

EXALTING CHRIST · EQUIPPING BELIEVERS · EVANGELIZING THE WORLD

# CORNERSTONE

MARCH-APRIL 2026



## The Transforming Effect of the Gospel

Bearing Fruit

Growing Up Into Him

...and more

...JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE · EPHESIANS 2:20

# From the Editor



by George T Ferrier

George lives in southern Ontario and fellowships at Bethel-Park Bible Chapel (Brantford, ON). Commended to the Lord's work in 2013 by Bridlewood Bible Chapel (Ottawa), he engages in an itinerant preaching and teaching ministry at North American assemblies, camps, and conferences. He is on the board of Cornerstone Magazine Inc. where he also serves as editor.

## Praise Him

*"O LORD, You are my God. I will exalt You, I will praise Your name, For You have done wonderful things; Your counsels of old are faithfulness and truth."* Isaiah 25:1

Meditating upon the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Christ we notice several praiseworthy features. First, consider His *submission* to the Father (Matt. 26:39-42). With His arrest drawing near, He said in the Upper Room, *"But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here"* (John 14:31). Then, just prior to His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Lord prayed, *"O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."* At this juncture, He was not seeking to avoid the cross but was yielding Himself to His Father.

The holy, omniscient Christ knew that the cross was the reason He came and was fully aware of the suffering He would endure. He faced the impending wrath of God for humanity's sins and the agonizing experience of crucifixion even before He left the glories of heaven (Ps. 40:6-8). Yet He came in submissive love for His Father and, at Gethsemane, verbally reaffirmed His commitment to His mission. His divine knowledge of what lay ahead brought anguish to His whole being, but it did not deter Him.

Next, we observe Christ's *sovereignty* (Matt. 26:47-57). Several times during His ministry, He said, *"My hour has not yet come."* On a few occasions, some tried to seize or kill Him, but He prevented them and slipped away (Luke 4:29-30; John 7:30, 44; 8:59; 10:31, 39; 18:6). As His time drew near, He said, *"The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified"* (John 12:23). When they came to arrest Him, He told Peter to put his sword away. Unlike the powerless, unwilling lambs of the Old Testament, the omnipotent Lamb of God voluntarily gave Himself up to be arrested and crucified. And on the cross, He sovereignly dismissed His own spirit (Matt. 27:50; Luke 23:46; John 19:30) but only after He had finished bearing our sins: *"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father"* (John 10:17-18).

Third, during His trial, He demonstrated the *substitutionary* nature of His death (Matt. 26:59-62). According to the Mosaic Law, the two false witnesses should have been crucified for their lies: *"And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you"* (Deut. 19:18-19). Christ took their place on the cross, just as He did for you and me.

Fourth, we view His *silence* (Matt. 26:62-64) before the authorities as foretold: *"As a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth"* (Isa. 53:7). He refrained from defending Himself or embarrassing His adversaries. It was only after the high priest put Him under oath that, in obedience to the Law (Lev. 5:1), He replied that He was the Son of God.

Finally, we see His *sufferings, sorrow, and solitude*. Indeed, He suffered being tempted (Heb. 2:18; 1 Pet. 4:1) and was the *"Man of Sorrows"* (Isa. 53:3; John 11:35; Luke 19:41; Heb. 5:7-9). The Lord had told Peter, *"The rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me"* (Luke 22:34). Later, when the rooster crowed immediately after Peter's third denial, *"the Lord turned and looked at Peter"* (Luke 22:61). His look of sorrow caused Peter to depart and weep bitterly (Matt. 26:75). Christ was truly human and knew the pain of rejection by His family (Ps. 69:8), His nation (Ps. 69:20), and being forsaken by His disciples (Matt. 26:56). Then, on the cross, bearing our sins, He was forsaken by God (Ps. 22:1). By Himself, He purged our sins. Therefore, God has highly exalted Him (Phil. 2:9). He is now gloriously risen, ascended, and seated at God's right hand (Heb. 1:3). Praise the Lord. Hallelujah! CM



**Managing Editor:**  
George T Ferrier, editor@cornerstonemagazine.org

**Editorial Committee:**  
George T Ferrier, Ontario, Canada  
David Dunlap, Florida, USA  
Brian Gunning, Ontario, Canada  
Mark Kolchin, New Jersey, USA  
Craig Shakarji, Maryland, USA

**Advisory Council:**  
Rick Morse (Nova Scotia, Canada)  
Fred Schwertfeger (Wisconsin, USA)

**Proofreading Assistants:**  
Kathryn Jones, South Carolina, USA  
Richard and Virginia Strout, Florida, USA

**Address Changes or New Subscriptions:**  
subscriptions@cornerstonemagazine.org

**News & Notices:**  
Submit online at [cornerstonemagazine.org/news](http://cornerstonemagazine.org/news) or  
email: news@cornerstonemagazine.org

**Design and Layout:**  
Hosanna Milbrath

**Website Design:**  
Matt Williams, Louise Street Marketing

**Treasurer:**  
Eileen Lee (USA) · George T Ferrier (Canada)

**Accountant:**  
Eileen Lee (USA) · Brian Gunning (Canada)

[www.cornerstonemagazine.org](http://www.cornerstonemagazine.org)

**Donations:**

**U.S. Donors:** please send gifts to  
Cornerstone Magazine Inc.  
PO Box 690096, Charlotte, NC 28227

**Canadian Donors:** please send gifts to  
Cornerstone Magazine Trust  
PO Box 246, Waterford, ON, N0E 1Y0

**Online Donations and e-Transfers:** please visit  
[www.cornerstonemagazine.org](http://www.cornerstonemagazine.org)

**Purpose:** Cornerstone Magazine seeks to build up and encourage the Lord's people by publishing Bible teaching articles and reports of the Lord's work. Its aim is to present truth in words that are easy to understand in regard to the person of Christ, His church, and evangelism. Cornerstone Magazine does not intend to be the official voice of any group of churches. The editor takes responsibility for the content that is published. For any spiritual blessing, to God be all the glory.

**Copyright:** Cornerstone Magazine is copyrighted only to preserve the integrity of the material. All rights reserved. Articles may be translated into other languages and used in English periodicals, provided no changes are made to the sense of the article, while showing a credit line "— Cornerstone Magazine." Sorry, unsolicited manuscripts cannot be acknowledged or returned. Printed in USA.

**Donations:** Cornerstone Magazine is jointly published by Cornerstone Magazine, Inc., an United States Internal Revenue Service 501(c)3 tax-exempt non-profit corporation, and Cornerstone Magazine Trust, a charitable trust registered with Canada Revenue Agency. Cornerstone Magazine is dependent upon the Lord to provide for its needs. It is freely sent upon request, as the Lord enables. No subscription fees are charged. Cornerstone Magazine is supported by those who appreciate the aims and the work of this ministry. All donations are tax deductible in accordance to law. All funds received are used towards the ministry of Cornerstone Magazine. We are thankful to all who practically support the work of Cornerstone Magazine.

All Scripture quotations are from the KJV or NKJV unless otherwise indicated.

...JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE · EPHESIANS 2:20

**Volume 10 | Number 2**  
**March-April 2026**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### 2 The Transforming Effect of the Gospel

*Bruce Hulshizer*

### 4 Bearing Fruit

*Peter Bolton*

### 6 Growing Up Into Him

*Ray Jones*

### 8 The Frontlines

*Andrew Boom*

### 10 Foundations of the Faith

*Keith Keyser*

### 12 The Importance of the Resurrection

*Ian Taylor*

### 14 Strength in Weakness

*Rick Morse*

### 15 Issues & Answers

*Alexander Kurian*

### 16 News & Notices

# The Transforming Effect of the Gospel

## THE LETTER TO TITUS

PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK

**T**he appearing of the grace of God in Christ changes everything, a game changer, or rather, a life changer (2:11). The appearing of the kindness of God our Savior has saved us, giving the believer a whole new life through the Holy Spirit (3:4-5). God's gospel gives eternal life to those who believe (1:2-3) - God's very life within us. Therefore, our way of living should demonstrate godliness consistent with this wonderful reality (1:1). We should act very differently than we did before God's love appeared to us (3:4-8). Those in Crete once behaved like everyone around them; as "Cretans," their defiled nature was evident in everything they did. Having been saved, they now had the Holy Spirit within them. They were no longer the same people, so there should now be a noticeable change in their conduct.

