

THAT EXPLOSIVE POWER!

By Richard Dent

One of my favorite hymns has always been "Power in the Blood," which includes the words, "There is power in the blood of the lamb." Many great song leaders like to ask their audience to make that letter "P" explosive when they are singing that great hymn. As a child that was probably the highlight of the hymn to me.

Let's critique the hymn.

In the Old Testament sacrifices were often made by offering up animal sacrifices. The book of Leviticus tells in detail how the Hebrew people were to sacrifice and what they were to offer up and also when they were to offer their animal sacrifices, or when the high priest was to carry out God's plan for them to be acceptable in His sight.

Today we don't offer up animals as sacrifice. There is no need for that since Jesus Christ is God's gift for the forgiveness of our sins when we obey His word (John 3:16). God is willing

to forgive us when we are baptized into Christ and put Him on (Galatians 3:27).

When we are baptized God's power washes away our sins. There is wonderful POWER in the precious blood of the Lamb.

"Sin stains are lost in the life giving flow; there's wonderful power in the blood." Have you experienced this power? Life is in the blood both physically and spiritually. When blood quits moving through our hearts and brains . . . we die. Without the blood of Jesus cleaning our spiritual hearts (souls) from sin . . . we die spiritually. We need to be released from the burden of sin. Spiritual surgery is needed. Read Hebrews 4:12.

Friend, appreciate the power of God's written word in song. Be justified by His blood and be saved from wrath (Romans 5:9).

Yes, there is power in the blood of the Lamb.

Sing it out loudly!

— Liberal, KS

"Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18,19).

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

"And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Revelation 1:5).

DELIBERATELY DENSE

By Bobby Key

If the Bible is completely beyond man's grasp, how could one expect to know God and be saved eternally? Doesn't it stand to reason that the God who gave us the revelation by which one is drawn to Him (John 6:44,45), and by which He will one day judge us (John 12:48), would enable us all to understand that revelation?

Otherwise, where is the hope of salvation for ordinary people like you and me?

"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). Only through study can one "present himself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15.)

Much of the failure to understand lies in our unwillingness to understand.

There is that failure to see which comes from a refusal to see. A man can deliberately shut his mind to truth which he does not wish to see; he can be deliberately dense toward teaching which he does not wish to accept. Nicodemus was like that (John 3).

If a man does not wish to be changed, he will deliberately shut his eyes and his mind and his heart to the power which can change him. When the invitation is offered by the Lord, some of us could say if we were honest, "No thank you; I am quite satisfied with myself as I am, and I don't want to be changed."

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). This is God's promise to all men everywhere. The common people still hear Him gladly (Mark 12:37).

Yes, we can all understand God's message. But we must have a genuine

desire to understand. Let's resolve not to be deliberately dense. (1929-2018)

"And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says, 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull, Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.' But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear" (Matthew 13:14-16).

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

Old Paths

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*"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)***THE UNITING POWER OF THE GOSPEL**

By Milton Smith

Speaking of the unique human relationship created by the church, Paul wrote in Colossians 3:11, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all." In the first century, Jews and Gentiles experienced almost no interaction, much less fellowship. As a matter of fact, the Jew was forbidden to eat with a Gentile or even enter his house. The Gentiles felt much the same toward the Jews, regarding them as inferiors. The Lord's church brought together both Jews and Gentiles into the one body of Christ. This was truly an amazing accomplishment!

The barbarians and the Scythians were considered uncultured by the Greeks, Romans, and Jews alike. Of the two, however, the Scythians were seen as the worst. According to the 5th century Greek historian, Herodotus, the Scythians "drank the blood of the first enemy killed in battle, making a napkin of his scalp and a drinking vessel of his skull." The Jewish historian, Josephus wrote, "The Scythians delight in murdering people and are little better than wild beasts." Origen wrote that there were no laws more impious than the laws of the Scythians. Yet Paul told the early church that all people (including the barbarians and Scythians) were to be accepted on equal terms in Christ.

Aristotle called the slave "a living tool." Slaves were thought of as nothing more than human objects. But when a slave became a child of God, he became an equal brother in Christ with his Christian slave owner! A slave might even serve as an elder, deacon, or teacher in the local congregation where his slave owner might attend. This caused Christians to begin viewing slavery in a much different light. Many scholars believe that Paul's letter to the slave owner, Philemon, regarding his runaway slave, Onesimus, might have been the most astounding social document written during the first century.

Truly amazing is the deep impression the gospel made upon the world. No other institution in history has affected mankind as has the Lord's church. Every Christian should rejoice to belong to such a Divine institution!

— Tulsa, OK

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:28,29.)

SMALL SEEDS SOWN

By Mark Lindley

The principle of sowing and reaping is a law of the natural world. For farmers, a time of sowing must precede reaping. What is true in the natural world is also true of spiritual things. The apostle Paul wrote, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Galatians 6:7,8).

