

IT ALL BELONGS TO GOD

By Bobby Key

God is the sovereign creator and owner of all things. God created all things, upholds all things, and gives all things.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

“The earth is the Lord’s and all its fulness, the world and those who dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1).

“‘The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,’ says the Lord of hosts” (Haggai 2:8).

Of course we Christians belong to God not only because He made us and cares for us, but also because He redeemed us, and because we have voluntarily and gladly given ourselves to Him. “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God

in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19,20).

We are stewards or trustees of what we have and what we are. There is a difference between ownership and possession. As between man and man, we may claim to own things; but as between man and God, we own nothing. God owns all things. We may use those things we possess, temporarily, but ultimately all will be returned to God and an accounting must be rendered.

God has never given a deed to any of us for anything. We brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out, hence we are not absolute owners of anything.

The doctrine of stewardship is taught from Genesis to Revelation. The words “steward” and “stewardship” may be found over twenty times in the King James version of the Bible.

In the inspired words of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:2, “It is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” - (1929-2018)

“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created” (Revelation 4:11).

“Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

THROUGH TEAR-FILLED EYES

By Chris McCurley

In Luke chapter 19, we find Jesus looking out over the city of Jerusalem. As He assessed the grim condition of the inhabitants of this great city, He wept. Actually, our English translation doesn’t do it justice. The word used is *klaio*; a word that refers to “loud wailing.” Jesus didn’t shed a few tears. He wailed out loud. If only the citizens of Jerusalem would have accepted Him as their Messiah, they would have known the true meaning of peace. As a result, they were about to endure destruction. Through the tears Jesus said these words: “For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.” (Luke 19:43,44.)

This tragic prophecy was fulfilled less than 40 years later when Roman armies surrounded the city. 600,000 Jews were slain and thousands more were captured, and all of it could have been

avoided. God had come to Jerusalem in the person of Jesus Christ, but the city rejected Him. And they paid a terrible price for their missed opportunity.

Many of us weep for the condition of our surroundings. We are saddened by the immorality that persists in our country. We are grieved by the fact that so many in our culture are turning their backs on God and His word while sanctioning sin. We are outraged that God is being removed from the public square and religion is under attack, all in the name of tolerance. Notice that Jesus didn’t resort to throwing verbal darts or vicious personal attacks. He wept. He wept over the city because it didn’t have to be this way. The citizens didn’t have to suffer, but they did because they forfeited a golden opportunity.

It should concern us when God’s word is being ignored or when our Lord’s character is under fire. We must stand firm for the truth when it is under attack. But we also mustn’t forget that souls are involved. There are many living in sin and promoting sin because they don’t know the truth. These folks don’t

know the things that make for peace. They need to hear from us. Like the residents of Jerusalem, they may forfeit the opportunity to know the Messiah but at least we should give them the opportunity. Remember, Jesus prayed for forgiveness for those who were driving the nails through His wrists and feet. Do we weep for the condition of our nation? And does our sorrow motivate us to do what we can to change hearts?

Where is your Jerusalem? Look around you. You are among throngs of people who do not know the things that make for peace. You are walking among the walking dead. Does the sinful state of others cause you to mourn? Do you see the sinner as an enemy or as a victim? These are pertinent questions as it relates to Jesus’ mission because if we do not have a deep sense of sorrow for those who are without a Savior, we will never go to them. Like Jesus, we must have a passion for compassion. We should see the sinful through tear-filled eyes.

— Dickson, TN

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

HAS HONESTY DISAPPEARED?

By Dalton Key

Does anyone feel the need to tell the truth anymore? Has honesty disappeared completely?

I once heard about a math teacher, seasoned by years of real-life classroom experience, who would always make a little speech before handing out his tests. He would look seriously at the students and say, “I’m giving two tests today - one in mathematics and the other in honesty. I hope you pass both of them. But if you can pass only one, be sure it’s the test in honesty. There are a lot of good men and women who don’t know anything about algebra or trigonometry, but there are no good people who are not honest.”

What a sad commentary on our times that the word “honesty” is most often prefaced with the adjective “old fashioned.” While honesty is still - as always - “the best policy,” it appears lately to be a policy more admired (from a safe distance) than required.

When Dad lies about where he’s been, Mom hides the truth of who she’s been talking with, and the kids, when caught red-handed with their hands in the cookie jar blurt out “we didn’t do it;” and when such subterfuge is considered by all parties as completely normal, something has gone wrong with society. When truth is jettisoned from family life, what hope is there for the world? “Truth in advertising?” Forget about it. “Honesty in politics?” You’ve got to be kidding. “Lying to get into a prestigious university?” Why not?

We’ve become masters at rebranding. We speak of white lies, half-truths, and clever spinning of the truth, but we might as well call things what they are. A lie is a lie, period. Whether we cheat on a tax return, perjure ourselves before a Grand Jury, or purposely deceive our spouse, a lie is a lie; and all dishonesty is inherently, undeniably wrong. Read Revelation 21:8 as proof.