"Cretans" 1:12

Deceive, destroy,  
debased, defiled inside

Heirs of Eternal Life 3:7

Pure by the Holy Spirit inside

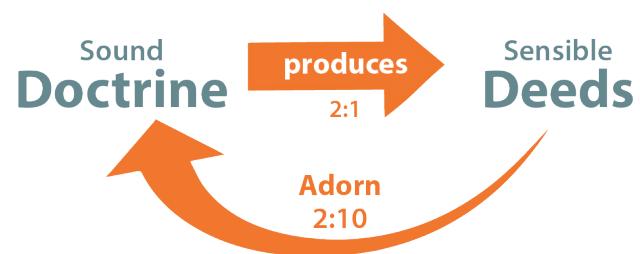
### Godly Elders Should Nurture Godliness in the Saints

After preaching the gospel in Crete, Paul left Titus to set things in order in the local churches, beginning with the appointment of elders in each church (1:5). These elders were to be blameless men who would oversee the people of God (1:7) and protect them from teachers who promoted empty words that did not produce good works (1:10-16). To develop godliness in all the saints, it is essential to have godly leaders. The elders are overseers who shepherd the flock of God among them (Acts 20:17, 28), nurturing godly lives primarily by their example (1:6-9).

May God continue to raise up such men to care for local assemblies—men who are exemplary in family life, self-controlled in their plans, passions, pleasures, power, and possessions, and who possess overall excellent character and conduct. May the Lord raise up godly leaders with open homes and open hearts, who love to see spiritual health among God's people, who are sensible, who endeavor to do what is right, and who maintain an active relationship with God that leads to pure living. Let them be stable in their walk and recognize the value and authority of the Scriptures. In local gatherings led by these godly leaders, the saints can imitate their example and benefit from their loving investment. How valuable are overseers whose lives are consistent, who care for God's flock, and who are capable of teaching the Word and refuting false teachers.

### Sound Doctrine Produces Solid Living, the "Good Life"

Empty religious talk does not lead to actions that bless others, and therefore does not represent God well (1:16). In contrast, saints should live in a manner that aligns with sound doctrine (2:1). Godly behavior demonstrates the value and excellence of doctrine (2:10). How glorious is the gospel when truth comes from the mouth of a man from Crete, who is expected always to



lie (1:12). The gospel of God's grace, which saves us, also instructs and purifies us so that our lives exemplify sensible, good deeds (2:11-14).

What honor is brought to God's Word when saints of all ages live sensibly and bless others (2:1-8).

### Sound Lives Have Substance Below the Surface

Inspectors sometimes drop a heavy rod onto a concrete slab floor to listen for hollowness below the surface. The Word of God is "sound," not hollow, so those with eternal life from that Word should have lives that are solid, not hollow-sounding. When someone refers to an older man's faith, love, or perseverance, it should not ring hollow.

Sensible living is seen in the man delivered from demons in Mark 5 in that he was sitting, clothed, and *"in his right mind"* (the same Greek word translated "sensible" (NASB) throughout Titus). Before Christ, he certainly would not have been sitting and clothed - no one could subdue him. But now he was controlled by a completely different nature within him. Clear thinking led to consistent, controlled behavior. Likewise, this should be seen in men and women of all ages (2:1-10).

### Men and Women of All Ages Should Honor the Gospel By Their Ways

Older men should be balanced, dignified, and self-controlled. They should conduct themselves in a manner that shows they have something valuable to offer. Others are naturally inclined to respect them when they recognize the solid substance of their trust in God. These men have proven the reliability of God throughout their lives. They should be the kind of man who, when the saints think of them, they remember a heart that desires their well-being, evident through acts of sacrificial love. They remain steady and unwavering, having learned through experience that our faithful God provides help. How desirable it is to have such older men among us.

Similarly, older women should be honorable, living in a way that reflects their significance in God's plans. Their conduct and speech should uplift others rather than bring them down. Instead of living to indulge themselves, they ought to invest in others. They should not let their own pleasures dominate their thoughts, schedule, or spending. Instead, they should put effort into nurturing the next generation in godly living, influencing younger women toward the true "good life." Rufus' mother was such a loving, trusted mother in the assembly (Rom. 16:13). How valuable!

Younger women should be influenced by older women to live excellent lives that bless others. The enemy tries to degrade a pure, faithful, serving woman and diminish the perceived value

of marriage, family, and the home. However, the gospel teaches younger married women to see the beauty of God's designs. She focuses her affection and interest on her husband and children, valuing those entrusted to her care and nurture. Rather than succumbing to superficial attraction, she is a woman of substance who shares her inner beauty with her husband alone. What a high calling it is to be a "householder," responsible for managing such a foundational place of blessing as the home. They should do it with diligence and joy, setting the atmosphere in a way that honors our beautiful Lord Jesus. They should show the beauty of a pleasant disposition that desires to see others doing well, just like God (3:4). They should excel in the excellent attribute of functioning under authority, as the Lord Jesus did so well. By their example, they can remind the bride of Christ to submit to our Husband. How excellent, what goodness can flow from such a solid woman.

Younger men should likewise be a blessing to others. It is possible for a young man in his teens, twenties, or thirties to be solid and steady—praise the Lord! Young men should develop awareness and consideration for others, being intelligently active and strong in order to bless, not just strong for strength's sake. They should carry themselves in such a way that others admire their speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, rather than despise foolish, youthful ways (1 Tim. 4:12). They should be known for doing good, like the Lord Jesus, whose actions blessed others (Acts 10:38). They should teach God's thoughts faithfully and have a dignified way of living that commands respect.

Their speech should be genuine and honest, with no hollowness or manipulation; not saying what they think people want to hear just so they will like them. What a high calling.

## "What honor is brought to God's Word when saints of all ages live sensibly and bless others."

### This Behavior Honors Sound Doctrine

May others think highly of God's gospel when they observe our way of life. How uplifting it is to witness the grace, kindness, love, and life of God expressed in genuine, sensible, and good ways that represent the gospel well and bless others. CM



**by Bruce Hulshizer**

Bruce and his wife Amie reside in Mechanicsburg, PA. They were commended to the Lord's work from Mechanicsburg Christian Fellowship in 2014 and have a ministry among local college students. Bruce teaches in local assemblies and conferences and serves on the Board of Greenwood Hills Bible Conference in Fayetteville, PA. In addition, he maintains a website at [saintsserving.net](http://saintsserving.net) and a YouTube channel at Encourage Depending.



# BEARING FRUIT

THE SECRET TO AN ABUNDANT LIFE

PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK

**S**ome of the most pivotal teachings the Lord Jesus ever gave to believers were delivered to those first disciples in the Upper Room, just hours before He would die. As recorded for us in John 13-17, the Master was preparing them to carry on and thrive as His witnesses—with joy—after He left and the Holy Spirit was sent.

Technically, they were in the Upper Room only until the close of chapter 14. Judas having left in chapter 13. The Master spoke the words of chapters 15 and 16 as they walked toward, and then out of, the east side of the city, where He stopped and prayed to the Father on behalf of His followers (including us), as recorded in chapter 17.

Please take a moment to read John 15:1-17; however, we will be primarily focusing on verses 1-8.

## Christ's Priority on Fruit-Bearing

Let us first address the expressions “*cuts off*” (v.2, NIV) or “*takes away*” (v.2, NKJV), and “*thrown away... and... burned*” (v.6, NIV). Some use these verses to teach that we can lose our salvation. However, salvation is not the context here. Rather, these verses are about living life as an effective disciple. The Lord’s inclusion of these comments underscores His priority on fruit-bearing by contrasting it with our not being useful in the way we were meant to be (see 2 Pet. 1:8-9; Titus 3:14). Years later, Paul would teach a similar principle using a different illustration, where salvation is assured, but the work may or may not be what it was meant to be (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

Note three key motives the Lord Jesus gave disciples for prioritizing fruit-bearing:

1. For the Father’s glory (v.8). This should be our greatest motive. After all, as the Vinedresser/Gardener, He deserves to see His efforts succeed, just as they did in Christ (John 17:4)
2. To “*prove to be*” disciples of the Lord Jesus (v.8, NASB). This is consistent with what He had taught in 13:35. An unfruitful branch lacks credibility in claiming to be a Christian, since they are not following Christ well. No one is benefitting from them in the way God intended, though He could still make use of them for firewood (v.6)
3. The assurance of hearing “Yes” to our prayers (vv.7,16). Our Father always hears and answers the prayers of His children, but He does not necessarily agree with the content or motives of our prayers (e.g. Jam. 1:5-8; 4:2-3). Believers of mature character and a lifestyle of intimacy with Christ have come to truly delight themselves in the Lord, so that they express in their prayers the very will and heart of the Lord Himself, and He delights to give them those desires (Ps. 37:4).

