

Perseverance? Yes, please.      STAND (& stand & stand & stand)      Be a ROCK in a Hard Place

# THE SOWER

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TO STAND  
& Persevere



A Day in the Life of  
TruthOrTradition.com  
(see page 19)

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# Letter From The President

By John Schoenheit

This issue of *The Sower* focuses on standing and persevering for God. Doing what it takes to persevere over the long haul of life should be each Christian's top priority. The Bible contains many verses encouraging us to be faithful, for example: "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58 ESV)<sup>1</sup>." Being "steadfast" for the Lord year after year requires more than just having strong emotions about the things of God. It means being fully persuaded that His promises are true.

I got a good lesson in the difference between emotion and persuasion when I played football in high school. I can remember when we were about to play a team that had a better won-loss record than we did. The coach would get us in the locker room before the game and give us an emotional talk about how we could beat them, and we would run out all fired up and ready to whip up on the other team. However, it always turned out that our emotion carried us only for a little while, and then eventually died out in the heat of battle as we were being pounded.

The same type of thing can happen to Christians. Sometimes a wishy-washy Christian will go to a meeting that has touching prayer, exciting praise and worship, and a powerful message. Stirred emotionally, he will make all kinds of promises to himself about how he will get up in the morning and read the Bible, pray on a daily basis, tell his friends about Jesus, and make time for fellowship meetings. But emotion, by its very nature, does not last very long, and pretty soon he breaks the promises he made to himself and returns to patterns of lukewarm Christian living.

To "persuade" means to convince by appealing to logic, reason, or understanding. Unlike emotion, persuasion lasts through the years. It carries us through both good times and bad, and anchors our Christian behavior in life's rough times. Of course, being deeply persuaded about the things of God requires an investment of time and energy, but we can be assured that taking that time is well worth it. Books could be written on how to become and stay persuaded about the things of God, but let us look at a good starting point.

First, we must recognize what persuasion is and what it will take to be persuaded to be faithful in the things of God. This step seems to happen automatically for many people, so you may not have thought about it before. Some people seem to "just do" the basic commands of God, but there are many others who need some direction. Knowingly or not, most people run their lives based on how they feel. This is easy to ascertain by asking them questions. "Did you go to church this week?" "No, I just did not feel like it." "Did you read your Bible today?" "No, I felt like just relaxing this morning." We all need to recognize that though it is possible to become Pharisaical and inflexible about the things of God, the more common problem by far is that most of us are not committed enough to the things of God that we do them regularly.

God is love, and all His commands and requests come from a loving heart committed to our wellbeing. We all know whether or not we are doing what God asks. If we are, praise God and let's keep up the good work. If we are not, let's figure out how to change that by becoming persuaded about the things of God to the end that we do them on a daily basis. That persuasion will bear good fruit both in our lives now, and in the everlasting future.

## Note

1. Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*™ © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved.

# Be A Rock in a hard place

By John Lynn

In the fall of 1972, while on a tour of the Bible Lands, I stood on Mars Hill in Athens, Greece, where the Apostle Paul preached his magnificent discourse recorded in Acts 17. That was back in the days when “pet rocks” were the rage, so as a memento I took home a palm-sized piece of that rocky hill. My rock knows only one command: “Stay.” And for the past 35 years on my desk it has done just that. It is a faithful rock, and I can count on it to be there for me.

A rock indicates firmness, and a big enough rock indicates immovability and permanence. No doubt that is why one insurance company’s symbol is the Rock of Gibraltar, a huge stone known for its tendency to stay put. The company’s appeal to prospective customers is that it is just as reliable, and that each customer can have a “piece of the rock.”

The true “Rock” is *Jesus Christ*, whom God raised from the dead and exalted as Lord and Head of the Church, his Body. If you have made him your Lord, you are born again of God’s spirit and, via that gift of holy spirit, you have “Christ in you” (Col. 1:27).<sup>1</sup> You *definitely* have a piece of the Rock. What’s more, as a member in particular of the Body of Christ, you *are* a piece of the Rock! Because you have been born again of “incorruptible” seed (1 Pet. 1:23-KJV), you are guaranteed everlasting life in Paradise. That means that you will *forever* be firm, immovable, and permanent.

But what about *now*? The world is definitely a hard place in which to live. How can each of us be a “rock”? How can we exhibit the qualities of a rock in our practice of Christianity? That is what this simple word study of “rock” and “stone” is about. We will see that we are to be “living stones” who *speak out* in witness to “the Rock from which we were hewn,” and that as we stand together on The Rock, we can rebuild the wall of truth that tradition has torn down.

In contemporary language, to be “rocked” is to be moved or swayed powerfully with excitement or emotion. And we in the USA know that if something “rocks,” that means it is very impressive, remarkable, and extraordinary. Well, JESUS *rocks*, and as a “chip off the Old Rock,” so can you. As you walk with him, you can powerfully move people to excitement and emotion by the testimony of your life. The life of Christ within you can be “manifest in your mortal flesh” to the end that people see how impressive, remarkable, and extraordinary our Savior truly is.

## Stones As Memorials

A record in the Old Testament shows that rocks were used to remind people of God’s deliverance. When the people of Israel had crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land, Joshua used stones to remind the people of their deliverance from Egypt.

### Joshua 4:4-9

- (4) So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe,  
(5) and said to them, “Go over before the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a **stone** on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites,  
(6) to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘**What do these stones mean?**’  
(7) tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. **These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.**”  
(8) So the Israelites did as Joshua commanded them. They took twelve **stones** from the middle of the

Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, as the LORD had told Joshua; and they carried them over with them to their camp, where they put them down.

(9) Joshua set up the twelve **stones** that had been in the middle of the Jordan at the spot where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant had stood. **And they are there to this day.**

Passing over the Jordan consummated God's redemption of His people, Israel, from the land of bondage to the land of promise. In Joshua 4:1, note that "the whole nation" crossed over, and thus each one had the opportunity to partake of all that God made available there. Today, each Christian has been redeemed from the bondage of sin unto a life of limitless possibilities in Christ. Not all, however, are faithful to continue walking the path of righteousness God has set before them. But *you* can be.

The stones were set up as a permanent memorial, a witness, to remind the people of God's deliverance and to inspire them to believe His promises for the future. They were taken from the middle of the Jordan and set in the camp of Israel, which was at Gilgal, in the Promised Land. A second set of stones was taken from the middle of the Jordan and set down on the East side of the Jordan to mark the place where the Priests had stood and where the miracle occurred. As living stones, you and I have been taken from the middle of a sick and dying world, so to speak. We are still in the world, but we are not of the world, and we are each to be a rock in a hard place. As we build our lives on The Rock, Jesus Christ, our faithfulness will inspire others to say of us as well: "They are here to this day."

Space prohibits me from quoting much of Joshua 24, but Joshua gathered the people and reminded them of how God had delivered them from the Egyptians and given them a land of plenty. He exhorted them to put away the false gods they had served before and serve only Yahweh. They said they would, so he made a covenant with them that day.

#### **Joshua 24:26-28**

(26) And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large **stone** and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD.

