

THE NEWSLETTER

A Ministry of Cornerstone Fellowship of Coatesville Pennsylvania

The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor
Mr. Peter E. Jensen, Assistant Pastor of Youth Ministries & Group Life

610-384-1375 or 610-384-1216
610-384-6757 (fax)
email: fbccoatpa@aol.com
www.cornerstonefellowship1.org

VOLUME 35, Number 7

JULY 2016

INDEPENDENCE DAY

We who are Christians and Americans need to be in fervent prayer for our nation and our national leaders always. Together, we CAN make a difference! May God bless you as you ask God to bless America.

PRAYER OF NATIONAL REPENTANCE

"Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask Your forgiveness and to seek Your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, *Woe to those who call evil good*, but that is exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values. We confess that, We have *ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word* and called it *pluralism*;

We have *worshipped other gods* and called it *multiculturalism*;
We have *endorsed perversion* and called it *alternative lifestyle*;
We have *exploited the poor* and called it the *lottery*;
We have *rewarded laziness* and called it *welfare*;
We have *killed our unborn* and called it *choice*;
We have *shot abortionists* and called it *justifiable*;
We have *neglected to discipline our children* and called it *building self-esteem*;
We have *abused power* and called it *politics*;
We have *coveted our neighbor's possessions* and called it *ambition*;
We have *polluted the air with profanity and pornography* and called it *freedom of expression*;
We have *ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers* and called it *enlightenment*.

Search us, Oh, God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Guide and bless those who have been called to direct us to the center of Your will and to openly ask these things in the name of Your Son, the living Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen."

THROUGH THE BIBLE IN A YEAR

July

1 1 Chronicles 21 & 22; Psalm 119:89-96; Romans 13
2 1 Chronicles 23 & 24; Psalm 119:97-104; Romans 14
3 1 Chronicles 25 & 26
4 1 Chronicles 27 & 28
5 1 Chronicles 29; Psalm 119:105-112; Romans 15
6 2 Chronicles 1 & 2; Psalm 119:113-120; Romans 16
7 2 Chronicles 3 & 4; Psalm 119:121-128; 1 Corinthians 1
8 2 Chronicles 5 & 6; Psalm 119:129-136; 1 Corinthians 2
9 2 Chronicles 7 & 8; Psalm 119:137-144; 1 Corinthians 3
10 2 Chronicles 9 & 10
11 2 Chronicles 11 & 12
12 2 Chronicles 13 & 14; Psalm 119:145-152; 1 Corinthians 4
13 2 Chronicles 15 & 16; Psalm 119:153-160; 1 Corinthians 5

14 2 Chronicles 17 & 18; Psalm 119:161-168; 1 Corinthians 6
15 2 Chronicles 19 & 20; Psalm 119:169-176; 1 Corinthians 7
16 2 Chronicles 21 & 22; Psalm 120; 1 Corinthians 8
17 2 Chronicles 23 & 24
18 2 Chronicles 25 & 26
19 2 Chronicles 27 & 28; Psalm 121; 1 Corinthians 9
20 2 Chronicles 29 & 30; Psalm 122; 1 Corinthians 10
21 2 Chronicles 31 & 32; Psalm 123; 1 Corinthians 11
22 2 Chronicles 33 & 34; Psalm 124; 1 Corinthians 12
23 2 Chronicles 35 & 36; Psalm 125; 1 Corinthians 13
24 Ezra 1 & 2
25 Ezra 3 & 4
26 Ezra 5 & 6; Psalm 126; 1 Corinthians 14
27 Ezra 7 & 8; Psalm 127; 1 Corinthians 15
28 Ezra 9 & 10; Psalm 128; 1 Corinthians 16
29 Nehemiah 1 & 2; Psalm 129; 2 Corinthians 1
30 Nehemiah 3 & 4; Psalm 130; 2 Corinthians 2
31 Nehemiah 5 & 6

FOR WHOM SHOULD I VOTE?

(Because you have asked, here are some thoughts regarding how Christians should approach the upcoming elections)

- Charles H Jensen

America remains at a crossroads of huge importance. Much is dependent upon the way she chooses to go. In just a few months, we will be going to the polls to choose a new President and other leaders. And many people are asking "For whom should I vote?"