In epistles addressed to the churches, the Spirit of Christ continues to emphasize fruit-bearing as our norm. For example, see Romans 7:4 and Colossians 1:10, as well as Acts 26:20 (echoing the Baptizer in Luke 3:8). This leads to a natural question.

## What Is “Fruit”?

Most likely, we immediately and rightly think of “*the fruit of the Spirit*” (Gal. 5:22-23), since the life of the vine flowing through us is meant to produce Christlike character. We will return to this point in a moment.

The context in John 15, however, is about being equipped to live out the life into which the Holy Spirit will lead believers, as witnesses for Christ while we await His return. Therefore, we could say that 'fruit' refers to a productive lifestyle—a harvest—in our efforts as ambassadors for Christ. This is reflected in a sample of passages in the New Testament where the word "fruit" is used:

- Evangelism and discipleship (Rom. 1:13; Matt. 28:18-20)  
Note of caution: it is about contributing to these activities, not about numbers of converts or disciples
- Sharing materially with fellow believers in need (Rom. 15:26-28)
- The sacrifice of praise to God, with thankfulness, especially while being persecuted (Heb. 13:13-15)
- Deeds which come from being rooted in Christ and the truth (Matt. 7:15-23; 12:33-37). It is not just religious works and experience. It must come from a healthy, vital communion with Christ
- "The fruit of righteousness" (e.g. Jam. 3:18; Heb. 12:11; Phil. 1:11; Eph. 5:9) - living in step with God, as to what is right in action and heart

The reality is that what is happening within us is more crucial than the outward actions on which we might be tempted to focus, perhaps even with a sense of pride. The deeds of Christ were an outworking of His perfect character - "*the fruit of the Spirit*" - and He continues to seek to live out these qualities through His followers.

#### Side Notes of Encouragement:

- Take comfort: it is not instant; it is a developmental process, though growth and increasing maturity are intended
- Take the pressure off: we are called to "bear" fruit, not "produce" it. The word "produce" carries a more causal meaning, as if we were the source. However, Christ makes it clear a branch cannot generate fruit. It is the life of the vine flowing through us that brings forth the fruit

#### The Secret of Bearing Abundant Fruit

In this passage, we often focus on the vine, the branches, and the fruit. However, notice verse 1: behind it all stands the Father, the expert Gardener and Vinedresser, who provides all the conditions necessary for success. He is seeking to bring about a progression of growth: (refer to the table below).

The secret to such growth is to focus on our responsibility—abiding—rather than on the fruit itself. The word "abide," whether used as a verb or a noun, appears nearly 20 times in John 14 and 15, including John 14:2, which states, "*In my Father's house there are many abodes.*" (Darby) By abiding, we are passive and dependent, because the fruit is produced by the Vine and the Gardener, not by us. Yet, this process is also active and intentional (2 Pet. 1:3-11), as we must prioritize our connection to the Vine and cooperate to ensure there is an unhindered flow of the life of the Vine through us. Only then can we be confident that mature fruit will appear and yield ongoing, high-quality harvests.

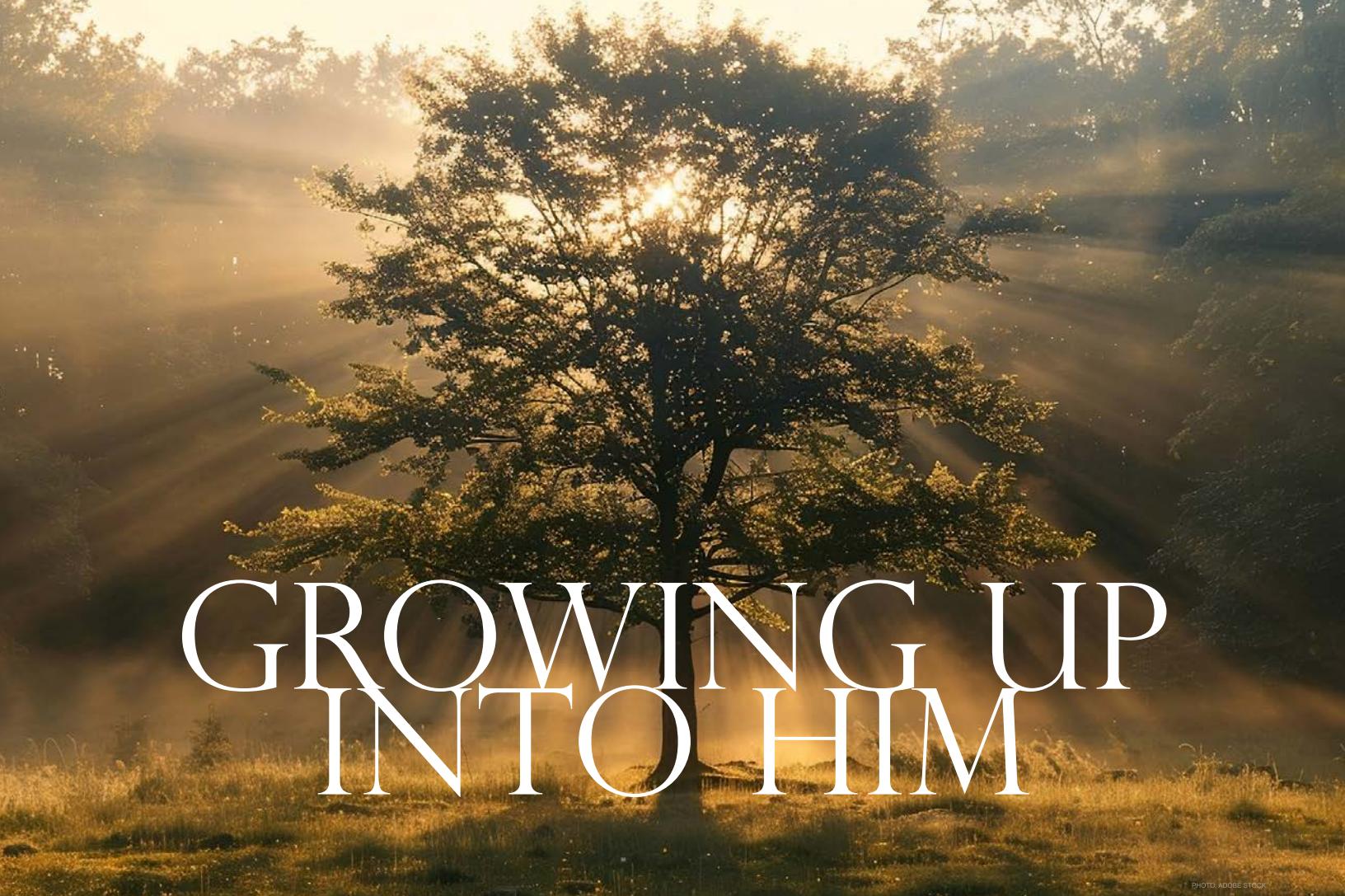
In conclusion, we might paraphrase verse 8 in this manner: "By this My Father, the Gardener, is glorified: that you bear a reliable abundance of fruit and thereby demonstrate that your outflow of life and purpose is truly My life and My will expressed through you." CM



#### by Peter Bolton

After a career as a math teacher, Peter now invests his time in Bible teaching, counseling and prison ministry, as does his wife Beth. Their home in Cambridge, Ontario, is near most of their 5 children and 10 grand-children, and Eagle Street Christian Fellowship, where he serves as an elder.

Degree of Fruit	How It Comes To Be
Fruit (v.2)	From initial abiding, by virtue of faithfully seeking to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus
More fruit (v.2)	From nurturing and pruning, by submitting to the Gardener's efforts • "prune" = "cleanse," verb of verse 3 "clean" = "pure" as used in places like John 13:10-11; Matthew 5:8; 1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:22; Titus 1:15; Revelation 21:18 (pure, clear...same Greek word) - Only what is meant to be in us is what is there - Verse 3 - the Father uses the word of truth to do this, fertilizing or else cutting off things that are hindering or distracting from growth
Much fruit (vv.5, 8)	From dynamic abiding, by being in active communion with Him...with joy (v.11)
Fruit that remains (v.16)	From maturity of purpose, by finding our identity in Christ and a life of representing Him, and serving and blessing others (the recipients of the fruit) • "remains" = abides, continues, endures



# GROWING UP INTO HIM

PHOTO: iStock

**S**pring arrives; seeds are planted, and the farmer looks for signs of growth. A baby is born to joyful parents, full of hope for steady growth into adulthood. Yet, tragically, growth does not always come. Crops sometimes fail, and a child may stumble in development bringing deep anguish. Equally tragic is when those born into the family of God fail to grow.