(27) "See!" he said to all the people. "**This stone will be a witness** against us. It has heard all the words the LORD has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God."

(28) Then Joshua sent the people away, each to his own inheritance.

Joshua set up the stone under an oak tree, which in Scripture represents longevity, faithfulness, and steadfastness. The stone, however, would outlast even the oak. He said that the stone was to be witness because it had heard all the words of Yahweh. Yes, the stone remained as a reminder, but *it could not speak*.

Each of us once dwelt on the wrong side of the unbridgeable chasm between man and God. We decided to leave that bondage and run to God's heart, but we came to the edge of the chasm and could not cross by ourselves. We cried out to God, and He snatched us to the safety of His side, putting us far above our spiritual Adversary. Let us now, therefore, put away any gods we previously served, such as fear, pride, envy, lust, selfishness, and serve the Lord as living stones of witness.

## **How Firm a Foundation**

Throughout the Old Testament God is often referred to as a rock, and that indicated a place of safety and refuge. In Exodus 17, when the people of Israel were wandering in the wilderness and had no water, God told Moses to strike the rock at Horeb with his staff, and water flowed out to quench their thirst. That is a clear prophetic reference to the coming Messiah, and 1 Corinthians 10 expounds upon it.

## 1 Corinthians 10:1-5 (NKJV)<sup>2</sup>

- (1) Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that **all** our fathers were under the cloud, **all** passed through the sea,
- (2) **all** were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,
- (3) **all** ate the same spiritual food,
- (4) and **all** drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of **that spiritual Rock** that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.<sup>3</sup>
- (5) But with **most** of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.

Jesus was not following along behind the Israelites in the wilderness, but he would follow them in *time*, and it was to the coming Messiah whom they were to look for their salvation. Once again we see that ALL the Israelites were given equal opportunity to walk in newness of life, but most did not do so, allowing themselves to be misled by their leaders and thus turned away by spiritual deception. Today, each member of the Body of Christ is fully equipped to become like him and shine his light to the world, and to do so we must stand upon the truth of God's wonderful Word and act accordingly.

## 1 Corinthians 3:10 and 11

- (10) By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds.
- (11) For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Life's principles declare the truth of God's Word. Speaking of an architectural foundation, The *Encyclopedia Britannica*<sup>4</sup> states: "The foundation of a structure generally seems to transfer the loads from the structure to the underlying materials (such as soil or rock) which are known as the foundation material." And the *Construction Handbook for Civil Engineers* says: "A properly designed foundation conveys all loads to the earth in such a manner as to prevent unacceptable settling or breakup of the supported structure. This is accomplished by spreading the load over a sufficient area."

**Jesus Christ** is a sufficient foundation for the Church because by his life he conquered all the sins of mankind and by his death he paid the price for sin itself. As the Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5), he transfers our loads of human weakness to God, His Father (and ours), who is the very bedrock of his own life.

In case you want to study this more thoroughly, consider the following: when it comes to how all mankind relates to Jesus Christ, each person will either **stand upon the Rock** as their sure foundation (Isa. 28:14-16; Matt. 7:24-29 and 16:13-18), **stumble over the Rock** (Rom. 9:30-33), or **be crushed by the Rock** (Luke 20:9-18).

## Living Stones of Witness

Speaking of Israel at the future Resurrection of the Just, God says in Ezekiel 36:26b that He will "...remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." As Christians, our formerly stony hearts have been flooded with God's tenderizing holy spirit. Though we are still "earthen vessels," we have the ability to faithfully manifest the heart of Christ to the world. In reality, God has done for us something similar to what John the Baptist proclaimed to the unbelieving Pharisees and Sadducees who were flaunting their Jewish heritage: He has given us life as "children of Abraham," figuratively speaking.

## Matthew 3:9

And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that **out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.**

Jesus said something similar at his triumphal entry into Jerusalem when the Jewish people were praising God and

blessing Jesus as their long awaited king:

**Luke 19:38-40**

(38) “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

(39) Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

(40) “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, **the stones will cry out.**”

We who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are firmly standing upon The Rock. Those who refuse to believe in him stumble over The Rock. Those who pledge their allegiance to the Devil will be crushed under The Rock. As you stand upon The Rock, both he and our Father will back you up with their power. The stones Joshua set up because they had heard the words of the LORD *could* not speak. Though called to be a nation to minister to the world, Israel *did* not speak. Now we, whose stony hearts have been flooded with life, are the ones called to go forth and *speak the truth in love*.

**2 Corinthians 3:2 and 3**

(2) You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody.

(3) You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit [spirit] of the living God, **not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.**

1 Peter 1:18-2:3 is a stirring section of Scripture regarding one’s new birth and subsequent growth by way of wholeheartedly desiring the sustenance of the Word of God and a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. Then come the following verses, wherein the Jewish language communicated very well to Peter’s audience:

**1 Peter 2:4, 5 and 9**

(4) As you come to him, **the living Stone**—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—

(5) you also, like **living stones**, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

(9) But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

It is we, the Church, who are to declare the praises of our Father and our Lord. And the greatest truth we can declare is the Sacred Secret,<sup>5</sup> which is that today it is available for anyone to be born again of incorruptible seed and thus be a member of the Body of Christ, fully equipped to manifest his life to the world, and guaranteed everlasting life in Paradise. As Christians, we are “living stones” built into a dwelling place for our God. He has placed His very nature within us so that we can walk in fellowship with Him and light up the world with His love and truth.

**Ephesians 2:19-22**

(19) Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household,

(20) built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with **Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.**

(21) In him **the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.**

(22) **And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit [spirit].**

The Sacred Secret was the first truth lost shortly after the death of the Apostle Paul in about 70 AD, and since then much of “the wall of truth” found in the Church Epistles has been torn down and replaced by the religious traditions of men. God is counting on each of us, like “rocks” who have heard the words of the Lord about the Sacred Secret, to stand faithfully in this hard place, speaking forth the truth that so many billions have never heard. So, fellow members of the Body of Christ, let us each cleave unto our Lord Jesus, put on the mind of Christ, and

faithfully stand together upon The Rock of Ages. *Let's rock!*

**Notes:**

1. "Christ in you" is not literal, because Christ is in heaven. This is the figure of speech Hypocatastasis, and is a powerful way of saying that all that Christ is in you. For more on this figure see: [TruthOrTradition.com/figures](http://TruthOrTradition.com/figures)
2. Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are taken from the *New King James Version*<sup>®</sup>. © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
3. The phrase "that followed them," is incorrect. There is no word in the Greek text for "them."
4. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. Chicago.
5. For further study on the Sacred Secret, visit [TruthOrTradition.com/secret](http://TruthOrTradition.com/secret)

# The Contender: Stand! (And stand, and stand, and stand)

By John Schoenheit

**S**tanding for the Lord year after year might be the most difficult thing that a Christian can do. The annals of history are full of Christians who shone brilliantly for a short while and then faded away. The world is a cruel place, and it often happens that people are hurt to the point that they no longer have any desire to obey God in a meaningful way. That is one reason why the words of Ephesians 6, which focus on standing, are so powerful. In the short section of Scripture below, note that the word “stand” (Greek: *histemi*) and “withstand,” which comes from the same root word, occurs four times in four verses.

