Dying Churches, Part 3

by Elder McKinley Wright (101 years old)
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Churches die because God removes their candlesticks. If you desire to know the internal condition of your church, look at the **regularity** of God's adding members to her. Acts 2:47 says that God added members to the church daily. We cannot expect God to add someone every day; but if we are what we should be, He will add regularly. This article's focus is on motives that are acceptable to God. God gives more attention to our motive in doing a good thing than He gives to the good that an action accomplishes. We begin by looking at the message of Acts 2:41-47.

Peter had delivered a sermon on the Day of Pentecost. Several years later, a man named Luke was writing a history of the early church. First, he wrote about Jesus and the beginning of the church (the Gospel of Luke). Then he began at Jesus' Ascending into heaven and wrote about the church during the time when most of the twelve men whom we know as Apostles were living. He wrote about Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. When he finished describing Peter's sermon, he summarized with the statement recorded in verses 40 and 41. The writer suggests that each reader (you) read them thoughtfully. All of the verses from 36 to 47 (particularly verses 36 to 40) begin with connecting words indicating that they are parts of one overall statement.

Verse 41 begins with the word "then," a connecting word that indicates a cause/effect relationship. Peter's preaching caused people to be baptized. Verses 42 to 46 begin with the word "and" indicating that this is a group of items, each of which is of equal importance. Several of the verses also contain the word "and" or commas (used instead of the word "and") within them. We shall not discuss these verses, simply naming the expressions. The words inside the parenthesis are not part of the Inspired word. They are the writer's remarks, usually identifying the meaning of pronouns or defining words.

Verse 42. "They (those who were added to the church in verse 41) continued stedfastly (kept working at it) in the apostles' doctrine (God's teachings that had been entrusted to the apostles) and fellowship (they felt like they belonged to each other), and in breaking of bread (took part in every Communion Service), and in prayers (prayed often in the group and individually).

43. And fear (recognition of God's majesty) came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles (God saw their reverence and rewarded them by permitting the apostles to do these things).

44. And all that believed were together, and had all things common (they felt that they were so much a part of one another that they practiced a communal life style);

45. And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them (gave parts of their possessions and goods) to all men, as every man had need.

46. And they, continuing daily (every day) with one accord (in complete agreement) in the temple (they were Jews so they worshipped there), and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat (food) with gladness and singleness of heart (they concentrated on God),

47. Praising God, and having favour with all the people (the common people among whom they lived were so impressed with the disciples' dedication that they were glad to have them [disciples] as neighbors). And the Lord added to the church daily (every day, regularly) such as (those who) should (ought to) be saved." (If they ought to be saved they were not already saved.) The Lord added them to the church so she could teach them how to live lives that please God).

The cited passage is a list of things that the early church (her members) did. They (the things) are connected by the word "and" or commas, used to keep from using the word "and" so repetitiously, meaning that the early church did all of these things, not just some or a few of them. The early church did these things because their attention was centered on God and not on themselves.

About 75 years ago an un-named Primitive Baptist church with which the writer is familiar began studying the Bible together on Sunday mornings before their worship service. When their study of the Bible became known among the denomination, a hue and cry among the other churches exploded. The writer was a young member of another church that was part of the complainers because the un-named church had a "Sunday School." The only people who used the words "Sunday School" were the complainers. In the midst of the noise the un-named church was faithful to their conviction. They were convinced that their course of action pleased God. God showed His pleasure by adding members to the church. Knowledge of it (members being added to the church) went through the denomination. About half of the churches began having Bible study hoping that it would bring more members into their church. **It didn't.** What was the difference? The un-named church began having Bible study because they wanted to praise God better. By faith, they held on in the face of opposition because they felt that it was the right thing to do. The other churches began Bible Study

hoping to help themselves instead of to praise God.

Every disciple of Christ ought to have a regular schedule of prayer and Bible study. God is worthy of our adoration for two reasons, who He is and what He has done for us. To most of us, prayer is asking God to give us something that we desire and there is difficulty in obtaining it. When He gives it to us, we probably don't even pause to say, "Thank you." That practice **dishonors** God. He is more than a huge "grandpa" and we ought to remember what He has done for us several times each day.

Most of us think that we have discharged our responsibility if we give Him an hour or two on Sunday. We feel that way because we have neglected the study of the Bible. The Bible is where we learn about God, who He is and what He has done for us. The more we know about Him and what He has done for us, the better we can worship Him. Worship is not just about being at the church every time she meets. It is about what is in our minds while we are there and how we feel afterwards. When the church service ends, are you elated about God, being more aware of His Greatness than when you came? If your answer to that question is not a resounding yes, you need to examine yourself, comparing yourself to God's standard.

Solomon had finished building a Temple to replace the Tabernacle. He had led the Israelites in a two weeks long dedication by offering thousands of animals as sacrifices. The animals that were offered were Type and Shadow representations of Jesus' dying to atone for the sins of His Elect. After a week of rejoicing, Solomon sent the people home. That night, God appeared to him in a dream and spoke to him (II Chronicles 7:11). During the dedication, Solomon had prayed, asking God to bless the new Temple in a special way. The prayer is recorded in II Chronicles 6:1-42 God's answer to the prayer is recorded in II Chronicles 7:12-22. We shall look at verses 12-14 because they contain God's formula for revival.

God's answer began with God's statement that He had heard Solomon's prayer. Then God made two statements beginning with the word "if," making them conditional statements. If certain conditions occurred, certain things would happen. The first "if" is about what would happen if the Israelites failed to meet the standard that God had set for them. God has a standard for His people and He judges them. **He did then, and he does now.** He has forgiven the sins, both Original and Practical, that would have kept us out of eternal heaven, but He still makes us responsible for living up to His standard for our day-to-day behavior. He is lenient when He judges us, but if we persist in our slothfulness, serious consequences are sure to follow. The second "if" is about recovery from those consequences.

