

Via

*The Perfect
Gift*



BIBLE-BASED READING FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

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EDITORIAL

As you read through this volume of Via, you may notice that many of the articles are about the peace that God gives to us when we are right with Him. Our desire is that all our readers will place their trust in God's only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Once we are saved, we have peace in our lives knowing that our eternal future is secure. We have peace knowing that when the Lord Jesus Christ returns for all those who are saved, we will go with Him. Once we pass through the door of salvation, instead of a life that is imbalanced and out of alignment, we have inner peace and rest.

Salvation brings peace, it is also "*the gift of God*" (Ephesians 2:8). We chose the picture of a gift for the front cover because throughout this magazine you will read much of God's gift of His Son to save us. If you have accepted God's simple plan of salvation, may this cover remind you to share with others this good news. If you are not yet saved, may the picture and the articles you read lead you to receive the gift of God.



EMPTY CHAIRS

Here's an arresting sight. Rows of white chairs, set out on a vacant lot in the middle of a city – swivel chairs, dining chairs, armchairs, picnic chairs, classroom chairs. If you were to count them, you would find there are 185. What are they doing there?

These chairs are a touching memorial to those who perished in the earthquake that struck the city of Christchurch, New Zealand, on February 22, 2011. There is a chair for each one who died. Among the dead were office workers, shoppers, children, students, tourists – all going about their normal activities.

Many visit the memorial each day; they survey the scene silently, soberly – and turn away. For there is nothing to say in the face of such finality. The chairs are all empty, and they will never be filled again.

The solemn reality is that each one of the 185 people represented by the empty chairs in Christchurch has a soul which now occupies one of two places in eternity. It's a reminder that for each of us there will come a time when our particular 'chair' on earth will be vacated. Like those who died that day, each of us has a soul that will live forever, either in Heaven with the Saviour, or in Hell. Like them, we may get no warning – so we need to prepare now.

Each chair is individual. Similarly, each of us is individually responsible before God – and each requires God's forgiveness for the Bible says, "...all have sinned" (Romans 3:23).

As you see in the picture, the chairs are all white. I may look like a good person to others – 'painted white' as it were. But the Lord looks on the heart and, without exception, He sees sin. Sin that needs to be dealt with before it brings eternal ruin.

In His indescribable love, God gave His one and only Son, the Lord Jesus, to die on the cross so that He may be the Saviour of each one who believes in Him. Although "*the wages of sin is death*," the great news is that "*the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 6:23).

Once we have received the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, we can look forward to something that will take place even more suddenly than an earthquake. The Bible teaches that the Lord will come for His own "*in a moment*" (1 Corinthians 15:52). For those of us who have trusted Him, we'll be thrilled to leave our earthly chair vacant and fill a place in the glories of Heaven. (Read John 14:3, 6.) Will you be ready for that moment?

L M Thompson



The All Important Door

I wonder how many doors I have stepped through today? I probably stepped through various doorways in my house at least 30 times since awakening. When I went downtown, I stepped through the post office door and the insurance agency door. Each entrance was done purposefully. I was on a mission; I needed to get to a certain place that only had one way in, through one particular door. My will totally dictated my movements, and the direction I was going.

There is another door that exists that many people have not yet entered. This door is available to every person for their entire life until they breathe their last breath. If we wait to enter this door until after we die, it will be too late. It is not a door that you can see with your eyes, but rather, a door that must be entered by faith. This door I am referring to is a Person. The Lord Jesus said, *"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved..."* (John 10:9).

Entrance through this door to eternal life is through trusting faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. I am totally convinced that most people have not entered the door because they do not desire salvation from sin. Instead their will loves to sin.

Once a person sees that their sin deserves judgment from God because they are guilty, and once they know that Christ is the way to escape the judgment that they deserve, the person can choose to enter or not to enter the door. Each person makes a choice. A person's will determines their destiny. Just like Joshua, we can say, *"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"* (Joshua 24:15). We can choose to be inside the door and be safe, or we can choose to stay outside of the door and be in danger. Are you going to say 'no' to God and His forgiveness and eternal life and 'yes' to judgment and eternal punishment? Or will you choose to enter the door and say 'yes' to God's amazing love and 'yes' to His Lordship and eternal life with Him forever?

