a court-case. We might imagine a man trying to establish his claim to sonship with his genuine relationship to his father, but against strong opposition. Evidence and counterevidence is brought forward and presented. But things do not go well for the claimant; however, a very reliable witness is called into the court, who gives powerful testimony on behalf of the man, and thus the claimant wins his case. Owen states that the reliable witness for the Christian is the Holy Spirit. The courtroom is the believer's heart. His claim to be a true child of God is challenged and opposed by Satan. But the Holy Spirit by a powerful testimony puts to silence the counter-claim of the devil, and the Christian's claim to sonship is firmly established!

A man may feel himself to be a true child of God. He believes, on the basis of the Scriptures, that he has indeed trusted Christ, and the evidence that he is a believer is quite strong. Yet, he is still doubtful. It is then the Holy Spirit speaks peace to his soul and gives him a real sense of assurance. His verdict is the same as that of the believer's own heart. He rejoices by faith to say, "I am a child of the King!" This is what we mean by the "witness of the Spirit." May God give to each reader faith to rest in the promise of His Word, and the corresponding enjoyment of the witness of His Holy Spirit.

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