

- Idolatry -

*"If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him,
for the temple of God is Holy, and that is what you are."
(1 Corinthians 3:17)*



Berean Lamp Ministries
For the Body of Christ

Vol. 25
Nov/Dec 2014

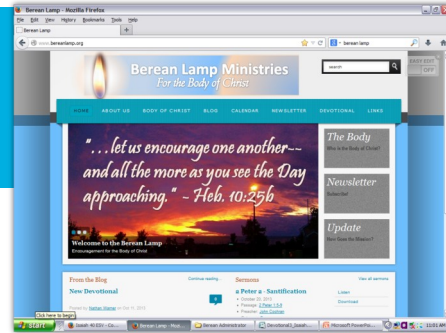


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Here Be Idols

by Nathan Warner - Page 4

Morbid Introspection

by Ginny Larsen - Page 7

The Kingdom of Self-Worship

by Lynn Warner - Page 13

Oops! Have We Built a Calf?

by Natalie Warner - Page 15

Ivory Palaces

by Maggie Moller - Page 18

The Berean Lamp Newsletter is a monthly 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.

The Berean Lamp Ministry seeks to:

1. Encourage and strengthen the Body of Christ by providing the means for each of its members to share their spiritual gifts with one another, rooted in the Word of God, thereby growing into deeper union with one another and with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).
2. Minister to non-believers; be a witness for Christ and a testimony to His Body in the world.

We would appreciate your help in contributing to the content and in spreading the work of this ministry. Thank you, and God bless.

- Pastor Scott Moller

Visit www.bereanlamp.org/lampstand/ for an explanation of the cover art.

Administrator: Nathan Warner

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

Editors: Natalie Warner, Julie Moller





Berean Lamp Ministries

For the Body of Christ

12-09-14

www.bereanlamp.org ♦ A Ministry of the Berean Christian Fellowship—Zimmerman, MN ♦ Vol25



*"You SHALL love the LORD
your God with ALL your
HEART and with ALL your
SOUL and with ALL your
MIGHT."*

(Deuteronomy 6:5)



*"And in that it was
COMMANDED to leave the
STUMP with the roots of the
TREE, your kingdom will be
ASSURED to you
AFTER you recognize that it
is HEAVEN that rules."*

(Daniel 4:26)



By Maria Madsen

Here Be Idols

By Nathan Warner

“Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.”
(1 Corinthians 3:16-17 NASB)

A Tale of Two Sanctuaries

I’ve read about an abandoned church building in England that I’ll call Thameside where the congregation dwindled to the point that the church decided to close. This sanctuary of worship to God became neglected real estate put up on the market for anyone to buy. The flock that once filled its sanctuary as the Body of Christ instead flocked to sanctuaries of fleshly desires. Abandoning the Church of God for idols, they left their building to be used for the world’s purposes.

Closer to home, I’ve seen another sight – a great, garnished church I’ll call Crosswaters. It’s a place that’s on fire with zeal. People come from everywhere to pack its parking lot full and flood the offering with outpourings of cash. It is an energetic scene bursting with bands, lights, and action, but there is no spiritual substance. The message they preach is not the truth of the Word of God. People press in to experience miracles (self-help and magic) and have miraculous experiences (emotional outpourings). They don’t come to hear about repentance of sin, eternity, suffering, or obedience to Christ, and they’re in luck because they never have to. The gift shop sells books, DVDs, T-shirts, coffee, and anything they can manage to put a sticker onto. In doing these things, they have exchanged God in their church for idols from the world.

Both of these churches are a pattern seen among the Israelites in the Old Covenant. Some Israelites abandoned the temple to worship idols in groves and mountaintops, while others brought their idols into the Temple it-

self, crowding out the sacrifices to God. While Thameside and Crosswaters seem remarkably different on the outside, they are both illustrations of how idolatry affects the Church. At Thameside, people left God’s House to ruin in order to spend their time and energy on idols. These idols are the things that are perishing with the world, such as a pint at the pub, a football match, shopping, a meal, a television program, etc. These people may still call themselves Christians and wear crosses and own Bibles, but they spend all their time and energy on worldly pursuits. At Crosswaters, the leadership quietly replaced God with idols, bringing the dead things of the world into the Church, converting His House into a place of business. To make this happen, they set up men in place of Christ and promoted the teachings of men over the teachings of God. These “Believers” spend a lot of energy “doing church” and from a distance may seem like Christians on fire for God, but like white-washed tombs, their insides are dark with idolatry. Their works will perish because the world they love is doomed to perish in fire.

It’s clear that both Thameside and Crosswaters destroyed the sanctuary given to them by God. And while both churches are guilty of idolatry, Crosswaters’ sin is much more serious. It keeps up the appearance of love and obedience to Jesus and proclaims God is good, but the character of God they proclaim is a different god entirely. Like the Pharisees, they present themselves as “Believers,” even gatekeepers for God, but will not let anyone into His Truth, nor will they go in themselves (Luke 11:52). Despite their differences, both of these churches illustrate what happens when people’s priorities change from the eternal to the temporal. Their purpose in life automatically becomes death because what they pursue is also futile vanity for it also will pass away. Instead of denying themselves for Jesus, they deny themselves nothing but Jesus. Before we throw too many stones, however, we should realize we are all guilty of idolatry on some level. We spend so much time stockpiling tinder in bank accounts, homes, cars, jobs, desires, lusts, and all things of the flesh. These

are the things that will be burned up by fire. So often we forget the abiding gift of our Salvation: *"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body"* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). How could we forget the price God paid to give us eternal life freely?

