

The New Creation

" Sing To The Lord
A New Song "
- Isaiah 42 : 10

HE IS RISEN!

*Celebrating the
True Meaning of
Easter*



" We Are Waiting For New
Heavens and A New Earth
In Which Righteousness Dwells "
- 2 Peter 3 : 13

" Behold I Make All Things New . "

- Revelation 21 : 5



The Berean Lamp
For the Body of Christ.

Vol. 3
April 2012



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Forgiveness

by Scott Moller - Page 3

The New Man - Child of God or Trans-human?

by Nathan Warner - Page 4

Only Through Jesus (poem)

by Jesse Larsen - Page 7

Lives of the Christians - Page 8

Trust in the Lord with all Your Heart

by Jim Poppenhagen - Page 8

I Come to You, My Lord (poem)

by Ginny Larsen - Page 9

An Ordinary Day

by Betty Harstad - Page 10

Assurance of Eternal Life

by Dave Weatherly - Page 11

Benefits of Scripture Memorization

by Beth Moller - Page 12

Exalting Jesus Above My Chief Joy

by Bob Larsen - Page 14

Art Page - Page 15

Sing a New Song - Page 16

In the Garden

by Maggie Moller - Page 16

Hallelujah! Alleluia! (poem)

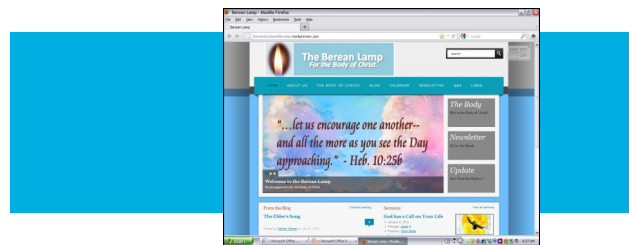
by Maggie Moller - Page 17

The Story of a New Creation

by Jesse Larsen - Page 18

Fellowship with __?

by Jani Lynn Warner - Page 20



The Berean Lamp Newsletter is a publication of the Berean Lamp Ministry. Visit our website at www.bereanlamp.org. The Berean Lamp Ministry is a service of the Berean Christian Fellowship of Zimmerman, MN



www.bereanlamp.org ♦ A Ministry of the Berean Christian Fellowship—Zimmerman, MN ♦ Vol3

“Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” (Acts 17:11)

Forgiveness

By Scott F. Moller

In Luke 23:34a Jesus said, *“Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”* I think these are some of the most beautiful words ever spoken. These words show us the heart of Jesus while He was hanging on the cross. He had been rejected by the people, falsely accused by the rulers, scourged by the soldiers, and nailed to a cross for a crime He did not commit. He was guilty of nothing, but there was no bitterness in His heart. He was wronged in every way imaginable, yet He was requesting forgiveness for the wrong doers.

One might ask, “How could Jesus have this attitude towards these men?” It was because He understood the will and heart of the Father. God, the Father, desired and was seeking forgiveness for all mankind. This was the very reason and purpose for Jesus being on the Cross. Paul tells us in Romans 5:10a, *“When we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son.”* You see, God did not wait for mankind to seek His forgiveness before He acted. He provided Jesus as the means of forgiveness while men were still hostile towards Him. When Jesus cried out in John 19:30, *“It is finished,”* His work was done. He had conquered sin and forgiven the human race from God’s perspective. All that was left was for men to ask for and receive the forgiveness He offered.

In life, we each must grapple with our standing before God. The Apostle Paul declares that we are all sinners and fall short of

God’s standard (Romans 3:23). Paul continues (Romans 6:23) that because of our sin, we are due death and eternal separation from God. Please take time this Easter Season to examine yourself as you stand before God. Jesus purchased your forgiveness when He hung on the cross in your place. If you have not done so already, pray to Jesus and accept the gift of salvation He is offering to you.



Editor in Chief: Nathan Warner

Oversight Committee: Pastor Scott Moller, Deacon Bob Larsen, Nathan Warner

Editors: Natalie Madsen, Jani Lynn Warner, Julie Moller

The New Man – Child of God or Transhuman?

By Nathan Warner

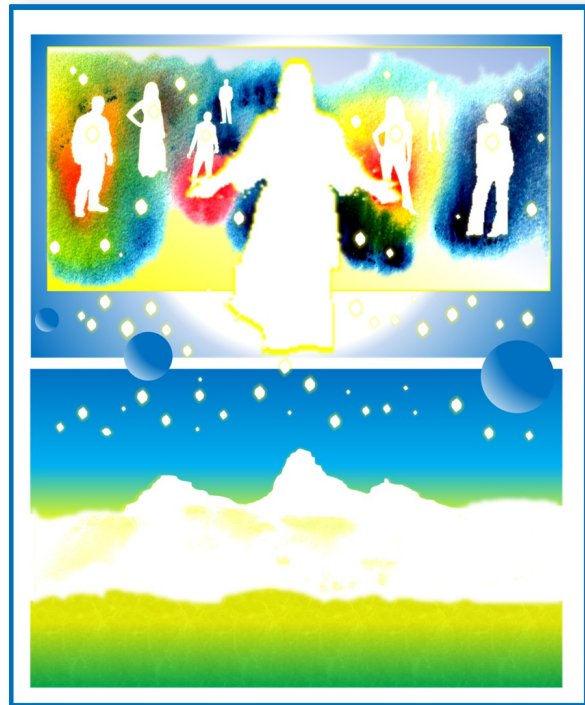
We are just tiptoeing into the year 2012, and it is already proving to be a time of great uncertainty and upheaval around the world. While the media and entertainment promote the apocalyptic visions of the end of the world that the Mayans may or may not have foretold to occur on December 21, many in the New Age and scientific communities are looking for a physical or spiritual “transformation” of humanity that they believe is imminent. According to New York Times contributor Benjamin Anastas, the New Age interpretation of this date (Dec 21, 2012) is that it marks the start of time in which Earth and its inhabitants may undergo a positive physical or spiritual transformation, and that 2012 may mark the beginning of a new era.¹

