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Perspective

Paul in Rome

By Larry Urbaniak

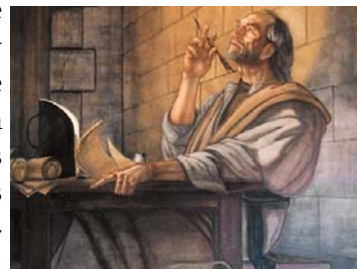
2 Timothy 1:16-17 – *“May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me.”*

Why was it necessary for any Christian to “search hard” for Paul in Rome? The KJV says when Onesiphorus was in Rome “he sought me [Paul] out very diligently, and found me.” Just previously in this letter to Timothy, Paul had stated that he had been deserted by or turned away from everyone in the province of Asia. He even specifically names two who apparently led others away from him.

One train of thought about these events comes from early church period information. Suetonius, a Roman historian who recorded much about the lives of the Caesars, notes that Claudius expelled both Christians and Jews from Rome thinking that Christ was their leader. Acts 18:2 “...because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome....” seems to confirm this.

Although there is confusion about the timing of what happened when in Rome (and even how often Paul was imprisoned there), it does seem apparent that there was internal conflict among Christians who were in Rome. Paul was somewhat poorly received there and ne-

glected. While under guard Paul openly preached Christ to any who would listen. Men who were in the Praetorian Guard and were converted by Paul spread his views throughout Rome. Was there jealousy or envy by those who were Christian leaders in Rome prior to Paul’s being there? Was there conflict between Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome? Did Roman conversions cause political pressures for persecution and/or expulsion from Rome? Was Paul eventually executed as a result caused by these internal conflicts?



It is apparent that Paul gives cogent advice to Timothy for Christians that we should all heed. In 2 Timothy 2:14-16 Paul writes, “Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.”

Roy's Reflections

The End Of Another Year Or A New Beginning?

By Roy Boswell, 1936-2010

Almost all people know January 1st is the first day of the New Year, but many people think of it as just the end of the past year. So, are you thinking the end of an era or a new beginning? Actually, for the person needing or wanting to start fresh, it makes no difference. Many people have a notion about when their life should get better, and that is what they are saving their best effort for. But to renew our life spiritually, the Bible tells us...*"His mercies are fresh every morning."*



We are admonished to renew our minds daily, *"be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* Each new sunrise is a brand new day, ready for our personal new beginning.

Many people want to return to some space in time when life seemed simpler. I was thinking about time itself...how it moves so quickly when we are not watching and how slow it seems when we are waiting for some event. The events of a life are recorded and deposited into the mind where the bank of our memories reside. They are always available for viewing with the eyes of the heart. Time doesn't really take anything away from us, it is a gift for us to use to our own advantage.

This concept of time, and how to measure it, was the endeavor of the ancients down to our computer gurus of today. Timepieces through the ages took many forms. The ancients marked time with the sundial, the Jews had their civil and religious calendars, the Chinese developed the water clock, astrologers observed the stars and Native Americans marked the seasons by the shell of the turtle. Then came the hour glass, city tower clocks like the famous Big Ben, and then to the digital clocks and LCD wristwatches of today.

Each new Year is depicted graphically with a stooped old man carrying away his scythe having reaped the past year, while the innocent little baby crawls onto the scene in a fresh diaper ready to discover new life. Each of us will make many new starts in various aspects of living;

but the only real New Beginning, that I believe is available on earth to all men, is the New Birth John tells us about: *"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* – John 3:3. This new birth takes place when one received Christ as Lord and Savior into his life. Then the kingdom of God is made alive in his heart.

2 Corinthians 5:17 describes it like this, *"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."* Our own fleshly old man walks slowly away as our new creature (the baby Christian) awakens to spiritual life with Christ, our elder Brother, so that we may become more Christ-like and build a stronger relationship with our loving Heavenly Father. We do this by reading and living the Word of God, the Bible.

Jesus, who is the timepiece of scripture, said, *"Watch therefore, for you know not when the master of the house is coming – in the evening, or at midnight, or at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning – lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.. And what I say to you, I say to all, Watch."* (Mark 13:35-37) In the meantime, we should pray and look forward to the SONRISE of eternity each and every day.





Beside Still Waters...

A Grateful Heart by Donna Mathewson

"It is good to praise the LORD...to proclaim your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night."
Psalm 92:1, 2



David gives us a model for maintaining a grateful heart and an attitude of praise. Gratefulness and attitude are inextricably intertwined. I have made it a practice to start off each day focusing on the love that the Lord has bestowed upon me. I need to focus on His love and grace in my life, to thank Him for His hand in my life, gratefully seeking His guidance and protection. Then, as I go forth into my day, no matter what comes, I am reminded that all that crosses my path is for my good. It has passed through the hands of a Father who loves me intensely and there is no need to worry or to fear.

During the day, I fill my life with praise music. When I drive anywhere in the car, you will see me singing praises to my Father. Praise music lifts my spirits and points me in the right direction. My Father is right there with me, even in the mundane aspects of my life. At the end of the day, I thank the Lord for His faithfulness to me during that day. I may not realize all that He had done for me, for I am often unaware of His hand in my life, but I know He was there, no matter the circumstances. I thank Him for the hardships of the day, as well as the good things that come my way. I ask Him to teach me the lessons that He wants me to learn through my circumstances. Though I may not completely understand why I am where I am, or why He has placed certain situations in my life, I do trust God that the outcome will be for my good and I know that He will continue to change me into the likeness of His Son.

