

## FOCUS ON YOUR OWN RACE WITHOUT DISTRACTIONS

By Danny Tunnell

Every Christian has a race to run (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). Paul was able to say, "I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course (race), I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). Paul focused on the race he was running, and by doing that he carried out his own admonition to preach the word (2 Timothy 4:2).

Mary sat at Jesus' feet focused on what Jesus was saying while her sister, Martha, was distracted with other things (Luke 10:39,40). Jesus said, "Mary has chosen what is better" Luke 10:42, NIV).

It is easy in our modern era to get sidetracked. We live in a day in which it is so easy to spread gossip, slander, and rumors. People post things on social media and don't even have to identify themselves. They give an opinion based on a lie, or a half-truth, or just something taken out of context, and they disparage others. Surely a child of God is living by a higher standard! "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3). "Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles" (Proverbs 21:23).

Many people, when they hear gossip or a juicy rumor about someone, share it with others. Why not keep it to yourself? Did you know a malicious rumor will die if not one repeats it?

People can be judgmental and magnify other people's mistakes and shortcomings, thinking that if they damage someone's reputation that will make them look better. Nothing is further from the truth! If they talk badly about people in front of you, they'll talk badly about you in front of others.

If someone criticizes you, the natural thing is to criticize them back. It's easy to get drawn into a battle we're not supposed to fight. We are not to pay back evil for evil (Matthew 5:43,45; Romans 12:17-21). Many times it is best to ignore the critics. The truth is that some people are determined to not understand you, they do it on purpose, and they will never be for you. Sometimes you have to be comfortable being misunderstood. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "To be great is often to be misunderstood." He listed several great historical figures who he believed were misunderstood: Pythagoras, Copernicus, Galileo,

Newton - and he also included Jesus. The Bible indicates that Jesus was often misunderstood (Matthew 16:5-12; John 2:19-21; John 10:6).

Another distraction is not minding our own business. Paul said our goal should be "to lead a quiet life" and "to mind (our) own business" (1 Thessalonians 4:11). In 1949, Hank Williams wrote a humorous song, "If you mind your own business, then you won't be minding mine." He said, "A lot of people request this song for other folks, but nobody requests it for themselves!"

Do you recall in the Bible where Moses' brother Aaron and sister Miriam didn't like the woman Moses married? (Numbers 12:1). Moses had married an Ethiopian woman. She had a different nationality. God didn't take it lightly when they spoke against Moses. It was none of their business. Miriam was struck with leprosy and by the mercy of God she was later healed. Satan will do everything he can to keep us from advancing. He wants us distracted. Let's focus on the race set before us (Hebrews 12:1, 2).

— Miami, OK

## ECONOMIC INDICATORS

By David Deffenbaugh

Economic and financial specialists talk about "economic indicators" that tell us whether things are going to get better or worse. Did you know that Jesus also talked about investing and economic indicators? Really. Jesus warned about falling stock markets and failing corporations. No, not in exactly those words. Instead, He spoke about thieves, moths and rust (Matthew 6:19-21). Those were the threats to financial investments in His day just like corporation executives and panic-driven stock markets can have a devastating effect on mutual funds and 401K's today.

Jesus said that a much better, much safer investment than treasures on earth are treasures in heaven. Just exactly how does one invest in heaven. What's the ticker symbol on the New

York Stock Exchange? HEAV? Let's just say this is a unique investment opportunity. There's not another like it. A stock broker won't be able to tell you about it either.

The Bible, though, explains it quite clearly: "... give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven" (Matthew 19:21). "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, not to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come" (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

Using one's earthly treasure to care for those in need and to do good is how treasures are laid up in heaven. Is that really a good investment? Let's

talk about return on investment. How about worth that exceeds all the world's wealth combined? (Matthew 16:26). How about a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? (2 Corinthians 4:17).

This also serves as an economic indicator. It is the location of our treasure that identifies our heart's home (Matthew 6:21). We may say or claim or wish that our heart is in the right place, but one sure-fire way to find out is to see where our treasure is going. Our heart will follow our treasure.

How's that for an economic indicator?

— Paragould, AR

# Old Paths

Vol. 50, No. 3 March 2026

"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

## I'VE NEVER MET A HAPPY CRITIC

By Bobby Key

On a near perfect day an enthusiastic young boy remarked to an older gentleman about the fine weather. The man was a chronic critic, an habitual faultfinder. He looked into the sky and tried to find a cloud to complain about. He was unable to find a single thing wrong. Finally, he grouched, "Young man, I'll have you know this: weather can't last forever!"

The critic is never living at his best. He is almost never happy. If he is driving on a highway that has pleasant scenery on one side and scenery less so on the other side, he chooses to focus on the unpleasant. If he is in the midst of a conversation in which both good and bad things are being discussed, he hears only the bad. He looks people over carefully, trying his best to find blemishes, warts, moles, scars, etc. And he usually finds exactly what he is looking for!

Jesus had a name for this kind of person: "Hypocrite."

Yes, endless faultfinding indicates hypocrisy. It indicates that the critic has faults more serious than he discovers in others. He would do well to heed Jesus' advice relative to this fault: "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 7:3-5).

Don't be a speck-hunter! - (1929-2018).

"Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:1-8).

## I MUST, I CAN, AND I WILL

By Dalton Key

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6,7).

God's will for me is simple to see,  
His purpose decisively taught;  
**I must** always rejoice, unceasingly pray,  
And give thanks no matter what.

God knows what is best, whatever my test,  
And leaves me with this precious thought;  
**I can** always rejoice, unceasingly pray,  
And give thanks no matter what.