Verse 13 of II Chronicles, chapter 7, names three unpleasant things that Israelites might suffer because their failure to obey God cause unpleasant consequences. Verse 14 Is about what they must do in order to be relieved of these consequences. God knows what is in the very depths of our minds, so we cannot just say the proper words and escape. There are four things that God required of them (and us). The first is that they (we) must humble themselves. That means that in the very depths of our minds, we must acknowledge (confess) to God and to ourselves that God has the right to place whatever requirements that please Him upon us, and that we did the things for which we are being punished. The second requirement is that we must pray. We must not just say "I have sinned" and then go on with what we were doing. We must put our transgression into words and then from our hearts ask God for forgiveness. The third thing that we must do is seek God's face. That means we should think, say and do the things that please Him. The fourth requirement is that we must turn from our wicked ways. If we were serious when we did the first three things, this one will be easier because we shall find God giving us strength.

Singing "Lord, Revive Us" during the song service or saying the words during the prayer are not enough. Revival will occur when (and only when) the members of the church turn themselves around. We should ask God to help us but don't expect Him to just overpower us and make us turn.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; I Peter 2:9

The Joyful Sound

by Elder William M. (Billy) Mullis
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*"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound:
they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance" (Psalm 89:15).*

"We have heard the joyful sound, Jesus Saves, Jesus Saves!" That hymn, written by Priscilla J. Owens, expresses one of the most joyful sounds ever heard! When the angel spoke to Joseph, he said concerning Mary and Jesus, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for **he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)**. The most joyful sound up to that time was, "He shall save His people from their sins!" Jesus did not come to offer to save, or try to save! He saved His people from their sins by paying the ultimate price of shedding His own blood to save! While hanging on the cross, He made another glorious, joyful sound: "It is finished!" (John 19:30).

"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound" that Jesus accomplished what He came to do! He saved us from our sins! Jesus paid it all! Seven hundred years before Christ Jesus was born, Isaiah prophesied this joyful sound! **"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins"** (Isaiah 40:1-2).

Do we realize what a joyful sound it is to hear that Jesus has saved us from our sins? The joyful sound concerning our eternal salvation is expressed in the following verses! "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein **he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace"** (Ephesians 1:3-7).

In those verses, we see that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world (the doctrine of election). It is a blessed people who know the joyful sound of election! These verses also declare that God "predestinated us unto the adoption of children" (the beautiful sound of the doctrine of predestination!) God also "made us accepted in the beloved"! We did not accept Him, but He made us accepted! We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace! Some people hate the doctrines of election, predestination, us being made accepted, and us being redeemed and forgiven because of the blood of Jesus Christ! The sounds of election, predestination, us being made accepted, and redemption by the blood of Jesus are hated by many church-going people! But "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sounds" of election, predestination, and salvation by grace!

Ah, but there are more joyful sounds than just that we are saved by grace and nothing can separate us from the love of God! It is a joyful sound to know, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1). When we realize we are but weak and frail creatures, and we know that "your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8); THEN we know the joyful sound that we have a Shepherd, The Chief Shepherd, the Good Shepherd who is protecting us every moment of every day! We are preserved in Christ Jesus our Lord! We are safe in the hand of Jesus and the hand of our Heavenly Father! Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound that the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want!

Because He is our Savior and our Shepherd, we do not have to worry about the future! God will take care of you! "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:25-33). Do you know and believe the joyful sound

that Jesus cares for you and will take care of you?

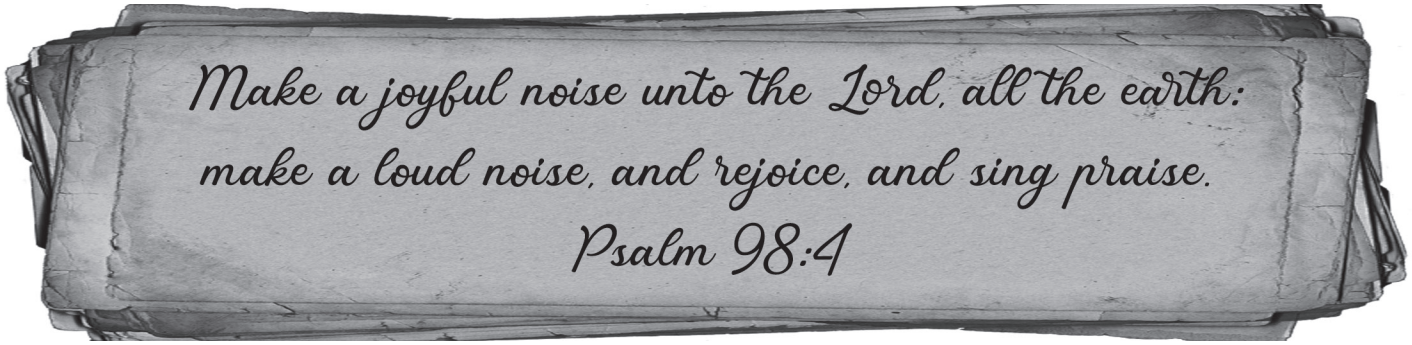
Do you know the joyful sound of the words of Jesus when He said, "...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18)? As long as we are His Church, the pillar and ground of the truth, following Jesus as faithful disciples, the devil cannot kill the local Church. "Onward Christian soldiers, Marching as to war!" Greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world! "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). JOYFUL SOUNDS!!!

"Make a **joyful noise** unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with **singing**" (Psalm 100:1-2). Have you heard the joyful sound of the saints of God lifting up their voices loudly singing praises to the Lord? When we sing in the Spirit and sing with understanding, it is a joyful sound to the people of God who have spiritual ears to hear the saints singing and making melody in their hearts unto the Lord!

Have you heard the joyful sound of the preaching of the gospel? Oh what a joyful sound it is when we hear one preaching "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (I Corinthians 2:4). Oh how our hearts fill with joy and our cups overflow when we hear, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (See Matthew 3:1-2; 4:17; 10:5-7.) The gospel of the kingdom of heaven being "at hand," here and now, is for those who repent and keep the commandments of God! We experience righteousness, peace, and joy NOW in the kingdom of heaven (kingdom of God). (See Romans 14:17.) "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21).

Do you know the very last joyful sound we will hear before we are taken to the eternal heaven? **"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:** Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (I Thessalonians 4:16-18). What blessed people we are to hear the joyful sounds each day of our lives. Who can imagine how glorious the joyful sounds will be in the eternal heaven?