Recently, the UK’s Independent Newspaper reported that over 20,000 New Agers have camped at the base of Mount Bugarach in France where they believe aliens live. One of these New Agers, going by the name “Jean,” explains their view of the 2012 apocalypse: “The apocalypse we believe in is the end of a certain world and the beginning of another,” he offers. ‘A new spiritual world. The year 2012 is the end of a cycle of suffering. Bugarach is one of the major chakras of the earth, a place devoted to welcoming the energies of tomorrow.’”²

Many New Agers, members of the occult, world leaders, and scientists around the world are anticipating or laboring for some kind of “transformation” to “evolve” humanity from its current “suffering” state. They are looking for a “new man” to be formed within them (or constructed for them) that will be free of the limits that define what it means to be human. They believe that this “new man” will come into being by some mystical or engineered transformational event and may be aided by the next step in evolution, planetary alignments, metaphysical phenomena, science, or

aliens living under an inverted mountain.

Within the scientific community, an emerging movement seeks to fundamentally transform human nature and conquer death through the application of genetics, bioengineering, cybernetics, brain and mind mapping, and countless other fields that are tampering with the natural order God created. This movement is referred to by their populists as “Transhumanism” (or “posthumanism”).



Transhumanists work tirelessly in all science fields on their fundamental goal to “remake man in man’s image.” To obtain this objective, they work on augmenting human biology with modern technology, extending life, and transferring human consciousness to machines – all with the intention of conquering death. They often talk about the “inadequacy” and “frailty” of the human body and look forward to a transformational event they call the “Singularity,” which they believe will occur in the next 15 to 20 years. This “Singularity” is the moment in time when they believe what it means to be human will be fundamentally changed.

“Until now, we’ve been reshaping the world around us,” UCLA biophysicist Gregory Stock explains, “but somehow we imagined that we

were going to remain the same and that's not in fact true. We are going to remake ourselves and it's very difficult to deal with because it will rip free all of the anchors that have until now told us who we are as human beings."³

The "anchors" Professor Stock is referring to include faith, morality, and ethics, but he and most Transhumanists believe that it is good, proper, and necessary for humanity to "rip free" of them if it is to "evolve." "We really, really do want to violate human limits now," Transhumanist author Bruce Sterling stresses, "and we're getting closer and closer to the ability to do it – it's what we want."³

While these lies and delusions of Satan may not be mainstream in culture yet, those that believe them at least recognize the inadequacy of the human condition. Sin ("human nature," as they refer to it) and death (a "disease" that must be cured) are serious issues after all, it would seem. No longer are they ignoring the human condition like traditional humanists did: *"let us eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die,"* (1 Corinthians 15:32).

"We've come out of the humanist time and now we're redefining what it means to be human," Professor Joseph Rosen says. "We have the opportunity now to do things better than nature has done."³

These transformational movements are honest enough to acknowledge our fallen nature ("the problem of being human"). They are seeking a way out of their condition, but they rebel against what they see as the "foolishness of God" (1 Corinthians 1:25) when He declares that there is only one pathway to salvation, resurrection, and rebirth: our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. They have chosen to believe a delusion: that they can find or forge their own pathway to imperishable immortality in a world without God.

As Christians, we are not waiting for a spiritual transformation to occur. We have already been spiritually transformed (or renewed) through the blood of Jesus Christ. *"For He himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordi-*

nances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility... In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:14-16, 22).



This reconciliation to God is the new creation that comes into being when Christ is formed in us (Galatians 4:19). *"For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death"* (Romans 8:2). This is a spiritual rebirth that does not affect the body (or flesh), which is still subject to death. Christians therefore regard the flesh as the Old Man (or the Old Nature) that has no value in the glorious future of the New Creation of Eternity. *"From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation"* (2 Co-

rinthians 5:16-18).

Spiritually, we are new men and new women dwelling yet on an old earth in the old heavens. Though we still inhabit our old fleshly bodies, we have been born again spiritually into the Kingdom of Heaven through the blood of Jesus Christ. By God's grace, we are reborn into the future, spiritually being re-formed for another time and another place – created for *“new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells”* (2 Peter 3:13). A believer's reborn spirit will be raised by Jesus into new, incorruptible bodies during the resurrection: *“I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’ ‘Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 15:50-57).