Jonah serves as a classic example of one of God's children who needed to mature. God wanted to use him in the important task of saving souls. He knew Jonah's childish tendencies, yet there was still vital work to be done. Likewise, God knows who we are, and He continues His work in us.

While the storm raged outside, Jonah was comfortably asleep below deck. In the same way, we live in days of tremendous spiritual storms. Souls are perishing, yet many of the Lord's people rest comfortably, unaware. No wonder Paul sounded the alarm, urging believers in Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus to wake up (Rom. 13:11; 1 Cor. 15:34; Eph. 5:14).

Is the Holy Spirit speaking to us, or even to our assembly, commanding us to wake up and grow up? The theme of growth is woven deeply throughout the epistles, reminding us that it is not optional but essential for the child of God.

## The Need to Grow

Peter speaks of the need to grow: *"As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby"* (1 Pet. 2:2). Just as newborn babies crave milk to grow, so believers must feed on the Word in order to grow spiritually. A newborn instinctively craves milk, searching and reaching out for it without hesitation. Do we, likewise, recognize our absolute need for the Word of God and long for it as earnestly as a newborn longs for milk?

## How to Grow

In his second letter, Peter exhorts us to *"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Pet. 3:18). The path to growth is found in knowing Christ, and we come to know Him through feeding on His Word.

First, we simply read it. As believers, we must remember that the very Author of Scripture dwells within us. The Lord Himself promised: *"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore, I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you"* (John 16:13-15).

Second, we must feed on the Word regularly. Just as we rarely miss a meal in order to maintain physical health, so we should not miss a day without nourishment from the Word of God.

Third, we should eat purposefully. Some years ago, a young man asked me to help him with Bible study. When I visited his room, I saw that his “study” consisted of books scattered across his bed. He had no desk, no bookshelf, and hardly any resources for deeper study. Now compare that with how we prepare food for physical nourishment. We set aside a special place, equip it with counters and storage, and devise plans to keep it stocked and useful. Do we have such a place and plan for the intentional study of God’s Word?

Fourth, we enjoy the Word together. Just as special meals are often best shared with friends, so spiritual nourishment is greatly strengthened in fellowship with other believers. The church that began at Pentecost was characterized by four vital principles under the direction of the Holy Spirit: *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42).

### The Reason to Grow

The objective of the Christian life is to grow into maturity, revealing the very life of Christ: *“But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ”* (Eph. 4:15).

In his letter to the believers in Ephesus, Paul clearly explains what it means to grow up into Christ. In the opening fourteen verses of chapter one, he unfolds the many spiritual riches every believer receives through trusting in Christ’s shed blood at Calvary. He tells us that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. He has predestined those born into His family for adoption as sons. He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him, we have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. In Him, we are predestined to receive an inheritance and given the privilege of being to the praise of His glory. Having believed, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. Surely, this immeasurable wealth, given freely to every born-again believer, is beyond full comprehension.

But Paul goes on to enumerate even further blessings. He prays *“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints”* (vv.17-18). Spiritual growth is achieved through a deeper knowledge of Christ.

## “THE THEME OF GROWTH IS WOVEN DEEPLY THROUGHOUT THE EPISTLES, REMINDING US THAT IT IS NOT OPTIONAL BUT ESSENTIAL FOR THE CHILD OF GOD.”

And by what power could God accomplish this in poor, lost sinners like us? Paul answers: *“What is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places”* (vv.19-20).

But what is the ultimate objective for all the saints on earth? Paul explains that the Lord has given gifts to the church to equip believers in the local assembly for ministry. Teaching, shepherding, and growth are to continue until *“we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”* (Eph. 4:13).

The standard of spiritual growth is the fullness of Christ: *“...the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all”* (Eph. 1:22-23). But what does that fullness look like in the life of the assembly? And what should it look like in our daily walk with the Lord?

All believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and share in the very life of Christ. Paul deeply longed for the spiritual growth of the saints, expressing his burden with these words: *“My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you”* (Gal. 4:19). The word “formed” comes from the Greek “*morphoō*,” which refers to the act of giving outward expression to one’s inner nature.

Spiritual growth is not a quick achievement but a lifelong journey of becoming more like our Savior. From the new birth in Christ to the full maturity He desires for us, the Spirit patiently works within, shaping us day by day through the Word of God. As we read, meditate, study, and fellowship together, the life of Christ is formed more fully in us, until His character is reflected through both our individual lives and our assemblies. May we, then, with humility and dependence, hunger for His Word, yield to His Spirit, and fix our eyes on Christ, who alone is our standard and our goal. **CM**



**by Ray Jones**

Ray and Carol Jones lived for many years in England and were involved with youth work, beach missions, and establishing a local assembly. Serving with New Tribes Mission for 35 years, they taught New Testament Church principles to prospective missionaries preparing to reach remote people groups with the Gospel. They were commended by Wallenstein Bible Chapel in 1981. Ray serves as Vice Chairman of Guelph Bible Conference Center, and is currently engaged in itinerant ministry, shepherding, Bible studies, and conferences.

# THE FRONT LINES



## CONTINUING IN FELLOWSHIP AND SERVICE

---

### Pittsboro Christian Village

---

Many believers know about Pittsboro Christian Village (PCV) and have a general idea of who we are. Yet, even among those familiar with PCV, we sometimes find there are misunderstandings about what life here is truly like. It is not uncommon for people to assume that PCV is mainly a place where older Christians quietly live out their final days, or that it is a kind of Christian nursing home for those who are no longer able to be active in ministry. While we do provide care when it is needed—care we are genuinely thankful to give—those assumptions miss the heart of what happens here.

The truth is that PCV is a vibrant community of believers who continue to walk with the Lord, grow in faith, encourage one another, and serve. The campus is located in the growing town of Pittsboro, North Carolina, just outside the Raleigh–Durham area. While the surrounding community has changed in recent years and continues to change rapidly, our purpose remains the same: to provide a place where the Lord's people can continue in fellowship, discipleship, and meaningful ministry, even as the seasons of life change.

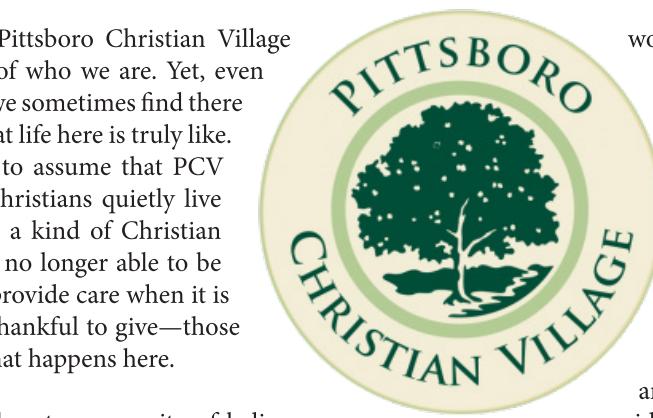
When believers move to PCV, their ministry does not end; in many ways, it simply begins a new chapter. With the everyday responsibilities of managing a home eased, many residents find they have more time and energy to invest in others. Conversations about the things of the Lord happen naturally around the table. Prayer for missionaries, assemblies, and gospel

work continues. Encouragement is given freely and often, as people check on one another and share life together.

Some residents continue to travel and teach, lead Bible studies, and disciple younger believers. Others write letters of encouragement to commended workers or assemblies they have supported for years. Some share the gospel with neighbors, staff, and caregivers. Even though all the residents are professing believers, the gospel remains active here; there are always hearts that need encouragement, clarity, hope, and at times, salvation itself. Ministry continues because the Lord is faithful to work in every season of life.