Praise God and thank Him for all the joyful sounds!



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Spiritual Warfare

by Elder Clay Gill
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"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities,against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

As Christians, we must understand the battle and struggles that we face with the devil's temptations and lies. We are told in James 41 to "resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The devil tempts us, distracts us, lies to us, and fights against us in our walk as a Christian. The devil's tactics seem overwhelming and more than we can handle. In this article, we are going to examine what spiritual warfare is, the internal battles we face, and how we are to fight against the spiritual wickedness in high places.

What is Spiritual Warfare?

To some, there may seem to be an obvious answer. However, in today's world of emotionally driven and shallow Christianity, we must take the time to give a clear Biblical definition of what a spiritual battle is and looks like.

In defining the term 'spiritual warfare' we must first note that not once in the KJV Bible is this phrase ever used. When we use this phrase, it describes the battle that Christians experience when they are fighting against the wiles of the devil. One way to explain spiritual warfare is by comparing it to physical war. Military battles are fought for the purpose of controlling territory or for inalienable rights or to gain power. In World War II, Nazi Germany was fighting against surrounding nations for the purpose of growing the German territory and eradicating unwanted individuals. The Allies fought against Hitler's political campaigns because of the atrocious acts of the Nazi military. It is often like this with our spiritual battles with Satan. Satan is about committing egregious attacks. The scriptures state that Satan is walking about "seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8).

As we battle with Satan and his temptations, we will experience the fierceness of the battle because it is Satan's goal to completely entangle and destroy us in his traps and snares. In II Timothy 2:26, we see this statement about Satan's strategy when he fights against us, "And that they may recover themselves out of **the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.**" It is a battle to fight against Satan and get ourselves out of his snares and resist his demonic will. In one instance, spiritual warfare is defined as, "the act of fighting against Satan when he tries to keep us from God's calling. The enemy comes to kill, steal, and destroy so when we are pursuing Christ, he tries to accomplish all of those things" (Shyann Swearingen in Just Disciple).

For the clearest scriptural definition of spiritual warfare, let's return again to I Peter 5:8-9, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." I believe this verse gives us the clearest definition of Spiritual Warfare in the phrase ***"resist stedfast in the faith."*** As Christians, we are not fighting if we are not fighting by faith! The primary way to fight against the devil is to "resist stedfast."

The Battle Within

The battle of spiritual warfare is not only fought with the things of this world but also within us. In truth, our most frequent spiritual battles take place within our own selves. Listen carefully to Paul as he poetically articulates the battle he faces within himself.

> "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that [it is] good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but [how] to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" (Romans 7:14-25).

In this passage, you can hear the internal conflict of two natures within Paul, the spiritual and the natural/carnal. One desires to follow Christ, the other desires to do what is pleasing to self. When our carnal mind is being tempted, we enter into spiritual warfare. The battle is to resist the flesh, resist the devil, deny self, take up our cross, and follow Jesus. This is all-out warfare! We thank God that because of Jesus Christ our Lord and through the Holy Spirit, we can fight the battles and walk victoriously. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

Resisting Stedfast

It would do us no good to focus our attention in this article on the idea of spiritual warfare and not look at the actual process of the war. Therefore, we take the action words in I Peter 5:9, "… resist steadfast in the faith," to begin understanding what the battle looks like.

To "resist" is a verb that clarifies the action that we are to be actively doing. We are to resist or set ourselves against or oppose or withstand. So, in resisting, we are going to work hard to oppose the work of Satan in our lives. To resist stedfast means that we are to work hard at opposing the attacks of Satan by being strong, firm, immovable, solid, devout, and faithful to Christ. The word picture that I get in my mind is the long-time field day activity at church camp; and even way back from my days at Ware Street Elementary when we would play the game of tug of war. While Satan is working to pull us in his own direction, we are to set our feet firmly, put our weight in the opposite direction, and pull with all our strength. It is a battle to put all your weight into fighting not to cross that line and be taken captive by Satan. The battle gets intense, but our whole focus is to resist stedfast, flee in the opposite direction, and keep our eyes clearly focused on Jesus Christ.

There is an important passage of scripture that we need to recognize at this point though, with our analogy of a game of tug of war. This verse out of Zechariah 4:6 states "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts." We are not fighting these spiritual battles alone, pulling on that rope to no avail. Another passage helps us to grow into a healthier perspective of the Spirit of God fighting for us in the battles. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but ***mighty through God*** to the pulling down of strong holds;)" (II Corinthians 10:3-4). This act of resisting stedfast is spiritual warfare, fighting against the attacks of Satan, through the mighty power of God.

An additional note that needs to be made as we begin to close out these thoughts on Spiritual Warfare. God has established a clear line of defense and protection for believers as we fight these spiritual battles. Pay careful attention to two passages of scriptures below.

The first passage comes out of Ephesians 6:10 – 18:

> "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

We have both defensive and offensive methods of attack when we put on the whole armor of God. We should never go into battle against the wiles of the devil without the whole armor of God. It behooves us as Christians to carefully study this passage, understanding the teaching and instruction of God on this armor and then carefully, intentionally, and confidently put on this armor and walk as the soldiers of Christ that we are called to be.

The second passage comes out of Ephesians 4:11-16:

> "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [even] Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

God has established for us His bride, the church, the people of God, as well as roles and gifts within the body who are to fight beside us as we fight these spiritual battles. The church is to work together for the purpose of perfecting or maturing the saints of God. Older parents who have already raised teenagers can speak into the life of younger parents who are currently raising teenagers about the pitfalls and struggles. Older men can teach the younger men how to overcome the wicked one. Older ladies can teach the younger ladies how to live soberly in Christ Jesus. When we isolate ourselves from the people of God and from the church of Jesus Christ, the devil is pleased. Satan loves nothing better than to get that lone sheep off to himself so that he can destroy, devour, and kill. Our battles ought to be fought alongside other believers.

