

THANK GOD IN ADVANCE FOR PROMISES KEPT

by Danny Tunnell

The Bible says, "The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11). "God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). "Blessed be the Lord, Who daily loads us with benefits" (Psalm 68:19). "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name" (Psalm 100:4).

Faith is expecting God to keep His promises (Ezekiel 12:25). Abraham was fully persuaded (convinced) that what God promised, He was able to perform (Romans 4:21).

Are you thanking God in advance for keeping His promises? That's what faith does! "Now thanks be to God, Who always causes us to triumph in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14). "Thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Did you notice that "thanks" is connected to "triumph" and "victory" in those verses? Did you notice "thanks" precedes "triumph" and "victory"?

It's good to thank God in advance for keeping His promises, even before you experience them. It shows that

you have faith in God and His word. It shows that you believe in God's integrity and ability to do what He says He'll do.

Faith in God is not praying and then waiting to see if it will happen. If God promises it in His word, then believe when you pray that you will have it (Mark 11:24). Believe that the answer is granted and start expecting it, and start thanking Him for it.

No one has who ever trusted in God has been disappointed (Romans 10:11). That has never happened and it never will.

God wants us to trust Him. Doesn't it please you when people trust you? Especially after you've come through for them repeatedly. Suppose someone said of you, "You just never know what he might do." Then someone says, "I know what he'll do; he'll keep his word!" Does that honor you? Oh Yes! Does that bless you? Faith is one of the most honored things you can do for anybody. Why? It speaks of that person's character, integrity, and ability. "If he says he'll do it, you can count on it."

How much more should we honor God who cannot lie, has never lied, and has never failed. Just as someone who expresses faith in you pleases you,

faith in God, ahead of time, pleases God (Hebrews 11:6).

Doc Horton grew up poor in the South. At age 13, halfway through the seventh grade, he had to quit school and go to work to help support the family. He said, "All my life I wanted an education." Eventually, he did go to college. With 13 children in the Horton family, it was always a treat when Momma made a big platter of hot, fluffy country biscuits. The family rule was that as the platter got down to the last biscuit, you couldn't lay claim to it by saying, "Pass me the biscuit," or by reaching for it. The person who said, "Thank you for the biscuit," even before receiving it, got the biscuit. Even if the biscuit was on the opposite side of the table and several other children were closer to it.

Don't let this be too simple for you. Even before you receive something God has promised in His word, go ahead and thank Him in advance. God has already prepared a table for you in the presence of your enemies (Psalm 23:3). Everything you need is already on the table. God is pleased by your faith when you thank Him in advance for what He has already provided.
— Miami, OK

IS SIN INHERITED?

By Mark Lindley

The old doctrine of Original Sin is still alive. Every now and then, one might hear a preacher state that we all have "Adam's nature," and that we are "born in sin." The doctrine is referred to as Original Sin or Total Hereditary Depravity. Many denominations of our day believe it.

The doctrine suggests that after Adam sinned in the Garden, he passed on his "sin nature" to all people. Every baby is born "defiled in body and spirit," and is "totally depraved," not because the baby has sinned but because Adam sinned.

Some believe that Psalm 58 teaches this doctrine: "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf cobra that stops its ear, which will not heed the voice of charmers, charming never so skillfully. Break their teeth in their

mouth, O God! Break out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord!" (verses 3-6). Based on this passage some have said that "babies speak lies" because they have inherited "Adam's nature."

Let me assure you that babies are pure, innocent, and are not born in sin! Further, babies have never inherited a "sinful nature" from Adam! This is an ugly, false doctrine that should be opposed by all who respect God's Word.

