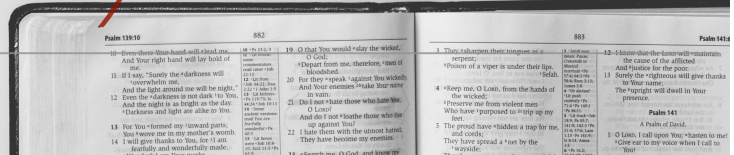


WORDS *of* TRUTH

“Plain and Simple”



Joe's Journal

Joe Manasco is a Bible major at Freed-Hardeman University who is set to graduate in December. He is working with the West Dyersburg Church of Christ in Dyersburg, TN. Joe will be having a recurring column in *Words of Truth*.

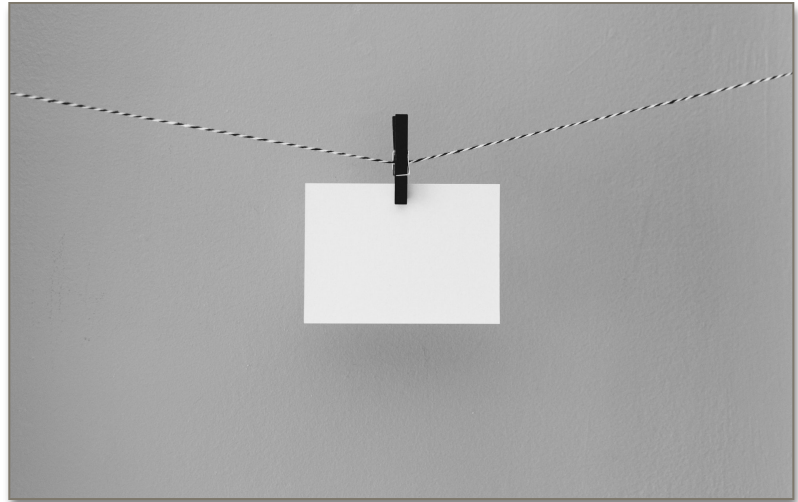
Ladies Article

Anna Harris is the wife of Charles. She has her Associate of Arts degree from Young Harris College.

Theme Articles

Charles Harris has been the preacher for the Beattie Road Church of Christ in Albany, GA since 2018. He is a 2011 graduate of MSOP.

Steven Ford is a 2013 MSOP graduate. He also attended Wayne State University. He has been preaching for the Highway Church of Christ in Benton, AR, since 2011. Steven and his wife, Carlisa, have two daughters: Savannah and Summer.



Undeniable Power

The simplest solution is often the most desirable. Mathematicians still spend time trying to devise new solutions to ancient problems. There may be multiple ways of stating or defining a single concept like the Pythagorean Theorem, but usually, the simplest proof is the most elegant. And elegance in math is highly sought after.

God's Word has such a simple elegance that it seems illogical to a believer that anyone could deny its divine inspiration. In His matchless wisdom, God knew exactly what plot would best capture the hearts and minds of mankind for all of history, and He knew best how to reveal that sequence of events in a manner that is both thorough and concise. The profundity of the Bible is mind-boggling. And yet, in all its richness and complexity, the Bible contains a life-changing power unrepeatably by the efforts of man.

—DD

Joe's Journal

Complex, but not Complicated

Joe Manasco

Life *should* make sense. Don't we as humans all harbor that assumption? As we look at the world that surrounds us, people expect certainty to be the thread that holds society together. When things happen differently than expected, humanity decides that whatever happened is "wrong," and the way that we wanted it was "right." Is it really that simple?

In my experience, life is rarely simple. Rather than a basic formula to find success, this life hands us a complicated collection of mazes and obstacle courses, accompanied by a pat on the back and a resounding, "Good luck!" From there we set out to find our way with smiles on our faces and hope in our hearts... until one day, all of us sit down, throw our hands in the air, and look toward the sky for answers. We ask fellow wanderers on life's journey, "Where else can I turn? What should I do?," only to be met by the realization that they, like us, are lost. In futile desperation, we search for material things to soothe our hearts, setting ourselves up for disappointment time after time. It is at this point that we as humans are met with the most frightening truth—we need God. Then, we face a fundamental question: where can I find Him?