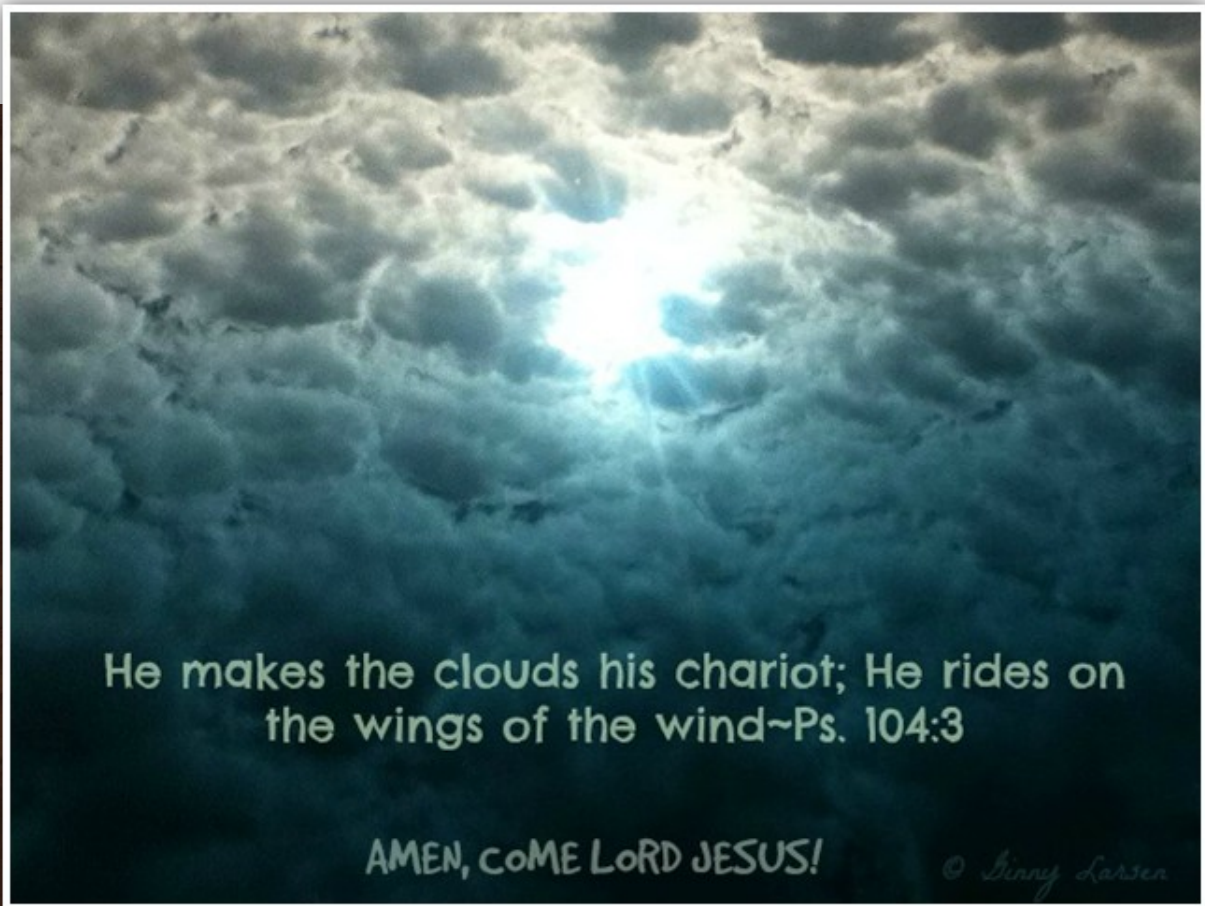
Attending to God Comes at a Price

The time and energy a Believer puts into worshipping God (at church or in the Body) is time and energy lost to the world – it is given to God and does not profit the flesh. Many of us have felt at least once in our lives that we could be doing something "important" or that "needs doing" instead of attending church, studying the Word, or praying. We sense those distracted moments while at church or in prayer when something other than God is fill-

ing our thoughts. What happens when these momentary temptations take root and grow? Perhaps we begin to resent the time we are spending at church, in prayer, and in the Word. Is attending to God worth our effort if it costs us a balanced schedule, a happy family, a great marriage, a successful career, a full bank account, real friendships, and satisfying intimacy?

THAMESIDE: If these are the things that are on our mind all the time, then we most certainly will resent our time spent in church, prayer, and the Word, because we'd rather SPEND our time seeking what we "really need" in the world instead of "wasting" time on "non-essential things." After all, if Salvation is a "VIP ticket" that you've already received, then get out there and live life! Check off "Salvation" from your list and move on to the next big thing! God is love, so He understands me, and He's got my back.

CROSSWATERS: On the other hand, per-



By Ginny Larsen

haps we fear our salvation is tied up in church attendance and prayer and walking away is a mighty big risk. Yet, we would really rather be SPENDING our time and energy on the “real things” that affect our lives in the world. Well then, how about we bring the things we want from the world into the Church so we can serve ourselves while serving God? And maybe people from the world will come into the Church and hear about God, so we’re actually doing God’s work while we do work for ourselves. It’s the best of both worlds!

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST: *“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth”* (Matthew 6:24). Bringing the world into the Church is love of the world, not love of God. Attending to God is worth it because He desires it of us if for no other reason than thankfulness for our Salvation. We have to go beyond realizing that all our idols are not worthy of Him. We have to come to a place where we realize not even our lives are worthy of Him, so that we can say, *“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him”* (Job 13:15 KJV) – though I am robbed of everything in the world, even my life, yet I will attend to God. Church, prayer, and the Word are time spent on the eternal—that which will last forever. It’ll still be a part of us a million years from now. Right now, it’s “lost” time to this present world but gained in eternity through the work of Jesus Christ and the gifts He will give. That isn’t to say that God won’t give us worldly blessings – of course He does, and there is nothing wrong with asking Him in prayer for these blessings as part of our relationship in Him. However, these things should never come before Him in our hearts because worldly blessings are nothing in the face of eternity. They will perish, but our Salvation will endure forever. God desires the sacrifice of our time and energy to Him, the Bridegroom of the Church (Ephesians 5:25-27), just as He created our human relationships to require the sacrifice of time and energy to each other. A sacrifice acknowledges it may not be convenient or easy for us. We may have to let some

things slide to attend to prayer, the Word, and church. Think of the Israelites who had to give the best of their flock and production to God – not the move you’d make if your mind was on what you’ll make at the market, right? Sacrifice to God may mean we fall behind in the world, but if we turn away from Him and sacrifice our time and energy to worldly things instead, we become enemies of God: *“You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God”* (James 4:4). In the same way, if we still say we love Him, but love the world just as much, we are also adulterous.

