

Taste and See Part II

Dave Hunt

Last month we noted David's enthusiastic exhortation, "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him" (Ps 34:8). When David wrote this psalm, he was a fugitive from King Saul, who was searching with an army to kill him. Yet his heart was filled with rejoicing as he continued to trust and praise God. How was that possible under such circumstances?

Taste God! Is that what gives faith to trust Him? What did David mean?

Clearly, he was not referring to taste buds in the mouth, much less to physically eating God, who is a Spirit (Jn 4:24).

Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 to Satan in His temptation: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Mt 4:4). Obviously, He didn't mean that God has a literal mouth. Though conveyed by means of something physical, words themselves are not physical. Eating the pages of the Bible would not bring the truth written thereon into the heart—it would only cause indigestion in the stomach.

Neither David nor Jesus was denying (as do Christian Science and other Mind Science cults, Hinduism, New Ageism, etc.) the reality of the physical world. They were not teaching that our minds create our circumstances. They were using material things as illustrations in order to lead us into spiritual reality. How else can God convey spiritual truth to us when all we know is the observable universe? And therein we have a problem.

We must take care not to make the mistake of Nicodemus. When told that he had to be "born again" to enter heaven, this astute rabbi thought Christ was referring to biological birth. Incredulous, he demanded, "How can a man...enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (Jn 3:3,4).

Jesus replied, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things?" (Jn 3:12). As long as we remain in these bodies, descriptions of familiar physical things provide the only language available for teaching heavenly things that we do not yet know.

What does it mean to "taste" God? Of course, David was not speaking of anything physical being ingested into our stomachs! "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24). David could only have been using a physical illustration to refer to something spiritual: a deepening appreciation of God in the process of worshipping Him in spirit and in truth as Jesus said we must.

Yet literally chewing and swallowing the paper pages of Scripture would be no more absurd than imagining one was chewing and swallowing the literal body and blood of Christ at a Roman Catholic Mass. Although Jesus said, "He that eateth me...shall live by me" (Jn 6:57), Catholicism teaches that He meant eating His physical body and drinking His physical blood. So the priest, by the magic of "transubstantiation," supposedly turns a wafer and wine

How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Psalm 119:103

into the literal body and blood, soul, spirit, and divinity of Christ—which misses entirely what Christ meant.

The wafer (supposedly now "God") is worshiped and then eaten! A large wafer is put in a monstrance and paraded before worshipping crowds, then left on display in a church for the faithful to bow before it and spend time "in Christ's presence"! Sadly, those who thus grasp at the physical rob themselves of the spiritual truth and blessing Christ intends.

And what about non-Catholics by the millions who also fail to realize the joy and strength of the spiritual truth the Word of God conveys? Dutifully attending church on Sunday morning is all they know of God, while His Word lies neglected much if not all of the week and is rarely meditated upon in the heart. May David's challenge move us deeply, and may we enter into what he meant: "O taste and see that the Lord is good!"

Worship is not a repetitious exercise of rituals and formulas. These create a veil that actually prevents us from enjoying the presence of the Lord. Worship is the heart

poured out in gratitude and awe, expressing our appreciation of who He is and what He has done for us by His grace through Jesus Christ.

David said, "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps 16:11). That is not the pleasure and joy of this world but of heaven. Those who love this world and feed upon its pitiful attempts at satisfying human longings would be uncomfortable in heaven and would not consider it a place of pleasure and joy at all.

We cannot "taste and see that the LORD is good" without having a taste for Him. A taste for God, as for anything else, must be developed. How? By an act of the will, we begin with obedience to the very first command: "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Dt 6:5; Mt 22:37; Mk 12:30; Lk 10:27). How can we do this?

We follow God's instructions: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" (Dt 6:6-9; 30:6, 16-20).

With "*all* thine heart...*all* thy soul...*all* thy might," leaves nothing for any competitors for my affections. May I not love my wife, my children? Yes. Every love is legitimate that is in harmony with my love for God; every affection is blessed that deepens my love for Him; every pursuit into which I invest my strength is to His glory that is in harmony with God's will. My life and that of my family is to revolve around my love for God, and His Word is to be the subject of our conversation continually. What a glorious life!