God certainly reveals himself through his creation—as the apostle Paul notes in Romans chapter 1. By looking at the earth and realizing the power it requires to create such a place, we know that God exists. In a moment of triumph, man eventually comes to terms with finding God and confirming his existence; yet just as quickly, we are disappointed to discover that our wandering is not quite finished.

Again, rather than peaceful satisfaction, we are met with yet another question: What does God want from me? There is no question man could ever contemplate that bears greater consequences. It is a question that is complex, profound, and emotionally charged; more so than any other. This question demands an answer. Eventually the answer will come, and when it does, it is sobering to learn that God desires something from mankind that we are incapable of giving Him on our own.

How can it be that God would create mankind, and then ask us to do something we are incapable of? It seems as though there are far more questions than answers. How could something so important be so complicated? If anything should make sense, should it not be this? Is God really this complicated? What does God want from me, and how can I do it?

I'd like to offer you some good news. God in His everlasting, all-powerful wisdom, saw this moment coming. He knew before you and I ever were born that we would eventually come to this impasse; so, He prepared a way forward for us—now all we must do is walk in it. Christians know that way as "the Gospel." In short, the Gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, came and lived a perfect life on earth. He lived and breathed as we do, eventually dying on a wooden cross as an eternal sacrifice, being resurrected according to prophecy, thereby forgiving and making obsolete the sins of all mankind. By doing this, He provided an opportunity for women and men alike to be cleansed of their sinfulness and made whole again, reunited with God in spirit until we are one day reunited with Him in the heavenly realm. Simple, right? Not exactly.

My goal is not to answer every question that could potentially arise out of studying the Gospel of the living God; I'm neither prepared nor capable of such an enormous task. God himself may be the only being capable of such a thing. I simply want to show that the presence of questions does not invalidate the truth or the blessedness of the Gospel message. The scope of the Gospel is extremely wide, but it is not unknowable. Furthermore, I'm not sure that God desires we see the Gospel as a problem to be solved, or a series of questions that need to be answered. I do not seek to minimize the depth of the Gospel, or to say that it is overly simple to understand; I merely mean to say that as complex as it is, the Gospel is attainable for all.

All in all, let this be clear: The Gospel by definition *is* simple—God gave His Son to die and be resurrected so that we may have eternal life with Him one day. In practice, however, the Gospel truth can be extremely difficult to implement into our lives. How could a 2,000-year-old message, prepared by God since the beginning of time, composed by a series of ordinary men, translated across thousands of languages possibly hold the keys to life? Not only that, but how could such an aged message possibly require an individual alive in the year 2020 to change his or her life in such dramatic fashion? Admittedly, this is difficult to grasp, and I cannot offer a thorough explanation. Though it is demanding and unyielding in its expectations, the Gospel must not be viewed as a mandate or set of rules—rather, as a blessing and an opportunity. The Gospel is an opportunity to live under the eternal protection of Christ. It is an invitation to experience God's incomparable grace and incomprehensible mercy. Without the Gospel, humanity is left without hope and purpose.

The creator of the universe, the all-powerful and all-loving God, allowed us all to make choices. In doing so, He knew that we would be imperfect and ultimately incapable of living righteous lives on our own. In a manner only possible by divinity, God worked out a solution that would require sacrificing a part of Himself for His creation, and in return He asks not that we deserve the opportunity; only that we take it. No matter how often humans contemplate this amazing feat, we are left with beautiful complexity—may we never confuse that with complication.

Dietary Restrictions

Anna Harris



If being a Christian and mother of a 14-year-old with a life-threatening medical condition has taught me anything throughout the years, it is to never apologize for being an investigator. Especially when it concerns literally guarding the life of my child, it's a matter that should never nag me with guilt. As a veteran food allergy mom, I've discovered some striking parallels between managing life with food allergies and the search for spiritual truth. Let's consider how these two avenues of thought uniquely intertwine, both physically and spiritually.

HEAR - Rom. 10:17; 3:23; 6:23

It all begins with new information being presented. A new diagnosis, something we've never before faced, something that could inflict physical harm to the point of causing death... merely by what could be ingested? What are we to do? Hearing the gospel for the first time presents new information, leading to a new diagnosis of soul sickness, a danger of spiritual death...by what has already been ingested (sin). What are we to do?