This is the fulfillment of the spiritual transformation we undergo as believers into the physical transformation when we are raised incorruptible as the New Man. The sin and death nature that humanity fears so much has no hold on us as believers because we are the true “new creation” that has escaped sin and death through the grace of God by the cross of Jesus Christ.

How interesting that the very thing mankind obsesses over is right before them in the Good News of Christ! The billions of dollars in research spent for man to find their own road to salvation from sin and death are wasted on a delusion. Christ has conquered sin and death and made those of us who believe in Him the

only new, immortal creation. This will be fully realized when He returns for us and the rebirth of our inner nature will find union with a reborn outer nature.



While still dwelling in our old flesh and interacting with the world in this old earth, believers sense a separation from it in everything we do and a displacement everywhere we go because of the sin and death that is brought into the world by the will of man. This should not be a surprise since we are the spiritual relatives of a whole line of people *“who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God”* (John 1:12-13) who all *“died in faith, not having received*

the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city” (Hebrews 11:13-16).

This imperishable, immortal City waits for our imperishable, immortal bodies after the resurrection as John saw in the revelation given to him by God: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.’ And He who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new” (Rev 21:1-5).

“Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

“Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him everywhere” (2 Corinthians 2:14).

“Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57). Amen.

¹ New York Times Article “Final Days” July 1, 2007, by Benjamin Anastas

² <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/hippies-head-for-noahs-ark-queue-here-for-rescue-aboard-alien-spaceship>

³ Documentary film “TechnoCalyps” by Frank Theys

ONLY THROUGH JESUS

*Only through Jesus
and not through me...
it's only through Him
that I truly see.*

*Only through Jesus
I can't go wrong...
I'm finally singing
a decent song.*

*Only through Jesus
and not through me...
I have been broken,
but truly set free.*

*Only through Jesus
I can't go wrong...
when I am weak
He is strong.*

*Only through Jesus
I'm finally free...
I only wish
that all could see...
that this is not
because of me...
only through Jesus
I'm truly free!*

*Only through Jesus,
this is my case:
I'm only a sinner,
saved by grace.*

By Jesse Larsen

Lives of the Christians



Nate Saint












N5156H

Born and raised near Philadelphia, Nate Saint was an avid flier from age 7 and took lessons in high school. He joined the US Army when WWII broke out but had to leave after he contracted an infection in his leg. In 1941, he graduated from Wheaton College and began working as a missionary in Ecuador with his wife, Marjorie Farris. They established an airstrip and delivered supplies to missionaries. He located the feared tribe of Huaorani and initiated the first contact. On Sunday, January 8 1956, he and a team of missionaries including Jim Elliot were ambushed and killed by the Huaorani while trying to share the Gospel. Nate's sister, Rachel Saint, continued missionary activities to the Huaorani which led many to Christ, including Mincaye, who killed Nate Saint. Mincaye, who is now a missionary, preacher, and church elder, adopted Nate Saint's son Steve into the tribe. The Saint Family came to live permanently with the Huaorani in 1997 to work together in evangelism.

Trust in the Lord with all Your Heart

By Jim Poppenhagen

*"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths."
(Proverbs 3:5-6)*

This is one of my favorite verses in Scripture. I've found it to be so true in my life. I only pray the Lord will help me to trust Him more and always acknowledge Him in my ways. Yes, He is faithful to forgive us if we confess our sins and ask for His cleansing. He is so gracious and merciful that He even sends angels along to help us. We may not even realize it most of the time, but once in a while

we will recognize a supernatural experience in our lives. Just as the Apostle Peter was rescued from prison (Acts 12), we too may have an angel to help us through a difficult or impossible situation, even if we may actually never see them. Paul tells us to *"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares"* (Hebrews 13:2).

I'm sure there have been many times when angels have helped me through a difficult or impossible situation, and I didn't even realize it, but there have been several times when I was absolutely sure of angelic intervention. One such time happened many years ago when my wife, Marge, and I were on our way back home to Beaver Bay on the North Shore. As we were driving up into Duluth on old Highway 61 at night, all the traffic came to a complete standstill at the top of the long slope. It

was so foggy, we could no longer see the road. It was very dangerous to drive in fog as thick as that, so all the cars in front of us stopped. We also decided to wait until the fog lifted. There was nothing else we could do, it was just too dangerous.

As we waited, car lights came up behind us, but instead of stopping, they pulled out around us. Just before the car passed us a voice of the Lord said, "Follow those lights. If they leave the road, you leave the road, but follow them as they pass by." Well, when the Lord speaks to you, you pay attention and obey! I pulled out of the line of cars and followed the red taillights of the car over the edge of the slope and down the long hill. We were the only other car driving down that steep slope, and we moved along at a good clip following those taillights.

When we reached the bottom, the fog began lifting and the taillights we had been following vanished, too! They were just gone! It was then that I realized no one could have been driving at that speed in the dense fog without ending up in the ditch or in a terrible accident. Just think about driving downhill in the dark without being able to see the road! It could only have been the supernatural guidance of the Lord.

We praised God and went on our way, making it home safely. I am convinced that God sent an angel to escort us down that hill in that dense fog. We were delivered just as David said, "*The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them*" (Psalm 34:7).