## **Ephesians 6:10-14a (ESV)<sup>1</sup>**

(10) Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

(11) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to **stand** against the schemes of the devil.

(12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

(13) Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to **withstand** in the evil day, and having done all, to **stand** firm.

(14a) **Stand** therefore....

God wants us to stand in this “present evil age” (Gal. 1:4-ESV; the “evil day” of Eph. 6:13-ESV), when the conflict is intense, and be left standing when it is over. Why is that so hard? There are many reasons, of which we will examine only a few. One reason is that many people do not take the time to build a clear picture of the Hope in their mind. That Hope is the anchor of the soul (Heb. 6:19), and a clear understanding of it helps keep us anchored to God in day-to-day life. There is no need to be unclear about what God has in store for you in the future, because there is much about it in Scripture, and it is there because God wants us to know the love He has for us.<sup>2</sup>

Another reason people do not keep standing for God is that they do not mentally prepare themselves for the long and difficult fight with evil. Somehow many of us think that life should be, or will be, easier than it actually is. Life is hard and cruel, and difficulties come from unexpected places.

Looking at how and why people start going to church will give us some insight on why many fall away from God during tough times. Many Christians started going to church when they were children, simply because their parents made them go. Sunday school teachers work hard to make the experience fun and entertaining so the children will like it. Most children do not learn that the Christian life is not about what is fun or what makes us happy, but rather about giving and service. God created us for a purpose, and fruitful Christian living requires making sacrifices for Him. As children grow up and are faced with the distracting “pleasures” of life, church becomes less “fun,” and by college age, a huge number of children who were raised to go to church no longer do. They naturally, but incorrectly, think in terms of what church can do for them, not what they could do for God as a member of a church.

People who give their life to Christ when they are adults often have the same problem the children do. Most of them start going to church with a friend because they like the fellowship, or because they feel a spiritual or psychological need, or they are searching for something in their life and think God may help. In most cases, it seems people start going to church because of what God can do for them. That is natural, and it is fine. God is the Great Healer, and the ministry of Christ to heal the brokenhearted, set captives free, and bring Good News to those in need is a vital part of what happens in church.

However, it is important that Christians be taught why God delivers His people. He could, after all, simply let captive and brokenhearted Christians stay that way until the Rapture, and straighten everything out then. Why

deliver people now? The answer is clear—*we are delivered so we can serve*. Giving our lives in service to God is reasonable. It may not be easy, and many times it is not “fun,” but it is certainly reasonable, and Romans makes that point.

### **Romans 12:1 (KJV)**

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable* service.<sup>3</sup>

Christians need to know that they were created for a purpose, saved for a purpose, and healed for a purpose, and that purpose is to serve God. If we understand that service will require a lot from us, we will be much more able to stand in tough times, when we do not get a good feeling from serving God. As the psychiatrist Scott Peck has pointed out, when we realize that life is difficult, it immediately becomes *less difficult*, because we are mentally prepared for the difficulty.

## **Be Strong in the Lord**

Because life is difficult, and God wants us to stand year after year, He has given us armor to help us stand in the fight.

### **Ephesians 6:13-19a (ESV)**

(13) Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to **withstand** in the evil day, and having done all, to **stand** firm.

(14) **Stand** therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

(15) and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

(16) In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

(17) and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

(18) praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

(19a) and also for me....

Before we go into the specifics of the armor, we need to make a couple of important observations. First, the armor of God mentioned in verses 13-17 is so intriguing, and so intrinsically powerful, that it is easy to forget that this section of Scripture opens with the exhortation to be strong in the Lord.

### **Ephesians 6:10 (Author’s translation)**

Finally, be strong in the Lord, that is, in his mighty strength.<sup>4</sup>

The Christian must be, and remain, strong in the Lord. In him we have the strength we need to stand and withstand. The armor we put on is not our armor; it is God’s armor. Furthermore, we are not strong in ourselves because we have the armor. If we forget that, and begin to trust in our strength, then the Evil One will quickly discover how to defeat us. The “armor” section of Scripture starts with us being strong in the Lord, and that is where we must stay.

## **The Big Game**

Another thing we must keep in mind is that “...we do not wrestle against flesh and blood...” The word “wrestle” is a very good translation of the Greek word *pale* (Strong’s #3823), even in this context of a soldier’s armor. While it is true that over time the usage of *pale* broadened to include various struggles (which is why quite a few versions

say “struggle” instead of “wrestle”) *pale* always retained its undertone of the wrestling contest. Furthermore, hand-to-hand combat was common enough among professional soldiers that being a good wrestler helped a lot on the battlefield.<sup>5</sup>

The people of Ephesus were familiar with wrestling due to the popularity of athletic games throughout the Greco-Roman world. Archaeologists have uncovered three gymnasiums in Ephesus, and the main theater, occasionally used for gladiatorial games, seated 24,000 people. Although there were always some “local amateurs” who competed in the games, by the time of Paul many of the contestants were professional athletes who made their living by traveling around from game to game, living off sponsorships or winnings.

A major point of comparison between wrestling and Christian life is that the wrestlers did not kill their opponents. The games went on place after place and year after year, and although today’s match might be over, another would come next week, or next month. The contest never ended, and such is the case with Christians. We cannot beat the Devil once and for all and then have peace in our lives. Rather, we wrestle against evil and ungodliness day after day, week after week, throughout our lives. This can get discouraging, and it is why we must grasp the fact that God does not ask us to “win” the contest, because we cannot kill the Devil. We are told to “stand.”

My Argentinean friend Alejandro Marchesan called Christianity “the Big Game” and compared it to the big soccer matches of his country. I was always empowered by his comparison. In sports, each player enters the match of his own free will, each player gives his all, and each player knows that there will be another match soon. No one is upset that the opponent is not “killed” and does not “go away.” That is the nature of the game. Christians would do well to take to heart that our contest with evil will exist throughout our lives. God does not reward us for the ultimate victory, which is His, He rewards us for entering the context and standing faithfully for Him, wearing His uniform, if you will, throughout our lives.

## The Armor of God

As we begin to examine the armor that God has provided for us, we can see that we are told to “...take up the whole armor of God...” The words “take up” are not the usual words for putting on clothing, but mean what they say, “take up.” Furthermore, the Greek is in the imperative mood, so the verb is a command, not a suggestion. God gives us the armor, and to obey Him we must put it on. The words “take up” give us the mind picture of a person standing up with all the armor lying at his feet. The armor is there, but to be useful it must be picked up and put on. Furthermore, if only a piece of the armor is used, the benefit of the armor is minimized. We are to take up the whole armor, not just parts of it.