BELIEVE - John 8:24; Rom. 10:14-16

Once we've processed the new information, a decision must be made and action must be taken. We must educate ourselves. We must eagerly learn everything there is to know about specific allergens in order to avoid them. Complete avoidance of any known allergens is currently the only guarantee for the protection of physical life.

Similarly, we should develop a voracious appetite for seeking the simple truths of God's Word. Do we truly believe God's Word over what we may have previously held as truth? Are we convicted? We must commit to study and sifting out any false teachings for our own spiritual protection. Remember the Bereans of Acts 17:11? They "searched the scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." How many questions must they have asked when presented with the truth, considering their devout Jewish background? Still, they were eager to acknowledge and to believe based on the divine evidence of the word of God.

REPENT - 2 Cor. 7:10; Luke 13:3, 5; Rom. 12:2

Based on diagnosis and new knowledge, there will be a necessary change of mind and lifestyle about the seemingly endless threats to physical safety. Allergens can be found in the most inconspicuous places. Cross contact is perhaps the most dangerous aspect of food allergies. Allergens can be extremely elusive, hiding nearly anywhere. Consistent label reading, special sanitizing measures, and making detailed phone calls to food manufacturers for accurate information is imperative to making the safest choices. It takes considerable effort and extreme precautions to guard against cross contact with allergens anywhere food may be stored, eaten, processed, or prepared. The world will never be the same for those with food allergies.

There is a very real and present danger of "cross contact" with sin — it contaminates every soul it touches. Temptation is everywhere and it is battling for the soul. Consider the religious confusion that surrounds us and holds the world hostage with thousands of various teachings, all claiming to follow the Bible, yet only leading souls to death. A complete change of spiritual mindset regarding God's view of sin is required for salvation. We must strive for a godly life. Every morsel that tempts our taste buds, before swallowing whole, must first be tested for purity and for approval of God and His Word.

CONFESS - Mat. 10:32; Acts 8:37; Jam. 5:16; 1 John 1:7-10

It is a time to declare and cast aside any misconceptions concerning food allergies. It's not a matter of taste preference, picky eating, or simple intolerances. It is a matter of life or death. It's also important to frequently assess ongoing research and realign our thinking as needed for safety. But mistakes happen. There will likely be an occasional moment of panic due to possible accidental exposure, despite our best efforts of safety. It is best to acknowledge it, learn from it, and move on in faith.

Sin will still plague us at times. We are not perfect and are forever in need of Jesus' cleansing blood. We are to confess, seek forgiveness, make corrections, learn from the experience, and keep walking in the light of our Lord.

BAPTISM - Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Pet. 3:21

A cleansing is required for this new way of life. Purging the kitchen and home, car, workspace, etc. of all allergens is vital for safety. There are specific cleansing agents such as soap and disinfecting wipes that are most effective for the breakdown and removal of allergen proteins.

(continued on page 7)

The Simple Gospel

Charles Harris

“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)”

Ephesians 3:1-4 KJV

We live during a time when many confusing teachings are being broadcast throughout the world. It is such a blessing to have the simple gospel of Christ. The Gospel of Christ is a message that can be understood and followed with confidence.

The Gospel must be simple because it is to be preached to every creature. When Jesus sent out the apostles, they were sent to take the Gospel to every person (Mark 16:15) of every nation (Mat. 28:19). Certainly if the Gospel is to be preached to every creature it must be simple. If the Gospel is not simple, and cannot be understood, then it would do no good to preach it.

Another reason why the Gospel must be simple is because it is to be believed. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). It plainly says those that “believe not” shall be damned. Would it be right and fair to damn a man for what he cannot understand? Dear reader, the Lord has given us His Word, we are instructed to believe it, and if we do not we will be damned.

Let’s note a few evidences that show the Gospel is meant to be understood. First, what is said about the church is simple. The Lord himself said, “That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mat. 16:18). Christ said, “I will build my church.” I ask, whose church is this? Is it Luther’s, Wesley’s, John’s, or any other man’s? You say, “No!” You are absolutely correct. Why do you say, “No”? Because Christ said “I will build my church.” It is His! He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28), and it wears His name (Rom. 16:16).