The Temple of Our Bodies

Both Thameside and Crosswaters are examples of “community idolatry” – when a Body of Christ turns from God to idols. Community idolatry isn’t restricted to a building because the Church is anywhere two or three gather together. Idolatry doesn’t begin in the Church, however, because each Believer is a sanctuary for the Spirit of God. Churches are pictures of our own bodies, just like the Jewish temple was a picture Paul used for the Believer’s body: *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?”* (1 Corinthians 6:19). This is where idolatry begins – in the sanctuary of each person’s body, for *“what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people’”* (2 Corinthians 6:16). God takes idolatry in each body seriously. Do we? Do we catch ourselves feeling like our spiritual lives are a “waste of time” – like the Thameside church – and that the answers to our difficulties are out in the world? Or, are we fooling ourselves into thinking that the worldly things we focus on are actually God’s business – like the Crosswaters church – substituting the world in place of

God? The macro-idolatry (large scale) of the culture always begins with the micro-idolatry (small scale) of the heart.

Though speaking about the Jewish temple, I believe that when God says, *"I have chosen and consecrated this house that My name may be there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually"* (2 Chronicles 7:16), it can also be used concerning our bodies under the New Covenant. Is it any wonder then that when Israel destroyed the Temple of God (just like Thameside and Crosswaters), God gave them over to destruction? Therefore, *"do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,' says the Lord. 'AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAR; And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,' Says the Lord Almighty"* (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Just as we are now temples for the Spirit of God here on earth, so on the New Earth, God will be our temple and we will dwell in Him, for John looked on New Jerusalem and *"saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple"* (Revelation 21:22). This will be the completion and the fulfillment of the great mystery of each Believer that Jesus spoke of to His Heavenly Father concerning the Children of God—*"that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us"* (John 17:21a). Even so. Amen.

Morbid Introspection

By Ginny Larsen

"An idol is anything which usurps the place of God in the hearts of His rational creatures."

-Webster's 1828 Dictionary

We think of many things when we think of an idol. We think of statues made to be worshipped as gods. We think of things in our lives that perhaps we have too much affection for, or that we spend too much time on. We think of people that we hold in too high of a position in our lives, rather than God. But the surprising thing I had to learn in my own early walk with God was that my greatest idol, which had to go in order for God's Spirit to have His way in me, was my own religious, self-righteous flesh of "morbid introspection"—after all, the root of idolatry is "self." I was given to morbid introspection. I thought it necessary, in fact, in order to live a holy life. I looked inward constantly to examine myself and was always finding things to "give up" that I thought would make me holier to God. I found something wrong with everything. I was continually miserable and never had assurance in my heart that I was ever pleasing to God, nor was there any joy in my salvation. How could there be? The more inward I looked, the more sin I saw. I began to think anything I enjoyed was an "idol" and God didn't want me to have it. The funny thing was, the more I gave up, the more those things pre-occupied my mind and heart. They were not the idol that was usurping the place of God in my heart. My idol was my own introspection — my thinking that I could make myself clean and holy through it. I looked at myself as "holier than thou" because of things I was able to give up that others didn't.

Morbid introspection is nothing more than our flesh trying to improve itself, cleaning itself up to make itself righteous. I was always trying to "crucify" my own flesh instead of *"reckoning myself dead with Christ to sin and alive with Him"* (Romans 6:11). I was trying

hard to do what God had already done! Of course my attention then was always on myself. It couldn't be on God, because I was pre-occupied with improving myself, with making myself holy, with performing in a way I thought God expected me to, and with how I was doing. I sought to have more faith, but with eyes on myself, **my faith was only in my faith**, rather than in HIS faithfulness. I became an idol to myself. I looked to myself for what I should have looked to God for. Self-introspection usurped the place of the Holy Spirit in my heart. It limited me to "my own understanding" of my heart rather than God's understanding (Proverbs 3:5-7).

It is impossible for our sinful fleshly nature to improve itself or to keep itself (Romans 7:18). If this was possible, the law would have been sufficient. Even if we ask God to "help us," He cannot help our flesh improve but will expose it, so that Christ in us will be revealed in His power. It is impossible for anything holy to come out of any action of my flesh, no matter how religious it appears. It is impossible for me to live up to the standard of God's righteousness which is absolutely perfect, not breaking one jot or tittle of the Law. If I am looking to myself, my introspection, or my works to do that, I have become an idol to myself. I have either lowered God's Law or put myself above it. It is not Christ helping us through our "faith" but **Christ in us** that is our hope of glory. Even our "faith" can be a work or striving of the flesh. In this case, our faith is in **our** faith, rather than **resting** in Christ and His finished work. It is the power of God and His indwelling presence alone that is our life, our righteousness, our salvation, and our rest. We are kept by **THAT** power of His finished work alone and **THAT** faith (1 Peter 1:5). We can't have true faith in the power of God to keep us unless we understand that power is from His finished work, resting in that alone, which is to the uttermost, complete, and forever. If we don't understand that finished work, our faith is only in our own faith to keep ourselves.