I COME TO YOU, MY LORD

*I come to you, my Lord
In the quietness of the morning
You restore my soul
As the fresh dew lies on the morning grass
Your Spirit lights upon me
And waters my soul with the freshness of new life*

*Oh Water of the Spirit light upon me
Fill me with new life
Refresh my heart
Quench this thirst
Make all things new, just as You said*

*I come to You my Lord
And yield my life before You
Oh have Your way!
As I open my heart up to receive You
Holy Spirit speak to me
Let me hear the secrets that You whisper in my ear*

*Oh Water of the Spirit light upon me
Fill me with new life
Refresh my heart
Quench this thirst
Make all things new, just as You said*

*I come to You, my Lord
For manna that's from Heaven
Oh Bread of life
As You spread Your table out before me
Let me feast upon Your Word
And I'll be filled with the bread that gives eternal life*

*Oh Water of the Spirit light upon me
Fill me with new life
Refresh my heart
Quench this thirst
Make all things new, just as You said*

By Ginny Larsen

An Ordinary Day

By Betty Harstad

“But whoever drinks of the water that I give him will never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”
(John 4:14)

On what was probably just any ordinary day, a woman came out of her city in Samaria to draw water from a well. This was probably a daily and often mundane task. She did not know yet that on this very day, her life would be changed forever because Jesus and His disciples were passing through Samaria. Jesus stopped to rest at the well while He waited for His disciples to buy food. How it must have astounded this Samaritan woman when this Jewish man spoke to her. She knew Jews avoided traveling through Samaria because they despised the Samaritans. Yet, this Jewish man was talking to her! It wasn't ordinary small talk either – He was talking about things that really mattered. He even told her He could give her “living water” and “eternal life.”

This Man knew of her sinning ways without needing someone to advise Him! All the words He spoke were so extraordinary on this otherwise ordinary day that she perceived Him to be a prophet. She even wondered if He could be the Christ, and in answer, “*Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He’*” (John 4:26).

After the disciples returned to Jesus, this woman left her water pot behind and went to tell the men of the city about this Man: “*Come, see a man who told me of the things I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?*” (John 4:29) Many Samaritans came out of the city to hear Jesus. Perhaps this woman stayed near Jesus the two days that He remained there to hear everything He had to say. “*And they were saying to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves’*” (John 4:42).

How she must have pondered over every word she heard later from anyone who had met with Jesus during His earthly ministry. How she must have listened intently when hearing news of His death, burial, and resurrection. How she must have continued to be amazed that this Man took the time to come to her in person with words of life as she realized He truly was the One sent by God the Father to be the Savior of the world. After His death and resurrection, He truly did send the Holy Spirit to be within those who believed, just as He had promised her that she could have “*water springing up to eternal life*” (John 4:14).

The words that He spoke to her are written down for all of us who came later. We are blessed to be able to hear (and read) the very same words that she heard so that we may be led to believe in the Savior just as did this Samaritan woman. “*Many more believed because of His word*” (John 4:41).

Believers on any day may “see” Jesus Christ in all of Scripture. Take the time to read Luke 24 when Jesus spoke to two disciples (after His resurrection) who were on the way to Emmaus. They were puzzling over the death of Jesus on the cross, and Jesus said they were “slow of heart” not to believe all that the prophets had spoken. “*Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures*” (Luke 24:27). Soon their “eyes were opened” as they were given the great key to understanding Scripture – that He Himself is its subject and that in Him the entire Bible finds unity. No day is dull when the focus is on Him who opens our understanding through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. No day is dreary when believers read from that great Book or hear the Word when they gather together. No day is ordinary when we are in Christ.

Assurance of Eternal Life

By Dave Weatherly

Contemporary Christians have been conditioned to believe that because they recited a prayer, walked the aisle, or had some other experience, they are saved and should never question their salvation. It is a widely held misconception that anyone who questions whether he or she is saved is challenging the integrity of God's Word.

Scripture, however, encourages us to *"examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified"* (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Peter instructs us to make our calling sure: *"Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble"* (2 Peter 1:10).

Jesus taught that the inward condition of a person would become manifest externally: *"For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:44-46)

The Bible teaches clearly that the evidence of God's work in one's life is the inevitable fruit of transformed behavior: *"In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God"* (1 John 3:10). Faith that does not result in righteous living is dead and cannot save: *"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not*

give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:14-17). Now, we know that our salvation is not by works or by our fruits, but by faith in Jesus Christ. *"One is justified by faith apart from works..."* (Romans 3:28). First comes faith, and then follows works (or fruit). Works are not for our own benefit, but for the nourishing of others.

Real salvation is not simply justification. It cannot be isolated from sanctification, nor ultimately glorification. Salvation is the work of God through which we are *"conformed to the image of His Son"* (Romans 8:29). Genuine assurance comes from seeing the Holy Spirit's transforming work in one's life, not in clinging to the memory of an experience or event. **This is what it means to be a new creation in Christ.**

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Romans 8:29-30).



