

A Quarterly Journal

(A presentation by email)

“LIGHT FOR OUR AGE”

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*“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”
Psalm 119:105*

Feature One: Editorial

Clutched in the Devil's Hand

Being a Christian is difficult when we have to suffer, and we don't understand why. Why do we have to lose people that are so close. Why do people we trust betray us? Why did I not get the job I needed so badly? The Bible does answer these questions for us. Let me turn your

attention to three people where this is discussed in God's word. The first is the patriarch Job.

The Bible teaches us that Job was very devoted to God. The book of Job tells us that God was telling Satan how devoted Job had been to him and Satan challenged both God and Job. He told God that he had built a hedge about Job, so it was no wonder that Job was devoted to him. God trusted Job and told Satan he could do what he wanted to Job. Satan took everything from him. As a parent I can only imagine the pain as he was told that his children were killed. At the same time others servants came and told him that all of his possessions has been taken from him or destroyed.

By reading the book of Job we know why. Job did not understand. Everyone turned on him including his wife. They thought they were helping, but they only caused him more pain. Job didn't know that God believed in him enough to allow Satan to attack him as he did.

The second person I will mention is Joseph. Here was a young man that was being raised as a privileged prince. He was loved by his father, and no doubt had anything he desired. While he probably knew his brothers did not like him, he never expected them to sell him into slavery. Yet that is what they did. Here was a young man about seventeen that went from being a prince to being a slave. That would be enough to destroy the faith of many people, especially one so young. Yet the Bible teaches that Joseph remained faithful to God.

As a slave, he worked hard and became the overseer of his master's house. He was still a slave, but at least he had a responsible position and life was somewhat easier. Once again, however, the rug

was pulled out from under him when his master's wife falsely accused him of attacking her. Joseph now found himself in Pharaoh's prison. Psalm 105:17-18 tells us that Joseph was mistreated while in this prison. The text reads: "He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron." Remember, in all of this, Joseph was innocent. No matter what Joseph did, his world seemingly came crashing down on his head. Joseph did not know why. Yet, through all the years in prison, Joseph remained faithful to God.

The third example I will raise is our Lord himself. While Jesus certainly knew what awaited him in this world, he had to suffer but was totally innocent. He loved his people, but his people rejected him. Even many that believed on him rejected him because they loved their positions. John 12:42-43 tells us: "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Jesus, though innocent, went to the cross for this was the only way he could save mankind.

Job, by being faithful and silencing Satan, found favor with God; and Job 42 tells us that God restored more to Job than he had in the beginning. If Job knew about Satan's challenge to God, we do not know. We do know that Job remained faithful.

Joseph eventually realized why he endured so much. After he rose to power in Egypt and was second in command of the entire country, he met his brothers once again. When he revealed himself to them he said in Genesis 45:5,

“Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.... And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.”

All of those years that Joseph suffered, he didn't understand why. When he did realize the reason, he was glad to be the instrument by which God saved his family.

There are times we suffer, and we don't understand why. There are times we suffer, and we discover many years later why. There are times we suffer, and we realize why. The Bible covers it all. It is hard to endure suffering whether or not we understand why. Yet God's word teaches clearly that we are to endure to the end. There is nothing in this world worth giving up a place with God in the next.

Feature Two: *an article by R. C. Oliver*

MAY I HELP YOU

Light May, 1955

Have you ever been falsely accused? If so, then you ought to read all this article; for I believe it will help you.

Your emotional strains are not unlike the emotional strains of others; rather, they are what I have found to be common to man. It is not, for instance, an uncommon thing for those who have been oppressed, broken and crushed at heart to come to my office for counsel. They have either done something for which they are now ashamed, and they want to know what

they ought to do to make it right; or else they have been offended by someone else, and they are grieved because they cannot understand why anyone would do to them what they feel the offending party has done to them.

Just what one should say on occasions of this kind will sometimes tax every fiber of the soul. To say the wrong thing may mean their eternal destruction; but the right thing said may mean their redemption. To be qualified for occasions like this, we must pray for wisdom. On these occasions I always try to remember that –

*“Down in the human heart,
Crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried
That grace can restore;
Touched by a loving hand,
Wakened by kindness,
Cords that were broken
Will vibrate once more.”*

I must deal kindly, letting my “speech be with grace, seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6); yet I must deal frankly, placing the blame wherever I honestly believe that the blame belongs. Many times I find the fault, to a great extent, identifies itself with the very person seeking counsel. They are not necessarily wrong in their judgment of being done wrong—they may have actually been wronged; nevertheless, having overlooked some of the more valuable truths of the Christian system, they miss the value of their

experience and deprive themselves of a blessing.

This is especially true upon those occasions when they are experiencing the stresses and strains of false accusations. Someone either is, or has, falsely accused them—something has been said about them that isn't true, and they cannot see any value in it, but feel that something should be done about it. Though I am not denying that something should be done about it, that is, whenever something can be done about it, yet the greatest difficulty is to get the offended party to see that what they have interpreted as a disagreeable offense, is actually a disguised blessing.

When people say ugly things about you, if those things are not true, Jesus says: “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” – Matthew 5:11-12.

Jesus here shows that we cannot have fellowship with the prophets who were before us until we share with them the stresses and strains of false accusations. Need I remind you that Jesus suffered these emotional strains? We cannot know, nor are we qualified to teach, what are some of the richer blessings in Christ, until we have walked through like experiences with Him.

How can one speak with feeling, of the throbbing ache within the breast of Jesus? How can he share His reproaches, until he has sat under the lashing rebukes of false accusers, as Jesus did? After one has shared like sorrows with Him, then can he say: “Now, Lord, I know—I know now how you felt when you were wronged, and now with words of living power I can present your sorrows clearer to those who have shared them not with you, nor experienced with you your grief.

