

# The Sabbath Sentinel

July–August 2008



**A Child refugee of religious  
persecution in Darfour, Sudan  
(Proverbs 24:11)**

**BSA — The Bible Sabbath Association**

*Jesus said, "the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath"*

# The Sabbath Sentinel

July–August 2008 Volume 60, No. 4 Issue 532

## FEATURES

- 4 **Easy Pickings**  
by Kenneth Westby
- 5 **Are You Prepared for the Return?**  
by Brian Knowles
- 7 **Compromise**  
by Daniel Botkin
- 10 **God's Friend**  
by Terril D. Littrell
- 11 **Why Stay in a Difficult Marriage?**  
by Dawn Yrene
- 13 **Fix my Kid, II**  
by Al Menconi

## DEPARTMENTS

- 3 **Editorial: Warriors for God**
- 20 **When Prayers are not Answered**  
by Donald Mansell
- 21 **Sabbath Morning Companion**  
"Footnotes to the Ten Commandments"  
by Lenny Cacchio
- 22 **The Church in the World**
- 23 **Notices and Advertisements**

### Our Cover:

God tells us in Proverbs: "Deliver those who are being taken away to death, and those who are staggering to slaughter, oh hold them back" (24:11).

(Refugee child from Darfour, Sudan; Source: iStockPhotos.com)

*The Sabbath Sentinel* is published bimonthly by The Bible Sabbath Association, 802 N. W. 21<sup>st</sup> Ave., Battle Ground, WA 98604. Copyright © 2008, by The Bible Sabbath Association. Printed in the U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited. Nonprofit bulk rate postage paid at Rapid City, South Dakota.

**Editor:** Kenneth Ryland, tss\_editor@mac.com.

**Associate Editors:** Julia Benson & Shirley Nickels

**BSA's Board of Directors for 2007-2011:**

**President:** John Paul Howell, jphowell@cablespeed.com

**Vice President:** Marsha Basner

**Vice President:** June Narber

**Treasurer:** Bryan Burrell

**Secretary:** Calvin Burrell

**Office Manager:** Shirley Nickels

**Directors At Large:** Darrell Estep, Calvin Burrell, Bryan Burrell, Rico Cortes, John Guffey, Dusti Howell, Tom Justus, Earl Lewis, Kenneth Ryland

**Office Manager—Battle Ground, WA, Office:** Shirley Nickels

**Subscriptions:** Call (888) 687-5191 or write to: The Bible Sabbath Association, 802 N. W. 21<sup>st</sup> Ave., Battle Ground, WA 98604 or contact us at the office nearest you (see international addresses below). *The Sabbath Sentinel* is sent free of charge to all who request it. Your subscription is provided by the voluntary contributions of the membership of the The Bible Sabbath Association.

**Donations** are gratefully accepted and are tax deductible in the United States. Those who choose to voluntarily support this international work to promote the Sabbath and proclaim gospel of the kingdom of God are welcomed as contributors.

**Annual membership contributions:** regular membership \$25; Family Membership \$30; Life Membership \$500. All memberships include an annual subscription to *The Sabbath Sentinel*. Make all checks, drafts and money orders payable to *The Bible Sabbath Association*. (Visa and MasterCard accepted).

**The Bible Sabbath Association** is dedicated to promote the seventh day Sabbath. As a nonsectarian association for Sabbath-observing Christians, BSA accepts members who acknowledge Jesus Christ (Yahshua the Messiah) as their Savior, believe the Bible to be the Word of the Eternal, and uphold the seventh day Sabbath. BSA takes no official position on other theological issues, and publishes *The Sabbath Sentinel* as a forum to promote understanding and to share items of interest to Sabbath observing groups and individuals.

**Opinions expressed** in *The Sabbath Sentinel* are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Editorial Staff or of *The Bible Sabbath Association*.

**BSA Worldwide Web Site:** <http://www.biblesabbath.com>.

**Correspondence and manuscript submissions:** Address all inquiries to: Kenneth Ryland, c/o *The Sabbath Sentinel*, 802 N. W. 21<sup>st</sup> Ave., Battle Ground, WA 98604. Phone: (888) 687-5191, E-mail: tss\_editor@mac.com.

### International addresses:

**Australia:** Bible Sabbath Associates, Walter & Cindy Steensby, P.O. Box 4305, Hawker ACT 2614, Australia. E-mail: steensby@netspeed.com.au

**Sierra Leone:** The Bible Sabbath Association Sierra Leone, 326 Bai Bureh Road, Calabar, Town, P.O.BOX 289, Freetown, Sierra Leone

**Philippines:** Enrique M. Gabuyo, 398 Kinville Subdivision, Calamba Laguna 4027, Philippines, cogemg007@yahoo.com

**Nigeria:** Bassey Akpan, Nigeria BSA, P. O. Box 1277, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. E-mail: ycog1@yahoo.com

**Address Service Requested**

## Our Mailing Address

Bible Sabbath Association  
802 N.W. 21<sup>st</sup> Ave.  
Battle Ground, WA 98604.

### Ask for a FREE subscription to *The Sabbath Sentinel*

For orders and information, call (888) 687-5191.

For all other inquiries, dial (360) 687-1541.

E-mail us at [biblesabbath@comcast.net](mailto:biblesabbath@comcast.net).

Visit our Web site at [www.biblesabbath.org](http://www.biblesabbath.org).

# Warriors for God



I want to show you pictures, but it's too dangerous. They have repeatedly asked us not to take photographs. If the images fell into the wrong hands, pastors and family members could be killed. To guarantee the safety of everyone here, there is a very visible presence of armed police in and around the meeting hall at all times.

Welcome to the International Conference of Voice of the Martyrs. This year's conference is being held on the beautiful campus of Oklahoma Wesleyan University in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. My wife and I decided to attend this year's conference with two of our dearest friends, and I'm very glad we did. Seeing the pictures and videos of the realities of daily life for many Christians around the world is a real slap in the face — an eye-opener. Hearing the testimonies of believers on the front lines of this war we are engaged in against Satan and his hordes is truly a horrific revelation.

Far from being a morose atmosphere, there is a real joy here at witnessing second-hand what many experience first-hand on a daily basis. The Word of God is reaching people who have never heard the name of Jesus before, and it is transforming their lives. Christ is building His Church and the gates of hell are indeed not prevailing against it. Once Christ takes a hold of a person's life, He imbues that person with a Spirit that is fiercely loyal to the Savior—one that cannot be shaken by imprisonment, torture, rape, the burning of homes, loss of businesses or farms, or the loss of life of husbands, wives, or children. The triumph of faith in Christ in extreme circumstances may seem extraordinary to us in the West, but it is a daily necessity for Christians in many countries around the world.

### **The Life of Richard Wurmbrand**

Before I relate several of the testimonies we have heard, I should tell you a little about Voice of the Martyrs (VOM). VOM is an outgrowth of the work of Richard Wurmbrand. Wurmbrand was born in 1909 in Bucharest, Romania, the youngest of four boys in a Jewish family. Early on, after the death of his father, Richard was attracted to atheism and communism and secretly traveled to Moscow during his adolescence to study Marxism. Through some extraordinary circumstances he became a Christian in 1938 and subsequently joined the Anglican Mission to the Jews. He labored in his ministry throughout World War II until the Soviet Army occupied Romania and

outlawed church meetings. It was at that time in 1944 that Richard and others started their work in the underground church in Romania and surrounding communist countries. That work consisted of smuggling Bibles to believers, holding evangelistic meetings in secret locations, and baptizing new believers.

After World War II Romania became one of the most oppressive communist dictatorships the world had ever seen. Torture as well as physical and psychological experimentation on prisoners was commonplace. The Romanian secret police eventually got wind of Wurmbrand's activities and sought to catch him because he had become so effective in taking the Word of God to persecuted believers. During the communist period in Romania, Richard spent a total of 14 years in prison; three of those years were in solitary confinement. Yet each time Wurmbrand was released from prison, he would immediately go back to his work in the underground church.

Pastor Wurmbrand was released in 1956, after eight and a half years, and, although warned not to preach, resumed his work in the underground church. He was arrested again in 1959, and sentenced to 25 years. During his imprisonment, he was beaten and tortured repeatedly. Eventually, he was the recipient of an amnesty in 1964. Concerned with the possibility of further imprisonment, the Norwegian Mission to the Jews and the Hebrew Christian Alliance negotiated with the communist authorities for his release from Romania for \$10,000. He was convinced by underground church leaders to leave and become a voice for the persecuted church.

Wurmbrand traveled to Norway, England, and then the United States. He became known as the "The Voice of the Underground Church," doing much to publicize the persecution of Christians in communist countries. In 1967 Wurmbrand formed Jesus to the Communist World which was later renamed Voice of the Martyrs (ref. Wikipedia, article on "Richard Wurmbrand"). Wurmbrand's best known book is *Tortured for Christ*.

### **What the Presenters Told Us**

With that background in mind let me now tell you about a lady named Maria from Colombia. We heard Maria's story through an interpreter. Maria, her husband, Alberto, and their three children live in a part

*Continued on page 18*

# Easy Pickings



“Piece of Cake,” “Sitting Duck,” “Out Gunned,” “Pushover:” These and other phrases could be used to describe our weak, pathetic, and inferior position before the powerful Evil One.

*by Kenneth Westby*

If Satan is the god of this present age<sup>1</sup> and  
If he is a mighty spirit entity—a fallen high angel  
and  
If he is the great deceiver<sup>2</sup> and  
If he commands legions of other supernatural  
agents and  
If he is a cunning master liar<sup>3</sup> and  
If he is ancient and an experienced foe of God  
and  
If he powerfully opposes all that God stands for  
and  
If he has knowledge of God and his plan from an  
unique and extra human vantage point and  
If he is out to deceive<sup>4</sup> and destroy humanity —  
especially believers and  
If he goes about like a vicious lion seeking prey<sup>5</sup>  
and  
If he has studied your vulnerabilities and has  
methods<sup>6</sup> to exploit them and  
If he is the master tempter and knows our weak-  
nesses and....

If all the above is true, and I believe it is, how do we mere mortals stand a chance against such a formidable enemy? Do we as individual humans possess any innate power sufficient to defeat such a foe? In Martin Luther’s majestic hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” is this sobering line from the first verse:

*For still our ancient foe  
Doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and power are great,  
And armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.*

## God at War

Jesus didn’t casually consider that “ancient foe” of God and man. Jesus’ great temptation by the Prince of Darkness was a contest unparalleled in human history. His very ministry and life were at stake. He knew what powers he faced. He knew the Adversary’s purpose and cunning. He also knew that the battle was not his alone to wage; God was both his defense and offense in combat with the Enemy.

