

Expository Files, 11.4

April 2004

Edited by Jon W. Quinn & Warren E. Berkley

In This Issue

Front Page – Jon W. Quinn, The Church of Christ

For What Am I Waiting, Psa. 39, Jon W. Quinn

What's In A Name, Isa. 9:6, Zeke Flores

No Condemnation - Rom. 8:1, Warren E. Berkley

An Ideal Life – Ps. 128, Jay Horsley

Topic Page – Victory Crown, Jon W. Quinn

Plan of Salvation

Final Page – Notes of Gal. 3, Warren E. Berkley

For Easy Navigation, Use Bookmarks

Front Page

The Church of Christ By Jon W. Quinn

Here is a simple list of seven Scriptural reasons why the Church of the New Testament is an essential part of God's plan for our lives.

1. The church we read about in the New Testament is a part of God's Eternal Purpose. The church was in God's eternal plan (Ephesians 3:10-12). The members of the church are also referred to as "fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." (Ephesians 3:6).

2. Hades will not prevail against the Church of Christ (Matthew 16:18). Jesus would die, but He would rise again to build His church. The Rock

upon which the church is built is the fact of Jesus' identity as the Christ, the Son of God (Matthew 16:16-17).

3. The Church is Christ's kingdom (Matthew 16:19). He rules over His church, though His authority is not limited to the church. We are added to the church when we are translated into the kingdom, and that is done when we answer to the call of the gospel by obedient faith (Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:13; 18). This kingdom is to be given first priority in our lives (Matthew 6:33).

4. The Church is the Family, or Household of God (1 Timothy 3:15). If it is necessary to be God's child in His family, then it is necessary to be a member of His church. If we are not in God's family, then He is not our Father. Who are the heirs of God? Would it be those in or out of His household? (Romans 8:15-17; Titus 3:7).

5. The church has a purchase price. Guess how much it cost. The church was purchased and the the price was the blood of Christ (Acts 20:27). But note that the blood is also said to purchase men (Revelation 5:9). This means that the church is made up of people redeemed by the blood of Christ.

6. Jesus is Savior of the Church. Paul identifies the body of Christ as the church, and then says Jesus is Savior of the body (Ephesians 5:23). He also is said to love the church and that He gave Himself up for it (Ephesians 5:25). Those in the church, or body, have been reconciled unto God, and the price of reconciliation was paid on the cross (Ephesians 2:16).

7. The church is referred to as a spiritual "Mount Zion". Isaiah had prophesied about the salvation that would occur here (Isaiah 2:2-3). In the New testament, we learn that Mount Zion is the church and we also find out that when this universe is removed at the end of time that the church, or kingdom, will not be shaken (Hebrews 12:22-24; 25-29).

For What Am I Waiting?

(Psalm 39)

By Jon W. Quinn

Waiting is part of life. Some businesses have thrived on reducing wait time. That is the purpose behind drive through lanes at the bank and at fast food restaurants. That is why there are so many checkout lanes at the grocery store. But, inevitably, we still find ourselves waiting in lines and waiting rooms. Waiting is sometimes necessary: The farmer waits for his crops to mature. The batter waits for his pitch. The runner waits for the starting pistol.

But waiting is sometimes dangerous. Many illnesses can be treated if caught soon enough. A person who is flailing about in the water is not interested in being asked to “wait a minute” before being tossed a rope. Spiritual minded people would think of the danger of waiting to obey the gospel or teaching the lost about Jesus.

Why do so many wait to make things right with God? Why not follow Him today? Why put off things we know need doing? Many times we fail to act because spiritually we are unprepared; we are too distant from God. But such neglect is a dangerous thing; the opportunities to save ourselves and others slip away (1 Timothy 4:15,16).

Consider the Psalmist David who, because of his own sin and estrangement from God, for a time could no longer speak for the Lord (he was ashamed to teach righteousness when he himself had been so negligent). Listen to him: "And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in You." (Psalm 39:7). That is a good question. When it comes to being what the Lord wants me to be, then what am I waiting for? Consider the thirty-ninth Psalm.