Given the current presumptive candidates for the highest office, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, that is a perplexing question for neither candidate is entirely pleasing. However, we should not make our selection on the basis of the personalities of those running for office. This is NOT a popularity contest, or, it should not be. That's how we picked the candidate we would support when we were in grade school. Frankly, being the first in any category to run for office should not influence our thinking either. As responsible adult Christians we should choose the candidates we support on the basis of that for which they stand. In this election, that, too, is difficult for one candidate is presented as an irresponsible hot head and the other clearly bends the truth irresponsibly. So, we are forced to look for principles beyond the candidates themselves. In this election, the principles are found in the "platforms" of their parties. For example: the platform of the Democrat party supports abortion on demand. They argue that a woman should be free to kill a child conceived in her womb if she does not want it. The platform of the Republican party defends the right of the unborn to life.

In his book *The Mystery of the Shemitah*, Rabbi Jonathan Cahn says this, "If God is not sovereign over the land and its people,

then the land and its people become cut off from the Creator. A god-centered worldview is replaced by a man-centered or self-centered worldview... God is driven out so that people become their own gods, masters of the land, their world, and their destiny. They rewrite the law and redefine what is right and wrong, moral and immoral.

Without God nothing would be holy, or for that matter, unholy. Nothing has any purpose except the purpose they now assign it. And with no true purpose, they could do whatever they wanted...not only with their land but also with their lives, with each other, and with their children. Thus, they lifted up their children as sacrifices on the altars of foreign gods.

It was for this last transgression that judgment fell...Israel offered their sons and daughters in the fires of Baal and Molech and that sin brought the nation's destruction."

For me, the baseline for all moral decisions remains the Bible. Until recently, that was true for our nation as well. But today, America has drifted away from that position. America no longer has a God-centered worldview. We now have a man-centered or self-centered worldview. Romans 1:21-32 gives us a description of a nation which has turned away from God and made self the determinate of right and wrong.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen.

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

It is amazing to read the Romans' passage, for, unfortunately, it sounds like it is describing our nation today. Like ancient Israel, we have chosen to drive God out. Now, free from any restraint applied by God, we can do what we want to do with our land, our lives and our children. We can even justify killing others if they oppose us or if their conception is inconvenient. But our change of position about right and wrong, moral and immoral changes nothing! Right and wrong, moral and immoral is still determined by God and is found in God's word. It is as wrong to kill others

and our children today as it was in Bible days. And God's judgment is the same!

Since 1973, (Roe v Wade) 57,762,169 "legal" abortions have been performed in the United States. That is 1.3 million abortions each year or 3,562 abortions each day. How displeased God must be with a nation that disregards his holy word and redefines morality so as to allow its mothers to kill their children as their right! If God judged Israel, his chosen nation, and sent her into exile for seventy years for this crime, how can the United States, or any other nation, hope to avoid his wrath if they permit the same sinful behavior?

The fall of God's judgment is always preceded by warnings to the people on whom judgment is about to fall. These warnings come as smaller judgments: plagues, natural disasters, economic downturns, etc. If the smaller judgments are ignored and the people of the nation do not repent of their error and return to God, the final judgment comes.

This election is an opportunity for America to repent of her error and return to God and his word. If the nation chooses to vote for an abortionist or for the party that defends a woman's right to kill her unborn child (to murder her child), the warning judgments which God has sent to us: economic problems, new diseases, terrorist attacks, etc., will be ignored and the nation will move closer to final judgment and collapse. So, in this election, we have an important choice to make which has nothing to do with Hillary or Donald. We can vote for a party which supports an increasingly self-centered worldview which is devoid of God, or we can vote for a party which supports a more God-centered worldview. This election is too important for us to vote on the basis of the candidates' personalities. What is at stake are the principles which will guide our national future.

CALLED TO FOLLOW

He certainly wasn't one of society's so-called "beautiful people," flying around in his private jet to the world's exotic spots to have his picture taken with others of the jet set. Nor was he a maker of global political news. Now was he to be counted among the world's richest. Quite the opposite. He was one whose life and work put him at the other end of the social scale. He was despised by his neighbors and acquaintances. To use Biblical words, he was an outcast and a sinner. He had no cause whatsoever to expect that a generation or so after his death he would be at all remembered, let alone be remembered with warmth and thanksgiving. He was, after all, a man who had volunteered to serve in a dirty and dishonest public position, and people like that don't receive notice in the annals of public history. Yet, he is not a forgotten man in human history, and his recorded words have been given a unique prominence in our world's literature. By now you know of whom I speak: Matthew, disciple of Jesus, and author of the first of the New Testament Gospels.