Jesus had read the account from the Book of Daniel<sup>7</sup> of a certain evil cosmic power, identified as the

Prince of Persia, who was able to delay—for three weeks!—an angel of God sent to answer Daniel’s prayer. God’s messenger, no doubt a high-ranking one, had gotten caught up in a fight by a determined enemy set on preventing Daniel from receiving God’s answer. Finally, the awesome Chief Prince of angels, Michael, was sent by God to engage in the mighty conflict of supernatural beings. That proved decisive and the delayed angel sped to Daniel to give him information from the Book of Truth.<sup>8</sup> His task finished, the angel told Daniel he must return to the ongoing battle with the Prince of Persia.

The Bible, from beginning to end, presupposes spiritual beings who exist “between” humanity and God and whose behavior significantly affects human existence, for better or worse. Such a conception lies at the center of the biblical worldview.<sup>9</sup> We war “against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12).

Some may mock the idea of there being a devil. To some he is but a cartoon character, a mere foil for morality plays and religious fables. To others he is simply a handy image for the dark corners of man’s nature. Still others are fascinated by the whole devil business and establish cults to worship Satan. C. S. Lewis observed,

*There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.<sup>10</sup>*

Jesus took seriously the reality of spiritual warfare knowing it had been raging since the Garden of Eden. He knew of his own self he could do nothing<sup>11</sup> and that he was no match for the Devil one-to-one.

*Continued on page 14*

# Are You Prepared for the Return?

by Brian Knowles



During the first forty of the fifty days between Passover and Pentecost, Jesus continued to instruct his disciples. Just before he ascended to heaven, Jesus told them they would soon be baptized (immersed) with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). He said that the power of the Holy Spirit would enable them to witness to him all over the world (Acts 1: 8).

Immediately after he said this, Jesus rose into the air and disappeared behind a cloud (Acts 1:9). The assembled group of 120 disciples (Acts 1:15) looked intently up into the sky trying to figure out where he had gone and perhaps when and whether he was coming back (Acts 1:1).

Suddenly two “men” (evidently angels) appeared before them with an explanation: “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go to heaven,” (Acts 1:11). So Jesus would return, and it would happen the same way he left. What we don’t know is when it will happen. Approximately 1,976 years have elapsed since the angels spoke those words and Jesus still has not returned.

## Prophecy Buffs Hold Forth

I’m not a prophecy buff, but there are many of them out there. Some of them claim to know almost exactly when the Lord will return. They base their prognostications and pontifications on a variety of calculations. I do not intend to enumerate here their diverse and often convoluted methodologies. Suffice it to say that most of us, if we’re honest, have no idea when Christ will again set foot on this earth; we just know that he will.

Nor do we have any real need to know precisely when Jesus will return. We do not need to understand the mechanics of his return. All we need to know is that when it’s His Father’s time, Jesus will show up (Matthew 24:36). Just as suddenly as he left, he will return. When he does, big things are going to happen (Zechariah 14:4 ff.). Our Lord will come to fulfill the parts of his divine commission he didn’t fulfill the first time around (cf. Luke 4:14-19 with Isaiah 61:1-2).

Jesus could return within the lifetimes of people reading this article. Or it may be another millennium before he arrives on the scene. The point is: every generation of Christians, from the time of the original apostles to the present, had or has a duty to live in a state of perpetual spiritual readiness at all times. If Jesus came tonight, would you feel that you are in the kind of spiritual state he would want to find you in?

So all this distills down to the issue of spiritual preparedness. In what ways did Jesus instruct us to prepare for his return?

## Avoiding Specific Deceptions

In one of the parts of the so-called “Olivet” prophecy that concerns the end times, Jesus said this: “... Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many... (Matthew 24:4).

Not a few, but many – will claim to be the Messiah, God’s Anointed One. Prior to the appearance of true Messiah, there will appear a plethora of false Messiahs. Jesus warned: “At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time.

“So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the desert,’ do not go out; or ‘Here he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east and is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man,” (Matthew 24:23-27).

One of the characteristics of false Messiahs is that they always seem to be “hidden” in secret caves or desert locations until a moment of “revealing.” Or they may reside in some obscure monastery high in the Himalayas. The appearance of false Messiahs is often accompanied by prophets, gurus and oracles who claim to have inside information about the prophesied figure that is soon to appear. Their job is to create a sense of expectation and anticipation.

Just about every major religion—including Christianity—is capable of producing a false Messiah.

When the only true Anointed One of God appears, he will be visible to all. His will not be a clandestine arrival but one that is as visible as lightning flashing across the sky. He left in clouds, he will return in clouds—and he expects his Church to be ready for him.

### **An Unwelcome Son**

When Jesus returns, the world will not welcome him. He said, *“At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they shall gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other,”* (Matthew 24:30-31).

Forget the mechanics of this event for a moment. The issue at hand is spiritual preparedness. Do you think Jesus true elect will “mourn” at his return? Of course not. Only the Lord’s enemies will mourn. They will realize the jig is up. The King has arrived. His people will rejoice — and only they will rejoice to see his coming. The Lord’s return signals the beginning of a much-needed new world order. All the kingdoms of this sad, sick, war-torn world will become the kingdoms of Christ (Revelation 11:15b). The rulers of the world’s murderous, corrupt kingdoms will not rejoice at the arrival of the One who will dethrone them, but the true people of God will rejoice.

### **Unexpected Arrival**

There is no doubt the Lord will return, but many passages of Scripture suggest that it will be at a time when people are not generally expecting it (Matthew 24:36-44). We are advised to “keep watch” and to “be ready” (verses 42 and 44).

Jesus then speaks of his “faithful servants” who will be found doing his work at the time of his return: *“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants of his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him so doing when he returns,”* (Matthew 24:45, 46).

What is being depicted here? Clearly Jesus has in mind the activities of the leadership of the Church. A wise servant will be found faithfully carrying out his duties to the Church. He will be “feeding the flock” with sufficient and nourishing spiritual food, as Jesus instructed Peter (John 21:15-17). And, what will that servant *not* be doing?

There is a temptation, because of the 1976 years that have elapsed since Jesus promised to return, to conclude that it’s not going to happen at all. To us, that’s a long time. To the Lord it is like a couple of

days (II Peter 3:8). Jesus addressed this issue: *“But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ and then he begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with the drunkards,”* (Matthew 24:48-49).

What the Lord is describing here is a servant who has forsaken his spiritual responsibilities and slipped back into the retrograde behavior of an unconverted person. His conduct degenerates. He’d rather party than serve the cause of Christ. He begins to abuse his brethren in the Church.

Peter, at some point, came to understand that the Lord might not return in his lifetime. He knew that some would be disturbed by this possibility. He addressed it in his second letter: *“First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” he has promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation,”* (II Peter 3:3-4).

The term “following their own evil desires” simply means doing what comes naturally — yielding to the evil inclination, to the *yetzer hara*. It means behaving as one did prior to conversion, lowering one’s standards and behaving carnally. Another way of saying it is “backsliding.”

It is natural to wonder why the Lord is taking so long to return. Peter suggests an explanation: *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance,”* (II Peter 3:9). The longer it takes the Lord to return, the more people have time to repent and get right with God. Once Jesus has returned, all bets will be off. Judgment will be at hand. That is what John the Baptist meant when he said that the Lord would “baptize” with fire (Matthew 3:11-12).

Perhaps then it is the mercy of God that delays the Lord’s coming. At the same time, the Lord is not limited by the boundaries of time as we are. He will not return one moment too soon, or too late. The vital thing for Christians is to live in ongoing anticipation of that event no matter when it occurs. It means being spiritually ready.

### **Summing Up Preparedness**

There are many other passages that can be brought to bear on this issue. Not the least of them is the parable of the ten virgins, given by Jesus right after his words about his return (Matthew 25:1-13). Of the ten virgins in the parable, only half of them were prepared to meet the Bridegroom. Again, the issue is spiritual preparedness.

---

*Continued on page 20*

# Compromise

by Dr. Daniel Botkin



Compromise can be good or bad, depending on the situation. It can be good when trying to make a decision that will satisfy everyone. For example, if your wife wants to spend three hours at the zoo and you want to spend only one hour there, you can compromise and spend two hours at the zoo. That way you will both be disappointed and miserable, but at least you will be equally disappointed and miserable. Compromise can be good when a buyer and a seller are haggling over the price of an item. If the seller wants \$300 but the buyer only wants to pay \$100, they can compromise and settle for a price of \$200. That way they will both feel like they were deprived of \$100.

So compromise can sometimes be a good thing. However, when God makes strong, sure demands — "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not" — compromise is out of the question. When Yahweh said to Pharaoh, "Let My people go," there was to be no compromise, no haggling over the details of this demand. Yet haggling is exactly what Pharaoh tried to do. Four times he tried to get Moses and Aaron to compromise the Lord's demand. When we look at the way Pharaoh tried to pressure Moses and Aaron to compromise, we can see a picture of how the world, the flesh, and the devil pressure us to compromise our faith and conform to the world.

The story of the Exodus is a story about a redeemer, Moses, taking God's people out of Egyptian slavery. It is a prophetic picture of the Gospel, which is the story about the Redeemer, Yeshua, taking God's people out of slavery to sin. Yahweh's demand to Pharaoh was "Let My people go, that they may serve Me." Because of our Redeemer's finished work of Redemption, His demand to Satan is "Let My people go, that they may no longer be conformed to the world, but transformed by the renewing of their minds."

Satan does not want to let God's people go, just as Pharaoh did not want to let God's people go. After Moses and Aaron's first demand for freedom, Pharaoh responded, "Who is Yahweh, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not Yahweh, neither will I let Israel go" (Ex. 5:2). But after four plagues — blood, frogs, lice, flies — Pharaoh was ready to

talk. However, Pharaoh thought he could haggle with Moses and Aaron over the details and work out some sort of a compromise.

## "Stay in Egypt"

"Go ye, sacrifice to your God," Pharaoh said, but then immediately added, "in the land," i.e., in the land of Egypt (Ex. 8:25). This is the same tactic Satan uses on God's people today.

"So," Satan says, "you wanna be religious, huh? Okay, you can be religious. But stay in the world; don't stop being worldly. Don't let yourself be different from the Egyptians around you. If you want to be religious, we'll accommodate you. We'll create a compartment for your religious life. We'll call it The Religious Compartment. You can go to church once or twice a week and get your religious itch scratched. Since you're a religion addict, you can go to church and get your religious fix. Just don't let your faith affect how you live at other times, outside of church. Keep your faith inside the four walls of the church. Stay in Egypt and be like the worldlings around you when you are outside of church."

