



And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

John 1:46

Within our current political environment it is often difficult to imagine anything “good” coming out of Washington DC. What with one group wanting to impeach the other, primarily for being voted into office (it appears) with an agenda differing from their own—Or the other failing to respectfully address the leader of their Assembly, as sparks fly and accusations are thrown (“You violated the spirit of this law!” “—No, *you* did!”); One wonders how on earth we can ever, once again, live as “one nation under God” (Oops, is that a violation of the Establishment Clause??).

It just seems that somewhere along the way, on the way to the State House, the Outhouse has gotten involved in our politics; and it stinks. However, such is not the way it ought to be; in our past, present, or whatever remains of our future . . . if we would return to the foundations upon which our beautiful republic rests. Not that all need to speak of politics within a spiritual setting, but we must realize that what we are as individuals, ultimately, we will display in public. Somehow, under the cover of anonymity—and the power that modern communications and “tweeting” now afford, we seem to be forgetting the basics of human dignity and respect.

Somehow, in the conflict and contest of ideas within our

our market place, gentleness and respect: the ability to address one another in a civil manner, and as human beings, has begun to degenerate into an environment where we fight like cats and dogs, or much worse. This is not a principle that will make this nation, or any other institution great—either in the past, or ever “again”!

Yet how do we return to “decency and respect” or, as a popular translation of an apostle’s letter puts it, “gentleness and respect”? As one modern translation states:

*. . . always
being prepared
to make a defense
to anyone
who asks*

(CONTINUED)

you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior . . . may be put to shame.

1 Peter 3:15-16

And just for good measure, the next sentence reads: “*For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.*” (vs. 17, ESV). In other words, in the battle for civility, sometimes it is necessary to “take down” to keep the peace. Humility often has a price tag, within an antagonistic environment but, the Scriptures warn ~ “by pride, only contentions come around” (Proverbs 13:10).

We are in a battle for peace, in which the weapons are not guns and bullets (or drones, as may be necessary within international conflicts) –but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). How does one acquire such “weapons” one wonders? Where, the power for us to become “ladies and gentle-

men”)? Where, the power to “love our enemies” and to do good to those abusing us?? And where, the power to comprehend and use the same ability as someone (or Someone) nailed to a Cross to say, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”??

The power of the Cross, and of the *Resurrection*, is the good news of the Christian gospel (the “gospel” is the “good news”). This is what we want to declare today, in our churches, on our the streets, the busy thoroughfares of our republic—and yes, even in the Statehouses of our wonderful country. And it all begins by first repenting *of our own sins* and getting right with that God Who would send His only begotten Son to the earth to die for our waywardness & sin, and bring us back to true “gentleness and respect”—as we repeatedly remember the roots of our human experience.

For something truly good *has* come out of Nazareth, and His name is “Jesus,” in whose Presence is fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11).

Be blessed in Jesus.



ARE YOU “SAVED”?

... receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

James 1:21



Meekness (i.e. gentleness) is important if you want to be saved. However, if you are like myself, reading this first chapter of a letter written to the Dispersion of Hebrew believers in Messiah, scattered throughout the known world, may seem just a little bit confusing. Martin Luther, the fa-

mous reformer to whom much of the western world (and especially Protestant movement) traces many of its roots—infamously declared this part of the Bible is no more than an “epistle of straw” and unworthy of being included in the Bible, at all.¹ James’ opening comments in in his

very first sentences, actually encourage us to welcome trials and difficulties(!), “knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” (verses 3 & 4).

James’ solution? Ask for more wisdom (at least, that’s what the next verse seems to imply), read it for yourself:

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

James 1:5

However, for anyone familiar with the Bible, or even the very *first part* of the Bible, something may now be knocking at the back of our minds to remind us of the very first temptation, addressed by our fore parents in their encounter with a certain “serpent” who derailed their stay in Paradise by telling them that by seeking forbidden knowledge they could become just like God—and they were “off to the races.”

⁴ *Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

Genesis 3:4-5

What was Eve’s response? She thought this would make her wise!

⁶ *So when the woman saw that the tree was good . . . to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; . . .*

Genesis 3:6-7

And so, it would seem, humankind has been exposing its nakedness ever since!