One final thought, spiritual warfare is real! Satan doesn't come at us to

get us to reject God outright. His tactics are to make us forgetful. We forget about the armor and the family of God when we are in the midst of the battles. We forget that God will fight with us and go before us into the battles. We forget God's commandments and the promise that if we keep His commandments we shall prosper and not fall in the day of battle. Satan is an excellent deceiver and his most pernicious dart that he will throw at us is forgetfulness. That is why it is my prayer that this article will simply remind us that there is a battle to fight, and that when the battle is won, it is not for our own glory but for the Glory of Christ. If not for Jesus, we would have no hope! However, because of Jesus, our life is about bringing Him glory and honor for the victory that is ours in Him.

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Did God Fail to Accomplish His Purpose?

by Bro.Rusty Wise
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"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:28-30).

Either God is true and His word is true, or it is not. Either God accomplished what He purposed, or He did not. Either God is triumphant, or He is a failure. There is no gray area, neither room for speculation, nor doubt.

Regardless if we believe His word!

"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged" (Romans 3:3-4).

Regardless if we obey His word;

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19).

Regardless if we accept His word!

"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6).

Regardless of water baptism!

"And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:42-43).

Regardless of age!

"And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy" (Luke 1:43-44).

Regardless of our situation!

"And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:44-48).

Regardless of our worthiness!

"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke 15:13-24).

Therefore can God fail?
NO! HE CANNOT FAIL!

"He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isaiah 42:4).

Can God lie? NO! HE CANNOT LIE!

"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:" (Hebrews 6:18).

Are we then secure in God's eternal love? YES! WE ARE SECURE IN GOD'S ETERNAL LOVE!

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:37-39).

Can the purpose of God be thwarted?
NO, HIS PURPOSE SHALL STAND!

"The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand:" (Isaiah 14:24).

Our prayer today is that we may wholly lean on the God of all and trust in Him, that we shall be delivered into

His capable hands. That by His grace and His alone, we shall look upon His glorious face. Amen

HALLELUJAH, WHAT A SAVIOR!

By: Philip P. Bliss

1) Man of sorrows! what a name
For the Son of God, who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim.
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

2) Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood.
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

3) Guilty, vile, and helpless, we;
Spotless Lamb of God was He;
Full atonement! can it be?
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

4) Lifted up was He to die;
"It is finished!" was His cry;
Now in heaven exalted high.
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

5 When He comes, our glorious King,
All His ransomed home to bring,
Then anew His song we'll sing:
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Continued from Page 7

suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

I John 1:5, This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that **God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.**

I John 4:8, He that loveth not knoweth not God; for **God is love.**

GOD IS NOT!

Num 23:19, **God is not a man,** that he should lie; **neither the son of man,** that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

I Cor 14:33, For **God is not the author of confusion,** but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

Heb 6:10, For **God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love,** which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Matt 22:32, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? **God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.**

James 1:13, Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for **God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:**

Titus 1:2, In hope of eternal life, which **God, that cannot lie,** promised before the world began;

Job 35:13, Surely **God will not hear vanity,** neither will the Almighty regard it.

II Peter 3:9, **The Lord is not slack concerning his promise,** as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Final Thought

Ps 34:8, O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

Jesus Christ

Hints:

Isaiah 7:14
Luke 3:37
Hebrews 4:15
Hebrews 12:2
Luke 7:34

Luke 3:23
Matthew 2:1, 2:23
John 1:36
Mark 6:3
Hebrews 4:14

Galatians 4:4
Mark 6:3
Revelation 21:6
Matthew 1:23

1. Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be born of a _____.
2. Who was Jesus supposed father? _____
3. Since He had no earthly father, He was the seed of _____.
4. Emphasizing His humanity, Jesus often called Himself the son of _____.
5. In what city was Jesus born? _____
6. In what city did Jesus grow up? _____
7. Jesus had how many half-brothers? _____
8. How many times did Jesus sin in 33 years? _____
9. John introduced Jesus by calling Him the ____ of God.
10. Jesus is known as the Alpha and the _____.
11. Jesus is not only the Author, but the _____ of our faith.
12. Before becoming a preacher, Jesus served as a _____.
13. _____ means, "God with us."
14. Unlike other religious leaders, Jesus was a friend of publicans and _____.
15. What kind of Priest is Jesus? _____

Overcoming Setbacks

by Chris Bond
Patterson, Georgia

The word of God is filled with many great testimonies and inspirational accounts. Recorded in its pages are powerful acts of God. Often, these acts were exemplified through the unwavering faith and courage of men and women who simply followed God's instruction as they endured hardships.

As one reads of the account of Moses leading the children of Israel through the Red Sea, it is a joy to vicariously share in the victory of God's people as the Egyptians were destroyed and salvation was achieved.

Even small children revel upon hearing of how a young shepherd boy named David defeated a giant Philistine named Goliath, armed with only a sling, five smooth stones, and most importantly: his faith.

It is human nature to "skip to the good part" when thinking about the accounts of Biblical figures. No doubt, this behavior is most evident during Easter time. Many Christians will focus on the resurrection and try to suppress the feelings of sadness and guilt that are associated with Christ's sufferings. However, in order to fully understand the value of the victories and triumphs found in God's word, we must also be willing to study the setbacks that come beforehand.

As we attempt to follow Christ, we often face a reversal in progress. These setbacks may be caused by our unwillingness to follow Christ, as was the case with the rich young ruler, found in Matthew 19:16- 24. It reads, "And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, **If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.** But when the young man heard that saying, **he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.** Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Because the rich young ruler was unwilling to give up his worldly treasures and completely follow Christ, he experienced a setback and was not able to have that sweet fellowship with Christ. Often, our setbacks are self-induced. Another example would be the account of the prodigal son found in Luke chapter 15:11-32.

Job is an example of someone whom lost everything, through no fault of his own, but faced his setbacks with an attitude of faith and love for God. No matter how hard Satan was allowed to attack Job, he weathered the storm and overcame all the obstacles in his path to be greatly blessed by God (Job 42:12-17). Children of God can count on Satan attempting to attack their faith. The scriptures make it very clearly that the devil is as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8). Satan is labeled as a murderer and the father of lies in John 8:44. The devil is also apt to move in the hearts of our loved ones in order to bring evil upon us. Such was the case of Joseph.