The sad truth is that many church people are just religion addicts, and they do this very thing. As a result, they remain enslaved to Egypt. They are the lukewarm, worldly churchgoers who make Jesus puke. (See Revelation 3:16.)

## "Don't go very far"

Moses and Aaron refused Pharaoh's attempt to get them to stay and serve Yahweh in Egypt. So Pharaoh offered a second suggestion. "I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to Yahweh your God in the wilderness," Pharaoh said, "only ye shall not go very far away" (Ex. 8:28).

If you are determined to not be conformed to the world, Satan resorts to this same "Don't go too far" tactic. "Okay," Satan says, "so you don't want to be just a lukewarm, worldly churchling, or a churchly worldliness. You're determined to leave Egypt and not be conformed to the world. Okay, be a non-conformist if you must, but don't go very far. Stay close to Egypt. Don't be very different from the worldlings around you. If people think you're just a

little bit different because of a few external religious eccentricities, that's okay; just so long as they know that underneath it all you're pretty much like them, just one of the good ol' boys."

Those believers who agree to be pretty much like the worldlings around them are pretty much still enslaved to Egypt. They have refused to conform to the world in a few areas, but they are not aware (or they simply do not care) that they are still in bondage to the world in many other areas.

### "Ye that are men"

After a few more plagues - murrain, boils, hail - Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron. "Go, serve Yahweh your God," Pharaoh said, "but who are they that shall go?"

Moses and Aaron said that all the Israelites were going, even the women and children.

"Not so," Pharaoh replied. "Go now ye that are men, and serve Yahweh" (Ex. 10:11).

Like Pharaoh, Satan tries to persuade men to leave their wives and children in Egypt. "Okay, men," Satan says, "so you want to be religious fanatics. Okay, man, go ahead and make a fool of yourself. But for cryin' out loud, don't take your wife and kids down this path of non-conformity. If you're not gonna be conformed to the world, at least let them live like worldlings. Let them enjoy the carnal, worldly pleasures of Egypt. Don't deprive your wife and kids of fun because of your personal religious convictions. You don't have to participate in their worldly, pagan activities. You can just go in the next room and read your Bible while they decorate their Winter Solstice Nimrod Tree."

This is perhaps the most difficult compromise for men to resist. What loving husband and father wants to deprive his wife and children of fun activities? Sometimes certain fun activities are not kosher for believers, though. If an opportunity for a fun activity requires you or your wife or children to profane the Sabbath or to violate some other commandment of God, then that activity is not kosher, at least not at that time and under those circumstances.

A man who compromises his faith to please his wife and children is in effect agreeing to Pharaoh's demand to keep the women and children in Egypt. By allowing his wife and children to be conformed to the world, he is keeping his wife and children enslaved.

A man does not need to be (and should not be) a harsh, unsympathetic tyrant when dealing with world-conformity in his family. Sometimes certain

individuals need to be gradually weaned away from worldliness, especially when long-held habits and customs are involved. A man should be as gentle as possible but as firm as necessary.

Sometimes a man will have personal convictions which his wife and children do not share. How does the Lord expect the wife and children to respond to the wishes of the man of the house if they do not hold to those same convictions? This can be a difficult question to answer, because every case has details which are unique to that specific case. How strong is the man's conviction? How important is it to him? Is he willing to wait for his wife and children to come to the same conviction, or is it so important that they must conform to his wishes even if they do not yet share his conviction? How old are the children? How spiritually mature and spiritually receptive are the wife and children? Are the man's wishes for his family based on dear commandments written in the Scriptures, or does he expect his family to do things that the Bible does not specifically require?

In regards to that last question, I suspect that most people would say it is unrealistic for a man to expect his family to conform to his convictions if his convictions are not based on a Scriptural mandate. In other words, if a man forbids his family to do certain things, they should be things which God has forbidden in the Scriptures. If a man forbids things which God has not forbidden, he is expecting too much from his family. Or is he?

If you feel that way, I suggest you read about the Rechabites in Jeremiah 35. The Rechabites were a tribe of people descended from a man named Jonadab the son of Rechab. Jonadab commanded his sons, saying, "Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever; neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents" (Jer. 35:6f).

Five significant things about the Rechabites. First, Jonadab's personal convictions were not based on Scriptural commandments. Nowhere in the Torah does God forbid wine, houses, or farming, and He does not command us to dwell in tents all our days. Second, Jonadab commanded his sons to conform to his personal convictions. Third, he expected not only his own immediate sons but also his sons' sons "for ever" to live according to his convictions. Fourth, the Rechabites obeyed Jonadab: "Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; nor to build houses for us to dwell in; neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed. But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and

done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us" (Jer. 35:8-10). Fifth, and perhaps most significant, God commended and blessed the Rechabites for following their eccentric ancestor's unusual wishes: "And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel: Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: Therefore thus saith Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel: Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want [lack] a man to stand before Me for ever" (Jer. 35:18f).

So if a wife and/or children do not have the same convictions that the leader of the family has, they might want to consider the story of the Rechabites.

### **"Without your flocks and herds"**

After two more plagues - locusts and darkness - Pharaoh agreed to let the people go, even the women and children. "Only let your flocks and herds be stayed," Pharaoh said (Ex. 10:24). Moses and Aaron said no. They insisted that their flocks and herds go out of Egypt with them.

What is the spiritual parallel to this part of the story? What does this teach us about not conforming to the world? As a pastor, I can see the spiritual parallel to Pharaoh's suggested compromise. A pastor is a shepherd. So when I hear Pharaoh saying, "Go out of Egypt without your flocks and herds," I hear Satan saying, "Be a non-conformist if you want; go out of Egypt if you must, but don't take your flock, your local congregation, with you."

Just as Satan says to men, "Don't take your wife and kids down this path of non-conformity," he says to shepherds, "Don't take your flock down this path of non-conformity. Take your own wife and children with you if you must, but don't expect the other men in your congregation to drag their families down this path."

My response is the same as Moses' response to Pharaoh: "Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind" (Ex. 10:26). In other words, No child left behind!

### **The reason for suggesting compromise**

Moses was a man filled with and led by the Holy Spirit of God to bring freedom from Egyptian bondage. Pharaoh was a man filled with and led by the unholy spirit of Satan to keep God's people enslaved to Egypt. Your adversary the Devil wants to keep you enslaved to sin and conformed to the world. Your adversary uses the same tactics that he used when he

spoke through Pharaoh. He tries to get you to compromise and conform to the world, because world-conformity will prevent your transformation into the likeness and image of the Son of God.

The story of the Exodus describes the showdown between Yahweh and the gods of Egypt. A spiritual battle was raging in the heavens when Pharaoh tried to get Moses and Aaron to compromise. Now think for a moment about compromise in the context of war. When a war is going on or is about to erupt, if the leader of one of the armies wants to work out a compromise with his enemy, he wants to do so for one of two reasons. Either it's because he's compassionate and kind and wants to avoid unnecessary bloodshed and the loss of innocent lives, or it's because he knows he's no match for his opponent.

For which reason do you suppose Pharaoh wanted to work out a compromise? It certainly wasn't because he was a kind and compassionate guy! It was because he knew he was too weak to win the battle. Now think about your adversary the Devil. Why does Satan tempt you to compromise? Why is he willing to let you "be religious" provided you stay in Egypt, or at least close to Egypt, or, if you are determined to leave, at least go without your family or your flock? It's not because he's kind and compassionate. Satan tempts you to compromise for the same reason Pharaoh tempted Moses and Aaron to compromise, because he knows he is too weak to win the war. Satan knows he is no match for the Messiah who is in you, transforming you from glory to glory.

Moses and Aaron didn't need to even consider compromise as a possible option. Egypt was being sorely plagued, so there was no need to even consider compromise. Why agree to compromise when the enemy is on the run? Moses and Aaron knew they had Pharaoh on the run. I've got good news. Satan has been on the run ever since the Resurrection of Yeshua. Satan knows he is done for. So the next time Satan tempts you to compromise your faith, remind him (and yourself) that compromise is an act of desperation for losers, and not an option for an army that has its enemy on the run.

---

*Reprinted from Gates of Eden, March-April -2008, pp. 8-10. "Gates of Eden" is a bimonthly newsletter produced by Gates of Eden, a messianic Jewish ministry. Write to Gates of Eden, P.O. Box 2257, East Peoria, IL, 61611-0257. Gates of Eden is on the Internet at [www.gatesofeden.org](http://www.gatesofeden.org). This article was adapted from a 8-part teaching series, "Transformation or World Conformity," now available on CDs. Contact Gates of Eden for details on how to order.*

# God's Friend

## *His name was Moses*



**By Rev. Terril D. Littrell, Ph.D.**

Friendship with God is an image we all cherish, and in our hearts we hope to have more than just a symbolic description of our relationship. With our Creator. Is true friendship with God ever really possible, though? Friendship implies an equality and reciprocity between the people involved. What can a human being give to God?

The answer might be found in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, where we see God and Moses becoming friends and relating to each other in that easy manner intimates often show. There is an honesty in this relationship based on pure humility and profound trust, as well as courage and, gentle curiosity.

When Moses asks God's name, he takes the first step we all do when making friends: "What is your name?" Moses is not the only one to have asked God's name, but until this time, he is the only one to have received an answer *Yahweh*, "I Am Who Am With You."

Being *with* someone in heart and in spirit, moreover, is the truest definition of the special intimacy that friends enjoy. It does not necessarily depend on being together; nor, on the other hand, is it damaged by frequent visits. It means simply sharing a spirit—and God was willing to share with Moses.

The marvel of this exchange (and the hope for us) is that Moses was not perfect. He was timid, afraid to raise his voice lest someone notice his stutter. He could not have been a very convincing speaker: only with the help of ten plagues and an angel of death could he get the Israelites out of Egypt. And, once they got out, a journey that should have taken four weeks lasted, under Moses' leadership, 40 years. It was to Moses that God gave the Ten Commandments, but as we all know, he broke the first set.

This story shows us that our mistakes and inadequacies are never enough to prevent our having a relationship with God. Being right doesn't matter to a God who can redeem all of reality.

One of the truest proofs of the deep friendship between God and Moses is the easy manner in which they trade complaints. When the Israelites object to missing out on the food they had in Egypt, Moses reports their concern to God, who provides for them as usual. When those same people who taste the daily manna decide they want to worship a golden calf, *Yahweh* rages against them. And the job of placating God falls, naturally, to Moses. Throughout the desert journey, God and Moses continue to try each other's patience, and thereby come to know each other.