We learn further that there is only one church, which is the Lord’s body. “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). “And he is the head of the body, the church” (Col.1:18). “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Eph. 4:4). The body is the church and there is one body, therefore, there must of necessity be just one church. That does away with the idea of “the church of your choice” and settles once and for all that it is the church of Christ’s choice.

Next we learn that we are baptized into that one body. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13). How do we get into the one body? We are

baptized into it. Isn’t that simple? The body is the church and we are baptized into the body, therefore, we enter into the church through baptism.

What is said about baptism is simple. We find that it is a burial in water. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3-4). “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses” (Col. 2:12-13). Isn’t that simple? If it is a burial it cannot be a sprinkling or pouring. What do you do when you bury someone in the ground? What do you do when you bury someone in the watery grave of baptism?

Further we learn that baptism is for believing penitents, not babies. Infant baptism is without scriptural authority. The subject for baptism is to believe. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). The subject for baptism is to repent of his sins. “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). I ask you, can an infant believe? Is he capable of doing that? Can an infant repent of his sins? Does he have any sins to repent of? The answers are very simple, and when you answer these questions you will find the proper subjects for baptism will not be infants.

Last of all, baptism is to save. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21).

The Gospel of Christ is simple. One does not have to be a college graduate to understand how to go to heaven. In our preaching of the Gospel, let us always remember to keep it simple, and easy to be understood. If we fail in this we have failed altogether, because if people cannot understand they cannot obey, and if they do not obey they are lost (2 The. 1:7-9).

Brethren, let us go back to the Bible. Let us determine “not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). Men can comprehend that God sent His Son to die on Calvary’s cross for the remission of our sins. They can love Him enough to believe in Him and obey Him. Souls will be won to Jesus Christ, the church will grow, and God will be praised.

The Sufficiency of the Gospel

Steven Ford

“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:19 ESV

There is a verse in the New Testament that perfectly captures the essence of the idea that the Gospel of Christ is all sufficient. *“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence”* (2 Pet. 1:3). God has not left man ignorant as to how to live with one another, nor with God Himself. Within the message of Christ (the Gospel), one can know about creation, sin, judgement, grace, redemption, and salvation. What a message! Paul aptly wrote, *“How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things”* (Rom. 10:15 KJV). Consider the following ways in which the Gospel is thoroughly sufficient.

The Gospel of Christ is all sufficient in its **REACH**. On one occasion, Jesus said, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”* (Mat. 28:19). The Gospel message is for people of every land, language, and ethnicity. Though the Lord’s initial plea was for the Jewish nation (Mat. 15:24), his call for repentance and invitation to salvation was expanded to everyone. Lineage is no longer of any consequence. All men are now welcomed into the family of God. In a sermon to a Gentile audience, Peter boldly exclaimed, *“Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him”* (Acts 10:34-35).

The Gospel of Christ is all sufficient in its **POWER**. No matter the sin one commits, through the Gospel, all sin is washed away and all souls can be saved! *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek”* (Rom. 1:16). The Gospel’s power is not limited to what one might consider “little” sins. There were certain Christians in Corinth who had been guilty of sexually immoral, idolators, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, greedy, drunkards, revolvers, and swindlers. Yet, because of the power of the Gospel, they were those things no longer. They could stand before the Lord knowing that they had been washed, sanctified, and justified.

Further, the potency of the Gospel is sufficient to cleanse even the worst of sinners. There is no person whose sins are so great that he can not be saved. Even Paul, who had been a persecutor of the Church, was able to receive grace as manifested through the Gospel. *“The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life”* (1 Tim. 1:15-16).

The Gospel of Christ is sufficient **FOR ALL TIME**. There are books, medical practices, and bits of technology that are considered antiquated over time. Many such things have lost their relevance, usefulness, and even effectiveness in this age. Yet

the Gospel is timeless. It was preached in the days of Abraham (Gal. 3:8), it was preached in the first century (1 Cor. 15:1), and it will be preached until the Lord returns! *“For ‘All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.’ And this word is the good news that was preached to you”* (1 Pet. 1:24-25). There will never be a time in which the Gospel will be outdated. As long as there are people on the Earth, there will be sin. As long as there is sin, there will be the need for a Savior. As long as there is the need for a Savior, there will be a need to declare the good news of the Gospel and tell lost souls how to be saved!