Motivated by jealousy, Joseph's brothers cast him into a pit. From there, he was sold into slavery. After being falsely accused of a heinous crime, Joseph was cast into prison. The setbacks Joseph faced were not only life-changing, but they were also heartbreaking. Joseph loved his brothers and they betrayed him. He was a hard worker and gained the trust of Potiphar, but through Potiphar's wife's deception, Joseph found himself in an all too familiar scenario: alone. Such is the case when we face one major hurdle after another. It may seem that no matter how hard we work, no matter how fervently we pray, or even how faithful we are to attend church, the "goalpost" may seem to move farther away.

Even though Joseph was clearly betrayed by those he loved and was left alone, he was never truly alone. God was with Joseph throughout all of his tribulations. After interpreting Pharaoh's dreams and making it clear to Pharaoh that the way he was able to do so was through the power of God, Joseph would ultimately become second in command to rule over all of Egypt (Genesis 41:40-45). Joseph's "setbacks" were only a "set up" for a mighty "come-back" as he would be reunited with his brothers and father. Joseph would acknowledge that the evil they did unto him was meant for good. In Genesis 50:20-21, Joseph said, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones."

These accounts of overcoming setbacks are written for our learning so that we may have hope and under-

stand that God has thoughts of peace, and not evil; to give us an expected end. Jeremiah 29:11-13 reads, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

Focusing solely on the happy endings, and choosing to ignore the hardships that lead to them, will weaken one's faith. David writes in Psalm 121:1, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." David was recalling the period in which he was fleeing unto the hills to hide from King Saul (I Samuel 22-24). The hills were a scary place and represent a major setback in David's life, but he chose to keep them in memory lest he forget God's deliverance and protection while he was hiding in those hills. In Psalm 121:2, David answers the question of where his help comes from, "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." God's hand was protecting David in the hills and God delivered David from Saul's hand in the process! Looking unto our own hills in order to see how God has helped us overcome previous setbacks will help to strengthen our faith as we endure a present hardship. May we remember the assurance God gave Joshua in Joshua 1:5, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

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Mema's Marriage Advice

Tips written by Sis. Moena Mullis (July 2004)
Expounded upon by Sis. Christy Bond (November 2021)
Patterson, Georgia

When I was getting married in July 2004, my precious grandmother, Moena Mullis, who we lovingly called "Mema," wrote me a 12-point bullet list of advice for a happy marriage. I framed it and have kept it by my bed as a reminder of how to have a happy marriage. Each of her tips were biblically based. I have added scriptures to her points and wanted to share her Godly wisdom with those who may need some tips on how to have a Godly, happy marriage.

Titus 2:3-4 says, "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children." I'm thankful for my grandmother being willing to teach me as a young bride. Because I don't keep all these tips as I should on a daily basis, it is good for me to go back often and reread her tips! I will list them in her order.

1. Be a friend. We need to work at it to keep our spouse as our "best friend." It's not always easy to get along. It takes work to stay best friends. The more you work at it, the closer you become. Proverbs 18:24 says, "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

2. Give day-to-day compliments. Compliments are not hard to give out, but being sincere and taking notice of small things takes work. Compliment your husband when he shaves and looks nice. Compliment your wife when she's gotten a haircut or done something different to her looks. Everyone wants to feel loved and that their spouse "takes notice" of them. Proverbs 16:24 says, "Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones."

3. Make sure your spouse is the first person you tell your stories to. Talk every night for at least 30 minutes of "chit chat." It's so important in the midst of busy schedules, being exhausted, and children begging for both of your attention, to keep the communication going on a daily basis. It takes an effort on both spouses' parts to keep the communication lines open, but your spouse should be the first one you want to share your joys with and the first one you want to share your burdens with. I've been reading a book called **Love and Respect for a Lifetime,** which is written by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs. One of the quotes in the book that stood out to me was this, "When you come home after you have been apart, the first few moments of reconnecting will set the tone for the rest of the evening." Make an effort to greet each other with hugs and kisses each day as you come back together after being apart from each other. Share the good stuff when you first come together. There will be time later in the evening for a more serious conversation about deeper or more serious talk.

4. Surprise each other with unexpected gifts occasionally. Another book that Chris and I read earlier in our marriage was **Love Dare,** which is written by Stephen and Alex Kendrick. On day three of **Love Dare,** it recommends buying something that says, "I was thinking of you today." As the book and my Mema pointed out to me, it doesn't have to be anything expensive. It could simply be a homemade card and their favorite candy from the store. It's just nice to know you are loved, appreciated, and thought of by your spouse.

5. Laugh at your mate's idiotic jokes and off-hand remarks. Some of my earliest memories of my grandparents was just that, my Mema laughing at my Papa. You knew he came first in her life (after God) and she came first in his life (after God). They were able to laugh together. Those are some of my fondest memories of my own parents. My Daddy was a jokester and knew how to make my Mama laugh. My husband, Chris, reminds me of my Daddy in many ways as he's a jokester too! I pray I can always laugh at his jokes and my kids will look back on our relationship as a joyous one. Proverbs 15:13 says, "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance." Proverbs 17:22 says, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." When I get stressed and burdened down, I'm no longer joyful. I can become an angry woman. The Bible warns about being like that in Proverbs 21:29, "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman." It also warns the men in Proverbs 26:21, "As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife." Contentious means "given to arguing or provoking argument." No one wants to be described like that. We would much rather be described as a joyful person, so LAUGH!

6. Be honest. ALWAYS be honest. This includes being completely open and honest in ALL matters. Never try to "hide" anything from your spouse, especially pertaining to your children. Don't hide the children's sins and wrong doings from their Dad and don't keep any "secrets" from your spouse. On the other hand, don't blast him with the kids' wrong doings as soon as he walks in the door either. This goes back to #3 about keeping the com-

munication lines open, but not greeting each other with bad news first each day. Just remember to always be transparent and fully honest with your spouse. Actually, you should be that way with everyone. Being an honest person, who speaks truth, is one of the most important ideals in life! Ephesians 4:25 says, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another."