Scripture tells us that Moses erected a tent outside the camp and here he would speak to God "face to face as one would talk to a friend."

In one of the most powerful scenes ever recorded, Moses says to God, "Show me your glory, I beg you" (Exodus 33:18).

At this point Moses has become very intimate with *Yahweh*, and desires to know even more. He knows, however, that no one can look upon the face of God and live. So God, as we learn in Exodus, gently finds a way for Moses to come closer without being destroyed.

"*Yahweh* said, 'I will let my splendor pass in front of you and I will pronounce before you the name of *Yahweh*... here is a place beside me. You must stand on the rock and when my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and shield you with my hand when I pass by' " (Exodus 33:19-23).

There is tenderness here, and the kind of familiarity that exists between old friends. And it is the kind of moment that enables a special friendship to endure.

One passage describes a scene very close to Moses' moment of death. The prophet is old, and he is tired of mediating between God and the Israelites. One day Miriam and Aaron are speaking against Moses, and *Yahweh* overhears. What follows is a magnificent defense of one friend by another. *Yahweh* comes down in a pillar of cloud and angrily summons Miriam, Aaron, and Moses into the tent. There *Yahweh* reminds them that most prophets must have visions and dreams when they want to reach God, but "not so with Moses, because he is at home in the house of *Yahweh*, and when Moses wants to speak with *Yahweh*, he does so face to face, not in riddles." God demands to know where they got the nerve to treat the friend of *Yahweh* like this?

Miriam and Aaron probably thought twice before doing it again. If we could believe that God loves each of us that much, gossip might become obsolete.

At the end of the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses dies. He never does enter the Promised Land, but he is able to see it from a distance. The tone of this last passage is peaceful and powerful. In the traditional Jewish way of expressing death, the writer tells us that Moses is gathered to his people. Most of all, though, he is gathered to his God, his friend *Yahweh*.

---

*Reprinted from **Insight**, April 2008. Dr. Terril D. Littrell is a retired pastor with over forty years of experience in teaching and ministry. He and his wife Chloe live in Cleveland, Tennessee.*

# Why Stay in a Difficult Marriage?

Quiet miracles happen — even in the most tumultuous unions.

by Dawn Yrene

Divorce isn't the "unforgivable sin," my friend hinted, not so subtly. I had just expressed my deep remorse over marrying a man with whom I had little in common.

Kevin and I had been proof that opposites attract. He was the wild type — a tattooed, leather-clad biker. His first love had been his Harley until he met Christ six months before meeting me. To be honest, Jesus and Harley still vied for first place. His closet was filled with spare parts, and the motorcycle "herself" rested in the middle of his living room when not in use.

I, on the other hand, was a straight-laced evangelical who listened to Christian music, worked a Christian job, and spoke Christianese. I had my own idols, though; and at age twenty-six, marriage was becoming one of them.

We met at a Christian singles' retreat. When it was over, I had found a new friend in Kevin, but "that's all," I assured myself. We were too different ever to be more. When Kevin asked for my phone number, I was surprised. Our next outing was a rainy Fourth of July fishing trip. We returned soaked but with a pleasant memory. What little Kevin said was often about the Bible. As a baby Christian, he had a refreshing realness about him and brought fresh perspectives to life — especially my spiritual life. We began attending Bible study and praying together.

After a few months, he proposed. Despite the good memories we were making, we were also starting to disagree often. Illogically, I assured myself that marriage would make us "one" on children, spending, and many other significant differences between us.

## Till trials do us part?

Marriage only magnified our differences. Kevin began to take his eyes off Jesus, and my response to his changes did the same to me. We were looking to each other to fill the empty places only Christ can fill — a form of idolatry. We fought regularly. Though Kevin could say sweet things, he also knew how to make me feel low — even abused. I was surprised to see myself, the "good little Christian," becoming hateful and vengeful. I began pondering my friend's advice. What if I married the wrong person? Why stay married if it's all about

fighting? Why be unhappy when a simple divorce means freedom? After all, Christians aren't perfect.

Amid this, a still, small voice kept reminding me of what I had prayed shortly before meeting Kevin. "Lord, instead of looking for a man who fits my list of wants, give me to a man who needs me as his helper, as Adam needed Eve." Despite our differences, Kevin needed a helper, and the helper God had selected was me. And I needed Kevin — to balance me, challenge me, and cause me to trust God. Through the painful trials of marriage, God was purifying me, teaching me to obey even when it wasn't comfortable, and rewarding me in quiet ways only I could see.

## Good reasons

Fifteen years and five children later, my difficult marriage has brought happiness I never imagined and pain I never knew I could endure. Kevin has a growing relationship with Christ, as do I. Idolatry has been replaced by awe over God's forgiveness. Brokenness and thankfulness have replaced abusive language and

behavior. Answered prayer has turned a marriage that was an embarrassment to God's kingdom into a testimony of His power.

Kevin and I are still more like black and white than gray. We need Christ to hold us together. But our roller coaster ride has shown me that, contrary to worldly opinion, there are good reasons for staying in a difficult marriage. Here are some.

Learning to rejoice. Many situations make us feel trapped: nagging temptations, a tormented past, sickness, poverty, loneliness — or a troublesome marriage. The apostle Paul showed us what to do when there's no way out: While in prison, he worshipped God (Acts 16:25). Being bound to an incompatible spouse needn't stop us from thanking God, experiencing peace, and receiving His gifts daily. Divorcing my husband would have exchanged one prison for another: the trap of bitterness and unforgiveness. Could I, like Paul, rejoice in my prison cell?

**Better people.** Without suffering, who would we be? David lived a life of warfare, moving from one battle to the next. Yet David worshipped so joyfully that he ignited a revival throughout Israel. His son Solomon, in

---

In our marriage, the times forgiveness has been hardest have also been the times I have seen God's rewards in the most amazing ways.

---

contrast, received from his father a productive and peaceful kingdom. He enjoyed wealth, wisdom, and whatever he wanted. Yet Ecclesiastes suggests that Solomon's easy life led him to depression, cynicism, and weak faith.

**Strengthened prayer life.** God wants people to stay married, yet He hasn't made that road particularly easy. It's only by crying out to God in our inadequacy that difficult marriages can change and grow. Isaiah 64:4, 5 says:

No eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways.

With this incentive, I've learned to pray for everything from simple blessings at home to complicated requests, such as how to communicate so Kevin will understand. I've even learned to pray things I don't really want to pray, such as for me to recognize my sin and for God to change me into the wife Kevin needs. My marriage is undeniably better when I pray for my spouse.

**Lessons in forgiveness.** If there's one thing marriage has taught me, it's how to seek and grant forgiveness. Kevin, who had suffered through two divorces as an unbeliever, recently told me how freeing it is to ask forgiveness and receive it. In his previous marriages, the word forgiveness was never mentioned.

In our marriage, the times forgiveness has been hardest have also been the times I have seen God's rewards in the most amazing ways. When I truly forgive Kevin for hurts he regrets causing, his love for me grows. In the same way, I love him more when he sets me free from the debts I owe him.

Often it comes down to a simple choice: Will I hold on to bitterness, or will I love Jesus enough to put another person's needs before my own — even if that person has wounded me to the core? Will I be kind to a spouse who doesn't return my kindness, because the Lover of my soul asks me to, or will I bale out? If he is a gift from God — a part of my walk with Christ, someone who can test my love for God regularly — I will be able to forgive even when he seriously disappoints me.

**Death to self.** A difficult marriage can seem like a mistake, but it may not be. A spouse may be the best person to teach us to die to self (Mark 8:35). Males and females have different needs and wants when it comes to sex, communication — even TV preferences! In marriages where the list goes much further, including preferences in food (health vs. junk), holiday traditions, denominational affiliations, and cultural backgrounds, divorce may at times seem to be the right choice. But Proverbs 14:12 says that what seems right can lead to death. If we trust God, we can believe that divorce, while it may seem logical at times, would only destroy the good results God wants to produce in us.

**God's restoration.** Some couples divorce, saying it's impossible to love each other. But Jesus said, "All

things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27). Both Kevin and I have reached low points where it seemed we could never love each other again. Miraculously, our union has become such a team, such a friendship, and such a wonderful romance that we feel unworthy and amazed at God's ability to restore. Utter hatred can become passionate love when we submit those feelings to God and when obedience overrides the desire of the moment.

**Seeing the good.** Every situation and person has good and bad aspects we can choose to focus on. When I wanted our yard fenced, Kevin felt we couldn't afford it. I wanted protection for our kids. Finally, he put up a six-foot chain link fence — after I told him I didn't like chain link. Years later, looking at that fence, I can feel angry at my husband's choice, or I can thank God that Kevin sacrificed time, sweat, and money to keep our children safe. I can also remember that we often think we've communicated clearly, when our spouse heard a completely different message. Maybe Kevin didn't realize that chain link was that big a deal to me. Maybe it was on sale. Maybe he tuned out during that part of the conversation. When marriage is tough, there's still an opportunity to find my spouse's good qualities and thank God for them, despite the imperfections.

### Marriage by the Book

In an age when counselors tell us to get out of "poisonous relationships" and well-meaning friends say divorce is OK, I remember the words of an old, yet living Book. It's not really about marriage to a man but to the Bridegroom. If I love Him, I'll obey by loving my spouse. In doing that, I find — strangely — that my difficult marriage can become a delight. And while God doesn't promise that, He does ask if I am willing to die so I can find real life in losing mine. I admit such obedience doesn't come easily.

Thankfully, Kevin's Harley no longer resides in the living room. He sold it a year after we married to pay bills from our daughter's birth. Now we have a cat and five rowdy children in its place. Lately Kevin has been browsing the Internet for another motorcycle. I don't know what I'd do if he brought it into our living room. But with God's help, we've made it over enough hurdles that I hope we wouldn't let a little thing like that get in the way of a happy marriage. With all our differences, we make too good a team for that.

In fact, I've come to believe that differences and difficulties are a recipe for truly great marriages. Differences may make marital harmony more difficult to achieve. But when two people with varying strengths come together, wanting to obey God and allowing Him to be strong where they are weak, the marriage that results becomes a powerful force for good in this world and a great reason for unbelievers to believe.

