

# *A Light in the Valley*

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Issue 2

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)*

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## ***My Feet Had Almost Stumbled***

*by: Kris Brewer*

Asaph, in Psalm 73, identified what may be one of the difficult realizations of the righteous: Life is not fair! He wrote of his experiences, looking around the life he was living, to see the wicked and how they prospered. It was easy for him to grow envious of these wicked people, as it appeared that they had everything they ever wanted.

It doesn't take long to look around us and see the prosperity of the wicked. Everywhere we look we can see the wicked seeming to live a life of ease without any problems. Like Asaph, we see those who are wicked, yet prosperous (Psalm 73:3, 7). We see those who live to an old age, and seem to die peacefully (Psalm 73:4). We see those who are prideful, even to the point of boasting about how prideful they are (Psalm 73:6). We see people who mock God and are antagonistic against His people (Psalm 73:10-11).

When we see such things, it becomes easy to start thinking that we have

made the wrong decision. We begin to think of how much better life would be for us if we just gave up on God and all that He has instructed us to do. We wouldn't have it so hard. We could probably be more prosperous if we were to leave behind our moral principles.

Asaph's problem is the same problem that we sometimes fall into. He had lost his perspective. And, sometimes perspective is everything! Asaph had allowed himself to fall into the worldly, temporal perspective. He was focused on what he could see, and had, at least to some degree, lost sight of that which is invisible. Paul, as he wrote to the Corinthians, warned them about this very same problem:

*Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and*

*eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:16–18).*

Any time we allow our focus to be drawn away from the goal of the eternal prize, available only through faith in Christ Jesus, we will be drawn away from righteousness. There is much to this world that is quite appealing when we reject God. Temptations are just that because they appeal to things that are pleasurable to us as human beings. When we are striving to serve God and feel like we are somehow “missing out” on the things that other people are involved in, we begin to lose perspective. When we are persecuted for serving God, and see the wicked living what appears to be the trouble free life, it is enough to knock us down spiritually (Psalm 73:12-14). We can end up being just like Asaph, grieved of heart and vexed of mind (Psalm 73:21).

Like Asaph, we need to get our focus reestablished. Instead of looking at the present and thinking that we are missing out on something grand, we need to focus on the eternal. Notice what Asaph did to refocus his attentions:

*If I had said, “I will speak thus,” Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children. When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me— Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end. (Psalm 73:15–17)*

Asaph went to God to get the proper perspective. There was more out there than just this life. There was something to look forward to, regardless of how difficult things might get in the “here and now.” If there were nothing beyond this life, no matter how good this life is, it would be a dreary existence.

*Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. (1 Corinthians 15:12–19)*

Asaph eventually came to realize that what he saw as some great benefit in those worldly people around him was really no benefit at all. There was no benefit to their wicked and worldly life because when they died (peaceful though it may be)

they had to go and face the Lord, to whom they had to give an answer. He was reminded of the eternal perspective, rather than the earthly perspective. In the end, God would be the one who dealt with them (Psalm 73:18-20).

Asaph began his Psalm by telling the reader that God is good to Israel. Before he discussed his own doubts, he reminded anyone who would read his work that God is good. God does not change. He is always good to those who are willing to do His will (Matthew 6:28-34). Asaph's doubts did not come because of some shortcoming on God's behalf. His stumbling was the result of his own earthly (and selfish) desires. He saw the rich and powerful, and he was enticed by what he thought might be offered in their world. But, anything they could offer was only temporary at best. He returned to the House of God where he could be reminded of the eternal reward of a faithful life of service to Him.

Notice how Asaph completes his Psalm:

*But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, That I may declare all Your works. (Psalm 73:28)*

That is certainly the conclusion that we need to reach as well. Start with the conclusion that God is good to those who are obedient to Him, and end with the idea that it is our responsibility to draw near to God and put our trust in the Lord. If we believe that, how can we fail to declare His works?

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We cannot help but wonder what changes would have taken place in religious history had the followers of these men heeded their pleas. The pleas, however, went unheeded.

Denominationalism with its religious division exists and will continue to exist until our Lord comes to "root it up" (Matt. 15:13). But meanwhile, no one has to be a part of the denominational system; no one should be a part of it. Today, one can be just a Christian—as was Paul, or Peter, or James, or John with membership in nothing but a local church made up of other Christians. Faithful churches of Christ, with no denominational affiliations, meet throughout the world.