We also see opportunities beyond our walls. Some residents help with AWANA locally, while others participate in the small Good News Club that meets on campus. We host Bible conferences four times a year, bringing together believers from local assemblies and speakers from across the country for ministry, fellowship, and strengthening in the Word. We enjoy being involved and active with local ministries such as Mountain Top Youth Camp, youth groups, service organizations, and assemblies in the area. These connections remind us that we are part of a much larger work, the body of Christ serving together.

Of course, fellowship among believers here is both active and meaningful. Proverbs 27:17 says,



"Iron sharpens iron," and that is exactly how it feels to live here. We benefit from generations of believers walking with the Lord together. Our residents are in their 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, and beyond, all continuing to grow, encourage, and sharpen one another in the faith. It is a blessing to see believers discipled by those who have walked with Christ for a lifetime.

Life here is also full. Together, we enjoy social gatherings, outdoor spaces, gardening, Bible discussions, hymn sings, and even activities like pickleball and swimming in the pool when the weather is warm. Some prefer to be involved in everything, while others enjoy a quiet, independent rhythm. You can be as active and social as you like, or you may choose a peaceful, private routine. There is no pressure to "join everything." The goal is simply to live among the Lord's people with joy.

We call it a village because that is truly what it feels like, neighbors who know one another, care for one another, and look out for one another. It is a place where fellowship is part of everyday life, not something that happens only during set hours.

One of the most meaningful parts of the ministry at PCV is the Benevolent Fund. The Lord has enabled us to help provide for believers who served faithfully, yet did not have the means to fully support themselves financially later in life. Many who spent their lives in gospel work, missionary service, or supporting the assemblies did so joyfully and sacrificially. They did not accumulate wealth because their investment was in eternal things. It is a privilege for us to continue supporting them now.

The Benevolent Fund is not supported by government assistance or corporate dollars. It is maintained entirely through the loving gifts of the Lord's people, individuals and assemblies who desire to share in this ministry of care. We view it as a testimony to the truth that the Lord's people care for one another. We do not take these gifts for granted; each one represents love, fellowship, and gratitude toward the saints. We are humbled that the Lord continues to provide, and we trust Him to continue supplying according to His will.

As time passes and health needs change, we are grateful to have the Care Home on campus to provide support. Even when someone requires additional care, they do not lose their place in the community. They are not removed from fellowship or separated from the life of the saints. They are still visited, prayed with, sung with, loved, and included. They are still able to meet with the assembly that gathers right down the hall. This is one of the things that makes PCV feel like family instead of a facility.

Many who move here say the same thing after arriving: "I didn't realize how much was happening here." The days are filled with conversation, prayer, laughter, and shared meals. There is structure, but more than that, there is a sense of belonging, a



sense that we are walking together in the same direction, seeking to bring all glory to God!

If you have thought of PCV mainly as a place for the very elderly or those near the end of life, I encourage you to see it instead as the next chapter for many believers, a chapter where there is room to breathe, to rest, to encourage, to serve, and to finish well together.

We are grateful for the prayers and interest of assemblies and individuals who share in this work. We would be delighted to have you visit, walk the campus, share a meal, or join us for a conference. If the Lord has given you gifts for care, discipleship, hospitality, encouragement, or leadership, there may be opportunities to serve here. And if He lays it on your heart to support the Benevolent Fund or future building projects, we are thankful for every expression of fellowship in this work.

*Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.* Galatians 6:10

If you would like to learn more, have questions, or wish to arrange a visit, I would be glad to hear from you: andrew.boom@pcvnc.org or 919-542-3151. 



**by Andrew Boom**

Andrew Boom and his family moved to Pittsboro Christian Village in 2024 from Dubuque, Iowa, to serve in the ministry of PCV. Andrew serves as Executive Director and lives on campus with his wife, Jennifer, and their seven children. Their family is thankful for the privilege of sharing daily life, fellowship, and service among the believers at Pittsboro Christian Village.

# FOUNDATIONS *of the* FAITH



## *Justification*

**J**ob framed the classic problem of how a holy God can deal with His sinful creation by asking, “*Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one*” (Job 14:4). Thankfully, the gospel provides a comprehensive salvation, addressing every aspect of the Lord’s just requirements and humanity’s fallen condition. The biblical doctrine of justification specifically resolves the legal side of Job’s dilemma. As the righteous Judge, God is both “*...just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus*” (Rom. 3:26).

### **A Declaration of Legal Standing**

People often confuse justification and sanctification. Moreover, they mistakenly believe that striving toward holiness earns them a righteous standing before the Almighty. Scripturally, this is not accurate. Like all components of the gospel, justification and sanctification are by grace (Rom. 3:24). In the vocabulary of salvation, justification means to legally declare someone righteous. It does not make one righteous in practice; that is what sanctification means. The gospel contains both of these ideas, but it is important to recognize the divine order: First, God justifies the sinner; then He sanctifies them positionally and—over time—progressively.<sup>1</sup> The Scriptures stress that one must be justified righteously, with no subversion of the truth through bribery or duplicity. Deuteronomy 25:1 explains this divine standard: “*If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked.*” Proverbs 17:15, on the other hand, shows the contrasting wrong way: “*He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord.*”

### **A Demonstration of God’s Grace**

True and false ways of justification are depicted in our Lord’s parable about two men who went to the Temple to pray (Luke 18:9-14). Pharisees were noted for their public piety: ostentatiously praying, giving alms, and performing other religious works to display self-righteousness (Matt. 23:2-36). Accordingly, the Pharisee in the parable prayed a self-admiring discourse, exalting himself at the expense of the nearby tax collector. As one writer warns: “First century or twenty-first century, it is human nature to struggle with legalism and self-reliance. In our pride we want to assert our own righteousness before God rather than cast ourselves completely upon the righteousness of Christ. This tendency is universal; it is not limited to Jew or Gentile, ancient or modern, young or old. Legalism was a first-century Jewish problem whether they saw it or not. It is our problem today as well.”<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, the tax collector belonged to a despised class of sinners; many, through their collaboration with the Roman overlords, exploited the people. Nevertheless, this particular publican, with his downcast gaze, was “*poor in spirit*” (Matt. 5:3), crying out for mercy with these words: “*God be propitious to me—the sinner!*” (Luke 18:13, YLT).<sup>3</sup> Regardless of his past sins and poor reputation, he was justified because of his faith in God. Despite his religious performance, the Pharisee remained unjustified - better known as “condemned” (v.14; John 3:18, 36).

### **A Defense of God’s Righteousness and Grace**

What is the basis of justification and how can God be gracious to unjust people? The righteous judge has standards and there

must be an actual judgment underlying His saving work. By His redemptive sacrifice, Christ paid the penalty for sins and liberated sinners from sin's slavery. Believers are now transferred from the enemy's despotic and dark reign into "*the kingdom of the Son of His love*" (Col. 1:13). All of this flows from the Lord Jesus' death, dying as the substitute of sinners. He is the place of the sacrifice that satisfies the claims of divine justice - "*the propitiatory*" or "*mercy seat*"<sup>4</sup> as Romans 3:25 says. Yet He is also the sacrifice that makes propitiation, paying the legal debt for us, the transgressors (1 John 2:2; 4:10). Thus, one sees that God is righteous, but He declares sinners righteous based on His sacrificial work through Christ, when they receive Him by faith (Rom. 4:4-5).<sup>5</sup> As Gooding and Lennox explain: "God's solution is that his own Son as mankind's representative has paid the penalty for us by bearing the judgment of God against sin and dying on the cross. If, therefore, we put our faith in Jesus, God can count his death as our death; our penalty having thus been paid by Jesus, God can justify us, that is, declare us to be right before his judgment throne."<sup>6</sup>

## A Demonstration of Changed Lives Through the Reality of Salvation

Justification can also mean to vindicate someone - even God Himself, as when some Jews demonstrated that He was "*right*" by believing John's preaching and submitting to his baptism (Luke 7:29-30). Furthermore, James 2:17-26 shows that someone who is justified by faith will demonstrate this changed status through a new lifestyle. Believers are not saved by works, but they are saved for a lifestyle characterized by good deeds (Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 2:11-14).<sup>7</sup> Their claim of salvation does not merely rest on words - which may be devoid of reality. Instead, it is evidenced by their sanctified behavior, affirming the truthfulness of their verbal confession of faith.

Biblical salvation addresses realities, not unsubstantiated wishful thinking. It proceeds from Christ's sacrificial death (Rom. 5:9; Gal. 3:13, 24-25; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 9:26), is confirmed by His resurrection (Rom. 4:25), and leads to eternal glorification with Him (Rom. 8:28-30). Justification is the work of the Trinity, rather than man's effort. One receives it through faith, and therefore, it stands irrevocable by His will and grace. **CM**

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Note the order of these doctrines in Romans 1-8 and Galatians 3-6.