"For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband

*dies she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an **adulteress** if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress. Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, **so that you may belong to another, to Him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God**"*

(Romans 7:2-4). When we live under a "law principle," we are actually guilty of spiritual adultery, since we have been married to another. Dead to the law, we are married to Christ, and He alone now is our righteousness. We live under a new law—the law of "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

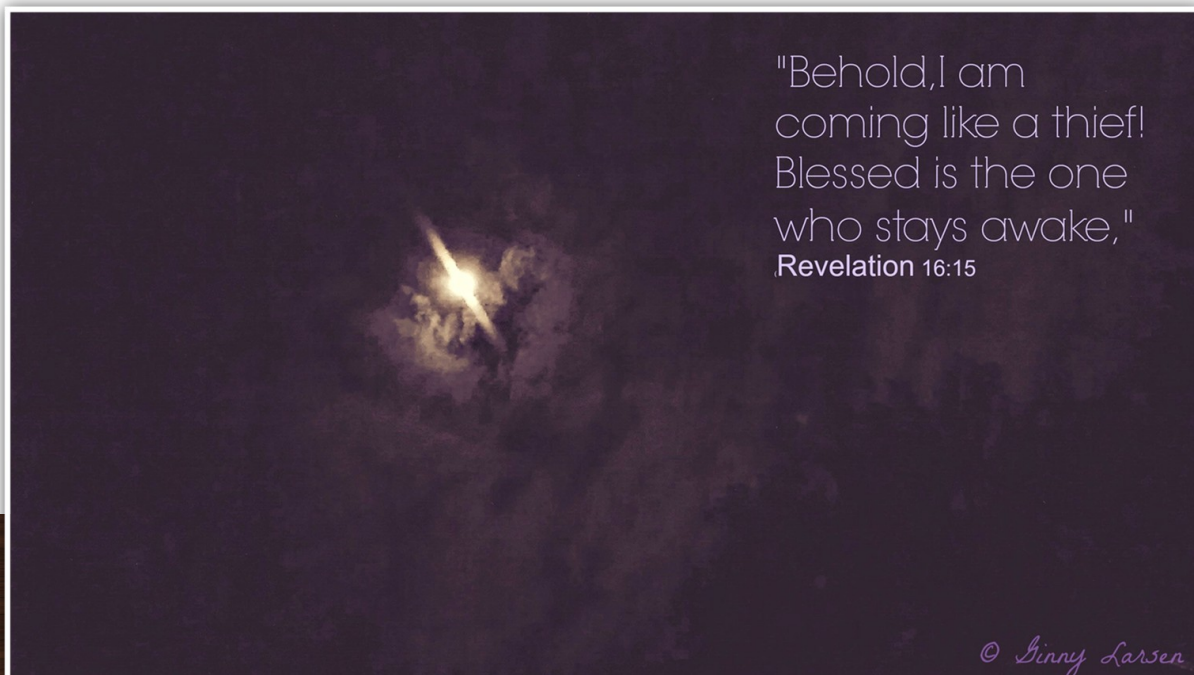
Living under constant introspection, trying to "die" to self, was only another way of living unto a "law principle" in myself—by my own righteousness, rather than living in complete trust in His righteousness alone in me to do all. The Lord so clearly convicted me of this and made me see that rather than looking to myself, I was to look to Him, not only as my righteousness but that I could trust **Him** to reveal *true* sin in my heart and cleanse me and keep me. I did not have to do that by always introspecting and giving up things. In fact, when I gave up the introspection, I was able finally to see things from God's perspective and that those things that I thought I had to give up in order to be more pure and holy were not important to God at all. They produced no righteousness in my heart, nor did they truly subdue the flesh (Colossians 2:20-23). In fact He began showing me things in my flesh I had no idea were there. Truly, the more I was introspective, the less I truly saw myself and my self-centeredness. Now, I began to truly see. We can't truly see ourselves by looking inward. The only way to examine myself is to come into His Light and look upward. As we come daily to God's Word, the mirror of our soul, presenting ourselves to Him, His Spirit pierces our hearts. We need not introspect, but we do need to let God inspect. He does that by His Word and His Spirit. He does the changing in our hearts by His Spirit indwelling us as

we continue to learn of Him and abide in Him. His Word reveals the truth of our hearts. *"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account"* (Hebrews 4:12-13). Therefore, *"search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"* (Psalm 139:23-24)

It is only as we come before God, eyes on **Him**, and allow **Him** to search our hearts that we can see. In the Light of His holiness, we see our own "undone-ness" (Isaiah 6:5). It's only then, as we take His side against our flesh, agree with Him, and trust Him to enable us to walk in the righteousness of Christ that is now in us, that we are truly able to overcome and subdue, **by the Spirit**, the deeds of the flesh. First, we have to understand that we already have that righteousness if we are in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21), and now we must "put it on" by faith - reliance or "reckoning" on it. We must let Christ live in and through

us as our life. We can only "put on" what has already been given. *"For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I **have been** crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me"* (Galatians 2:19-20).

I had no assurance in my heart before God when I was introspecting, but I always had a fear of condemnation and failure to "measure up." Once I realized I did have assurance in the finished work of Christ and His righteousness, I was free to truly live in His love and for His love, and that is what filled my heart. My mind was now on Him, not myself. My motives were led by His Spirit and His love in me, not a fear of judgment anymore, nor a fear of never being able to measure up and having to do more and more to be pleasing to Him. I found rest in His finished work. I wanted to please Him now more than anything because of my delight in Him and His wonderful salvation and grace! Once He was in the right place in my heart and mind, as my only righteousness, other things in my life had more pleasure in their rightful place. I was able to enjoy God's creation, because I saw His glory in it. I



"Behold, I am
coming like a thief!
Blessed is the one
who stays awake,"
Revelation 16:15

© Ginny Larsen

By Ginny Larsen

was able to enjoy the pleasures of life He gave, because it caused me to rejoice in Him and His love revealed in them and give Him glory for them (James 1:17). They were in their rightful place. No longer did they have a hold on my heart as though I needed them, nor were they idols in my heart, but they were instruments of God's glory. Morbid introspection causes us to deceive ourselves because we find loop-holes in our thinking to set up a law to follow, but making sure we give up something and hold on to something else. The flesh can never please God, because it is always trying to please itself, even while it tries to "crucify itself."