Well, what about Psalm 58? I affirm that Psalm 58 does not teach Original Sin as seen by the following: (1) The passage is describing David's enemies, not innocent babies; (2) The passage says that the ones under consideration "go" astray, not that they "are born" astray; (3) Newborn babies cannot talk, much less "speak lies"; (4) The ones David describes have "teeth," but babies do not have teeth; (5) Neither Adam nor Adam's "nature"

is mentioned in this passage; (6) This passage is an inspired exaggeration, designed to show the wickedness of David's enemies who were also God's enemies. Obviously, the language is not to be taken literally. Babies do not "literally" go astray "as soon" as they are born; rather, wicked men make wicked choices early in life and go astray. That is all the text teaches.

No passage teaches that babies are born sinners!

Adam did not have a "sinful nature." God created him pure and sinless. But Adam chose sin. This is precisely how people become sinners today. We choose sin and therefore commit sin. "Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4).

Sin is committed, not inherited.
— Ripley, MS

Old Paths

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"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

OOPS!

by Dalton Key

Gleaned from both personal observation and testimony from others comes this collection of church service "bloopers":

"Let me assure you that we have gathered here for no other purpose than to think on worldly things". . . "It would simply be impossible for one to attend every service of this Gospel Meeting and get anything out of these sermons" . . . "We have two who are sick of this church" . . . "I am sorry that we don't have any sick to announce; oh, yes, I forgot! We are happy to announce that Brother _____ has the flu" . . . "We pray that if there has been any spark of revival lit during this Meeting, the Lord will see fit to water that spark" . . . (In prayer for the Lord's Supper) - "Lord, we thank Thee for this fruit of the loom" . . . "We are so thankful that Brother _____ had the audacity to respond to last night's invitation" . . . "As you know, we like to have the truth properly confounded here, so we invite you back tomorrow night to hear Brother _____ dispense with the gospel once again" . . . "All those gathered here who feel the need, feel free to come as we sing this song of invitation and commit your sins publicly" . . . "I have an announcement here about a debate over at - well, I don't remember who is debating or what the subject is - but you will want to go."

And then there was the especially flustered maker of announcements who brought one service to an abrupt close by blurting out, "I do hope that we will never see you again!"

The point? When next you hear the inevitable inadvertent blunder from the pulpit or classroom lectern, be patient. Public speaking isn't as easy as it may appear from a distance.

DO WE NEED THE BIBLE?

by Bobby Key

Do we need the Bible? If we hope to please God we do. If we have an interest in going to heaven we do. If we want the best life has to offer we do. Yes! Of course we need the Bible.

Several years ago a denominational preacher hurled his Bible across the church building before the eyes of his startled congregation. He then shouted, "If this book is going to keep me from Jesus Christ, there goes my Bible!"

I wondered what this man could have possibly known of Jesus Christ apart from the Bible. Did he have access to a more trustworthy source than the Bible itself? Could the man have looked into his own heart and seen a better Savior revealed there than he could have seen on the pages of the New Testament? Surely this preacher had become vain in his reasonings and his senseless heart had become darkened. He was afraid the Bible would stand in the way of some new revelation of truth.

We can't help but pity such an exhibition and pity any preacher who could stoop to such cheap theatrics.

The Bible is certainly the word of God, the medium through which the will of God is revealed. By it the man of God is completely furnished to every good work (2 Timothy 3:15-17). We can know nothing of the real Jesus outside of what the Bible says about Him. We have no further revelation today (Jude 3). The Lord has already given us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

There is not one solitary thing a man needs in religion that he cannot find in the Bible. It is indeed all-sufficient.

It is true that the Bible does not flatter man, but condemns him as a sinner. However, the Bible also reveals a way of escape. Christ came to enable us to escape the servitude of sin and the devil. He came to make us free. The whole duty of man is to fear God and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

As I see it, the only thing left for me to do is accept God's sin offering and completely submit myself to the will of God - and all I know about God's will is what I read in the Bible. - 1929-2018

"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 the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

SPEAKING THE TRUTH

by Joe Dale Wilson

According to Proverbs 25:18, “A man lying about his neighbor is a club and a sword and a sharp arrow.” Lying words will injure just like a club, or as a sword will wound, or as an arrow will penetrate the heart.