Benefits of Scripture Memorization

By Beth Moller

*"I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You."
(Psalm 119:11)*

Many people know familiar passages of Scripture by memory such as John 3:16 or Psalm 23. But what are some specific ways that we can benefit from memorizing God's Word? Several different thoughts came to mind when I was thinking about this subject.

First of all, God tells us to meditate on His Word. Joshua 1:8 says, *"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so you will be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."* In this passage, Joshua is telling the Israelites that if they think about the things God commands them to do, they will do them, and they won't fall into the temptations of sin. If we memorize verses, often they remind us to act as God would want us to. Most important of all, we are obeying God by meditating on His Word. It is easier to meditate on His Word when we have it with us in our hearts.

Another benefit of memorizing Scripture is that you always have Scripture with you, regardless of where you are. The Bible is very important to us as Christians, and by memorizing different passages of Scripture, we can think about it at any minute of the day. Have you ever looked at a beautiful sunset and instantly thought, *"The Heavens declare the Glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands"* (Psalm 19:1)? When thoughts such as this pop into my head, they make me very appreciative of God's goodness to me, and I am amazed at the beautiful world that He has created for us. Often, verses we have memorized will suddenly be in our mind, reminding us of God and how He cares for us.

By having Scripture in our hearts and minds, we can have great personal growth and encouragement from it. I am often encouraged by verses that I have memorized, and they re-

mind me of different things that God wants me to do. I haven't memorized nearly as much Scripture as I want to, but I love being able to think about the verses that I do know by memory. Sometimes a certain verse will really help me, and I can gain a lot of encouragement from it. For example, Romans 12:1-2 reminds me to act as Jesus would want me to act and to not follow the ways of the world. This isn't to say that I always do the right thing of course, but when I am tempted to sin, these verses are a good reminder to me to press on and live as Jesus would want me to live.

Another benefit of memorization is that it teaches us discernment. We live in a world filled with lies and deception. As Christians, we need to be discerning in what we believe and take part in. A good verse to remember is Acts 17:11, which says, *"Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."* Since there are so many people in the world who are being deceived by false teaching, it is important that we know what our Bible says and that we know what is false. By memorizing Scripture, it can help us determine whether or not we are being taught the truth.

Another benefit of memorizing Scripture is that it helps us grow by being in the Word and focusing on it. If we memorize Scripture, it also helps keep our minds focused on God. If our thoughts are thoughts of verses and other thoughts that are pleasing to God, we will be obeying God by obeying what Paul and Timothy wrote in Philippians 4:8. *"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things."* I certainly think that Scripture fulfills all of those things perfectly! So, if we memorize Scripture and think about it, we will be obeying this passage of Scripture.

Another benefit of memorizing Scripture is that it teaches dedication. I learned quickly that I can't memorize a verse well by just reading it through a few times. It takes practice

and determination. If you half-heartedly memorize a verse or memorize it quickly, you often forget it within a few days. Sometimes it doesn't even take that long. I know this by experience. Only if I am dedicated to learning and studying the verse will I remember it well. However, I know that if I spend time on memorizing something really well, I will remember it for a long time! One year, my dad had us work on memorizing Psalms for a short time after dinner each night. We memorized Psalm 1, Psalm 8, and Psalm 23, and I remember them all really well today because we worked on them until we really knew them and we worked together as a family.

Last, but definitely not least, memorization of Scripture should be our best tool for witnessing to others. If people that you are witnessing to have questions, it is good to answer their questions with Scripture that backs up what you told them. And, by memorizing Scripture, you can be sure to have verses with you even if you don't have your Bible!

One way to memorize Scripture is with a group. Memorizing with others often spurs you on to memorize more. As kids, we can have several opportunities to memorize Scripture. One way is by being a part of a Bible quizzing team or participating in a program such as the Bible Bee. I participated in the Bible Bee in 2009. My experience was good, and I did memorize quite a few passages of the Bible that were on the list that the organization gave the participants. Of course, it often works very well to memorize verses with your parents or siblings, too! By memorizing with others, you can have an added motivation to help each other learn the passage. And remember, anyone can (and should!) memorize Scripture!

When I am trying to memorize a verse, I often try to work on it after I read my daily devotions. Another thing that I find helpful is to write the verse on paper a few times, while thinking about the verse and what it says. Once I think that I have the verse mostly memorized, I try to recite it to someone, so they can tell me what I still need to work on. Finally, I try to practice the verse often right

after memorizing it so I don't forget it. I find that this method helps me remember verses months after I first memorize them.

I hope this has been an encouragement to you. Memorizing Scripture is something that we can do our entire life! Just like we are always learning something new from the Bible, we can always be memorizing more Scripture that we can meditate on. I have only memorized a very, very small portion of the Bible, but a goal that I have is to memorize the book of Philippians as it is one of my favorite books. I want to always be learning something new from God's Word so that I might grow in Him. I hope that you will make memorization of God's Word a personal goal of yours too.

