

# Expository Files

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### Front Page

#### **Grief: Our Steady Unwelcomed Companion**

*Warren E. Berkley*

Early in my life I knew grief only as a word. When my father died I was compelled by that loss to begin to know the meaning, though only in a limited way as a youngster. A few years later my first wife passed away, and that event brought me to another level of personal knowledge. Yet even now I cannot claim any expertise or proficiency. I usually cannot supply satisfactory answers about why bad things happen, but can only commend trust in God.

Seems like I always know people who are going through a loss, or there is some anticipated loss in my circle of friends and brethren. Thus, grief is our steady unwelcomed companion. There are perspectives that serve us well, though not remove the thing.

“Grief can be your servant,” someone said. Without question, in our suffering we can learn compassion, find time to think more of our God, better appreciate the suffering of Christ, and perhaps grief can generate some gratitude for our present wellbeing. But saying all of this – in the moment of impact – doesn’t help much.

Benjamin Disraeli said, "Grief is the agony of an instant; the indulgence of grief, the blunder of a life." I think he is right. Embrace it for a time, speak your sorrow, but don't let grief become baggage you carry or pity you beg.

Another thing, earthly grief is preparatory: "For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory behind all measure...," (2 Cor. 4:17)

**Paul's Wake-up Call**  
**Eph. 5:14-18**  
**Warren E. Berkley**

We have an expression that has become common: "a wake-up call." I cannot give good historic information about the origin. But it might have come to pass years ago (before travel alarms and cell phones) when people stayed in a motel and needed the front desk to call them in the morning. {Wikipedia says - a telephone service provided by lodging establishments.}

There is another, arguably greater, significance we may assign to the expression.

When something happens to you, or you witness something that sets off some needed internal awareness, we may call that a "wake-up call." I've had friends who suffered unexpected heart attacks or came dear death in an automobile accident, and spoke of the event as a "wake-up call."

**Problem is, we may just be sobered momentarily.** After a few days, the impact of the event has diminished and old habits of life resume. We are awakened and focused, but get over it quickly.

As a Bible reader and student, you don't have to wait for events in time to be sobered or examine yourself. Daily Bible reading, for example, will bring into your awareness many events and provocative statements that can wake you up and cause serious re-examination and commitment.

Here's an example:

*Therefore He says:*  
*"Awake, you who sleep,*

*Arise from the dead,  
And Christ will give you light.”*

*See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

*Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.*  
**Eph. 4:14-18**

## **WAKE-UP**

One way to understand conversion is: *hearing the gospel*, you wake up, see what sin is doing to you and walk away from it. Because of Jesus Christ you can do that. You can wake up, see what the problem is and **let Christ lead you to a new alertness and wisdom**. That’s a scriptural way to understand conversion.

But Paul is writing to the Christians in Ephesus, to people already converted. He uses this statement apparently quoted either from Scripture or a hymn Christians used. It is, from whatever writing, ultimately from God.

This says to Christians: **Once you let Christ wake you out of sin, you must not fall back into the slumber of that old way of life**. Once you get your wake-up call, don’t hit the snooze button. Christians need to be warned, admonished, and sometimes awakened from their nap. *More specifically . . .*

**PAY ATTENTION: “see then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise.”**

Look at these three words: **“see,” “walk”** and **“wise.”** This is about paying attention to your conduct so that there is consistent wise living. You have to watch where you are going, or you will fall down. This is simply paying attention.

I know you have seen this: *people being baptized, then not following through with determination to be grow and be faithful*. The problem is: you cannot be a Christian without focus, without attention on your manner of life. This is a call for wise living, and that requires that we pay attention to where we are going.

Look at that word that we are not used to: “Circumspectly.” Think of the word “circle” and “inspection.” This is about **looking all around**. To maintain a high level of awareness is essential to godly living. To stay awake in your service to the Lord **it is crucial to inspect yourself . . . look all around**.

Look for the approach of temptation.

Look carefully at your inner attitude.

Look at peer influences.

Look at how people can influence you, for  
good or evil.

Look at your Bible reading habits.

Look at your attendance.

Look at your involvement in prayer.

Look at your use of money and time and  
your duties in the home.