Salvation is a matter of the will. Entering the door is a matter of the will. Don't wait! God's Word says, *"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"* (2 Corinthians 6:2). Enter the door while you can. An abundant life with God awaits on the other side!

Looking for *Peace and Balance* in *Life*



If you could change one thing in your world, what would it be?

Television celebrity and personal trainer Bob Harper has impacted many lives with his motivational advice. In addition to being a personal trainer for celebrities, he has been a star on the NBC American *The Biggest Loser* television series with former co-star, trainer Jillian Michaels.

When his show partner left the series, some wondered about the show's continuing popularity. There was a dip in the ratings but Harper seemed unfazed. He said: "I'm doing what I was put on this earth to do — all the rest of that stuff, I don't care. At the end of the day, I'm a trainer. That's what I was doing before the show, that's what I do during the show, and that's what I will do after the show."

Recently Bob Harper was interviewed by his former *Biggest Loser* partner Jillian Michaels on her own show. It's a very positive and upbeat interview. She was looking for candor. She gave him open-ended statements to finish such as, "I'm most proud of ..." and "The hardest thing for me to overcome ..."

Michaels asks Harper what he would change if he could change just one thing in the world. His response: "It would be to find peace." He then went on to talk about the pursuit of personal peace. He mentioned John Lennon's quest for peace. He speculated that if a person could find peace in their life, how much better it would be for everyone else around them and presumably for the actual person who found it.

If you were to be asked similar questions, how would you respond? You may have accomplished and acquired many things in life — but have you secured inner peace yet? Bob Harper and others are realizing many successes in life, but when their day is over and the lights are out, they seem to have an inner longing for peace. Success they have. Peace they have yet to find. Does that describe your current state?

At the end of the interview, Mr. Harper also said he was "trying to find a little bit of balance in this unbalanced world." People are unbalanced when they are out of sync with their Creator. How can there be balance in a broken world when the primary relationship between

the individual and God is broken? A broken relationship in a home creates an unhealthy and unbalanced atmosphere. Spiritually it is no different, apart from the fact that a broken relationship with God is infinitely more serious and has eternal ramifications.

We can fill our lives with fortune, fame, fun and many other things. As long as the primary relationship is broken with God, there will always be a void, an imbalance and a perpetual longing in the human soul for something called 'peace'.

A mechanic talks about the need for your vehicle to have an alignment. The symptoms are: a pulling in one direction; a certain shaking when the vehicle accelerates; a steering wheel vibration and an unbalanced wearing of the tires. A car that needs an alignment does not provide a smooth ride. Spiritually speaking, because of sin our own performance is sub-standard and we fail God's road test. We need a spiritual alignment.

To those who are experiencing weariness, an imbalance in life, a pulling in the wrong direction, a sad wearing down and despairing, wearing out due to the presence of sin and the absence of inner peace, Jesus said these beautiful and inviting words: "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matthew 11:28).

You must come to the Lord Jesus for the required spiritual alignment in your life. When He said: "*I will give you rest*" He didn't mean a 'rest' that comes from no activity but rather the rest that comes from a life of satisfaction and peace, when all facets of one's life are aligned with the very purposes of God. That life is available to you this very day through Jesus Christ alone!

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Heart Trouble



What is the most common affliction that plagues people in North America? Heart trouble. More than any other ailment, it is the disease that causes an early death.

But there is an affliction even more deadly than a malfunction of the organ that pumps blood through our bodies. It is a spiritual heart disease from which everyone suffers. "*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23).

Here is the diagnosis made by Jesus Christ, the greatest of all heart specialists: "*Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man*" (Matthew 15:19-20). His words echo the verdict of Jeremiah 17:9, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*".

Our hearts, as organs, keep us alive, but the desires of the heart cause us to sin against God. What can we do about it? "*If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved*" (Romans 10:9).

Will you, this moment, give your life – past, present and future – into the hands of the Great Physician, the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave His life's blood that you may have a new heart? Ask Him for a spiritual transplant.

ELECTRIFYING

“If God is trying to tell me something, a letter would be nice.”

That’s what Brian said after the soccer game, because he was really shaken up and seemed ready to listen to God.

What does it take to make a person ready to listen to God? Listen right now, because God has already spoken to you in the Bible. He instructs, “*He who hath ears to hear, let him hear!*” (Matthew 11:15). God wants to get your attention, just as He wanted Brian’s attention.