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."
(Galatians 6:9)



Exalting Jesus Above My Chief Joy

By Bob Larsen

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.”
(Psalm 137:1-6)

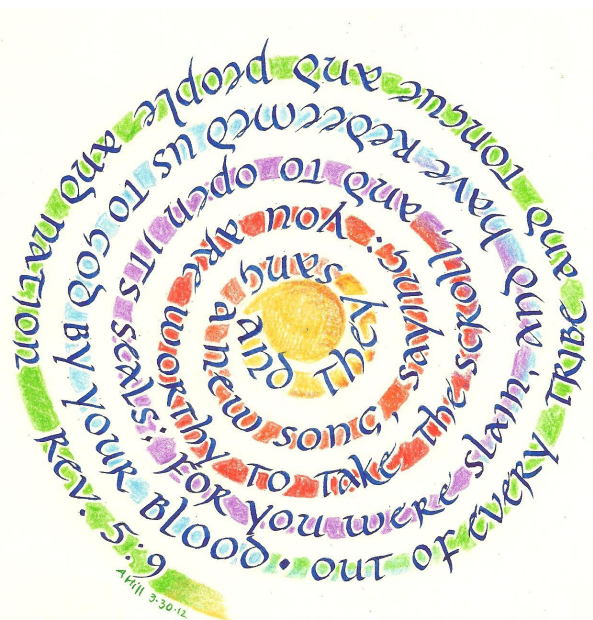
When I played in a Gospel band, it was wonderful to worship the Lord with our instruments. We used to go to a coffee house in Fargo, North Dakota, about once every other month. It was my favorite place to play. One time when we were there, I had just read Psalm 137. I thought to myself, “What if captors took us and demanded us to ‘Sing us one of the songs of Jesus’?” Would we say, “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?” The Israelites in this Psalm were under the Babylonian captivity. They longed to return to Jerusalem to worship their Lord. They would come to Jerusalem to worship. We come to Jesus to worship. Then I saw a parallel.

Would we say in our captivity, “If I forget you, O Jesus, let my right hand forget its skill; if I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth; if I do not exalt Jesus above my chief joy?” Whenever I read this Psalm, I examine myself. Can I still say that I exalt Jesus above my chief joy, and if I do not, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth? It is my desire that Jesus, the One who gave His life for me, would always be exalted above my chief joy. I am hoping that you all feel the same way.



New Beginning

By Amy Hill



A New Song

By Amy Hill



Reflections of His Glory
By Natalie Madsen



Hidden Treasures
By Natalie Madsen



“Glory to God in the Highest!” - Luke 2:14
By Ellis Warner (Aurora Borealis - Zimmerman 2001)

Sing A New Song

C. Austin Miles**In the Garden****In The Garden**

By Maggie Moller

As we celebrate Easter this year, we rejoice in the Salvation that is available to us through Jesus' death and resurrection. Part of our celebration includes singing hymns, glorifying Christ's power over death. Yet, I am also reminded of the reason Christ had to die. He died to atone for our sins. Romans 3:23 reminds us of our fallen state when Paul says, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God."*

In the beginning, man was created to live in close fellowship, both physically and spiritually, with God in the Garden of Eden. This is the way God wanted His relationship with man to be, but because of sin, God had to send man

In the Garden

C. A. M. C. AUSTIN MILES

1. I come to the gar-den a - lone, While the dew is still on the
 2. He speaks, and the sound of His voice Is so sweet the birds hush their
 3. I'd stay in the gar-den with Him Though the night a-round me be

ros - es, And the voice I hear, Fall - ing on my ear, The
 sing - ing, And the mel - o - dy That He gave to me, With -
 fall - ing, But He bids me go; Thro' the voice of woe His

CHORUS

Son of God dis - clos - es, in my heart is ring - ing, And He walks with me, and He
 voice to me is call - ing.

talks with me, And He tells me I am His own; And the
 joy we share as we tar - ry there, None other has ev - er known.

Copyright, 1912, by Hall-Mack Co. International Copyright secured. Used by permission

out of His holy presence and out of the sustaining Garden of Eden.

Yet, God was not finished with His plan for mankind! He sent His only Son, Jesus, to die for the sins of the world. John 3:16 says, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* Because of Jesus' death on the cross, we will one day live close to God again! We will one day again walk in close fellowship with our Lord and Savior.

The hymn "In the Garden" was published by C. Austin Miles in 1912 and reminds us of what we look forward to when Christ returns. Miles was born in Lakehurst, New Jersey on January 7th, 1868, but very little is known about his life, except that he attended the University of Pennsylvania and became a pharma-

cist. He left this promising career in medicine to write hymns. His first hymn was titled "List 'Tis Je-sus' Voice," and Miles said of his new profession, "It is as a writer of gospel songs I am proud to be known, for in that way I may be of the most use to my Master, whom I serve willingly although not as efficiently as is my desire." "In the Garden" was intended as an Easter hymn, as it retells the Resurrection story from the view of Mary Magdalene.

Mr. Miles' great-granddaughter has told the story of how the hymn was written in a dark basement with no window, not the beautiful garden scene the hymn describes! Clearly, C. Austin Miles was not picturing an earthly garden when he penned the hymn's peaceful words, but a heavenly one. Paul reminds us in Colossians 3:2 "*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*"

Often we fall into a habit when we sing hymns on Sunday mornings of forgetting to dwell on the meaning of the hymn-writer's words. I would like to bring to our attention two phrases in this hymn.