You and I are kin to this man, Matthew. In the grace of God he truly is, for us, one of the earth's "beautiful people." Our forefathers in the Christian faith long ago accorded him the esteemed title, "Saint." God gave him the talent to write a record of earth-shaking events, and for the sake of the Gospel, Matthew did so. It should make us feel good to have information like that about our kinfolk. We all like to know we are related to real "winners." And Matthew – no question about it – was a winner. Let's take a close look at how this socially-certified "loser" became a winner.

The biographical record of the transformation is very brief. It

takes less than one New Testament verse for Matthew to recount the history: "... (Jesus) saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, 'Follow me'." There, you have heard it all, every word that was written in the opening chapter of the biography of one whom we gladly name as our kinsman. It is a sketchy history, to be sure. It doesn't provide the details we might like to have, curious people as we are about our ancestors, but it must suffice. (Until we enter heaven, our questions about this and other similar matters will remain unanswered, and once we are in heaven, I presume we will have better things to do with our time and energy than chase Matthew in order to get from him the colorful details of his history.) You see, to read the rest of Matthew's Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, is to realize that that former tax collector – even in this first chapter of a long story of disciples and following Jesus – was most concerned to tell others the incredible news of Jesus who, contrary to all popular expectations invites sinners and outcasts into his fellowship. If we truly understand the circumstances of a tax collector in that old world, it is surprising, it is astonishing, it is beyond belief to hear that Jesus would dare to approach a Matthew and invite him into a godly fellowship. And that is precisely the amazing grace which underlies that short autobiographical note with which the gospel begins: that Jesus the Messiah should invite sinners to join him in the love and work of God; and even more that that, that by the simple call of God in Christ sinners become sons and daughters of God!

That kind of information, that good news stretches beyond the range of ordinary belief and imagination. That, however, is the very nature of the Gospel! The grace of the almighty and all-holy God reaches out to embrace even the most unworthy. How incredible that love which occasions the invitation to be followers and disciples!

The invitation is declared to all the Matthews of this world so simply: "Follow me." Jesus doesn't set down a list of prerequisites to be met before we answer his calling. And he doesn't go on to announce that now that you have responded to the invitation, you will receive a thick book containing page after page of instructions and regulations for all who intend to be his followers. He simply says: "Follow me,"... and then waits to see what happens.

What happens is this: as we become his followers, we soon learn that he leads us into a new life and way of living. In God's wonderful way of working, we become more and more attached to him whom we follow, namely the person of God's Son, Jesus. That attachment, that "marriage," that union produces its own results. Attitudes, for example, are changed. The ways in which we are willing to expend time and energy of our pocketbooks is transferred. Old ways and old obsessions are put to death, and new ways of looking and hearing and thinking and living are brought to life. Sometimes in Christian experience the hearing of the invitation and its responses are abrupt; sometimes the whole experience is so gradual in taking place that the realization that we are on the course of following Jesus comes almost as a surprise. But regardless of how it happens or has happened in your life, know this: the invitation to follow the Lord Jesus Christ embodies within itself the power to fill your life with the joy of sin forgiven and the certainty of being about God's business forever. We confess that our following is day-by-day by faith only, but that same faith hears and believes the promise: "Lo, I am with you always." Rejoice, for you are called!

QUOTES TO REMEMBER

"The purpose of disciple making is not disciple making for its own sake. We aim to populate heaven, to reach the most people

possible with the life-saving, life-changing message of Jesus Christ."

"Measuring a church by bodies, bucks and buildings means nothing more than having 'the right fluff'. The true measure of a church's success is what it does to the hearts of people. Does it turn Christians into Disciples?"

"So how can we measure the effectiveness of the church? By the ability of its members to penetrate their world for Christ. The best way and the right way to grow a church is to improve the members' penetration ability."

"Disciple making is the heart of the church, and it is God's will for every believer to be a disciple... not just a Christian."