## The Belt of Truth

The first piece of armor in the list is the belt of truth.<sup>6</sup> The soldier’s belt was one of his most significant pieces of clothing. While not as visible or glamorous as the helmet, or as fearsome as the sword, the belt anchored the rest of the armor. The breastplate attached to it and thus stayed in place, protecting the soldier’s chest; the sword hung from it so it would not have to be constantly carried in the hand; and the belt had a rest for the shield so that the soldier would not have to carry the weight of the shield hour after hour as he marched. A soldier who marched all day carrying the weight of the sword and shield would arrive at the scene of battle so tired that his effectiveness in combat would be greatly reduced.

Like the soldier’s belt, the truth of God’s Word is foundational for the Christian and anchors all of the rest of his life. Knowing that the belt of truth anchors the rest of the Christian armor, the Devil wages a constant and aggressive campaign against truth, and promulgates lies such as there is no absolute truth, or that relationships are

more important than truth. To defeat those lies we must remember that God is true, and that He does not lie (Titus 1:2). What comes from God is truth, and truth leads us to Him.

### **Psalm 43:3**

Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell.

To say that there is no absolute truth is to miss the point that everything in existence originated in the heart of a God who had a divine and loving purpose for everything He did. There is a God and there is a Devil; thus there is a “right way” and a “wrong way” to live, there is everlasting life and everlasting death, and so forth. We ignore this to our peril. God gave us the armor so we could stand for Him, and if we neglect understanding and knowing truth, the foundation of our armor becomes shaky indeed. Thankfully, as Jesus has told us, the Word of God is truth (John 17:17), and we can grow in truth by studying it diligently. As the Psalmist says, the truth guides us to God.

We should note that the Greek text reads that the Christian is to “gird himself” or “belt himself” around with truth. The verb is in the middle voice, making it crystal clear that it is the person who must put the truth around his or her waist. Knowing truth does not come from owning a Bible or living near a church. We must actively work to put on the belt of truth; it does not “tie itself on” to us. Similarly, the breastplate and shoes are referred to in the middle voice in the Greek text. Each believer must put these things on for himself.

## **The Breastplate of Righteousness**

The Roman soldier wore a breastplate that covered his vital organs, and we are told to put on the breastplate of righteousness. To fully understand the breastplate of righteousness, we must remember that “righteousness” has two meanings in the Administration of Grace in which we live.<sup>7</sup> Righteousness is the God-given righteousness, or right standing, that we have before God because Jesus died for our sins, and it is also the right standing we have before God when we choose to live rightly. When Romans 5:17 mentions the free gift of righteousness that Christians have, that is our righteousness due to the work of Christ. When 1 Timothy 6:11 (KJV) instructs us to follow after righteousness, or 2 Timothy 3:16 (KJV) says that the Bible provides instruction in righteousness, that is “right living” before God.

The “breastplate of righteousness” includes both meanings. First, no matter how hard we try to live obediently before God, we will sin. If we do not understand that our sins are forgiven, and that due to the work of Christ we stand righteous before God, the weight of that sin on our conscience can be unbearable. Many people have been made ineffective in their lives and ministries, and some have abandoned the Christian faith altogether, due to the guilt they feel from their sins. They have not put on the breastplate of righteousness, and guilt and shame have penetrated their vital organs. The knowledgeable Christian is aware that when he confesses his sins, they are forgiven in Christ, and he does not hold on to the guilt produced by his mistakes. Freed from that weight, he can stand effectively for the Lord.

The breastplate of righteousness is also the breastplate of our righteous life. Living righteously before God protects us in many ways. There is physical protection, such as from the ravages of alcohol, drugs, sexually transmitted disease, and so forth. Also, our minds are protected from the consequences of willful sin, such as shame and guilt. The Bible says that those who practice sin become slaves to sin, and that is true. The savvy Christian puts on the breastplate of righteousness by living righteously from day to day so he can readily stand against the wiles of the Devil.

## **The Shoes: Readiness Given by the Gospel of Peace**

The shoes, like the belt and breastplate, are not offensive armor. Nevertheless, they are essential if the Christian

is going to stand year after year for God. In this case, the footwear of God is the readiness, or preparation, one has for the evil day, and this comes from the Good News of peace. The reference to the gospel of peace in this context is not referring to evangelism, as that is not the context here. Rather it is referring to the peace that Christians must have in their minds and hearts to stand firmly day after day against the onslaughts of the Adversary.

The Bible has many references to the peace that each of us is to have. Every Church Epistle opens with God's assurance that we are at peace with Him. Peace is a fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:22). Furthermore, we are to let the peace of God rule in our hearts (Col. 3:15), and peace can also guard our hearts (Phil. 4:7). The Christian who has not prepared himself to be peaceful will have a difficult life, for every day brings new challenges. In contrast, people who love the Word of God and follow it have great peace, and can stand in the battle of life.

### **Psalm 119:165**

Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.

To have an abundant and joy-filled life, believers must prepare themselves with the Good News of peace, and be peaceful.

## **The Shield of Faith**

The importance of the shield to a soldier cannot be overstated. It protects him from being killed by the blows of the enemy. What we as Christians need to remember, however, is that the shield does not stop the blows from coming. In fact, the soldier feels the blows in spite of the shield. A blow may even be so hard that it knocks the soldier down, but the shield will do its work and keep the blow from killing him. The shield of faith works the same way.

The “shield of faith” is a genitive of apposition, and means, “the shield, that is to say, our faith.” In other words, the shield *is* our faith. “Faith,” which is “trust” in God, does not keep the blows of the Adversary from coming, and having a shield does not mean we will not feel the blows.<sup>8</sup> But our trust in God keeps us from being “killed” by the Adversary; we withstand attack after attack with our love for God and commitment to Him intact. Without the shield of trust, life's problems would be overwhelming. Daily we trust that our heavenly Father will see us through the day, give us strength, give us guidance, help with our problems, and so much more. Without that trust, the enemy's fiery darts hit us again and again, eventually taking the life out of our Christian walk.

Faith is not a mystery—it is simply trust. We build trust with God the same way we do with anyone else, by being involved with the person, interacting with him, and paying attention to what he says and does. Christians must pray, pay attention to what God says in His Word, and act on it. If we are faithful to do that, our faith will grow, and our shield will be strong for those difficult times in life.

## **The Helmet of Salvation**

The “helmet of salvation” of Ephesians 6 is more accurately called the helmet of “the hope of salvation” in 1 Thessalonians 5:8. The word “salvation” is used in its general sense in this verse, and is not restricted to only salvation to everlasting life, although that is included. The entire Creation is in bondage and is groaning in pain (Rom. 8:21 and 22), and so are we Christians (Rom. 8:23). Everything in Creation needs to be “saved,” that is, “rescued” from the power of sin. Nothing any of us can do will change that now, but God will rescue His creation in the future. The Lord Jesus will descend from heaven and conquer the earth, and the earth will once again become a paradise. God promises that in the future we will live on a beautiful earth in new, energetic bodies, and our lives will be free of sickness, hunger, war, and injustice.<sup>9</sup> He has given us that wonderful Hope, and it can sustain us through our lives, especially in hard times.