<sup>2</sup> Jay Harvey, "Justification: Why the Lord Our Righteousness Is Better News Than the Lord Our Example," in Kevin DeYoung, *Don't Call It a Comeback*. (Crossway, 2011), 103.

<sup>3</sup> HCSB has "*turn your wrath from me*."

<sup>4</sup> JND.

<sup>5</sup> "To tell me that I can escape the guilt of my sins by telling myself that I am not really responsible is to reduce me to an animal. How then can we find forgiveness and release, without saying our wrong deeds do not matter? The only answer I know is to be found in Christ, who came primarily, not to teach us to be good, but to release us from the chain of guilt. Christ, by his atoning death, solves that problem, in that he by his suffering maintains the standards of God's law, and its values, upon which our happiness depends. At the same time, he makes it possible for God to remain righteous and to justify those who have faith in Jesus." David Gooding, *Is there a Reasonable Hope for Humanity? A Myrtlefield House Transcript*. (Myrtlefield Trust, 2019), 10.

<sup>6</sup> David W. Gooding and John C. Lennox, *Key Bible Concepts: Defining The Basic Terms Of The Christian Faith*. (Myrtlefield Trust, 2013), 44.

<sup>7</sup> "His 'works' look uncommonly like 'the fruit of the Spirit' of which Paul speaks. They are warm deeds of love springing from a right attitude to God. They are the fruits of faith. What James objects to is the claim that faith is there when there is no fruit to attest it." Leon Morris, "Faith," *New Bible Dictionary*. (IVP, 1996), 359.



**by Keith Keyser**

Keith Keyser has served the Lord full-time in Bible teaching and preaching throughout the USA, Canada, and other countries. Keith and his wife Naomi were commended to the Lord's work in 1999 and fellowship with the saints who meet in the Lord's name at Grace Gospel Chapel, Gilbertsville, PA.

***"By His redemptive sacrifice, Christ paid the penalty for sins and liberated sinners from sin's slavery."***

PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK



# The Importance of the Resurrection

*“Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”*

Romans 4:24-25, ESV

PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK

With all the diverse yearly celebrations, it seems that many people believe the most important religious holiday is Christmas, when we celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus. Of course, there are many references to the coming of the Messiah in the Old Testament, and many names are given to the one who would come. “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). “And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6) and many more. The coming of the Lord Jesus as Savior and Son of God, the one who would lay down His life and make reconciliation with a Holy God possible, is truly the most wonderful news we could imagine.

The Old Testament accounts of those who learned about the importance of sacrifices and the shedding of blood color all the

pages of Scripture. Beginning with the skins of an animal killed to cover the nakedness of our first parents, it continues with many other profound examples, such as Abraham and Isaac climbing the mountain of sacrifice. Abraham’s faith that God would do something, even raise his son after he sacrificed him, was based on God’s promise that generations would flow from Isaac’s descendants. “God will provide for Himself the lamb” (Gen. 22:8). “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac... of whom it was said, ‘Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.’ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back” (Heb. 11:17-19, ESV). Abraham believed God, and his faith was counted to him as righteousness. “And to the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness” (Rom. 4:5).

Animal sacrifices could never take away sin; they were only shadows and types of the perfect sacrifice to come. “*For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins*” (Heb. 10:4, ESV). “*How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God*” (Heb. 9:14, ESV). God’s righteousness is satisfied by the blood of a perfect sacrifice for the one who has faith in the Lord Jesus’ death on the cross. “*Therefore, He had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people*” (Heb. 2:17, ESV).

Resurrection was not a major theme in the Old Testament, and there are only a few accounts of someone being raised from the dead. In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus raised several people from the dead among His many other miracles. However, the Lord’s resurrection is a much more important factor for us, as upon it hangs the main basis for our salvation. “*It will be counted to us who believe in Him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification*” (Rom. 4:24-25, ESV). “*Declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Rom. 1:4, ESV).

The fact that, by the Spirit of God, Jesus was raised from the dead gives credence to who He is. As the perfect Son of God, fully man, and truly God manifested in the flesh, Jesus was the only perfect sacrifice acceptable to a holy and righteous God. Therefore, He was the only one who could make the sacrifice that would propitiate, or appease a holy and righteous God. His resurrection is the proof that God accepted His sacrifice and that we can be certain of the basis for our justification before God. “*For Christ also suffered once for our sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit*” (1 Pet. 3:18, ESV).

What caused the change in the lives and attitudes of the disciples after the death and burial of the Lord Jesus? The women who had prepared spices and ointments to anoint the body went to the tomb on the first day of the week but found it empty. Then an angel spoke to them, saying, “*Why do you seek the living among the dead?*” (Luke 24:5, ESV) Mary Magdalene and the women ran to tell the disciples. Peter, together with John, ran to the tomb. John arrived first and stood at the entrance, but Peter went in, and they both saw the linen that had wrapped the Lord’s body lying there, with the face cloth folded and set apart.

Others saw the Lord Jesus over the following days as well. The account of the two followers of our Lord who were walking back to their home in Emmaus provides a striking example of the sadness and fear among the disciples. Most had thought that the Lord was about to set up His kingdom and overthrow the yoke of

Rome. These two men were surprised by another Traveller, and the explanation of the Scriptures that their “*friend*” taught them that day warmed their hearts as its truth was opened to them. During their meal, when the Lord broke bread with them, they finally realized it was the resurrected Lord Himself and raced back to Jerusalem to tell the disciples.

There are many intellectuals, and even religious organizations these days, that deny the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. However, there is more evidence for the resurrection available to scholars, lawyers, and religious leaders than there is for the authenticity of the writings of ancient philosophers and historians of the past. Most of the apostles and early believers died as martyrs, and as J & S Starkey stated in their book on Apologetics, “*Nobody willingly dies for something they know is a lie.*”<sup>1</sup>

The verses in 1 Corinthians 15:3-6 give clear teaching as to the importance of both the cross and the empty tomb: “*That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive...*” (ESV).

**“*His resurrection is the proof that God accepted His sacrifice and that we can be certain of the basis for our justification before God.*”**

Paul then went on to confirm the importance of the resurrection with the statement: “*If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain... and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins*” (1 Cor. 15:14, 17, ESV).

Our sins have been dealt with, and new life is the result. “*For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at His coming those who belong to Christ*” (1 Cor. 15:21-23, ESV). We are privileged to have the assurance that, as Christ rose from the dead, there will be a rapture of both the living and the dead, and so we shall be forever with the Lord. CM

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> An Emmaus Worldwide Study Guide, Apologetics for Beginners.



**by Ian Taylor**

Ian Taylor a commended missionary to Colombia in 1968, served 20 years there, later moved to the USA, and has continued as an itinerate teacher, currently serving on the Board of Trustees of Emmaus Bible College and chairing the Board of Emmaus Worldwide.

# STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

*"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."*

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

**P**ersonal weaknesses are as common as having elbows halfway down our arms. Whatever form they may take, any disability can be an ongoing source of concern for the person who experiences it. Some weaknesses are temporary, like a broken bone that can be reset and healed. Others are more permanent, such as a chronic physical or mental disability. Whatever Paul was referring to in this passage, it was clearly an ongoing condition that substantially impacted his quality of life and, as a result, could have affected his service to the Lord.

As someone living with an ongoing mental disability (Bipolar Disorder), I have often prayed that the Lord would remove my "thorn in the brain," to paraphrase Paul's diagnosis. Wrestling with the cyclical extremes of this condition is a constant struggle, and it is certainly no mystery to me why suicide is more common among individuals with bipolar disorder than with any other mental illness. However, the blessed Master has made it perfectly clear that He is more than sufficient for my deficiencies and has used my disability to manifest His love and care in a uniquely personalized way.

## Self-Importance

Paul's primary understanding of why his disability persisted was its effectiveness in combating any sense of self-importance to which he might have been prone. This could have resulted from external sources, such as excessive praise from others, or possibly from a tendency to congratulate himself on his accomplishments. Either way, he recognized that his thorn was permitted by God as an ongoing reminder of his own weaknesses.

