

“I’M JUST A-PASSING THROUGH”

By Milton Smith

Albert Brumley wrote a hymn some years ago entitled, “This World Is Not My Home”. This beloved and popular hymn begins with the words, “This world is not my home, I’m just a passing thru.”

Truer words were never written!

In reference to those faithful saints of old, the Hebrew writer tells us, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13).

We are all strangers in this world! Both Paul and Peter described our physical bodies as nothing more than earthly “tabernacles”; in other words, temporary, earthly dwelling places for our eternal spirits.

Because earth is filled with such unpleasant things like sorrow, sickness, pain, aging, and death, this world is not

suited as our eternal home. Even earthly joys and pleasures are transient. This world is unable to provide us with that eternal bliss that the human spirit longs for. Job did not desire to always live in this world (Job 7:16). Moses spoke of the time when life is cut off and “we fly away” (Psalms 90:10). Paul desired to depart this world to be with Christ (Philippians 1:23). Peter looked to the day when he would “cast off” his earthly tabernacle (2 Peter 1:14).

Jesus, Himself, has gone to prepare an eternal abode for the faithful (John 14:2-3). What a wonderful thought to know that this eternal home will be free of those things that bring so much suffering to us in this life. Sorrow, pain, darkness, and death will be left outside the gates of our new home. Matter of fact, nothing will be permitted to enter into our future abode that might corrupt it (Revelation 21:27). Peter describes our heavenly home as “an inheritance in corruptible, and unfilled, that fades not away” (1 Peter 1:4).

It is in this future home that the redeemed of all ages will live and eternal life will be possessed. The next time this world might get you a little down, just remember the beloved words of that old hymn:

“This world is not my home, I’m just a-passing thru.”
 — Tulsa, OK

“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens . . . So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:1,6-8).

HARDENED HEARTS

By Danny Boggs

The wise man said, “The way of the transgressor is hard” (Proverbs 13:15). It’s still true, though we don’t always believe it. Often we feel more the way the Psalmist did: “Behold, these are the wicked; and always at ease, they have increased in wealth. Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure, and washed my hands in innocence” (Psalm 73:12-13). People spit in God’s face, get away with it, and even prosper. We try to live right and wonder whether the Lord even notices!

Why do some people live with such neglect of their spiritual natures? The answer is hard hearts. And why do Christians envy the ungodly? Same answer. “For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end; while it is said, ‘Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me’” (Hebrews 3:14-15). Sin dupes God’s mockers into believing that pleasure is their lot for life. Sin makes Christians think it is better to feel good than to do good.

The most notorious hard heart belonged to the Pharaoh who refused to release God’s people from bondage. The Bible makes twenty references to his callused condition. It sometimes says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (e.g. Exodus 8:32), while in other cases it tells us that “the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart” (e.g. Exodus 9:12). It appears God exacerbated the stubbornness Pharaoh harbored in his heart. It took ten plagues, the last being the near simultaneous death of every firstborn son in Egypt, including Pharaoh’s, before the wicked ruler would bow to the will of the Almighty. One hard-hearted man, blinded by his own arrogance, brought untold suffering on a whole nation that depended on him.

Jesus asked His own disciples more than once whether their hearts were hard (Mark 6:52; 8:17). Could a person spending 24 hours a day in the presence of the Lord have a hard heart? Jesus says so.

God will not force us to enjoy Christian life. Rather, He attempts to persuade us with love and truth. When

will we stop ignorantly envying sinful life? Only when we recognize how wonderful life in Christ really is! “This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way . . .” (Ephesians 4:17-20).

Christianity is no bed of roses, but the hardship it brings is far different from the messes that result from fighting against God. Suffering which results from doing right is educational, limited, and promising (Romans 5:1-5). Suffering which results from doing wrong is mere misery when it doesn’t help us see the need to repent. “Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity” (Proverbs 28:14)
 — Neosho, MO

Old Paths

Vol. 49, No. 6 June 2025

“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

SURRENDER

by Dalton Key

With tensions high and hate abounding,
 Close to home and past the sea;
 Truth is now as ever shouting,
 Change begins with you and me.

The time we waste in pointing fingers,
 Not a single problem solves;
 When all’s been said but one truth lingers -
 We can only change ourselves.

The mind that looks for faults in others,
 Sees mistakes most everywhere;
 As we seek so we discover,
 Forming most of what we fear.

With heaven’s help may we remember,
 Hearts to help first look within;
 Change will come as we surrender,
 All of self to all of Him.

“So brothers and sisters, since God has shown us great mercy, I beg you to offer your lives as a living sacrifice to Him . . .” (Romans 12:1, NCV).