Brian was goalie for his team. It wasn’t the best kind of day for a soccer game; the whole field was a soggy mess. It had been raining earlier in the day, and the sky was looking black again. Suddenly, a vivid flash of lightning split the sky, and something happened that Brian will remember as long as he lives.

“The team was coming toward me,” he reported, “and suddenly I felt the hum of electricity all around me. Then the ball was just rolling along by itself and everybody was down.”

Twenty-one players, plus the referee, had dropped in their tracks. Only Brian remained standing. “I just stood there, looking over the field at all the bodies. It was a weird feeling.”

Something so unusual feels like a message from God, and Brian was not mistaken. Don’t wait until you are in a field full of fallen friends. NOW is the time to listen to God.

One by one the fallen players began to stir and get up on their feet. All but the referee. He remained down. The paramedics were called to restore his breathing.

The news reporter asked Brian how he felt about it. He answered, “If God wants to tell me something, a letter would be nice.”

But, Brian, God has already written a letter! He has cared for His wonderful letter through fire and storm for thousands of years. Copies are printed every day. Read the Bible. Find out that “*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son*” (John 3:16). Find out that if you believe in the Son, you have everlasting life.

What will it take to make you ready to listen? Your own death may be the message that will make you listen. But then it will be too late to receive God’s loving gift. Hell is an awful reality.

Are you listening right now? God loves you. He wants you to accept the gift of everlasting life from His Son, Jesus Christ. Will you come right now and not wait for God to speak louder?



Bible Truth Publishers

What's Life?

MONEY

PARTYING

FRIENDS

FUN & GAMES

SUCCESS

POPULARITY

What's life? Some say it's good friends, money in your pocket, popularity, partying, and having as much fun as you can for as long as you can. Is that all there is to life?

One summary of life is 'Here today, gone tomorrow!' A really bitter answer to this question is: 'Life is a terminal disease'.

Life is short. One book describes life this way: "*It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away*" (James 4:14). But that same book, the Bible, introduces a Man who came into this world that we may have life, and that we may have it more abundantly (John 10:10). This Man is Jesus Christ.

This is not about religion. This is about a real person, the Son of God, who came to give you eternal life – both in Heaven after you die and right now. He gives a love, peace and joy that is far better and longer lasting than anything this world can give. Fun and games, wealth and success, sex and drugs do not last. They don't fill the emptiness inside.

Because of our sin, we are spiritually dead and far from God; but, the Lord Jesus, God's Son, died on the cross and rose again so we can be cleansed from our sins. We must see our need of Him and come to Him, repenting of our sins, and trusting Him to be our Saviour. This must be done personally. No one else can do it for you.

Look at these promises from the Bible, and see what Jesus Christ has to offer –

- New life: "*He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life*" (John 5:24).
- True love: "*In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him*" (1 John 4:9).
- Lasting peace: "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (John 14:27).
- Real joy: "*In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore*" (Psalm 16:11).

Don't be satisfied with temporary substitutes for the real thing. Find real fulfillment in the new life that Jesus Christ can give you. It starts the moment you accept Him as your Saviour!

Grace and Truth

A Gift of Love

One day as I was carrying my baby granddaughter, I tried to fit between a dining room chair and the china cabinet. It was a little awkward because of the bundle in my arms. I managed to give the china cabinet a solid thump with my hip. The bone china figurine that had pride of place in the centre of the top shelf, rocked one way then the other before it fell to the floor and shattered. I couldn't grab for the figurine because my hands were already full.

I was distraught. Each of the girls in my family had been given a delicate china doll from among my grand-

mother's things. The figurine had been special to me.

The next day, my daughter-in-law came with a wrapped present. Surprised, I opened it to find that she had given me her porcelain figurine. What a gift of love!

Meanwhile, my husband had gathered up all the broken pieces of the ornament that he could find. With attention to minute detail, he was able to put my doll back together with only a few nicks and jagged edges here and there. Another gift of love! Now both figurines have pride of place on a lower shelf of the china cabinet.

I share this with you to tell you of an even greater gift. God, because He loves us so much, gave His only begotten Son so that anyone who believes on Him will have life forever with Him. He gave His Son, knowing that the Lord Jesus would leave the wonders of a perfect Heaven to come to live in a world marred by sin. The Lord Jesus was crucified. While on the cross, He was punished for my sin and for your sin. He died and then rose again after three days, completing His work.