7. Don't get in "over your heads" in debt. Tear up the credit cards. If you keep things simple, you'll avoid a lot of unnecessary fights. There's not a lot that has to be said about this. Make a budget, and stick to the budget. Live within your means. It's hard, but it must be done. Proverbs 22:7 says, "... the borrower is servant to the lender." Romans 13:8 says, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another..."

8. Thank each other. Thank your spouse when he/she does something nice for you. Thank your spouse when he/she does housework, cooks, or when extra chores are done around the house. Thank your husband for being a hard worker and provider for the family. We must never criticize each other because that is not building your spouse up, but rather tearing them down. If you don't like what your spouse cooked, find something nice to say about it. Thank them for taking the time to cook for you. Show your spouse that you appreciate them by being specific in what you thank them for. Another thing my Mema told me that has stuck with me is to NEVER put your spouse down in front of anyone! If there is something you need to correct your spouse on or talk to him about, do it in private. We are never to "shame" them! If you were to correct them in front of someone, that would embarrass them. Don't correct them in front of company or even in front of the children...it must be done in private and in a loving way. We will not live on this earth forever and almost without exception, one spouse outlives the other. Don't live with regret! THANK YOUR SPOUSE for the loving acts of kindness they do for you each day and don't take them for granted. Romans 1:21 says, "...When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." It is a SIN not to be thankful to God and others who do so much for you!

9. Never go to bed angry. I was blessed with two godly grandmothers. BOTH of them told me when I first got married, NEVER go to bed angry. Forgive your spouse quickly and keep the love alive. Be the first one to say "I'm sorry" and mean it! Ephesians 4:26 says, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Life is too short to hold grudges. FORGIVE and do it before the sun goes down! It's so sweet to get in bed and cuddle. Don't get in the "Don't touch me" mood because you're angry!

10. Keep romance alive. Mema was such a talker and an excellent writer, so I was surprised when she gave me my list in bullet points and didn't expound on anything. I think it was because she didn't want to have to write anything on this point. Ha, ha! Read Song of Solomon if you need tips on how to speak romantically to your spouse. Another great book which has a chapter devoted to keeping romance alive is **Created to be his Help Meet** by Debi Pearl. In chapter 16 of the book, "To Love Their Husbands," Debi says, "When you truly love and reverence your husband, the very thought of him loving the likes of you should thrill your soul and make you long to give him pleasure."

11. Believe everything in life happens for a reason. God may be testing you. Each time you'll come through a little stronger and wiser! There are times in life where everything seems to be going wrong. Sometimes things are going wrong because you are not serving the Lord fully and He is bringing His judgments in your life. On the other hand, if you are "living right" and doing all you can in service to the Lord, it may be a trial of your faith. Remember Romans 8:28 reminds us, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Keep trusting God and His plan for your life.

12. Stick to a budget! For many years I thought Mema had made a mistake in repeating this one. I didn't want to point it out to her, but I just chalked it up to a mistake. Chris and I have been married for 17 years now and I'm starting to understand that this point was not a mistake. We have seen "good times" financially in our marriage and hard times too. We continue to learn the importance of a budget and sticking to it. There are always going to be surprise bills coming through like medical bills, car trouble, etc. You have to plan for those extra things, when possible, in your budget. God will make a way when you are striving to follow Him.

*13. A man needs unconditional respect and a woman needs unconditional love. This is not on my list from my Mema, but I have been reading a book mentioned above, **Love and Respect for a Lifetime,** and I feel this advice cannot be left off of the list. Ephesians 5:33 says, "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband." As quoted in the book, "Love and respect are like oxygen to a suffocating person, and this is one reason why God commands a husband to love his wife, and commands the wife to respect her husband. Try some love and respect. It will change the way you talk to, think about, and treat each other. It will change your marriage! The woman absolutely needs love, and the man absolutely needs respect. It's as simple- and as difficult-as that."

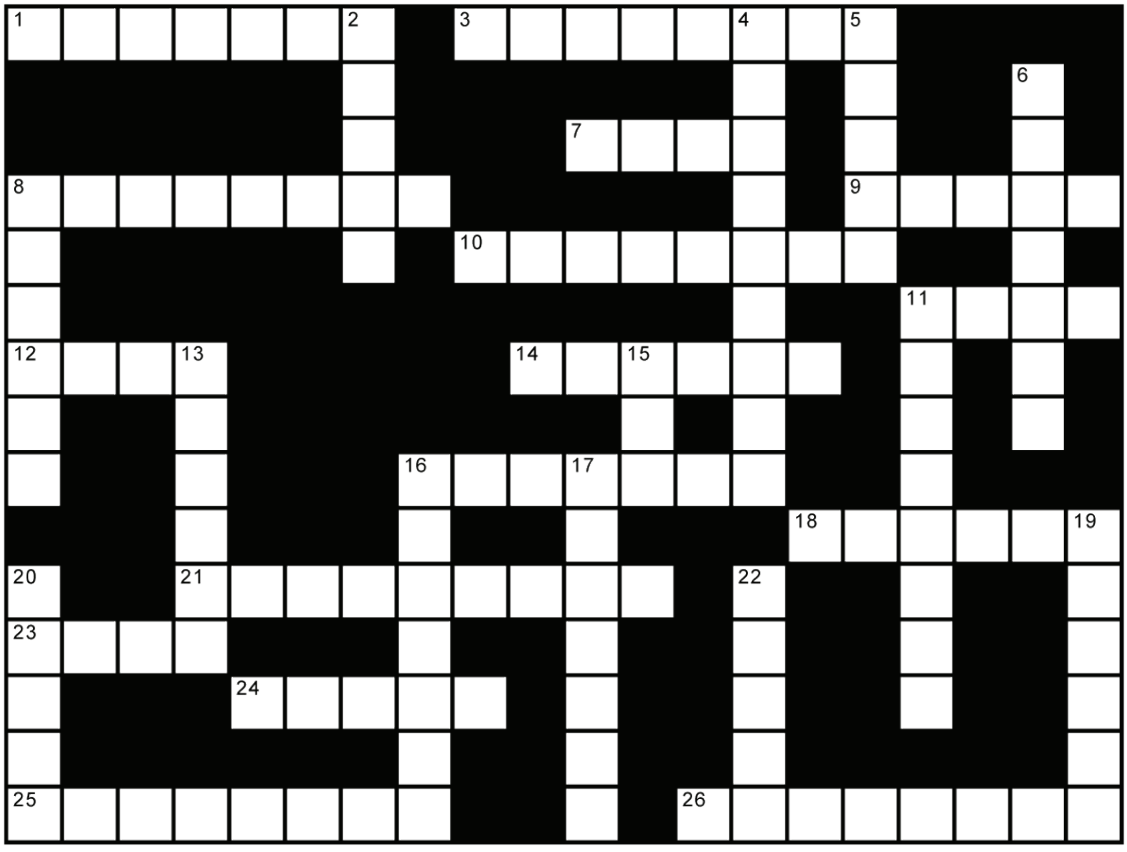
Satan would love nothing more than to destroy your marriage. Our country is in the shape it is in mostly because Satan is destroying marriages and families. May God bless us all to put Him first in our lives and to keep our marriages strong!