"The Great Commission is repeated five times in the Bible...

John 20:21

Mark 16:15-18

Luke 24:44-49

Acts 1:8

Matthew 28:18-20

If you put it all together it would read like this: 'Go, preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Make sure that signs of God's power are present with you. Start at home and work your way toward the remotest parts of the globe.' It is a challenge to be 'fishers of men.'"

WHEW! TALK ABOUT THE HOT SEAT!!!

This one will make you stop and shudder! If the devil were to write his devilattitudes, they would probably go something like this:

1. Blessed are those who are too tired, too busy, too distracted to spend an hour once a week with their fellow Christians – they are my best workers.
 2. Blessed are those Christians who wait to be asked and expect to be thanked – I can use them.
 3. Blessed are the touchy, who stop going to church because they get their feelings hurt or don't like what's going on – they are my missionaries.
 4. Blessed are the trouble makers – they shall be called my children.
 5. Blessed are the complainers – I'm all ears to them.
 6. Blessed are those who are bored with the minister's mannerisms and mistakes – for they get nothing out of his sermons.
 7. Blessed is the church member who expects to be invited to his own church – for he is part of the problem instead of the solution.
 8. Blessed are those who gossip – for they shall cause strife and divisions that please me.
 9. Blessed are those who are easily offended – for they will soon get angry and quit.
 10. Blessed are those who do not give their tithes & offerings to carry on God's work – for they are my helpers.
 11. Blessed is he who professes to love God but hates his brother and sister – for he shall be with me forever.
 12. Blessed are you who, when you read this think it is about other people and not yourself – I've got you, too!"
- OUCH!!

SPECIAL BLOOD DRIVE

ON Thursday, July 28

TIME: 2-7 pm

Please make an appointment!

We need all the help we can get to meet our goal!!! Ask your friends, neighbors, co-workers, and family to come and give blood.

HOW WELL DO YOU WORSHIP?

(From *Bridges for Peace Israel Teaching Letter*)

The worship of the Lord involves much more than going to a service where we sing some songs and hear the preaching of the Word. Worshiping God is a lifestyle that encompasses our whole being, day in and day out – what we say, what we do, and most importantly, how we do it. Praise and worship is the highest form of thanksgiving that one can offer. The Hebrew language helps us to understand the full dimension of what our praise and worship should be.

Hallel: means to boast, rave or celebrate clamorously. Psalm 44:8 - *In God we make our boast (hallel) all the day long.*

Todah: means thanks, but also from the root for hand, means to extend the hands in adoration. Psalm 50:23 - *He who sacrifices thank offerings (todah) to Me honors Me, and prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God.*

Barach: means to bend the knee, to bow low, to empower for success, blessing. Psalm 103:1 - *Praise (barach) the Lord, O my soul.*

Shabach: means shout, mirth and loud adoration offered with an unashamed voice. Psalm 117:1 *Praise the Lord all you nations, extol (shabach) Him, all you peoples.*

Teruah: means a shout as at the walls of Jericho but also the long loud sound that the shofar (ram’s horn) makes. Psalm 89:15 - *Blessed are all those who have learned to acclaim (teruah) You...*

Hishtachavey: means worship in the act of bowing oneself down in awe of the Lord in submission. Generally a quiet act. Genesis 22:5 - *He said to his servants, ‘Stay here with the donkey while the boy and I go over there. We will worship (hishtachavey) and then we will come back to you.*

Gil: means to turn around, spin, dance in exuberant joy. Zephaniah 3:17 - *The Lord your God is mighty in your midst; He will save. He will rejoice over you with joy. He will rest in His love. He rejoices (ya-GIL-elyeick) over you with a joyful shout.*