No matter how difficult our lives become, our hope for a wonderful future shines through the darkness and points to better things to come. Because of this, the Bible refers to the Hope as **the anchor of our soul** (Heb. 6:19). As such, it is fitting that our hope of salvation for both ourselves and Creation is referred to as our “helmet.” Life can be so difficult and discouraging that it is hard to think straight. Each year vast numbers of people get caught up in the difficulties of life and make unwise decisions. Many people even completely lose sight of any value or purpose in their life and commit suicide. The hope of salvation says, “Hang in there, your troubles will not last long, and then things will be glorious.” The hope of salvation helps protect our minds and keep us calm and rational in troubled times, enabling us to keep on standing for God. When properly understood, the hope of salvation is a very effective helmet, protecting our thoughts and helping us stand for the Lord year after year.

## The Sword of the Spirit: the Word of God

The sword of the spirit, the Word of God, is the only offensive weapon the believer has as he wrestles with evil. This is simple, but often forgotten. Sometimes we try to reason with evil so it will change, or be so loving and kind that evil will relent from doing harm, or we simply try to avoid it and not enter the fight. The Devil is real, his nature is evil, and he has enlisted the help of many demons and humans to carry out his evil plans, so the fight is real and cannot be avoided. If we ignore the Word of God we not only disarm ourselves, but we also put ourselves in the position of not being able to effectively help others.<sup>10</sup> No wonder the psalmist says, “I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word” (Ps. 119:16). No wonder Jesus reminded us of the words of Deuteronomy, that people do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4; Deut. 8:3).

It is important to remember that the sword is the “sword of the Spirit.”<sup>11</sup> When we think about it, that makes sense. As humans, can we stand against the Devil in our own strength? No. Are there any earthly weapons that can defeat him? No. The only weapon that is effective against the Enemy is the Word of God. Even with that, we do not defeat him in a permanent way; we simply cut off his attacks and protect ourselves.

In the Greek text, the verb telling us to take the helmet and the sword is in the imperative mood. That means that God is not just stating that we should take these pieces of armor, or asking us if we would like to, He is commanding us to take them and put them on. If we do not put on the helmet and take up and use the sword, we are in effect telling God that we will not enter into His service in our fullest capacity. One important reason why God commands us to take the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, is that if we do not really understand the Word, we can unknowingly be used by the Devil against the purposes of God, and hurt other people. For example, the Christians who tortured other Christians during the Inquisition thought they were doing Christ’s work. Although that is an extreme example, the same kind of thing, people working against God when they think they are working for him, happens on a much smaller scale every day. Christians are called to stand for God, and the sword of the spirit is an essential part of our armor if we are going to be successful in doing that throughout our lifetime.

God has called us to stand for Him, stand in the evil day, and, “having done all,” to stand. It is not easy, and sometimes seems more of a burden than a blessing, but our labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58). Let us each do what it takes to stand for God and His Son as long as we live. They deserve that from us, and we will be blessed for doing it.

### Notes:

1. Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*™ © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved.
2. See our book, *The Christian’s Hope: The Anchor of the Soul*. It has much about what is coming in the future for believers.
3. The Greek word for reasonable is *logikos*, and the exact meaning in this verse is disputed by scholars. Thayer’s Lexicon [Thayer, Joseph H. Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., Peabody, MA, reprinted 2000.] points out that the word was a favorite of ancient Greek philosophers, who used it in the sense of “rational,” from the use of *logos* as “reason.” If it were used that way in the verse, “your reasonable service” would be a good translation. However, *logikos* was also used in a sense that referred to what belonged to the realm of words and logic versus the realm of matter. If used in that sense, “reasonable” stands

opposed not to that which is foolish or unreasonable, but rather to that which is material, external, or of the flesh, such as the ritualistic and outward worship of the Jews. This is why many versions go with the translation “spiritual service” or “spiritual worship.” To us it seems that both meanings are present in this use in Romans, and thus dedicating our lives to God and living sacrificially is certainly “reasonable.”

**4.** In this translation I understand the Greek *kai* to have the sense of “even,” or better here, “that is.”

**5.** Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians* (Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002), p. 825.

**6.** A more literal translation than “belt of truth” is that we are to be “belted with truth.” The belt is the truth.

**7.** For a more thorough development of the two ways “righteousness” is used, see our booklet, *Righteousness—Every Christian’s Gift From God*, available on page 5 of the enclosed price list or visit [TruthOrTradition.com/righteousness](http://TruthOrTradition.com/righteousness)

**8.** For more on the definition of “faith,” visit [TruthOrTradition.com/faith](http://TruthOrTradition.com/faith)

**9.** We are not saved, rescued, from this present evil world yet, nor is the world saved from the power of sin. The Bible refers to us as “saved” (and we refer to ourselves that way), which is an idiom in the original languages of the Bible known as the “prophetic perfect.” The essence of the prophetic perfect idiom is that if something is absolutely guaranteed to happen in the future, it is often spoken of as if it had already occurred. Because our salvation is guaranteed, we speak as if we have it now, and the salvation of the world from its present distress is guaranteed also. For an explanation of the prophetic perfect, see our book *The Christian’s Hope: The Anchor of the Soul*, appendix E, available on page 5 of the enclosed price list or visit [TruthOrTradition.com/pp](http://TruthOrTradition.com/pp)

**10.** Some people might dispute this fact and say that they can help others without knowing the Word of God, but help that is truly help must eventually lead those who do not know God to be open to His Word and especially salvation through Jesus Christ. If helping someone does not eventually lead to his or her salvation, then the help is in vain. It is like “helping” someone re-arrange the deck chairs on the Titanic. Eventually it will not matter.

**11.** The genitive in this verse is probably the figure of speech Amphibologia, encompassing two meanings at once. Thus the genitive has both the force of a genitive of possession, i.e., that it is ‘the Spirit’s sword,’ but on loan to us to use, and also the force of a genitive of origin, “the sword given to us by the Spirit,” to use in our earthly lives.

## Partner profile

### Gabrielle Sue Davis

**A**s a deaf child, I used my eyes to develop a visual language. I remember picking up my first Gospel tract and reading it, fascinated with the graphic pictures with fewer words. Later on, I read some other tracts in other locations, yet the simple message did not cross my mind. The only thing I understood was that I do not want to be dead forever, but to have an everlasting life with God.

The Gospel was clarified for me when I went to the California School for the Deaf in Berkeley, a residential deaf school. My best friend, Priscilla, and I spent hours in the dormitory discussing God. We thought that the best way to become a Christian was to live an honest life. The following summer, Priscilla went to a church that had a deaf ministry, and became a Christian. In September, she brought her Bible and showed me Romans 10:9 and 10. I read it and she explained it to me in sign language. I understood, and I confessed Jesus Christ as my Lord and believed that God raised him from the dead. I felt at peace. She then encouraged me to read the Bible.

I then met Jurleme, my other best friend, at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. She has been a Christian since she was a kid, and she taught me something that I never realized. She used a metaphor by saying that because God is spirit, He depends on me to use my hands to give financially to the ministry. Whether I give small or big offerings, He sees me as a giver. It is between God and me. Let Him take care of where the money goes. Then I saw where the Word says that God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7), and from then on I became a giver, particularly to Spirit & Truth Fellowship.