# ***Christians With No Denominational Ties***

*by: Bill Hall*

God places great emphasis on names. He changed Abram's name to Abraham (Gen. 17:5), Sarai's name to Sarah (Gen. 17:15), and Jacob's name to Israel (Gen. 32:38). He gave to John and Jesus their names before they were born (Luke 1:13,31). He has given to His people of this age the name "Christian" (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). He has given no sectarian or denominational names, but rather condemns them (1 Cor. 1:10-13). The great need of our day is for men and women to forsake their denominational ties, be nothing but Christians, and call themselves "Christians," with no other religious names.

It is of interest to note that leaders in the prominent denominations, including some of their founders, recognized and preached this truth. N. B. Hardeman, in his *Tabernacle Sermons* (Volume IV, pages 216, 217), gives quotes from Charles Spurgeon, Martin Luther, and John Wesley in which they plead for unity.

Charles Spurgeon, a prominent Baptist preacher, is quoted as saying: "I look forward, with pleasure, to the day when there will not be a Baptist living. I hope they will soon be gone. I hope the Baptist name will soon perish; but let Christ's name endure forever." (Spurgeon's Memorial Library, Vol. I, page 168).

The quote from Martin Luther: "I pray you to leave my name alone, and call not yourselves Lutherans, but Christians. Who is Luther? My doctrine is not mine. I have not been crucified for anyone. St. Paul would not let any call themselves after Paul, nor of Peter, but of Christ. How then, does it befit me, a miserable bag of dust and ashes, to give my name to the children of God? Cease, my dear friends, to cling to these party names and distinctions: away with them all; and let us call ourselves only Christians after Him from whom our doctrine comes." (The Life of Luther, by Stork, page 289).

Brother Hardeman's quote from John Wesley, founder of the Methodist church: "Would to God that all party names and unscriptural phrases and forms which have divided the Christian world were forgot; that we might all agree to sit down together as humble, loving disciples at the feet of a common Master, to hear His words, to imbibe His spirit, and to transcribe His life into ours."

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# ***Armageddon At Hand?***

*by: Greg Gwin*

Many so-called ‘prophecy experts’ are convinced that political developments in the world today are indicators that the great Battle of Armageddon is about to take place. Armageddon, of course, is described in the Book of Revelation. Many think the description there is of a literal battle between the forces of evil and good. Their thinking is that it will usher in the millennial kingdom of Christ. This is becoming an increasingly popular view.

***What about Armageddon?*** The only place the word is found in the Bible is in Revelation 16:16. It refers to Megiddo, a large hill near the plain of Jezreel. It was well known to inhabitants of the region because of the many battles that had been fought there throughout history. The context has absolutely no reference to an actual future assembly of nations or armies to fight a literal war.

***Is the end near?*** Those who are making predictions about the return of Christ and the end of the world are doing so in direct contradiction to what the Bible says. The Scriptures teach that “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night” (2 Pet. 3:10), implying that there will be no sign or advanced warning.

***What should we do?*** Considering the present political turmoil in the world, Paul’s instructions seem appropriate: “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (1 Tim. 2:1,2). And, of course, constant and faithful service to the Lord is essential so that, whenever the Lord returns, “that day should (not) overtake you as a thief” (1 Thess. 5:4).

## **Study Opportunities**

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM  
Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

## **Meeting At**

Homewood Suites of Bozeman  
1023 E Baxter Ln,  
Bozeman, MT 59715

***Everyone Welcome!***

# *The Vantage Point of Temptation*

# *Ladies*

# *Covery!*

*by: Amy Drake*

“He lied to me...”

“I won’t die...”

“Why would this be wrong...”

“This will do so much for me...”

“He doesn’t want me to be like Him...”

“And I want to be like Him...”

“I want it...”

She takes the fruit in her hand, brings it to her mouth, and she bites. She gives some to the man who is with her, and he eats the fruit. Sin has entered the world.

We can only speculate the thoughts that raced through Eve’s mind as Satan lied to her about God, the Almighty Being who was her creator, but whatever thoughts she had led her to see the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil as Satan saw it, not as God saw it.

In the beginning of the world, we can read of God having a direct relationship with Adam. He created him and provided him a home in the Garden of Eden, with work to do. The Lord cared for Adam and did not desire for him to be alone, so he made him a help meet, Eve (Genesis 2:5-24). Together they lived in the garden, made in God’s image, and had a connected relationship with the Lord, a relationship He had designed to be so from the beginning.