ONE OF THREE

1. Who was a son of Noah? Dan, Ham or On? (Genesis 5:32)
2. Who was the treasurer of the group of apostles? Judas, James, or Jannes? (John 13:29)
3. To whom did Jesus say, “Feed my sheep”? Peter, James, or John? (John 21:15)
4. Where did the city wall collapse in Joshua’s day? Megiddo, Jericho, or Pimlico? (Hebrews 11:30)
5. Where were followers of Jesus first called Christians? Athens, Antioch, or Attalia? (Acts 11:26)
6. Where did John write to “the seven churches”? Patmos, Patara, or Pathros? (Revelation 1:9)
7. Where did Simon the Leper live? Bethel, Bethany, or Bethsaida? (Mark 14:3)
8. Who was Queen of Ethiopia? Canaan, Candace, or Cana? (Acts 8:27)
9. What was the name of a proconsul of Achaia? Galilee, Gallio, or Galileo? (Acts 18:12)
10. Who was the secretary of King Jehoiakim’s palace? Elijah, Elisha, or Elishama? (Jeremiah 36:12)

WORDS & THEIR BIBLICAL DEFINITIONS

Connect each word with the proper Biblical definition.

- | | |
|------------------|------------------------|
| ASHER | APPOINTED |
| BABEL | A PRINCE OF GOD |
| BETHEL | A TROOP |
| BOANERGES | BITTER |
| CEPHAS | BOOTHES |

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| CORBAN | CONFUSION |
| EDOM | DRAWN OUT |
| EMMANUEL | GIFT |
| EVE | GOD WITH US |
| GAD | HAPPY |
| ISRAEL | HOUSE OF GOD |
| JESUS | MANY |
| LEGION | MOTHER OF ALL LIVING |
| MARAH | RED |
| MESSIAS | SAVIOR |
| MOSES | SENT |
| SETH | SONS OF THUNDER |
| SILOAM | STONE |
| SUCCOTH | TAKEN OUT OF MAN |
| WOMAN | THE CHRIST |

One of Three - 1. Ham; 2. Judas; 3. Peter; 4. Jericho; 5. Antioch; 6. Patmos; 7. Bethany; 8. Candace; 9. Gallio; 10. Elishama
 Words & Their Biblical Definitions - Asher-Happy; Babel-Confusion; Bethel-House of God; Boanerges-Sons of Thunder; Cephas-Stone; Corban-Gift; Edom-Red; Emanuel-God With Us; Eve-Mother of all Living; Gad-A Troop; Israel-A Prince of God; Jesus-Savior; Legion-Many; Marah-Bitter; Messias-The Christ; Moses-Drawn Out; Seth-Appointed; Siloam-Sent; Succoth-Booths; Woman-Taken out of Man

YOUTH NEWS

DON'T FORGET!!
YOUTH FELLOWSHIP (grades 6-12) - WEDNESDAYS, 7-8:30 pm weekly (following the Mid-Week Worship Celebration)! Come and experience it! Bring your friends!!

YOUTH SPIRITUAL GROWTH GROUP - THURSDAYS at 7pm (EVERY YOUTH is invited!) **On hiatus until September**

YOUTH BIBLE FELLOWSHIP - for Jr & Sr High - 9:30 am Sunday mornings
 Worship Celebrations - Sundays at 8:15 and 10:45 am and Wednesdays at 6:30pm

PLEASE HELP US OUT!
EMPTY INKJET PRINTER CARTRIDGES
 Please donate your empty inkjet printer cartridges to the youth group to be recycled. A container is placed in the **coat room** to receive your donations. **KEEP THOSE CARTRIDGES COMING!** We appreciate every bit of help we receive.

SUMMER EVENTS for YOUTH in grades 6-12
 Friday, July 8 - Mini-Golf
 Saturday, July 16 - POOL Party
 Wednesday, July 20 - Bonfire and Cookout
 Saturday-Sunday, July 30-31 - Beach Trip (sign up deadline-July 17)
 Saturday, August 13 -Good Works Workday (sign up deadline-July 10)
 Saturday, August 20 - White Water Rafting (sign up deadline-July 10)
 Wednesday, August 24 - Slip-n-Slide Kickball
Please sign up NOW for these events!

CHILDREN'S NEWS

COOL KIDS - Children, 4 years old up through grade 3 are invited to participate in COOL Kids on Sunday mornings at both the 8:15 and 10:45 celebration services. Following the praise time and the reading of scripture in the Worship Center, kids are dismissed to ROOM 108. COOL Kids (Children Of Our Lord Kids) helps kids learn to celebrate Christ in a way they enjoy and become excited about.

SUMMER EVENTS for EVERYONE!

Sunday, July 31 - The CORD (Peter, Paul & Dontell) will perform at the United Church of Surf City.