I thank God for the Internet, as it is one form of communication accessible to me. I was searching for a ministry because I desired to have a better understanding of the Word, and I found this one. At that time, they did not yet have their TruthOrTradition.com and BiblicalUnitarian.com sites. When they came out, I read their articles and I have been inspired and blessed. My favorite website is TruthOrTradition.com, and I also love *The Sower* magazine. The writers are doing an excellent job of clearly explaining the meaning of the Scriptures to me.

Their competence in teaching has been so great that I have continued to learn and grow more and more. This has motivated me to give of my money to this ministry, which has so much to offer. Moreover, their websites are user friendly and accessible to the deaf (and hearing) people all over the world.

Gabrielle Sue Davis  
Upper Marlboro, MD

# Figure of speech: Synecdoche



he ability to communicate by words is one thing that sets apart mankind from all other creatures. God is the Author of language, and no one has ever used language as precisely as God does in the Bible, including His use of figures of speech. When most people say, “a figure of speech,” they are speaking in general terms of something that is not true to fact. However, genuine “figures of speech” are legitimate grammatical and lexical forms that add emphasis and feeling to what we say and write. Recognizing and properly interpreting the figures of speech in the Bible has many advantages. We can understand the true meaning of Scripture and be able to more fully enjoy the richness of the Word of God. It is important that we become at least somewhat familiar with the figures of speech in Scripture, of which there are more than 200 varieties.<sup>1</sup>

The figure we are going to cover in this issue of *The Sower* is Synecdoche (pronounced sin-ek-de-key). It is an exchange by which the whole of something is put for only a part, or vice versa, or a genus is put for a species or vice versa. Anyone studying Synecdoche will soon see its similarity to the figure of speech Metonymy, and Bullinger describes it this way:

[Synecdoche is] a figure by which one word receives something from another which is *internally* associated with it by the connection of two ideas: as when a part of a thing is put by a kind of Metonymy for the whole of it, or the whole for a part. The difference between Metonymy and Synecdoche lies in this: that in Metonymy, the exchange is made between *two related nouns*; while in Synecdoche the exchange is made between *two associated ideas*.<sup>2</sup>

Synecdoche is one of those figures of speech that we use every day, but are not taught to be aware of it. There are hundreds of examples of Synecdoche in the Bible, and Bullinger has 44 pages of examples. There are a large number of specific categories of Synecdoche, but the general idea is easy to understand. For this article, I will generalize the concepts into the whole for the part and the part for the whole, to give the basic idea of the figure. For a more exacting study, the reader should refer to Bullinger’s wonderful work on the subject.

## “All” or a “whole,” is put for a large part or a representative part:

### **Jeremiah 26:9b (ESV)**<sup>3</sup>

...And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

Not “everyone” did, as is clear from the context, but a large number did. The Synecdoche adds a powerful punch to the verse, as we come face to face with the large number of people who rejected God, and Jeremiah His prophet.

### **Matthew 3:5 (ESV)**

Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him [John the Baptist]...

Not “all” the people were going, but a large number were. The Synecdoche gives us a feel for the large numbers of people that responded to John the Baptist.

### **2 Kings 8:9a (ESV)**

So Hazael went to meet him [Elisha], and took a present with him, all kinds of goods of Damascus, forty camel loads...

The Hebrew text reads that Hazael took “every good thing of Damascus” to Elisha, which, of course, is

impossible. This is a Synecdoche, the whole for a part. Hazeal took every kind of good thing. This is an example of the English versions, such as the ESV above, interpreting the verse for us rather than just translating it. That can be helpful to the beginning reader, but it does not give the English reader the chance to see the Synecdoche.

**Acts 10:12 (YLT)<sup>4</sup>**

in which [in the sheet let down from heaven for Peter to see] were all the four-footed beasts of the earth, and the wild beasts, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the heaven...

Not every single animal, bird and insect was in the sheet, but the majority of the *kinds* of animals were represented. The Synecdoche helps us understand why Peter was recoiled instinctively from all these creatures and said, “Surely not, Lord!” Even the average American, who has no problem eating some of the creatures in the sheet, would have recoiled at the sight. This verse, like the example immediately above, has the Synecdoche translated out of almost all English versions.

**James 2:15a (KJV)**

If a brother or sister be naked...

“Naked” is put by Synecdoche for “scantily clothed.” This is a common Synecdoche in the Bible, compare John 21:7, for example, where Peter is said in the Greek to be “naked,” but he would not have worked that way, especially since fishing boats on the Sea of Galilee can easily be seen from shore. Similarly, Isaiah was almost certainly not “naked,” (Isa. 20:2) but he had on his inner tunic such as a mourner or even a prisoner of war would have. Many versions have replaced “naked” with “scantily clothed” or some other phrase, translating the Synecdoche out of the version.

## A part is put for a whole

**Psalm 1:1a (ESV)**

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked...

In this verse, and hundreds of others in the Bible, the specific word, “man,” which is put for the whole of “mankind,” both men and women. In the culture of the Bible, women were understood to be included. In biblical times this was not considered an affront to women, although it often is today.

**Psalm 44:6a (NASB)<sup>5</sup>**

For I will not trust in my bow...

“Bow” is put by Synecdoche for all weapons. The point is David will not trust his weapons, he will trust Yahweh, his God. God’s use of the Synecdoche packs an important punch. If the verse had said, “I will not trust in my human resources, such as weapons,” we readers are left with no clear picture in our minds. However, by saying “bow,” we can all picture David holding a bow but not trusting it to deliver him.

**Genesis 3:19a (ESV)**

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground...

“Bread” is put for all the foods man will eat. Bread was such a staple in biblical times that “bread” is used as the general term for food dozens of times in the Bible, and the phrase, ‘break bread’ meant much more than that, it meant to eat a meal.

### **Exodus 21:6b (ESV)**

...And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever.

Not literally “forever,” but through his lifetime. There are many figurative uses of time in the Bible. Besides Synecdoche, words indicating periods of time were often exaggerated (the figure of speech Hyperbole) in the biblical culture, as they are today. Furthermore, some “time” words had more than one meaning. Not being able to discern from the scope of Scripture what is eternal from what is of limited time has caused much doctrinal confusion among Christians.

### **Ephesians 6:12a (ESV)**

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood...

In this case, “flesh and blood” means “people.” The verse could have been written in a simple literal way, using “people” instead of “flesh and blood,” but the use of the Synecdoche more powerfully contrasts people with demons, who are not flesh and blood.

