



Bible Believers' Bulletin

Vol. 39 No. 11 "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17) November 2015

A Thanksgiving Message

By Dr. Peter S. Ruckman

"O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy . . . Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing" (Psa. 107:1-2, 21-22).

In 1621, in Plymouth, Massachusetts, the Pilgrim forefathers held a Thanksgiving. They came over here in 1620, and in the first year, half of their number died in the harsh New England winter. Out of 102 colonists, 49 survived.

With the return of Spring, God sent along two Indians, who could speak English, who taught them how to plant corn and how to fish. Because their first harvest was so good, they held a feast of Thanksgiving to God.

In 1777, the Continental Congress declared the first national day of Thanksgiving; and when the Constitution was adopted, Presidents Washington, Adams, and Monroe each proclaimed national days of Thanksgiving.

After that, the individual States observed the holiday. In 1827, the woman who wrote the nursery rhyme "Mary Had a Little Lamb," Sarah Josepha Hale, began a campaign to make Thanksgiving a national holiday, and in 1863, President Lincoln established "the 1st Thursday of November . . . as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens."

With that in mind, I want to give you four things for which you ought to be thankful and praise God.

First, if you are saved, you can thank God *He showed you the way*. Our passage says those Israelites were wandering around "**in the wilderness,**" fainting of hunger and thirst, and when they cried to the Lord, He delivered them by leading "**them forth by THE RIGHT WAY**" (Psa. 107:4-7).

If you are saved, you *know* "**the way**" (John 14:4). Jesus said, "**I am the way, the truth, and the life: no**

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Thanksgiving

By Brian Donovan

In 1621, the 53 Pilgrims who survived the trip across the Atlantic, as well as the first year of hardship in their new land, along with ninety Indians, celebrated a three-day November feast of Thanksgiving to the Lord God for their first harvest in the New World. This came in spite of the fact that they had already made seven times as many graves for their dead as homes for the living. They made sure they acknowledged that their success in growing and reaping a crop was due only to the continual mercies of the Lord. One of the reasons this was not an annual observance was in part due to the fact that, as Christians, they acknowledged the Lord's hand in everyday life and thanked Him consistently; not only on an annual basis.

It was another 156 years later, in 1777, that marked the first time all thirteen colonies in America observed a Thanksgiving Day, though it still did not become an annual event. In 1789, after his inauguration as the first President, George Washington proclaimed Thursday, November 26, as a "day of public thanksgiving and prayer," though even at that late date, it did not become an annual event.

It was not until 1863, in the middle of killing thousands of Southern citizens, that Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday of every November to be a national holiday. It remained a national holiday on the last Thursday of that month until 1939, when FDR, under pressure from retailers who were concerned they could not squeeze in enough shopping days till Xmass, changed the date that year to November 23. Confusion reigned as 23 states observed the 23rd, and 23 states observed the 30th, with Colorado and Texas observing both. After a few years of confusion, Congress passed a law in 1941 making the holiday the fourth Thursday of the month.

As the years have passed, Americans have degenerated the "holiday" (holy day) into getting the day off from work, stuffing their faces with turkey, watching football, and, most importantly, shopping (as in "**the love of money is the root of all evil**"—1 Tim. 6:10). The retailers have won the day, and the biggest moneymaking day of the year is now called "Black Friday," the day following "Thanksgiving." Last year, the stores raked in \$51 billion in the four-day weekend as Americans "thanked God" for their iPhones, iPads, and selfie sticks. Reports of hysteria, stampedes, and violence over shortages in the stores are common occurrences during this "holy day."

The Christian, of course, has no "holy day" nor a set time of thanking God, as every day is a day of thanks. The start of mankind's apostasy in Romans 1:21–32 is found in not glorifying God and in being unthankful (Rom. 1:21). The modern American education system is outlined in these steps of degeneration, including the scriptural definition of evolutionary theory: having vain imaginations, a darkened heart, becoming fools while professing wisdom, changing the glory of God into corrupt images of animals, and worshiping nature. The last step of this degeneration is being given over to the "**vile affections**" of the sodomite world (Rom.

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Thanksgiving

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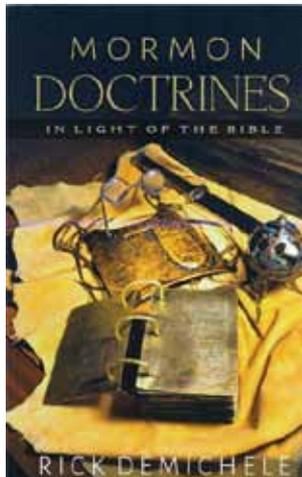
1:26–27). With the green tree huggers and sodomites infecting the land, America is, no doubt, at the end stages of this outlined apostasy.

But the saved Bible believer has constant thanks due to his Saviour and God. We are reminded that it **“is the will of God”** to **“give thanks”** **“in everything”** (1 Thess. 5:18), though there are times when this is called a **“sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name”** (Heb. 13:15). The reason the child of God will find thanks to God a sacrifice at times is because our thoughts are not His thoughts, nor are our ways His ways (Isa. 55:9). The so-called “bad” things that come into our lives are doled out from the Father’s hand, and we know from scripture that they are always for our good (Rom. 8:28).

So it will be in those times that we find thanks to God a **“sacrifice of praise.”** The old-time hymns recognized this truth with lines such as: “Thanks for thorns as well as roses, Thanks for weakness and for health; Thanks for clouds as well as sunshine, Thanks for poverty and wealth! Thanks for pain as well as pleasure—All Thou sendest day by day . . .” We are not usually very quick to give thanks for thorns, weakness, clouds, and poverty. The Apostle Paul gave thanks for his infirmities, but not until he **“besought the Lord”** three times to remove the thorn in his flesh (2 Cor. 12:7–10).

Another old hymn says, “Let sorrow do its work, Send grief and pain; Sweet are Thy messengers, Sweet their refrain, When they can sing with me, More love, O Christ, to Thee, More love to Thee, More love to Thee!” There is a great work to be done that is contrary to our old nature in the troubles of this life. It requires some meditation and

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Every religion has a foundation. Do the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints reflect a biblical foundation, or are they cleverly devised fables? All doctrine is judged by one court of appeals—God’s word. If a doctrine lines up with scripture, it is of God; if not, it is of man or Satan. There are no other possibilities (Isa. 8:20).

In this work, Pastor Rick DeMichele takes the challenge of Mormon leaders: he examines eight key teachings of Mormonism and what the Bible has to say about them. This book not only holds the Bible as the final authority, but the Jesus Christ of the Bible as the only means of salvation.