One of the greatest needs in our present world is honesty. “A man of truth tells what is right, but a false witness conveys deceit” (Proverbs 12:17). People who will lie will be deceiving their own hearts as well as those they speak to! “Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, while joy is with those who counsel for peace” (Proverbs 12:20).

In our world, salesmen, politicians, preachers, psychologists, and many educators have displayed a lack of integrity in what they are proclaiming. The lack of integrity in business is seen in Proverbs 20:14: “Bad, Bad, says the buyer, but he leaves and brags about his bargain.” People of our generation have forgotten that “the lips of liars are an abomination to Yahweh,” (Proverbs 12:22a), because “with his mouth the godless injure their neighbors” (Proverbs 11:9).

One of the seven things God hates is “a lying tongue” (Proverbs 6:17).

The wise man said, “A righteous man hates lying, while a wicked man is covered with shame and disgrace” (Proverbs 13:5). Why would a righteous person hate lying? Righteous people are marching in honesty. “The honesty of the upright guides them” and “the righteousness of honest people directs their way” (Proverbs 11:3, 5).

It must be remembered that “death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Proverbs 18:21). Many people have been destroyed by lying tongues and have had their reputations ruined.

What would happen if everyone in Washington, D.C. spoke the truth, not being deceived? What if all college professors and people in education taught history as it actually happened, and left theories out of facts; if they taught math, literature, and English, while staying away from subjects that parents should be teaching at home? What would happen if all psychologists used real science in their teaching and speeches? What if every preacher would learn the truth and teach only what we find in The Last Will and Testament of Jesus Christ?

ANSWER: God would be pleased and our world would be immensely improved! (Scriptures used as translated by Hugo McCord).

— Vernon, TX

“Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another” (Ephesians 4:25).

EDITORIAL . . .

PANIC

by Dalton Key

For those of you old enough to remember . . .

. . . It’s been 25 years since the Y2K panic, when we were told the world was sure to collapse due to unprepared technology.

. . . It’s been nearly 50 years since the gas shortages and accompanying long lines at the gas pumps, when we were told the world was just a few years away from depleting its reserves of fossil fuel.

. . . It’s been over 60 years since the Cuban Missile Crisis, when we were told the world was on the very brink of a looming nuclear holocaust.

The point? Many of us have lived our entire lives, scuttled by scare-mongers from one promised peril to the next, always assured that our best days were behind us and our worst nightmares were lurking just around the next corner.

And yet, somehow, by some means, we survived.

Fear sells. Fear is contagious. For some, fear is even fun. But fear was never intended to be the default setting for those created in the image of the Almighty.

Open the Bible at random. You’ll be just a short distance from one of God’s admonitions, one of His invitations, to leave our fears at the feet of the One who made us. “Fear not,” is a message permeating both Testaments and spanning all three Bible dispensations.

What did God tell Abram? “Do not be afraid” (Genesis 15:1). What did he tell Isaac and Israel and Moses and Joshua and Gideon and Isaiah and Jeremiah? “Do not be afraid,” “do not fear,” “fear not” (Genesis 26:24; 46:3; Numbers 21:34; Joshua 1:9; Judges 6:23; Isaiah 41:10; Jeremiah 1:8). What did Jesus tell his disciples? “Do not be afraid” (Matthew 10:28, 31; John 14:27). What do the inspired writers of the New Testament tell us? “Be anxious for nothing,” “do not give way to fear,” “do not fear,” “do not be afraid” (Philippians 4:6; 1 Peter 3:6,14; Revelation 2:10).

One unbreakable law of the universe is as follows: As faith grows, fear recedes; as fear grows, faith recedes. Jesus understood this reality as he admonished the fearful among his hearers with the words “O you of little faith” (Matthew 6:30).

The world promises calamity. It always has. In contrast, God promises - and provides - spiritual peace and inner calm.