First, in the chorus we sing "And He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own..." This phrase reminds me of the analogy in the gospel of John where John likens Jesus and His followers to a shepherd and his sheep. John 10:4 says, "...*he [Jesus/The Shepherd] goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.*" Once we become part of Jesus' flock, we can freely walk and talk with our Shepherd. He cares deeply about each one of us and knows us all by name.

Second, verse 2 says, "And the melody that He gave to me within my heart is ringing." David wrote in Psalm 40:3, "*He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.*" David reflects the reaction each of us should have when we enter into a new relationship with Jesus. Jesus suffered and died for us, and knowing all that He did for us should give us reason to sing about His love for us without ceasing!

This Easter, I hope you find comfort in the thought that one day, maybe soon, Jesus will

return and bring us home to the Father. Then we will all experience for ourselves the close relationship Adam and Eve had with God in the Garden of Eden.

Cites Consulted

www.wikipedia.com

www.nethymnal.org

www.cyberhymnal.org

The Celebration Hymnal

Hallelujah! Alleluia!

*Hallelujah! The Son arose on Easter morning!
Darkness is vanquished in the presence of the Light!
Alleluia! Death is suppressed; the whole world's rejoicing!*

*The women's report sent Peter and John running,
The stone rolled away, an empty tomb, what a glorious sight!
Hallelujah! The Son arose on Easter morning!*

*"The grave could not hold Him," the angels were saying,
The soldiers fell down at the heavenly sight.
Alleluia! Death is suppressed; the whole world's rejoicing!*

*Mary, rejoice and be glad! Cease with your crying.
The Lord, He is risen! His smile is bright!
Hallelujah! The Son arose on Easter morning!*

*His death for all men is saving,
But you must accept it to come out of the night.
Alleluia! Death is suppressed; the whole world's rejoicing!*

*Keep watch! He is returning! The hour's approaching,
Accept His gift, receive the Light!
Hallelujah! The Son arose on Easter morning!
Alleluia! Death is suppressed; the whole world's rejoicing!*

By Maggie Moller

The Story of a New Creation

By Jesse Larsen

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

It is my desire that this testimony will reveal the root of all problems in life and that it will point people to the solution of those problems.

I am currently 32 years old. I was born with Tourette's Syndrome, obsessive compulsive disorder, and a learning disability. As a teenager, I was very troubled and very miserable. I often struggled with severe depression, anxiety, rage, and there were even times when I was suicidal.

During my teen years I developed an obsession with angst-based bands like “Korn” and “Nine Inch Nails.” The majority of the music that I listened to expressed feelings of anger and despair. The lyrics were often harsh, sometimes suicidal, and sometimes even murderous.

After going through years of ridicule, I felt that my hatred and self-pity was justified because of things I had been through and because of the way people had treated me. My fascination with this music was more than just a mere interest – it was a total obsession. I felt that I could strongly relate to the feelings expressed in many of the songs, and the music became like a religion to me.

I viewed this music as a way of venting my unpleasant feelings, but these feelings only became all the more severe as the years went by. In a perverse way, the music seemed to make me feel better while I was listening to it, but my heart was becoming increasingly cold over the years, and my unpleasant feelings were only getting worse.

Through a psychological counseling-based group that I was in at the age of 15, I was taught that venting was a good thing...so I did not see any problem with what I was doing.

At the age of 20, I came to a point of utter despair, and it seemed like nothing in life made any sense. Around that time, my mom came over to my apartment one day, and she began talking to me about world events and how they relate to the Bible and where the world is headed.

It was on that day (July 4th, 1999) that I received Jesus as my Savior. After that, I got rid of some of my CD's, and I tried to avoid any music that involved any violent content, anything blasphemous, or anything else that I saw as immoral...but I still viewed my venting as a good thing, and I still continued to listen to some of the same music that I always listened to.

Shortly after that, I began reading the Bible. I did not know where to start, so I just decided to start by reading through the books of Psalms and Proverbs.

I was still very new to the Bible during this time, so much of what I was reading was hard for me to understand. Nevertheless, many of the verses that I read gradually revealed the vanity of the lifestyle and the beliefs that I had been holding onto for so long. During this time, some of the verses that gradually opened my eyes were Psalm 37:8; Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 15:1; Proverbs 18:2; Proverbs 29:11; Proverbs 30:33; Ecclesiastes 7:9; Romans 12:21; and more.

As I came across these verses and others, it was becoming more and more clear that the lifestyle and beliefs that I was clinging to had never gotten me anywhere, and it had only made my life an even bigger mess than it already was.

Now that I understood that this lifestyle was not right, I tried to give up all of this music, but the music still had a hold on me, and I could not give it up no matter how hard I tried. My obsession with this music was deeper than I can even describe, and it still had a hold on me, even though I now understood that it had never gotten me anywhere. I began to see that there was still bitterness deep within my heart, although I was hiding it from myself and others.

Soon after my attempt to overcome my ob-

session with this music, I began reading more through the New Testament. It was then that God revealed to me that I simply can't overcome my obsession with this music – only He could overcome it through me! If you do not understand what I mean by that, then I will let the following verses explain.