---

*Reprinted from the Bible Advocate, June 2008 (http://cog7.org/BA/). Dawn Yrene writes from Tijeras, NM. Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.*

# Fix my Kid, II

I used to believe that one of the advantages of having daughters was that my clothes would be safe. After all, girls don't wear boys' clothes, do they? Girls wear dresses and ribbons and bows, right? Wrong! As my little girls grew up, all these assumptions were blown out of the water. My daughters rummaged through my socks drawer, my shirt drawers, and every other clothing drawer I had. They figured that if it fit or came close to fitting, it was fair game.

At first I thought it was cute, but I began to notice that some of my sweaters were missing. I couldn't find a T-shirt when I needed one. And worst of all, they were wearing out all my socks! I gave up complaining about the missing shirts, but I sure didn't want them wearing my socks outside, getting grass stains, or worse -- holes in the toes! This type of behavior was a mortal sin when I was growing up. My mother simply would not allow it, and neither would I. I was going to win this battle!

So every time I saw them wearing my socks without shoes, I made sure they knew I was upset! "Get back in here and put on your shoes!" became a mantra for me. Before long, nearly everything I said to my girls was about putting on their shoes or taking off my socks. I started to see them as the enemy whose purpose it was to drive me nuts by running around in stocking feet — my stockings on their feet!

Eventually, my daughters began to obey me -- out of fear. I was winning the battle for the socks ... but I was losing the war for my children. I evaluated my conversations with Ann and Allison and realized I was angry or disappointed with them the majority of the time. No wonder they didn't want to talk with me! I didn't want to be a spineless parent, but I also wanted to be able to have a loving relationship with my children.

However, I noticed that my daughters' behavior didn't seem to bother their mother. Why should it? They weren't her socks! But it was more than that. I noticed the girls were much more obedient to their mother. I noticed she was able to talk with them without getting upset. They even liked to be around her, while they barely put up with me. She was choosing her battles with our children ... and socks just weren't worth the fight.

After much prayer and thought, I came to the conclusion that a \$.79 pair of socks wasn't worth fighting over. So I bought a dozen pair of sweat socks with gray bottoms. I took the two-dozen

stained and holey ones, and dropped them on the floor between Ann and Allison's bedrooms. "Girls, these are your socks. If you want to play outside without shoes, that is up to you. You have more than ten pair each. When you ruin them, we will consider buying new ones. But these are mine," as I held up my new gray-bottomed socks.

From that day on, nothing more was ever mentioned about socks. I noticed that a lot of the "small stuff" no longer bothered me. I also noticed my daughters were less uptight around their dad. When I quit fighting them about socks, we began to talk and have fun. I really learned to enjoy them and they seemed to enjoy me.

I wish I had learned sooner that my children were more than projects to control, but were young girls who needed a dad who wouldn't "fight" with them over every issue. I have learned to pick my fights. How about you?

—Al Menconi

*Reprinted from "Perspectives," at OneNewsNow.com. Al Menconi is considered a leading expert on the influence of today's entertainment on the Christian family, and has written extensively on the entertainment media and Christian parenting. He founded Al Menconi Ministries in 1982. The ministry website houses one of the world's most extensive collections of video game reviews from a biblical worldview.*

## Christians on the Firing Line

*(OneNewsNow.com)* A Christian photographer, Elaine Huguenin, fined \$6,000 for refusing to photograph a homosexual "commitment ceremony" in New Mexico is taking that state's Human Rights Commission to court.

Jordan Lorence, senior counsel with the Alliance Defense Fund, which represents Huguenin, says the Commission's decision is being appealed to the New Mexico courts.

"We are appealing that because it's such a gross violation of the right of conscience protected by the First Amendment," he reiterates. "This commission in New Mexico is essentially coercing unwilling photographers to participate and put in a good light a ceremony that advocates same-sex 'marriage.' This is something the photographer cannot support," Lorence details.

Many have suggested that the photographer should have simply refused to work for the homosexual couple without voicing her opposition to their lifestyle, but Lorence disagrees.

"We should have the freedom under the Constitution to say the real reason [we don't agree with something]....Certainly, people can shade the truth and get out of doing things. But then that allows these kinds of laws to basically silence people...." he contends. "And I think that's just wrong."

Lorence says the case could eventually wind up in the state or even U.S. Supreme Court because of its implications on religious liberties and other First Amendment protections.

*Westby: Easy Pickings—Continued from page 4.*

He realized he needed the “armor of God” so that when the Evil One attacked, he could stand his ground.<sup>12</sup> To that end he fasted and prayed before his Father forty days, crying out for strength to resist the Devil. He anticipated the psychological vulnerabilities the Devil would seek to exploit. The weaker his fasting body became, the stronger his spirit and his bond to God—the ultimate Power.

The Devil presented himself full of charm, intellectually challenging, his arguments seductive, and his propositions appealing. The allure of this ruling demigod offering Jesus real power was tempting. The gospel accounts give only the briefest summary. This very real temptation of Jesus continued for forty days. It was not a game. For a temptation to be tempting the sin must be more attractive than the good. Jesus was temptable in all points of normal human desire, just as we are.<sup>13</sup> The Jesus-Devil dialogue must have been intense and exhausting.

Jesus, the Second and True Adam, stood up to the serpent from Eden and defeated him. He, unlike Adam, obeyed his God and resisted all attempts to drive a wedge between Father and Son. Jesus was committed to doing his Father’s will, come Devil or high water. When the contest of wills was over Jesus was still standing, the Devil defeated, departed, sulking, but plotting for another “opportune time.”<sup>14</sup>

We may not attract such personal attention from Satan himself; nevertheless, we are among his evil kingdom’s first targets. We are followers of God and of his Son Jesus, the Messiah. As sons and daughters of God we are the objects of Satan’s disdain. He has a score to settle. Unable to destroy God’s firstborn, his devious efforts are directed at the Church of God, the spiritual body of believers—you and me among them.

“Know your enemy” is a maxim for battle, and it might be helpful for us to review the dossier on Satan.

### **Three Strikes and You’re Out!**

Let’s look at Satan’s dossier beginning with the creation of man. Unable in Eden to destroy God’s new creation, after his initial success in deceiving Eve, he turned to exploiting human freedom to bend minds and behaviors toward evil. As the centuries passed he succeeded spectacularly in making sin more attractive than obeying the loving Creator who had made man in his image. “The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.”<sup>15</sup>

Etched in the Serpent’s mind was the fearsome prophecy of his Maker—Genesis 3:15. His coming

destruction was predicted, and Satan was determined to prevent its happening: A child of Eve would one day, God said, “crush your head.” From that day, eliminating the human race became his strategy, a strategy that almost succeeded.

Before the second millennium of human history was completed, God ordered the earth destroyed by water and his “heart was filled with pain.”<sup>16</sup> But not everyone on earth had been corrupted. There was Noah, a righteous, faithful soul. Just as God began the human family with Adam and Eve, he was prepared to keep the hope of humanity alive with the family of Noah. Mankind survived; Satan’s corrupted world perished. Strike One!

### **Strike Two**

More centuries passed with the Adversary opposing God at every turn. God’s calling out of the nation of Israel to bear witness to his goodness became Satan’s prime target for destruction. Satan managed much mischief, but was unable to destroy Israel.

Then, suddenly, the dreaded prophecy of The One coming from the seed of Eve (a human) invaded earth. The stately and mighty Gabriel, the angel of The Presence, came to Mary announcing the Promised One would be born to her. The fulfillment of Genesis 3:15—the seed of Eve coming to crush the



*Paul Gustave Doré’s (1832–1883) depiction of the fall of Lucifer.*

Serpent—was now in the womb of a young Jewish girl. The Evil One must have been in a panic.

Satan witnessed Jesus' birth in Bethlehem and induced his agent Herod to kill him. A lot of baby boys were killed but not The Seed whose parents had hurriedly taken him to Egypt.

Ever persistent, Satan didn't give up on eliminating his potential executioner. As we discussed above, Satan mounted a frontal attack tempting Jesus to give up the hard and narrow road the Heavenly Father had given him to walk, give up his messianic calling. He offered Jesus something more immediate, more appealing, and more satisfying. No success.

Satan tried to get mobs to kill Jesus.<sup>17</sup> No success. Satan trolled about and finally hooked one of Jesus' disciples to betray him. He then worked his magic on all the powers of the time—Sadducees, Pharisees, Romans—hired some false witnesses, and succeeded in finally killing the Promised One, the seed of Eve. He must have breathed a sigh of relief on that Passover day thinking he had hit a home run and won the game. He had defeated God's promise and threat of Genesis 3:15. He was home free...for three days.

But, the Son of God, the seed of Eve, was raised from the dead to eternal life, exalted to His Majesty's throne and glorified. Death was defeated. The Son of God vindicated. The Adversary vanquished and his fate apparently sealed. He failed. Strike two.

### **The Devil's Daily Business**

Following the resurrection, the Devil's options have narrowed, and his time is running out. Like a cornered rat, Satan fights for his life, pathetic as it is. He knows what is most important and precious to both Father and Son are those now taking on the divine nature of God—the Church. He knows of God's plans for the church to rule in the coming Kingdom of God. If that happens, he knows his kingdom will be judged, destroyed, and replaced with those bearing the image of God. Satan's kingdom is tormented with that prospect. One of its demonic members shouted at Jesus, "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"<sup>18</sup> Their dark kingdom fears, of all things, being sentenced forever to what the Bible calls the "blackest darkness."<sup>19</sup>

Satan's last option to avoid his feared fate is to destroy the Church and postpone or thwart God's coming kingdom. His number one job is to resist the process of turning sinful carnal humans into righteous sons and daughters of God, to stop us Christians from following Jesus. He is attempting this by whatever means at his disposal. In this too he will fail. The church is

that tiny mustard seed that has grown large with millions joining The Way to life everlasting. Jesus promised the Church would not die<sup>20</sup> but thrive until the end of this present evil age. At that time the resurrection will again dramatically vindicate God's own by defeating sin, death, and the Devil.

But the resurrection is not yet here and the spiritual war against God's people rages on. It is a war you and I are in whether we want it or not; whether we are aware of it or not. We had better be aware.

### **You Are No Secret**

Peter warns us to not be ignorant of the spiritual struggle we face and of the Devil's dastardly devices. His devices are tailored to the job at hand. He and his malicious minions work at several levels: individual by individual, religious, cultural, educational, political, and governmental. His kingdom seeks to corrupt the world at all levels and in all arenas for the purpose of doing hurt to God's creation. His success is never total, for God's forces of truth, goodness, and light are holding the total darkness at bay.