Waiting to Speak

I said, "I will guard my ways
That I may not sin with my tongue;
I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle
While the wicked are in my presence."
I was mute and silent,
I refrained even from good,
And my sorrow grew worse.
My heart was hot within me,
While I was musing the fire burned;

Then I spoke with my tongue:
(Psalm 39:1-3)

Sin and neglect makes it awkward for us to communicate any spiritual truth to others. We are commanded to tell others of Jesus; to encourage obedience to His gospel and to teach against sin. We are told to have the proper spirit and attitude as we do so (Ephesians 5:11; Titus 3:8; Galatians 6:1,2). But we cannot help others see their need to repent of wrong if we refuse to do so ourselves (Matthew 7:1-5).

The Psalmist also tells us that to continue in neglect and sin only makes matters worse (vs. 2). The Psalmist David's "sorrow" and inner "pain" grew worse. His sin had many bad effects, both temporal as well as spiritual (Romans 7:24; 1 Timothy 6:9,10). David saw clearly opportunities and the need to speak (vs. 3). He was so eager to speak to the need of the moment (like Jeremiah; Jeremiah 20:9). God expects you to be prepared to obey Him and speak His will as well (Acts 4:19,20). "And now Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in Thee".

Time Does Not Wait For Us To Act

LORD, make me to know my end
And what is the extent of my days;
Let me know how transient I am.
Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths,
And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight;
Surely every man at his best is a mere breath.
Selah.
Surely every man walks about as a phantom;
Surely they make an uproar for nothing;
He amasses riches and does not know who will gather them.
(Psalm 39:4-6)

Life goes on. It would be nice if we could call "timeout" and life would just stop while we attended to our business, and then when we were ready to take care of the Lord's business; we could start the clock up again. Like Jesus, we need to be "about our Father's business" (Luke 2:49; cf. Ecclesiastes 12:13,14; Joshua 24:14-15).

It is possible to wait too long. There is not always tomorrow. Paul was brought before the governor Festus and King Agrippa. Festus never seemed to be all that close to heeding the gospel, but Paul's preaching "almost persuaded" Agrippa to become a Christian. But think: how much better off in eternity is Agrippa than Festus? He is no better off! Being "close" to acting is not enough (Acts 26:24-29).

The Scripture often warns against assuming that "there is always a tomorrow" (Luke 12:19-21; James 4:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3).

Hopelessly Waiting

And now, Lord, for what do I wait?
My hope is in You.
(Psalm 39:7)

Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry;
Do not be silent at my tears;
For I am a stranger with You,
A sojourner like all my fathers.
Turn Your gaze away from me, that I may smile again
Before I depart and am no more.
(Psalm 39:12-13).

The time to prepare is now. A day without the Lord is a day without hope. (Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:12; Hebrews 3:12,13). There is no good reason to end this day without God. The Bible encourages speedy action on those who know what the right thing to do is. Today is the day to make preparation and take action (Hebrews 4:6-7; 2 Corinthians 6:1-3). David said; "For I am a stranger with You" (vs. 12). Don't allow the Lord to become a stranger to you! (Matthew 7:21-23).

Pain and sorrow is not always a bad thing. It woke David up as to his soul's true needs. It caused him to ask, "And now Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in Thee."

It would have been foolish for David to have waited further. It would have been wasteful and could have had made tragic circumstances even worse.

Deliver me from all my transgressions;

Make me not the reproach of the foolish.
I have become mute, I do not open my mouth,
Because it is You who have done it.
Remove Your plague from me;
Because of the opposition of Your hand I am perishing.
(Psalm 39:8-10).

Like David's, our hope is also in the Lord. Like David, it is foolish for us to wait as well. There is too much at stake. It cannot be worth it. The consequences for neglect are too steep; and the reward for seeking God in righteousness are too wondrous. Our hope is in the Lord.

What's in a Name? **(Isaiah 9:6)** **By Zeke Flores**

Some time ago there was a big ruckus in the legal world concerning "truth in advertising". For example, if a product called itself a "pain reliever", then it had to relieve pain. What a concept! Yet sometimes we hear the expression, "What's in a name?" because we know that some things aren't always what they're called.

Take my name, Ezekiel, for example. It means literally, "God strengthens". However for many years that was not what I believed. I lived 33 years trying to get my strength from my own devices rather than from where my name says it comes from. Only after God's grace was poured out on me did I realize how true my moniker is!

Let's consider the name of One whose purpose was determined before the beginning of time. The prophet Isaiah told his people in Isaiah 9:6 That someday a Child would be born. One whose name would symbolize the many wonderful aspects of His character. "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."

