

A close-up photograph of a rusty, square padlock attached to a green wooden door. The padlock is heavily corroded with orange and yellow rust. The door has green paint, and the left side of the image shows a vertical strip of orange and yellow paint. The word "Via" is written in a large, brown, serif font with a white outline in the upper left corner.

Via

***Is your
future
secure?***

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EDITORIAL

We live in uncertain times. Many of us are looking for security. We want peace and safety for ourselves and our loved ones. Perhaps you are like Chelsea, from the children's article, and you know that you are in a terrible mess. There is hope and peace and eternal security found in the Lord Jesus Christ. Often we try to find security in the wrong places like Kelly Clark initially did. Perhaps you will suddenly find yourself in dangerous circumstances as did Scott Hayes and the Iraqi soldier. Potentially you may have a golf ball or another object fly close to your head, reminding you that you need to consider your eternal future.

Eternity is real. If you accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, you can be sure of being with Him in Heaven, the place of peace and safety prepared for those who are saved. The only sure place of security is through a relationship with God's Son.

We hope that you will enjoy all of the articles and that something you read will help you to do more than give eternity your best shot. All the Bible quotations in these articles are from the New King James version.

Hidden Padlock

We have hidden a picture of a padlock, which is used to keep something secure, somewhere in the magazine. See if you can find it! Send your name and address to Via Magazine, Box 551, Portage la Prairie, MB R1N 3B9 Canada. Tell us where you found the padlock and we will send you a small prize.



Atrocities and tragedies abound. News headlines tell of heart-breaking events all over the globe. The world is in bad shape.

How can we be secure in such troubled and uncertain times? Do we invest in security systems? Do we build greater walls around ourselves emotionally and physically? Do we hoard water, food and gas in case of disaster? Do we blame God and choose to push Him out of our lives?

God offers hope. *"The eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy"* (Psalm 33:18).

God is aware of every injustice. We don't know how often He intervenes in lives, seeking to protect people and point them to Jesus Christ, the Saviour. God uses His Word, His people and circumstances to gain our attention. Yes, God does judge sin. He

must because He is righteous. But, God is also full of mercy and grace, *"not willing that any should perish"* (2 Peter 3:9). Did you know that God judged His only Son on your behalf? The Lord Jesus took the punishment that our sins deserved. He bore it all and satisfied God's wrath. The wrath that was incurred by our pride, disobedience and unbelief.

Is there security for such troubled times? YES! To be in God's will provides absolute security. What is God's will? Firstly, that you acknowledge your need of Him as your own Saviour and trust Him alone for the forgiveness of your sins. *"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him"* (John 3:36). Secondly, God wants you to walk with Him and bring Him glory! He will give you light for your life and show you the path that He wants you to follow.

There are beautiful promises of hope in God's Word that He can never break. His Word says, *"Perfect love casts out fear"* (1 John 4:18). Have you accepted God's perfect love shown through His Son? God's Word says, *"For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you'"* (Isaiah 41:13). *"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand"* (John 10:28). Placing yourself in God's grip, gives you the greatest security a person can ever have. He will not let you go!



Call of God

I recently attended a reception to recognize the faithful dedication of two women, Marian Ronald and Daisy Hanna. As nurses they have each spent 50 years at the Loloma Mission in Zambia, Africa. They do not seek attention for themselves but tell how the Lord called, equipped and enabled them to do the necessary work.

Primarily the women went to Africa to tell the good news of salvation to the people they met while providing nursing care. However, they have each contributed to the Mission in many ways. Daisy and Marian are involved with Bible Studies, sewing classes, buying food from local producers, clinics, surgeries, midwifery, medical transportation and the feeding and clothing of widows and orphans.

They have seen many changes over the years, particularly within the area of communication. It used to take three or four weeks to send a letter out of Africa and a similar amount of time to receive a reply. Today with Skype, internet and cell-phones, the response is almost immediate.

At times the dirt roads were treacherous. Skirting fallen trees and straddling deep holes on the dirt surfaces added time to the transportation of critically ill patients. Today, many roads are paved. They



allow for quick travel, which can save lives in medical emergencies. But, one thing that has never changed is the message of the Gospel.

When Marian and Daisy first went to Africa they told the people that God loved them enough to send His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in their place. Today the nurses continue to tell the Africans that God loved them enough to send the Lord Jesus Christ to die on the cross for sin that was not His own.

Sin makes each of us imperfect. We make mistakes and commit more sin. Sin leads to death. Unlike us, God is sinless and perfect. The Bible tells us that, "*the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 6:23). To have God as our Father, and to be with Him in Eternity, we need to be sinless and perfect in His eyes, and the only way we can be, is to have faith in Christ as our Saviour so His righteousness can be credited to us. Because the Lord Jesus took our place, God is able to forgive our sin and call us His children when we place our trust in the finished work of His Son.

It is good that not everything changes!

ALIVE!

“It’s a miracle you are alive,” the doctor said as she indicated the reports and x-rays showing water-filled lungs and low oxygen levels. Scott had proven that, *“there is but a step between me and death”* (1 Samuel 20:3).

Vacationing Scott and Kim Hayes walked on the beach in Mexico. They headed to a sandbar where the Ameca River flows into the Pacific Ocean. A mother and daughter were wading back from the other side of the river with their hands full of beautiful shells. “The water is only knee-deep! We just went across and back - it’s easy!” they said. Scott decided to cross over to get some shells for Kim. Just ten feet away from the shore, Scott stepped into what felt like a hole. All

the sand whisked out from under his feet. He was dragged under the surface, trapped in a vortex of fierce water where the river meets the ocean. Kim pleaded, “Someone save my husband! He’s going to drown!”

Stuart Swenson was also on vacation with family and friends. His group were on the sandbar hoping to see stingrays. Stuart had walked about waist deep into the water ahead of the rest of his group when he heard his wife yelling to tell him that his friend, Pat, needed his help at the mouth of the river. He saw Pat standing in chest deep water and another person’s head barely visible in the waves. He began running towards his friend, grabbing a child’s life jacket on the way.

Five critical minutes had passed since Scott had first gone under. He thought he was having a terrible nightmare but he would briefly ‘come to’ enough to grasp reality. Stuart dove towards the stranger and swam



to him, thinking he would quickly pull him back to shore. He had been vigorously training for an Ironman triathlon. However, even with his legs kicking as hard as he could, the pair were rapidly being swept away from the shore.

Pat had crossed the mouth of the river to move down the deserted beach closer to where the two men were floating. He continued to stay in line with them as they drifted away, waving his arms to attract the attention of a fishing boat. Slowly the boat turned around.

At this point, Scott's lungs were full of water and his oxygen levels dangerously low. When the fishing boat finally reached them, one of the men dove in to help push Scott up the ladder, as the other two men in the boat pulled him up. They began the bumpy ride to the marina where an ambulance was waiting.

Scott was in critical condition in the intensive care unit with a possibility of brain damage. Thankfully, he passed all his neurological tests and four days later, he was out of the hospital and enjoying time with his family. God had the right man in place at the right time to save Scott.

Scott had taken swimming lessons as a child and had cheated to pass the tests. While his face was in the water and his arms were doing the motions, he walked all the way across the pool. His instructors either did not realize or they didn't mind that he couldn't swim. However, when the real test

came and he needed to swim in the ocean, his 'faking it' failed him.

Similarly there are people in the world who are pretending to be Christians. Maybe they are hoping that if they just have enough faith, good works, prayers, or church attendance they will manage to be accepted into Heaven for eternity. Faking Christianity is not good enough when the real test, death, comes. We have to "KNOW" we are saved. Romans 5:6 says "*For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly*". When Scott was in the water that day, he was completely and

When Scott was in the water that day, he was completely and utterly without strength.

utterly without strength. Helpless! He needed a saviour. Just as we, while in our sins, are helpless to do anything to save ourselves. We need a Saviour. Stuart was Scott's saviour that day in the rough waters. The Lord Jesus can be your Saviour if you trust Him.

As an eighteen year old, Scott realized that with his sin he could not meet God's standard of perfection and one day be in Heaven. He saw for himself that God had sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to take his punishment for him. Scott accepted that when the Lord Jesus said on the cross, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30), the payment for Scott's sin was complete. There was no more struggling for Scott. Jesus did it all. Trust Him!



An Iraqi Soldier's Prayer

My story begins in Northern Iraq where my family were part of a minority group known as Assyrian Christians. We were 'nominal' Christians - Christians in name only.

My family was faithful in attending church and adhering to church practices. However, those practices never gave me any peace within, nor did I have the assurance of Heaven or the forgiveness of my sins. I was not a 'real' Christian. I thought no one could know for sure that he would be in Heaven when he died. I believed that we would stand before God one day and He would then decide, according to our deeds, where we would spend eternity. That frightened me.

After I had been in the army for eight years during the Iraqi – Iranian

war, my country decided to invade Kuwait and start another war. I had a six day leave before the war started. I took my wife and son to Northern Iraq and we stayed in a small village. I was stranded from my unit and ended up being branded as a deserter. This put me in danger of immediate execution, so I fled. The mayor of the village, in which I was hiding, announced that all deserters must immediately leave and return to their army base or face execution in front of their families.

Let me pause in my story and ask you: What would you do if you heard such an announcement - that tomorrow morning at 8 a.m. you would be executed in front of your family? Facing the death penalty is horrific beyond imagination, but leaving this world for an eternity without hope is far more horrifying.

During our sleepless night, my wife and I cried out to God and prayed for three things; an end to the bombing, a pardon for the deserters,

and a discharge from the army. God answered all three requests. A radio newscaster announced that the United States President would call a cease-fire. The Iraqi President gave a pardon and a discharge to all deserters. I returned to Baghdad and I was released from the army without any charges. I thanked God for answering my prayer – even the prayer of a lost sinner.

Looking for a brighter future, we travelled to Jordan. When we arrived, I heard that there was a church service for Iraqi refugees. My wife and I went. I heard the clear message of salvation from God's Holy Word, the Bible.

I had always believed that Jesus came to save 'us' but never thought that He came to save 'me'. I believed in Him as 'our' Saviour but never

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as 'my' Saviour. I thought that if I repented and God erased my past sins, that I could then keep the rest of my life clean. I thought I needed Him to do His part, and then I would do mine.

I did not realize that a person could know for sure where he would be five minutes after he died. But when I heard the Word of God, it was so clear: *"He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life"* (1 John 5:12).

The Word of God said that I could have eternal life, not by my works, prayers, baptism, or anything else, but by having the Son of God. I asked myself, "How could I have the Son of God?" The answer was in the Word of God: *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock"* (Revelation 3:20). I understood that the Lord had been standing at my heart's door for almost 32 years. All the things that happened were God's efforts to come into my life – His voice speaking to me.

I read from Romans Chapter 5 verses 6 to 8, *"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly ... But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"*. When I looked at these verses, I asked myself, "Is there anything else left for me to do in order to be saved?"

The Lord Jesus, on the cross, cried, *"It is finished!"* (John 19:30). I believed His Word and needed nothing more. I was no longer a nominal Christian or a mere professor of Christianity – I was a possessor of God's wonderful salvation and eternal life. God saved me from the physical death penalty in Iraq when my wife and I cried to Him. God is at work in your life as well. God's desire for me back then was to bring me to the full blessing of spiritual salvation from eternal death when He forgave my sins. That's His desire for you too.

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Ty's T



Ty Parker was like any other 9 year old boy. He loved swimming, football, soccer, hunting, fishing, hockey, and air soft guns. He loved anything with a motor - quads, dirt bikes, even the lawn mower. Ty could spend hours creating things with his Lego, spent his summers camping at Clear Lake, riding his bike, sitting by the campfire and just being with his family. While on this year's camping trip, his headaches began. On August 19, 2015, Ty was diagnosed with a cancerous brain tumor. It was shocking news for him and his family yet through his diagnosis and the days leading up to the necessary brain surgery, he possessed strength, courage and faith.

The evening before his brain surgery, Ty and his dad Jon were putting some Lego sets together. He was tired and weak, and he sat back

in his chair with two longer pieces of Lego. Jon could see him thinking. He snapped them together in the formation of a "t". He looked at his dad, held up the "t" and said, "Dad, T for Ty". Then he brought it back down, touching the two pieces. A number of seconds passed then in his weak voice he said "Dad, you know, sometimes when

I think of the 'T' in my name, I think of the cross". The photo on this page is the very cross he made that evening. This was the final two pieces of Lego he put together. The Cross.

Not just any cross, but THE cross. Why was this so important to Ty? Because he loved the One who died on it for his sin, Jesus Christ. Ty wasn't very old when he understood that he needed a Saviour. He entered into a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus when he was seven years old. He knew that his sins were forgiven,

his debt was paid and his future was secure. He was sure of his salvation. He knew God was in control of his life and health. This gave him peace as he faced the battle of his life.

Sadly, Ty developed complications as a result of his surgery and passed away on August 31, 2015. He is now with his Saviour. In life and death,

the cross made all the difference to Ty. What about you? What does the cross of Jesus Christ mean to you? It can change your life and your destiny. You need a Saviour. Acts 16:31 says, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”* In life you can know peace, joy and hope for eternity and in death, you need not be afraid.

Bubbles

Bubbles have a way of bursting quickly, long before you want them to. That's the way so many pleasures in life are. One minute we're having fun and the next minute that fun is gone, leaving a sticky mess behind. It kind of reminds us of sin. One minute of doing what we want and not what God wants seems like a great idea. But before long we find ourselves trapped in the sticky mess of sin and rebellion.

God says, *“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 6:23). Sin is doing what seems right to us without caring what God says about it. We've all done it, but the consequences are really awful.

Warm water might be all you need to clean up after making bubbles, but it takes a lot more to clean up sin. Jesus Christ came to die on the cross and shed His blood to wash away all sin for

everyone who believes on Him. The Bible says, *“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7). Dying on the cross for sin cost the perfect Lord Jesus a tremendous amount of suffering, but it won't do us any good unless we recognize two things.

1: We are sinners who need a Saviour. We are not just a little bit messy with sin, we are hopelessly tangled in it and badly need a Saviour.

2: We must accept the Lord Jesus and His shed blood in order to be washed from our sins. It doesn't do any good just to believe that warm water will wash sticky hands clean without actually using it. It does no good to believe that Jesus lived and died without accepting Him as your Saviour. *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved”* (Acts 16:31).

Bible Truth Publishers

Chelsea Chased a What?

Dear Children,

Grandma and I know that children like riddles, so here is a riddle for you. Tell me ...

What kind of dog is white ...

Has black spots all over it ...

And a light yellow spot on its forehead ...

And also smells like a skunk?

Did you guess?



"Sure, Grandpa. It sounds like your dog Chelsea ... she's a Dalmatian. But how come she smells like a skunk?"

Well, children, this is how it happened. You know that I take Chelsea out every night around 9:30 for our usual walk. She likes to chase any rabbits she can find and also any cats that have strayed onto the property.

Well, this time Chelsea chased the wrong cat! This one was a "POLECAT," or better known as a skunk! When she came back to me, I could smell her before I saw her! I said, "Oh, no! She's been sprayed by a skunk!"

Chelsea was rubbing both sides of her head on the grass, trying her best to get rid of the odor. I said to her, "Chelsea, we didn't train you to

chase skunks! So now, how do you think you are going to get back into the house? Grandma will never let you in smelling like that!”

Grandma was horrified when she caught the odor of Chelsea. She said, “Let’s get that dog into the barn right now!” Then Grandma brought out a bucket of hot water with special soap and three quarts of tomato juice.

Right about then, I got to thinking that we did not train Chelsea to chase cats or skunks, yet here was the result of what she did.

When God created our first parents, Adam and Eve, they were without sin. But when Satan came along and tempted Eve, they both disobeyed God and did what they were told not to do. So the very first sin in the Bible is disobedience. Colossians 3:20 says, “*Children, obey your parents in all things.*” Do you always obey your parents? Probably not. Because you are a sinner, just like me. And we aren’t allowed into God’s house with our sins, just like Chelsea wasn’t allowed into our house with the skunk odor all over her.

Tomato juice is great for removing the odor of a skunk. Grandma poured the tomato juice all over Chelsea’s head, making sure the juice did not get into Chelsea’s eyes. Then Grandma used soap and water to wash her all over to remove the tomato juice and then dried her with a towel. The place on Chelsea’s head where the skunk sprayed her looked like a dull, yellow stain.

Children, isn’t that much like us? We can never get into God’s house, Heaven, without having our sins washed away.

“All sins, Grandpa?”

“Yes, all sins! Disobedience, telling lies, swearing, stealing and others are all sin. And do you know how we can have all those sins washed away? The answer is 1 John 1:7. “*The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*”

Now then, Chelsea’s skunk odor was washed off, and she was ready to come back into the house. By now it was 10:30. When Grandma opened the door, Chelsea was the first one in, making a dash for her own bed. And Grandma and I and our grandson, who was visiting us, were right behind her.

Chelsea could do nothing to help herself, but we were ready and willing to help her, and she was willing to let us. Now for you and me, there is nothing that we can do to get to Heaven. The Lord Jesus Christ did it all for us at the place called Calvary. His blood can wash us clean from every stain of sin. Psalm 51:7 says, “*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow*”. Grandma and I hope you are willing to let the Lord Jesus wash you clean from your sins so you will be allowed into Heaven.

Love,

Grandma, Grandpa
and Chelsea

What Do You Know?

What's the most important thing you know? It's a huge question! Education is a big part of our lives. We spend years going through elementary, middle, and high school, and then we are strongly encouraged to go to university or college. We spend a lot of money on learning - and possibly a good amount of time and energy as well!

Hopefully, the things we've learned will be useful, but there are so many lessons that take place outside of a classroom. We might meet our friends at school, but there are no classes on "how to be friendly." We might learn how to solve math problems, but that won't help us with personal problems. We might be taught how to use a globe, and where nations of the world are, but there is a very high chance you won't learn how to get to Heaven.

One lesson that is not always taught is what the Bible says about us. The Bible, God's word, is true, and we can trust what it teaches us.

In Romans 3:23, we read that, "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*". Every single one of us has disobeyed God. We do what we know we shouldn't do, and don't do what we know we should.

God knows everything we've done, and cannot allow us into Heaven with our sin. Because He is completely just, He must punish our sins.

But God also knew that there was one possible way for us to be free from our sin. He knew that there was only one Person who could be punished in our place. That was His Son, Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that He had no sin in Him at all (1 John 3:5).

Because Jesus was punished for our sin, God is able to forgive us, and bring us to Heaven after we die. But not only that, He wants us to know Him personally. He wants us to know how much He loves us. Not with a weak or changing love, but with an everlasting love. He loves you so much that He gave His only Son for you (John 3:16).

God doesn't leave us guessing about the state of our soul. 1 John 5:13 tells us that we can know we have eternal life! Every person who trusts the Lord Jesus as their personal Saviour will be saved forever. He is the most important person you can know! Do you know Him?

Value of your life

Which is worth more - your **LIFE** or your **SOUL**?



What is your life worth? People don't ask this question often but it is worth considering.

The value of our life depends on who is doing the evaluation. Our neighbours might value our life based on our contributions to the community. A chemist might value us based on the chemicals in our bodies (which are probably worth less than \$50). An insurance adjustor would establish our worth by our future earnings based on our job, education and age. Famous people have value because others pay to see or hear them.

Furthermore, these values are very temporary. Values can change suddenly. They changed in the summer of 2015, when the wealth of the world decreased by \$11 trillion. Naturally speaking, our planet has more than 7 billion people so there is no reason to think our life should be valued more than others by our Creator. In fact, God views our lives as temporary and non-substantive: *"For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away"* (James 4:14).

Some place a value on our lives, but God sees the value of our souls.

Our souls are intensely personal because they are our eternal beings. Their value cannot be measured by insurance adjustments or popularity. The Bible asks *"what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"* (Mark 8:36). Our souls are more valuable than the possession of the wealth of the entire world for a lifetime. Wealth decays, but our souls will last eternally. Our souls are our identities and the vessels in which we will experience joy or suffering for all eternity.

God values our souls much more than the world we live in. The value He places on our souls is seen by His actions: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16). Every person who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ and His saving work is freed from the consequences of sin and his or her soul will dwell with God eternally. The worth of your soul is determined not by your accomplishments or relationships – it is determined entirely by what you do with God's love and offer of salvation. Don't neglect the future of your soul!

Kelly Clark

Olympian Snowboarder

If you had no friends, no money, no success, no breaks in life, no significance and no future you could understand the dark feeling of being empty inside. Perhaps you have a horrible inner void, screaming out to be filled, that hauntingly echoes through the hollow caverns of your life. But what if you had everything above – yet, with each milestone reached, the gnawing empty void at the core of who you are grew stronger? Then what?

In 2002, 18 year old Kelly Clark, became the first-ever American gold medalist in half-pipe snowboarding at the Salt Lake City Olympics. At the top of her sport, with a gold medal hanging around her neck Kelly said: “I had achieved everything that was in my heart to do and at the same time I wasn’t finding the fulfillment I was expecting to get from it.”



So Kelly did what she thought would fill the void in her heart. She tried to be the rowdiest partier of all. But neither her gold medal nor her partying was enough to take away Kelly’s deep sense of emptiness. “I had spiraled into this depression and into this place that was just real dark. ...Snowboarding’s still going great. I’ve got it made. I’m living the dream, but on the inside I’m dying.”

A couple of years had passed and she was gearing up for the Snowboarding World Cup season. From an outside perspective her life was picture-perfect and together. At the bottom of the pipe, a girl who had fallen on both runs was crying. The girl’s friend said, “Hey, it’s all right, God still loves you.” There was just something about that comment that caught Kelly’s attention. She couldn’t shake it or deny that it stirred something up in her.

“God still loves you.” She had qualified for the finals but did she qualify to be loved by God? “All I could think about,” Kelly said, “was what if this God loved me and do I qualify for that? I needed to know.

If God loves this person, maybe God would love me. Maybe that would give me fulfillment and significance. I believe as humans we were created for significance and I was looking for it everywhere and I just didn't find it."

Kelly Clark literally ran back to her hotel room to find the Bible she knew would be there. But, as she opened the Bible she didn't know where to look or start. How could she find out about God's love for her in this big book?

She found out that the girl she had overheard was staying in the same hotel so she knocked on her door and said: "Hi, my name is Kelly, and I think you might be a Christian. I think you need to tell me about God." Kelly reported, "The girl started sharing God's love with me and how

She told me that it was about a relationship and she told me that Jesus loved me.

that God created me for a purpose ... and that God loved me. She told me that it was about a relationship and she told me that Jesus loved me. It was what I really needed to hear."

No one thinks an accident or a sickness or an injury is something to appreciate or value. But for Kelly Clark a knee injury gave her time to seriously look into the deepest and most important matter in her life. Not distracted by competitions or practices, she focused on her spiritual need to be right with God, to know

the joy of having her sins all forgiven, and of having inner peace.

One day, during those months of being sidelined by her injury, she accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as her very own personal Saviour. What Kelly Clark found was not religion – she found Christ.

That's Kelly Clark. Now what about you? Are you satisfied or are you experiencing a certain emptiness inside? Do you have a relationship with God through Christ that has brought new meaning to your life? Is Christ the inner source of your joy?

Prayerfully think about these three questions and their answers from God's Word – the Holy Bible.

Does God love you, even if you have never loved Him?

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Can you earn God's love and salvation by self-efforts?

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

How can you be saved and enter into a relationship and fellowship with God?

"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).

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Someone is watching you!

Many times we are unaware of being watched, but security cameras are tracking our movements. When the bombs exploded at the Boston Marathon, police and other security forces were able to use security camera footage to reconstruct the event. In Manitoba, a 57 year old woman left home for one of her regular long walks. She was preparing for a hiking holiday in British Columbia. Police have been able to use footage from security cameras to learn about parts of her journey. However, somewhere along the way something happened and she did not return home.

It is a nasty feeling to know that we are being watched for sinister reasons. But, there is comfort in knowing that those who care for us are watching. For example, my young granddaughter likes to explore playgrounds. When she is venturing into new territory she will repeatedly look back to make sure that I am still keeping watch. She feels comfortable and able to explore knowing that someone else is making sure she is playing safely.

Although we may not know it, Someone is watching our every moment. Thankfully God has no

sinister design, but He does see our actions and know our thoughts. God “*knows the secrets of the heart*” (Psalm 44:21).

God is watching us to see what we will do with His Son. He wants to have a relationship with each one of us; however, there is a barrier between us and God because “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). We are sinners but we are not without hope. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only remedy for the barrier between the sinner and God. Jesus died on the cross, He paid the penalty for sin and bridged the gap between us and God.

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:5, 6).

In order to enjoy a right relationship with God as our Heavenly Father, we must personally trust the Lord Jesus Christ and accept Him as our Lord and Saviour. We are then assured of an eternity in Heaven. As well, we can be comforted knowing that our loving Father is watching over us every moment. “*For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers*” (1 Peter 3:12).



The Shiny Stone

For Erasmus Jacobs, it was just another day. As the 15 year old wandered near the river on his father's farm in South Africa, he noticed a stone shining in the sun. He casually picked it up and put it in his pocket. Later, he used it in a game of five-stones (or knucklebones). As he played, his mother noticed the shiny stone. She mentioned this to her neighbour and when he saw the stone, he offered to buy it. She said, "You can have it if you want it" - and she gave it to him.

Eventually it was sent to a mineralogist for examination. The 'stone' was found to be a magnificent diamond - 21.25 carat! The year was 1867 and the diamond was the first to be found in South Africa. It became known as the "Eureka Diamond" (eureka being a Greek word meaning "I found it!"). Cut to a cushion-shaped brilliant, the diamond is on display at the Mine Museum in Kimberley, South Africa.

But...what made Erasmus pick the stone up in the first place? What caused his mother to take notice of it?

What caught the neighbour's attention? It was the stone's shine. There's a precious message here. Is there anything that shines out in this dark world like God's love? Is there anything to compare with the love of the Lord Jesus, the "*light of the world*" (John 8:12)? He died to forgive our sins and wants to shine His glorious, eternal light into our hearts (2 Corinthians 4:6).

What a good thing Erasmus didn't just walk past the shiny stone. Friend, have you found the glorious message of the gospel? What is your reaction? Don't 'walk past' God's offer of eternal life, and leave it lying there, as it were. It cost God His only Son. It cost the Lord Jesus His life's blood.

You surely wouldn't treat the gospel message as something to be picked up as a curious thing, and 'played with', like Erasmus did with the stone - or even 'give it away', like Erasmus's mother? You would be saying, in effect, that God's offer of salvation is for others, not for me. The treasure of eternal life is a 'find' far greater than all the diamonds in the world. Trust the Saviour today and let His glorious light shine into your heart!



Giving It Your

Best Shot

head would have responded had it been struck. But, given the speed with which the golf ball flew past my face, I think, at a minimum, I would have collapsed to the sidewalk.

My walk interrupted by the near hit, I thought I should at least recover the errant ball. Eventually, I found it in a bush. I took it to coffee with me wondering whether the golfer had even given it a second thought. Was it the golfer's best shot? Probably not, but even if it was, the consequences were minimal.

As I drank my Americano, my mind went to another sphere – a spiritual reflection. Over the years I have politely asked people if they are going to be in Heaven after they die. More than once I've been told: "Well, I'm giving it my best shot." Outstanding and upright citizens of our country have told me – "Sir, I expect so. I definitely am giving it my best shot." Others, living rather dark, fractured, and broken lives have told me basically the same thing: "Dude, I don't know, but I'm gonna give it my best

I was enjoying a brisk walk on a late February day. While admiring the spectacular beauty of Langley, British Columbia and appreciating the early spring blossoms appearing on the trees and the ducks peacefully swimming in the ditches, something flew past my head. Normally, I wouldn't wear a helmet when I am just out for a walk! But tomorrow morning I will be more careful and more watchful.

I looked across the street to see where the flying object might have originated. It was from a golf course. Golfers were teeing off and giving it their best shot. I don't know how my

shot.” A slight difference in how they articulated their spiritual strategy but the bottom line was the same.

Giving it your best shot may be a good strategy for golfing and for other things in your life, but it’s disastrous if that’s your approach to Heaven.

Jesus met a man one night who was sincerely giving Heaven his best shot. There was no mediocrity in his life. Nicodemus pursued excellence. He planned on being in Heaven. If living a good life, if being a strong believer, if being genuine and sincere about his faith and being diligent and devout about his religion – if that’s what it takes to get to Heaven, Nicodemus would make Heaven for sure.

But, Nicodemus was in for the shock of his life. He discovered that giving it your best shot was not acceptable to God – no matter who tried. He

The chances of making it to Heaven by giving it your best shot are not merely slim – they are nil.

would never be in the Kingdom of God if all he had was his best shot at it. Jesus told him: *“Unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God”* (John 3:3).

The chances of making it to Heaven by giving it your best shot are not merely slim – they are nil. There is a 0% chance you will be in Heaven if all you have is your lifetime of giving it your best shot.

The new birth, of which Jesus spoke, is an absolute necessity – it is the only entrance requirement for acceptance into God’s family and to Heaven. *“You must be born again”* (John 3:7). Jesus wasn’t merely suggesting it would be a good thing. He said it was a **‘must’**.

A sinner is ‘born again’ the moment he or she consciously repents of sin and places their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. Jesus told Nicodemus that *“whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:15).

The Bible is clear – no one gets to Heaven based on their sincere efforts or personal merit. Our deeds and works have no value when it comes to the forgiveness of our sins and acceptance by God. You must receive, by faith, Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour or you will miss Heaven for sure.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves (this is not your own doing); it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Giving something your best shot is okay when it comes to an exam in school, or performance at work, or even in golfing. But when it comes to eternal life and being in Heaven, it will result in disaster.

Think about it.

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