Therefore, though we should never rejoice over the fact that some men will condescend to carry a false report against us, or take up an ugly report about us, we should rejoice that God has allowed us to be the objects of their false testimony. It is a great honor for one to be falsely accused for Jesus' sake. Though I do not necessarily expect the worldly man to understand how suffering reproaches with Christ is a blessing, yet if these few words of mine will be a means of helping you, my brother—if they will but give to you a clearer concept of the value of suffering with Christ, then I shall be made happy; and my time in writing them down will not have been in vain.

Feature Three: Sandy's Women's Corner

“I WANT TO BE A LADY”

There is a young lady in our congregation that I taught in my four-year-old Bible class. She is graduating from high school this year. She is a beautiful young lady with a delightful personality, bright, and ready to go out into a new world.

When she was in my class, she was very mischievous, so much so that she sometimes spent a little time in the corner. She could be very disruptive. She wasn't really bad, just talkative and mischievous.

She was always dressed in pretty dresses, and her hair was perfectly fixed. She loved looking pretty, but she could sometimes be a tomboy.

I tried to explain to her that she was a pretty and smart little girl, and that she needed to act like a lady.

After several weeks of being disruptive in class, she came in one Sunday morning and announced, “I am going to be a lady from now on.” I

was surprised, but I shouldn't have been. This little girl surprised me every week with something.

Her announcement to not only me but to the class had everyone looking around to see what I was going to say. I told her I thought that was wonderful, and I certainly hoped she really meant it. Guess what? She did! From that Sunday until she left my class, she came in and behaved in an almost adult way. She didn't distract the other students. She said her memory verse. She answered questions, always raising her hand first. What a change!

I never knew what caused her to change. I would like to think that what I said to her made her do it, but who knows? All I know is that she became an ideal student.

Her mother told me about an incident that happened later in the year. They were in a restaurant having lunch. The little girl walked by a table where the server was placing a bottle of beer on the table. She looked up at her mother and said loudly enough for everyone at the table to hear, "That man is going to the bad place because he is drinking beer. We talked about that in my Bible class".

This "little lady" has now gone to meddling! But she was just stating a Bible principle, one that she had learned in Bible class and at home as well.

There are lessons to be learned from this little girl:

1. The truth is for everyone, even a 4-year-old.
2. Never underestimate the power of the gospel. If we present it, it will often fall on an open heart.
3. People can change. No matter how bad a person or what they have done, they can change.

4. Never give up on a soul. No matter how they have behaved in the past, no matter how they have received the truth before, keep using every opportunity to teach.
5. Teach with love. I truly loved this little girl. I think she knew it too. I still love her and wish her the best in life.
6. Children can teach. I don't know what the man in the restaurant thought about what this child said, but I doubt he forgot it. Children have a way of expressing the truth.

As this young lady goes off to school, I hope she will remember that she is a lady. She is also God's child.

Feature Four: Our Communication:

Tips for Effective Listening

- **Focus fully on the speaker**, his or her body language, and other nonverbal cues. If you're daydreaming, checking text messages, or doodling, you're almost certain to miss nonverbal cues in the conversation. If you find it hard to concentrate on some speakers, try repeating their words over in your head—it'll reinforce their message and help you stay focused.
- **Avoid interrupting** or trying to redirect the conversation to your concerns, by saying something like, "If you think that's bad, let me tell you what happened to me." Listening is not the same as waiting for your turn to talk. You can't concentrate on what someone's saying if you're forming what you're going to say next. Often, the speaker can read your facial expressions and know that your mind's elsewhere.

- **Avoid seeming judgmental.** In order to communicate effectively with someone, you don't have to like them or agree with their ideas, values, or opinions. However, you do need to set aside your judgment and withhold blame and criticism in order to fully understand a person. The most difficult communication, when successfully executed, can lead to the most unlikely and profound connection with someone.

Show your interest in what's being said. Nod occasionally, smile at the person, and make sure your posture is open and inviting. Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like "yes" or "uh huh." http://www.helpguide.org/mental/effective_communication_skills.htm

Feature Five: Bible Question

Is it ever permissible to speak of the building as the church?

Yes, one may metonymically speak of the building as the church; however, one errs seriously should he think the building is the church for which our Savior died. The building is not, and never can be, the church in that sense. In the sense that we sometimes speak of a delicious *dish*, having in mind the *food* served in the dish; or the *cup*, having in mind the *contents* of the cup; only in this sense are we ever justified in speaking of the building as the church. However, to speak of it in this sense is permissible.

Humor:

After a church service on Sunday morning, a young boy suddenly announced to his mother, "Mom, I've decided to become a minister when I grow up."

"That's okay with us, but what made you decide that?"

"Well," said the little boy, "I have to go to church on Sunday anyway, and I figure it will be more fun to stand up and yell, than to sit and listen."

In Closing:

One of my cousins, Dean Oliver, sent me this note following the January edition: "Bob ... for those who may want (or need) further comments regarding the use of instrumental music ... and ... who may want the comments of others outside of our fellowship ... all they need do is Google "Instrumental music in the first century church." There are numerous "early church fathers," who, though we would part with them on other issues .. soundly support the total avoidance of any mechanical instruments in worship. It only adds further proof that that first century church did not include the use of instrumental music in their services. Your cuz Dean." Good thoughts, Dean.

I was advised that someone attacked the web page the back lessons are on. It will take a while to get them back, but this is the web page where they will be found (when restored.) I trust all is going well with you.

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