The Gospel of Christ is sufficient in its **HOPE**. The term “hope” can be defined as having desire mixed with expectation. Before one obeys the Gospel, he is outside of Christ and has NO HOPE (Eph. 2:12). Yet, through the Gospel, there is a wonderful and blessed hope for the Christian. *“Because of the hope laid up for you in Heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel”* (Col. 1:5). So what is the heavenly hope? It’s a three-fold expectation. There is the RESURRECTION of the saints, the RETURN of the Lord Jesus, and the REUNION of the saved. *“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord”* (1 The. 4:13-17, emp. SF). What more could one hope for than to raise to eternal life, see the face of Jesus, and live forever with the saved?

The Gospel of Christ is sufficient in its **UNITY**. There will always be lines of division among men. Whether it be for gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic position, or anything else. It seems that people are nearly eager to find the things that separate us as opposed to that which brings us together. With the Gospel, all of that goes away. Hear these words from Paul, *“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Gal. 3:27-28). There is a oneness achieved through obeying the Gospel that otherwise eludes men (Eph. 2:13-16).

When it comes to the souls of men, God’s Word will always be enough. One need only open the Scriptures, obey that which is read, and anticipate with endurance the promise of God. All men can have a bold confidence and assurance of salvation because the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is all sufficient.



ARE WE BARREN FIG TREES?

Clifford Dixon

[Editor's note: *This article appeared in the October 14, 1988, edition of Words of Truth. Bro. Dixon lists his address as Jay, FL, at the time of writing.*]

In Luke 13:6-9 we read: "He speaks also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about ti, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." The Lord was giving this parable to the Jews because they thought they were more righteous than others and needed no repentance. He shown them as being an unfruitful fig tree that was about to be destroyed. But the lesson doesn't end there. We need to ask the question, "Am I an unfruitful tree?"

1. This tree had been planted in a favored spot — the vineyard. We likewise have so many blessings going our way. We are favored with material blessings galore, and have the blessing of the fact that Christ has died for us, established his church to house the saved, gave us the Bible to guide us and opportunities to obey and serve the Lord. Any man now who is without God is especially without excuse because of all the blessings he has and opportunities he has of serving God.

2. The Lord expects man to bear fruit for Him. The Jewish nation was not bearing fruit because they rejected Christ. If we reject Christ and the word of Christ, we also will be barren. Jesus said, "Abide in me, and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:4-5). No matter how many good works one attempts outside of Jesus Christ, he will have no credit with God. One must get into Christ first; and to get into Christ he must be willing to listen to the words of Christ. "Know ye not, that o many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). When one does this, what is his new relationship? Look at verse 22 of Romans 6 — "But now being made free from sin, and become servants unto God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." To bear fruit for the Lord we are going to have to get "into" the Lord. Have you done this, neighbor?

3. Life is vain that does not bear fruit for the Lord. The Lord told the vine-dresser that he had come three years seeking fruit, and found none. Then he said, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" Man is the only creature of God's creation who is made in His image. That means that man has an eternal spirit within him, and also that God wants to have communion with him. God thus tells man in the scriptures how He wants man to live; and when man will not listen to God's instructions, his is a thwarted life that is unfruitful and vain.

Look at all the years and all the things that God did to give man salvation through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Then look at all the people who turn their backs on Jesus and will not be cleansed in his blood. Solomon of old summed it up when he said, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecc. 12:13). The translators added the words "duty of" in this verse, and without them the verse would read that to fear God, and keep His commandments is the "whole of man."

John speaks of the fact that Jesus would not only give the baptism of the Holy spirit but also fire; then he explained that the "wheat" (representing the fruitful Christians) would be gathered in to the garner, but the "chaff" (representing those who did not serve Christ) would be burned up (Matthew 3:12).

4. The vine-dressers represent the messengers of Christ who teach the word of God and encourage people to obey it. They are digging around the tree and fertilizing it to get it to be fruitful. This would represent the preaching of the word, which is to be done with reproving, rebuking, and exhorting with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:2-3).