You and I must be concerned with how the tempter is working on our case. Consider that the tempter has a dossier on you. How does your file read? It will list your vulnerable areas of thought; your spiritual and moral weaknesses; your bad habits; your undisciplined areas of lust and greed. It will note the situations and things that tend to trigger you to envy, to become prideful, to anger, to self pity, to hate, to gossip, to lie, to boast, to deceive, to over indulge, to criticize, to put others down, to be selfish, to sin.

Everyone has a little different profile of strengths and weakness and it is the task of the tempter to know yours. His focus, of course, is to exploit your areas of weakness. This is how battles are won. Find the vulnerable areas and attack there. Find the gaps in the line, the chinks in the armor and attack there. The Enemy has made a specialty in spotting and exploiting the soft spots in our character.

I quoted C. S. Lewis above from his preface to the unique and strangely fascinating book, *The Screwtape Letters*. Read it sometime. After writing it he said he could never do such a work again. He labored to put himself in the mindset of the Enemy who is set on destroying Christians and preventing potential Christians from becoming believers. After completing the book he declared he would never attempt such a painful task again. Yet, the book is most helpful in alerting Christians to the spiritual forces operating upon them.

Screwtape is a senior demon who is writing letters to guide a less capable and less experienced demon,

Wormwood. The letters concern Wormwood's assigned "patient" or target who is a young man in London during WWII. Every area of this young man's life, environment, and family come into play. Meanwhile, the young man dealing with the pulls and passions of life begins to consider the reality of a God. He is introduced to Christianity. Screwtape's letters are insightful toward understanding both how God and the Devil deal with this fellow. The man is free; he cannot be made to do things or forced to believe things, so the methods of influence upon him must be subtle, undetectable, invisible. The story ends well; Wormwood loses his "patient" to the one Screwtape calls the Enemy (God) and is sent back for retraining at the Tempter's Training College. The young man endured, with God's unseen help, the various trials and temptations thrown his way. He freely chose God's kingdom and way of life, found happiness and became a useful servant of his Lord.

It is safe to assume that your prowling-about-enemy, the Devil, does have a file on you. You should know your vulnerabilities as well or better than he does. These will be, and I would wager, have been, your continual areas of trouble, stumbling, and sin. They have been the areas that have caused you and others the most grief and discouragement. Admit to yourself that these are your weaknesses, and ask God for help.

When Peter was under great temptation of the Devil and in danger Jesus said, "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail" (Lk 22:31). We must pray for others as well as ourselves that we resist temptation and cling to God in faith.

We have been promised help to combat evil temptations. Resist we must. Take on the armor of God, close the gaps, and shore up the vulnerable positions. It might be a helpful tactic to make a list of your key vulnerabilities where your moral and spiritual life is at risk. The list will probably be short—perhaps only a few areas of character weakness. What would be on that short list? If you don't have any immediate ideas, a close and honest look into the mirror of God's law, the fruits of his spirit, and the works of the flesh, should illuminate areas of lack and concern. We need the clarity and focus of Christ as we engage the formidable forces out for our destruction.

Satan is not our focus; God is. But, Satan will use all his wiles to stand between you and your heavenly Father.

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has

conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death (James 1:13-15).

James details the life cycle of sin, the sequence of the downward slide. God's Word takes temptation as a given. It assumes it. We must identify the source. If God is not the tempter, who is? Well, I think we know the answer. James instructs us:

Submit yourselves, then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you (James 4:7).

The alchemy of our own lusts combined with Lucifer's enticements spells sin. Temptation comes not from God!—but from Satan either directly or indirectly via his system, his surrogates, or his corrupted culture. He has learned all the subtle tricks to tweak your particular variety of lusts and weaknesses to produce the sin he seeks.

### **Easy Pickings?**

With all this talk of the powers of the supernatural kingdom of Satan it might be natural to feel like "easy pickings" and to feeling woefully "outgunned." But, the truth is quite the opposite. There is no need to quake and fear before the fallen angel. If God is for us—and he is if you are his son or daughter—who can be against us?<sup>21</sup> Paul makes that a rhetorical question since the answer is quite obvious. Jesus conquered the kingdom of Satan and dispatched demons with a word, confronted Satan and defeated him. What power can stand before the Master of the Universe, Yahweh? And, God has given his beloved Son power above every power.

We may face evil boldly with the power of God firmly before and behind us. We need not be preoccupied with the various machinations of the Devil and his fellow unclean spirits. He is a loser, a condemned power whose days are numbered.

Sure, we have troubles and will encounter temptations. God-fearers always have. You and I are not unique. Peter, who had first hand dealings with the tempter, wrote:

Humble yourselves under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith... (1 Peter 5:6-9).

"We are more than conquerors through him who loved us," writes Paul. Conquerors of what? Paul continues,

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present

nor the future, not any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:37-39).

### Strike Three!

The Devil and his demons know there is one true God—"and shudder."<sup>22</sup> We know the one true God—and rejoice. Christians are members of the triumphant heavenly kingdom, we have tasted the powers of the age to come,<sup>23</sup> and we will one day see with clear eyes the ultimate end of the Evil One as he is cast into the consuming lake of supernatural fire.<sup>24</sup> Strike three! You're out!

Easy Pickings? No. God has called us to have confidence in him and his power to deliver us from all our temptations and trials. We are not victims. We are winners. We must do our part by resisting the Evil One, asking God's help to shore up our areas of vulnerability, forsaking our lustful habits, and seeking to have God's good and loving character become ours. God has called us to be bold in carrying out the mission of His Son—proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God—whatever the opposition. The Father and Son will not let us fail. We began this article with a line from the first verse of Martin Luther's scripturally powerful hymn, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*. Let's close with verse three:

*And tho this world, with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God has willed  
His truth to triumph through us;  
The Prince of Darkness grim,  
We tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure,  
For lo, his doom is sure;  
One little word shall fell him.*

Amen. Hallelujah!

### END NOTES

1. Eph. 2:2; 6:12; John 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4
2. Rev. 12:7-9
3. John 8:44
4. Rev. 20:10
5. 1 Pet. 5:8
6. Eph. 6:11
7. Daniel, chapter 10
8. Dan. 10:21
9. Boyd, Gregory A., *God at War – The Bible & Spiritual Conflict*, IVP, 1997, p. 11
10. *The Screwtape Letters*, Harper Collins, 1942, p. ix
11. John 5:19, 30
12. Eph. 6:13
13. Heb. 4:15
14. Luke 4:13
15. Gen. 6:5
16. Gen. 6:6
17. John 5:18
18. Mat. 8:29
19. Jude 6, 13, 2 Pet. 2:17
20. Mat. 16:18
21. Rom. 8:31
22. James 2:19
23. Heb. 6:5
24. Rev. 20:10

---

Ken Westby is the founder and director of the Association for Christian Development, 2303 W. Commodore Way, Suite 206, Seattle, WA 98199 ([www.godward.org](http://www.godward.org)). Ken is also a director emeritus of the BSA.



Jesus casts out the devil by by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

"We live in an age of science and of abounding accumulation of material things. These did not create our Declaration [of Independence]. Our Declaration created them. The things of the spirit come first. Unless we cling to that, all our material prosperity, overwhelming though it may appear, will turn to a barren sceptre in our grasp. If we are to maintain the great heritage which has been bequeathed to us, we must be like-minded as the fathers who created it."

*American President, Calvin Coolidge*

*Editorial: Continued from page 3.*

of Colombia close to the Venezuelan border in an area that is under the domination of the FARC, an extremely violent communist revolutionary army. The FARC finances its activities through the selling of drugs, extortion, murder, kidnappings, and political assassination. They hate Christianity as much as they hate the current government.

I like to refer to Maria as the Deborah of Colombia. That is because Maria is leading an army of pastors' wives, many of them widowed due to the assassination of their husbands, in taking the Word of God into enemy territory. Maria and the women that she works with have declared their willingness to give up their own lives in order for the oppressed people of Colombia to hear and read God's Word. They are committed to the notion that the only hope for the people of Colombia is to be found in Christ and the Word of God.

You may ask why the women are carrying this burden for God. It is because in many instances men (those who are still alive) are not permitted to enter certain parts of Colombia. If they do enter, they are often shot on the spot. The rebels, however, are less suspicious of women, so they are allowed to pass through the checkpoints where men cannot go.

In another presentation a young Iranian husband and wife told their story with the husband interpreting. These Persian Christians were dressed in complete cover; only their eyes were exposed. Any public exposure or photos of these people could mean certain death for themselves and their families back in Iran.

The young woman explained how she had come to believe that Jesus was her Savior and Lord. Her mother had developed multiple sclerosis and her condition was worsening. All the doctors gave her no hope, so she and her daughter entered into a suicide pact. They were going to take sleeping pills and turn on the natural gas from their oven and simply go to sleep and never wake up. As they were preparing to carry out their plan, they turned on their satellite television for a few minutes, and there was a Christian preacher who declared, "You who are planning to commit suicide because you have lost all hope need to give your lives to Jesus Christ because he will give you hope and healing." When they heard the words of the preacher, the young woman called the preacher and explained to him that she and her mother were about to commit suicide. The preacher asked to speak to her mother and convinced her to commit her life Christ. When the young woman heard this, she began to scream and shout that this was all crazy. The preacher left the young woman with this one thought, "Commit your life to Christ for one week, and you will see a difference."

The following morning her mother awoke, got out of bed and began walking around the house as she had done in earlier years before she had MS. She went back to her doctor a couple of days later and was again tested for MS. The doctor denied that she had ever had the disease in the first place. ("Then Jesus answering said to them, Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached" — Luke 7:22).

After witnessing the undeniable power of Christ in her mother's life, she now declares that she is as zealous for Christ as she ever was for Islam. This young woman, her mother, and her husband are now working very actively in the underground church in Iran. These and other Christians in Iran who have converted from Islam must keep their identities secret because the Islamic police force (which operates separately from the national and local police) now have the authority to execute Christian converts.

We then heard from a man who works exclusively in the Arabian Peninsula. He often has to transport new Christians from one country to another in order for these converts from Islam to survive. Each country has its own Islamic police and they often do not exchange information, so he shifts people among Oman, Qatar, Dubai, and Kuwait. With a new identity in a new country, they can find work and live as if they had always been Christians.

This Arabian worker spoke of the difficulty of getting the gospel into Saudi Arabia. Since this country is the religious center of Islam in the world, it is completely closed to any evangelism of any kind. There have been a number of publicized cases in recent years of Christians who have been executed for holding Bible studies with Muslims. However, the Word of God goes forth even in Saudi Arabia.