Walk with your eyes open – alert to everything around you. *Being awake spiritually also means . . .*

**Wise Time Management:** “redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

Wise living is the healthy combination of many kinds of good choices, consistently repeated. You begin with the choice to become a Christian – obeying the gospel. After baptism, through the discipline of the Word – you learn to make good choices, consistently, about a variety of things. Wise living is the healthy combination of many kinds of good choices, consistently repeated.

Good choices about relationships.

Good choices about money.

Good choices about your response to  
pain and disappointment.

**And here – good choices about your use of  
time.**

One issue that seems to destroy us sometimes is, we don't stop and give sufficient thought to how we use what God gives us, like time. Time, properly conceived, is a gift from God and if we squander it – if our habits amount to wasting time or using time primarily for selfish purposes – **we have failed to act as Paul directs in his wake-up call.**

Redeem the time - - That is, consider time to be a precious commodity. Buy it, by faithful use and good management of your days.

One of my favorite writers is John Maxwell who says, “If you take life more slowly than your energy level is capable of, you can become lazy. If you continually run at a pace faster than you are capable, you can burn out. You need to find your balance.” That requires thought, prayer, practice and daily discipline, to redeem the time. Wise living is the healthy combination of many kinds of good choices, consistently repeated. Redeem the time, because the days are evil.

*Likewise, spiritual awareness requires that we ...*

### **Understand The Lord's Will**

You just cannot be alert, awake and active as a Christian if you are not seeking to understand the will of the Lord. “Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

Notice how two things are placed in opposition to one another: being unwise, or understanding what the will of the Lord is. Here's what can be argued, based on this – If you are “unwise,” as the term is used here – **it is because you do not understand what the will of the Lord is.** The other side of that – the positive side is – **if you are seeking to understand the will of Lord and engage in His will – to whatever extent that is your purpose – YOU ARE ABLE TO BE WISE IN YOUR DAILY LIFE.**

Many who fall asleep after becoming Christians have not sought diligently to understand the will of the Lord. That led to their slumber.

Absence or negligence leads to spiritual illness, slumber and death. In the absence of Bible reading, neglecting Bible classes, staying home when Bible preaching is offered, then gradually forming these bad habits over time – **you cannot maintain good spiritual health, and cannot be wide awake in your discipleship.** The grace of God becomes of no avail.

## **Be Sober**

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.”

Let’s use this approach ~ there is an assumption, we are consumers . . . or I might argue, we are ingesters. We will ingest something. We will take in something.

Simple: **Let it be what the Spirit offers, not what the wine bottle offers!** If we must consume, ingest or drink – If we must live under the influence of something, let it be spiritual, not alcoholic.

Drunkenness is forbidden all through Scripture, but isn’t it often true – **where something is forbidden, there is an alternative that is better.** So, to maintain a good, high level of spiritual awareness – to stay awake about God don’t get drunk – instead, fill yourself with all the Holy Spirit offers (see Gal. 5:22-23).

Do you want to remain alert – awake and alive as a Christian?

Here is our wake-up call:

### **Eph. 5:14-18.**

*Therefore He says:*

*“Awake, you who sleep,*

*Arise from the dead,*

*And Christ will give you light.”*

*See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

*Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.*  
**Eph. 4:14-18**

### **Today, Matt. 6:34** **Jay Taylor**

The word “today” should be an important word to the child of God. Yesterday becomes part of the past with every sunset and tomorrow is not a guarantee. Yet, many believers consume hours dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. Their focus should be on “today.”

During the great mountain sermon, Jesus concluded His teaching about worry by saying, *“therefore do not worry about tomorrow...”* (Matthew 6:34). James adds that it is boastful and arrogant to assume the existence of unborn tomorrows. He then reminds us that we *“do not know what will happen tomorrow”* (James 4:14-16). We quickly see that today is the most important day of our lives. All of our focus and energy should be directed to the present day. We need to live our lives in such a manner that realizes that eternity could begin today! Eternity could begin today. What should I be today? What should my life consist of? What should I do with my time today?

Today, I will live with an awareness of God. How long has it been? Hours? Days? Weeks? When was the last time you thought about God? Today, I do not want to just have a passing thought of Him. I want to live in such a way that I am aware of Him at all times. The godly person acknowledges God in all that he does. He sees God in creation. He speaks to God through prayer.