It is not that knowledge is evil, in and of itself—or that knowing good and evil is wrong—if properly advised. It has to be mixed with faith. Yet, even here, James seemed to always trip me up, for his advice seemed to simply imply that I should pursue *perfection* through the study of the Scriptures. For the Scriptures are like a mirror, James informs us, and designed to show us our imperfections. That’s when he tells us that the Scriptures can “save our souls” (verses 22-24).

Is this what the Bible is all about? Knowing the “do’s and don’ts” of living a good life, and making right choices? Why, even Jesus agreed with the lawyer who asked what was necessary to get into

The lawyer asked:

“ Who is my neighbor? ”

heaven. Jesus answered him with a question: ~ “What does the Law say? What is your interpretation?” (After all, he was a lawyer, he should know!!) The lawyer answered:

So he answered and said, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and "your neighbor as yourself."

Luke 10:27

Then Jesus answered (paraphrasing): “You got it! Do that and you will live (in heaven)!”

But, this lawyer seemed to have been related to our friend James, who advises us to ask in faith “nothing wavering” (with perfection)—so, the lawyer (being a lawyer) could not just let sleeping dogs lie. That’s

when he asked the question which got an answer that has become so popular, that everyone in the western world is familiar with it. The lawyer asked:

“Who is my neighbor?”

And Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan (paraphrasing): Telling of a “low life” (so called) who saw a victim laying by the side of the road that had just been robbed, wounded and bleeding—while religious persons just passed by, too busy to stop and help. Then a “certain Samaritan” stopped, and ~opened his car door, took the man to the nearest hospital, and without asking about whether or not he had medical insurance, simply told the people in the ER room, “take care of this man, here is my credit card number, and whatever he needs, charge it to me!” (Luke 10:29-35)

“So,” Jesus asked, “who was this man’s neighbor?” In a eureka moment, the lawyer answered, “He who showed mercy to the man!”

“Go and do likewise,” Jesus answered (Luke 10:37).

What is most interesting, is that although the very first church established in Jerusalem was so on fire that money and possessions completely lost their value (in a sense) as everyone shared *everything* in the opening days of the church so that they “had all things in common” (Acts 4:32—note that this was *voluntarily*, and *not* by government fiat, as with socialism)—there is no *command* to pursue this absolute and extreme form of generosity throughout the rest of the New Testament. In fact, in an apparent effort to maintain order and decorum, the apostle Paul would later issue a definite command stating that freeloaders (who are able bodied) should be put to work.

¹⁰ *For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work,*

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THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground,
and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;
and man became a living soul.

Genesis 2:7 (KJV)

Within the breast of every believer beats a heart that feels a need to have the relationship with our God confirmed: to know, for certain, that God hears and answers our heart's cry: To be assured of a tri-fold deliverance—of our spirit, soul, and (one day) our very bodies as we walk into His Presence with the everlasting *life* He has already started to furnish (Jn. 17:3): such wholeness as will forever be evident in that place where no sickness, corruption, or decay may dwell.

*Now may the God of peace
Himself sanctify you completely;
and may your whole spirit, soul,
and body be preserved blameless
at the coming of our Lord Jesus
Christ.*

1 Thessalonians 5:23

This tri-fold experience, of course, originates with God Himself who made us in His very image and breathed into us this very essence of life, at the inception of the human experience. This we may affirm, without apology or compromise, based on the opening pages of the Bible, itself.

*Then God said, "Let Us make
man in Our image, according to
Our likeness; let them have do-
minion over the fish of the sea,
over the birds of the air, and
over the cattle, over all the earth
and over every creeping thing
that creeps on the earth."*

Genesis 1:26

Most interesting, that God said nothing about man's dominion over himself—except in one reference to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the next chapter (Gen. 2:17)—almost as if, in creating this precious treasure, as a Father with a new born child, He would shield us from the pains and perils of adulthood: especially its perils. “Just trust in Daddy,” He was saying, “and Paradise will forever be yours” (see also Romans 8:15c-16).