We may accept this Gift of love or reject it. By accepting the Gift, you will have eternal life with God in Heaven. "*I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish*" (John 10:28). Rejection of the Gift leads to you being separated from God forever and being banished to the Lake of Fire. I pray that you will accept this most precious of gifts!



Motorcycle Riders



When I was ten years old, I caught the “motorcycle bug.” From then on I was determined to own a motorcycle. I learned all I could about them and worked hard until I finally bought my own. It was all I had ever dreamed of.

Riding fast and hard with some of my buddies led to a new dream — motorcycle fame! And so I became a motorcycle racer.

Racing brought years of thrills, spills and chills. But one day everything changed in a second! On a Sunday afternoon while highway racing alone in the country, I miscalculated and took a corner too fast. I ended up in the ditch with a severely broken leg and other injuries. Two hours passed before an ambulance arrived.

As the ambulance went screaming to the hospital, we collided with another vehicle! I was thrown through the windshield of the ambulance, broken leg and all. I arrived at the hospital broken, battered and bleeding. I didn't expect to have long to live.

I remember hearing once that a person should be sure he dies right, because if he dies wrong, he can't come back and die right. I knew if I died, I would die wrong — without God and without hope.

Up until then, I had pushed God out of my life. I figured that if I found out what God had to say to me in the Bible, I would have to give up the passion of my reckless lifestyle. So when anything “religious” crossed my path, I would quickly get rid of it and quiet my conscience. No matter how I tried NOT to think about death and God, that “still small voice” kept coming back to remind me that I would meet God.

I felt very alone in that hospital with death hovering over me, but most of the time my mind was clear. This time He got my attention. I understood that if a person

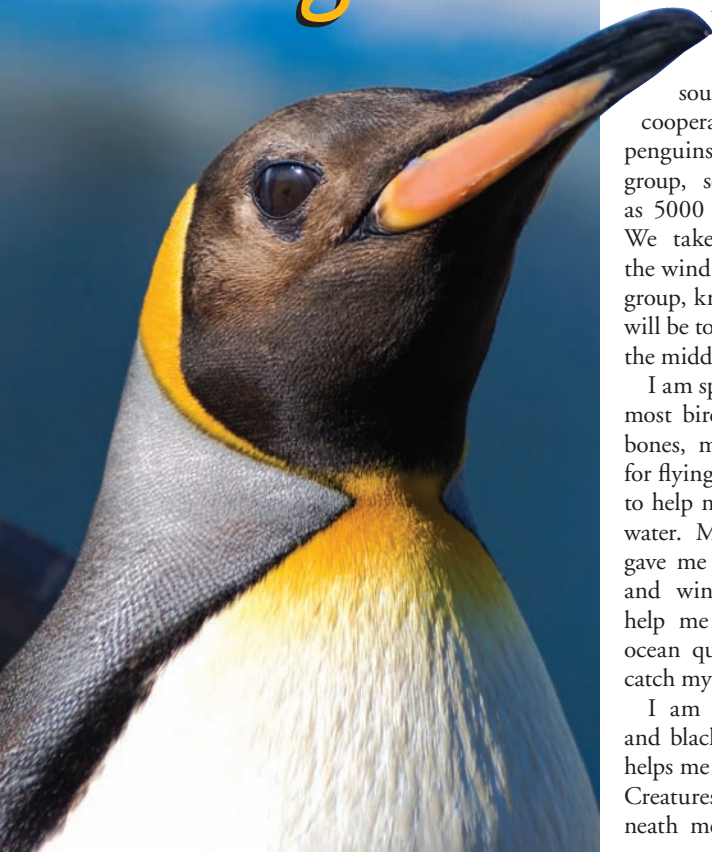
dies without God, he dies alone — completely alone. Then I remembered hearing that those who receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour will have eternal life. *“That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:15). That would be dying right! There on the hospital bed I obeyed the gospel. I knew I was a pretty big sinner, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour, and God saved my soul ... just as He promised.

Maybe you're not a big sinner like me; maybe you're only a little sinner. It doesn't make much difference, because the Bible shows that it only takes one sin to keep a person out of Heaven!