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:5-8).

Paul, though he attained a level of righteousness according to the law that probably few others had, thought it nothing at all in comparison to gaining Christ. How much

more should we consider our own "holiness" nothing but dung and rather have the true righteousness of Christ alone: *"But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith (not faith in my faith but trust in His faithfulness)—that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death"* (Philippians 3:7-10). Though appearing to try to please God, religious flesh will always only please itself. Morbid introspection is religious flesh. It is self – usurping the place of the Holy Spirit in our lives and hearts and minds so that it can never please God. It must be brought to the cross and done away with, just as every other deed of the flesh, by God's Spirit.


Father, open our eyes to see our flesh, even our religious flesh, and enable us to be free of it, trusting in Your righteousness alone and

Your life in us alone to be our life.
Amen.



*"THEREFORE
consider the
MEMBERS of your
EARTHLY body as DEAD
to immorality, impurity, PAS-
SION, evil desire, and
GREED, which amounts to
IDOLATRY."
(Colossians 3:5)*

CHRISTMAS



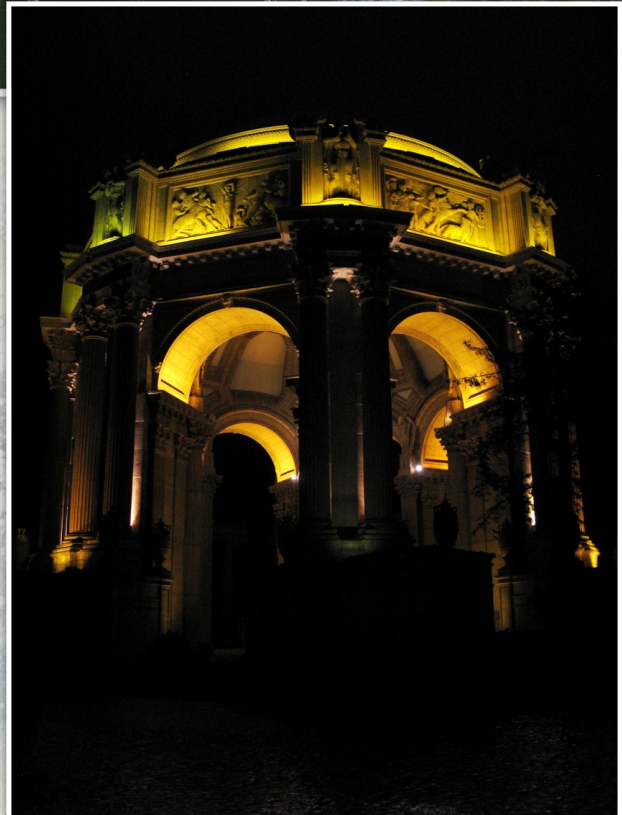
*"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
For He has visited us
and accomplished redemption for His people,
And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of David His servant—
As He spoke by the mouth
of His holy prophets from of old—
Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES,
And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US;
To show mercy toward our fathers,
And to remember His holy covenant,
The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,
To grant us that we,
being rescued from the hand of our enemies,
Might serve Him without fear,
In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.
And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
For you will go on
BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS;
To give to His people the knowledge of salvation
By the forgiveness of their sins,
Because of the tender mercy of our God,
With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,
TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS
AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH,
To guide our feet into the way of peace."
(Luke 1:68-79)*

*"No ONE can serve two MASTERS; for either he will HATE the one and LOVE the other, or he will be DEVOTED to one and DESPISE the other. You CANNOT serve God and WEALTH."
(Matthew 6:24)*



By Nathan Warner

*"What AGREEMENT has the temple of God with IDOLS? For we are the temple of the LIVING God; JUST as God said, I will dwell in them and walk AMONG them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My PEOPLE."
(2 Corinthians 6:16)*



The Kingdom of Self-Worship

By Lynn Warner

Most of us have grown up in an increasingly secular culture. To be secular is to be worldly-minded, to focus on this present life. More and more spiritual things are being reduced to a material or physical aspect. There is a sinful attachment to worldly-mindedness, which usurps God's authority to define us as His creatures living in His creation. He alone gives true meaning to our lives because He is the Author of His creation. One of our challenges as Christians is to allow Him to reveal to us what beliefs, values, meanings, and attitudes we must separate from to be more wholly His children. What are our secular idolatries?

I think the main secular idol is "self." In America, "self" is in God's place. Pride is an unreasonable conceit of one's own superiority and self-esteem. "Self" is confident in his own power and authority in reasoning, including moral reasoning. Therefore, "self" can judge for himself the values and meanings of everything, including God Himself. "Self" can define what is good and what is evil, including God Himself. (For example, we have all heard an unbeliever say, "I can't believe a good God would allow so much evil in the world.") "Self" can define himself. We all struggle with "self" and the pride of life – Satan fell because of pride and so did man.