For as God is triune, man is tri-partite; while having a spirit, living in a body, and being a living soul. Whenever any part of our composite personhood goes out of alignment, or becomes disjointed, we feel “un-whole”, incomplete, and “sick.” Worst, when our

spirits become disconnected from our spiritual Source, we become “dead.” This is what God would spare Adam, while also fulfilling the need to have him act as a true vice-regent, ruling over this earth, with the ability to choose and make decisions, while not having to worry about being burdened with endless “do’s and don’ts.”

Such was Paradise.

Within this human experience, Adam and Eve were discovering, they were being introduced to serious decision making. It was a simple decision, to be sure, (to eat, or not to eat, *one* forbidden fruit): but the decision was significant and awesome, nonetheless. For they were to “reign” from within, as they voluntarily submitted to God and exercised dominion, from within and . . . over themselves.

Yet, they thought they would experiment(?) by disobeying — only to find that, now, they experienced a new “chill in the night” from which they sought the comfort of fig leaves.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

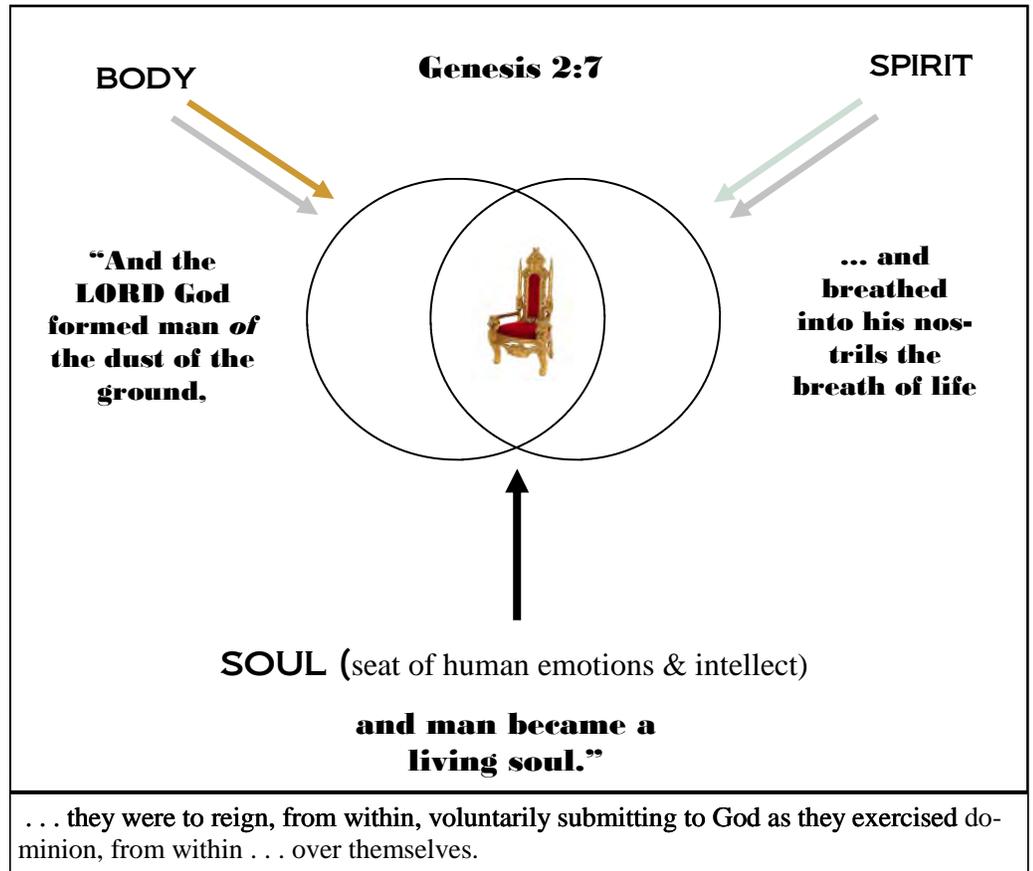
Genesis 3:7

When God “found” them shivering in the Garden, as it were, He pronounced a curse upon them (for God never bluffs, and always performs what He promises) —and yet mercifully performed the very first redemptive act necessary to provide them a covering, by taking the life of another to cover their nakedness.

Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

Genesis 3:21 kjv

This is the first time that physical, animal death, is brought into the picture within the Bible: when God slew animals to give a covering to human-



kind’s sin. Later, through the intricately orchestrated sacrificial system given to Moses while he was spending time with God in Mount Sinai, the official sacrifice of animals would be instituted, although its practice actually predated the mosaic law (note, for example, the heart wrenching testing of Abraham when he was asked to sacrifice his son. Isaac asked:

... Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.

Genesis 22:7-8)

No, God never bluffs, but He is also gracious, and while Abraham did not have to offer his son, after passing the test—Father God *did* offer His Son, to provide that “lamb who takes

away the sin of the world,” (Jn. 1:29). For the law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17) and only because the Word of God is, itself, God breathed (2 Tim. 3:16) can we find such amazing symbolism and spiritual lessons written across the centuries of dialogue recorded within that Book.

For example, do you remember what God told Adam and Eve about dying *on the day* that they ate of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 2:17)? “They did not die,” you say, “at least, not on that day!” Of course, theologians can argue that with God a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day (2 Pet. 3:8). Yet for us, now operating with a clearer understanding of human makeup, as well as a better understanding of our personal and spiritual needs, we can now appreciate New Testament renderings “death” and “life” within the human experience. To give just one instance, note the *tenses* of how personal salva-

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(Continued from page 3) ..."SAVED"?:

neither shall he eat.¹¹ For we hear that there are some . . . not working at all . . .¹² Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that [the able bodied] work in quietness and eat their own bread.

2 Thessalonians 3:10-12

All of which brings us back to James, where we suddenly notice that there does appear to be a definite attempt, by this leader in Jerusalem, to correct something he had observed within the church, in general: an improper use of the concept of faith, among believers. In other words, James appears to be attacking a "lazy faith."² For Christian faith is not intended as a "magic charm." There is something much deeper required of each of us, when exercising this powerful ingredient of abundant living.

We must be serious, in our approach to God.

⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.⁷ For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

James 1:6-8

It is not until much later in his letter that we begin to appreciate this larger issue that James is driving at, as he starts to conclude his epistle with an admonition that every real believer in the Christ has personally encountered. We call it "repentance."

⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.⁹ Lament and

mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

James 4:7-10

Here is what James is really getting at—and, if you will accept it, it is also what the Lord was pointing to, when answering that lawyer. Of course, the story of the Good Samaritan is worth telling, and knowing—whether or not we see any deeper spiritual truth: Loving our neighbor is good, within any society.

**Loving our neighbor .
is what truly makes
a country great!**

It is what truly makes a country great!

Yet there is a deeper issue. Jesus knew that no matter what advice was given, the lawyer would be argumentative; so He gave him an example that (hopefully) would expose the lawyer's hypocrisy and personal depravity before God, and thus cause him to simply throw himself upon the mercy of God, to be saved.³ For, the lawyer should have known better. He should have known that the reason Jesus came, and that the Messiah had to walk the earth . . . was ultimately to die in our place, in order to reverse the curse originally issued in the Garden of Eden, as the Messiah exchanged *His perfection* for our failures, and weaknesses.

As the Old Testament prophet Isaiah wrote, hundreds of years before:

*Surely He has borne our
griefs And carried our sorrows;. . .*

All we like sheep have gone

*astray; We have turned,
every one, to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on
Him the iniquity of us all.*

Isaiah 53:3, 6 [Please read the whole chapter!!]

This is why Jesus went to the Cross, and why the first thing that came out of His mouth, as He hung there, was,

*Then Jesus said, "Father,
forgive them, for they do not
know what they do." . . .*

Luke 23:34

No, Eve (and Adam) didn't realize just how serious it was to disobey God—and in their, and our, quest to save ourselves, we often do not know what we are getting ourselves into. Thus, like a little child, we need to turn back, and simply agree with Jesus concerning our spiritual need and ignorance, and we simply need to ask, in faith, for the wisdom that really *will* save our souls: by simply confessing our sins and placing our faith in Him.

It's what Adam and Eve should have done in the first place, so that they would have the power to resist temptation, and what we (because of what Jesus did do, by paying a terrible price, in our place) —may now do, by faith.