How does our Lord change the hearts and minds of people in Saudi Arabia? Through dreams and visions. Many Saudis who have never heard the gospel are receiving Christ as Savior and Lord through dreams and visions. If this seems strange to you, consider what the apostle Peter said on the day of Pentecost. Quoting from Joel 2:28 the apostle declared, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17). God prefers that we go to others with the gospel, but where that is impossible, He still makes provision. Remember also that Jesus said that if his disciples kept quiet, the stones would cry out declaring that Jesus was Messiah and Lord over all (Luke 19:40). The name of our Lord will be declared among the heathen whether we do it or not.

## Some Observations

There were other presentations from Christians in countries such as North Korea, China, Israel, and Bangladesh. One thing that stands out crystal clear in all of the presentations I heard is the willingness of these Christians to die for their faith. It is not just a statement they make; they have to live each day with the possibility that they will be apprehended, tortured, and killed. Living and, if necessary, dying for Christ is their reality—a reality they willingly accept. They recognize and have consciously chosen to put themselves in that position so that others might discover the hope that they have gained through knowing Christ as Lord and Savior. For me, I came to understand in modern context what the apostle Paul meant when he wrote in Philippians 1:20-21, "...my earnest expectation and hope [is] that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

As the presenter from the Arabian Peninsula put it: "God did not take us away from all this when we were first saved because there is more to do. Why else are we still here?" In the same vein the Palestinian Arab Christian spoke in private session of the timidity of American and other Western Christians. He called our spiritual disease "diplomatic Christianity" and has written a book with that title. The premise of the book is that in the face of today's challenges, Christians can no longer be diplomatic; they must confront falsehood head-on with truth, whatever the cost. Time is short!

One thing that occurred to me as I was writing of the healings and other miracles such as dreams and visions is that to some readers this will seem preposterous. They reason that such miracles don't occur nowadays as they did during the time of the apostles. Some will assume that since such miracles have not happened to them personally, they can't be real. Or, because these persecuted Christians didn't accept Christ as their Savior through their church organizations or some group they support, the conversions are false—a deception. I just want you to know how much it grieves me to have to write these words to you. There are a few who have hardened their hearts to the yearnings and pain of people who ache with desire for Christ like the ones whose stories I have told in this article. Please do not harden your hearts to these people in their day of trouble.

At the same time I have talked to many in the Sabbath-keeping community over the years that have experienced the same kinds of miracles that these persecuted Christians have received. They have seen visions, dreamed dreams, have been healed miraculously and snatched from the jaws of death. In times of trouble, our Lord reveals Himself in marvelous ways, and it seems, the greater the trouble, the greater are His revelations and grace.

Here are a few Bible verses that are a reminder of Christ's autonomy and authority, and how these gifts and miracles of God fit into His overall purpose for mankind.

"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover' " (Mark 16:15-18).

"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

"John answered and said, 'Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us.' But Jesus said to him, 'Do not hinder him; for he who is not against you is for you' " (Luke 9:49-50).

What we are really seeing in the events of today in these closed and dangerous countries are the sovereign acts of God which He is doing to get people's attention focused on earth's soon-coming king and the gospel that proclaims His salvation and lordship. God will not leave mankind without a witness, and our Heavenly Father will choose how He wishes to do that. What God is doing in these perilous societies is witnessing to people that the truth of Christ is real and that their religion is false. It is very dangerous for the Christians who live there, but it is necessary to reveal the love of God to all of mankind and break down the walls of hell that Satan has erected to prevent unbelievers from embracing the truth of Christ and receiving eternal salvation.

We in the West are often far from the Kingdom because we have need of nothing. After hearing the story of Maria from Colombia, my wife said, "And I was worried about my nails." For me and my wife it will be very hard to put the images of these warriors of God out of our minds. We only heard from a few of them at the Voice of the Martyrs conference. They represent tens of thousands of others out there whose stories we never hear, whose faces we never see. They all have one thing in common. They value Christ above all else in their lives. Their passion is to give the gift of Christ's fellowship to their friends, their relatives, and every passerby they meet so that they too can discover the overwhelming joy and peace they now enjoy through Christ. This heavenly treasure that they have discovered in their field of poverty and oppression gives them wealth that will last throughout eternity.

Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus.

—Kenneth Ryland

To be ready for the Lord's return, we must first have the discernment to distinguish between the true and counterfeit Messiahs. The true Anointed One (Messiah) will come suddenly, in the clouds, in a highly visible way, at a time when people generally are not expecting him. Even some Christians will apparently have given up on the idea of his return.

Some will have degenerated to unchristian behavior – partying, getting drunk, and yielding to their darker nature. Some will even begin to abuse their fellow Christians.

Those of us who are called to feed the flock must be found zealously doing so. We cannot afford to neglect those who are in need. Our first duty as Christians is to each other – no matter our doctrinal differences and personal quirks. We will have to account to Christ for how we have treated those who are his (Matthew 25:31 ff.). As Paul wrote the Romans: *"So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God,"* (Romans 14:12).

We must be discovered meeting each other at our points of real need (James 1:27). Ideally, we will be found in the process of maturing as Christians on every front. We will be living as though the return of the Lord were imminent. We can't afford to be caught with our spiritual pants down. We need to be filled with the Spirit (have oil in our lamps), and be growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord (II Peter 3:18). And we need to be found in prayer (Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18).

If we get discouraged, let down, and revert to the unconverted state, we'll be like the virgins who had no oil in their lamps — unready to meet the Bridegroom. Perhaps it's time to do some soul searching and take inventory our spiritual condition. Despite claims, no one knows precisely when the Lord will return to this earth. It behooves each generation of Christians to live as though it could happen in their generation. The words of Luke 21:24-36 apply to the generation that lives to see the return:

*"Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will come upon you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live upon the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen [in that generation], and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."*

---

*Brian is a professional artist and writer and is a former magazine editor. Brian is also an avid student of the Bible and a frequent contributor to the Association for Christian Development website ([www.godward.org](http://www.godward.org)).*

## **When Prayers Are Not Answered**

*by Donald Mansell*

*Gehazi went on ahead and laid the staff upon the child's face, but nothing happened. 2 Kings 4:31, T.L.B.*

God gave Gehazi the unique privilege of associating with the prophet Elisha, yet Gehazi failed to yield his life completely to Elisha's God. Our verse records how, when the son of the Shunammite woman died, Gehazi was given the unusual privilege of restoring the boy to life by laying the prophet's staff on the child's face, "but nothing happened." This in spite of the fact that he had followed the prophet's instructions to the letter. Why? The answer is really quite simple: Gehazi's life was such that the Spirit of God could not work through him.

His true spiritual condition is revealed when, after Naaman had been healed of leprosy and Elisha had declined to accept any remuneration for the miracle performed, greedy Gehazi went running after the chariot of the Syrian army commander and lied: "Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments" (2 Kings 5:22). Naaman in gratitude gave him twice what he asked for and ordered two of his servants to carry the gifts to Gehazi's abode. In order to conceal his perfidy, Gehazi, "when he came to the tower, ... let the men go, and they departed" (verse 24). Gehazi thought he had succeeded in his scheme of hiding his ill-gotten gain, but God knew all about it, and in the end he paid a terrible price for his lack of consecration.

When Gehazi's compliance with Elisha's instructions did not restore the Shunammite's son to life—a miracle that the boy's subsequent resurrection clearly showed to be God's will—he should have asked himself why, but apparently he did not. In a similar way, when we pray for something that is plainly God's will, and nothing happens, we need to examine ourselves to see whether there is something in our lives that obstructs the working of God's Spirit. If there is let us remove it, by God's grace.

If, after doing this, our prayers are still not answered, we need to ask ourselves whether this is the time God has chosen to reveal His power. "Not yet" is as much an answer to prayer as a bolt of lightning falling from a cloudless sky in answer to prayer.

Too often, when our prayers for things God has promised go unanswered, we hastily conclude that it must not have been God's will when, in reality, as in the case of Gehazi, the trouble lies with us.

---

*Donald Mansell, New Every Morning, page 297. Review & Herald Publishing Association. 1981.*

## Footnotes to the Ten Commandments

"The Ten Commandments don't have any footnotes," said the pundit, the point being to take them literally if you are going to take them at all.

I appreciate the sentiment, but I disagree with the premise. Yes, those commandments mean what they say. "Thou shalt not steal" is a good command to live by, but what if you and your children are starving and you have a chance to slip off with an apple from the produce aisle. Are you committing a crime worthy of jail? A biblical footnote, if you will, says, "Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry" (Proverbs 6:30).

From this one might conclude that extenuating circumstances and the offering of grace can temper the commands and judgments of God.

And if taken literally, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" leaves open a wide range of behaviors not covered literally by that command, but are we to conclude that this is what the commandment means? Jesus placed a heavy footnote on this commandment. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery;' but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-29 NASB).

"Thou shalt not kill." Does that mean we shouldn't slap the mosquito that's sucking our blood? In Hebrew the command is "Thou shalt not murder," but does that make everything short of murder acceptable? The footnote from Jesus: "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell" (Matthew 5:21-23 NASB).

Jesus once again raises the standard by saying that the act is evil, but the act would never happen in the first place if the heart is right. If you walk around with an attitude of anger and hate, you have corrupted your heart and in the end it is the heart that matters.

As with any piece of literature, one must be careful not to be too literal, especially when lifting a verse or two from its context. And that context is not just its immediate context, but the sweep of evidence in the entire piece.

—Lenny Cacchio

---

Lenny Cacchio lives in Lees Summit, Missouri, and is very active in the Truckers' Bible Study in the Kansas City, Missouri, area. The Sabbath Morning Companion is now available as a devotional and journal through the Website of the Church of God, Kansas City ([www.kccog.org/literature.htm](http://www.kccog.org/literature.htm)).

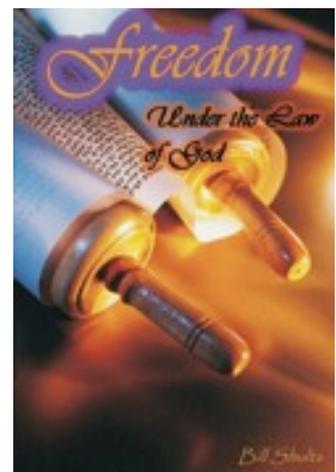
---

## FREEDOM UNDER THE LAW OF GOD

How God gave you life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in the Torah.

Hungry Hearts' new book is now available: *Freedom Under The Law Of God*. This book is a must-read for anyone who lives the Law of God. We explain the fundamental concepts of freedom in the American Declaration of Independence as found in the Law of God, or the Torah. Freedom truly is ordained by God in His Torah. We also compare and contrast grace with obedience. Get this new book and see how very vital it is to obey the Law of God. Freedom can only be achieved under the rule of Law. And the only Law that really guarantees your freedom is God's Law.