Why not make a day of it. Come to Surf City for worship at 10am, visit the beach and stay for the Concert at 3pm. Sign up now so Mrs J knows how many to cook for.

Saturday, August 20 - White Water Rafting - Deadline to sign up is July 10

Saturday, September 10 - SOULED OUT 2016

Friday, September 23 - NEWSBOYS Concert at "The BOB"
Deadline for sign up is July 24.

EMAIL TROUBLES

It has come to our attention that many of you who have a verizon.net email address are not receiving the newsletter or the links or anything else that comes from the church office. We have been told that if you go into your verizon settings you can select to receive emails from the church email address (fbccoatpa@aol.com). Otherwise they go to your spam folder and are immediately deleted. If you continue to have problems, please let the church office know. Thank you.

ON HIATUS

BIBLE STUDY for WOMEN, and SPIRITUAL GROWTH GROUPS will be on hiatus for the summer. They will start up again in September. Watch for the opportunity to sign up for Spiritual Growth Groups in August.

CONGRATULATIONS!

To those from our fellowship who graduated from high school this year:

Briana Richardson
Tiffany Schweitzer

SAVE THE DATE!!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2pm til dusk
SOULED OUT 2016

Remember, SOULED OUT is a festival of song and spoken word in praise of our Creator - God Almighty. Start inviting your friends NOW! Block out this date so you won't miss this wonderful day. Line up of musical groups will be announced at a later date They will lead us in worship & praise all afternoon & evening. Special prayer events and activities for children and DINNER on the grounds—What a GREAT day this always is!!

Watch for posters & flyers to use to invite your friends and family. Bring your lawn chair and stay ALL DAY! ALSO, be ready to sign up to donate food and volunteer to help with cooking, clean up, etc. We will have a GREAT TIME – RAIN or SHINE!

And don't forget that we will again have the **BIZARRE BAZAAR**. What an added treat this was last year. Vendors are being lined up fo this additional bonus at SOULED OUT 2016. If you know someone that

should be contacted, speak to Deb Logan as soon as you can.

IS GOD AT THE CENTER OF YOUR LIFE?

Living the Christian life doesn't have to be a mystery. Although faith involves believing in what we cannot see, the Bible gives us plenty of help and hope along the way. There are several key ways to know God and grow closer to Him, gaining a deeper understanding of what He wants for us. We should develop healthy habits through praying, reading Scripture, depending on Him, being obedient, serving others, and telling others the good news. If we are serious about our commitment to the Lord, one day at a time, we can reignite and fuel our faith.

FORGIVENESS THROUGH THE CROSS

The crucifixion has been called "the best-known fact in the life of Jesus." The only words of Jesus from the cross recorded by Mark and Matthew were the first line of Psalm 22:1 in Aramaic or Hebrew: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There are two main interpretations of this word from the cross. One is that it was a cry of temporary desolation as Jesus stood upon the threshold of death. A second is that it was an appeal to God in which the Son of God identified himself with the psalmist in his terrifying complaint of being deserted by the Father. It should be recalled that the entire psalm was very familiar to Jesus. He well knew that the psalmist went on to express assurance that God who seemingly had forsaken him would surely answer his desperate need in his hour of suffering. Whatever the interpretation, two facts are certain. One is that Jesus' cry from the cross revealed the awful loneliness of his suffering on behalf of mankind. The other is that the cry of his humanity never dimmed his consciousness of God. He might have despaired in his solitary endurance of the cross, but he never denied God.

Few passages reveal so clearly the awfulness of sin in its rebellion against God That the sinless Son of God should be nailed to a cross, taunted by wicked men, and left to die alone like a murderer was the fullest unveiling of the heinousness of man's darkened heart.

Luke does not refer to this word from the cross. Instead, he records another which epitomizes the forgiveness of a merciful and loving God: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Although these words do not appear in some of the older manuscripts, their inclusion in our New Testament is certainly in complete keeping with the nature of Jesus Christ. This is the kind of God with whom we deal, one whose love is great enough to breathe a prayer for forgiveness for his enemies in the hour of his greatest suffering.