God's prophet foretold that this coming One would give us guidance. He calls Him "Wonderful Counselor". The Hebrew word for wonderful is

one that is used for the extraordinary or the miraculous, literally full of wonder. "Counselor" was used in terms of a king who guided his people through the consultation of trusted advisors. Thus we have One who would guide through extraordinary, wonderful counsel. Paul the apostle extols the wonder of Jesus in 1 Tim. 3:16: "And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, beheld by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory." As for the quality of His counsel, Paul tells us that in Him (Jesus) "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. 2:3). Truly Jesus fulfills this as He guides us even today through His Word. All one has to do is take a look at the changed lives that result from heeding His advice.

Next Isaiah says this coming One would be called "Mighty God". The term reveals that not only would He be all-powerful (mighty), but He would also be God Himself! In other words, He would not just have the power of God, He would be the God of power! Paul relied on the God of power when he wrote, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Phil 4:13) in the midst of extreme adversity. We too can lean on this awesome power when we are faced with distress of any kind.

Isaiah then calls the coming One "Eternal Father" linking Him conclusively with God who "inhabits eternity" as spoken of in Is. 57:15. In fact, when the Jews proudly told Jesus that they could trace their ancestral roots back to Abraham, Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." (John 8:58) The Jews were infuriated and prepared to stone Jesus because such a statement made Him equal with the God who gave His name as "I AM" to Moses in Ex. 3:14. The Hebrew writer reminds us that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." (Heb. 13:8)

Finally Isaiah describes the coming Messiah as the "Prince of Peace". One of the many meanings of the Hebrew word "prince" (Shar) is "administrator". Since it's evident that Jesus didn't come to end all wars, the peace He came to administer must have a deeper significance. Peace means literally "joining together" and this is exactly what Paul meant when he wrote, "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1). It was Jesus' voluntary, vicarious sacrifice for our sins that made this peace possible as in Is. 53:5 "But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed."(NIV) He is the One who

made peace with God possible and He is the One who keeps us in that peace!

The wonderful majesty of the names of Christ doesn't end there. Matthew tells us that Jesus fulfills the prophecy, "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us." (Matt. 1:23) John the apostle writes that "...the Word was God" and that "...the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (John 1:1, 14) Before He ascended to heaven, Jesus promised, "...I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:20) What a thrill to know that the author of our salvation is near when we need Him!

Perhaps the most wonderful name He possesses is that which we call Him by, "Jesus". The name means "God is my salvation" and was given to Jesus as an infant because "...it is He who will save His people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21) Without Him and His work on the cross, we would surely have no hope!

So, what's in a name? To the many who are being saved by the One who wears the name above all names, the answer is "Everything!" Now the question Jesus asks comes to you, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matt. 16:15) Well, what do you say?

No Condemnation (Rom. 8:1)

Warren E. Berkley

Romans 8:1 contains teaching that can mean a great deal to each of us. I'll read the verse in a moment.

It must be an awful thing, in our justice system, to be a condemned person. To violate criminal law; to be apprehended; to be convicted and sentenced. And therefore be a condemned person. Knowing your condition and having no hope of relief.

But this may not concern you. If you are not guilty of any crime. If you entertain no fear of going through the justice system and being incarcerated. You may not easily identify with someone in prison, awaiting future punishment.

There is, however, a spiritual counterpart to this. Let me ask – have you ever transgressed God’s law? Have you ever committed any sin? If you have sinned, you stand condemned in the court of divine judgment and the indictment against you is written in the Scriptures. Sinners are condemned. As Paul wrote in Romans: “to those who...do not obey the truth – indignation, wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,” (Rom. 2:8,9). Regarding those who violated the Law of Moses, the Scripture said, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them,” (Gal. 3:10). Participation in sin brings to the sinner – earned condemnation; the curse of violating God’s law.

All of this brings us to our text, which is the first verse of Romans chapter eight. Remember, sinners are condemned. But because of God’s grace, there is a place of safety; a way to escape that condemnation.

Here is the verse. ***“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”***

Sinners deserve condemnation, but “in Christ Jesus” there is “no condemnation.” What does that mean?

In order to have a good understanding of the first verse in Romans 8, it will be necessary to follow the flow of thought out of chapter seven and into chapter eight.

