

## ***SATAN, THE SCAMMER!***

By Richard Dent

Have you ever been tricked out of money that you would have liked to have used in a more beneficial way? People who do these things are crooks and are not ashamed to steal your material things. We know that in the Old Testament one of the ten commandments was “Thou shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15). In the New Testament, Paul told the Ephesian brethren, “Let him who stole steal no more” (Ephesians 4:28).

Money may not be the only thing that people are scammed out of. Consider the story of Jacob and Esau. Rebekah favored her son Jacob more than Esau. Rebekah told Jacob just what he needed to do to confuse his father, Isaac. Jacob dressed himself up and brought an offering of food to his father who was blind in his old age. Jacob pretended to be Esau and,

what do we know . . . it worked. When the real Esau came to his father with an offering of food, sorrow befell them both. In Genesis 25, we find that Jacob took advantage of his famished brother and got him sell his birthright to him. Then in chapter 27 we find that Rebekah and Jacob scammed Esau and Isaac again by getting the blessing which should have gone to Esau, as the oldest brother (Genesis 27:30-40). Of course we know that things didn't work out too well for Rebekah and Jacob as he had to flee from the anger of his brother, Esau. Remember that scammer is another word for trickster.

But who is the biggest scammer of all? Why I believe it just has to be old Satan himself. Yes, Satan does not just want your money . . . he wants your soul! Again Paul told the Ephesians, “Put on the whole armor of God that

you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). Paul also told the Corinthians that Satan could transform himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Don't let Satan scam you out of your soul. “What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul?” (Matthew 16:26),

— Liberal, KS

“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you” (1 Peter 5:8-10).

## ***THE BEST KNOWN CHAPTER IN THE BIBLE***

By Danny Tunnell

The 23rd Psalm may be the best known chapter in the Bible. Many people in our society can say at least the first line: “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.”

On television if someone is reading the 23rd Psalm, what is going on? Usually a funeral. There is nothing wrong with reading the 23rd Psalm at a funeral. A lot of people associate this Psalm with dying. But it's a psalm for living as well.

This psalm was written by David, who knew firsthand the responsibilities of a shepherd. He knew about taking care of sheep. He turns around and says, “The Lord is my Shepherd.”

Isaiah said that all of us are like sheep which have gone astray (Isaiah 53:6). The fact that the Lord is our Shepherd does not mean that the sheep are cooperating. “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” We might say today, “I will not lack.”

David had an assurance that God would meet his needs. Today we have even greater resources than David had to trust God. Jesus said, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). David couldn't turn to Philipians

4:19, which says, “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” We have even better promises in a better covenant (Hebrews 8:6).

Our Father will provide. He owns all the silver and gold, and the cattle upon a thousand hills (Haggai 2:8; Psalms 50:10).

While attending a Bible school, a young lady got a job as a janitor for a church. She had a pretty nice guitar. When she wasn't cleaning the church building, she spent time with the young people. One of them said, “Wow! That's a really nice guitar! You are a janitor, but you have a really nice guitar!” She replied, “You need to understand that my Dad owns the cattle on a thousand hills.” The next week the young person came up to her and said, “Tell me about that ranch your Dad owns.”

The second thing David talks about is rest. “He makes me to lie down in green pastures.” Jesus said, “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28-30). “He leads me beside the still waters.” When we follow the Shepherd, we get peace (John 14:27). “He restores my soul.”

The Shepherd guides us and leads us in paths of righteousness. We have a sense of protection. “I will fear no evil for You are with me” (see Psalm 112:7; Proverbs 3:24).

When we follow the Shepherd we have comfort. The Shepherd prepares a table for us in the presence of our enemies. We can enjoy life even when it appears that there are threats on the horizon. “No weapon formed against you will prosper” (Isaiah 54:17).

He anoints our head with oil. The presence of God is upon us. We have abundance. Our cup runs over. Someone said, “The pessimist says, ‘My cup is half empty.’ The optimist says, ‘My cup is half full.’ But the believer says, ‘My cup runs over!’”

When we follow the Shepherd we have confidence. “Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life.”

We have a sense of union with God. “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” David didn't have Jesus words in John 14:1-3, or Paul's words in Romans 8:35-37, but we do.

May the Lord become more dear to us as our Shepherd.

— Miami, OK

# Old Paths

Vol. 48, No. 11 December 2024

“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

## ***FEAR AND TREMBLING***

By Danny Boggs

Scream! Panic! Collapse! Run away! Those are the kinds of things we do when we are afraid. We shake, and our hair stands up straight. Fear grips us, causing reactions and sometimes lasting effects.

When we come to the Bible, we cannot abandon those thought associations when we read about “the fear of God.” And we should not. When God met Moses on Mount Sinai, “Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I tremble with fear’” (Hebrews 12:21). David confessed, “My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments” (Psalm 119:120). “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31). But that's not the whole picture.