David didn't develop his taste for the Lord in a day. He fed upon the Word of God until to him God's "judgments" (i.e., His statutes) were "Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Ps 19:10).

The quotables this month are from authors who lived in past centuries. One stands in awe of some of these writers. How did they develop such a deep understanding and appreciation, such an

appetite for God and His Word, that most Christians lack today? They invested time, effort, and devotion in communion with God and in meditating deeply upon His Word—time that few are willing to invest today because loving God is not high on their list of priorities.

God did not promise to reveal Himself to the casually curious but to those who would seek Him with “all [their] heart” (Jer 29:13). Jeremiah said, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart...” (Jer 15:16). Sadly, the actual words God spoke are no longer palatable to many of those who call themselves Christians. Indeed, few today know what the genuine Word of God tastes like.

We are raising a generation on the spiritual junk food of religious videos, movies, youth entertainment, and comic book paraphrases of the Bible. The Word of God is being rewritten, watered down, illustrated, and dramatized in order to cater to the taste of the carnal mind. That only leads further into the wilderness of doubt and confusion.

We are being led away from the Word of God (upon which, by faith, we must feed) through “dynamic equivalency” paraphrases, supposedly more easily digested “translations” such as *The Message* by Eugene Peterson (to which we’ve referred in the past) that cast aside the sacred words from God’s mouth and put men’s words in their place. Nelson Publishing’s *Revolve Bible* for teenage girls is designed like a fashion magazine, because the real Bible is “too big and freaky looking.” Not to lose a lucrative market, Zondervan created *True Images* for teen girls and *Revolution* for teenage boys.

Retreating even further from the pure written Word that came from God’s mouth, “Christian” movies claim to make the Bible more interesting and dynamic by having it acted out on the screen (including actors playing the part of Christ himself and thus pretending to be “God manifest in the flesh”). The words that “proceed from the mouth of God” are being trashed, and in their place we are being given words that proceed from men’s minds. How can we check the validity of what is being taught in the church today? The Bereans checked Paul’s message by searching the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11)—but those are being taken from us and the words of men put in their place.

When David referred to God’s Word as “Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (Ps 19:10), what did he mean? The Bible is literally filled with such metaphorical expressions, none of which is intended to be taken literally but spiritually. This is true from Genesis to Revelation, with

a consistency from different authors both in the method and message that furnishes overwhelming proof of the Bible’s divine origin.

When the Psalmist said, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path,” he meant neither a physical light nor a physical path. “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God” (Ps 42:1,2). Surely the Psalmist does not mean that literal water such as a deer drinks would quench the thirst of the soul. He is referring to a spiritual drinking of God by faith—a deepening appreciation of God through meditation upon His written word and communion in the Holy Spirit.

Christ told the woman at the well, “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst...” (John 4:13,14). Obviously, the “water” Christ gives has nothing to do with quenching physical thirst—nor is it to be sprinkled upon anyone, but we are to *drink* it. It would do no good for a priest to “bless” physical water and call it “holy water.” Holiness is a spiritual reality

For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see...

Matthew 13:17

to which the physical can never attain: the two exist in different realms.

Unquestionably, the term “drink” shows human responsibility. Almost the last words by Christ in Scripture were, “And whosoever will...take the water of life freely” (Rv 22:17). He provides the water of life; we must drink it. Are you and I *drinking* of God and of Christ moment by moment? Can we say with the Psalmist, “so panteth my soul after thee, O God”?

O taste and see! This is David’s cry under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to all of us. He tasted and wanted us to enter into the same “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” That this truth receives no help from an artist’s rendering of “Christ” or an actor “playing” Jesus in a religious movie is made more than clear: “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pt 1:8). Jesus told Thomas, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (Jn 20:29). We are literally being robbed of this Christ-promised blessing when well-meaning artists paint pictures of “Jesus”

and actors attempt to portray Him on the screen.