Bible Reading Calendar for January

DATE	MORNING	EVENING
1	Genesis 1,2	Matthew 1
2	Genesis 3,4,5	Matthew 2
3	Genesis 6,7,8	Matthew 3
4	Genesis 9,10,11	Matthew 4
5	Genesis 12,13,14	Matthew 5:1-26
6	Genesis 15,16,17	Matthew 5:27-48
7	Genesis 18,19	Matthew 6
8	Genesis 20,21,22	Matthew 7
9	Genesis 23,24	Matthew 8
10	Genesis 25,26	Matthew 9:1-17
11	Genesis 27,28	Matthew 9:18-38
12	Genesis 29,30	Matthew 10:1-23
13	Genesis 31,32	Matthew 10:24-42
14	Genesis 33,34,35	Matthew 11
15	Genesis 36,37	Matthew 12:1-21

DATE	MORNING	EVENING
16	Genesis 38,39,40	Matthew 12:22-50
17	Genesis 41	Matthew 13:1-32
18	Genesis 42,43	Matthew 13:33-58
19	Genesis 44,45	Matthew 14:1-21
20	Genesis 46,47,48	Matthew 14:22-36
21	Genesis 49,50	Matthew 15:1-20
22	Exodus 1,2,3	Matthew 15:21-39
23	Exodus 4,5,6	Matthew 16
24	Exodus 7,8	Matthew 17
25	Exodus 9,10	Matthew 18:1-20
26	Exodus 11,12	Matthew 18:21-35
27	Exodus 13,14,15	Matthew 19:1-15
28	Exodus 16,17,18	Matthew 19:16-30
29	Exodus 19,20,21	Matthew 20:1-16
30	Exodus 22,23,24	Matthew 20:17-34
31	Exodus 25,26	Matthew 21:1-22

Crossword Puzzle - Clues on next page



ACROSS

1 "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good ___ of great joy, which shall be to all people." (7)

3 "I have no greater joy than to hear that my ___ walk in truth." (8)

7 "They that sow in tears shall ___ in joy." (4)

8 "It is joy to the just to do ___: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity." (8)

9 "...the triumphing of the wicked is ___, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment" (5)

10 "...in thy ___ is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (8)

11 "When they saw the ___, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." (4)

12 "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be ___." (4)

14 "Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast ___ may rejoice." (6)

16 "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith ___ patience." (7)

18 "...neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might ___ my course with joy..." (6)

21 "Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my ___ joy..." (9)

23 "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a ___ noise, and rejoice, and sing praise." (4)

24 "But the ___ of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (5)

25 "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for ___, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." (8)

26 "That many ___ and the righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." (8)

DOWN

2 "Blessed is the people that know the joyful ___: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance." (5)

4 "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that ___, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." (9)

5 "Make a joyful ___ unto God, all ye lands:" (5)

6 "Well done, thou good and faithful ___: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (7)

8 "...for the Lord had made them ___" (6)

11 "...the joy of the Lord is your ___" (8)

13 "...as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe ___ in my womb for joy." (6)

15 "...there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over ___ sinner that repenteth." (3)

16 "___ may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." (7)

17 "For the ___ of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (7)

19 "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your ___ forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." (6)

20 "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an ___ in my holy mountain..." (5)

22 "...the Son of man hath ___ on earth to forgive sins..." (5)

Manna From God's Word

God of Truth

Webster defines "truth" as being faithful, constant, unchanging, true. Hebrew and/or Greek meaning (Strong's): "truth" as being faithful, sure, right, trustworthy, true.

Deuteronomy 32:4 He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

Psalm 25:5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

Psalm 31:5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

Psalm 40:11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.

Psalm 57:10 For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.

Psalm 86:15 But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

Psalm 91:4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

Psalm 100:5 For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

Psalm 117:2 For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.

Psalm 119:142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.

Psalm 119:151 Thou art near, O LORD; and all thy commandments are truth.

John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Romans 15:8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:

I Corinthians 13:6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

Galatians 2:5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Ephesians 6:14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