The law of sowing and reaping is a universal rule that applies to Christians and non-Christians. It is an unchanging truism that we reap what we sow.

Fundamentally, there are three things necessary for sowing and reaping to occur: seed, ground, and time. A seed is a common and relatively small object, but it produces great results. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches" (Matthew 13:31-32).

The seeds sown by our words and deeds may seem small, but they produce significant results. The ground in which we sow is life. In good times and bad, during all seasons and circumstances, we are sowing.

After sowing, there is a period of waiting for the harvest. In the natural world, the farmer waits for his crop to mature and has "long patience" (cf. James 5:7). Regarding spiritual things, after we have sown, we may reap in hours, days, weeks, years or in eternity.

But we will reap what we sow.

Sowing "small" seeds of poor choices can lead to a bitter harvest of regret and sorrow. One may sow seeds of theft, stealing money from one's employer, and reap a damaged reputation and loss of employment. One may sow seeds of addiction to alcohol, and reap the loss of health. If one never sows these seeds, the unwanted plants cannot grow.

It is also true that we may sow words and deeds of kindness, encouragement, gratitude, and love, and reap strong relationships and happy homes (cf. Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:18-20). As we journey through life, sowing small seeds for the Lord will pay great benefits. Sow good seed and reap a harvest of spiritual blessings!

— Ripley, MS

AGE OF ANXIETY

By Dalton Key

One might understand the inclination towards worry lately. The past few years have been unusually trying. Covid, crime, and corruption have dominated the news. Wars and rumors of wars continue to encompass the planet. Yet still, in spite of it all, we are commanded of heaven to live our lives free from worry.

As divine commandments go, this one is rarely mentioned or understood as such. The Scriptures, though, are both forthright and unambiguous concerning this too-often sidestepped issue of worry, about which Jesus Himself said clearly, “Do not worry” (Matthew 6:31).

Notice that Jesus did not merely advise His followers against worrying excessively; He mandated against worrying, period. Sometime later, the inspired Paul wrote, “Don’t worry over anything whatever” (Philippians 4:6, Phillips).

Heaven’s message is inescapable: Christians should not worry. Full stop.

When discussing this matter with other Bible students, whether in a Bible Class or as part of a more private conversation, an interesting question is often posed. “What about concern? What is the difference between concern, which is necessary to a productive life, and worry, which is clearly condemned of heaven.” The question may be the result of genuine curiosity. It may be an attempt to avoid the Lord’s expectations. But regardless the motivation, the question deserves an answer.

Both worry and concern are alike in that they require a certain, focused attention directed toward a situation of interest. While there is certainly nothing wrong with holding interest for the “nuts and bolts” of life and living, this interest can easily morph into a consuming, life-draining preoccupation. Concern, which is normal, too often becomes worry, which, for the Christian, should not be.

Here lies the fundamental difference. Our cares and concerns are easily cast aside. “Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). Our worries, though, take on a life of their own, taking control of us. The word “worry” comes to us from a Middle English term meaning, “to strangle.”

When concerns begin consuming us, strangling our very souls, we have entered the dangerous domain of worry.

Jesus, in his warning against worry, reveals the real root of the problem with the words, “O you of little faith” (Matthew 6:30). Faith may be involved in a healthy attitude of concern, but it has nothing at all to do with worry!

Simply put, worry is a concern allowed to control us in the absence of faith.

As we focus on life’s problems, real or imagined, we have a choice to make. We may choose to obsess over them, allowing them to dominate our minds and strangle our very thoughts; or we may choose to live as people of faith, casting our cares upon the Lord.

EDITORIAL . . .

FORTY-ONE YEARS LATER

By Dalton Key

In their consuming desire to wake the sleeping member, many denominations have transformed the worship service into a three-ring circus. We understand a preacher in England has started delivering his sermons through a ventriloquist’s dummy.

Another minister recently planned an all church dance in the graveyard adjoining the meetinghouse, explaining, “We wanted to show that the church is not dead, but alive.” And still another religious group brought a leather-jacketed motorcycle gang into the church building for what was called a “blessing of the motorcycles.” A number of bikes were wheeled down to the front and “blessed,” but the results were somewhat disappointing according to the church’s caretaker, who wryly remarked, “All we did was get a lot of grease on the carpet.”

But the “topper of all toppers” may have to go to the First Unitarian Church of Richardson, Texas, which brought a stripper into the act. According to the newspaper report, “exotic dancer Diana King danced for the congregation on Sunday morning, and when she was through there was nothing left but her G-string and the congregation’s imagination.” The preacher defended the dance by saying, “She was expressing herself, and I think she got that over to the congregation.” We doubt anyone slept through that service.