When Scripture declares, “But we see Jesus” (Heb 2:9), it does not refer to earthly portrayals. “Having not seen” with our physical eyes, but looking with the eyes of faith, we adore Him and become more and more like Him: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18). Yes, it takes much time to meditate upon God’s Word and to commune in prayer with Christ and feed upon “the living bread” (Jn 6:51). And the more time we spend in this pursuit, the sweeter He will be to our taste.

How did David know that in God’s presence is “fulness of joy and...pleasures for evermore” (Ps 16:11)? Had he already been to heaven? God had become so real and precious to David that his passion was, “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple...I will offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing...praises unto the

LORD” (Ps 27:4-6). Of course, he did not mean an earthly house or temple such as Solomon would build, nor did he mean a physical beauty of the Lord.

But wouldn’t it have helped David to have some great artist’s rendering that supposedly resembled God to look upon? No! Such idolatry would have led him astray and is an abomination, because God is a Spirit and has no physical form. Thus, any attempt at physical depiction is forbidden.

Yet it is an established custom in the Roman Catholic Church and even among the vast majority of evangelicals to have “pictures” of God “manifest in the flesh [Christ]” (1 Tm 3:16) painted by famous artists—pictures that don’t even look alike, are pure speculation, and thus could only be misleading. Furthermore, such pictures attempt to depict Christ as He looked before His crucifixion and resurrection, whereas He doesn’t look like that anymore but as He appeared to John (Rv 1:12-18). Indeed, Paul declared, “Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more” (2 Cor 5:16).

David explains in this psalm what it means to taste and see that the Lord is good. We seek Him, look to Him, and cry to Him in our need, and we trust Him no matter how impossible the situation or how deep the valley of testing. Thus we experience the intimacy of His loving care, protection, and provision, causing His praise to be continually on our lips.

TBC

Quotable

I have sought to follow the Laws of Evidence as applied to documents in our courts of law.... I hold...that the evidence of manuscripts and versions and of the Egyptian, Babylonian and other documents outside the Bible confirms the *prima facie* evidence of the Biblical documents...both as to text and meaning; and that this text and meaning cannot be...changed simply [by] the opinions of men of our generation.... I contend that our text of the Old Testament...is what it purports to be and what Christ and the apostles thought it to be...the Word of God and the infallible rule of faith and practice.

Robert Dick Wilson, A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament (1926), Professor of Semitic Philology, Princeton Theological Seminary, fluent in over 40 Semitic languages, one of the greatest scholars of all time, pp. 6-7

I could not look at any good thing between the earth and skies, which man might not trample on....If the Creator does not depart from his usual method, he will not compel me to receive any favor [but] leave it possible for me to turn away from...*the offer of heaven*...from everlasting joys....[In] whatever direction I looked, common-sense, reason, and reflection pronounced a solemn amen to every doctrine taught in that fearful and precious book [the Bible]....

There is no unkindness in the call, if I am invited to think of a habitation...exceedingly beautiful, where death can never enter, and where the tear-drop was never seen,...a world where want was never known,...the song is always singing.... I am not unwise if I ask, "How am I to get there?"

If I am told that those who desire this prize are directed to express their wishes for it to One who can hear the lowest whisper, I cannot say there is any great difficulty in such an undertaking.

If I am told that this Hearer of requests once became MAN, and that all...I have done wrong...he bore in his own body on the tree, that I may escape suffering, I can never say the offer is not a kind one. If all are invited to apply, I am included in the number.

David Nelson, M.D., The Cause and Cure of Infidelity (1841), pp. 392-94

[For quotes like the above, see TBC Extra Page]

Q&A

Question: How can we know what God says without hearing through a human source? How can I know I am really hearing from God and not from a man or from my own imagination?

Answer: You ask one of the most important questions there is, yet it is one to which most people give little thought because they are willing to take the word of some man or church or cult that claims to be speaking for God. You dare not trust your eternal destiny to someone who claims to be God's mouth-piece, no matter how sincere he seems to be and no matter how large or ancient the church that gives him his authority.

The question you must ask yourself is whether you really want to hear from God, even if He says something you don't like. Many people claim to be seeking God, but they are not seeking the true God, who will tell them where they are wrong, but a "god" who will tell them what they want to hear and give them their desires.

The Bible claims repeatedly to be the Word of God. We have given proof for that fact in this newsletter many times and in many ways. We would be happy to send you copies of those proofs. Contact us and we will help you: by phone at (800) 937-6638, or at our web site, www.thebereancall.org.

God promises, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13). Seek Him with all your heart (this is the most important search you could ever undertake) and He will reveal Himself to you in His Word and in your heart and conscience. You need have no doubt on this issue.

We recommend that you start your Bible study with John's gospel and continue on through Acts and Romans, then go to Genesis and carry on. God expects you to study His Word diligently. Of course, you have every reason to do so. Your eternal destiny depends upon knowing Him and believing on Christ who paid the penalty for your sins. My latest book, *Seeking and Finding God* (see Resource Pages), deals with the very question you have asked. You may find it helpful.

Question: In the June Q&A in dealing with homosexuality, you stated, "Adam is the only one created in God's image." Yet 1 Cor 11:7 states, "For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God...." This does not negate your statement, but it probably needs some more explanation....

Answer: Adam was definitely created in the image and likeness of God: "And God

said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him..." (Gn 1:26,27). There is an interesting change of pronouns that reflects the trinity: from "us... our...our" to "his." There is both plurality and singularity in the God-head: three persons, one God.

Adam and Eve, of course, were the only people created, period. Their children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, et al., and all the rest of mankind were not "created" by God but were begotten of parents through natural processes that God created for perpetuating the race, just as with animals. We come into the world by normal birth, not directly by God's creative act as was the case with Adam.

We are dying beings from the moment of our birth, with disease already in our bodies and many imperfections. We cannot say that we are the same men and women as God created Adam and Eve to be.

Moreover, we are spiritually dead from birth, meaning that our spirits are dead to God, not indwelt by the Spirit of God as were Adam and Eve. They were created by God. We can be recreated by simple faith in Christ.

Question: You said that Jesus had no blood in His resurrected body. But He has flesh and bones. The Bible says that the life of the flesh is in the blood, so how can He have flesh without blood? Don't bones make blood for the body? Also, He ate food. What would be the purpose of food with no blood to pick up the nutrition?

Answer: Yes, Christ has a body of "flesh and bones" (Lk 24:39), but there is no blood in His body, because it was all poured out for sin upon the cross. The rest of the very verse you quote declares that fact: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lv 17:11).

The life of the natural flesh was in the blood, but that body is transformed in resurrection: "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (1 Cor 15:44). The old flesh that gives us such trouble will be no more after the resurrection, but we will have "spiritual" bodies like Christ's. We couldn't die if we wanted to!

Christ now lives in "the power of an endless life" (Heb 7:16), and "being raised from the dead dieth no more" (Rom 6:9). So it will be with us, for we shall be "in the likeness of his resurrection" (Rom 6:5).

The old creation is done away in Christ and we are a new creation: "...if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Cor 5:17).

Christ told Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side...” (Jn 20:27). If Christ had blood in His body He would be bleeding from five wounds. There must be a gaping hole in His side for Thomas to have been able to thrust his hand into it! Forever He will bear the marks of Calvary as a constant reminder of the cost of our salvation.

Yes, Christ ate “a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb” (Lk 24:42,43)—not because He was hungry or needed to eat in order to stay alive and have energy, but to show the frightened disciples that He was not a ghost as they imagined. We do not know how a “spiritual body” functions—it can walk through walls and instantly transfer itself from place to place to place. But there is no need of food to nourish bodies that cannot die.

Question: You stated (TBC, May '04) that the Hebrew noun *chabburah*...is singular in Isaiah 53:5, indicating one blow from God....” I pointed out to you that this very word is unmistakably plural in the Hebrew, which means that both your statement and the inferences you drew from it are false....You are very quick to point out errors of scriptural fact to others. If you are unwilling to retract an obvious and provable error which has certain theological consequences possibly uncomfortable to you, I cannot see that you are in a different category from the dozen or so “teachers” I have already left with my sandal dust on their wingtip shoes. A cover-all, “We’re not perfect,” is not sufficient when you have misled people on a matter of fact. Please either retract your error publicly, prove to me that I am in error, or remove us from your mailing list. He that is not faithful in little things may not be trusted to be faithful in much.

Answer: I know nothing about Hebrew. My comment was based upon the word of someone who I presume does know Hebrew, John MacArthur. You will find this statement re Isaiah 53:5 on p. 1038 of his *The MacArthur Study Bible*: “by his stripes we are healed. The stripe (the Hebrew noun is singular) that caused His death has brought salvation to those for whose sins He died [a Calvinistic statement, by the way, indicating that Christ did not die for the sins of the world, but only for the sins of the elect predestined to salvation]....”

Let’s assume that MacArthur in his study Bible is wrong and that *chabburah* is plural, meaning a number of blows. That would not change the fact that the bruising that effected our salvation was from God,

not from men. The context is clear. Verse 4 contains the clause, “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” Verse 5 declares that He was “wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities....” Verse 5 itself declares that the wounding, bruising, chastisement, and “stripes” were for our sins and effected forgiveness and peace with God. A beating from men could never do that. Verse 6 explains that this wounding and bruising was because “the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Verse 7 refers to what *men* did. It is clear that He was stricken “for the transgression of my people” (v. 8)—again, something man could not do. Verse 9 refers to His burial, and verse 10 clearly says that “it pleased the LORD to bruise him,” and that the Lord made “his soul an offering for sin.” Verse 11 refers to the “travail of his soul,” obviously because of his soul being made “an offering for sin.” And verse 12 again declares that “he bare the sin of many.”

Clearly, the entire context of Isaiah 53 is about God punishing Christ spiritually for the sins of the world. Surely Peter gives the proper interpretation of Isaiah 53:5, when in quoting “by whose stripes ye were healed,” he explains, “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Pt 2:24). Christ was not bearing the sins of the world when men were scourging Him. It was only when God laid our sins upon Him and made His soul an offering for sin that the penalty for the sins of the world was paid – and that was on the cross. Christ did not receive blows from men on the cross, but from God for our sins, which is why He cried out in agony, “My God, my God! Why hast thou forsaken me?” (Ps 22:1; Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34).

So I was mistaken in putting too much emphasis upon MacArthur’s view that *chabburah* is singular in Isaiah 53:5. But it doesn’t matter. The blows, single or plural, by which we are healed of our sin’s penalty, were clearly from God and not from men. It is neither biblical nor rational that sinful Roman soldiers could possibly mete out God’s righteous judgment in holy wrath for sin. Much less could physical punishment at the hands of men possibly pay the infinite penalty for sin that billions of sinners would otherwise endure for eternity in the lake of fire.

News Alert

CHRISTIAN COALITION HEAD MOVES TO CATHOLICISM (AP, 5/24/04): As president of the Christian Coalition of Alabama, John Giles is no stranger to a pew. Yet he remembers well the time he got lost in a Roman Catholic church. “I couldn’t even follow the order of service, it was so foreign to me,” Giles says of that day some six years ago.

Since then he’s found his way and a new home in the Roman Catholic church—a home that might seem foreign to the overwhelmingly Protestant church population of Alabama.

“I have to admit to you that the whole time that I was in that church service, I was reduced to tears, and I couldn’t explain it,” Giles said Monday in an interview with The Associated Press. Giles and his wife, Deborah, were confirmed at St. Peter’s Parish in Montgomery on Easter Sunday. Once he visited the Roman Catholic church, he found himself in awe of its history and ritual, particularly its use of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch in each service. And the deeper he looked into the faith—which is the largest in the United States but lags behind Southern Baptists and other Protestant denominations in the South—the more he says he realized that many of his beliefs about Catholicism had been wrong.

“There is a perception among Protestants—you kind of have this perception that if you’re Episcopal or Catholic, you’re not even saved, you’re not born again, which is totally a myth,” he says.

He recalls one example from the New Year’s holiday, which he spent in Florida with the chairman of his board. He had told the chairman of his and Deborah’s plans to convert, and he says they were well-received.

“But we went to some other friends of theirs’ house on one of the nights we were down there,” Giles remembers. “And so we’re sitting around visiting and this one lady was teaching a Sunday School class on cults. And she began to name off all the cults that she’d be teaching and named Catholic in there.”

He acknowledges that the reaction by his Protestant constituents may be mixed. But he hopes they, like he and his wife, will keep an open mind.

“We hope that we could have a small contribution to building bridges where there weren’t bridges,” he says. “Because Christians are Christians. There’s no such thing as Christians and Catholics.”

[TBC: The Catholic Church teaches that a person must be baptized and become good enough to enter heaven. That is supposedly accomplished by receiving the Sacraments here on earth and being purged from one’s sins in purgatory after death. But the Bible declares that no one can ever be good enough to merit heaven. Salvation, it states, is a gift of God that can only be received by grace through faith alone. Trusting completely in Christ’s full payment for our sins is humanity’s only hope for eternal life. Sadly, ecumenical entities such as the “Christian” Coalition seem to favor political expediency over biblical truth.]

Dave's Itinerary

Sep. 24-25	Olive Tree Ministries & Jan Markell Arden Hills MN (763) 493-3010 www.olivetreeviews.org
Sep. 29- Oct. 1	Winnipeg Prophecy Conference Winnipeg MB Canada (204) 888-7270 www.wpgpc.com (for details)
Oct. 3	Berean Baptist Church Winnipeg MB Canada (204) 837-3699
Oct. 9-14	Calvary Gospel Chapel Southampton, Bermuda 44-1-234-3250
Oct. 20-28 20-23 25-28 29-30	Congresso Chamada Brazil Pocos de Caldas Campina Grande Natal/RN 011 55 (51) 3241-5050 from the USA 0300 789-5152 only in Brazil www.Chamada.com.br
Nov. 5-7	Shenandoah Valley Baptist Church Stephens City VA (540) 868-4023
Nov. 10-15	Vienna, Austria 011 43-1-2853153 011 43-1-87893721

Letters

Dear Dave and Friends at Berean Call,

We left a mega-church after 19 years of membership and leadership because we could no longer tolerate the marketing, the programs, and seeker-friendly/sensitive atmosphere, notwithstanding our many meetings and conversations with the pastor and other associates. At one time there were 20 ministers on staff, each with a different ministry, office and staff....Dave, what are true Christians to do? Many looking for true Bible-trusting fellowship are out here grieving at a church gone astray. CL (CA)

Dear T. A. McMahon,

Every one of the blinded and emotionally moved "Christians" for the Gibson film *The Passion [of the Christ]* should read your book [*Showtime for the Sheep?*]. You describe and evaluate each of the film's flaws in a most accurate way, and I want to thank you for having had the courage to write it down and make it a public tool. Finally, I thought, someone has the insight a disciple of Christ should have! AW (GA)

To those who faithfully serve,

I think often of the video you all have expressed effort and desire to make concerning psychology. May the Lord continue to give you wisdom and discernment to speak as you ought, to clearly communicate His truth in the dense fog in many minds and hearts. We listen to little [of] "pop"

Christian radio, but have listened recently, and I was amazed at how blatant and intermingled self-esteem and [self-]worth were, in both song and many messages. It grieves me to think that so many "young" and immature in the faith are feeding on this worldly "manna." FH (WI)

Dear Dave,

Calvinism is sweeping the country.... My Calvinist friends sing praises to God for electing them to go to heaven. My non-Calvinist friends sing praises to God for His free gift of eternal life to whosoever believeth in the perfect, finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ and receives His substitutionary atonement as full payment for the penalty of their sin. The Calvinist says, "I'm going to heaven because God *chose me*." The non-Calvinist says, "I'm going to heaven because God's Son *redeemed me*." MP (MN)

Dear Berean Call staff,

Thank you for your May newsletter, "Showtime for the Sheep?" by T. A. McMahon. It was a welcome and helpful brief warning of the many scriptural errors set in and around the production of the film. As you have stated, though, it can certainly be turned for good in lovingly evangelizing the truth by weighing the Word against the erroneous trappings of this film. I would also like to extend my appreciation for the access to all the newsletters on the web.... They are a valuable tool in supporting fundamental biblical studies, and great comfort for the readers in knowing that we are not alone in the belief and practice of the pure and unadulterated Word of God. HG (Australia)

Dear Brothers in Christ,

Our pastor started to talk about "Forty days of purpose" and said he would start this program in ten weeks. After that, every sermon was geared toward this. In my spirit, I felt something was wrong, but didn't know what it was. As I prayed and asked God for discernment concerning this, your February newsletter, "The Vanishing Gospel," came. I knew immediately it was from the Lord.... Our pastor has taken the direction of being a "seeker friendly" church and our hearts are burdened for the congregation, which seems to enjoy this. Please know that your messages are needed. There is still a remnant that only wants God's will [but there are] so few churches that are preaching the true gospel. CB (PA)

Dear Brother in Christ,

I always read *The Berean Call* with great interest and appreciate your fight for the

purity of the Word of God. Most of the time I even agree with you. However, I wish at times that you would give your criticism of fellow Christians in a more loving way. The Satanic forces seem to be working frantically to keep people from accepting Christ, whether it is the reawakened Islam, the never-defeated Communism, our news media, or "Christians" who live obviously ungodly lives.... Ultimately, the Lord is our Judge. He knows our motives. If portraying Christ in a movie is a way to bring young people to salvation, or bringing young people to church services with a more modern beat, the Lord will judge the motive and the result. (I myself think that it's terrible what has happened to all the beautiful, harmonious music and meaningful words of the past. I call those boring, repetitious choruses "the dumbing of Christianity.") Anyway, please keep *TBC* coming. MK (SC)

TBC Notes Fall Back to the Bible

Typically, autumn is the season in which we go back to an endeavor we took time away from during the summer. Since that's the time our children go back to school, we too are often motivated along educational lines. Our encouragement is that you put such an inclination to work by joining a solid Bible study.

Many Bible studies, for example, get going again after a summer hiatus. If you're not currently involved in one, seek one out. But make sure that it's a real, verse-by-verse, Scripture-interpret-Scripture Bible study. As a sign of the times, perhaps, we're seeing Bible studies deteriorate into social gatherings, popular Christian book studies, "Purpose-Driven" programs, and a quagmire of feelings-oriented interpretations. If you can't find a good study, start your own with a few like-minded believers.

As we draw near to the return of Christ, the only safeguard against our being led away from sound doctrine and seduced by the growing apostasy is to abide in the Word of God.

T.A. McMahon
Executive Director

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Timely Words From Saints of the Past

There is a sentimental notion that makes us make ourselves out worse than we think we are, because we have a lurking suspicion that if we make ourselves out amazingly bad, someone will say, "Oh no, you are not as bad as that," but Jesus says we are worse. Our Lord never trusted any man, "for He knew what was in man"; but He was not a cynic for He had the profoundest confidence in what He could do for every man....

Oswald Chambers (1874-1917)

Much of our difficulty as seeking Christians stems from our unwillingness to take God as He is and adjust our lives accordingly. We insist upon trying to modify Him and to bring Him nearer to our own image. The flesh whimpers against the rigor of God's inexorable sentence and begs like Agag for a little mercy, a little indulgence of its carnal ways. It is no use. We can get a right start only by accepting God as He is and learning to love Him for what He is. As we go on to know Him better we shall find it a source of unspeakable joy that God is just what He is. Some of the most rapturous moments we know will be those we spend in reverent admiration of the Godhead. In those holy moments the very thought of change in Him will be too painful to endure.

A. W. Tozer (1897-1963)

It is God who gives repentance unto life, but we may say that repentance comes, like faith itself, by hearing the Word of God. Therefore man is responsible to heed that Word, to face it honestly, and thus allow it to do its own work in the heart and conscience. It is this that brings one to an end of himself and prepares the soul to trust alone in the finished work of Christ and so be saved by free, unmerited grace. To say that because a sinner, whether Jew or Gentile, is dead toward God, therefore he cannot repent, is to misunderstand the nature of that death. It is a judicial, not an actual, death. The unsaved man is identified with sinning Adam by nature and practice, and so is viewed by God as dead in trespasses and sins. He is spiritually dead, because sin has separated him from God. But actually he is a living, responsible creature to whom God addresses Himself as to a reasoning personality, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). An examination of the previous verses will show that these words of grace follow a very definite call to a change of attitude, to the bringing forth of works meet for repentance.

H. A. Ironside (1876-1951)

The Spirit of God never heals [except] He wounds; and if those seeking Christ have not peace, it is because there is still in them some remnant of fancied goodness.... There is a counterfeit Confession of Sin; let us beware of this counterfeit. We may be sure the sorrow is not deep if the sin be not subdued.... God kills to make alive. He smites men's consciences to make them judge themselves. The first great step when a man desires to be saved is unqualified self-condemnation. Sin unconfessed is imputed; but sin confessed is blotted out by God. The sinner, coming in the name of Jesus, has a *title* to life; the ground of that title is the very name and justice of God.

R. C. Chapman (1803-1902)

This new life in the people of God discovers itself by conviction.... The sinner is made to know and feel that the sin, which was his delight, is a more loathsome thing than a toad or serpent, and a greater evil than the plague or famine.... [Previously] he was wont to marvel... what harm it was for a man to take a little forbidden pleasure; he saw no such heinousness in it.... Now the case is altered, God hath opened his eyes to see the inexpressible vileness in sin.... This is the reason why affliction so frequently concurs in the work of conversion.... If a man made pleasure his god, whatsoever a roving eye, a curious ear, a greedy appetite, or a lustful heart could desire, and God should take these from him, or turn them into gall and wormwood; what a help is here to conviction!... Try if your... riches or pleasure can help you.... Can they... redeem your soul from everlasting flames? Cry aloud to them, and see now whether these will be to you instead of God and his Christ.... Now the sinner feels an insupportable burden upon him, and sees there is none but Christ can take it off.... Either he must have Christ to justify him, or be eternally condemned;... have Christ to save him, or burn in hell for ever.... After this deep conviction, the will discovers also its change. The sin, which the understanding pronounces evil, the will turns from with abhorrence.... Convinced also, that Christ alone is able and willing to make peace for him, he most affectionately accepts of Christ for Saviour and Lord.

Richard Baxter (1615-1691)

From the hour [George Müller] began to serve the Crucified One he entered more and more fully into the fellowship of His sufferings, seeking to be made conformable unto His death. He gave up fortune-seeking and fame-seeking; he cut loose from the world with its snares and joys; he tested even churchly traditions and customs by the word of God, and step by step conformed to the pattern showed in that word. Every such step was a new self-denial, but it was following *Him*. He chose voluntary poverty that others might be rich, and voluntary loss that others might have gain. His life was one long endeavour to bless others, to be the channel for conveying God's truth and love and grace to them.... To one who asked him the secret of his service he said: "There was a day when I died, *utterly died*;" and, as he spoke, he bent lower and lower until he almost touched the floor—"died to George Müller, his opinions, preferences, tastes and will—died to the world, its approval or censure—died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends—and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God."

A. T. Pierson (1837-1911),

writing about George Müller (1805-1898)

Things are wrong between the world and God. The world does not know Him. Its citizens do not love Him. They do not trust Him. They cannot stand before Him with acceptance. Their sins have separated them from God, and the guilt of sin is bearing them down to deeper sin and a dark eternal hell. But God has sent Jesus Christ to make this right.... [Christ] has taken upon Himself man's sins, man's obligations, man's wrongs against God. He has met the issue, and He has paid the penalty.... This is the gospel of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ.

A. B. Simpson (1843-1919)