Have you applied the Scriptures to your soul, so that you may be saved?

Do it today!

Pray, simply, something like this:

Lord Jesus, I know that I have sinned and that I need forgiveness. Thank you for coming to take my place on the Cross, and rising again, so I can Live with You forever.

Come into my heart today, through your Holy Spirit, and save me, now.
Amen.

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== **The Human Experience** ==

tion is explained within the New Testament, and the specific (supposedly impossible) statements made.

First, because it relates to death itself, note how Paul describes the believer’s experience in his letter to the Ephesians:

¹ *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,*

Ephesians 2:1-2[∞]

Note, carefully, what the apostle under the leading of the Holy Spirit writes: first, that we *were dead* before coming to Christ—following the devil (the prince of the power of the air, who works in those willfully disobeying God).

However, let us also examine carefully what the apostle says about the status and state of the believer after having appropriated the *perfect sacrifice* of God’s Son (Isaiah 53:5-6)!

⁴ *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*

Ephesians 2:4-6[∞]

“Wait!” you say, “Now you’ve gone too far! I believe in Jesus, and I’m not in heavenly places—am I?” No, of course not . . . at least your body isn’t there, yet! However, our spirit man is already experiencing something of heaven, right now, for as Jesus Himself said:

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

John 17:3

Notice, as well, with a careful reading, the tense utilized within Paul’s declaration of our deliverance. He says emphatically “(by grace you *have been saved*)”! It is as if, in passing, the apostle just cannot resist throwing in this tasty tidbit, that we really *are (now)* saved in an eternal sense *by grace!!*

Grace? What is “grace”? Grace is undeserved favor: a gift given at the expense of another; in this case, at the expense of the Messiah of Israel; the Christ, on the Cross. In other words, this part of our salvation is given without any effort  on our part,

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory . . .

other than simple agreement.

⁸ *But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

Romans 10:8-10

However, now we must accept

the reality of our salvation not only being graciously completed, but also note that our soul *is being progressively saved*. To see this, please notice once more how James uses the *present* tense in a familiar text.

Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

James 1:21[∞]

Here we see the writer stating that the word (or Scripture) *is able* to save our souls. In other words, our souls and minds are progressively being brought into conformity to the likeness of Christ, as we meditate on the teaching that Scripture gives to us, and obey its instruction.

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 3:18[∞]

And that “mirror”? Of course, it is the very word of God, which is able to save us—if we submit to it! As James (quoted earlier) says:

²² *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.*

James 1:22-24[∞]

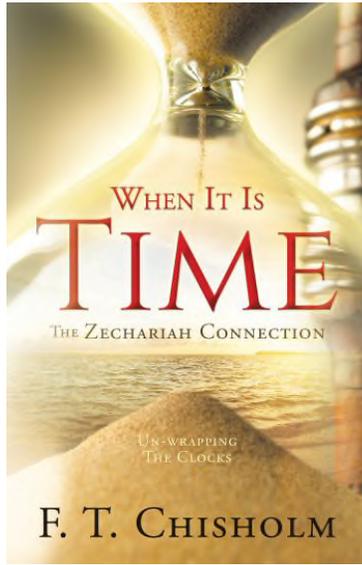
As for our bodies, they will be transformed, at the last trump (1 Cor. 15:52)!

And this is all the space we can devote to this amazing revelation, today.

Be blessed in Jesus!

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Features:

1. ARE YOU "SAVED"??
2. *The Human Experience*

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What Must I do?

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved."
Acts 16:31

How?

If you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:9,10

In Other Words

Acknowledge: your need

—as a sinner (Romans 3:23, II Cor. 5:14-15)

Accept: His work on the Cross —to be your Savior

Confess: your acceptance of His lordship over you.

Live for Him: with your new life!

For the scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be ashamed."

Romans 10:11

ENDNOTES; unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures, quoted from NKJV

¹ Did Martin Luther Really Want James Taken Out of the Bible? ZONDERVAN ACADEMIC, <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/martin-luther-james-bible-2020/1/11>.

² See also Hebrews 6:12

³ Psalm 51:16,17