Back in Romans 7, seeking to be right with God under the Law, but guilty of sin – Paul found himself to be “wretched, carnal, and sold under sin.” This was before he found and received deliverance in Christ; prior to his conversion. He had been attempting to live right with God, based on his own obedience to what he thought was right – but he was wrong and disobedient. That frustration is the subject of Romans chapter seven.

This is the common experience of people who seek to be justified before God, only by their compliance with law; depending upon their works, without receiving the forgiveness offered in Christ. The pattern is, you sin; the law convicts you of your sin; you make some attempts to do better, but you sin again and thus remain guilty before God. This cycle is what Paul is talking about in Romans 7. It is the common experience of people who seek

to be justified before God, only by their works, without accepting pardon in Christ by the activity of faith.

Paul relates his own experience, as a Pharisee, before his faith in Christ. He was keeping the law as he understood it, but without the forgiveness Christ purchased on the cross. He was, therefore, “wretched, carnal, and sold under sin.”

Where did he find an end to this misery? Rom. 7:25 – “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 7 is about the frustration (the inner conflict) of trying to be right, trusting in your performance apart from the blood of Christ.

In Romans 8, he leaves the past and speaks to the present: **“There is, therefore, now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”** Before trusting in Christ, Paul was depending on his own performance. As a result, his life was wretched and he was under condemnation. **But now, as an active believer in Christ (thus, a justified man), he suffered no condemnation.**

Romans 8:1 – “There is, therefore, now, no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” Paul left his old life of sin and human tradition. He was baptized to have his sins washed away by the blood of Christ. Then, he engaged heart and life, walking according to the Spirit. Thus, there was now “no condemnation.”

When challenged about their spiritual welfare, some will say: “I am a good person. I try to do what the Bible says. I keep the Ten Commandments.”

In these claims, no reference is made to Christ. No remembrance of the Cross, and no praise for the grace of God. Some people simply depend upon what they do. No interests in repentance and baptism, to participate in the blessings of Christ. No involvement in a local church with other Christians. Justification, from their perspective, based on their efforts to be good.

For them, it is as if Jesus never died for them or died needlessly (see Gal. 2:21). No choice is made to repent, to be baptized into Christ, to receive the forgiveness He died for sinners to have. They resist the appeal of being washed in the blood of the Lamb. They go from day to day, year to year,

depending upon what they do, but without a personal response to the gospel of Christ. Thinking they can handle the sin problem by themselves.

Paul lived that way for a time. A militant Pharisee, not just indifferent to Christ, but defiant. Yet, attempting to maintain good standing with God based on his own righteousness. He describes this in Romans 7 and in Philippians 3.

In Philippians three he calls it – **confidence in the flesh.**

Listen to what he wrote in Philippians 3.

¹Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

²Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! ³For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, ⁴though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

⁷But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

It is clear, as Paul writes about his own experience, that for a time before his obedience to the gospel, he lived his life based on “confidence in the flesh.” As the Pharisees interpreted the Mosaic Code, Paul was “blameless.”

But there came a time when Paul became aware of his own condemnation; that without the pardon from God in Christ, he was lost. I believe he is documenting that awareness of conscience in the later part of Romans 7. He

said things like: “I am carnal...sold under sin...sin dwells in me...I am in captivity to the law of sin which is in my members...O wretched man that I am.”

These were the emotions of this lost soul, trying to keep the law but failing; now aware of his own condemnation. In Romans 7:24, he accounts for his despair: “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” The answer comes back, “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

There may be a lot of good things you do. You may be generous. You may carefully avoid certain kinds of immorality, crime and dishonesty. You may have a positive mental attitude. It may well be, there is a commendable work ethic you have pursued all your life. You may shun immorality, oppose evil and talk about God favorably. **But without Christ, you are lost; you stand condemned before God.**

If you have ever sinned once, you need Christ. God is a merciful, forgiving God. But the forgiveness God offers is not automatic; nor is it conferred because of your good record.

God forgives sin in Christ. So when Paul personally discovered the condemnation of his own sin, there was no where to go but to Christ! He needed more than what the Mosaic Law provided (a provisional forgiveness). The Pharisees didn't have access to God. When Paul personally discovered the condemnation of his own sin, there was no where to go but to Christ. And today, when we read Romans seven, and keep reading into chapter eight, that truth cannot be missed, if we are honest with the text.

Our text says: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”

Once you realize your sinful condition, and the condemnation it brings, there is only one place where there is “no condemnation.” There is only one plan of salvation.