The liar imitates the devil, who “is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). The one who lies possesses a tongue which is “an abomination” to the Lord (Proverbs 6:16,17). The Bible reveals lying to be a loathsome, disgusting practice which runs completely counter to the nature and desires of the God Who made us (Hebrews 6:18; Titus 1:2).

Scripture instructs, “Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor’” (Ephesians 4:25).

Why? Because there are no good people who are not honest. Old-fashioned or not, this world could use a healthy dose of true Christ-like integrity. The world may blindly lie its way into the very abyss of oblivion, but disciples of Christ are expected to know - and practice! - the truth.

Honesty is still the best policy!

TWO PREACHERS

by Dalton Key

Two preachers preached, though both with a flaw,
Concerning our spiritual race;
One argued that Christians are under no law,
The other was blinded to grace.

The first man proclaimed, with voice firm and bold,
That Christians today are not bound;
That laws and commandments are relics of old,
And now only love can be found.

“God’s word is a love letter - nothing but grace,”
So said the first preacher again;
And while this is partially true, we must face,
The truth of our part in God’s plan.

The grace of God teaches us how we must live,
How to serve Him and live and obey;
And though we are free, we still must all give,
Our all to all He has to say.

The second man preached from the opposite pole,
A message devoid of God’s grace;
He warned of the horrors awaiting the soul,
With what looked like a smirk on his face.

While he did teach the truth of acting on trust,
And living by what we have learned;
He seemed to suggest that it’s all about us,
That heaven is something we earn.

Oh yes! we must practice a faith that obeys,
And keep ourselves firmly on track;
But never forget: Christ’s blood is what pays,
That debt we can never pay back.

Two preachers preached on and both filled the hour,
But both missed the target that night;
How needed are men who proclaim heaven’s power,
And won’t stop ‘till they’ve got it right!

THE BIBLE STANDS ALONE!

By Milton Smith

One of the primary things that demonstrates the superiority of the Bible over other religious books is the amazing quality of its teachings. A few examples follow. The so-called “holy books” of Hinduism teach everything from evil gods to strange ideas about reincarnation. Buddhism’s religious books actually contain teachings and ideas that are atheistic. Shintoism teaches nature worship, ancestor worship, and emperor worship. Zoroastrianism promotes such ideas as polytheism, dualism, and often even appears to dignify hatred. Confucianism, like Shintoism, elevates ancestor worship, and much like Buddhism, promotes certain atheistic concepts. Islam’s main religious book (the Koran) promotes such disturbing ideas as fatalism, hatred, the degradation of women, and aggressive violence. Such violent actions have dominated much of the news for many years now.

Compare the ideas and concepts above to the main doctrines taught in the Bible. Only the Bible presents God as a Being who is holy, kind, gracious, and very interested in the well-being of mankind. The Bible promotes universal brotherhood and the indescribable worth of all human beings. Mankind is dignified and presented as possessing immense value. Man’s origin, purpose, and eternal destiny are all clearly presented within the pages of the sacred Scriptures. The concept of love dominates the pages of the Bible - the love the Father has for mankind, the love Jesus displayed when He went to the cross, and the love that God demands from us, His creation. Matter of fact, Jesus taught that the greatest commandment is to love God and the second greatest is that we should love one another.

But nothing separates the Bible from other religious books more than the amazing story of the One who came to offer eternal life through His own blood. The Bible alone portrays Christ as being so loving that he left his home in heaven, became incarnate in human flesh, and died vicariously for the sins of lowly mankind. In a way, all religions present human beings as helpless creatures. But only one - Christianity - tells the story of the loving Savior who came to redeem us. And because of the central story of this Book of Books (i.e. the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ), its final pages end with a glimpse of an abundant, eternal life in a world yet to come.

The Bible towers above all other religious books for one, simple reason: its author is God!
— Tulsa, OK

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

EDITORIAL . . .

(EDITOR’S NOTE: This issue completes 47 years of continuous publication. To those of you who make this work possible through your ongoing and generous support, thank you! Your help has always made the difference in keeping us above water. This year has been fraught with both changes and challenges! As many of you choose either year’s end or a new year’s beginning to contribute as you are able, allow me say in advance and once more: Thank you! With your help we hope to continue the work of OLD PATHS.)

LOOKING FORWARD

By Dalton Key

As we look forward to a new year, will we agree with life’s nay-sayers? or with the apostle Paul?

Paul’s life was anything but easy. Following his conversion to Christ, his work for the Lord was met with countless instances of opposition, affliction and painful persecution. He wrote the Corinthian brethren recounting several examples: “. . . in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in hunger and nakedness - besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

A lesser man might have complained of his fate and given up the fight. But Paul was made of sterner stuff. While imprisoned in Rome, his words to the Philippians ring forth with amazing faith and faith-based optimism. “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain . . . one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus . . . Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say rejoice!” (Philippians 1:21; 3:13,14; 4:4).