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each

Thanksgiving

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time to honestly thank the Lord Jesus Christ for cancer, divorce, financial ruin, pain, or an erring child. Where could a Christian turn to hear that cancer is his friend? Certainly not to any TV, radio, or Internet entrapment site in these days. The preaching and teaching of the Laodicean age cannot even mention such a thought. After all, God exists for your comfort. But the truth is, cancer cannot form in any child of God's body without God's knowledge or direction. To think otherwise is to deny the Lord's power and care, as given in the scriptures.

We're to give thanks to our God in everything, and we are to remember that our responses are supposed to be to His (not our) pleasure (Rev. 4:11). He has promised to give the strength for each of our days (Deut. 33:25), and by the way, we do not need any more than that. He has also promised His sufficient grace (2 Cor. 12:9), as well as His continual presence (Heb. 13:5).

The Lord has allowed me to be around some saints going through the various states of cancer and watch a work being done as they respond to His hand. Of course, it is not without some fear, nor without some worry, but after the initial shock and concern, the work done in their lives could not have been done without it. This work is possibly the only part of the ordeal of cancer worth thanking the Lord, but it is a very personal and private work those around the suffering Christian often fail to see.

It must be mentioned that in some of these cases the "answer" to our prayer has not been a physical healing, but a slow work "**that shineth more and more unto the perfect day**" (Prov. 4:18). Every time I have walked away from a visit with a saved brother or sister in Christ with cancer, I must be thankful to my Saviour "**in every thing.**" The Lord seems to do some special work in his or her life that makes me desire not the cancer, but the result. "Sweet are Thy messengers, Sweet their refrain, When they can sing with me, More love, O Christ, to Thee!"

The saved soul is to come to the Lord in prayer "**with thanksgiving,**" even in his requests (Phil. 4:6). We are to "**enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise**" (Psa. 100:4). It is all because of "**the blood of Jesus Christ**" which allows an audience with a God who is too holy to fellowship with sin (1 John 1:7).

"**Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift**" (2 Cor. 9:15). This Thanksgiving season should be unnecessary for the Christian, who is to be thankful in everything and at all times. Yet what a chance for the saved to reflect again and use the time the world sets aside, but not abuse it (1 Cor. 7:31). As rich, saved Americans, we should be reminded that we are not to be "**highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy**" (1 Tim. 6:17). All the while, we should remember our brothers and sisters who have been handed some troubles for their good, that they might bring pleasure to the Saviour who is worthy of our thanks and our love.

The President And the Pimp

In Revelation 17:1–2, we read about a “**great whore**” who commits fornication with “**the kings of the earth.**” There is no doubt as to her identity if you read Revelation 17:4, 6, 9, and 19. *It is the Roman Catholic Church.*

Like most whores, this one has a “Pimp” who drums up business for her. He is the “head” of the Roman Catholic Church, who travels around making political speeches before heads of State and legislatures.

Back on September 28, 2015, this Pimp was welcomed by the President of the United States on the South Lawn of the White House. *Six times* in that speech the President referred to this Pimp as “Holy Father.” I thought it would be interesting, for a change of pace from all the media hype, to see what the One this Pimp professes to represent had to say about such a reference.

Turn to the actual “Lord’s Prayer” in John 17. This is not the *Disciples’* Prayer of Matthew 6:9–13, which the Catholics call the “*Pater Noster*” (Latin for “**Our Father**”). Look at Matthew 6:9—“**After this manner therefore pray YE.**” That wasn’t a prayer Jesus ever prayed for Himself a day in His life. Why not? Because if He had, He would be confessing He was a *sinner* (Matt. 6:12). Jesus told those same disciples whom He taught to pray that prayer: “**If ye then, BEING EVIL . . .**” (Matt. 7:11). If Jesus Christ prayed that prayer, then He would be confessing he was in the same boat as His disciples: an evil sinner who needed forgiveness.

The “Lord’s Prayer,” a prayer Jesus actually prayed Himself, is found in John 17, the whole chapter. Look at verse 1: “**These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, FATHER . . .**” He didn’t pray “**Our Father**” for Himself. Read John 17; you won’t find one verse where He addressed God as “**Our Father.**”

Do you know why the Catholics switched the prayers on you? Because they started calling the Popes “Holy Father,” and they didn’t want you to know where they got the title. It is in the Lord’s Prayer—the *real* one.

“**And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. HOLY FATHER, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are**” (John 17:11).

The Whore is covering up her *blasphemy* (Rev. 17:3). She refers to a Marxist, Jesuit wino by the title of *God the Father*. Every dumb Catholic in Philadelphia, New York City, and Washington, D.C. calls the Pope that. Every major news outlet, including FOX News, calls the Pope that. And the President of the United States calls the Pope that. What is that? It’s *pagan stupidity*. I say that with charity, of course.

That’s nothing but *antichrist garbage*. You think I am just talking? Look at the very next verse in John 17, that follows on the heels of Christ’s reference to His “**Holy Father.**”

The President And the Pimp

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“While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the SON OF PERDITION; that the scripture might be fulfilled” (John 17:12).

Right after the **“Holy Father”** shows up, up pops the Son of Perdition—the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:3). What does the Antichrist do?

“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:4).

The Pope usurps God the Father’s *title* (“Holy Father”), he usurps God the Son’s *position* (“*Vicarius Filii Dei*”—“Substitute Son of God”), and he usurps God the Holy Spirit’s *authority* (speaking *“ex cathedra”* on matters of doctrine and morals). Any conceited ass—and I say that with apologies to every four-legged ass in the pasture—who would let *anyone*, much less a head of State, call him “Holy Father” has to be filled with more demons than the maniac of Gadara (see Mark 5:9–13). And anyone who would tolerate such blasphemy—like the fellow in the White House—is so deluded that he has no idea where he is being led (2 Thess. 11–12 cf. Rev. 13:8).

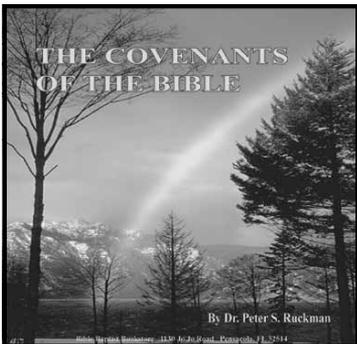
Speaking prophetically of the Great Whore, the wisest man who ever lived said:

“Her house is the way to HELL, going down to the chambers of DEATH” (Prov. 7:27).

That is the “blessing” the Pimp bestowed on this nation.

(Editor’s note: Material taken from Dr. Ruckman’s Commentaries on Rev. 17 and John 17, and from comments made in his Sunday School class on Luke.)