The plan is not for me to solve the sin problem by doing better, though I should. The plan of salvation is not for me to just start doing good things. The plan of salvation is not for me to just ignore my past sin. **The plan is, to**

accept the salvation God provides in Christ. To hear, believe and obey the gospel, in order to receive the forgiveness in Christ I cannot have anywhere else. The plan is, to seek relief in Christ, so that even though I have sinned, in Christ I am not condemned.

As a sinner, I stand convicted and condemned. But now, in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation.

If you are a sinner, just doing better will not save you; you must be baptized into Christ; in Him, there is no condemnation. This is God's plan.

I want to show you how this is developed in the book of Romans; and I want us to consider three things:

The cause of condemnation
The removal of condemnation
The personal participation of the sinner

First, the cause of condemnation. Sin is the cause. This is established by Paul, beginning with Romans 1:18, and continuing through Rom. 3:23. And the point is simple. We have a problem. The problem is sin; we have disobeyed God. Paul begins to affirm this and prove this in Rom. 1:18, and he concludes, in Rom. 3:23 – that all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God. Sin, personally chosen, is the cause of condemnation. If you have ever committed one sin. If you know, you are living in sin today, that's the cause of condemnation.

Second, consider the removal or remedy. It is the atoning work of Jesus Christ. At the center of the book of Romans is Christ; who He is, and the giving of Himself for us. Everything is connected to Him. The epistle begins with this statement about Christ:

¹Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God ²which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, ³concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, ⁴and declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. ⁵Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, ⁶among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

Right from the start, the apostle Paul puts Christ at the center of everything. Then, at the end of the epistle He is there:

²⁵Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began ²⁶but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—²⁷to God, alone wise, *be* glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

Paul begins and ends the letter to the Romans – with these statements exalting Jesus Christ. And everything in between is an explanation or application of the truth about Jesus Christ, as the Savior who died for us.

So, once I realize that I’m condemned by my own sin, the next step for me to take is – act out of trust in God, to receive the forgiveness Christ died for me to have.

So there is the cause of condemnation, which is sin. There is the remedy God provides in Jesus Christ.

Third, we must not leave out the personal participation of the sinner. Let me carefully explain what I mean by “personal participation.”

Sin causes condemnation. Jesus gave His life to provide the removal of condemnation, but **personal participation is required!**

Being saved by the blood of Christ is not automatic. Jesus doesn’t twist our arms and compel us to be forgiven. We must personally participate; we must receive and keep what is offered. Trust and obey.

There is something the sinner must do! In order to receive the benefit and have the condemnation removed. And, all through the book of Romans, we are given instruction about this participation. And two things are prominently connected – faith and obedience. Romans 1:5 – “obedience to the faith.”

But listen to this, found in Romans 6:17,18.

¹⁷But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. ¹⁸And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Now observe with care – what they were, in contrast to what they became. They were “slaves of sin” before obeying the gospel. They became “slaves of righteousness.” How did they make that transition? How did these “slaves of sin” become “slaves of righteousness.” They heard the preaching of Jesus Christ, and they obeyed. They “obeyed from the heart.”

Sin condemns. Christ died to remove the condemnation. Once I realize I’m a sinner, I can participate in that benefit, when my faith in Christ becomes active in obedience. My personal participation is required, initially – then after baptism and until death, walking in newness of life.

The Christian can say, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”

In a moment, I’m going to take you through the steps, in obedience to the gospel of Christ. And the appeal will be made to everyone who hasn’t been baptized, to escape the condemnation of sin – by entering into Christ.

An Ideal Life
Ps. 128
Jay Horsley

1 How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways.

2 When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, You will be happy and it will be well with you.

3 Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine, Within your house, Your children like olive plants Around your table.

4 Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the LORD.

5 The LORD bless you from Zion, And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

6 Indeed, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!

The rewards of God for righteousness are not all consigned to the next life. The true and righteous servant of God will be abundantly rewarded. There is ultimately, and most surely, the future afterlife. The spiritual progress one makes in knowledge and purity of heart is also a sure reward. But there yet remains the possibility of vast blessings of a more temporal nature. I say that these are a possibility because the actions of evil men may rob us of all physical things, including life itself, or one may live in a time and place that is under the curse of judgment from on high due to widespread evil. But in normal circumstances the faithful will be able to construct lives that are not only in accordance with the will of God, but also richly blessed.