He reads God’s word. He loves God. He recognizes God as the source of every good and perfect gift. God comes first in all his/her thoughts and actions. Today, I will be pure in heart. We are surrounded by attitudes, thoughts, and actions that are not pure. The child of God must flee from them. Jesus said that the pure in heart will see God (Matthew 5:8). That is what we desire and live for. We want to see God and spend eternity in His presence. I must be pure in heart if that is my desire. Therefore, today, I will set nothing wicked before my eyes (Ps. 101:3). Today, I will set my mind on things above (Col. 3:2). Today, I

will think on those things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely and of good report (Phil. 4:8). Today, I will resist temptation. Today, I will hate sin.

Today, I will teach someone about Jesus Christ. God has blessed me with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Today, I will bring that message of hope to others. The group of people we refer to as "others" are all around us. They are next door and down the road. We see them at the grocery store every week. They deliver our mail and pick up the trash. I want to bring others to Jesus Christ. Today, I will pray for courage and wisdom to do that. Today, I will look forward to Christ's return. He is coming again! What a thrilling thought! We will be like Him and see Him as He is on that day when He is revealed (1 John. 3:2). Eternity will begin on that day. Today, I will live like Him and anticipate His return. I will be compassionate, kind, merciful, gracious, slow to anger, touched over the infirmities of others, ready to rejoice, and loving. What will you do today?

## **Tears at Night-A Shout of Joy in the Morning**

**"...His favor is for a lifetime ."**

**Psalm 30:1-12**

**By Jon W. Quinn**

Everything seemed bleak during the early part of David's life as his enemies were many; including the national enemies of his people as well as personal enemies such as Saul, the king. David continued to express confidence and hope in God. It is that undying confidence that is the rock of our hope. God is good. God is love. God is just, and He will ultimately prevail, as will His faithful children. In life, in death and in life again.

For His anger is but for a moment,

His favor is for a lifetime;

Weeping may last for the night,



But a shout of joy comes in the morning.

(Psalm 30:5)

One very strong point of this verse is that trials are temporary and can never bring defeat if we will remain faithful unto our God. One day, the last enemy will be conquered, the night will fade forever, and eternal day will dawn. David, the inspired writer and prophet captures so well the principle of enduring faith and the victory it will bring. We always need to be mindful of this lesson in our daily lives, especially during times of crises. This confidence will make us strong, and keep us calm, and brighten otherwise dark days.

### **Bad Times Do Not Bring Defeat to the Faithful (Palm 30:1-3)**

In time of need, when there is no other solution, or even when there are several, the first priority is to call upon the Lord.

I will extol You, O LORD, for You have lifted me up,

And have not let my enemies rejoice over me.

2 O LORD my God,

I cried to You for help, and You healed me.

3 O LORD, You have brought up my soul from Sheol;

You have kept me alive, that I would not go down to the pit.

(Psalm 30:1-3)

The sinner who desires to come to God must call upon the name of Christ, the Lord (Acts 2:21; 4:12; 2:36-38; 22:16). This response to the gospel is trusting in God to assist and lift us out of the most critical distress of all! (Colossians 2:12). That is always the first order of business for those who have not yet come to God to be saved by grace through faith.

In all of life's distresses, walking with God gives confidence and hope. This is true when the distress is caused by the wicked, cruel and unjust (Hebrews 13:6) and is true even when they successfully inflict great evil (Romans 8:31-39). Faith in Jesus is our source of confidence (John 11:25,26). The less faith we have, the less confident we are. Do not cast away confidence by neglecting the building of a strong spiritual foundation (Hebrews 10:35-39).

### **The Support of My Brethren**

(Psalm 30:4)

A part of developing an enduring spiritual foundation of which we have just spoken comes from standing shoulder to shoulder with other committed brethren and sharing strength with strength (Hebrews 10:23-25).

Sing praise to the LORD, you His godly ones,

And give thanks to His holy name. (Psalm 30:4)

Your faithful and supportive words are needed by your brothers and sisters, but only when accompanied by faithful and supportive actions will they be beneficial (Colossians 3:16, 17). No sorrow experienced here can diminish at all the glory and joy we will experience in eternity as faithful children of God. Jesus is coming again. His reward will be more than enough to make it right. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

### **If The Lord is With You in Your Life**

(Psalm 30:6-9)

The Lord's presence in our lives is based on our inviting Him to be there. There was a time even in David's life when God was distant due to David's own actions:

6 Now as for me, I said in my prosperity,

"I will never be moved."