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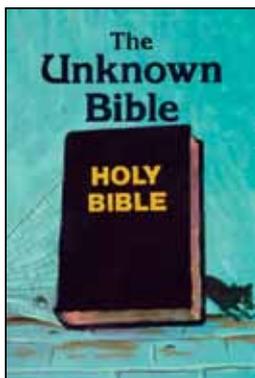
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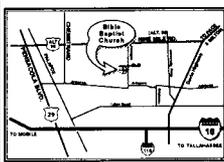
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A Thanksgiving Message

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man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

Aren't you thankful the Lord showed you **"the way"**? Suppose He hadn't. After all, a lot of people don't know **"the way."** Some people think **"the way"** is repent, believe, confess, and be baptized; then you have to keep the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, and endure to the end, and you *might* make it. *They're going to Hell like a bullet.* They are *still* hungry and thirsty spiritually, and their soul *still* faints within them. The Lord didn't show them *anything*.

What if you were over in a place like Spain. I read one time that over in Spain, during the Lenten season (the forty-day period before Easter, observed by Catholics), there are sold 2,000 hair shirts, 1,000 lashes with knots in them, 8,000 crosses weighing between 200 and 240 pounds apiece, and chains in which people walk ten miles in downtown Madrid. Why? Doing penance for sins; self-mutilating the body to atone for their own transgressions. Aren't you grateful God showed you something *better* than that mess?

Why, a black African from Ethiopia had better sense than that bunch of godless, depraved papists. When Haile Selassie addressed the World Evangelical Congress, in Berlin, in 1966, he said, "This age above all ages is a period in history when it should be our prime duty to preach the Gospel of Grace to all our fellow men and women. The love shown in Christ by our God to mankind should constrain all of us who are followers

and disciples of Christ to do all in our power to see to it that the Message of Salvation is carried to those of our fellows for whom Christ our Saviour was sacrificed, but who have not had the benefit of hearing the good news."

Aren't you glad the Lord showed you the way to the **"city"** (Psa. 107:7 cf. Heb. 12:22). The Roman Catholic lawyer Karl Keating says no one can know where he is going until he dies; that is standard Catholic teaching. Mark it down, brethren, when you hear someone talking like that, *he doesn't know the way to the city.*

Second, you can be thankful God showed you the way *despite your rebellion* (Psa. 107:10–15). Sometimes I think some Christians think God owed it to them to show them the way. Listen, Christian, God didn't *owe* you anything. That Bible says, **"according to his MERCY he saved us"** (Tit. 3:5); it says, **"For by GRACE are ye saved"** (Eph. 2:8). If you are saved, it is only because of the *mercy* and *grace* of God. There was nothing good in you that *made* God save you (Rom. 3:10–12).

Before you got saved, you were a *rebel* against God and His words. You were **"ungodly"** (Rom. 5:6), you were a *sinner* (Rom. 5:8), and you were God's *enemy* (Rom. 5:10). Yet the Lord still showed you the way despite all that. Aren't you grateful for that? Can't you thank God for that?

I don't know anyone in the world like Jesus who can put up with folks like He does. Who like Jesus can take a prodigal back home without scolding him? Who like Jesus can

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A Thanksgiving Message

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take a fallen woman off the street and make her fit for Heaven? Who like Jesus can go through a cemetery and put the light of hope over it with the words: **“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live”** (John 11:25).

The Lord showed the way to you when you didn't care anything for Him, and you ought to praise God for His goodness in that regard. At Thanksgiving, the Christian should make a list of God's goodness and run down that list, thanking God. Do you thank God for your eyes? Some people are blind. Do you thank God you can breath? There are all kinds of patients in hospitals on oxygen. Do you thank God you can walk? A lot of folks are confined to wheelchairs. Do you thank God for your hands? Some people have lost one due to an accident. Do you thank God you *can* eat? I don't mean *for what* you eat, though you should do that. Some folks with ulcers can't eat a lot of the things you can. Do you thank God for that? And at the top of that list should be God's goodness to you in giving you a chance to be saved.

Third, you can thank God that when He saved you, He gave you *some protection against yourself*. A Christian was walking down a city street one time. He passed a juke joint and said, “Thank God for saving me from that.” He passed by a liquor store, and he said, “Thank God for saving me from that.” Someone threw a cigarette butt down on the sidewalk in front of him, and he said, “Thank

God for saving me from that.” Then he passed by a department store with a full length mirror on display in the showcase window. As he looked at his reflection in the mirror, he said, “And thank God for saving me *from you too.*”

I don't care how bad the temptations or the sins get for a Christian, they don't have the same power over him as they did before salvation. It is like having been tied up to a post, and someone comes along and cuts the cords that bind you. The post may still be there, and it may hold some attraction for you, but you are no longer bound to it. You don't have to stay with that post; you can walk away from it, if you want.

That's the same way it is with salvation. Before you were saved, you were bound to **“the law of sin and death”** (Rom. 8:3 cf. Rom. 7:1–4), but when you received Christ, the Holy Spirit cut you free from the body of sinful flesh (Col. 2:11–12). Now sin doesn't have to have dominion over you (Rom. 6:13–14). And when you do sin, you don't have to go to Hell for that sin; you **“have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”** (1 John 2:1). You are guaranteed to make it to Heaven and be just like your Saviour (Rom. 8:29; 1 John 3:1–2), no matter what happens to you (Rom. 8:38–39) or what you do (1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Tim. 2:13).

“He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder” (Psa. 107:14). **“For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of**

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A Thanksgiving Message

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iron in sunder" (Psa. 107:16). Can't you thank God for that?

Sin doesn't have the pull it once had; it doesn't have the attraction. To a Christian, a hellhole all lit up with neon lights is just a neon-lit garbage can. A Christian can walk through a place like Sears, Target, Kmart, or Walmart and say, "Thank God I don't need all that junk." He doesn't have to covet all the things set before him. "Uncle Bud" Robinson went to New York City one time. He was raised in Tennessee and Texas, and had no education. He walked around New York City looking up at all those big, tall skyscrapers. When he went back to his hotel, he got down on his knees by his bed and prayed, "Dear Lord, I want to thank you that I didn't see anything that I wanted." Isn't that a blessing? Amen, brother, sister! It's a blessing from God to go through 24 hours and not see anything you want. Do you thank God for that?

Psalms 107:22 says, "**let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving**"; Hebrews 13:15 says, "**let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.**" It's not always easy to praise God and thank Him, did you know that? Sometimes it is really hard; that's why it's called a *sacrifice*.

A preacher visited a member of his congregation, one time, who was a paralytic. "Don't you ever get depressed?" the preacher asked him. "Aren't you ever tempted to complain, murmur, and gripe against God?"

"Yes," said the paralytic.

"Well what do you do about it?" asked the preacher.