The Blessings In An Ideal Life

Fruitful Labor in Contentment. It is the blessing of God that we can enjoy the fruits of our labor. From the very beginning man has worked to this end. Work is not a curse, but is good for us. Certainly the curse has greatly increased the difficulty of our work, but work and its fruit are for our good. A man in a decent home with enough good things in it is content – if he worked to build it and paid for it with the wages earned by his own labor. Heirs of fortunes are very often lost souls, especially if they never do work of their own to add to or preserve what they have received. But the man of God who works patiently, gratefully receiving and building industriously in small increases, will not only do well, but will be rightly content in his accomplishments.

When Solomon considered all of life (*“under the sun”* as it is styled in the book of Ecclesiastes), he concluded the same thing. *“Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward.”* (**Eccl. 5:18**) The ideal life does not necessarily consist of the things that the world thinks is important; rather, it consists of work blessed by God, no matter what the net worth of the estate a man leaves behind.

Husband, Wife, Children and Grandchildren. The blessings of “Home, Sweet Home” are given by God. The family was the first institution God gave to man. Very quickly (probably on the first day of man's existence) God said, *“It is not good for the man to be alone.”* (**Gen.2:18**) The coming of man and woman together is still *“too wonderful for me”* (**Prov. 30:19,20**)

and “*a prudent wife is from the LORD.*” (Prov. 19:14)

The children that result from this union are a blessing of God. This passage calls up the imagery of the olive plant. The olive plant would produce new shoots all around it. The new shoots were produced and sustained by the same root. This common image is used to picture parents surrounded by their children at home around their table.

“*Behold, children are a gift of the LORD.*” (Ps. 127:3) They are a blessing to us because they call forth in us our best affections and purest feelings. Here is a most sacred charge to uphold - to properly rear “*in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*” (Eph. 6:4) those whom the Lord has given us. This endeavor is not for their benefit alone; it also makes the parents better. The proper patient rearing of children, with regard for God, so fundamentally improves us that one is not qualified to lead the people of God without having successfully and fully done it. “*He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity.*” (1 Tim. 3:4)

God does not picture us building a solitary lonely home, or even being in one in our older years. Our children should recognize the great blessings they had in their home, grow up, and strive to produce the same thing for their children. The grandparents will have the double blessing of seeing yet another generation progressing in the Lord. Raising another faithful generation is part of the return children make to their parents.

Spiritual Progress of God’s People. David’s description does not leave out the spiritual things. David spoke of “*bless[ing] you from Zion*” and “*the prosperity of Jerusalem*” during the course of our lives. When God’s people live a life that He can bless, they and their religious institutions (Israel in the Old Testament, the church in the New) will be greatly blessed. Fellowship with others who are striving to have blessed lives is great encouragement to do the same, and builds up the whole people.

Achieving The Ideal Life Through Fear Of The Lord

What a life this would be. A fruitful, contented life at work, at home and at church. What more could one rightly ask for? This is what we’re all to seek. Yes, this is the ideal and we may fall short of it, but this is not an unobtainable utopia. We can confidently direct our lives toward it.

The fear of the Lord is the very root of the ideal life. It is so basic and important that it is actually stated twice in this short psalm, (verse **1** and **4**) The fear of the Lord is reverence, dread to offend, anxiety to please, complete submission and obedience. In other places is it said to be “*the beginning of wisdom,*” (Ps. **111:10**; Prov. **9:10**) and “*clean, enduring forever.*” (Ps. **19:9**) His compassion (Ps. **103:13**) and His lovingkindness (Ps. **103:17**) and His favor (Ps. **147:11**) are on those that fear Him.

This fear of the Lord is very practical. It will cause us to walk in the way of God. When we live the right way, the way that God directs, good things flow as a matter of course. So the “*the fear of the LORD leads to life,*” (Prov. **19:23**) and is “*a fountain of life*” (Prov. **14:27**) which “*prolongs life.*” (Prov. **10:27**) If the life we want is the life He wants for us, then our faithful labor and His continual blessing will cause it to happen for us.

Do you want a life like this? Then consider the admonitions of David: “*You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield,*” (Ps **115:11**) and “*O fear the LORD, you His saints; For to those who fear Him, there is no want.*” (Ps. **34:9**) Walking in the fear of the Lord is very blessed life indeed. In fact, its almost ideal.