I never did reach my goal of motorcycle fame, but I have received something far more fulfilling and worthwhile. With Christ as my Saviour, I have peace ... peace with God ... peace from a troubled conscience ... peace that passes all understanding ... peace the world can never give. Instead of the short-lived pleasures of sin, I have joy and happiness in this life, and I'll have it forever in Heaven.

Bible Truth Publishers

Meet the Amazing Penguin



I can drink sea water and stay warm in very cold harsh environments. I am a special bird, an emperor penguin.

I have four layers of feathers that protect me from the wind and help keep me waterproof. When the Antarctic winds are blowing their coldest, I keep warm with the large amount of fat that insulates my body. This fat also serves as a long-lasting energy source. I know how to cooperate with my fellow penguins. We huddle in a big group, sometimes as many as 5000 of us, sharing heat. We take our turn braving the wind at the outside of the group, knowing that soon we will be toasty warm tucked in the middle of all the bodies.

I am special because unlike most birds that have hollow bones, making them lighter for flying, I have heavy bones to help me to dive under the water. My Master Designer gave me a streamlined body and wings or flippers that help me shoot through the ocean quickly so that I can catch my dinner.

I am white on the front and black on the back. This helps me to hide in the water. Creatures swimming underneath me look up to where

the sun shines on the water and they can't spot me. Looking from above, I am dark like the ocean depths.

I am uniquely designed to process salt water. I have a special gland that filters out the salt that I don't need. The salt is mixed with a small amount of moisture which drips down my beak. I can then sneeze it off.

When the sun is shining brightly, I may feel too warm. My Creator made me so that I can raise my feathers a little to allow the extra heat to escape. I can also hold out my wings which have many tiny blood vessels close to the skin. When I hold them out, air can move across these vessels and cool me down.

Creatures like me don't just happen. They are planned with precision by a very orderly, intelligent Designer. The Bible tells us that, "*All things were made through Him* (Jesus Christ), *and without Him nothing was made that was made*" (John 1:3).

The Lord Jesus Christ designed a way for me to live in the icy cold. He also

designed a way for you to live as part of God's family. He knew that there was no way you could make yourself good enough to be in His family. The Bible tells us that, "*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). You can become a child of God because the Lord Jesus came to earth and took the blame for your sins.

Creatures like me don't just happen. They are planned with precision by a very orderly, intelligent Designer.

He died on the cross and rose from the dead so that when you trust Him, you become one of God's children forever. You can read the promise in John 1:12, "*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name*". Won't you believe in Christ today?



Hidden Gift

A jail guard in Philippi asked some Christian prisoners, "*What must I do to be saved?*" (Acts 16:30). They replied, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved*" (Acts 16:31). The Bible also tells us that it is "*by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God*" (Ephesians 2:8). Our desire is that you do accept this awesome gift! To help you focus on the need to accept God's gift of salvation if you have not yet done so, we have hidden a picture of a wrapped present somewhere in the magazine. See if you can find it!

Send your name and address to: Via Magazine, Box 551, Portage la Prairie, Manitoba R1N 3B9 Canada. Tell us where you found the gift and we will send you a small prize.

God's Gift of *Peace*

The Bible tells of a man from the country of the Gadarenes whose life was a nightmare. He was driven by the devil into the wilderness, to live alone in the tombs. He was in a crazed state of mind; naked, crying out and cutting himself with sharp stones. Filled with hatred and distrust, he answered to nobody. Not even chains could hold him down. Modern day psychiatrists would have a heyday with him, labeling him as a psychopath with schizophrenia, anxiety, depression, oppositional defiance, along with serious relational problems. If they were able to give him treatment, it wouldn't have helped.

I was struck by how his life mirrored mine in so many ways, especially in the way we were healed. Born into a 'messed up' family in Newfoundland, my morals and values were honed on the streets and in the justice institutions. At age ten, I had a rap sheet a mile long. Memories of my childhood included: safe hiding places, empty birthdays, abandonment, malnourishment, drug abuse, and physical abuse. I lived through experiences that hardened me with scars to my knuckles, nose, and heart. The age of 16 was a turning point for me. I was an accomplice to an assault, where my co-

accused beat another man to near death. While incarcerated for this, I witnessed another man get beat into unconsciousness. I still remember the fear of the guards bringing someone into my cell. I never slept that first night. Then the authorities allowed me one phone call and gave me a one way ticket back to my former foster parents in Manitoba. Believe it or not, my life of crime ended. I graduated from school, met my wife, became a teacher, raised three sons, and lived happily ever after. (*Cue the vinyl record 'halting-scratch' noise!*)

The happily-ever-after part was not to be, because misery followed me day and night for years. I tried to fix things

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by 'bettering' myself with a counselling degree, an increased salary and such. But 25 years later, I still lived hopelessly in

a tomb full of apathy. Personal wellness, education and wealth didn't bring true peace. I grew more miserable because I knew where to find it. You see, I had heard the gospel before. I knew about mankind being cursed and separated from God by sin. I knew that God sent Jesus to redeem mankind. But I willfully rejected God to preserve my lifestyle, albeit a self-defeating one. Knowing the truth and denying it, was taking its toll on me. I began to wish that I had never heard about God, but He wouldn't let me escape the truth. Instead, He placed into my life a Christian (my wife) and I witnessed her peace for 25 years. I saw her joy, even through difficulties. I knew where she got it, but I held out.

My day of reckoning came following a conflict at work with a challenging man who said that he was "in my corner", and that "someone upstairs was looking out for me". I was shocked. I didn't want him "in my corner" but I did need to talk to that "someone upstairs". So, like the Gadarene, I slumped down in tears and cried to Jesus saying, "I'm sorry, I'm done running, please help me". Immediately, like the man from Gadara, I was sitting at the feet of Jesus. Life's troubles were still with me but I was resting in my right mind with God on my side. It was March 25, 2011 that I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I found true rest for the first time in 46 years!

When I went to tell others, they were not interested. Responses included, "whatever makes you happy", "did you lose your reasoning?" and "oh, so it's like wellness?" People think that true joy comes only when there is no trouble in their lives. Not so. Jesus says "*My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give*

to you. Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:27). Through His peace, I get to consider my troubles a joy. His peace comes through His blood, shed for the penalty of my sins. His love forgives me of sin and relieves me of guilt. It is a peace that surpasses all comprehension. And now that I am saved by grace, I am learning about this incredible peace of God.

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'Rest in peace' is a phrase usually reserved for the dead. It is written on headstones. But being able to 'rest in peace' is also given by God to the living, who are alive in Christ. The rest that I have today, comes from faith in the promise of God, that when I die I get to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Amen!

Angus MacInnis



PARDONED - But Go!

It must have been a frightening experience for Paolo Gabriele, his wife and three children when the Vatican police arrived on their doorstep. Mr. Gabriele had been Pope Benedict XVI's butler since 2006, but now he was the focus of a major internal criminal investigation. Someone was leaking very private details of life in the Vatican to outside sources, obviously having stolen some of the pope's very personal papers. Paolo Gabriele was arrested. Eventually he was convicted and sentenced to 18 months in prison.

The human tendency when we have been wronged or our image capriciously damaged is to be secretly vindictive and intensely unforgiving. So it was newsworthy when Pope Benedict visited his 'repentant' former butler to tell him he personally forgave him and to grant him his request for a pardon.

To be released from all traces of wrongdoing and to have it removed from your record is a criminal's dream come true. For Mr. Gabriele, it will probably go down as the best gift he ever received. Pardon!

However, the remarkable pardon came with at least one major condition: Paolo Gabriele could no longer be a resident of

the world's smallest country – Vatican City. He had to leave the state and never return to his former occupation. It seems the Pope wished his former trusted aide well and then sent him away.

Human pardons are hugely different from God's pardons. God does not say to the sinner: "You are forgiven and pardoned from your sins and that's it! Stay away from Me and all that is Mine." Rather, God says: "You are completely forgiven and pardoned for all your sins. You are welcomed with outstretched arms into My family forever. I claim you as one of my children and you now have access to all that is Mine for this life and forever!"

"...The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

"But as many as received Him (Jesus), to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).

God is offering you forgiveness and a full pardon for all your sins, those you have forgotten and better still, those you cannot forget. This pardon is available to you today free of charge. To every honest sinner, God offers full forgiveness through the Lord Jesus Christ. But He goes far beyond the concept of a pardon. God also justifies the sinner.