That paralytic said, "Every time I hear a knock at my door and know the griper is coming—I've encountered him before and have come out a loser every time—I go to Jesus and say, 'Jesus, would you go to the door and see who it is and what he wants'; and that takes care of things."

Only a Christian can do that. A lost man has no one to send to the door.

Donald Gray Barnhouse had a meeting in a church one time where the pastor was gone during one of the services because his wife was in the hospital having a baby. In the middle of Barnhouse's preaching, that pastor came back. He came up on the platform and sat down. Barnhouse smiled at him to congratulate him for his new baby, but the pastor didn't smile back.

After the service, the pastor took Barnhouse back to his office and told him, "We've got a mongoloid baby, but my wife doesn't know about it yet. If I tell her, it's going to kill her. I don't know how to tell her about it."

Barnhouse told that preacher, "Tell your wife this: 'God loves us, and He wouldn't do anything to us if He didn't love us. He's given us a beautiful mongoloid baby, and he wants us to love it.'"

Barnhouse and that pastor had prayer, and the preacher went back to the hospital and told his wife what Barnhouse had told him to say to her. Of course, he didn't know why to do it. He couldn't reason the thing out in his mind, but he did it anyway.

What that pastor didn't know was that right around the corner of that

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A Thanksgiving Message

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room was the switchboard operator for the hospital. She was an atheist and a chronic alcoholic. She had never heard anyone react the way that preacher did to the bad news he had. Well, that made an impression on her. She got on her switchboard and called every nurse in that hospital.

The next night in the meeting, there were seventy nurses from that hospital, and 26 of them got saved. That was the Lord honoring a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

The Christian can thank God the Lord has given him some protection against himself. Think of all the ways things could have gone and all the ways things could have been. Some Christians have relatives fooling around with dope. Well, Christian, but for God's grace, *that could have been you*. Other Christians have friends or family in jail or prison. Aren't you thankful, brothers, sisters, that's not your case? Brethren, if it weren't for God keeping you from some things,

you could be down on "skid row." Aren't you glad God protected you from yourself before you got into a mess like that?

The last thing I want to say about the passage in Psalm 107 is that the Christian can be thankful that *the Lord is going to get him home safely*. Psalm 107:30—**"Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven."**

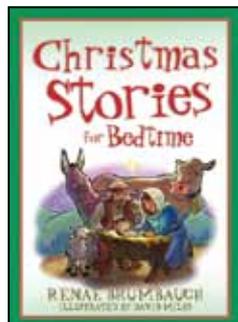
The Lord started you out, and He's going to get you home. The ship may have its sails all torn and the mast busted. The rudder may be broke, and the guy-lines may be flapping in the breeze. But the Lord is going to get you into the port; He's going to get you home.

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

"Who shall also confirm you

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Christmas Stories for Bedtime



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A Thanksgiving Message

Continued from 12
unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8).

You may be out in the storm right now and don't think you'll ever make it. Some of you are like a jet with two motors out, the rudder and the ailerons broken, most of the passengers sick, and the stewardesses in a panic. But you have a Pilot at the controls who knows how and where to land, even in conditions like that. You *are* going to make it.

Back on August 17, 1943, the Allies made an air strike against the German aircraft factories in Schweinfurt and Regensburg. Three hundred seventy-six bombers, with no fighter escorts, attacked the German factories in those cities. The German *Luftwaffe* started working on those squadrons until they lost a total of 55 bombers and 552 airmen.

A Lieutenant Colonel Lay reported that as those bombers were attacked, there were as many as sixty bodies of men flying through the air. On some of them the chutes opened, but on many of them they didn't. There were emergency hatches being blown open. Doors and pieces of wings were flying through the air. Twenty millimeter cannon fire was just stitching those bombers. One fellow in front of Lay was whipped out of his cabin, with the cockpit all in flames. The body was whisked back and hit the stabilizer of his bomber. That fellow's chute opened, but the body never moved again.

Another fellow came screaming down. When his chute opened, it jerked his body so hard his boots came clean off his feet. That poor soul never moved again either.

As the bodies came by Lay's aircraft, one chute nearly hit the motor going by. Another body went by so close to Lay's cabin that he could see the papers stuffed in the fellow's shirt pocket.

Down at the bottom of that squadron was a 24-year-old kid who was having his day. Both his bombardier and radio operator had been killed. A hole two feet wide had been torn in the fuselage by gunfire. A motor was on fire, and the rudder and stabilizers were damaged. With his aircraft in that condition, that young pilot kept his plane in the formation to protect the bottom flank of the squadron.

One of his gunners got on the intercom to him and asked, "Should we bail out?" The answer came back: "Stick to your guns; I'm flying this ship." That young man stayed with it and was able to land that plane. What was left of his crew got out of that "Flying Fortress" and kissed the ground.

Now brethren, I trust you "got the message" from that illustration. When things get rough and tough and hard, stick to your guns. You've still got the best Pilot in the world flying your ship. *He will get you through.*

"Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men" (Psa. 107:31).

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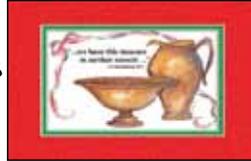
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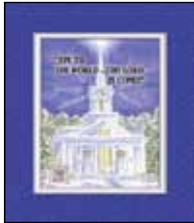
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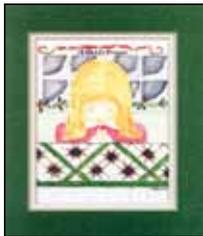
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Does Greek Help?

By Dean Hays (Part One of Eight)

Knowing and understanding the Greek of the New Testament is viewed as being very important by many Christians. When I told a friend of mine from western Kansas that I taught Greek here at the Pensacola Bible Institute, she said, "That's so wonderful! I would love to be able to know 'the Greek!' *It would give you so much more light on the Bible!*" That is a very common view among Christians.

What I would like to do in this series of articles is approach "the Greek" with an open mind; give it the benefit of the doubt. On the one hand will be "the Greek," and on the other hand will be the *King James Bible*. I am going to give "the Greek" a fair shake and let you, the reader, be the judge of which gives you "more light on the Bible."

To demonstrate to you the "light" you can get from the "original Greek," take out a pen and paper and translate a six-word Greek sentence.

Luo kalayn phulakayn epi tavn gayn (Luw kal hn ful akhn epi thn ghen).

I will break the sentence down for you one word at a time, and you can write down your translation on your paper. The lexicon I am using is the *Analytical Lexicon of New Testament Greek: Revised and Updated*, edited by Maurice A. Robinson.

Luo—I unloose, I loose, I loosen, I untie, I release, I break, I destroy.