Plain preaching of the word disturbs people who love the practice of sin, or who do not know they are walking in wrong paths. On Pentecost day the preaching of Peter caused the people to be pricked in their hearts, and to cry out to him and the rest of the apostles saying, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

Don't get excited if strong gospel preaching disturbs people, because it takes this to convert them. These messengers are also making intercession for men who need to bear fruit for the Lord. "I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; ...For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1-4). Through their intercessions, time is often extended for the sinner to have opportunity to obey the Lord.

(continued on page 7)

(Dietary Restrictions, continued from page 3)

A spiritual cleansing must also occur in the process of salvation. Immediate application of the blood of Jesus in the Biblical manner is the only solution for sin stains. We can't pray them out, cast them out, work them out, or Shout them out. It must be the specific cleansing protocol described in the Bible, through the immersion or "washing" of water for the forgiveness of sins.

LIVE FAITHFULLY - 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 3:18; Rev. 2:10

Maintaining a safe and fulfilling life with food allergies is absolutely possible! For our family, it takes vigilance and plenty of prayer. Keeping up with the latest research and medical studies and being involved in the food allergy community is a means of proactive peace for us. Knowledge is power. My daughter has even created a YouTube channel, Teal Tori, to help educate others about living with food allergies and how to help save lives.

Likewise, the Bible instructs obedient Christians to practice spiritual vigilance in walking the narrow path of faith. We are to always study, grow, serve, and support the work of the church. Knowledge of God's Word and sharing it with others strengthens our spiritual armor. For our family, nothing has been a more realistic reminder of the fragility of life and motivation for heaven than our daughter's condition. Epinephrine along with other medications may save the body and relieve anaphylaxis, but the pulse of our very soul depends on our proper obedience to God's healing Truth. Only in Him are we guaranteed the eternal cure for every ailment.

(Barren Fig Trees, continued from page 6)

5. There is a limit to God's tolerance, as can be seen from Luke 13:8-9, where the plea for the fig tree is, that it be extended another year: "And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." There will come a time when life can no longer be extended to the sinner, and he will have to go out to meet his Maker as an unfruitful tree. There will be a day when the Lord Jesus Christ will return; then it will be sad for all the unfruitful trees.

While the usual application of this parable is to unfaithful members of the church, we have seen in it such a good lesson to the sinner that we could not fail to use it. After all, he lives on earth, breathes the air God gives, and enjoys the blessings God gives here. His life touches others here; but how sad that he has no fruit for God because he has not rendered his life to the Lord.

Sinner friend, there is still time for you to do this, if you will act today!

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ASK A BIBLE QUESTION

QUESTION: What is the “secret rapture” doctrine, and where did it start?

ANSWER: Dave MacPherson, in his book *Cover-Up*, traces the “secret rapture” idea to a feverish vision by a Scottish teenager named Margaret MacDonald in 1830. Notice: *“We have seen that a young Scottish lassie named Margaret MacDonald had a private revelation in Port Glasgow, Scotland, in the early part of 1830 that a select group of Christians would be caught up to meet Christ in the air before the days of the Antichrist. An eye-and-ear witness, Robert Norton M.D., preserved her handwritten account of her pretrib rapture revelation in two of his books, and said it was the FIRST time anyone ever split the second coming into two distinct parts, or stages”* (p. 93). The “split second coming” and “secret rapture” theories were instantly incorporated into the theology of the early Plymouth Brethren leader, John Nelson Darby. Darby’s writings influenced certain evangelicals then and today, such as W.E. Blackstone, Dwight L. Moody, C.I. Scofield (esp. through his Scofield Reference Bible) and L.S. Chafer; and more recent writers such as Hal Lindsey, J.D. Pentecost, John Walvoord, Herman Hoyt and Tim LaHaye. The “secret rapture” theory is one among many methods of interpreting biblical prophecy called Dispensational Premillennialism (a.k.a. – pretribulation premillennialism). Regarding Dispensational (pretribulation) Premillennialism, I consider it a FALSE DOCTRINE, because Christ’s return will be an event; a single event (Heb. 9:28). Dividing Christ’s Second Coming into two second comings (i.e., 1st Second Coming – *parousia*, 2nd Second Coming – literal earthly reign) does NOT coincide with scripture! Therefore, the “secret rapture” theory can NOT be considered legitimate, having originated from a fever-induced dream!

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