Jeremiah saw the judgment of God in the destruction of Jerusalem, and then God showed him coming joy over the restoration of the city. Both scenes brought fear and trembling. “The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah a second time, while he was still shut up in the court of the guard: Thus says the Lord who made the earth, the Lord who formed it to establish it - the Lord is his name: Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known. For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city and the houses of the kings of Judah that were torn down to make a defense against the siege mounds and against the sword: They are coming in to fight against the Chaldeans and to fill them with the dead bodies of men who I shall strike down in my anger and my wrath, for I have hidden my face from this city because of all their evil. Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance and prosperity and security. I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first. I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. And this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it” (Jeremiah 33:1-9).

When we recognize our rebellion against God, we are seized by the thought of God's anger and wrath. We shudder to think that he hides his face because of our evil. But when we truly learn and believe that he is a God who also heals, cleanses, forgives, restores, rebuilds, prospers, protects, and rejoices over penitent people, we fear and tremble because of all the good and the prosperity he provides.

Biblically, real fear of God does not drive us forever away from him; it draws us near to him. It's humbling in a special way to think of how good God wants to be to us. Art Lindsley writes that fear of God “involves a reverence for and respect toward God . . . It is not a fear of rejection by God but a fear of distancing ourselves from God by our behavior or by proving ungrateful for the love God has shown us” (True Truth, p. 79).

“Therefore, my beloved . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both too will and to work for his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13).

— Neosho, MO

## ***Purpose And Direction***

by Joe Slater

A certain company that provides internet service has been running a cute TV ad. It portrays the sales staff having a meeting to remind them of various desirable features of their company's service. The price is good. The service is fast. You can use it on your mobile devices. Then the team leader asks, “What else do people want?” A team member responds in a doubtful tone of voice: “A sense purpose and direction in life?”

Consciously or unconsciously, people do, indeed, want a sense of purpose and direction in life. Your friendly neighborhood internet company probably isn't the best place to find it!

Secular progressive society and New Age religion urge us to look within ourselves to discover our purpose and determine our direction. “Follow your heart!” Glaringly absent is any reference to God or the Bible.

Human beings need answers to three basic questions: (1) Where did I come from? (2) Why am I here? and (3) Where am I going? Only when the first question is answered correctly can there be solid answers to the second and third questions. If we are merely the end result of a blind process of organic evolution, then looking inward is our only option for finding purpose and direction. But since we are the creation of God, His word tells us our purpose as well as our destiny.

Most people routinely look to unreliable sources for their sense of purpose and direction. Human philosophy, secular “science,” and even respected religious leaders give answers that sound good on the surface but fail in the final analysis. Faithful Christians have the assurance that our purpose is to serve God by serving other people under the direction of His word. We also have the privilege and duty to help others learn about their purpose and direction.

May God help us to fulfill our purpose diligently.

— Justin, TX

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments., for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14).



## MISSING: THE POOR IN SPIRIT

By Dalton Key

One need not look far these days to recognize humility as an attribute clearly out of fashion. Considered by many as more vice than virtue, more liability than asset, the humble heart seems to be sadly fading into extinction. The poor in spirit are getting harder and harder to find.

While this may be expected from a world in the throes of a love affair with itself, such self-centeredness should never characterize the Lord's people.

Several years ago I heard a disgruntled elder complain, "No one ever listens to me . . . I never get my way . . . and I'm the main one down there at church!" Here was a child of God full of himself but woefully empty of the spirit of Christ.

Jesus "did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matthew 20:28). He displayed no pride, no arrogance, no self-aggrandizement. The Lord of heaven and earth was instead known to be "meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). Though fully and bodily the very Son of God, he preferred referring to himself as the son of man. His desire concerned the Father's will and not his own.

Those of us who lead within the Lord's church or take a public role in the church's work or worship should take care, doing our best as we do our best, that our motives are pure. We are not superstars deserving of adoration; we are unworthy servants hungering and thirsting for Christ's righteousness. When we lead and work to be seen, appreciated or applauded by others, we may have our reward, just as the Pharisees had theirs, but it won't be coming from heaven and from the Lord we claim to serve.

Friend, if your motivation for service in the Lord's body centers on being noticed, appreciated, or constantly "patted on the back," your pride is showing! Remember the song, "All of Self and None of Thee?" You may need to remind yourself that it has more than just one verse.

Can you imagine Jesus pouting because his name was accidentally left out of the bulletin? Can you picture him whining because the Sunday morning announcements failed to recognize his efforts?

The Bible's words concerning pride and humility are neither infrequent nor are they written in vain. "Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, and before honor is humility" (Proverbs 18:12). Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:14). "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).

If we must boast, let us boast as did Paul, who declared, "God forbid I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14).

EDITORIAL . . .

(As 2024 winds to a close, we express heartfelt appreciation for those of you who have made the Old Paths possible, going all the way back to 1976, by contributing to this effort.. Many of our readers often choose the year's end to lend support; and for that - and for you - we simply say, "Thank you.")