Some may frown upon the idea that God would wish to inhibit our so-called self-esteem, but that is precisely the point. We are not to esteem ourselves more highly than we ought, nor to esteem ourselves above others (Rom. 12:3; Phil. 2:3). A biblically balanced view of self-esteem keeps us from being paralyzed by our own failings while simultaneously remaining fully reliant on the enabling grace of God in our lives. Sometimes, maintaining this balance is difficult.

## Self Sufficiency

Another common issue many of us face is the desire to be self-sufficient. It is typically ingrained in our upbringing and

repeatedly reinforced in our culture that this is synonymous with being a mature adult. While this may have merit in many practical aspects, self-sufficiency is often the adversary of spiritual reliance on the enabling grace of God. No person can submit to two masters (Matt. 6:24), because when we are submitting to self, we are not submitting to the lordship of Christ.

The positive long-term effect of a permanent disability is a decrease in trust in oneself and an increase in trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul learned that the Lord allowed his thorn so that he could truly understand the all-sufficient grace of God at work in his life. This truth went far beyond a theological concept and became an ongoing experience in his service to the Lord. He seems to conclude that he could not, or would not, have learned this truth in any other way.

## True Strength

David declared that "...every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah" (Ps. 39:5). Will we allow ourselves to fully absorb what is being said here, or are our egos too fragile to permit honest self-reflection? Paul's reference to God's word as a mirror (2 Cor. 3:18) is accurate, yet many of us need to get out the spiritual Windex more often and give our mirrors a good cleaning. If we do not, we will quickly embrace the kind of person we assume ourselves to be (Jam. 1:22-24) instead of seeing ourselves as God sees us. Isaiah experienced that this is necessary for each of us if we are to follow His leading in our lives (Isa. 6:1-8).

It is a liberating reality to come into that rich place where we realize that our own strength is like the grass that withers. It is an even greater freedom to know that the Lord's strength is the best and most productive enabling we can have in our lives. And we can have it! We can truly experience Him at work in our character, so that He can use us in His work. By way of warning, until we reach that place, nothing we do for Him will have any enduring effect. All of our combined resources are microscopic compared to His omnipotence, which begs the question: "Why would I think for one second that my strength is up to the task in His service?" As ludicrous as this sounds, I still find myself falling into this way of thinking.

...continued on page 17

# ISSUES & ANSWERS

“SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES...”

JOHN 5:39

## Why did Jesus tell others to keep quiet about His identity?

Some Bible scholars have called this phenomenon the “Messianic Secret.” The Gospels record instances when Jesus did not want anyone to know that He was the Messiah. For example, in Mark’s Gospel, Jesus often concealed His identity. After performing miracles, Jesus would command people not to speak about what He had done (Mark 1:44; 7:36). After Peter’s great confession that Jesus was the Christ (the Messiah), He charged His disciples not to tell anyone (Mark 8:30; Matt. 16:20). Jesus also silenced demons who recognized His true identity, instructing them not to make Him known (Mark 1:24-25, 34; 3:12).

Concealing His identity at times does not mean that Jesus’ public ministry was secretive. He was never reluctant to reveal His mission and message. He publicly preached the gospel of the kingdom of God in Galilee (Mark 1:14-15) and performed healings and other miracles in public (Mark 1:34; 2:1-12; 4:35-41; 6:30-44). After healing the demon-possessed man in the country of the Gerasenes (NASB), Jesus told him to share the news openly (Mark 5:19). In all these instances, Jesus was by no means secretive.

Theological and practical reasons may have led Him to avoid popularity. In doing this, His goal was to dampen popular expectations of a militaristic Messiah who would liberate the Jewish nation from Roman rule and establish a kingdom for them. Jesus wanted to fulfill the ministry the Father had given Him according to the Father’s will and timing. He wanted to define His messiahship on His own terms — not as a conquering king, but as a suffering servant (Isa. 53) who came to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

The crowds were becoming larger and unmanageable, and at times Jesus wanted to get away (Mark 6:31-32). He sought solitude but was often thwarted by the crowds: “Jesus got up and went away from there to the region of Tyre. And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know of it; yet He could not escape notice” (Mark 7:24, NASB). He was attempting to prolong His ability to move freely despite the ever-growing multitudes (Mark 6:53-

56). At other times, He had to be firm in leaving one group of people so He could minister to another (Luke 4:42-43). Then, too, large crowds would have attracted even more attention from the religious authorities, who already opposed Jesus’ ministry. Thus, Jesus concealed His identity at times so He would not be arrested before the appropriate time. He had work to finish before going to the cross. The proper time had to come for the revealing of His identity, His self-disclosure.

It is important to note that throughout His ministry, Jesus followed a broader pattern of simultaneously concealing and revealing His identity and message. In the great gospel invitation (Matt. 11:25-30), Jesus spoke about God’s sovereign concealing and revealing. The true identity of the Messiah was concealed from the wise and prudent Jewish leaders, who were arrogant and unrepentant, yet God revealed the truth to those who were humble and willing to believe: “...thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes” (Matt. 11:25).

Jesus used parables to conceal the truth from unbelievers while explaining it to His disciples (Matt. 13:11-17). He veiled the truth from those who had already rejected the light and truth given to them (Matt. 13:12-13). Further exposure to the truth would only increase their condemnation.

Despite Jesus’ clear self-revelation, the disciples struggled to fully grasp what He had revealed to them (Mark 4:13; 6:52; 8:17; 9:19). But thank God, the “Messianic Secret” is no more. The written Word has given us the full revelation of the Incarnate Word. Let us not keep silent; let us proclaim Jesus as Savior and Lord. **CM**



**by Alexander Kurian**

Alexander Kurian is a commended full-time worker serving the Lord for the last forty years in an itinerant ministry of evangelism, teaching, training, writing, and equipping. He and his wife Valsa fellowship at their commanding assembly, Edmonds Lane Bible Chapel in Lewisville, Texas.

Do you have a conference, event, or service opportunity you wish to advertise to print subscribers from across Canada and the United States, and to online readers on every continent?

# News & Notices

Submit 2-3 months in advance of the issue you would like it to appear in for print, or 3-4 months in advance for two months inclusion.

How to Submit:  
online: [cornerstonemagazine.org](http://cornerstonemagazine.org)  
email: [news@cornerstonemagazine.org](mailto:news@cornerstonemagazine.org)

## Spring Bible Conference

► March 6-8, 2026  
171 Candlewood Road Groton, CT

Wellspring Bible Fellowship will hold their Spring Bible Conference from March 6-8 with the first session on Friday evening at 7:00 pm, finishing Sunday at 11:15 am. Saturday morning there will be three messages concluding with a sit-down lunch at 1:00 pm. The invited speaker is Warren Henderson. For more information, please contact John Clifford at [clifford.duck11@gmail.com](mailto:clifford.duck11@gmail.com).

## Feeding the Flock 2026

► March 23-26, 2026  
America's Keswick Conference Center

Brothers Sam Mikhael, Larry Price, and Steve Price will be ministering the Word at Know the Word's annual conference. The dates are March 23 - 26, 2026. The theme is: "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her." The location is the renowned America's Keswick conference center in Whiting, NJ. The cost is \$425 pp which includes deluxe accommodations, great food, and top of the line facilities and activity options. This four day conference is open to all. For more information, visit [knowtheword.com](http://knowtheword.com) or email Mark Kolchin at [knowtheword@gmail.com](mailto:knowtheword@gmail.com).

## 19th Annual Ladies Conference

► March 29, 2026  
3270 Main St., Millbrook, AL

The 19th Annual Central Bible Chapel Ladies Conference is scheduled for March 29, 2026, at Central Bible Chapel. This conference has been a blessing to many, and they trust in the Lord's will that it will continue to be a blessing. This year's speaker will be Mrs. Elizabeth Skillen of Tee Nos Pos, AZ. For more information, please contact Laura Bonner at [hrhlaurabonner@gmail.com](mailto:hrhlaurabonner@gmail.com) or (334) 300-4636.

## Toronto Easter Bible Conference

► April 3, 2026  
Pearson Convention Centre  
2638 Steeles Avenue East, Brampton, ON

The Toronto Easter Bible Conference--sponsored by several assemblies in the greater Toronto area--will be held again this year on April 3 with speakers Jon Benson (NY) and Steven Hawkins (ON). The meetings will be held at 1:45 p.m. and 5:45 p.m. There is also a special youth focus meeting at 7:15 p.m. Childcare is available. For more information, please contact George McCann at [mccangeoann@gmail.com](mailto:mccangeoann@gmail.com).