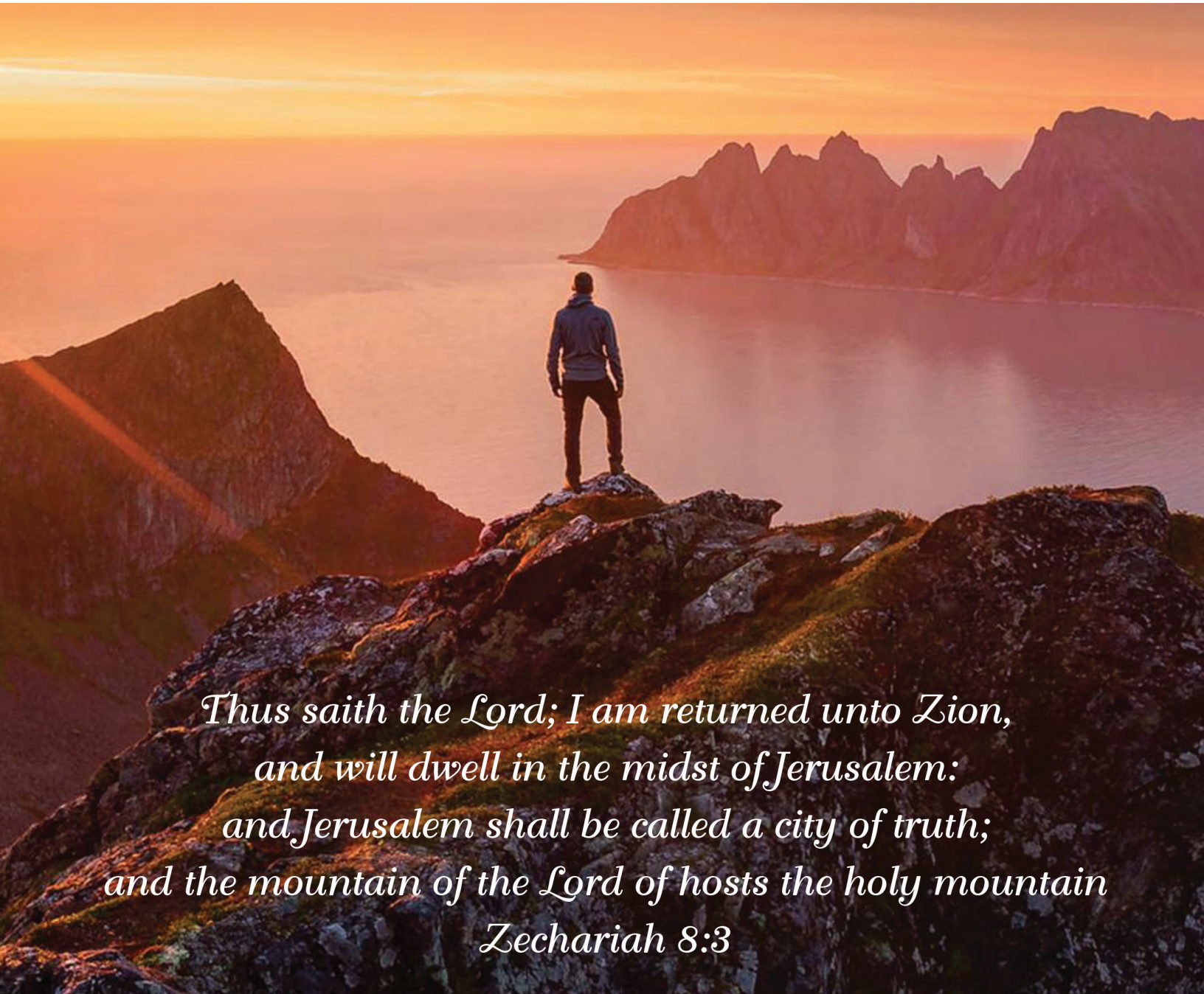
Colossians 1:5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

II Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Prayer

Psalm 19:14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

Compiled by Bro. Jimmy Hitchcock
Adel, Georgia


Thus saith the Lord; I am returned unto Zion,
and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem:
and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth;
and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain
Zechariah 8:3

Hymn History
"We're Marching to Zion"

Submitted by Elder Bill Mullis
Waycross, Georgia

"*…Come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy…*" (Isaiah 35.10)

One of our more beloved songs which expresses the concept of being with the Lord in Zion is "We're Marching To Zion". The text was written by Isaac Watts, who was born in Southampton, England, on July 17, 1674, to a cloth merchant named Enoch Watts. His father was a deacon at the Above Bar Congregational Church and as a dissenter from the established Church of England was imprisoned several times for his beliefs. The elder Watts also ran a boarding school where his son first studied.

Isaac had a severe case of smallpox as a child and as a result grew to be only five feet tall with a large head, hooked nose, small piercing eyes, and a frail, sickly body. However, he was precocious. By the time he was thirteen, he had learned Latin, Greek, French, and Hebrew. A local physician offered to send him to Oxford or Cambridge if he would become an Anglican minister, but he refused and was educated at the Nonconformist Academy of Stoke Newington under Thomas Rowe.

At age fifteen he began writing poetry. One Sunday after the morning service he complained about the lamentable singing. He later wrote, "The singing of God's praise is the part of worship nighest heaven and its performance among us is the worst on earth."

Isaac's father challenged him, "Give us something better, young man." Before evening, he had penned his first hymn, "Behold the glories of the Lamb," and either that night or the following Sunday when it was sung in the service, the people rejoiced greatly. Watts went on to produce over 650 notable hymns. In 1701, after completing his education, he became minister at age 26 of the Mark Lane Independent Chapel in London where he continued writing hymns to go with his sermons. Because of ill health, he rarely preached two Sundays in a row, but he remained at Mark Lane for the rest of his life.

One Sunday in 1712, a member of the congregation, Thomas Abney who was Lord Mayor of London, invited him to spend a few weeks' vacation at the Abney mansion in the suburb of Stoke Newington to help regain his health. The result was that he lived with the Abneys for the remainder of his days. Falling in love with the three Abney daughters, he took a special interest in their education, writing verses and lullabies for them which were later published as his Divine and Moral Songs for Children. Also he wrote books on logic, science, grammar, pedagogy, ethics, psychology, three volumes of sermons, and 29 treatises on theology–a total of 52 works in all on a dozen different subjects.

"Come, we that love the Lord," is from his 1707 Hymns and Spiritual Songs, originally in ten stanzas, though only seven have been commonly used in standard hymnbooks. Watts never did marry and died at the Abney home in Stoke Newington, England, on Nov. 25, 1748.

"Come, we that love the Lord" has been set to a number of tunes, but four stanzas were selected, a gospel song tune (Marching to Zion) was composed, and the chorus added in 1867 by Robert Lowry (1826-1899). It was first published in his 1868 hymnbook Silver Spray. The third verse of the hymn says, "The hill of Zion yields a thousand sacred sweets before we reach the heavenly field!" It is clear that this song is about the Church and the kingdom of heaven we can enjoy right now, each day, before we go to the eternal heaven!

Watts has been called the father of English hymnody, and in addition to his 1719 Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament, is the author of such classics as "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" and "Alas, And Did My Savior Bleed."