Believing His word, I'm fully assured,  
God loves me no matter my lot;  
**I will** always rejoice, unceasingly pray,  
And give thanks no matter what.

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20,21).

## HAS YOUR HEART BEEN BROKEN?

By Danny Tunnell

Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted (Luke 4:18). The word “brokenhearted” is two words in the greek. “Suntribo” means to break in pieces, to shatter. It is like throwing a jar down and it shatters. The second word “heart” in Greek is “kardia” from which we get the word “cardiac.” It means the heart. Jesus is talking about an emotional healing.

Has your heart ever been broken? Has it ever been shattered? The good news is that there is someone who can heal a broken heart. Jesus can put every piece back together and you don’t have to live with a broken heart.

After David had sinned so grievously with Bathsheba, and then had her husband, Uriah, killed, he was confronted by Nathan the prophet and began to realize his sin (2 Samuel 12:7). The brokenhearted and now contrite king cries to God in the 51st Psalm: “Have mercy upon me, O God . . . Cleanse me from my sin. I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. I have sinned against Thee, and done this evil in Thy sight . . . The sacrifices You accept are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

David’s godly sorrow brought about repentance and restoration. (2 Corinthians 7:10.)

Peter’s tender heart was broken after he had denied Jesus. The rooster crowed and Jesus turned and looked upon Peter (Luke 22:60-62).

Saul’s heart was broken on the road to Damascus when Jesus asked the penetrating question, “Why are you persecuting Me?” (Acts 9:4). That honest question cut deeply into Saul’s heart. Later, when Saul had become the beloved apostle Paul, he described himself as the least of the apostles, and even the least of all saints, because he had persecuted the church of God (1 Corinthians 15:9; Ephesians 3:8).

Has your heart ever been broken like that? A broken heart that helped to lead you to repentance? Every honest Christian would have to say, “yes.” The Lord is still correcting those that he loves (Hebrews 12:5-11).

A century has come and gone since Ira Stanphill was a boy growing up in Coffeyville, Kansas. He would become one of the most respected and prolific gospel song writers of all time. “He washed my eyes with tears” is one of his compositions:

“He washed my eyes with tears that I might see. The broken heart I had was good for me. He tore it all apart and looked inside. He found it full of fear and foolish pride. He swept away the things that made me blind. And then I saw the clouds were silver lined. And now I understand twas best for me. He washed my eyes with tears that I might see. The glory of Himself is revealed to me. I did not know that he had wounded hands. I saw the blood he spilt upon the sands. I saw the cross of shame and wept and cried. He was my substitute. For me He died. And now I’m glad He came so tenderly. And washed my eyes with tears that I might see.”

— Miami, OK

EDITORIAL . . .

## FROM VICTIMHOOD TO VICTORY!

By Dalton Key

Even though Paul’s life was anything but easy, he never portrayed himself as a victim, but rather as a victor because of Christ living in him.

Following his conversion to Christ, the apostle’s life was fraught with countless examples of opposition, affliction and painful persecution. He wrote the Corinthian brethren recounting several examples: “. . . in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in hunger and nakedness - besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

A lesser man might have succumbed to his supposed fate and given up the fight. But Paul was made of sterner stuff. While imprisoned in Rome, his words to the Philippians ring forth with amazing faith and faith-based optimism. “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain . . . one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus . . . Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say rejoice!” (Philippians 1:21; 3:13,14; 4:4). The zenith of the apostle’s positivity is revealed in the powerful words of Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Let’s determine to follow Paul’s noble example! Never, ever forget: “With God nothing is impossible” (Luke 1:37).



## UNSHAKEN

By Dalton Key

Just because you heard it,  
doesn’t make it true,  
An idea is not better  
just because it’s new;  
Though everybody says it,  
it still may foolish be,  
The truth remains unshaken  
for those with eyes to see.

This world beset with madness  
may seem beyond repair,  
Leaving us disheartened,  
overcome with care;  
With loudest lies unchallenged,  
and heard and heeded so,  
It feels like things are upside down.  
We wonder where to go.

But then I think of Jesus and the world  
He came to save,  
His simple life of goodness,  
not shuttered by the grave;  
The sheep He came to love and  
lead had clearly gone astray,  
They did their best to silence truth,  
much as we see today.

The Savior came to bring the truth,  
and live the truth as well,  
His life was lived with love for all,  
His death to save from Hell;  
Yet those he shed his blood to save  
were angered even more,  
Their screams and shouts to kill  
the Lamb became a frenzied roar.

As time has passed and life moved on,  
from that dark day to ours,  
The settled dust of history has shown  
where lies the power;  
The names of those who long  
ago refused His truth to hear  
Have all but been forgotten and  
it’s Jesus’ name we wear.

What mattered then yet matters still  
- the facts remain unchanged,  
Remember lies are loudest,  
the more they are deranged;  
But truth will out and right will win,  
it always has and will,  
God’s rock of truth will never move  
and stands unshaken still!

## JESUS: KING OF KINGS

By Joe Slater

as Hebrews 1:2 says, God “has in these last days spoken to us by His Son.” On the Mount of Transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah appeared alongside Jesus, God’s voice commanded: “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” (Mark 9:7).

In ancient times, kings led their armies on the battle field. Loyal soldiers understood the importance of following their king. Even the captain of the army knew the king outranked him.

Jesus is our King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16). As His loyal soldiers (2 Timothy 2:3), let us honor His supreme rank with our careful obedience!

— Springfield, IL

“And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:16).

“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities

or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:16-18)

### 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.”