The taunt which some of the religious rulers flaunted at Jesus, "He saved others; let him save himself" (Luke 23:35), reveals a profound observation concerning the arrogance of mankind. Actually, however, it unveils more about God than about man. For while, on the surface, it seems to indicate a weakness in God, it really says much about his omnipotence. There are many things in this world which God cannot do without contradicting himself. He cannot stop wars until men and women are ready to stop them. He cannot keep the evil of men from hurting those who are innocent. He does not force himself into the hearts of people. He waits in solemn majesty and dignity to be admitted by those who will receive him. His ways are not our ways; his kingdom is not like the kingdoms of this world; his kind of power is not like the power of the mighty of earth. In his death on the cross he fulfilled in his own life the principle which he taught: *Except a seed fall into the ground and die, it can bear no fruit.*

What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend.

With Jesus on Calvary were two malefactors who were crucified with him. Their crosses cause us to remember that the wicked of this world are punished. They throw into stark reality the suffering of the innocent Savior. And when one of the thieves, who was deeply involved in the world of sin, repented of his evil life and looked to Jesus for salvation, the real meaning of Calvary became evident. For Jesus' reply was a full pardon: "Verily I say unto thee, Today you shall be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). From that moment until now, this word from the cross has assured sinners of forgiveness no matter how deeply they have sinned.

Not long after this act of grace, the Savior cried with a loud voice: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). And saying this, he breathed his last. How fitting that the sufferings of our Lord on the cross should have ended in such triumph over sin. Even in his death, he identified himself with humanity, assuring a humble thief that he should be united with him that day in paradise.

The transforming power of Christ's suffering was evident even before he died. We have noted already the redemption of the dying thief. We marvel at the testimony of the centurion, a Roman, who saw in Jesus "a righteous man," or as Mark reported his word, "The Son of God".

Further evidence of the transforming power of his suffering may be inferred from the witness of Joseph of Arimathea. Here was a man who was a ruler of the Jews, a person of prominence, and one who did not vote with the others to condemn the Savior. It required genuine courage for him to go to Pilate and request the body of Jesus for burial. Certainly, his act demonstrated the power of Christ at work in his life.

We learn from this account of our Lord's suffering and death on the cross a very important truth. It is that the cross forces men and women to a response, either for or against Christ. It is little wonder that the events of Calvary and the resurrection divide history into two eras – before Christ and after Christ. They constitute the watershed which separates the time of despair from the time of hope, the time of judgment from the time of grace.

The strange power of Christ's suffering has caused men to turn from cursing the cross to kneeling before it in complete obedience to the Christ through whom they have found forgiveness and the love of God. No finer symbol of the hope of the world is to be found than that instrument of torture and death upon which Jesus hung on Calvary's hill. In his suffering for mankind lies the one hope of the world for peace, for it brings into the lives of all who respond to it the experience of being loved by God. Men and women then come to know how to love their neighbors. It is therefore the only effective way by which men and women learn how to become peacemakers, people of good will, the children of God.

A PRESCRIPTION FROM THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

Read this prescription aloud three times a day. Why three times a day? Did you ever take medication from a doctor only once or twice and stop it? If you did, you know that the medication did not work because you should have finished the prescription for it to be fully effective. The same is true of God's healing. There is great power in voicing these truths repeatedly.

Death and life (disease and health) are in the power of the tongue. Proverbs 18:21

The more you verbalize these truths, the more they will become part of your spiritual being. Remember, God wants you to enjoy health.

And the Lord will take away from you all illness. Deuteronomy 7:15

God does not give disease or punish with illness. God's desire is for us to be healthy.

Bless the Lord, oh my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name!

Bless the Lord, oh my soul; and forget not all his benefits; who forgives all of your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your desires with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.

Psalm 103:1-5

Surely he has borne our griefs (sickness) and carried our sorrows (pains)... and by his stripes (wounds) we are healed. Isaiah 53:4-5

A PRAYER FOR HEALING

Almighty and loving Father; you gave your beloved Son for our redemption and healing. Deeply imbedded in his wounds are all of our disease, all of our pain, all of our sorrows. My healing has already been accomplished. From now on instead of accepting sickness and disease, I receive only healing and health. I know these truths to be by God's promise in the name of my Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.



Psalm 33:12

MAY THIS AGAIN BE SO OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA!

HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY!