

Poignant Sayings of the Bible

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“Poignant” may not be a word most of us use every day. According to Merriam-Webster it conveys the idea of something that painfully affects the feelings, something that is deeply affecting, or something that is designed to make an impression. Many of us use familiar phrases like, “fight the good fight,” “going the extra mile” or “by the sweat of your brow” without giving them much thought. These sayings are poignant because they succinctly convey a mental picture that captures our attention and touches our emotions.

However as common as many of these sayings are, most of the time we don’t know where they come from or what their background may be. Often we’re surprised to

learn that many of these originated in the Scriptures.

In His sermon on the mount, Jesus said many things that have been shortened into familiar sayings. In this sermon Jesus primarily taught about the nature of His coming Kingdom. But He did so in a way that made deep, lasting impressions on the house of Israel, and by extension, us today.

For instance in Matthew 5:41 Jesus said, “*whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two.*” From this statement we get our familiar phrase, “going the extra mile.” When we use this phrase, we typically mean that we should give “it” our very best. What ever “it” is, we infer

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that we should go well beyond the minimum level of effort to ensure a positive outcome. But interestingly, this is not exactly what Jesus meant when He spoke of going the extra mile.

Notice the immediate context of Matthew 5:41. Go back to verse 38-39 where Jesus said, *"You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say to you, do not resist him who is evil."* He then gave three examples to illustrate what He meant by not resisting or taking revenge for evil. His third example was "going the extra mile."

In this illustration Jesus apparently alluded to an ancient practice (the first recorded use was by the Persians). Before the advent of the Internet, telephone, telegraph or even smoke signals or carrier pigeons, kings needed to rapidly disseminate important information in their realms. King Cyrus set up a national courier system comprised of official horsemen stationed at appropriate intervals throughout his empire. These heralds had the king's authority to compel anyone, or to confiscate any available means of transportation to ensure the rapid transmission of the king's decrees. We can see this system being used in Esther 8:9-14, specifically verse 14 says, *"The couriers, hastened and impelled by the king's command, went out, riding on the royal steeds; and the decree was given out in Susa the capital."* In Jesus' timeframe, a variation of this ancient practice had been extended to the Roman army. Soldiers could compel anyone to carry their gear one mile. Jesus taught that one should not resist or try to shirk this inconvenient "duty," but rather put the needs of the soldier ahead of themselves by gladly shouldering this burden and agreeing to go not just one mile, but to also go an extra mile.

In this publication issue, we'll discuss several poignant sayings from the bible. We'll examine: where these came from, who originally spoke them, and look at the original context or setting. We'll examine the original effect of the saying and compare with our usage today. We hope you find this issue enjoyable as well as enlightening.

No Peace for the Wicked

Tom Buckman

Biblically speaking, this phrase was first recorded in Isaiah. Isaiah 48:22 reads *“There is no peace for the wicked, says the Lord.”* Isaiah repeats this declaration in chapter 57 verses 20-21, which reads, (20) *“But the wicked are like the tossing of the sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud. (21) There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked.”*

In these admonitions, Isaiah appears to be identifying the failure of the Israelites to listen to the prophecies of the Lord and to obey His commandments. Early in Isaiah Chapter 47(v 4), God declares that, *“I know that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew, and your forehead bronze...”* In 47:8, Isaiah writes, *“You have not heard, you have not known. Even from long ago your ear has not been open, because I knew that you would deal very treacherously.”*

Basically God is saying these folks are Hard Headed and Hard Hearted!

But in our world today, this phrase seems to have taken a different direction. When we say there is “no peace for the wicked,” it is generally accepted that the “wicked” are the really, really bad guys. They are the ones who commit murder, embezzle large sums of money, or are involved other major illegal or scandalous activities. Or they may simply be those who openly deny the existence of God. Or those who are involved in all sorts of debauchery and “sins of the flesh.”

And granted – these folks are wicked. And in regard to their eternal destinies, there is absolutely no hope of peace for them.

However, the word translated “wicked” in Isaiah is *rasha*, and is commonly used to identify the category of people who had done wrong, are still living in sin, and are intent on continuing in wrong doing. The Septuagint has three translations of *rasha*: asebes (“godless, impious”); hamartolos (“sinner, sinful”) and anomos (“lawless”).

Then could the term “wicked” be applied to us? Could it be that our own sins, or our own godless or lawless behavior would put us in the same category of the people of Israel who had turned away from the God of their deliverance?

If so, then how can we avoid this? What can we do to obtain the true peace both in this life and the life to come?

Paul provides the answer in Philippians 4:4-7, *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. 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 comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”*

There was no “peace for the wicked” in the time of Isaiah. And I am confident there is no real peace for the wicked in our times today. But through obedience to God, we can obtain and enjoy overwhelming peace both in this life and in the life to come.

“The Lord bless you, and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace.” Numbers 26:24-26

For Everything There Is A Season

Charlotte Jobe

“For everything there is a season...” Ecc 3:1 One lesson we can learn from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 is that we live in a changing world. Some changes, like the seasons of the year or a new way we must drive to work, are accepted without much thought. There may be some inconvenience but we manage. Growth is change and wanted by God for Christians. II Pet.3:18 *“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.”*

“To make other than it is” is one definition given in Vines Expository Dictionary for change. The list of situations “To make other than it is” come from: family, job, move, health, economics, separation, education, age, etc.

The thought of change brings many things to mind. We often fear the unknown and that brings uncertainty. Having to do something different may make us uncomfortable. Our thoughts and actions may have to be altered. “Things just won’t be the same.” “It is hard.” “I can’t do this!”

Bible characters, as all people, were confronted with the challenges of change. Job had drastic life changes that brought anguish and that he did not understand. Some did not accept that changes must occur. Many of the religious leaders of the first century would not change (Acts 6:14). Paul and Barnabas had conflict that caused a change in preaching plans (Acts 15:36-41). By preaching, Paul found himself confined in Rome

(Acts 28:30-31). Christians were warned by Peter that change in the form of suffering would come to them (I Pet 5:10).

How will we or do we react to difficult change? Will we resist and fight against it as seen in the Jewish leaders? Even though we do not understand the why, will we go on as Job did? Can we continue with the work that the Lord has for us as Paul showed us? Do we realize that change is part of life and keep faithful as the persecuted Christians did?

Success in this part of our lives, will be seen in our dependence on God who changes not (Isa 46:10). All of His magnificent promises can be ours. We have no fear that they will not be completed. Whatever change comes into our lives REMEMBER:

I Pet 5:6 *“Humble yourselves, therefore under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.”*

Phil 4:6 *“Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made know to God.”*

Jude 24 *“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.”*

I Pet 4:19 *“Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.”*

In the different seasons of our lives, our song can be: “Oh, Thou who changest not, abide with me”



Feet of Clay

Steven D. Baxley

The phrase “feet of clay” is used in English to describe a person having “a character flaw that is not readily apparent,” first showing up in English usage in 1814 (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary). It is used particularly in reference to people of prominence or power. An example of its usage might be: “The news media is always quick to report on politicians’ feet of clay.”

This particular phrase comes from Daniel 2:31-45, specifically in verses 33-34 and 41-43. This passage concerns the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in a vision. The fourth kingdom represented in that vision would have feet “partly of iron and partly of clay” (vs. 33). Daniel gives the interpretation of this aspect of the image: it would be a divided kingdom (vs. 41), it would be “partly strong and partly brittle” (vs. 42), and the two parts would not be able to mix together (vs. 43). In the image, these feet are partially representative of the Roman Empire (since this fourth kingdom is represented not only by the iron/clay feet, but also the legs of iron – vs. 33). At no time does the image have “feet of clay”, but rather “feet of iron and clay.” Thus the English idiom is a slight variation of the Biblical original.

The dual parts of the image repre-

senting Rome are appropriate. Very strong in its early days, Rome is represented by legs of iron. However, as time went by, the Roman Empire was considerably weakened, to the point that the western Empire could no longer survive subsequent invasions from “barbarians” beyond its borders. Its “feet of iron and clay” could not support the Empire. The mixing of these two elements is also an appropriate picture of a very diverse empire, where numerous ethnic groups, speaking numerous languages, and practicing numerous religions, were held together only by the brutal rule of the emperor, carried out by his legions. The multiple revolts carried out throughout its history by its captive peoples demonstrate their desire to be free of such outside rule.

So, the English idiom borrows and changes slightly the imagery, but maintains the correct meaning. Rome appeared strong and invincible, but she would be destroyed by a stone cut out without hands, a kingdom set up by God which would fill all the world (Daniel 2:44-45). Rome had a hidden flaw, and hidden weakness, and this section of Daniel unmasks that flaw to show that the kingdom of God will reign supreme. The “feet of clay [and iron]” aptly describe this flaw in the character and composition of the last worldly kingdom described in the Bible.



Born Again

Ephriam Davis

How often have you heard, someone make a comment like, "I'm a born again Christian"? Many in the world use phrases like this as a means to "proclaim their allegiance to Jesus Christ" as a result of belief through mental consent only, without regard to what is meant by John 3:16 in full biblical context. In reality, the basis for the comment was what their "pastor" or a TV/Radio evangelists preached, or what they heard other family members or friends say. So what does it really mean to be "born again"?

We must first consider the occasion for this historical account as found in John 3:1-21. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews. Pharisees had a pattern of unwillingness to receive Jesus Christ's attempts to reach out in that they denied and rejected Him (Mat 23). However Nicodemus appeared to be willing to break from this pattern. The fact that he came by night, suggests that, while he was not totally ready to sever ties with the Pharisees, he was honest enough to at least privately acknowledge that Jesus Christ was a teacher from God because of the signs as He did in fulfillment of old testament prophesy (John 3:2, Isa 29:18-19; 35:5-6, Mat 11:2-6, John 20:30-31). Evidence of Nicodemus' willingness to break from the Pharisees is seen later in his public defense of Christ (John 7:50-51), and in his subsequent participation in the burial of the body of Jesus (John 19:38-42).

The Flesh –Vs– Spiritual Analogy: Christ often used commonly understood physical concepts to teach about un-seen spiritual

realities. For example, He used the metaphorical phrase, "the kingdom of heaven is like(ned)" 9 times to convey the importance and significance of kingdom or church that he was about build (Mat 13:24-52; Mat 20:1-16; Mat 22:2-14) He used the same style to teach Nicodemus, about the spiritual re-birth when He said we must be "born again."

Flesh / Physical Birth Process: Every man since Adam has come into this world the same way. Medical science has learned that water, which is referred to as amniotic fluid, is in God's plan.

"Amniotic fluid is a clear, slightly yellowish liquid that surrounds the unborn baby during pregnancy.... It is contained in the amniotic sac. While in the womb, the baby floats in the amniotic fluid. The amniotic fluid constantly moves (circulates) as the baby swallows and "inhales" the fluid, and then releases it. The amniotic fluid helps:

- The developing baby to move in the womb, allowing for proper bone growth.
- The lungs to develop properly.
- Keep a relatively constant temperature around the baby, protecting from heat loss.
- Protect the baby from outside injury by cushioning sudden blows or movements." (Ref 1)

In the natural process, when the baby reaches full term, the amniotic sac ruptures releasing the amniotic fluid, (water) through the birth canal. Thus the baby is born of water.

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Spiritual Re-birth Process: Every man has sin that separates him from God and the spiritual benefits of the kingdom of God (Rom 3:23, Isa 59:1-2). Man is consequently spiritually dead (Rom 6:23, Jas 1:13-15). Unlike the initial physical birth process, in which the baby has no choice in the matter, man is given the choice to accept or reject God's only plan of spiritual redemption to overcome this consequence. Just like water was in God's plan for the physical birth in the flesh, water was in the plan for spiritual re-birth. So no Nicodemus, Jesus was not saying that we must literally re-enter our mother's womb. He was speaking of the spiritually ordained process of being literally baptized in water for the spiritual forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:36-41, Acts 8:34-39, Acts 22:16, Rom 6:3-9). Thus a man can choose to be "born again."

Ref 1: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002220.htm>

Scapegoat

Russ Ward

Leviticus 16:1-34

Under the Law of Moses on the 10th day of the 7th month of the year the High Priest was required to make atonement for the sins of the people before the Lord Jehovah. This day was known as the Day of Atonement. The High Priest was to present unto the Lord, before the tabernacle, one bullock and two kid goats, all of which were to match the requirements laid out under the law as acceptable animals for sacrifice. The bullock was offered for the sins of the high priest. The two kids that were presented would

have lots cast on them by the High Priest. In this manner one would be selected as the atonement sacrifice for the people and the other as the scapegoat. The High Priest having followed all that was commanded of him for the atonement sacrifices would finish by placing his hands from the blood of the atonement sacrificial goat upon the scapegoat. The scapegoat was then lead away from the encampment of the people and was released into the wilderness bearing all the guilt of the sins of the people. In this manner the people were cleansed before Jehovah. (vs30) Both kids selected were without blemish, free of desecration, and worthy of presentation to Jehovah God. By chance and circumstance was the scapegoat selected and yet once presented before the Lord became the object of man's separation from Jehovah thus requiring it to bear the blood guilt of all of the people and to be removed from the presence of the Lord.

Webster defines a scapegoat as one who is selected for whatever reason to bear the blame for others. It is a common thing among mankind to take responsibility for actions deemed necessary and good, and also to look to someone else to bear the shame and reproach of those actions recognized as wrong, improper, or intolerable. We are quick to present ourselves worthy and just as quick to look toward someone else to blame for our shortcomings. However, in our colloquial use of the name we forget one important piece of its origination; the scapegoat was presented without blemish and innocent. Mankind's use is primarily one of convenience or conniving rather than one of sacrifice.

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

Mark Gray

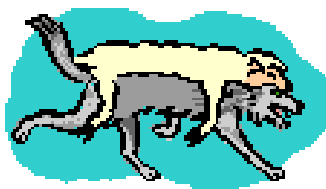
Near the end of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount He gives a warning to His listeners regarding false prophets. He says that they will *"come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."* Matthew 7:15 This message is a pretext to comparing people and prophets to fruit trees, and Jesus reminds the listeners twice that they *"will recognize them by their fruits."* (Mt 7:16, 20). A cleverly disguised wolf causes no alarm or fear when appearing as a sheep, but the wolf cannot hide what he is. Wolves are predators and cannot remain hidden among sheep for long before the sheep becomes a meal. These false prophets are the same. Their motivation does not come from righteousness or from following the Will of God, but rather comes from selfish motivations like power over others, esteem, and greed.

This message was to tell the listeners to be on guard because others would come along and claim to be either prophets or even the Messiah, but they should be vigilant and weigh actions and works against claims and messages. Jesus' message of obedience to God, service to mankind, and submission to government was not well received on a wide spread basis. Most were looking for a new king like David to lead a mighty war against Rome and reassert the authority of the Israelites in their land. Several "messiahs" at this time were drawing followers by proclaiming this type of message.

Jesus also knew that His time minister-

ing on earth was short, and His disciples would need to watch out for false teachers after His death. There were those with ulterior motives that would creep up in the faith like Simon in Acts 8. He attempted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit from Peter, but Peter rebuked him saying, *"Your heart is not right before God. ... Repent, therefore...I see you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."* Acts 8:18-24 I like to hope that Simon did repent, but undoubtedly there were many like him who sought the power of God for earthly gain. Groups also would rise and pervert the gospel of Jesus like the Nicolaitans (Rev 2:6) and the Gnostics (who would deny the deity of Christ) within a few years after Jesus' death. Surely, at least at their beginnings, these groups had an "appearance of godliness" as Paul warned Timothy in 2 Timothy 3.

Today, we use this phrase in a similar fashion. Someone who is not what they appear to be or who has malicious intentions is often called a wolf in sheep's clothing. The warning to those listening to the Sermon on the Mount is the same to us today. How can we keep on guard? We can be like the Bereans who *"received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."* Acts 17:11 How can we tell who is a wolf? *"By their fruits you will know them."* Like our first century brethren, we cannot become lax either. We need to make sure that what we hear preached is according to the Word of God. When we know the Bible, then we will not be easily fooled by treacherous wolves.



Pride Goes Before A Fall

Ken & Bobbie Ford

"God Bless the USA" is a patriotic song written and recorded by country music artist Lee Greenwood first in 1984. It reappeared after the events of 9/11 and again was a hit. The chorus:

***And I'm proud to be an American
Where at least I know I'm free
And I won't forget the men who died
Who gave that right to me***

Many of us know and sing this song. We also say how proud we are when our children do well in school, achieve honors in sports, or master memory work for bible class. We also talk of taking pride in homes, jobs, or actions like voting.

When we were younger, we heard a lesson teaching that all pride is sinful, and you shouldn't "have pride" in anything. It was even alleged that there was no instance in the Bible of pride as a good thing. After further study, we found that not to be the case:

Isaiah 4:2 Pride (linked with honor) in the fruit of the earth reflects the Lord's blessings. *"In that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel."*

I Cor. 15:30-32 Paul has pride in the brethren which he has in the Lord. NASV uses *"boasting in you."* *"Why are we in danger every hour? I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."*

II Cor. 7:4 Paul is telling them of the love he has for them. NASV has *"great is my boasting on your behalf";* KJ has *"great is my glorying of you."* *"I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy."*

So why do so many scriptures warn of pride, as in Proverbs 16:18, *"Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall."*

People of God before us: Adam, Eve, King Saul, Jonah, Manasseh, Judas, the rich young ruler, naming a few, had problems with their "pride of life" overriding the will of God. Would it be safe to say that all sin is the result of pride? Pride certainly is the cause of many sins: selfishness, vanity, not confessing sin, blaming others, not praying, materialism, lying, desiring status, etc. These are all symptoms of an evil heart, a sickness from within. Mark 7:21-23 reads, *"For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."* ESV This way of life results in falling from God's grace just as the Galatians were warned of their prideful observance of part of the law in Galatians 5:4, *"You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace."*

We have the answer in scripture to purge this sinful pride from our lives: repent and place our trust and confidence in the Lord. James 4:6-10 shows us how to humble ourselves before the Lord and save our souls.

Philippians 2:1-9, using Christ as the example, tells us how to live without “pride of life” thus avoiding a great fall which would be our destruction. The old hymn that goes from **“ALL OF SELF AND NONE OF THEE”** to **“NONE OF SELF AND ALL OF THEE”** have lyrics worth remembering!

The Good Samaritan

Rusty Moore

Today we often hear of someone who has done a good deed being called a “Good Samaritan.” We hear this phrase used by both believers and non-believers of Jesus. It is therefore nice to know the origin of this saying rests solely with Jesus Christ.

The story of the “Good Samaritan” is found in Luke 10: 25-37. Vs 25 mentions *“...a certain lawyer stood up and put Him (Jesus) to the test...”* (Note: The fact that the lawyer “stood up” indicates a formal setting. Also, a lawyer in this case was one who was knowledgeable of the Mosaic Law, and one who could interpret and teach it to others.) Therefore, one can gather the lawyer was asking his question from impure motives. He already knew the answer to his question of how to obtain eternal life. Jesus asked him how The Law read to him (vs. 26). The lawyer correctly answered one should love the Lord with all one’s heart, soul, strength & mind and one’s neighbor as oneself. Since the lawyer wasn’t able to trick Jesus into an incorrect answer, in order to justify himself, he tried again by asking Jesus *“who is my neighbor?”* (vs. 29) Jesus then proceeds to answer this question with the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

A *“certain man”* (who is most likely assumed to be a Jew) going from Jerusalem to Jericho is robbed and beaten by thieves and left “half dead.” Later, coming down the road are a couple of individuals respected by the Jews, namely a priest and Levite, who after noticing the man, just simply pass him by. Then a *“certain Samaritan”* (vs. 33) on a journey comes by. He however, possesses a personal quality not found in the priest or Levite, namely he *“felt compassion.”* Most likely this was a “shocker” to those who were listening to Jesus. A Samaritan who would’ve been looked down on by the Jews (John 4: 9 tells us that Jews had no dealings with Samaritans) was portrayed as being compassionate and caring, while the highly pious and respected priest and Levite were portrayed as being totally uncompassionate and uncaring. The Samaritan gives first aid to this stranger and then takes him to an inn and personally pays for his recuperation.

Jesus then has the lawyer answer his own original question by asking him who of the three demonstrated himself to be a neighbor to the injured man. It is interesting how the lawyer answers, *“the one who showed mercy,”* possibly not even wanting to mention the name “Samaritan” as the correct answer. Jesus responds for him to “go and do the same” (vs. 36).

In conclusion, it is my opinion, today’s usage of the term “Good Samaritan” is generally consistent with Jesus’ teaching, for those who would desire to follow God, to be truly compassionate and caring towards all. In addition however, Jesus within the context of this parable was no doubt demonstrating the hypocrisy inherent in those “so-

Forgive Them for They Know Not What They Do

Ron Gray

Jesus taught everyday in the temple; *“early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.”* Luke 21:37-38 *“The chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people.”* Luke 22:2 The chief priests along with the officers and elders arrested him and took him to their council to condemn him. Then, they took him to Pilate trying to have him executed for crimes against Rome and incited a crowd to back their demands. Pilate knew their motives (Matt. 27:18), but gave in to them, fearing a riot. He had Jesus scourged and crucified. Jesus’ apostles scattered in fear.

In the midst of the agonizing pain of his crucifixion, Jesus said, *“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”* Luke 23:34a Jesus had the power to forgive sin (Matt. 9:6), but he asked his Father to forgive them.

Dismissing the sins of the people just because they are ignorant is not taught in the scriptures. In fact, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 says, *“...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”*

The forgiveness that Jesus sought for these people came on the day of Pentecost when *“Peter, standing with the eleven lifted up his voice and addressed them.”* Acts 2:14-41 Peter told the crowd gathered there, *“this Jesus... you crucified and killed by the*

hands of lawless men.” Acts 2:23 *“When they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”* Acts 2:37-38) It appears that these people did not know that Jesus was truly the Son of God, though they knew of his “mighty works, wonders, and signs.” Acts chapter 3 proves that they *“knew not what they did.”* Verse 15, *“you killed the Author of life.”* Verse 17, *“I know that you acted in ignorance.”* Verse 19, *“Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out.”* – Considering these passages, only the ones who *obeyed* the gospel were given forgiveness of sins.

This statement when used today indicates that when someone is “ignorant” of the truth (“know not what they do”), then he may be “innocent” of the wrong. If a person is unaware of the truth, they should be forgiven for their actions. – We tend to have leniency on those who cause harm without realizing the impact of their actions. But, can we say to these people, “You are forgiven because you did not know what you were doing?” No, there are consequences for our actions.

It appears that many people in our society are well aware of the fact that they must obey the laws of the land and must learn skills that are instrumental in providing for their families. Yet, those same individuals ignore the laws of God and never attempt to learn *His* wisdom and instruction. They never

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seem to grasp the seriousness of obeying the gospel, even in its simplicity. They choose to remain blissfully ignorant of their duty to respond to God in faith, believing that forgiveness will be abundant on Judgment Day, when their response will be "I did not know."

Ignorance does not equal innocence. It was not so in Bible times, and it cannot be so today. If those who are ignorant of God's word were not held accountable for their sins, then we in attempting to teach them the Gospel would be their greatest enemy.

The Blind Leading The Blind

Donna Davis

"The blind leading the blind," sound familiar? This phrase may appear to have its roots in our modern day culture but is actually biblical in origin.

Jesus uses this phrase as a metaphor in the following verses : Matthew 15:14, 23:16 Luke 6:39 and similar expressions elsewhere in the scriptures to describe the spiritual condition of some of the Scribes and Pharisees.

As we recall, the Pharisees were a religious sect of the Jews, well known for their strict adherence to the letter of the Mosaic Law and their traditions. They emphasized external correctness but inwardly lacked any deep spiritual understanding and neglected weightier matters such as justice, mercy and faith. (Matt.23:23)

In Matthew 23:28 Jesus says concerning their spiritual condition: *"To men you appear to have an outward form of righteousness but inside are full of hypocrisy and lawless-*

ness." Their influence among society was very great and unfortunately many followed their example.

Their spiritual blindness led them to reject Jesus as the Christ and His teachings, thereby rejecting God and henceforth causing them to be incapable of properly guiding others.

Vines Dictionary of New Testament Words defines spiritual blindness as - a dulled spiritual perception, a covering with a callous (hard to penetrate).

Their leadership ineptness and spiritual blindness is clearly illustrated in John 9.

Jesus encounters a man who was born physically blind. v.1

He anoints the eyes of this man with clay and saliva. v.6

He tells him to: "Go wash in the pool of Siloam" v.7

The blind man went and washed and came back seeing. v.7

Observations:

He obeyed and followed Jesus' instructions v.7

He received his sight. v.7

He told the Pharisees and others how he received his sight. vss. 11, 15

Some of the Pharisees denounced Jesus as not being from God, because *"He does not keep the Sabbath."* v. 16

Others called Jesus a *"sinner."* v. 16

The blind man was asked, *"what do you say about him?"* His response, *"He is a prophet."* v.17

..So they again called the man who was

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blind and said to him, *"Give God the glory! We know that this Man (Jesus) is a sinner."* v. 24

He was only certain of one thing, *"One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see."* v. 25

He was asked again how his eyes were opened.. but they did not listen. v. 27

They reviled him. v. 28

And said to him , *"You are His (Jesus') disciple, but we are Moses' disciples."* v.28

The blind man's final response to them: *..."If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."* v.33

They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and you are teaching us?" And they cast him out of the synagogue. vss. 22, 34.

Conclusions: They were being taught some spiritual truths (although they rejected them) from the former blind man. He had been led out of his physical blindness and into spiritual enlightenment by Jesus because of his willingness to listen and submit to the instructions of the master teacher. Luke 6:40; John 9:35-38

"A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher." Luke 6:40

The Pharisees and those who followed them believed they knew more than Jesus and the former blind man and did not acknowledge their blindness (John 9:34)

Lessons we can learn: Spiritual Blindness causes one to make unrighteous judgments (John 7:24); the Pharisees accused Jesus of being a sinner i.e., because he healed the

blind man on the Sabbath, (John 9:14) yet they were blind of the fact that they sometimes circumcised a male child on a Sabbath (if the 8th day from his birth fell on a Sabbath day) in order to keep the Law of Moses. (Gen. 17:10-12; John 7:22-23)

In a spiritual sense one can become lost eternally. (John 9:41)

In a secular sense the term "blind leading the blind" in its modern day usage implies that those who are teachers/leaders must be able to see better than those they are leading otherwise they can cause their followers to stumble, fall, lose their way!

Let us remember the words of the apostle Paul, *"...Follow me as I also follow Christ."* 1 Cor 4:16, 11:1. And the words of Jesus, *"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."* John 8:12

How Are The Mighty Fallen

Steven D. Baxley

This particular idiom in English is used to describe how those who were previously powerful are now reduced. Forbes Magazine modified this phrase in a May 10, 2010 listing: "The Mighty, The Fallen" which was given the subtitle: "Stumbles by some famous companies since our 2005 Global 2000. Economies and labor have also given up ground." So, the phrase can be used not only to refer to once-powerful individuals, but also one-powerful companies and economies, who were subsequently reduced a much weaker position. It can be used to

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merely express surprise at a change of fortune, but its connotation is also often one of delight to see the strong brought low, without regard to the consequences of that fall.

This phrase can be found three times in the Bible, all of them in one particular passage, 2 Samuel 1:17-27. This text records David's lament over the death of Saul and Saul's son Jonathan. Saul and Jonathan had perished on Mt. Gilboa, Jonathan in battle, Saul by his own hand when wounded and not wanting to be captured by the Philistines (1 Samuel 31).

David's use of this phrase is not one of rejoicing and exultation. Quite the opposite is true, in fact. David was deeply grieved by the death of Saul (in spite of the fact that Saul had sought to kill David). Throughout the time that David was fleeing from Saul, even when he had opportunity to kill him, David refused to bring any harm to Saul (see 1 Samuel 24). In fact, when David cut off the corner of Saul's garment, he was repentant that he had done even that! Later, after the battle, when a young Amalekite brings word that he had slain Saul at Saul's request, David's orders him executed for having (claimed) to kill Saul. David was also grieved by Saul's son Jonathan's death. Jonathan and David were close friends, in spite of being on two different sides of Saul's favor (1 Samuel 18:1-3; 2 Samuel 1:26).

David's sorrow at the death of these two warriors was genuine (2 Samuel 1:22-23, 27). He viewed their passing not only in terms of his own personal loss, but in terms of the loss that they represented for the nation (2 Samuel 1:24). Even in regards to the death of Saul, which cleared the way for David to

be king, David found no reason at all for rejoicing or delight. The mighty had fallen, and that was a reason to mourn and lament.

The Writing On The Wall

Russ Ward

Daniel 5:1-30

During the time of the Babylonian Kingdom, Belshazzar son of Nebuchadnezzar reigned as King and prepared a great feast for his princes, wives, and concubines. During the feasting he called for the vessels taken from the temple of Jehovah to be brought into the feasting room and they all drank from them toasting the gods of silver and gold. As they continued this abomination a hand appeared and began to write on the side of the wall and none could discern its meaning. Daniel was then remembered who had served his father and was brought before Belshazzar. Daniel recounts the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar by God reminding Belshazzar that he himself knew of these things yet had not humbled himself and had in his pride desecrated the holy vessels of Jehovah. These then were the words that were written "**MENE MENE TEKEL UPHARSIN**" meaning "*God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it, thou are weighed in the balance and found wanting, thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.*" That very night the Kingdom of Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians and Belshazzar was slain. There are a number of phrases used today that come from bits and pieces of this writing from the hand of God

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(Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting, Thy Kingdom is divided, etc..) but as a collective whole it brings forth a sense of eventuality, finality, and loss. As Belshazzar did in his day we hear it said, we know and understand the essence portrayed by the words, and we comprehend the severity of what is about to transpire. What we often don't consider is its origination and that its use is tied to a collection of evidences leading to an eventual, inevitable, and unpleasant outcome.

What is truth?

Carol Fertig

John 18:38

A good theater/film director knows that meaning is conveyed by the way in which a line is delivered. Many times I have wondered as I read Pilate's query to Jesus, "*What is truth?*" just what Pilate may have revealed by his tone, attitude, etc. It's improbable that he was asking seriously for enlightenment. Was he being sarcastic? Scornful? Puzzled? Impatient? The scripture gives no modifier to the verb to tell us: simply "**Pilate said . . .**" Whatever Pilate's tone, whatever his motive in asking the question, there is a certain poignancy in the moment and in the question.

Pilate had just received Jesus from the hands of the high priest, and his first question to Jesus concerned the accusation the Jews were bringing against Him. John 18:33 says, "*So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to Him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?'*" His interest was only in whether or not Jesus was a threat to

the Roman government. Jesus' answer that "*My kingdom is not of this world ...*" John 18:36, obviously satisfied Pilate's concerns on that score, for he told the Jews "*... I find no guilt in him.*" John 18:38 The rest of the answer Jesus gave was what prompted Pilate's question about truth: "*. . . You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world – to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.*" John 18:37 Much later thinkers such as Paul Taborsky assert "*. . . that there is no such thing as absolute, pure Truth . . .*" when writing of Postmodern philosophy.¹ How arrogant to believe that Jesus would witness something that does not exist and have us listen to it!

John tells us at the beginning of his gospel "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" John 1:1 Then John says, "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*" John 1:14 It is this Son whom Pilate asks about truth, probably in a disrespectful way! Jesus told the Jews who had believed in Him, later in His ministry, "*. . . you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*" John 8:32 Yet skeptics such as Fredrich Nietzsche and Thomas Kuhn propound that truth is limited, approximate and always evolving. Seems the truth of Jesus is bedrock and that of the later philosophers is quicksand! Near the end of His life, just before He was betrayed, Jesus prayed to God for the disciples who would carry on after He returned to

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heaven: *"Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth."* John 17:17 There is no space in these statements for the shifting and subjective sort of "truth" in man's later thinking. Jesus is the word, and the word is truth. Jesus makes it abundantly clear in one of His impressive "I Am" statements from the book of John: *". . . I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* John 14:6 The truth that Pilate asked about is a powerful entity that will sanctify and free us! This is truth: solid, absolute, and worth our respect and service! *"Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding."* Proverbs 23:23

The poignancy of the situation and statement arises from Jesus just having spent a very tender time with his apostles preparing them for His death and departure. Though they should have known Jesus and His mission very well by this time, both Thomas and Philip showed that they did not understand: *"Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?'"* John 14:5 and *"Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.'"* John 14:8 Might Jesus have heard an echo of their questions in Pilate's question: *"What is truth?"* He had spent His life revealing Himself as the very embodiment of Truth, only at the end to be asked this poignant question. Unfortunately man is still asking the question and answering it for himself in any way which suits each man's own economy of things.

¹<http://www.spaceandmotion.com/Philosophy-Postmodernism.htm>

An Eye for an Eye, A Tooth for a Tooth

Jonathan Rodriguez

When we hear of a heinous crime in the news, a variety of emotions are often displayed. They can vary from sadness to anger, but more often than not, people often chime in with a quick "They should do the same to them" judgment. We live in a nation, in which its society is one that seeks justice; and whether it is fueled by righteousness or revenge, we must understand that the decision to cast judgment is not up to us. We are never commanded to judge according to our righteousness. Rather, we are to follow the laws of Him who gave it and wrote it. When God enacted this law, often referred as an "eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" law, in his infinite wisdom God intended for it to bring a fair and just judgment for his people, and perhaps to serve as a deterrent for potential offenders (Exodus 21:24-25) The truth of the matter is that it served its purpose, in its time and for his people in that time.

Today, God through our Savior, enacted a new law for his people, "You have heard that it was said, *"An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'* *But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you."* Matt 5:38-42 Why the change? Perhaps, the change from a physical kingdom to a spiritual kingdom,

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rendered the law inadequate. Whether this is the reason or not, the fact is that our citizenship, although, is in Heaven we still inhabit the earth, and are subject to the laws of the nation in which we live. Therefore, there are crimes in our nation and states, for which there is a penalty of death. As new testament Christians, we are never commanded to act as judges in matters of this world, we are commanded to carry out judgment for the laws enacted. In the Old Testament things were different, there was a law, and judge to dictate sentence based on what was written, and sentence was often carried immediately. In Matthew 5:39-42, we see an extremely different idea. We are taken from a self righteous attitude to one of service. We of all people, ought to be glad that God, does not apply the "Eye for an Eye a Tooth for a Tooth" when we transgress His law.

By the Skin of Your Teeth

Craig Sweet

Being a chronic procrastinator, my children gave me a sign for my office that reads, "If it wasn't for the last minute, nothing would ever get done around here!" I seem to always be running behind in my tasks or late in what I am scheduled to be doing. So, the old saying, "by the skin of my teeth" seems to hit home with me. I often seem to be getting something done by the narrowest of margins which is where the present day use of the term "by the skin of my teeth" seems to have evolved. Job was the one who coined this phrase in Job 19:20. Job at this point in the scriptures is in the deepest

of despair, his body wasting away to basically skin and bone, and everyone being against him. He is as close to death as it seems possible. He may or may not have literally meant the skin of his teeth since we know that teeth do not have skin. However, he needed to describe how very close to death he felt and that seemed to be an appropriate description for how he felt.

Today, too many people live their lives close to the edge of sin. Too often, people treat the hope of heaven by some sort of measurement. I have heard some say, "I will get to heaven by the skin of my teeth". Unfortunately, this sort of attitude is not biblically based. The bible does not teach there are degrees by which people make it into heaven. Either they make it or they don't. The sad thing is that some live their lives as if they will just barely make it into heaven; living partly in the world and partly for Jesus. The reality is that if each one of us really got the reward we deserved, none of us would make it to heaven (Rom 3:23). We are not saved by how much we do (works), but how we live for Jesus. It is how we live that drives what we are willing to do for Him. In the end, we are all saved by the grace of God (Rom 11:6).

When someone looks at their life and thinks that heaven is something that may or may not be a reward for them, they need to examine how they are living their life. They may have missed the understanding that when we live for Jesus and follow his commandments to the best of our abilities, our shortcomings will be covered by the grace of God. If in our heart we know that we are

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not living for Jesus, then we should be concerned that heaven might not be there for us. Don't make the mistake of putting off living for Jesus until tomorrow so that you can live like you want to today and then at some point in the future live for Him thinking you will just squeak into heaven by "the skin of your teeth."

A Man After God's Own Heart

Phil Lumpkin

"A Man After My Own Heart" is a saying that many of us have probably used at one time or another. It fits both genders, knows no age boundaries and evokes a complementary and "brotherly" sentiment. Figuratively speaking it refers to someone who has similar tastes, opinions, feelings, or preferences as our own. For instance, we may have a special food we enjoy; when we find someone else who also delights in this food, we might say, "a man after my own heart."

For students of the Old Testament this is a familiar saying that was initially used in reference to David, who would become the future king of Israel. 1 Samuel 13 begins with King Saul beginning his reign over Israel and facing a major invasion by the Philistines into the very heart of the budding nation. The threat was so severe that the Israelites hid themselves in caves, thickets, cliffs, cellars and pits. Saul himself seem to have fled to Gilgal in the Jordan River valley and was waiting for Samuel to come offer a burnt offering, asking for the favor of the Lord that Israel might repulse the Philistines. Saul and his small band of soldiers waited, but Samuel

delayed in coming. Patience was never one of Saul's strong suits and he eventually took it upon himself to offer the sacrifice. Samuel then arrived and said, "*you have acted foolishly, you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you.*" 1 Sam 13:13a This was the first incidence of Saul not following God's command. Samuel continued in verse 13b-14a saying, "*for now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever, but now your kingdom shall not endure.*" Kings typically established dynasties, where their descendants would rule upon their death, but due to his disobedience, the Lord pulled the rug out from under any of Saul's dynastic plans from the very beginning of his reign.

It is in this context that Samuel uttered this familiar saying, "*The Lord has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.*" 1 Sam 13:14 It shouldn't be surprising to us that Saul, who had not trusted in the Lord and who had disobeyed the Lord, was not a man after God's own heart. John, the apostle, wrote, "*the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him and He in him.*" 1 John 3:24a

On Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey Paul stood up in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch and said, "*He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will.'*" Acts 13:22 Once again we are shown the connection between being a person after God's own heart and the person who is willing to submit to the whole will of

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God.

Being a person after God's own heart doesn't imply some form of sinless perfection. We understand from the life of David that he sinned grievously. But he was also a man who acknowledged his disobedience and repented. Psalm 51:1-4a reads: *"Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness; According to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, And done what is evil in Thy sight."*

So the way we use "a man after my own heart" appears to be basically consistent with its use in the Bible. The Lord Himself uttered this phrase which makes it very special indeed. We may use it in a secular way, but our Lord uttered it in a spiritual sense to pay King David the highest of complements.

Oh You Of Little Faith

Phil Lumpkin

How many times have you heard this saying? "Oh you of little faith" is often uttered as a mild, even humorous rebuke aimed at those who doubt our abilities, plans or vision. As an example, someone might say, "you thought I couldn't boil water without scorching it—oh you of little faith." Once again this familiar phrase had its origin in the Bible.

Jesus spoke these words as a mild rebuke four different times to His disciples as recorded by Matthew. In Matthew 6:24-34 during His sermon on the mount, Jesus said, "I say

to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?" Mat 6:25 Jesus then gave examples of how the Lord cares for the birds of the air, even though they neither sow, reap nor gather into barns. Then He contrasted the worth of a bird with mankind. As Jesus so often did, He followed His illustration of the Lord's lovingkindness with mankind's total inability to even modify his own lifespan. Turning next to the flora of the field He speaks of its fragile, fleeting beauty; if God can create and nurture the grass of the field, *"will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith?"* Mat 6:30b His point was, "don't be anxious" about life's necessities. God knows we need such things, *"seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you."* Mat 6:33

The second time our Lord said this poignant saying is recorded in Matthew chapter 8, soon after He healed the Centurion's servant. This was the occasion when Jesus commended the Centurion's great faith (Mat 8:5-13) and healed Peter's mother-in-law. After healing many, Jesus gave orders to cross the Sea of Galilee.

While crossing the Sea (Mat 8:23-27) a great storm arose which threatened to swamp the boat, but Jesus was fast asleep. His disciples came to him and said, *"Save us, Lord, we are perishing."* Mat 8:25 At their bidding Jesus arose and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it became perfectly calm. But He did so only after rebuking

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them, saying, *“Why are you timid, you men of little faith.”* Mat 8:26a Verse 27 shows His disciples marveling, saying, *“What kind of man is this that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”* Truly Jesus was no ordinary man, but His disciples were as yet men of little faith.

The third time Jesus spoke these words was immediately after feeding the 5,000 and is recorded in Matthew 14:22-33. This happened again on the Sea of Galilee while His disciples crossed over to the highlands of the eastern shore.

Jesus Himself first went up to a mountain to pray and later joined His disciples during their dark, stormy crossing. *“And in the fourth watch of the night He (Jesus) came to them walking upon the water.”* Mat 14:25 The disciples’ reaction to this supernatural phenomenon was predictable—they thought they were seeing a ghost and they cried out for fear. Jesus said, *“Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid.”* Mat 14:27b Then you’ll remember impetuous Peter, *“Lord if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”* Mat 14:28b Of course, Peter was able to walk toward Jesus for as long as he kept his eyes on Him. But when he focused on the wind, he began to sink. Jesus once again did what He does best, He saved him. But in the midst of this miraculous rescue, Jesus issued another of His mild rebukes, *“Oh you of little faith, why did you doubt?”* Mat 14:31

The fourth time Jesus used this phrase is recorded in Matthew 16:1-12. Interestingly, this final event happened after he had fed the 4,000 and as He and His disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee once again.

Pharisees and Sadducees had been testing Jesus by asking for a sign from heaven. He rebuked them for their ability to discern the physical realm, but their inability to discern the spiritual. When His disciples had crossed the Sea, they were concerned that they had taken no bread. But Jesus began speaking to them, *“Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”* Mat 16:6 His disciples were unsuccessfully trying to reconcile His statement with their growling stomachs. Knowing their complete bewilderment, Jesus said, *“You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves because you have no bread?”* Mat 16:8 Jesus then reminded them how He had fed the 5,000 and 4,000, and had gathered up a great many leftovers each time. You can just imagine Jesus tenderly leading His disciples to understand that He wasn’t talking about food, but about the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

In a colloquial sense our modern day use of “oh you of little faith” is consistent with Jesus’ original usage. But Jesus had a much deeper spiritual message in mind. In each occurrence abundant evidence was available to testify about who He was. All they had to do was to open their eyes and evaluate the evidence. The Hebrew writer wrote, *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* Heb 11:1 NKJV We have ample evidence to be a people of great faith.



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