You be the translator. Write down what *you* think the word should be. All of the meanings are permissible definitions for that word; there is no wrong answer.

Kalayn—beautiful, good, noble, worthy.

Phulakayn—guardianship, guard, prison, place of confinement.

Epi—the word is a preposition that means "on," "upon," "near," "to," "towards," "against," "in addition to," "as far as," "over," "concerning," "on account of," "with a view to," "for," "during," "about."

Tavn—the.

Gayn—earth, soil, land.

As a Greek teacher, here is how I would translate it. See if your translation from the "original Greek" matches the "intent of the author."

"I destroy a noble prison in addition to the land."

How many of you agreed with me? Did you differ? Did you have "I untie worthy prison as far as the earth" or "I release good guardianship towards the land" or "I release good guard on the land"?

Well, if you had anything but "I destroy a noble prison in addition to the land," you are *wrong*. Why? Because I am the *teacher*; I have more experience doing this. I have been doing this for ten years.

So I will tell you what the "original Greek" says, at least until somebody comes around who has been teaching it for fifteen years or twenty years or 25 years. Then I'll give place to *him*, and *he* will tell me what the "original Greek" says.

Of course, I am being facetious to prove a point. The authority wasn't "the

Does Greek Help?

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Greek" or even the lexicon; it was the *experience of the one translating*.

Did we get "light" from "the Greek"? No. Why not?

When I did this in a seminar in a church, out of a hundred people, *no one* agreed with my translation. Four people from the audience read their translations, and *no one* agreed with them either. As a matter of fact, there could be 5,040 different translations of my simple six-word Greek sentence, and none of them could be considered wrong. (For those students of Greek out there, yes, I know there are actual rules governing the translation of prepositions, and that would narrow the possibilities down slightly, but the basic problem would still remain—an unreasonable amount of *possible* correct translations based on the whims of the translator.)

Take a New Testament quote like Romans 6:23. There are 18,800,600 possible ways of translating the verse. That is a *conservative* number based only on the definitions of the words. As far as each person translating is concerned, his sentence is right. He can open up a reputable lexicon and show me that he is right, and I can't say he is wrong because that is how the words are defined. Essentially, every person who participated in this little exercise *became his own authority*.

Did going to the Greek clear things up, or did it create confusion? Why, confusion, of course. Remember that lesson the next time you hear somebody say, "The original Greek says . . ." The "original Greek" can say all kinds of things, depending on the choices made by the translator. What it comes down to is you either have *what God said* or you have *man's opinion* about what God said.

The purpose of this little exercise was to show you the confusion created by *multiple authorities*. The proliferation of English translations since 1880 (over 323 now) hasn't brought clarity to the Bible; it has created *mass confusion*: **"every man did that which was right IN HIS OWN EYES"** (Judg. 21:25).

Now, we are going to look at some specific "Greek nuggets" that are usually presented as shedding light on your *King James Bible*. To give credit where credit is due, I am indebted for the insight on this first one from Sam Gipp's *The Answer Book*, and if you want it for further study, you can get it from the Bookstore (KJ-1743 @ \$6.95).

The first example at which we shall look is the two New Testament words for *love*: *agape* and *phileo*. Don't be too hard on scholarship just yet; give it a fair shake. Let's take the scholars' opinions on *agape* and *phileo* and test them out before passing judgment.

Now what is the difference between *agape* and *phileo*? Well, *agape* is supposed to be a deep, intimate, selfless love; and *phileo* is supposed to be a casual, friendly love. Those are the standard definitions. The typical comment is: "In English, there is just the word *love*, but in the 'original Greek,' there is *phileo* and *agape*. By the 'extra light' from the Greek, we see a deep, intimate love that is different from a casual, friendly love."

The passage used to illustrate this is John 21:15–17. There, Jesus asks

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Does Greek Help?

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Peter if he loves Him. The way it is presented is that the first two times Jesus asks Peter, He says, "Do you love me (*agape*)?" Peter replies, "Yes, I love you (*phileo*)." Then the third time, Jesus asks, "Do you love me (*phileo*)?" And Peter says, "Yes, I love you (*agape*)."

The standard exposition of this is that Jesus asked Peter twice if he loved Him deeply, selflessly, and intimately; but when Peter answered that he loved the Lord as a casual friend, Jesus became discouraged and asked Peter, "Do you love me as a casual friend?" This shamed Peter so much that he replied, "You know I love you deeply, intimately, and selflessly, Lord."

Sounds good, doesn't it? I'm here to tell you that it's a LIE. The definitions are totally untrue. We are going to go to the Scriptures, and let the Scriptures define the words so you will know the standard definitions aren't right.

But before doing that, let's get something straight. The two words in John 21:15-17 are NOT *agape* and *phileo*. You see, *agape* is a noun; *phileo* is a verb. What you have in the passage is *agapao* and *phileo*; not *agape* and *phileo*.

Of course, it is true that *agapao* is the verb form of *agape*, but if someone is going to pull the "original Greek," he had better have what the Greek actually says and not just be copying something he has been told. If you pulled the fact that John 21 actually says *agapao* and *phileo* because they are both verbs, you would unnerve the person trying to drag you to the "original Greek" for "light," because most of the time, he doesn't know about what he is talking.

Now we are going to take scholarship's standard use and definitions of *agape*

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Does Greek Help?

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and *phileo*, and subject them to the Scriptures to see if they hold up.

John 5:42—“**But I know you, that ye have not the LOVE OF GOD in you.**” According to the definitions we’ve been given, which word do you figure is used of “**the love of God**” here? It should be *agape* love, and sure enough, it is: “*agapen tou Theou.*” The verse backs up what scholarship says.

Matthew 10:37—“**He that LOVETH FATHER OR MOTHER more than me is not worthy of me . . .**” The love for your father and mother is *phileo* in the Greek: a casual, friendly love. I can see that. So far, scholarship’s definitions have measured up to what it has said.

Revelation 3:9—“**. . . behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I HAVE LOVED THEE.**” This is Jesus Christ saying, “I am going to make somebody know that I loved you.” What kind of love do you reckon the love of Christ for you is? Why, *agape*, sure: “*ego egapesa se.*”

Revelation 3:19—“**As many as I LOVE, I rebuke and chasten . . .**” Another example of the love of Christ for the believer, and right in the same context as Revelation 3:9. So it has to be *agape*, right?

WRONG! The same Jesus who “agaped” you with a deep, intimate love in verse 9, only “phileos” you with a casual, friendly love in verse 19. What’s with that?!

Matthew 23:6—“**And LOVE THE UPPERMOST rooms at feasts, and THE CHIEF SEATS in the synagogues.**” This is a reference to the Pharisees. According to the definitions, should the Pharisees’ love for “**the uppermost rooms**” and “**the chief seats**” be *agape* love or *phileo* love? It should be *phileo*, and it is: “*philousin.*”

Luke 11:43—“**Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye LOVE THE UPPERMOST SEATS in the synagogues, and GREETINGS in the markets.**” A parallel passage to Matthew 23:6. Surely it is going to be the same word for love, right?

Wrong again. Luke uses *agape* (*agapate*). Here is the same phrase used in two different Gospels, and one is a casual, friendly love while the other is a deep, intimate, selfless love. Interesting, wouldn’t you say?

John 5:20—“**For the Father LOVETH THE SON, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth . . .**” This is God the Father’s love for His Son, Jesus Christ. Surely this is a deep, intimate, selfless love —*agape*. No, it’s not; it’s *phileo*—“*Pater philei ton uion.*”

You mean to tell me that those Pharisees loved their seats more than the Father loves the Son? “**What new doctrine is this?**” (Mark 1:27).

I have a very comfy chair at home which I love deeply and intimately; in fact, I love my chair more than God the Father loves Jesus Christ. Of course, I speak in jest as a fool, but that is exactly the foolishness and heresy you get if you go by the scholars’ definitions for *agape* and *phileo*.

John 16:27—“**For the FATHER HIMSELF LOVETH YOU, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out of God.**” What do you think—*agape* or *phileo*? God’s love is always *agape*, right?

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Does Greek Help?

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Wrong again. God doesn't love you any more than He loves His Son—"Pater *phileo umas*." Well, maybe it's because you don't love Him any better than a chair—"umeis eme *pephilechate*" ("ye have loved me").

John 11:5—"Now Jesus LOVED MARTHA, and HER SISTER, and LAZARUS." Don't you wish you were those siblings? He "*agapes*" them, but He only "*phileos*" you.

John 20:2—"Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, WHOM JESUS LOVED . . ." As a matter of fact, Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus way more than He even loved the Apostle John. Jesus didn't love John deeply and intimately like He did Mary, Martha, and Lazarus ("*ephilei*").

Something is way wrong with scholarship's definitions of *agape* and *phileo*. I have taken their definitions as valid, and am coming up with the most absurd interpretations based upon them in *several* verses. Maybe it's just a fluke; let's keep going.

First Corinthians 16:22—"If any man LOVE NOT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, let him be Anathema Maranatha." The scholars taught you from John 21:15-17 that the love Jesus Christ wants from His disciples is *agape* love—deep, intimate, selfless love. So this must be *agape*—but it's not. If you don't casually, friendly love the Lord Jesus Christ, you're cursed.

Romans 5:8—"But GOD commendeth HIS LOVE TOWARD US, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Here's a good verse to prop up the scholars' definition of *agape*, for it uses that word for God's love. Maybe we can stick with this verse and forget all the others.

Second Timothy 1:7—"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of LOVE, and of a sound mind." Another good one for the scholars. God has given us a spirit that enables us to deeply, intimately love Him.

Romans 12:10—"Be KINDLY AFFECTIONED one to another with BROTHERLY LOVE . . ." There's no doubt about this one: it's *phileo*. Chalk up another one for the scholars.

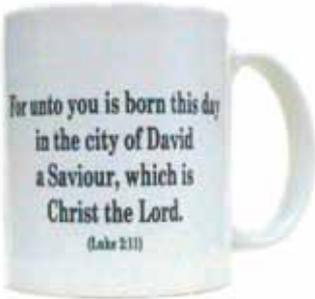
First Thessalonians 3:12—"And the Lord make you to increase and abound in LOVE ONE TOWARD ANOTHER . . ." We are *commanded* to love one another with a casual, friendly, brotherly kind of love (Rom. 12:10); at least until we get to 1 Thessalonians 3:12. Then it switches to *agape*. Anybody getting confused here, or is it just me?

First Peter 2:17—" . . . LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD . . ." Now you might think this should be *phileo*, but it is *agape*. The command is to deeply, intimately love one's brothers in the Lord.

Hebrews 13:1—"Let BROTHERLY LOVE continue." Except you are to love your brothers in the Lord with a casual, friendly love. Oh, come on! Make up your mind! Which one is it? Am I supposed to deeply, intimately love you, or am I just to casually love you in a friendly way? This going to "the Greek" is confusing.

Continued on 24

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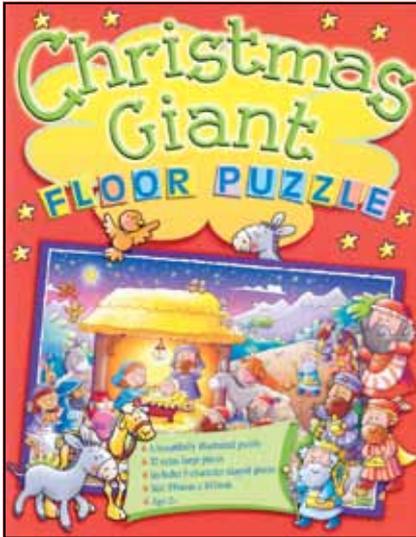
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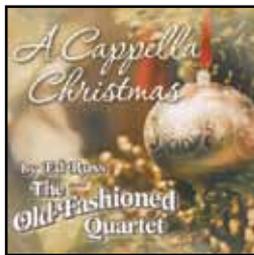
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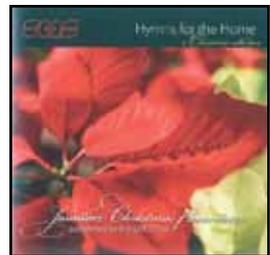
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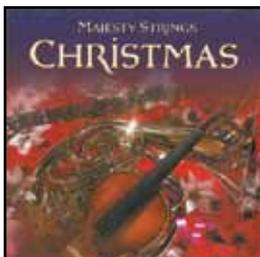
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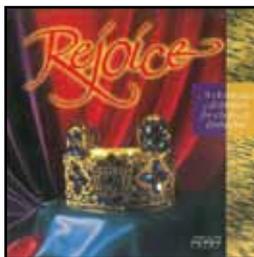
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Does Greek Help?

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Titus 2:4—“**That they may teach the young women to be sober, to LOVE THEIR HUSBANDS, to LOVE THEIR CHILDREN.**” *Agape* or *phileo*, which do you think it's going to be? It's *phileo*. Wives are “**to love their husbands**” in a friendly, casual way. Moreover, their love for their husbands is exactly the same as their love for their children.

Ephesians 5:28—“**So ought men to LOVE THEIR WIVES as their own bodies. He that LOVETH HIS WIFE LOVETH HIMSELF.**” The word in every case here is *agape*. Hey! What gives?! A man is to love his wife deeply, intimately, and selflessly; but she only has to casually return the favor? But that is the “original Greek” for you.