From the idol of "self" and pride of life rises the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the mind. In 1 John 2:15-16, we read, *"Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world"* (KJV). In America, merchandising fills the air – all our electronics access it. We are surrounded by merchandising; it has become invasive and oppressive. Again, we see Satan's influence on the world system. Many scholars believe Eze-

kiel 28, after describing the Prince of Tyre, describes Satan. In verse 16a, we read, *"By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned."* Merchandising encourages our lusts, and we become covetous, greedy. Many Scriptures warn against covetousness. But Ephesians 5:5 describes a covetous man as an idolater: *"For this ye know that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."*

Because the secular kingdom has no god but "self," the happiness and pleasure of "self" is idolized. We are reminded of this in 2 Timothy 3. Beginning in verse 1-2a we read, *"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers,...."* Within a lengthy list of the characteristics people will have in this perilous time, we read in verse 4 that people will be *"lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."* In such a culture, suffering has no value – the solution is to offer help for sale through experts. Not all can afford the experts, and not all the experts actually help us back to true health and "happiness." For those of us who achieve "happiness and pleasure," we want to protect and keep it, so we look for peace and security, another idol found in our secular kingdom. But Jesus said, *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break in and steal"* (Matthew 6:19). We may pursue "safety" (or the illusion of it) instead of holiness. The secular kingdom, instead of trusting God and His ways, has invested in more and more invasive security surveillance systems. Sometimes I wonder if 1 Thessalonians 5:3a refers to this time and season: *"For when they shall say, Peace and safety: then sudden destruction cometh upon them...."* Idols do not see, hear, move, or protect!

As Believers, our pride is crushed through great suffering, and our desire for worldly pleasures fades. We learn to surrender possessions, people, and our own bodies and minds to God and His purpose for us, that Christ

would be formed in us (Galatians 4:19). In 1 Timothy 6:6-7, we read, *“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”*

In conclusion, the secular kingdom is idolatry – it is worldly-minded, focusing on this earthly life and removing God and spiritual mindedness. One of the idols in the secular kingdom is “self.” “Self” usurps God’s place and replaces Him with pride of life. From the idolatry of self and pride comes the idolatry to covetousness. Man follows in the spiritual footprints of Satan and sets up worldwide mer-

chandising systems, which encourages lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh. The idolatry of pleasure-loving instead of God-loving becomes a goal of worldly life. We try to evade suffering by idolizing peace and security. The secular kingdom enforces this worldly focus by taking God out of our conversation and lives. We miss Him. One of my prayers is that God would reveal the idolatry in the hidden places of our hearts, heal us, and make us whole in Him. Amen.

CHRISTMAS

“Paul, a BONDSERVANT of Christ Jesus, CALLED as an apostle, SET APART for the GOSPEL of God, which He PROMISED beforehand through His PROPHETS in the holy SCRIPTURES, concerning His SON, who was BORN of a descendant of David ACCORDING to the FLESH, who was DECLARED the Son of God with POWER by the resurrection from the DEAD, according to the Spirit of HOLINESS, Jesus Christ our Lord, through WHOM we have received GRACE and apostleship to bring about the OBEDIENCE of faith among all the Gentiles for His NAME’S sake, among whom YOU also are the CALLED of Jesus Christ.”

(Romans 1:1-6)



Oops! Have We Built a Calf?

By Natalie Warner

“Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, ‘Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’”
(Exodus 32:1 NASB)

The Israelites were tired of walking by faith. Yes, they had witnessed the plagues in Egypt. Yes, they had seen the Red Sea part. Yes, they received instruction from God through Moses. However, the Israelites forgot that the Lord’s faithfulness does not run out; He continues leading whether we lose sight of Him or not. After all, when they left Egypt, He *“was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night”* (Exodus 13:21). Does God only lead or seem apparent in our good days? When things are going swell? We may be more apt to notice or to be thankful for Him in those times, but we cannot and should not neglect to watch for His Hand in the darkness, too. For, *“He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people”* (Exodus 13:22). Do we replace Him in our hearts, minds, and lives if we grow weary of walking by faith in the darkness? Think of how easily the Israelites strayed, and they had seen the Lord’s presence with their own eyes—more than most of us have!

“Aaron said to them, ‘Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.’”

Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. He took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, ‘This is your god, O

Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.’”
(Exodus 32:2-4)

When we look elsewhere for our hope and salvation, we are having a god before Him. If we put our trust in man alone or in something other than Jesus Christ for our eternal security, we’re forming for ourselves idols. Now, this is not to say that we cannot utilize things of the world to assist us – for example, choosing eye-glasses for our failing sight or medication for our sickness. What we need to never forget though is that the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart. What is our motive? Where is our hope placed? Are we doing this or that under God’s sovereignty, or are we usurping Him?

This is a common trait in the world. Take for example the so-called atheist. Atheists, by definition, don’t believe any sort of god exists (a = without, theist = god). However, if they were to contend that, they would have to admit that nothing created everything, which defies the very same laws of science that they base their belief on. An honest atheist will admit that he does believe in *some* god (science, humanity, or aliens, for example), just not THE true God. It follows, then, that he is not an atheist but an agnostic (someone who believes in a god, just not sure which one). Agnostics don’t want to believe in the true God, because if they did, they would be morally accountable. Instead, so-called atheists and agnostics make up a god that suits themselves. Atheism is a religion in itself. They make their gods cozy and comfortable and tolerant of sin—a golden calf fashioned from their own sinful imaginations. Romans 1:18-25 describes these unbelievers:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes,

His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over to the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

According to Scripture, they are without excuse! How much more so are we! And yet, we do the same thing as the atheist when we grow tired of not seeing the Lord and create a golden calf for ourselves—an idol we feel comfortable and secure with. We alter in our minds what God’s personality so clearly is and put ourselves in control. Yet when we suffer, we make Him out to be cruel and somehow to owe us an explanation. I’m guilty of this myself. I grow tired of waiting and watching for Him, wondering why this thing is happening here or that thing there, and I start forming a golden calf in my mind to help ME “cope,” to help ME “understand.”

“Now when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, ‘Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD.’”
(Exodus 32:5)

I wonder if Aaron was justifying the idol by convincing himself that it was just a joke—that they were all still obeying the Lord, just letting off some steam. After all, in view of the calf

and the altar, Aaron was planning on making a feast to the Lord. In the same way, we Believers also justify our idols before God. We convince ourselves they’re innocent, they’re just sitting on the sidelines, and they’re in no way between us and God.