7 O LORD, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong;

You hid Your face, I was dismayed.

8 To You, O LORD, I called,

And to the Lord I made supplication:

9 "What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit?

Will the dust praise You? Will it declare Your faithfulness? (Psalm 30:6-9)

But David returned to his God. Every Christian should live so as to always draw closer to God; and failing that, seek His favor yet again as we repent and return to Him. It is a dismaying thing to live and die without God. We simply are not equipped to deal with life and death and eternity without God and it is dangerous to accept the lie that we are.

### **Eternal Victory to the Faithful**

(Psalm 30:10-12)

The Lord is gracious and will help His people. Trust Him even when, and especially when, the distress seems great (2 Corinthians 1:8,9).

10 "Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me;

O LORD, be my helper."

11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;

You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness,

12 That my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent.

O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.

(Psalm 30:10-12)

Our God's purpose is to get us through every hardship here to be home with Him. We live in a fallen world and as a result there is evil all around, but faith overcomes the world. God has wonderful plans for His people, eternal joy well worth thanking Him for today, and tomorrow, and eternally. We now walk by faith, one day faith will become sight for those loyal to the Son of God. Don't miss that day!

## **You Sinned...AGAIN??**

**Luke 17:1-4**

**By Allen Dvorak**

Jesus spoke of the inevitability of “offenses,” pronouncing a woe against those who commit such offenses (Luke 17:1-2). As serious as the consequence of sinning against others, Jesus warned the disciples about the awesome responsibility of men to forgive sins committed against them (Luke 17:3-4).

“Take heed to yourselves,” He cautioned them, “If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him” (Luke 17:3-4).

Seven times in a day?? Has someone really repented if they are sinning seven times in a day? Of course, the passage in Luke doesn't say that the sinner was committing the same sin seven times in a day, but the passage raises questions about repetitious sin and the implications of repentance.

Repentance is literally “a change of mind” (Thayer/Vine). Thayer adds, “especially the change of mind of those who have begun to abhor their errors

and misdeeds, and have determined to enter upon a better course of life...” The Scriptures distinguishes between sorrow for sin, repentance and the fruits which repentance produces (2 Corinthians 7:10; Matthew 3:8; Acts 26:20).

In a perfect world, the sinner who repents of a particular sin, i.e., decides that he will not commit that sin, would not ever commit that sin again. However, God recognizes that man does not carry out his intentions in a perfect way (“The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” – Matthew 26:41b). In Romans 7:13-24, Paul pictured the struggle that man faces to do what he knows to be right.

The apostle John conceded that Christians would continue to sin occasionally (1 John 1:8-10), even though they have repented of sin when they obeyed the gospel (e.g., Acts 2:38). He also affirms, however, that Christians may not live in sin, i.e., “walk” in darkness (1 John 1:6-7; 3:6-9). The Christian who continues to sin without sorrow for sin and repentance is not “dead to sin” (see Romans 6:1-4).

Clearly God intends for Christians to grow spiritually (2 Peter 1:5-8; 3:18). We are provided divine help in resisting temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13) and expected to resist temptation (1 Peter 5:9; James 4:7-8).

Conquering sin entirely is a lifetime project and even determined Christians will falter at times. As our desire to please God becomes stronger and our ability to discern between right and wrong grows, our repentance will become more perfect and we will sin less.

## **6 WAYS TO HANDLE TOUGH TIMES**

**John Mulligan**

**{used by permission}**

Without a doubt, the United States is immersed in stressful times. Uncertain job markets. Declining housing markets. Unstable stock market. I do not need to elaborate or exaggerate. Tough times call for people of faith to rise to the occasion of the challenge. They need to think differently and act differently. Here are 6 ways people of faith can survive, and even thrive, during difficult times:

- **MINIMIZE CONTACT WITH FAITHLESS VOICES** -The news media, whether newspapers, television, or internet news outlets, are not voices of faith. The media is driven by the desire for viewership in order to generate advertisement. Bad news, especially fear driven news, attracts viewers. An old adage in the news industry that determines the headlines is *“if it bleeds, it leads”*. Truth, faith, or even thoughtful reflection are rarely welcome or even acknowledged in any newscast. Try turning off the TV. Put down the paper. Restrict your diet of internet news. Within days, life will become much more peaceful. Go ahead, give it a try. Perhaps the words of Isaiah to King Hezekiah’s officials, who heard the fear mongering of Rabshakeh, are most needed now—***“Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard...” (Isa. 37:6)***
- **EXERCISE CAUTION AROUND FEARFUL PEOPLE** –Sometimes the problem is not the news media but the people who take in the news media. They may be someone we are related to, or has close contact with us, and therefore has our attention. I have encountered church members far more familiar with words from the nightly newscast than with the words of Scripture. If family or friends are consumed with fear, or a “sky is falling” mentality, it is hard to not to be caught up in their frenzy. Create a loving but healthy separation between yourself and the fearful ones in your life. Exercise a spiritual form of “tough love” with them. Remember what the Apostle Paul told Timothy, ***“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of sound mind.” (II Tim. 1:7)***

- **GET INVOLVED IN AREAS OF SERVICE** –Fear contributes to cocooning. When scared, we are tempted to stay inside our homes, consume ourselves with movies, or become self absorbed in many other ways. Instead of withdrawing in times of trouble, we need to move outside of ourselves. Get out and visit a convalescent home. Volunteer at school. Help out at a homeless shelter. These opportunities of service will put proper perspective on our problems, and provide us with a healthy Spirit-driven distraction (Gal.5:22). Serving others often works as God’s psychiatry in a life filled with worry. Fear will have a hard time finding room in our lives if our lives a filled with blessing others. Remember, ***“...It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).***
- **SEE ALL FEARS AS A DOOR TO FAITH** –Tough times show us how little we can control circumstances outside of our lives. The housing market, stock market, or the job market is out of the ability of one single life to influence. Our lack of control helps us see who is in control. There is One who not only is in control, but also is the One who can change all things. Know that the Lord not only allows difficult times, He also uses them to spiritually form His chosen people. James wrote, ***“...the testing of your faith produces patience” (Jas. 1:2)***
- **TAKE YOUR FEARS TO THE ONE WHO TRANSCENDS ALL FEARS** –We were not designed to keep our concerns and fears inside ourselves. Our Creator wants those who trust in Him to take their fears to Him. The Apostle Peter tells us ***“casting all your care upon Him, for he cares for you.” (I Pet.5:7)*** Turning our fears over to God in prayer relieves us of the overwhelming burdens we cannot bear alone. Instead of constantly “stressing out” before family, friends, and co-workers, try spending time in prayer to God. Try praying first before getting on the telephone and communicating your anxiety to loved ones. Wait and see what happens when you pray first. Wait for the peace that ***“...passes all understanding...” (Phil. 4:7).***

- **ALLOW TOUGH TIMES TO REFOCUS YOUR LIFE** –When doors are shut in our lives, or what we are comfortable with becomes threatened, another reality enters. We are soon forced to think outside our comfort zone or think beyond the little world of sameness we have created for ourselves. Job loss, or even relocation, can be portals to a life beyond what we had previously imagined possible. Good times often make us content and complacent. Tough times expand us, often taking us to new and better places. Be open to the possibilities. Paul wrote the Philippians these words, “*...the things which have happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel.*” **(Phil. 1:12)** Should not we be able to say the same in our stressful circumstances?

How will we handle tough times? We can live by faith or fear. Fear must be seen as a dark, debilitating, and unacceptable choice. Choose faith over fear and see where the God who made the universe can take your life. Let the church of God rise to the challenge before us and be a beacon of light to a frightened country!

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# 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:

Acts 2:36-38

*"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

## 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.

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## **A Modern Example of an Ancient Warning**

**By Jon W. Quinn**

The Scriptures say, “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.” (2 Tim. 3:1-4). The Holy Spirit guided the apostle Paul to write this to warn how far human society can fall without God.

It is difficult to imagine how anyone could take issue with these words. The days of which Paul wrote seem to be here. Modern man has drifted further and further away from the definite moral and spiritual principles taught in the Scriptures and to which our founding fathers appealed as they were forming a new nation. Consider the following illustration that well states how far we have fallen:

“An abortion clinic was brought to court on criminal charges. What was their crime? They had been disposing the bodies of aborted babies in plastic bags. The court ruled that this was a criminal act because... plastic bags are not biodegradable!”

Without God, our standards of right and wrong become severely skewed!. God’s way and will is best. We need to wake up to that fact.