I choose to believe God. I prefer faith over panic.

How about you?

**WHEN DID INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC BECOME A COMMON PRACTICE IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP?**

by Milton Smith

When one reads through the New Testament, mechanical instruments of music used in praise and worship to God cannot be found. This is not the case with the pages of the Old Testament. Many good scholars believe that it was David who first introduced the use of instrumental music in worship and praise to God. Those who take this view generally point to certain Old Testament scriptures where the phrase “the instruments of David” is found (cf. 1 Chron. 23:5; 2 Chron. 7:6,29:26; Neh. 12:35; Amos 6:5). But other scholars do not take this position; they believe that God, Himself, allowed the use of instrumental music in worship under the old law.

In either case, how striking it is that we do not find mechanical instruments being used in the worship of the first century church. We can thus logically conclude that any convert who was accustomed to using instrumental music in his religious environment before his conversion, abandoned such use after his conversion.

But not only do we not find musical instruments being used in

worship and praise to God within the pages of the New Testament, church historians agree that those men in history identified as the “church fathers” made it clear in their writings that instrumental music was not found in Christian worship in the centuries that immediately followed the first century.

History tells us that mechanical instruments were absent in Christian worship until they slowly began to be introduced by the Roman Catholic Church. The earliest date for such inclusion seems to be about the eighth or ninth centuries (it should be pointed out that other scholars put this date much later - as late as as the 14th or 15th centuries). We can thus confidently conclude that any use of mechanical instruments in the church before the eighth century was - at best - a great rarity. Some attempt to argue that there might have been attempts to introduce instrumental music into Christian worship prior to the eighth century. But even if infrequent, isolated endeavors occurred, such attempts were still centuries after Pentecost,

were extremely rare, and were always met with stern opposition.

More assertive attempts to get mechanical instruments into the church would be made in much later centuries. Thus we know that such man-made instruments in the church were virtually non-existent before the eighth century (at the earliest). If mechanical instruments were already in common use in Christian worship, then no strong objections would have been made for their inclusion at that time. But this was not the case. When stronger attempts began to be made to bring instrumental music into the church, loud objections were voiced. This fact clearly shows us that any semblance of a “common” use of instrumental music in the church prior to the eighth century did not exist. Thus, it was in later centuries that such instruments began to be more aggressively introduced into Christian worship; before that time, not so. These are clear and indisputable facts of history that cannot be denied.

— Tulsa, OK

TREE REFLECTIONS

By Richard Dent

Recently I lost an old friend. No, it was not a human or an animal. It was a pine tree planted in 1977 by a Christian neighbor. It grew to be a very large tree until recently when a family with allergies from pine decided it must go.

As I reflect upon that tree, I remember some characteristics of trees and people. God’s word states that a man should be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in season (Psalm 1:3). How can we be like trees?

Since our God created the firmament (earth), much beauty has been appreciated, such as trees (Psalm 19:1). Many trees produce fruit which provides nourishment for many. God tells us in His word to be fruitful in good works for our works will follow us (Revelation 14:13). If we become unfruitful in this life then we will be ultimately cast away and withered (Mark 11:20-21).

Trees provide shade for the birds of the air to nest under their branches

(Mark 4:32). God’s word tells us of the importance of hospitality toward one another. Consider the story of Abraham and Sarah and the messengers sent by God to warn about wickedness (Genesis 18). Sarah fixed a meal for the angels and they ate under the shade of a tree (Genesis 18:8).

Like everything else, trees must endure the storms of life. Limbs are often broken by the force of the wind. You and I will have to deal with our own personal storms in this life. They may bring sickness, loss of jobs, temptations from Satan, etc. But we must stand strong as that old pine tree did.

Be faithful to the end and you will receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10)

— Liberal, KS

“Blessed is the man (whose) delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its

fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper” (Psalm 1:1,2-3).

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 15:58.)

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