Like all publications from Hungry Hearts Ministries, this book is free. Order yours today! With exciting chapters on "Law versus Grace," "The Way," and "A New Heart." This is a book that you will truly enjoy. It will give you a new love for the Torah. This book will give you exciting new reasons to study the Law of God. Order yours free at: Hungry Hearts Ministries, P.O. Box 10334, Jackson, TN 38308; hungryheartsmn@aol.com; hungryhearts.tripod.com.



"Bind up the testimony and seal up the law among my disciples" (Isaiah 8:16 NIV).

# The Church in the World

## IRAN: CONVERT COUPLE ARRESTED, TORTURED, THREATENED

*Compass Direct News: Wednesday June 25, 2008*

Officers seize Christians from their home, leaving ill 4-year-old girl unattended.

Security police officials in Tehran this month tortured a newly converted couple and threatened to put their 4-year-old daughter in an institution after arresting them for holding Bible studies and attending a house church.

A Christian source in Iran said that 28-year-old Tina Rad was charged with “activities against the holy religion of Islam” for reading the Bible with Muslims in her home in east Tehran and trying to convert them. Officials charged her husband, 31-year-old Makan Arya, with “ac-



activities against national security” after seizing the couple from their home on June 3, forcing them to leave their 4-year-old daughter ill and unattended.

Authorities kept them in an unknown jail for four days, which left them badly bruised from beatings, with Rad “very ill” and unable to walk, said the source. Rad was released on bail of US\$30,000, and her husband was freed on payment of US\$20,000.

“The next time there may also be an apostasy charge, if you don’t stop with your Jesus,” a female security police officer told Rad during interrogation, according to the source. Under Iran’s strict Islamic laws, Muslims who convert from Islam to another religion can be executed.

A draft law before the Iranian parliament would make the death penalty mandatory for “apostates” who leave Islam.

The female security police official warned Rad that if she and her husband continued attending a house church and holding Bible studies, they could be imprisoned “for a very long time” and would lose their daughter, Odzhan Arya. An officer also told Rad that authorities could concoct a drug case against them, “and you will be punished as drug smugglers.”

“He told Tina during the interrogation that if she doesn’t cooperate and tell some names and addresses, she won’t see her daughter for a long time,” the source said. “They said, ‘Next time if we catch you, you are going to miss your whole family forever.’”

### Forced Statements

The couple was forced to sign a statement, the source said, that they wouldn’t go back to their house church and that they would have no contact with other Christians – and that if they did, “they will be punished by the law of Islam.”

The couple would forfeit their bail and their freedom if secret religious police catch them engaged in Christian activities, they were told in the court before their release.

“They were tortured psychologically and physically,” the source said. “There are a lot of blue places on their bodies. Tina can’t walk well and is very ill, and her husband Makan is still very shocked.”

The couple was arrested after a relative of Arya informed security police of the couple’s Christian activities. According to the friend of the couple, officers confiscated their personal computer, satellite dish and television set, as well as all books, videos, CDs, DVDs and even a photo album.

“Tina is very sick, and because of the pain on the right side of her head from the torture, and the shock of the whole situation, she can’t leave the house and their daughter,” the source said. “She knows for sure that they are monitored in all their communications.”

On Monday (June 23) Arya received letters at both the clothing shop and his home stating that he must place evidence on his new window pane indicating his Islamic faith by displaying a statement and photos, or else he would have to buy a new window every day.

The source said Arya displayed a photo of Islamic leaders on the window, “but they want to go somewhere else.”

Arya went to area police asking for protection, the source said, “but they told him not to lie and to ‘go do something about it if you are a real believer of Islam.’”

# Notices and Advertisements

“FREE; LORD'S ACCEPTABLE YEAR, 2008. Causes and continual interruptions delayed His Work, and had to change address. They are being sent beyond His Holy Year, March 9, etc.

The Heavenly Father's Calendar, through Lord Jesus, is complete (John 4:34, 5:26-27, 30, 37). Contains the Work He sent Jesus to earth, Jesus' image and likeness (Genesis 1:26, Isaiah 53:2 described). Old and New Testaments' Ten Commandments (unfinished) will be sent later. Calendars for you and others, how many? Send to:

CHURCH OF GOD (NEW TESTAMENT), AT LARGE  
DON & MAGGIE SODERGREN, Ministers  
PO Box 493  
Kailua-Kona, HI 96745 USA.”

Read Revelation in your Church, Rev. 1:3 says so.  
See [www.revelationaloud.net](http://www.revelationaloud.net).

## SEED Ministry

Searching for a source for doctrinal literature in Russian and Ukrainian languages. Please send information to:

SEED Ministry  
PO Box 10  
Neck City, MO 64849

### Correction

The artwork in Daniel Botkin's article, "Warrior Kin and Captive Bride" in our previous *Sabbath Sentinel* was attributed to Daniel Botkin. It was actually an old print that is now in the public domain.

### Clarification

In the May-June editorial of this magazine the statement was made that of every dollar that the U.S. government takes in taxes, only 28 cents is returned in benefits. That figure was derived from a calculation of salaries, cost of office space, employee benefits such as retirement and health insurance as well as the cost of utilities and other overhead costs that figure into the expenses of running large federal bureaucracies. Some say that this 28-cent figure is too low. Admittedly, there are several ways of calculating government benefits. The main point in all of this is that you never get all that your tax dollars pay for. As Will Rogers once said, "We can be thankful that we don't get all the government we pay for."

### Tax-deductible Contributions to the BSA

The BSA has been serving you and other Sabbath-keeping believers for over 50 years. We would like to continue for another 50, but we need your help to do so. When you donate to the BSA, you are helping us keep alive the knowledge of God's beautiful Sabbath, and remember, all donations to the BSA are tax-deductible.

### Estate Planning with the BSA in Mind

Each of us wants to pass on to the next generation those things that we consider to be most valuable. The legacies we leave behind help our children and grandchildren build on the ground-work we have laid for their lives and success. In planning what to leave behind for others, we hope that you will consider the BSA and its support for God's way of living to be part of your legacy.

## Advertise in The Sabbath Sentinel

**Classified ads** (20% discount for second time, 30% thereafter) are available at the rate of \$1.00 per word (including each word and each group of numbers in the address; telephone numbers count as one word) for each issue in which the ad is published.

**Display ads** are available at \$150 per quarter page for each issue the ad is published. Where possible your camera-ready copy will be utilized, or we will design your display ad for you. Send copy for all ads and payment to The Bible Sabbath Association, 802 N.W. 21<sup>st</sup> Ave., Battle Ground, WA, USA.

**Discounts:** Advertise in the TSS Classified Ads section for more than one issue and receive discounts: \$1.00 per word 1<sup>st</sup> issue, 20% off for 2<sup>nd</sup> issue, and 30% off for subsequent times.

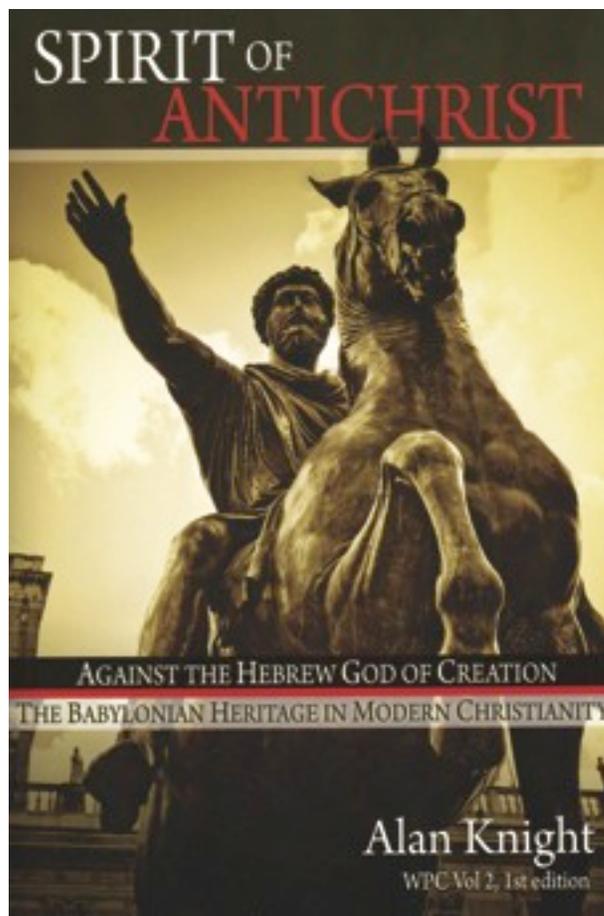
Ad copy without payment will not be accepted for publication. Deadline is two months prior to publication (i.e. if you want your ad to appear in the September/October issue we must receive it before July). BSA reserves the right to reject or edit any ad copy. Publication does not necessarily imply endorsement by the *Bible Sabbath Association* or *The Sabbath Sentinel*.

***Spirit of Antichrist*** is the long awaited sequel to author Alan Knight's very popular ***Primitive Christianity in Crisis***. In Revelation chapter 17 the apostle John presents a view of religious apostasy in his day that he connects with ancient Babylon. Scholars debate whether this should be understood as symbolic or literal. From the groundbreaking research that underlies this book, author and historian, Alan Knight, presents evidence that, in addition to the symbolism, much of it was surprisingly literal. John's description of a harlot "with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication," is a reference to an exotic yet literal religious ritual performed in the ancient Near East.

In the process of pursuing these issues, the author solves a number of other biblical riddles, including the historical events behind the mysterious description in Genesis 6 of intermarriage between human women and the "Sons of God." Most surprising of all, the author presents evidence, collected from respected scholars that suggests these religious themes derive from repeated contact between more advanced religious traditions in the ancient world and primitive shaman priests from central Asia.

Finally, this historical background provides a dramatic new understanding of the prophecies of the book of Revelation, including the precise identity and significance of the mysterious eighth king described in chapter 17 as "was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven."

This book is available from the BSA for \$17 (nonmembers add \$3 for S&H). If you would like both ***Spirit of Antichrist*** and ***Primitive Christianity in Crisis***, send \$30 for both volumes (nonmembers add \$4 for S&H).



---

## ***The Sabbath Sentinel***

***A Bi-monthly Publication of***

***The Bible Sabbath Association***

***802 N.W. 21<sup>st</sup> Ave., Battle Ground, WA 98604 USA***

***Return Service Requested***

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 618  
RAPID CITY, SD