#### **Notes:**

1. E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, reprinted 1968).
2. Ibid., p. 613.
3. Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*™ © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved.
4. Scripture quotations marked (YLT) are taken from *Young’s Literal Translation*, by Robert Young, 1898.
5. Scripture quotations marked (NASB) are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*®, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

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[www.TruthOrTradition.com/figures](http://www.TruthOrTradition.com/figures)

# Perseverance? Yes, Please.

By Don Snedeker

Language is a beautiful thing. It's an amazing thing. Its utility is difficult to capture, because we're using the very pieces of it to describe the whole. This creates a dynamic that is at times scintillating, at times frustrating, at times fun. The pieces of the wonderful whole are mini-portraits of human experience designed to elicit feelings, feelings that instantly cause us to reflect upon our own life experiences, then instantly transport ourselves back to the conversation we're involved with or the book we're reading. These mini-portraits include happiness, giddiness, wonderment, solemnity, and myriad others to assist us in understanding ourselves, our experiences, each other, and God, just to name a few.

Few words within the panorama of language convey as much to the depth of our being, or capture the range of human emotion, as does the word "perseverance." For anyone who has suffered (who hasn't?), for anyone who has experienced joy (who hasn't?), for anyone who has experienced relief that a tooth no longer hurts or whose child no longer cries when dropped off at kindergarten, the word incorporates a commonality among us all. It has its own fingerprint on each of our own life experiences, while at the same time engendering a universal understanding of its meaning and its sense.

There is another word, another mini-portrait of human experience, that is unfortunately and too frequently confused with perseverance, and that is *endurance*. When a friend recounts the details of a hard situation and sums it up by reflecting, "I endured that," she is communicating a melancholiness about it. It's easy to pick up on her feelings. You feel her sadness, you sense the drain of her energy even as she describes the situation years after it occurred. You summon a compassion in your realization that, for whatever reason, certain undesired aspects of life bore down on her. She was distracted, perhaps consumed, and spent much of her energy just getting through it, all-the-while trying to figure out What the heck is going on? Why is this happening? and When will it be over? The fact that the situation eventually came to a close is a good thing, no doubt, but her life was not enhanced by it.

## **Perseverance is different, and happily so.**

Ever since Adam sinned we all must endure pain. Pain is probably the most significant component that makes endurance and perseverance similar, but the similarity pretty much ends there.

With perseverance, two emotions—pain and joy—are inextricably linked. With endurance, it's pain and relief. When you've endured something, you have relief when it's over so you can get back to your life as you knew it. When you've persevered, you have joy when you reach your goal and can incorporate something new in your life. When you persevere, you are looking forward to a better situation arising in your life. When you endure, it's back to the old status quo.

Which leads nicely to the idea of hope, another of those mini-portraits that's hard to capture, but we know what it means. Hope is as valuable in the life of a human being as anything else, because it connects us to our own futures. A person who has a vested interest in his own life getting better has hope in favorable outcomes, as opposed to a person who wakes and says, for example, "I'd like to be involved in a train wreck today." Without the light of hope, life has little energy, little purpose. It is hope of a better future—either in a small way or big—that there will be greater, sustained joy at the end of some struggle. We struggle through life with constant reminders that we are going to die one day. What impels us forward? Hope. Hope that things will be better when we are raised from the dead and get new bodies. Hope that we are somehow pleasing God as we get up each new day, live, and go to sleep at night. Hope of rewards when Christ appears.

But we also know that, unless we live until Christ comes, "...it is appointed unto men once to die..." So we persevere, not merely endure. We have hope that things will be better, not merely return to the way they were. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. Death will be no more. No tears, no sadness. These are big brush-strokes depicting our futures that infuse us with hope. Without hope of a better future, people merely endure. And so many people live without this hope, which is just so sad. I don't know how they do it, as it's hard to fathom what meaning they derive from life.

Because we are so familiar with difficulty in our own lives, it serves us well to discern in each situation how (or if) our lives can become better from the adversity in it. With a conscience toward God, and trying to see His hand in your situation, you may realize that there is joy on its way. If you are unfamiliar with this sort of discernment, the abundance of adversity in your life will provide you with ample opportunity to begin familiarizing yourself with the process. Some situations do not carry with them the hope of something better. Someone dents your car and you've got to get it fixed. The best-case scenario is that you'll be without your car for a couple of days and the repair shop will return it to the condition it was in before the accident. You know they will not return to you a Jaguar convertible when you gave them a Ford Pinto to fix. No life-changing improvements will come from this situation. Once you get your Pinto back, it's life as it was.

It's a fair treatment of this subject to say that perseverance is a strengthened form of endurance, and the strength comes from the hope of something better for you than before your challenge arose. It is not always obvious when you're going through something whether the outcome will eventually improve your life, so what you believe about God will determine how you proceed in these situations. Your beliefs will govern how you speak about them, how you feel about them, how you reflect upon them when they're over.

Some adversity made your life better because the Lord was directing your steps, only you didn't know it at the time (as the expression goes, "Don't let your plans get in the way of what God has in store for you"). Perhaps, a la Hebrews 12:5 and 6, you're being disciplined by the Lord, and you are in some pain because of it. On the back end, your life will be better if you recognize that God was actively involved in the situation to make the overall quality of your life better. Perhaps you have understanding and wisdom that will be an asset to you for the rest of your life. Perhaps something such as pride lives in you and is being supernaturally weeded out so you can have a more peaceful life. This is partly what discernment is about. With discernment you can successfully answer the question: Is my life better for having gone through something, is it the same, or is it worse?

Which conveniently brings us to the next (and somewhat bold) step of considering Jesus's suffering at Calvary. In Hebrews 12:2, the King James translators say of Jesus: "...for the joy that was set before him endured the cross..." To my mind, he didn't merely endure, he persevered. He had the hope of a better life via resurrection, not only for himself but also for us.

I think Jesus persevered through (as opposed to merely having endured) the death of the cross, because he was motivated by a greater hope than returning to the status quo, which is what got him crucified in the first place. Without the promise of greater joy, it would be hard to imagine Jesus being motivated to go through that. Whatever he personally expected I don't know, but he had enough knowledge and hope to get him through the unthinkably painful situation he was in.

This is partly why we each must maintain our conscience toward God. There is a reward at the end, which keeps hope alive. For now, we experience adversity. We experience shame and guilt when we fall, pained hearts when we hurt others. But what impels us forward? An inner sense that we can—indeed, we must—persevere. We must look forward to the "hope of his calling," to the reward that has been promised.

And this is crucial to the distinction. When we live our lives with faith in the appearing of the Lord Jesus, and the expected rewards of having lived a life “worthy of the calling,” it is different than simply enduring things in this life. We have hope, we have purpose. This is reflected in the question in Romans 8:36, are we counted as sheep for the slaughter? This rhetorical question was designed to elicit in the hearers an opposition to a sense of hopelessness, to inculcate an opposition to the idea that there is no expectation of better things to come. It is a sort of hyperbolic speech, in which an extreme (in this case, the imagined death of those listening) is employed to elicit a feeling that heightens the point being made. The continuation is no, we are not counted as sheep for the slaughter, “...we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” If you think about the notion of conquering something—*anything*—what is your sense of it? Isn’t it that you will end up better off than you are now? “To the conqueror go the spoils,” and so they go to you when you persevere.