This became clear to me as I came across verses like Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:3-7; Romans 3:19-31; Romans 4:1-5; Galatians 2:19-21; and more. Here was my problem: I was trying to overcome my obsession with this music in my own strength rather than trusting in God's strength, which is made perfect in my weakness (see 2 Corinthians 12:9). I was still putting too much focus on myself and what I can do, rather than *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of [my] faith* (Hebrews 12:2).

This message became all the more clear to me as I continued to read the Bible. My desires began to change, and thanks to God, I no longer have the desire to listen to the music that I was once so deeply obsessed with. God, through His grace (*by the grace of God I am what I am* – 1 Corinthians 15:10), has taken the place of the things that were once filling the void inside me. In fact, I now prefer the old hymns. Around that time (when I was around 22 years old), I not only lost interest in the music that I was once obsessed with, but I also lost interest in other things, such as horror movies and violent video games. These things just simply didn't appeal to me anymore, although they were once the center of my life.

Throughout my life, every material thing that I sought for satisfaction has only filled the void temporarily...then the emptiness came back, and it only got worse when it came back. But God has filled the void permanently, and I have no longer felt empty since He has taken the place of the things that were once temporarily filling the void inside me. Jesus, through His Spirit, has continually changed my desires over the years since the day that I received Him as my Savior (read John 1:12-13; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:1-10; Galatians 2:20; and 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 for more info).

Over the years throughout my Christian life (I have been a Christian for about 13 years

now), through trials of affliction and through His Word, God has continued to reveal hidden selfish motives deep within my heart which I did not even know existed (read Jeremiah 17:9-10; Hebrews 4:12; and Proverbs 20:30 to better understand what I mean).

As we **continually** realize how weak we are in ourselves, it is then that we are able to *be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might* (Ephesians 6:10). This is what it means to have God's strength made perfect in our weakness, and this is what makes true biblical Christianity distinct from every religion in the world, including much of professing Christianity today. It is only through true biblical Christianity that Christ lives His life through us by His Spirit, and it is only through true biblical Christianity that God's strength is made perfect in our weakness.

Even now, I believe that I still have more to learn. I will always have more to learn until the day that Jesus is revealed, and I *see Him as He is* (1 John 3:2). It is only then that *I shall know, just as I also am known* (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance (Jesus, from Mark 2:17).

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief (The apostle Paul, from 1 Timothy 1:15).



Fellowship with ____?

By Jani Lynn Warner

With whom do we fellowship? Do we fellowship with our Old Nature (“flesh” or “self”) or with the New Nature that offers communion with the Father and His Son through the Holy Spirit?

On good days, we would like to think we fellowship only with God, but it often only takes a difficulty or trial to flare up feelings of anger, fear, resentment, jealousy, greed, and the thoughts that are engaged to justify them. When we listen to these thoughts, we are gossiping with the Old Nature against God. Even when we recognize this, we don’t always turn immediately to God and ask for His help. Sometimes rebellion just “feels better,” if only for a time.

Our Old Nature is bound by sin to death, but our New Nature is created for eternal life. *“And this is eternal life, that they know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent”* (John 17:3). Jesus died for us and said, *“It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you”* (John 16:7). Furthermore, Jesus declared, *“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him”* (John 14:23). Our New Nature is created for knowing and fellowshiping with the Lord, who makes His home with us.

A home is where we spend our dwelling time. Where we spend our time and energy shows us what we love or fear. It is where we are at home. Are we at home as slaves to the Old Nature in anger, fear, resentment, jealousy, or greed? Jesus said, *“Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed”* (John 8:34-36).

As Christians, we put on the New Nature to dress differently as representatives of God.

We are in fellowship with Him in an act of Faith. Paul tells us to *“put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires”* (Romans 13:14). Let’s no longer try fitting the Old Nature on for size. We should turn away from it to Christ and ask for His help.

When we give attention to our feelings and thoughts, we should make sure they agree with Scripture and are energized by the Holy Spirit, not the Old Nature. Too often, I realize I am having conversations with my old nature, stirring up strife, fear, feelings of resentment, feelings of self-pity, or justification for my actions. Sometimes, I realize I am enjoying fitting into the Old Nature and become rebellious at the thought of turning and returning to God. When I recognize this attitude, I ask God to help me *“be still and know that [He] is God”* (Psalm 46:10). Then, I ask for help to submit to His will.

Would we choose a friend like our old nature? Would we follow a leader like our old nature? Would we read a book written by our old nature? As Christians we should not, because it is full of deceptions, lies, destruction, and murderous tendencies - *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked”* (Jeremiah 17:9 KJV). Our New Nature enjoys fellowship with the Father and His Son through the Holy Spirit. It is at home in Jesus, it is nourished by His Word, and it fellowships with those that love Him.

In our Christian Walk, we should ask ourselves what thoughts and feelings we converse with daily. In every situation, do we fear the Lord or do we fear man? Where do we feel at home - in Jesus or in the world?

May Newsletter - PERSEVERANCE

Submission Deadline: May 5

Publish Date: May 13

Theme: Perseverance, patience, endurance, longsuffering, run the race with patience, the walk, watch with perseverance, waiting on the Lord, patience of Job, patience of the saints, Christ patiently endured, etc...