Justification is a great Bible truth. Because of the satisfaction Christ brought to God when He answered for every one of our sins on the Cross, God is able to do something awesome for the sinner. He justifies the sinner. Not only does the saved sinner have a clear record before God, but God welcomes the sinner into His presence with a righteousness and perfection that can never be altered or lost. Because a sinner has embraced God's Son as Saviour, God sees the justified sinner IN Christ and He can bestow upon the former sinner all the blessings of one totally accepted in Christ.

God's forgiveness, pardon and justification goes far beyond any gracious act any human can do for another person. Only God can do for you what needs to be done. You will never have true peace until you are right with God. God is waiting for you to accept His gracious offer. Will you accept Christ today?

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

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Johana's Story

I was born and raised in Colombia, South America and baptized as a baby. I attended Catholic school and did my first communion when I was ten years old. I always believed in God but never really had an interest in establishing a closer relationship with Him. Overall I felt I was a good friend, sister, daughter, student, and I thought God would give me credit for that.

During my mid-teens, I moved to Philadelphia. I was struggling with self-esteem issues and my parents' divorce. I was adjusting to a new country, city, culture, and language. I was working at a very young age, and taking over responsibilities at home due to the absence of my father.

continued...

Thankfully, everything wasn't bad. Unknown to me, God was working in my life!

Alejandra, a Colombian girl with a similar background and struggles, was in my classroom. We became great friends. When we had questions about classes and credits we went to our school counselor, Mrs. Estela. Our conversations included religious beliefs, and one day she invited us to her church meeting. We both worked every Sunday, so couldn't attend, but Alejandra's mother did go. Eventually, both Alejandra and her mother trusted the Lord Jesus for salvation, but I didn't understand much about the Saviour's love for me.

During my late teenage years I was enjoying everything the world had to offer, yet I felt incomplete, empty, and alone, with no inner peace. I knew something was missing, but I just couldn't understand what it was. One Friday night, I called Alejandra to invite her to the movies. In return, she said: "I was invited to a Bible study and I promised I will go; would you like to come?" My response was: "No thanks! I will find someone else to go with me to the movies."

Surprisingly, I did not find anyone to go with me, so I accepted Alejandra's invitation. The Bible study had already started when we got there. On the white

board, in red ink, were the words: 'The 4 Gospels'. Throughout the discussion, I was very lost because I did not know that the word 'gospel' meant good news. After the session, everyone was very welcoming. The food was great and the games were fun. I left with questions that night and went back for answers the following Friday. Those answers brought more questions, until I noticed my need for

salvation. My interest started to grow and Friday night Bible study became the place where I wanted to be every week.

**One night
I understood that
He who knew no sin,
came into the world
and gave Himself
as a sacrifice to
save me.**

John 1:12 says, "*But as many as received Him (Jesus), to them He gave the right to become children of God*". This verse made all the difference to me. I

understood I was created by God, but I was not His child because I had not yet received Him. I realized that although I was good by my own moral standards, I was still a sinner before God (Romans 3:23). One night I understood that He who knew no sin, came into the world and gave Himself as a sacrifice to save me (1 Peter 2:24). His blood cleansed me from all my sin (1 John 1:7). Although I did nothing to deserve it, nor did I earn it with good works, I was given eternal life and a purpose in life. He can do the same for you. Receive him today!

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The pictures were all too clear! The little girl was struggling to escape from the grip on her arm as the determined man dragged her away. The video camera went unnoticed until the “missing child alert” went out. Then the search for clues to her disappearance quickly turned up the little camera, and the tape was viewed — and broadcast widely on TV.

The phones at the police station began to ring: “I know that man!” “It can’t be my neighbour. He seems like such a nice man!”

But it was the seemingly ‘nice’ neighbour; the callers all recognized him: his face, his clothes, even his tattoos. The court-appointed defence lawyer had an impossible task. There was no arguing with the camera.

Another unnoticed camera was rolling one night in a little store. The night clerk was alone behind the counter when a young man came in looking for money or drugs. The clerk refused him. The intruder leaped over the counter, gun in hand, and fired a fatal shot. There were no living witnesses but the videotape that was running showed the whole sequence of events clearly. Another impossible task for a defence lawyer!

Even the small details of everyday life do not escape that continual surveillance. We little realize how often our actions are caught on many little cameras.

Technology has made possible a huge network of surveillance, although it cannot compare with the all-seeing eye of God.

That is something to think of with wonder and awe. We know that God is omniscient. He knows all, even the “*thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Hebrews 4:12) — the acts we only think about.

The Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, said, “*Nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known*” (Luke 8:17). If even our sinful thoughts are known to God, we have no chance, through our own efforts, of entering into His holy Heaven. Nothing corrupt or defiling can enter there.

But God has made a way. He gave His Son, His only beloved Son, to die for our sins. Isn’t that just overwhelming? God’s Word, the Bible, says it so plainly: “*While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8).

“*Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered*” (Romans 4:7). Sins — covered and forgiven! And it is GOD who covers them, that same all-seeing, all-knowing God who says “*their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more*” (Hebrews 8:12).

Have you admitted to God that you are a sinner and received His forgiveness? There is no way into Heaven without it!

Bible Truth Publishers



How Does a Snake “See” in the Dark?

We can't usually see in the dark. Why not?

You're probably thinking, "Because there's no light!"

Well, actually, you're wrong...there's lots of light, it's just not the type that we normally use to see with! Let's talk a bit about light and start with the sun.

Our sun is a ball of mainly hydrogen gas. Inside the sun, burning hydrogen releases electromagnetic radiation. Visible light, the red-to-violet colours of the rainbow, is one type of electromagnetic radiation. We use it to see. Another type of electromagnetic radiation is infrared light. We can't use infrared light to see, but when it is absorbed by our skin, we sense it as heat. Any warm object (like a pot of tea or a person) will release infrared light, but only hot objects (like the sun, a light bulb filament, or a wood fire) release visible light.

A snake's eyes also use visible light to see. But some, such as rattlesnakes, have something extra - pit organs. These are little pits near the nostrils. Infrared light from the snake's surroundings enter the pits and are converted into electrical signals. These signals then go through other nerves to the same part of the brain where signals from its eyes are sent.

Because a mouse is warmer than the background around it, the infrared light it releases is different than that released by

the background. You can think of it as the mouse having different infrared colours than the background. So, if there was a mouse in the dark, even though we can't see it, the snake, using its pit organs, can "see" the mouse...and then have a tasty snack!

The ability of some snakes to see in the dark by making use of a type of light that is in the dark reminds me of another light that we read of in the Bible.

Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life"* (John 8:12). If we don't know the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, it's as if we are walking in darkness. To walk in darkness is to live a life that is apart from God, condemned by God for our sin (John 3:18).

John 1:9 tells us that the true Light, the Lord Jesus, is come into the world. Like the infrared light, this Light is constantly shining in the darkness (John 1:5) and will make what is in the dark, our sins, visible to us (John 3:20). When we learn about the Lord Jesus in the Bible, we begin to understand how sinful we are, just as when a light shines and shows us something we couldn't see before. When we trust Christ as our Saviour, the problem of our sin is taken care of and we no longer walk in darkness. May you discover that the Lord Jesus, this Light, is available for you today!

Recently I rode on the London Eye. As I was slowly lifted high above the city of London, I was able to take in the grandeur of the architecture. The historical buildings, built when times were very different, gleamed in the bright sunshine. Nothing impeded the view. The glass oval pod that was carrying me around allowed me to look in all directions. I was impressed by all that I saw. From my lofty position, the City was delightful.

Once the ride was over, I walked beside the Thames River. There, at an outdoor restaurant near the base of the Eye, I noticed a man. He was dressed in ill-fitting dark clothes. His hair was a matted mess. It seemed like his eyes were darting about anxiously as he scurried from one waste basket to another, eating any food he found. He then went to all the empty tables and looked through what was left behind for more to eat.

During the ride, everything in London had looked serene and beautiful. Down on the ground, I could see that not everything was as it seemed from above.

So it is with some of us. We may look at ourselves and think we are doing well. We may feel impressed by what we see in our lives, but *“the Lord looks at the heart”* (1 Samuel 16:7).

He knows our hidden motives and the sin that we can hide from others and even ourselves. Because of what is in our hearts, we are not right with God. We are not fit to be with God in Heaven. Thankfully, once we discover our state, we are not left without a remedy. God prepared a way so that we can be made right with Him.

He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ who became a man. He lived a life of perfection and so was able and willing to be our substitute. God *“made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us”* (2 Corinthians 5:21). The Lord Jesus Christ took our sin so that our lives can be made clean. When we put our trust in Him, God does see us as fit for Heaven.

LONDON EYE



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