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with what measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye,’ and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:1-5)

GOD’S INSTRUCTION BOOK

By Bobby Key

It was the middle of September, and I was in my mid teens. The day was bright and sunny in the heart of Texas. Along with my brother and two sisters I set out early to begin a new school year at the rural school where we had all attended from the first grade. As we arrived on the school grounds our spirits were crushed.

A stranger was standing on the steps of the three-room school. He had an official looking paper in his hand and said he had a very important announcement. We were all informed, for the first time, that all of the grades from six upward could no longer attend that school. A small squatty-looking van pulled on the school grounds to take us away to a bigger and better school. We were loaded and hauled away like a bunch of wild-eyed West Texas steers and placed with strangers in an environment unlike anything we’d ever known.

The trustees and community had no say in the matter. The decision was made for us. The stranger on the steps said this change was for our good. With better educational advantages we could expect poverty to vanish, crime to cease, and all of us would be better prepared to face life or enter college. Of course, in our little community we had no crime; and everybody was poor, but nobody knew it! Though a little rough around the edges and somewhat ignorant by today’s standards, we were all as happy as could be.

The years have come and gone. That little rural school no longer exists except in memory. Driving through the community recently, we witnessed a great deal more poverty, saw evidence of crime being on the increase, and observed general deterioration all around. Statistics show an increase in lawlessness, drunkenness, immorality, thievery, vandalism, drugs, and lower test scores with each passing year.

Better educational opportunities are fine, but better education is not the answer to our problems. The only answer is the pure and simple gospel of Jesus Christ found in the Scriptures (Galatians 1:6-10).

Literary education and a greater amount of wealth are blessings only when possessed and exercised by those who are under the influence of our great Creator and Maker, God Almighty. The Lord gave the people of old His good Spirit to instruct them (Nehemiah 9:20). The Spirit’s inspired message is still available to instruct those willing to listen.

We are unable to roll back the years and return to the simpler lifestyle of yesteryear, but, thank God, we still have the Book of Instruction left for us. (1929-2018)

GODLY EXERCISE

by Wayne Robbins

The apostle Paul wrote the following to Timothy, “For bodily exercise profits little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8). Millions of dollars are spent every year on exercise equipment and gym fees, all for the purpose of becoming healthier. It is true that we may lose a few pounds, firm up our muscles, and even add a few years to our lives – but it is only beneficial in this life only! That is why the apostle Paul says that bodily exercise only profits little.

The apostle, therefore, urges Christians to exercise godliness which is profitable for now and the life to come. To exercise godliness means to do the commands of God and be busy about His business. In obeying His commands here on earth, we know that we are in His good graces and are assured of our salvation. What peace and comfort! But there is more. If we remain faithful to God here on earth, we know that we have the hope of eternal life when this earth life is over (Titus 1:2; Rev. 2:10). What joy!

Since godly exercise trumps bodily exercise in every way, we need to give heed to the admonition of the apostle and make sure that in our daily routine that we exercise godliness. This exercise assures us of an eternal home with God in heaven.

Exercise daily!!!

— Arkansas City, KS

“But also for this reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble” (2 Peter 1:5-10).

EDITORIAL . . .

FAITHFUL

By Dalton Key

With respect to the Lord and His church, are you faithful? Just how important to you are your convictions, your Christian character, and your commitment to the things of God? Would you be willing to die for Christ?

Any religion worth living for should be worth dying for as well. The King James Version of the Bible, the translation many of us grew up learning, had it right with respect to its treatment of Revelation 2:10. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” Many translations use the word “until” rather than “unto,” yet the suffering saints of Smyrna were not being encouraged to faithfulness merely “until” they died; they were urged to persevere even “unto” death, to the exacting throes of martyrdom.

John Fox in his Book of Martyrs, describes one such example of faithfulness which took place during the church’s early years: “Agatha, a Sicilian lady, (who) was not more remarkable for her personal and acquired endowments, than her piety: her beauty was such, that Quintian, governor of Sicily, became enamored of her, and made many attempts upon her chastity without success. On her confessing that she was a Christian, he determined to gratify his revenge, as he could not his passion. Pursuant to his orders, she was scourged, burnt with red-hot irons, and torn with sharp hooks. Having borne these torments with admirable fortitude, she was next laid naked upon live coals, intermingled with glass, and then being carried back to prison, she there expired on February 5, 251.”

This chaste soul ventured beyond the living for her faith - she bravely died for it. She was indeed “faithful unto death.”

For those of us blessed to live in a place and time less violent toward Christians and Christianity, the more pressing question is not, “would I die for my Lord?” but rather, “am I willing to live for Him?” Martyrdom, in the abstract, as a matter of imagination, is much simpler to assert and accept than real-time, real-life commitment. We may never be called to die for Christ, but we are expected - every day - to live for Him.