However, before the idols, we’re sacrificing much. We sacrifice a closer relationship with Christ. The more things cloud our vision, the less we see of Him. We sacrifice blessings and lessons that the Lord may have planned. While we’re seeking a way out, we might be missing the growth God wants to instill in us. This is evident in the modern church. Just as Aaron appeased the grumbling people by making them an idol they could appreciate, we have pastors who do the same to keep “peaceful” and prosperous churches. They sacrifice their testimony for the sake of appreciation and appeasement. Instant gratification wins over concern about ramifications. They sacrifice the spreading of the Gospel, and they dishonor the Lord by erecting a golden calf in the sanctuary. Where the raw truth of eternal damnation without the blood of Christ is supposed to be shared, they replace it with cushy services of self-help messages, feel-good prayers, and music. Is this honoring God or satan? As Lucifer declared, “I will make myself like the Most High,” so have many churches made the Most High in their own image—the image of sinful man.

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people.’”
(Exodus 32:9)

How often are we obstinate? Whenever we are challenged to examine ourselves, there is serious bias that gets in the way—our own obstinate bias. It’s an uncomfortable process for us when God weeds out the tares in our life, but we need to earnestly seek His face and ask Him to do the weeding. We could very well be nursing the idol of pride if we don’t think idolatry is a big enough deal to take seriously. It is a very serious thing, for by giving our thoughts to God, “*we are destroying specula-*

tions and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Let us not lose sight of Him and create a calf for ourselves, for we will surely stumble over it in the dark!

*"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of those who seek Him."
(Hebrews 11:6)*



CHRISTMAS

*"My SOUL exalts the Lord,
And my spirit has REJOICED in God my Savior.
"For He has had regard for the humble state of His bonds slave;
For behold, from this TIME on all generations will count me blessed.
"For the Mighty One has done great THINGS for me;
And HOLY is His name.
"AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION
TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM.
"He has done mighty deeds with His arm;
He has SCATTERED those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart.
"He has brought down RULERS from their thrones,
And has EXALTED those who were humble.
"HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS;
And sent away the RICH empty-handed.
"He has GIVEN help to Israel His servant,
In remembrance of His MERCY,
As He SPOKE to our fathers,
To Abraham and his DESCENDENTS forever."
(Luke 1:46b-55)*



Sing A New Song

Words and Music by
Henry BarracloUGH

"In garments glorious He
will come."



Hotel Walton, Broad and Locust Sts.,
Philadelphia, Pa.

In Memorial



Henry BarracloUGH
(1894-1961)

"During his
lifetime he
penned lyrics
for 20 hymns
and composed
music for 120"

375

HENRY BARRACLOUGH

Ivory Palaces

HENRY BARRACLOUGH

1. My Lord has garments so wondrous fine, And myrrh their texture fills;
2. His life had al - so its sor - rows sore, For al - oes had a part;
3. His gar - ments too were in cas - sia dipped, With healing in a touch;
4. In gar - ments glo - ri - ous He will come, To o - pen wide the door;

Its fragrance reached to this heart of mine, With joy my be - ing thrills.
And when I think of the cross He bore, My eyes with tear - drops start.
Each time my feet in some sin have slipped, He took me from its clutch.
And I shall en - ter my heav'nly home, To dwell for - ev - er - more.

CHORUS
DUET - Slowly, softly, and with much expression

Out of the i - vo - ry pal - a - ces In - to a world of woe,

FULL CHORUS
DUET - Very softly

On - ly His great e - ter - nal love.... Made my Sav - ior go.

© 1915, Renewal 1943 by H. BarracloUGH. Assigned to
Publishing Co. All rights reserved

Ivory Palaces

By Maggie Moller

*"All your robes are fragrant with myrrh and
aloes and cassia; from palaces adorned with
ivory the music of the strings makes you glad."*
(Psalm 45:8 NIV)

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

This hymn holds a special place in my heart. I heard this hymn off and on during my early childhood, but it didn't strike me as a beautiful image of the Lord's glory until my Great-Grandma's funeral. My Great-Grandma and I had a special relationship. Being named

after her, I have always held a sort of subtle pride in my parents' desire for me to be like her. She was one of the Godliest women I have ever met, and I have the honor of being her namesake. When she died, I was filled with strange emotions. She was the first person in my life to die with whom I had a strong relationship. I was filled with a sudden sense of the loss of never having the chance to see her on this earth again but at the same time joy that she was finally in the presence of our Lord and Savior.

Christmas brings back memories of Great-Grandma in many ways. Fun traditions such as her ginger cookies always bring back happy memories. Sadly, she also passed away a few weeks before Christmas. And while this can put a sad note on the Christmas season, it also is a time of rejoicing because of the knowledge we have that she is celebrating Jesus' birth with Him in heaven! "Ivory Palaces" always reminds me of Great-Grandma and the Godly

example she left for me to follow. But not only does it remind me of Great-Grandma, it also fills me with wonder at the unimaginable, unattainable glory of our God!

I have chosen this hymn because I believe it fully captures this month's theme of "Idolatry," as well as giving the Christmas message. After reading the refrain, we can clearly see the Christmas connection. However, you may be wondering how I can see this hymn fitting within the theme of "Idolatry." After reading the lyrics of "Ivory Palaces," I was left feeling a deep sense of awe and wonder at the beauty and splendor of the God we serve. And yet despite His glorious majesty and power, we often trade all He provides to us for the cheap, counterfeit junk of the world. I am as guilty of this as anyone.