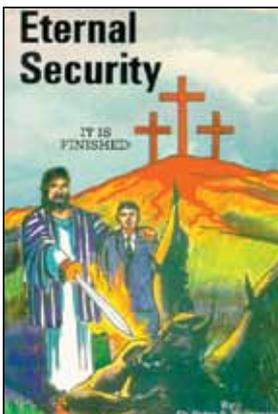
Titus 3:4—“**But after that the kindness and LOVE OF GOD our Saviour TOWARD MAN appeared.**” That is the love God showed toward sinful men by coming down and dying on the cross (see Rom. 5:8 above). It's got to be *agape*, right? (See Rom. 5:8 above!) Nope, it's *phileo*.

The only “light” we have on those two words comes from a *King James Bible*. Love is love. *Agape* equals love; *phileo* equals love. We saw the two words used interchangeably. God's love for His Son doesn't match the definition the scholars assigned; neither does the love husbands and wives are to have for one another.

Either the two words are different, as the scholars teach, leaving you with some absolutely crazy doctrines; or as I believe and have demonstrated to you, *the two words are synonymous*. They both mean the same thing: *love*.

So the next time somebody gives you the baloney that you can't “really” understand the fulness of a passage without going to “the Greek,” *give him the raspberry*.

In the next installment of these articles, I will go into the different levels of Greek scholarship in regards to the example we have examined here: *agape* and *phileo*.



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An Empty Chair

By Robert Militello

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and WILL SUP WITH HIM, AND HE WITH ME” (Rev. 3:20).

This Thanksgiving will once again find the Lord missing from the table of bounty provided for so many of His own in our nation. He is the Founder of the feast, so why should He be absent? Shamefully, the last-days church, blessed with plenty, is out of fellowship with the Saviour. That great and passionate desire for fellowship, which the Lord made plain before He was to suffer, goes unfulfilled.

“And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer” (Luke 22:15).

To sit down with His disciples and break bread one last time before being taken from them was so plainly stated in that phrase: **“With desire I have desired to eat.”** Is it conceivable that a genuine child of God reading this in Luke’s Gospel would not be overjoyed to have the Lord at his Thanksgiving table? Absolutely, yes!

The apostasy and lack of yieldedness in Christ’s Body has become so pervasive that His knocking at the door of the hearts of so many saints goes unheard. Here’s the situation for millions of His own: not only have they gone blind as to their spiritual situation (Rev. 3:17), but **“their ears are dull of hearing”** (Matt. 13:15). His absence at their Thanksgiving table is unnoticed, although He will receive a respectful amount of lip service.

“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME” (Matt. 15:8).

Countless marriages, relationships, and family ties are broken today by what psychologists say is a failure to communicate honestly. Well, that may be true among those outside the Body of Christ, but for those who know the Lord, there’s more to it than just communication. A right heart attitude is the glue that will keep things from falling apart, and God’s child knows the Lord’s heart is never at fault in the road to estrangement.

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23).

This holiday does much good for the soul; it is a welcome refreshment. Family members are happy to be in one another’s company; and expressions of endearment, care, and concern flow freely, and with real sincerity. The very nature of Thanksgiving Day lends itself to the need to acknowledge God’s goodness in our lives. If our affections are really **“on things above”** and not here (Col. 3:2), we will naturally gravitate toward those who are likeminded. The Lord makes careful note about what we like to talk.

“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name” (Mal. 3:16).

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You can't spend much time in God's word and not understand why so much emphasis is put on fellowship. **"The joy of the LORD is"** not **"your strength"** (cf. Neh. 8:10) when you are out of fellowship with Him. There will be joy at most Thanksgiving tables this year, but how much of that joy is really spiritual? If you are filled with the Spirit, will everyone feel comfortable around you? That depends on who is at the table. David had something to say about his preferences, and the Lord had it recorded for our instruction.

"I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts" (Psa. 119:63).

"They that fear thee WILL BE GLAD WHEN THEY SEE ME; because I have hoped in thy word" (Psa. 119:74).

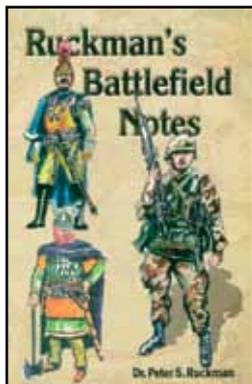
"Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies" (Psa. 119:79).

Notice the common denominator here: who really fears the Lord, and who is just pretending? For most American Christians, it will be somewhat uncomfortable to be around those who are sold out to their Saviour and eager to

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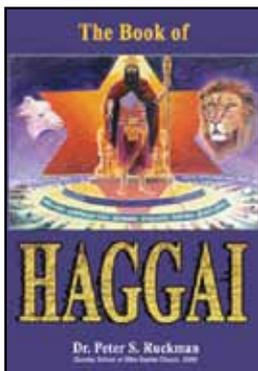
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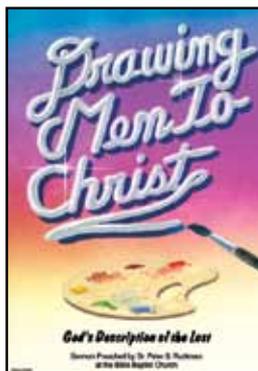
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please Him. It's tough to pretend you are in fellowship with the Lord if you are at the table with those who really are. Getting right with the Lord at the prayer altar leads to fellowship at His table. Every day the Lord delays His coming is another opportunity to make things right. He wants His table full, but who is willing to come?

“Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse . . .” (Luke 14:16–18).

Why should the Lord be knocking on the door of His own church building in Revelation 3:20, seeking to have supper with His own children? What caused Him to leave that assembly of rich and, no doubt, well-fed Christians enjoying the blessings (material, not spiritual) of America in these last days?

Look at the excuses offered in Luke 14:18–20. The first two excuses for not having the fellowship the Lord so desires involve *possessions*. It's hard to serve the Lord and mammon (Luke 16:30). Excuse number three in verse 20—**“I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come”**—is closer to the truth of what really makes fellowship more difficult. Paul spoke very bluntly about this situation.

“But this I say, brethren, THE TIME IS SHORT; it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none” (1 Cor. 7:29).

Try preaching that to men taken to Pentecostal and Evangelical churches by their wives on Sunday morning. You may need to join the witness protection program for preachers in fear of their wives. Too much of God's word in these last days has a fence around it marked: “Beware, High Voltage!”