Perhaps the height of the apostle’s faith-based optimism is seen in the powerful words of Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

The apostle’s view of things was unusual for his day. It certainly is out of step today, amidst the doom and gloom of the world’s ever increasing number of whining curmudgeons! But Paul’s spiritual perspective lines up squarely with heaven’s will. “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Paul believed with unbridled fervor that which many of us have either never known or long forgotten. He believed in personal responsibility - “I.” He believed in positive, forward-thinking affirmation - “I can.” He believed in assertive action - “I can do.” He believed in limitless potential - “I can do all things.” And of highest importance, he believed in divine providence - “I can do all things through Christ.”

I’ll ask again: will we agree with life’s nay-sayers? or with the apostle Paul?



Whose Feet Would You Not Wash?

By Joe Slater

As I was reading, I came across a question that struck me as profound: “Do you know anyone whose feet you would not wash?”

That question came, of course, from John 13 where Jesus washed His disciples’ feet. We often notice Peter’s initial objection, but miss the significant truth that Jesus washed Judas’ feet right along with those of the other eleven. Our Lord knew all along who would betray Him, yet He washed his feet.

Jesus came not “to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 10:28). Not one of the disciples, who had just been disputing with each other over who would be greatest (Luke 22:24), offered to wash

the feet of the others in that upper room. That was the duty of a servant! So, Jesus laid aside His outer garments, took a basin and towel, and showed them that true greatness manifests itself in service.

Jesus didn’t concern Himself with who was better than whom, or who was worthy and who wasn’t. Dirty feet needed washing. Jesus, the Teacher and Lord, washed them – even the feet of Judas.

Serving people whom we know and like comes easily. What about those we don’t even know? Or those we know but don’t like? And certain avenues of service appeal to us more than others.

Washing dirty feet doesn’t sound

particularly pleasant. You can probably think of other less-than-thrilling tasks where your instinctive response is, “eeew! I don’t want to do that!”

Are there people whose feet you wouldn’t wash? Are there jobs you simply would refuse to do? Take a closer look at Jesus. “For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15).
— Justin, TX

“Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26-28).

TRUE FREEDOM IS TO TRUST AND OBEY

By Danny Tunnell

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2).

It is a lifelong privilege to renew our minds with the word of God. A renewed mind means we take on God’s way of thinking (Isaiah 55:8,9). If my thinking opposes God’s way, then I need to lay down my thinking.

The way we behave is dictated by the word of God we are submitting ourselves to. When someone is renewing their mind with the word of God, it will show up in their thought life, in their marriage, and hopefully in the lives of their children.

Renewing of the mind is a process; it doesn’t happen overnight. If you argue with God, you’ll get good at arguing. If you agree with God, you’ll get good at agreeing. The renewed mind agrees with the will of God, while the un-renewed mind argues with it.

We live in a society that treats the word “submit” like it’s a curse word. Nobody wants to submit to anyone. But smart people will submit to God (James 4:7). True freedom is trusting and obeying God in everything He says.

President Ronald Reagan popularized a phrase while dealing with the Soviet Union. He said, “We will trust but verify.” That’s good advice in

dealing with people. But you don’t have to verify what God says. It is impossible for Him to lie (Hebrews 6:18). Our part is to believe (Mark 5:36). The more submissive we are to God, the greater our freedom! Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). The word of God is truth (Psalm 119:160; John 17:17).

Jesus is all truth, ultimate truth! Some people reject that, and think they are free. They reject it and say, “Now I can live it up!” But they find themselves in bondage far greater than any they’ve known before. The devil and sin are cruel taskmasters.

Since Jesus is God and the truth, and He tells us to follow Him, I would be a fool not to do so. To choose a path of sin over following Jesus is utter foolishness. Jesus said, “Whoever commits sin is a slave to sin” (John 8:34).

Are you a slave to sin? Are you in bondage to jealousy, to pride, to selfishness, to immorality, to gambling, to drugs, or to sinful pleasures, so that sin has become your slave-driver?

Sometimes we really don’t want to commit sin, but we do it anyway. Sin has become our master! Inside we are saying, “I don’t want to tell a lie, I don’t want to get drunk, or I don’t want to get involved with that person.” But we yield to sin anyway. Paul expressed it this way: “For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not

to do, that I practice.” He then asks the question: “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death.” And then he answers his own question: “I thank God - through Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:19,24,25)! Thank be to God that sin does not have to be on the throne in our lives. As we yield to Christ, and put Him on the throne, Satan no longer has power over our lives. Sin is no longer in command.

As we consecrate ourselves to God we may still slip and fail sometimes, but sin no longer dominates our lives. Sin is no longer the master. Jesus is Lord and Master.

True freedom is to trust and obey God.
— Miami, OK

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