## 45th Annual Ottawa Valley Easter Bible Conference

► April 3-5, 2026  
1249 Prince of Wales Drive, Ottawa Ontario

The 45th Annual Ottawa Valley Easter Bible Conference will be held, Lord willing at Rideauview Bible Chapel with invited speakers Tom Irwin (PA) and Joe Reese (ON). Meetings are scheduled each evening from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM with a youth rally on Saturday from 2:45 PM to 6:00 PM. Nursery and children's programs will be offered during the meetings. Refreshments and a time of fellowship will be offered after the meetings. All are welcome. For more information: [rideauview.org/easterconference](http://rideauview.org/easterconference).

## Palos Hills Spring Bible Conference

► April 24-26, 2026  
10600 S 88th Ave, Palos Hills, IL

In the will of the Lord, the Palos Hills Christian Assembly (Chicago, IL area) is planning on hosting its 56th annual Spring Bible Conference from Friday April 24 (7:00 pm) to Sunday April 26, 2026 (3:00 pm). The scheduled speakers are Micah Tuttle, Steve Price, and Alan Parks. There will also be special meetings for children (speaker TBD). Please plan on joining them for a challenging and refreshing time of hearing from God's Word and fellowship with other believers. Meetings will also be streamed on Zoom at: <https://bit.ly/PalosConference>. For more information, contact Warren Hagey at [eph320h@gmail.com](mailto:eph320h@gmail.com) or 708-935-4513.

## Discipleship Opportunity for Young Women

► June 4-13, 2026  
Grand Rapids, MI

"InTents Discipleship" is a nine-day discipleship training program for women ages 16 and up who desire to serve the Lord. Their vision is to inspire and equip young women to serve the Lord in their homes, churches, communities, and circles of influence using the skills and spiritual gifts that He has given them. The program focuses on five Biblical disciplines - Scripture, Hospitality, Evangelism, Discipleship, and Spiritual Gifts. These disciplines are first taught and then put into practice in a variety of hands-on experiences during the course of the program. There are opportunities to learn from women in different seasons of life, who are serving the Lord in a variety of ways. Please visit their Facebook page, InTents Discipleship, for more information, a video introducing the program, and photos from previous years. You may also email Becky with any questions at [rbwagner3@yahoo.com](mailto:rbwagner3@yahoo.com) or to register (deadline is April 20, 2026).

## Galilee Program

► June 21-July 10, 2026

**Southside Bible Chapel, Lafayette, Louisiana**

The Galilee Program is a seminar-style, discipleship-based course of biblical studies and practical instruction for Christians (ages 20-35), who are committed to Christ, His service, and their local church, and are passionate about growing in their faith and serving God with their lives. Its purpose is to help raise up the next generation of disciples and leaders. The emphasis is on inductive Bible study and how to minister to others through discipleship and evangelism. The goal of the Galilee Program is to support the work of local churches in raising up a new generation of disciples and leaders committed to the proclamation of the gospel and to the establishment and revival of churches founded on the principles and practices of the New Testament. Visit their website at [GalileeProgram.com](http://GalileeProgram.com) for more information and to apply.

## Book Offer - Digging Deeper into Revelation

“Digging Deeper Into the Revelation of Jesus Christ” by Mike Copple, is a 346-page reference for anyone striving to understand the book of Revelation. New with more details. A compilation of commentary notes provided by many solid brothers, this study guide contains the original Scripture, commentary, verse cross references, and reference commentary in 4 columns side by side. Revelation 1:3 inspired Mike to compile this study guide. Copies are available from your bookstore, online, or from Mike’s website <https://michaelcopple.com/digging-deeper-into-the-revelation-of-jesus-christ/> (check out the bulk order discounts for study groups).

## Book Offer: Real Salvation Stories

Real Salvation Stories: Illustrating God’s Gospel through the real-life accounts of those who experienced it for themselves by Larry Price with Rebekah Price Tidball. Copies can be obtained by contacting the author at [larryprice54@gmail.com](mailto:larryprice54@gmail.com) or purchased at Gospel Folio Press or on Amazon in print or Kindle format.

...continued

## The Holy Spirit

Another reality that is sometimes relegated to passive theological dogma is the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit. As the divine Therapist, He has proven Himself time and again in my thoughts, filtering through various illusions and delusions with precision and care. He illuminates, organizes, and directs in ways that are nothing short of supernatural. Recognizing and agreeing that our natural faculties are woefully deficient, we can then become willing and blessed participants as He works within us.

When I am weak, then I am strong. This confident paradox glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ in complete harmony with the yielding of self. At first, it is an uncomfortable proposition because none of us likes to feel any sense of being out of control. During my own persistent nightmares, my overactive and vivid imagination creates frightening scenarios in which I have no conscious sense of reason available to sort things out while sleeping. Once awake, these delusions fall away and rationality prevails—thank God.

## How to Use a Tabernacle Model in Ministry

Looking for younger men who might prayerfully consider learning how to use the large model of the Tabernacle for ministry, teaching, and gospel outreach. The thought is to gather several men for a multi day teaching time to learn how to assemble and disassemble the model. See: <https://www.tabernacle.larryrprice.com/>. For further details contact Larry Price at [larryprice54@gmail.com](mailto:larryprice54@gmail.com).

## Commendation

The saints at Faith Bible Chapel, London Ontario, Canada, have commended brother Rizwan to the work of the Lord with the Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. Rizwan has been in active and faithful fellowship with Faith Bible Chapel for several years. He has reached out to and visited the Jewish community in London and had occasion to speak at one of their meetings recently with a good reception and an invitation to return. Rizwan has accepted a three-month internship position with the Friends of Israel since September 15, 2025. He remains fully committed to this calling and looks forward to continuing serving as a missionary to reach the Jewish people in Ontario, Canada. Alongside the London area, he has a heart to reach and build relationships with the Jewish community in the Kitchener-Waterloo region as well. His work in the assembly has been a blessing and very appreciated by the fellowship.



**In the Next Issue of Cornerstone Magazine:**

- Hard Lessons From an Early Patriarch
  - Kept, Safely Kept
  - It's a Boy

## Wake Up, Get Up, Dress Up, Line Up

In the spiritual sense, we also need to be awakened from our sleep. Our days are limited, our nights are dark, and our times are desperate. *“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now, is our salvation nearer than when we believed”* (Rom. 13:11). The day of our Lord’s return is drawing near. There are sinners to be reached with the Gospel and saints to be reached with teaching from God’s Word. We must cast off anything that keeps us bedridden, put on His gracious enablement, and line up, ready and willing to follow His leading in whatever He calls us to do.

Many believers can testify from personal experience that the God whom we serve is able (Dan. 3:17). He can—and does—turn the nightmares of weakness into the dreams-come-true of His all-sufficient grace. CM

**by Rick Morse**

Rick lives in Berwick, Nova Scotia with Janie, his beloved wife for over 40 years. They are in fellowship with the saints at Bethany Gospel Chapel in Dartmouth, NS. Saved at age 21, Rick is active in his home assembly, and has ministered at a number of assemblies in Atlantic Canada. He contributes to Choice Gleanings calendar and has authored several books with his speaking and written ministry centering on a love for apologetics and expository teaching.

## The Legionnaire

*By Nathanael Reed*

We were called to a place near the city gate,  
To the crest of Golgotha's Hill,  
Where we led three men condemned to die,  
The two against their will.

I offered them wine, one turned his head,  
His garment we found nearby,  
Then while we gambled his raiment away,  
Blackness darkened the sky.

A soldier of Rome, a legionnaire,  
Battle-scarred and worn,  
I spiked his feet and hands then raised  
Him high on that dismal morn.

I lifted my head in the gathering gloom,  
And looked at his ravaged face,  
Yet etched in his eyes I saw such love  
The pain could not displace.

His gaze it pierced my empty soul,  
"I thirst," I heard him say.  
So, I wetted a sponge with sour wine,  
He drank and then turned away.

Lifting himself to catch his breath,  
His eyes swept side to side.  
"Tis finished," then, I heard him say,  
Then bowed his head and died.

Who can tell of this Nazarene?  
A carpenter's son, 'tis said.  
But He died on my watch at Calvary,  
And for my sins He bled.

And who can escape the gaze of the One,  
Who died all alone on that tree?  
Where He took on the sins of a legionnaire,  
And paid the price for me.