But here’s a challenge, which is part of your personal infrastructure: How well you persevere will be determined by how well you know what you believe in and what you are willing to stand for. Jesus, for example, didn’t want to give up his life. “...take away this cup from me...” he asked God, but his deep-seated belief was that he was going to fulfill the prophecies, and he persevered. He amended his request with, “...Yet not what I will, but what you will.” And it was done because Jesus knew what he believed in, and knew that joy was on its way.

That is why confusion—the bastard child of inadequate knowledge and wisdom—is one of the chief enemies of perseverance. If you are confused about your future in Paradise, or whether patience is a good thing, or whether God is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him, this uncertainty will manifest itself in a diminished desire to persevere through situations that challenge you.

That being said, there’s still good news about this dynamic. Even with some uncertainty in our minds—a common state for all of us—it is still possible to maintain an attitude of perseverance by keeping some of God’s large promises to us in our minds. Jesus did that when going to the cross. The big picture was in front of him: “...for the joy that was set before him...” We can do the same thing when life is confusing and hard. Christ is returning, and that’s a big deal. We get new bodies, and that’s a big deal. We get eternal life, and that’s huge. These all-encompassing promises can help us maintain hope when we get caught up in the minutiae (relatively unimportant details) of life. As Winston Churchill once said, “If you are going through hell, keep going.” Put one foot in front of the other, knowing that things will ultimately change. Pain is real, and so is hope. And joy is on its way. And when you meet Jesus Christ for the first time, you will understand why you persevered. Things will get better.

# Freedom Behind Bars

## By Grady Rogers

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen” (2 Pet. 3:18).

These instructions could not be more clear; we must dig deep into the Word of God to discover “the truth.”

I have been a Christian for approximately 40 years, and have read the Word and been in the Church nearly the entire time. My personal beliefs came from accepting the teachings of my pastors, Sunday School teachers, and other church leaders. I believed that they had more formal teaching experience than I, so they must be right. But too often something inside me did not feel right about what they taught. I now believe that was God’s spirit working in me.

When John Lynn introduced me to the chart showing “The Administrations in Scripture,” the lights came on for me. That explained so many things in the Bible that I had previously thought were contradictory. Once I understood the chart, every single doubt about the Bible that I had carried with me throughout my life was gone. I finally had answers to my questions, like: “How can Jesus be God and we be asked to identify with him?” “Are we living in the Kingdom of God today?” “Are we still under the Law to some degree?” “What is the purpose of a resurrection if “dead” Christians are already in heaven?” “Which part of the Bible tells *me* how I am to live today?”

Seeing how the Word is divided into eight administrations helped give me the answers to these questions and more. What an eye opener to realize that Jesus was an actual human being like I am. By definition, he could not be *both* the “Son” of God and God. Now I see that I can follow in his footsteps, with a realistic opportunity to *succeed* in being like him. We Christians are the Body of Christ in the Administration of the Sacred Secret, while the Kingdom of God is still future, and for Israel. We are not under the Law, but under grace. Death is real, and resurrection is the only antidote for it. As such, believers who have died are really dead—until Jesus comes and raises them to new life. Romans through Thessalonians give us our basic instructions about how to live today.

I heartily encourage you to study the administrations in Scripture (see our website, [TruthOrTradition.com](http://TruthOrTradition.com), TOPIC: Administrations), and I believe that mastering those vital truths will take your walk with the Lord to a new level. And if you have questions about believers in prison or how to minister in a correctional institution, please write to me c/o Spirit & Truth Fellowship. All the guys here send their love with mine as we strive to find *Freedom Behind Bars*.

# Fuel For The Fire

## By Jackson Trigg & Katherine Backlund

**H**ello precious readers! Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Christ Jesus our Lord! This year, we (Jackson & Katherine) had the truly awesome privilege of attending the Teens & 20s Camp in Bloomington, Indiana, which was a definite life-changing experience. We traveled all the way from the west coast of Canada to meet in the flesh with over a hundred lovely saints from many different places in America.

For myself (Jackson), this was my 3<sup>rd</sup> Spirit & Truth event, and it was absolutely the best to date. The atmosphere of friendship and family amongst all the believers permeated the entire week; it was such an immense blessing that it is hard to describe with words. During the week I was reunited with some old friends and made many new and wonderful friendships. I began missing people before we'd even flown home and can hardly wait to see them all again.

For me though (Katherine), this was the first Spirit & Truth event I've ever attended and I found it powerfully inspiring that I was so welcomed, loved, and supported by people I had never met before. I've never felt so accepted by so many people so fast and unquestioningly, it was a great glimpse of what can exist in life if we all take to heart the truth that is in Christ Jesus.

The teaching at Camp was incredibly encouraging, it was a wonderful and mighty blessing to learn how to use study tools and be able to **PROVE** the truth of God's Word, instead of guessing and hoping at it. I learned so much and was able to release bitterness and bondage in my life, and my faith in God and Jesus has grown immensely. I am so blessed with all the knowledge I gained at Camp. And now, being back at home, everyday I'm confronted with excellent opportunities to share God's love with others as well as many of the things I experienced while at Camp. I now feel such a deep love for those around me and can't wait to share the truth with them!

For both of us, it was an amazing time of learning, fellowship, and fun. The flame in our hearts for our God has been aroused into a bonfire, and it's so good to know that there are so many wonderful like-minded believers that can be looked to for love and support. Praise God for this extraordinary ministry!

We've been so blessed to be a part of it and have a bright future to look ahead to!

We're so glad to be a light in this world for the powerful and transforming truth of God's Word.

God's fellow workers,

Jackson Trigg & Katherine Backlund  
Nanaimo, BC Canada

# **Various & Sundry Musings, Ramblings, Observations, and Opinions From A Teens & Twenties Camp 2007 Staff Member**

## **By Eddie DeBruhl**

Not to boast, brag, or seemingly appear to have a martyrdom syndrome, I have served on staff for 7 of our 8 annual Teens & Twenties Camps. I say this to only establish a little credibility with you when I write about this year's Camp.

Although no two camps have been exactly alike, each has been wonderfully amazing in its own way. Every camp has had its own distinct personality and character without loosing or drifting away from the basic premise, vision and ideals on which Teens & Twenties Camp was founded. In a nutshell, to teach our youth how to research and study the Written Word of God for themselves so they can better apply it to their lives. This year was no exception, and I feel totally blessed and privileged to have been a part of it again.

Although we had our usual share of problems during this year's camp, such as equipment malfunctions and the like, it seemed to me as though the stress level in dealing with them was refreshingly low. There was a greater sense of peace, calmness, and depth permeating the whole camp than I had experienced at any previous one.

This year's complement of staff and elders seemed to have been especially hand-picked by our Lord Jesus himself because of the way each one fit into their own function so gracefully and competently. As usual, each staff member had to wear several different hats because we have NEVER had the problem of being overstaffed, and each one moved very smoothly and confidently from one position to another when necessary.

If you have never had the honor and privilege of serving as a staff member for a Teens & Twenties Camp, I wholeheartedly encourage you to volunteer for next year. Rest assured that if you do, you will receive more blessings that you could ever imagine and have experiences that you will never forget. May God bless you, and I look forward to seeing you at the Teens & Twenties Camp in 2008.