We admit that many church members are bored. Some sleep; others would like to sleep. But these lethargic, “I-couldn’t-care-less” ho-hummers are the ones who need changing - not the worship service!

We have neither right nor reason to compromise the purity of our worship to meet the fickle whims of an entertainment-crazed public. We need to change the worshipper, not the worship.

Let’s not follow the denominational world to the circus!

(NOTE: I wrote the foregoing article 41 years ago, as an editorial for this paper in September of 1983. Solomon was right in observing, “There is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). The religious shenanigans touted today as new and innovative are in fact neither. The church today needs what it has always needed: less froth and more substance; less time being entertained and more time being taught the Bible; and less interest in imitating the world and more interest in imitating the Lord. True worship “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), though sadly waning in popularity, will always be the worship expected and accepted of heaven.)



THE ART OF GETTING ALONG WITH PEOPLE

by Danny Tunnell

Gordan Lindsey (1906-1973) said, “If people do not learn the art of getting along with other people, they will be doomed to mediocrity, no matter what their other gifts are. And it is possible they may never really understand the reason for their lack of success.”

The ability to get along with other people, not to manipulate, but to love and appreciate, and thus, to bring out the best in others, are people skills we need to know in working with people.

Paul said, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18). With people, it may not always be possible. People have “free will,” and they may oppose you no matter how good you are to them.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt said, “If you treat people right, they will treat you right.” But then he went on to say, “That may be true 90% of the time!”

Just because you walk in love doesn’t mean that everyone else does. Jesus always walked in love, but that didn’t mean everyone followed His example. He preached the good news, the gospel (Luke 4:18,19), and yet they wanted to throw Him off the brow of a hill (Luke 4:29).

With people, just do the best that you can. That’s all God expects. Walk in love whether or not anyone else does (Ephesians 5:2; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Think about the relationships in the Bible where someone helped someone else; how Paul helped Timothy; how Joshua helped Moses; how Jonathan helped David; how Elisha helped Elijah; how John Mark helped Peter.

A lot of the problem in not getting along may lie in what Edwin Louis Cole (1922-2002) called the “counterfeit trinity” (Me, Myself, and I). It is a problem when everyone wants to be in the number one position!

Someone wisely said, “Everyone needs three types of relationships in their lives, a ‘Paul’ who can mentor and challenge you, a ‘Barnabas’ who can encourage you, and a ‘Timothy’ - someone to pour your life into.”

The reality of life is that some relationships will disappoint. That’s not what we want. We want every relationship to be fulfilling, gratifying, and walking in harmony.

If we study the Bible we learn that a lot of people didn’t get along very well. Adam blames Eve. Cain kills Abel. Ishmael and Isaac don’t get

along. Jacob and Esau don’t get along. Saul throws a javelin at David. David’s son, Absalom, rebels against him.

Even the disciples didn’t always get along well, arguing with each other over who was the greatest (Luke 22:24). Paul tells of a problem with Demas who deserted him (2 Timothy 4:10). Paul talked about all Asia turning against him (2 Timothy 1:15), and that no man had stood with him, but all men had forsaken him (2 Timothy 4:16). Paul and Barnabas had a sharp disagreement that caused them to separate (Acts 15:39).

Even Jesus had a mass exodus from His ministry (John 6:66).

It’s part of life that people will sometimes disappoint us, or let us down. God never will.

Are we going to let the disappointments ruin our lives. Will we take offense and become bitter? Or are we going to forgive and extend grace, become better and not bitter, as we grow in love toward others? (Ephesians 4:31,32).

— Miami, OK

Forget It!

by Joe Slater

If you want me to do something and I say, “Forget it!”, it means I’m not going to do that. I don’t expect you to erase your memory of what you wanted. If you tell me of a trivial offense someone committed and I say, “Forget it!”, it means put it behind you and move on. I don’t expect you to develop amnesia regarding the slight.

Forget, as used in the New Testament, doesn’t mean to erase your memory; it has more to do with not being concerned or being neglectful. After detailing the rich past he had enjoyed in Judaism Paul wrote, “But one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal . . .” (Philippians 3:13-14).

Obviously, he still was aware of his past – he had just written about it! But it was no longer of much concern to him. In that sense he “forgot” it.

Hebrews 6:10 tells us that “God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love.” God, being omniscient (all-knowing), doesn’t literally “forget” anything. But we need not be concerned that God might cease to care about the good works we do. They will always be important to Him. Similarly, Hebrews 13:16 exhorts us not to “forget to do good and to share.” It’s highly unlikely that a Christian would become unaware that God expects us to do good and share; but we certainly can and sometimes do become neglectful of that obligation.

Should you forget some past grievances and worldly honors? Should you strive not to forget to do God’s word, practice hospitality, and labor in service to God and His people? The point isn’t mere awareness; it’s caring about truly important things while letting others go.

— Justin, TX

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