It is this creation and relationship that Satan sought to destroy to strike at God. We are given brief glimpses of Satan prior to the creation of the world. 1 Timothy 3:6 implies that his downfall came from being puffed up and full of pride. Satan is at war with God and His people, and seeks nothing but revenge and destruction. 1 Peter 5:8 says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” When he saw Adam and Eve living in happiness and innocence, he saw an opportunity. This was an occasion in which he could give God’s perfect creation a view other than God’s and devour them.

Adam and Eve knew good from evil as God intended them to. They were, after all, created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). But Satan clouded their judgment with lies and pride. Genesis 3:4-6 tells us, “Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. 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!’ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise...” Satan put forward the temptation, “you will be like God.” At that moment they decided that God had lied, God was holding back from them; they would eat the fruit, they would not die, and they would be like God. Satan had shifted their vantage point.

Knowledge of good and evil is the ability and maturity to distinguish between good and evil, not in deed only, but in consequence as well. Imagine their anticipation as they took the first bite of the forbidden fruit, swallowing, ready to reward themselves. Adam and Eve expected their eyes to be opened and to know wisdom as God knows it. Instead they gained the knowledge that they had sinned and seized guilt and shame (Genesis 3:7-10). They had desired to be like God, and now they were separated from him by the spiritual death he had promised for disobedience. They would also experience physical death and a schism in their relationship with God (Genesis 3:19, 23). They had gained nothing but the insight of their sin. Our holy God cannot fellowship with iniquity. From that moment on, the human plight has been seeking reconciliation to God.

Adam and Eve should have known to see temptation as God sees it--something rejected, shameful, and bringing nothing but separation. Instead they chose to see it as Satan--self-serving, deceptive, and prideful. To serve ourselves and to doubt God and His promises are ways that Satan would have us view temptation. Satan crafts temptation in such a way that he connects to our desires to blind us to truth, giving way to deception. He has taken the rot and disgust of the sin and disguised it in something we see as pleasurable and desirable. When we give way to this pleasure, we bite into the putrescence of the sin we were blinded to. To God, sin is something he will forever reject because it brings separation from Him in fellowship and heart. Succumbing to temptation brings a harsh experience God does not desire for us. 2 Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

We have to be aware of the vantage point from which we are viewing temptation: Do we revel in the self service and believe the lies Satan plants? Or do we see it as estrangement, bitter, shameful, and outside of God's will for us? There is freedom and liberty in God's law. God is not tyrannical and restrictive with His law as Satan would have us believe. There is a relationship with God inside His boundaries. Outside of God's borders, there is nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth, and isolation from all that is holy.

The truth and the lesson in the account is that their fall is our fall. Temptation did not stop with Adam and Eve. We all face Satan and his host daily. Romans 3:23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Thankfully, even though there are times temptation gets the best of us, God cares for us as He did Adam and Eve. He still strives to reconcile our relationship that has been set at odds because of our pride and Satan. As we humble ourselves, recognizing our shortcomings, he shows us grace and mercy and the blood of His Son, caring for us as a tender Shepherd and loving Father. Christ came to cover Adam's trespass. Adam's choice brought death to the world, but Christ's choice of sacrifice has redeemed us and reconciled us to our Lord (Romans 5:12-21).

Colossians 2:13-14: "And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

# ***Daily Bible Reading***

## ***March 2016***

March 1	Psalms 138-141	March 17	Proverbs 19-20
March 2	Psalms 142-145	March 18	Proverbs 21:1-22:16
March 3	Psalms 146-150	March 21	Proverbs 22:17-23:35
March 4	Proverbs 1-2	March 22	Proverbs 24-25
March 7	Proverbs 3-4	March 23	Proverbs 26-27
March 8	Proverbs 5:1-7:5	March 24	Proverbs 28-29
March 9	Proverbs 7:6-8:36	March 25	Proverbs 30-31
March 10	Proverbs 9-10	March 28	Ecclesiastes 1-2
March 11	Proverbs 11-12	March 29	Ecclesiastes 3-6
March 14	Proverbs 13-14	March 30	Ecclesiastes 7:1-9:12
March 15	Proverbs 15-16	March 31	Ecclesiastes 9:13-12:14
March 16	Proverbs 17-18		

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