In our culture, it can be easy to assume we are no longer tempted by idols. Since we don't encounter golden idols set up in shrines on a regular basis, this must have been a stumbling block for the ancients alone, right? I thought this myself until I was in high school when all of a sudden God opened my eyes to see all the idols I had set up in my own life. I was shocked to discover that while I wasn't physically bowing down to a graven image, I had areas of my life that I was in a sense "worshipping." For my entire life I have been a planner. I plan what I am going to do each day, each week, each month, and on and on. However, when I was in high school, God quietly challenged me to examine my motives behind my intense organization. And what I discovered wasn't exactly pretty or worth bragging about. I found myself so focused on my goals and my life plans, I had left little room for the plans God had for my life.

As I look back over the last seven years, I cannot help but rejoice and give God the glory for the changes He has brought in my heart. I do not pretend to say it has been a rosy path or that I have arrived at a point of completion. Rather, far from it! However, God has brought me far, and I can attest to the wonderful feeling of beginning the process of letting go and fully trusting in His wonderful plans!

I do not pretend to say I never struggle with

this in my life or that I am a more developed Christian than everybody else. Rather, it is only through a conscious effort and strength from the Lord that I am able to even begin to conquer myself. My roommate and I recently had a discussion about whether or not a person ever "gets over" their struggles or if it is a life-long battle. I think it is safe to say we will never reach a state of perfection in our walk with the Lord until we are one day seated at His feet. This life is a battle, a race, a struggle. I encourage you to ask the Lord to show you areas in your own life where you may be holding on too tightly. Areas where "idols" have popped up quietly but now have a stronghold. It is not an easy revelation to see at first, but the joys that follow are beyond description!

Henry Barraclough The Lyricist and Composer

Henry Barraclough was born on December 14, 1891, in Yorkshire, England. From the early age of five, he showed an interest in music and began training for the piano and organ. When he entered the workforce, he followed a business career path and his musical talents were kept as a personal interest. His first job was with the Car and General Insurance Company as a claims adjuster. Then from 1911 to 1913 he served as the assistant to Parliament member George Scott Robertson.

Wanting to pursue his music in a more prominent way, he joined evangelist Wilbur J. Chapman as his team pianist. With Mr. Chapman, Barraclough moved to the United States to pursue evangelist work in America. After his arrival in the United States, World War I broke out, and Henry enlisted to serve under his new country. After the war, he returned to serve with Mr. Chapman once again. It was during this time the hymn "Ivory Palaces" took shape.

Unlike most of the hymns we have previously studied, the history behind "Ivory Palaces" has been recorded in detail. During the summer of 1915, when Henry was only 24 years old, Wilbur Chapman led an evangelical

tour around North Carolina. It was during an evening service at a stop in Asheville that the Lord laid the words and music for this hymn on Henry's heart. That evening, Mr. Chapman preached on the splendor of the Lord as described by the Psalmist in Psalm 45. Verse 8 especially struck Henry, and when he returned to the hotel after the service, he set right to work pouring out his heart into his song. The next morning Mr. Chapman opened his service with "Ivory Palaces."

As one critic described, "Ivory Palaces" does not demonstrate the highest level of poetic or musical development; however, the power of its message far outweighs its technical flaws. Sadly, "Ivory Palaces" is not included in our hymnal. I have included the verses below so you can read for yourself the beautiful message penned in each stanza. According to one source, the verses can be analyzed according to the progression of Christ's life. The first verse describes his heavenly glory. This verse, along with the refrain, speaks the Christmas message most powerfully to my heart. I think we all too often forget the majestic glory Christ left when He came to earth in the bodily form of a tiny baby. The second verse speaks the message of His death on the cross to cover our sins. The third verse describes the healing and redemption we can find in accepting His free gift of salvation. Lastly, the fourth verse gives us the hope of His return and our eternal life with Him in glory.

For the larger portion of his life from 1919 to 1961, Mr. Barraclough served as an administrator for the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. He passed away at the age of 92 in Philadelphia. During his lifetime he penned lyrics for 20 hymns and composed music for 120. More importantly though than his life accomplishments were his faithful service to his Lord and his adoration for Christ's heavenly glory!

Ivory Palaces

My Lord has garments so wondrous fine,
And myrrh their texture fills;
Its fragrance reached to this heart of mine
With joy my being thrills.

Refrain:

*Out of the ivory palaces
Into a world of woe,
Only His great eternal love
Made my Savior go.*

His life had also its sorrows sore,
For aloes had a part;
And when I think of the cross He bore,
My eyes with teardrops start.

Refrain

His garments too were in cassia dipped,
With healing in a touch;
Each time my feet in some sin have slipped,
He took me from its clutch.

Refrain

In garments glorious He will come,
To open wide the door;
And I shall enter my heav'nly home,
To dwell forevermore.

Works Consulted

Cyber Hymnal: "Ivory Palaces" <http://www.hymntime.com/tch/htm/i/v/o/ivorypal.htm>

Cyber Hymnal: "Henry Barraclough" http://www.hymntime.com/tch/bio/b/a/r/r/barraclough_h.htm

"Ivory Palaces" <http://www.gbod.org/resources/ivory-palaces>

January/February Newsletter Theme— Household of God

Submission Deadline: January 25

Publish Date: February 3

Household of God...

- What is a household?
- How is it different from a club, business, or organization?
- What does it mean for all of us to be part of it?
- Is the Household of God the Church family?
- How should members of a household treat each other?
- Why do some Christians treat the Church like a service station?

Verses on the HOUSEHOLD OF GOD (from the NASB version)

Ephesians 2:17-22 — *“AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”*

1 Timothy 3:14-15 — *“I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.”*

Galatians 6:10 — *“So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”*

Hebrews 3:6 — *“But Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.”*

1 Peter 2:5 — *“You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”*

1 Peter 4:16-18 — *“But if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?”*

Further Out—Mar/Apr 2015: PRAISE