Thanksgiving lends itself to family closeness like no other day, in that it is free of the giving and receiving obligation associated with Christmas. It should be easy for Christians to rejoice on such a national holiday as this. We see evidence of God's bounty everywhere in America. No nation in history has been so endowed with material comforts as our land has. Yet on the spiritual side, the blessings of God are fast disappearing. Can we thank God for a Supreme Court that redefines the bond between man and woman to include man and man, and woman and woman?

“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4).

Dysfunctional families by the thousands will gather on Thanksgiving, celebrating the triumph of perversion. Men “married” to each other will adopt children, and this will be called a “family.” By whose definition will that be, God's or man's? Two women will defile one another and bring children into the house who will then tell their classmates in school that they have two mommies. Who would thank God for the mess we have created due to a court that has decided to make respectable what was once an abomination? Is the Lord going to show up at the Thanksgiving tables of the judges, lawmakers, and politicians whose

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thinking is directed by the devil himself?

Certainly there will be a place at the table this year for Jesus in every Christian home, amen?

“Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press. And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are THESE WHICH HEAR THE WORD OF GOD, AND DO IT” (Luke 8:19–21).

Let the words of the Holy Spirit, as recorded here by Luke, go deep into your soul. Is your understanding of the word *family* and the Lord's understanding of that word the same?

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD” (Isa. 55:8).

Thinking about family fellowship in the biblical sense brings you back to knowing the difference between being a hearer of the word only and not a doer. For the church of the Laodiceans, the issue was the challenge put forth by the Lord Himself.

“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

Again, the question is before you on this national day of feasting: are you in fellowship with your Lord, or are you going to pretend you are? Revelation 3:20 contains the phrase **“if any man hear my voice.”** Obviously, there were believers in Laodicea who could hear the Lord knocking at their heart's door and could also hear Him calling. **“To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart”** (Psa. 95:7–8).

At some point, the Lord went outside of the Laodicean church. He didn't walk away from it, for He says in verse 19, **“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”** What would have to happen for the Laodicean believers to open the door and allow the Lord to come back inside? How badly does today's Christian in America desire to be in fellowship with his Saviour? The Lord says, **“be zealous therefore, and repent.”**

Brokenness has brought many a lukewarm saint to the Lord. Must the church in America be broken before the Lord comes for it? Every real Christian notices the growing animosity toward God's word which is now taking root in our land. It may very well cost you something to be a Bible believer soon. Are you prepared?

Family togetherness and fellowship on Thanksgiving Day are what we all seek. Nevertheless, the family peace and harmony we often work so hard to maintain may cost a lot. The peace we desire to keep among family members can destroy our fellowship with the Lord. Family is a gift, and a wonderful one at that. Yet beware, lest you exalt the gift above the Giver. The Lord's ways are not our ways, remember?

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send

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peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:34–37).

How's that for family unity? Yes, the price of fellowship with the Lord can be very steep indeed. Your desire for Him must exceed everything else in your life.

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I

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THE CREED OF THE ALEXANDRIAN CULT

1. There is **no final authority** but God.
2. Since God is a Spirit, there is **no final authority** that can be seen, heard, read, felt, or handled.
3. Since all books are material, there is **no book on this earth that is the final and absolute authority** on what is right and what is wrong, what constitutes truth and what constitutes error.
4. There **WAS** a series of writings one time which, **IF** they had all been put into a BOOK as soon as they were written the first time, **WOULD HAVE** constituted an infallible and final authority by which to judge truth and error.
5. However, this series of writings was lost, and the God who inspired them was **unable to preserve their content** through Bible-believing Christians at Antioch (Syria), where the first Bible teachers were (Acts 13:1), and where the first missionary trip originated (Acts 13:1-52), and where the word "*Christian*" originated (Acts 11:26).
6. So God chose to **ALMOST** preserve them through Gnostics and philosophers from Alexandria, Egypt, even though God called His Son OUT of Egypt (Matthew 2), Jacob OUT of Egypt (Genesis 49), Israel OUT of Egypt (Exodus 15), and Joseph's bones OUT of Egypt (Exodus 13).
7. So there are two streams of Bibles. The most accurate—though, of course, there is **no final, absolute authority** for determining truth and error; it is a matter of "preference"—are the Egyptian translations from Alexandria, Egypt, which are "almost the originals," although not quite.
8. The most **inaccurate translations** were those that brought about the German Reformation (Luther, Zwingli, Boehler, Zinzendorf, Spener, et al.) and the worldwide missionary movement of the English-speaking people: the Bible that Sunday, Torrey, Moody, Finney, Spurgeon, Whitefield, Wesley, and Chapman used.
9. But we can "tolerate" these if those who believe in them will "tolerate" US. After all, since there is **NO ABSOLUTE AND FINAL AUTHORITY** that anyone can read, teach, preach, or handle, the whole thing is a matter of "PREFERENCE." You may prefer what you prefer, and we will prefer what we prefer. Let us live in peace, and if we cannot agree on anything or everything, let us all agree on one thing: **THERE IS NO FINAL, ABSOLUTE, WRITTEN AUTHORITY OF GOD ANYWHERE ON THIS EARTH.**

This is the Creed of the Alexandrian Cult.

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come and appear before God?" (Psa. 42:1–2).

The Laodicean Christians had no such thirst. Their desire was for the things of this world. **"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing"** (Rev. 3:17).

Fellowshipping with Jesus, the One who bought them with His own blood, carries the risk of having to be content with only **"food and raiment,"** as Paul instructed Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:8. Laodicean Christians reach for the "white out" bottle when they read that verse. God's word is packed with stuff that can't be preached today in America. Folks won't take it; they'll have epileptic fits.

For those who love the word of God, there ought not to be a day that passes without thanking God for the cross. That barbaric death instrument reconciled me to God. It made peace between us and brought me to the table of fellowship. That's the table at which we have been saved to sit. Picking up your cross daily is what keeps you at the table of fellowship. It is the cross that causes empty seats at the Lord's fellowship table.

"And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:38).

That's the price of fellowship. Look around and notice the obvious similarity between the Laodicean and American churches.

"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, THAT THEY ARE THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, WHO MIND EARTHLY THINGS.)" (Phil. 3:17–19).

For a nation so blessed of God with so much for which to be thankful, it is becoming increasingly painful to watch the moral collapse underway all around us. Our enjoyment of the so-called "good life" is leading us to the salvage yard where once great nations now repose in rust and dust. We will be there shortly.

"Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister SODOM, PRIDE, FULNESS OF BREAD, AND ABUNDANCE OF IDLENESS was in her" (Ezek. 16:49).

You know what happened to Sodom. Are we exempt? Will the USA get a pass because we have "In God We Trust" on our coins? **"Will he reserve his anger for ever? will he keep it to the end?"** (Jer. 3:5).

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

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