Victory Crown
Special Topic
By Jon W. Quinn

~~~~~

He was the best. It was a long grueling race but he finished first. It was now the award ceremony, and he bowed before the magistrate as the crowds cheered. The trumpets sounded and the magistrate placed a woven garland of olive branches on his head as a victory crown. It was his moment of glory. He had worked long and hard for this. He had endured aches and pains, heat and exhaustion. It was quite an achievement. It was not the value of the material out of which his crown was made that had made it such a coveted prize, but what it symbolized to everyone. It was a crown of victory.

He led his victorious troops through his home capital city. The general and his army were greeted by cheering throngs and the victory fanfare of trumpets as he headed the long column of warriors. The enemy had been vanquished and the captured standards of the enemy were on display, but the standards of the victors waved high in the air. The general approached the viewing stand of the emperor and knelt as the crowds cheered. The emperor placed a woven garland of olive branches on his head as a victory crown. It was his moment of glory. His leadership and tactics, combined with the courage and might of his army, had won the battle.

The Greeks had two different words for “crown.” There were two vastly different kinds of crowns. The “diadema” was a crown of rule, such as a king would wear. “stephanos” was a victory crown, such as would be worn in the two examples we noted. The Bible uses both of these terms in a metaphorical sense. For example, it uses “diadema” to refer to Jesus' rule over His spiritual kingdom and “stephanos” to refer to His victory.

### **The Most Unusual Victory Crown of All**

A Crown of Thorns probably constituted the most unusual victory crown of all time. It was the crown placed on Jesus' head by the soldiers shortly before the crucifixion (Matthew 27:27-31). It is interesting that Jesus would be dressed and mocked as a king, but then the word for “crown” which the Bible uses would not be “diadema” but “stephanos.” See the text (John 19:1-6). The brutal fact is that not only is Jesus' kingship being mocked, but also His opportunity for victory and success. Everyone believes that battle is over and Jesus has lost (Matthew 27:41-43).

But Jesus won many victories, one after the other, on that Friday and the following week end. He fulfilled prophecies, including the most difficult to be fulfilled prophecies of all time (Isaiah 53:4-6; 10-12). He also accomplished His mission for which He had been sent to this world (John 12:27-28; Matthew 20:28). He defeated death (John 10:17,18; Revelation 1:17,18).

This is one of the reasons why I believe Jesus is coming again, and that He will call forth the dead, and take the faithful with Him. He always wins. Even when everything seems lost, He wins the victory. The soldiers meant to mock and torment Him by giving Him a “victory crown” of thorns.

But soon, He would be wearing a heavenly crown, following His victory which they, nor any other enemy could stop. Note the apocalyptic, visionary description of the victory of Christ over His enemies: “Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, 'Come.' I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.” (Revelation 6:1-2).

### **An Imperishable Crown**

The apostle Paul uses a victory crown for winning a race as a parallel to running and winning the race of life (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). The English words “wreath” (NASB) and “crown” (KJV) are used to describe this prize. The crown is made of a wreath as earlier discussed. It is both a crown and a wreath.

How long would the victory crown of a winning athlete remain fresh and green? Not very long. Soon it would shrivel, and the winner might perhaps place the remnants in a container where they would be saved. But the prize for which we reach is eternal. It is based on God's own eternal word (1 Peter 1:22-25).

What is your crown? What do you want to be successful at? For many, it is riches, but riches soon fade in glory. (James 1:10-12). There is a victory which can last forever.

Paul also says “Run in such a way as you may win” (vs. 24). It is possible for a runner to lose! How does one ensure victory? By exercising self control (vs. 25). He has a goal he is aiming for (vs. 26). He practices self discipline (vs. 27) knowing he could be disqualified if he does not. To preach/teach the truth but then not to live by it will result in losing the race and the imperishable crown! (1 Peter 5:4)

### **Our “People” Victory Crown**

The friends, brothers, sisters, loved ones that each one of us have been able to influence for good become another type of victory crown (Philippians 4:1). Those with whom you serve the Lord and whom you encourage become your victory crown as they grow in the faith. We become one another's crowns; it is a very special prize, or reward, to see someone you love do well in the faith. It is a reason to rejoice (Philippians 4:4).

The selfish and conceited will not see nor understand this concept. They are only happy when they receive good things, not when they give. Its all about them. That does not depict at all the attitude of Christ nor of His people (Philippians 2:1-5). And this crown will never be more radiant than at the coming of the Lord Jesus when you see those you have helped and been helped by along the way rise with you to meet Jesus as the faithful are wondrously changed and begin to share the glory of the Son (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20). There will be redeemed people making up your crown, won't there be?