I’ll ask again: are you faithful?



HAVING FAITH IN THE GOODNESS OF GOD

by Danny Tunnell

There are three places in scripture where the will of God is demonstrated perfectly: (1) The Garden of Eden, (2) The ministry of Jesus, and (3) Heaven. Those three places show the perfect will of God. That is God’s will for everyone, and what God wants for everyone.

Much of what we are seeing today is certainly not the will of God. It’s being marred by sin. It has become the will of Satan, who is the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

With Jesus our lives go from terrible darkness to amazing light (John 8:12). The gospel is glad tidings of good things.

Faith is simply believing that God will do what He promised in His word. Faith is absolute trust and confidence in God’s power, wisdom, and goodness by those who hear it (Romans 10:17). We must say what God said and agree with what He says about us (Hebrews 10:23). We need to receive the word of God, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:3).

We read about Abraham’s faith. He staggered not (did not doubt) at

the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God (Romans 4:20). As someone has said, “We need more ‘stagger nots,’ not astronauts!”

Don’t try to figure out how God’s blessings are going to come to pass. Bringing them to pass is God’s responsibility, not yours. Your part is to keep His promises before your eyes and in your heart (Deuteronomy 11:18; Proverbs 4:21). Don’t give up; look to God (Isaiah 40:31). Show yourself to be conformed to His will, then good things will just come to you. You don’t have to go after them, they are attracted to you (Deuteronomy 28:2; Matthew 6:33).

God gives good things to those who ask Him (Matthew 7:11). Taste and see the Lord is good! (Psalm 34:8). If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land (Isaiah 1:19).

God’s blessings are both temporal and eternal. Jesus came to give us abundant life (John 10:10). God daily loads us with benefits (Psalm 68:19). He forgives our sins and heals our diseases (Psalm 103:2,3). Those who

seek the Lord shall not want any good thing (Psalm 34:10). The righteous will bring forth fruit in old age (Psalm 92:14).

God is ready to prove to you just how good He is (Proverbs 4:8, ESV). No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly (Psalm 84:11).

Paul wrote, “All things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28). God richly gives us all things to enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17). God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). God’s kingdom is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).

Think of all the wonderful things God has done for you (1 Samuel 12:24, NLT).

Andrae Crouch wrote these lines: “How can I say thanks for all the things You have done for me? The voices of a million angels could not express my gratitude. All that I am and ever hope to be - I owe it all to Thee. To God be the glory - for the things He has done.” — Miami, OK

GOD’S WORD IN OUR HEARTS

By Mark Lindley

The longest chapter of the Bible is a chapter about the Bible. Psalm 119 contains 176 verses and is the longest chapter of the Bible. The entire chapter, all 176 verses, is designed to show the value and greatness of God’s Word.

This chapter has some unique features. It contains 22 sections, and each section is composed of 8 verses. In each of the 22 sections, the 8 verses of that section begin with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. There are 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet; therefore, there are 22 sections in this chapter.

This chapter contains many great verses, one of which is verse 11: “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” This is truly a great and powerful verse. Consider why it is so great:

1. It highlights the greatest thing in the world - God’s Word. The verse says, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart . . .” There is nothing in the world greater than God’s Word. Without the Word, we could not know God’s will

for our lives, and we cannot go to heaven without doing the will of the Father in heaven. (Matthew 7:21.) Therefore, seeing the beauty of heaven one sweet, eternal day would be impossible without God’s Word.

2. It reveals the greatest place for God’s Word - the heart. The word hid literally means “to lay up.” God’s Word, the Bible, cannot do us good if it is simply laid up in our houses, our cars, the church building, or some other place. The Word must be studied (2 Timothy 2:15) and stored up in our hearts that it might influence our minds and our daily conduct.

3. It promises the greatest results - not sinning against God. God’s Word imparts spiritual strength that will enable us to resist the temptations of the devil. When Jesus was tempted of the devil, the Lord responded with the words: “It is written.” (Matthew 4:4,7,10.) Jesus relied on God’s powerful Word, and that Word caused Satan to flee. (Matthew 4:11.) When we today are equipped with the powerful

sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17), and we apply it when tempted, Satan cannot bring us down.

In view of these facts, I’m sure we would all agree that Psalm 119:11 is truly a great verse! — Ripley, MS

Old Paths

830 W. Fargo Drive,
Broken Arrow, OK. 74012

On a nonprofit basis.
Published monthly and
supported by Churches of Christ
and individuals.

Dalton Key Editor
“Subscription Free;
Prayers Requested;
Contributions Appreciated.”