## ONE LESS THAN YOU THINK

By Dalton Key

Heaven still abhors "a proud look," while pronouncing a blessing upon the "poor in spirit" (Proverbs 6:17; Matthew 5:3). That said, an honest appraisal easily spotlights too many of us as failing to get the message.

Cicero, once billed as "the greatest Roman orator," serves as a terrible example in this regard. He was a man of large talent and an even larger ego. It was reported that often, after one of his speeches, Cicero's hearers would cry out, "Behold, how well did Cicero speak!" Over time, the applause worked to swell the speaker's head.

Cicero's massive ego was put on full display when he once remarked: "When I write on philosophical subjects and lay my writings aside and later have occasion to return to them, I can scarcely believe that Cicero wrote them, they sound so philosophical!"

Cicero's flaw? Pride, pure and simple. He came to believe too much in himself and in all the lavish praise which was heaped upon him.

Herod Agrippa had much the same problem. Luke records the king's sad story: "So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, 'The voice of a god and not of a man.' Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died" (Acts 12:21-23).

Cicero and Herod, falling for the flattery which swept over them, both succumbed to that "proud look" which heads the list of those things hated by the Lord (Proverbs 6:16-19).

When Scripture admonishes that we "be clothed with humility," it further reminds us that "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).

Those of us who teach and preach are especially and continually in need of such reminders. While many young preachers have been discouraged and decimated by unwarranted criticism, many others have been spoiled and ruined by well-meaning, but overblown, praise.

The story is told of one preacher who, after what he considered one of his more stellar sermons, asked his wife, "How many truly great preachers do you think there are in the brotherhood?" Her reply? "One less than you think!"

Paul's attitude deserves imitation: "Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others . . . But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (1 Thessalonians 2:6; Galatians 6:14).



## WHAT WILL BE JUDGED ON JUDGMENT DAY?

By Milton Smith

The question posed in the title of this article is not "who" will be judged on Judgment Day, but "what" will be judged. We know that every soul will be judged on this day. Jesus, Himself, said in Matthew 25:31-32, "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory. And before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." Consequently, we know that every soul who ever lived will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. But "what" will be judged on that day? In other words, exactly how and in what manner will each person be judged?

Revelation 20:12 tells us, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things that were written in the books,

according to their works." Paul tells us, ". . . every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor" (1 Corinthians 3:8). It seems quite obvious that each person will be judged by his own obedience, conduct, and faithfulness. Even our motives will be considered. There are some people who do many good works in this life, but they often do those things for the wrong reasons. I'm sure there are even some atheists who do certain "good" works. But God will judge our motive as much as our action.

Paul tells us that we are going to be judged according to the things done in the body, "whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). We thus know that our conduct in this life will be part of our own judgment. Jesus also tells us that our service to our fellow man will be a part of our own judgment (cf. Matthew 25:34-40). Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 3:13 that "every man's work shall be made manifest." Every feature of our life will be judged on

that day. Obedience, motive, conduct, service and faithfulness will be the type things that will judge us. It will be those things viewed by God as having eternal value that will prove to be worthy of eternal reward.

— Tulsa, OK

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books." (Revelation 20:11,12.)

## FOUND: A GOOD MAN

By Ron Stough

The Scripture reserves the word "good" for a select few characters described in its pages, but one of those men was Barnabas. Acts 11:24 describes Barnabas as "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith." Although the term "good" is often tossed around lightly today, God's description of a man as "good" is a rare compliment indeed.

Let's look at some of the possible reasons behind the goodness of Barnabas:

The first mention of Barnabas shows him to be a working Christian (Acts 4:36-37). He sold his land and brought the money to the apostles to help with the needs of those who were converted in Jerusalem. Barnabas counted his possessions as God's, and was not hesitant to give what he had to the cause of Christ.

Another fine quality in Barnabas was his faith. He was "full of faith," both in God, and in his fellowman. It was Barnabas who convinced the

doubting and frightened Christians in Jerusalem to accept the man, Saul, who had been their persecutor, as their new brother in Christ (Acts 9:27).

Barnabas was also missionary-minded. He was not content to help his friends at home only. He was anxious to tell others of the Savior, and he and Paul traveled great distances telling the Good News.

Barnabas was truly a remarkable individual because it seems he put the cause of Christ far ahead of his own desires. For this attitude, God called him good.

How would the Lord describe your life?

Why not be a Barnabas!

— Duncan, OK

"Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that

you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. For 'He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil'" (1 Peter 3:8-12).

### Old Paths

830 W. Fargo Drive,  
Broken Arrow, OK. 74012

On a nonprofit basis.  
Published monthly and  
supported by Churches of Christ  
and individuals.

Dalton Key Editor  
"Subscription Free;  
Prayers Requested;  
Contributions Appreciated."