### **A Crown of Righteousness**

For running a righteous race Jesus will award us with the crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Paul, as he wrote these words, was himself nearing life's finish line. Though he would be put to death, he did not see it as a defeat at all. He knew better. His race would end with an unending victory.

Always keep this goal, or aim, in mind. The high calling of God includes receiving the crown from Jesus. The Book of Hebrews tells us to "fix your eyes upon Jesus" and we need to, when temptation mounts, or when tragedy strikes, or difficulties appear ready to overwhelm. Focus on the race's end and run with endurance. Don't grow weary. (Hebrews 12:1-3). And what happens if we ? Don't drop out of the race. Deal with it, then forget it and press on (Philippians 3:12-15).

### **A Crown of Life**

For the faithful, even death brings life (Revelation 2:10). Who has the right to make such a promise? And on what basis? It is none other than Jesus, the Son of God, who has just been described in the context as "The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life" (Revelation 2:7,8). Eternal life itself is a victory crown. Death loses its victory in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:25,26; 55-58).

"Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." (JAMES 1:12) To those that persevere; to those that love Him; to those "loving God" means keeping His commandments, and it

this kind of faith that overcomes the world. (1 John 5:3,4). Jesus suffered death so we might live eternally (Hebrews 9:15). He is our salvation!

A victory crown plays a major role in discussing the victory faith brings. From the cruel crown of thorns placed on Jesus' head in jest to the eternal victory crown He now wears to the one He will one day give to His people, the message is the same. As the old hymn proclaims, "O Victory in Jesus, My Savior forever. He sought me, and bought me, with His redeeming blood." That's it... so we could have victory. So we could overcome the world. So we could rejoice forever with crowns that do not fade.

### *The Plan of Salvation*

*By Jon W. Quinn*

~

#### **Plan #1**

Announced by the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to new believers in Christ who asked what they must do:

"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (ACTS 2:38)

#### **Plan #2**

On the back page of a tract, sinners were urged to pray this prayer to be saved. This prayer is not found in the Bible; nor were alien sinners commanded to pray for their forgiveness.

*The Sinner's Prayer:*

*"O' Lord, I accept that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now accept Him into my heart as Lord and Savior asking for your mercy and forgiveness in His name. Amen."*

The editors of Expository Files are happy with plan #1 and thankful to the God of all grace for it. We cannot recommend Plan

#2 at all, but will change our minds when this prayer can be shown to us in the Bible.

## Final Page 11.4

### Notes From Galatians Three

{Warren E. Berkley}

Here is the issue Paul is addressing in Galatians. After the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, the gospel was preached. Sinners who heard the gospel and believed in Christ were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). It was not necessary to re-institute the religious ritual of circumcision as a condition of salvation or test of fellowship. The apostles made no law that anybody needed to practice the religion of Judaism, in whole or part. Christians were not obligated to keep the works of the law of Moses.

But there were certain men who went from place to place telling Christians they needed to keep the works of the Law of Moses (Acts 15:1). These men were preaching *another gospel* – and the Galatians were deserting God, moving in the direction of this false teaching (Gal. 1:6-9). The apostle Paul is responding to that problem with teaching from God (Gal. 1:12).

**Part of Paul's argument was, to challenge his readers to better understand the promises made to Abraham.** God promised Abraham, "In you all the nations shall be blessed," (Gal. 3:8, Gen. 12:3). Circumcision and the Law of Moses came *after* this promise, and did not annul or change it. "And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect," (Gal. 3:17). This may be one of the greatest steps you can take to better understand the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament; grasping the significance of the promise made to Abraham and the fulfillment of that blessing in Christ.

"But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe." (Verse 22).

Here is the problem and solution in one sentence! **The problem**: "everyone under sin." **The solution**: "faith in Jesus Christ." The solution is not found

in Judaism, or in keeping the Law of Moses. The solution is, to activate your faith in Christ. Every time the gospel is heard, believed and obeyed – the promise made to Abraham is fulfilled; ***the promise that God would bless all the families of the earth (Gen. 12:3).***