I am so thankful to my Father for showing me His love in the hard times. His faithfulness is

something I can depend on and because of that, I am so grateful to be a daughter of the King. I often wonder how those who do not have Him as their Father can get through each day! They must be so weary and alone. I have been weary (when I focus on the pain instead of the work that God is doing through the pain), but I have never been alone and for that I am grateful. I have a Father that will NEVER leave me or forsake me! I am so blessed and so grateful to be God's daughter. He has put a song in my heart; one that continues to increase as the days and years go by and for that I am so grateful!

Thank you, Father, for your great love and faithfulness to me! Thank you for being with me always, and for guiding and protecting me as I go through each day. Thank you for the wonderfully uplifting praise music that is abundant now and for how much it blesses me and keeps me focused on you and your Son! Thank you for adopting me as your daughter, I am so blessed! In his name I pray. Amen.



"AT TIMES OUR OWN LIGHT GOES OUT AND IS REKINDLED BY A SPARK FROM ANOTHER PERSON. EACH OF US HAS CAUSE TO THINK WITH DEEP GRATITUDE OF THOSE WHO HAVE LIGHTED THE FLAME WITHIN US."

— ALBERT SCHWEITZER





Ebenezers

Doing What is Right

by Jon Larson

"Josiah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." 2 Chronicles 34:2

The father of Josiah, Amon, was such a despicable lout that his own servants slew this evil king in his own palace. Regrettably, the people of Israel refused to see any mitigating circumstances and then put those servants to death. However, on the plus side, they installed Amon's eight year old son, our hero Josiah, as their new king.

By the time Josiah was sixteen, this king was determined not to follow in the ways of his immediate predecessors, but rather to seek after the Living God of his forefather, King David. Sadly, his predecessors had been such depraved idol-worshipping incompetents, that those goofs actually lost the most valuable thing in their possession: The book of the law handed down from Moses. Why? Because they desperately desired and strived to be like all the other nations around them. Their complete lack of faith and judgment placed Josiah between a rock and a hard place, but our hero struggled mightily to regain that which was lost through sheer incompetence.

Yes, the book of the law was lost, so Josiah drew on the only source of information available: those few faithful people of God who remained. From them, Josiah received somewhat sketchy oral presentations about the faithful men of old and the history of his nation. For this blessing, Josiah was truly thankful, but what he really longed for was the book of the law to read for himself. Don't it always seem to go, that you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone?

When Josiah was twenty years old, he looked around his kingdom and was embarrassed, disgusted, and enraged by the utter depravity which had become ingrained in the culture of his people. His kingdom had become a virtual heathen nation and Josiah was determined to turn his kingdom around to be the nation of the Living God. How? By making

things RIGHT. For six years, Josiah broke down all the phony baloney garbage which had infested Israel and turned it into dust. When Josiah completed that mission, he returned to Jerusalem.

Now what? Well, one look at the house of God instantly revealed to Josiah his next mission. The goofs had allowed the house of God to become a shambles. The cost was counted, and the money was collected to pay for the finest materials and craftsmen money could buy. The job was begun with the high priest Hilkiah in charge of the project. During the renovation, a wonderful thing happened: the book of the law was found! Hilkiah then promptly had it delivered to the king. This was it. When Josiah was told, he immediately wanted it read to him, and since the messenger was closest, he read it all to him. Why? Because Josiah didn't want a moment wasted.

For years, his fondest desire was to know the words of the book, but upon hearing them Josiah understood judgment was at hand for all the evil atrocities perpetrated against the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for so many, many years. Now, at that time, there was in Jerusalem a prophetess named Huldah who they went to for advice. She gave God's reply: "Because Josiah's heart was tender...humble...and wept before God, judgment would wait till Josiah was in his grave." Josiah was energized and gathered all the people of Jerusalem into the newly renovated temple, and Josiah himself read to them all the words of the book, after which this good king made a covenant with God, before them all and for his whole kingdom, that they would walk after the Lord with all their hearts, and keep all his commandments, testimonies, and statutes written in the book. From that day forward, all the people of Israel departed not from following the God of their forefathers and the words of His book, this they did for all the days of King Josiah.

The first nineteen verses of Second Chronicles thirty-five are devoted to the first Passover

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kept in Israel in far, far too many years. What grabs me by the collar and says "pay attention" is that the first thing mentioned is the specific day of the year the Passover lamb was killed. Obviously, Josiah would settle for nothing less than having everything done in accordance with the book. When it was all said and done, it says that there hadn't been such a Passover like it since the days of Samuel the prophet and the nation was indeed blessed. Throughout Israel these were now the salad days.

When Josiah was thirty-nine years old, the Pharaoh of Egypt just wanted to take a short-cut thru Israel with his army. The Pharaoh had dispatched ambassadors to Josiah to

assure him he was just passing thru, no harm, no foul. Perhaps Josiah should have just let it go. However, Josiah just couldn't let it go, because in his mind, it just wasn't RIGHT. Therefore, Josiah marched his army to the Valley of Megiddo and fought to turn back the Egyptians. Josiah was mortally wounded in battle and his servants brought him back to his palace, where our hero died. The prophet Jeremiah and, indeed, the whole nation, wailed and mourned, deeply lamenting his tragic and untimely death. When they buried him, all the singers of Israel sang lamentations for good King Josiah, and I like to think their song began: "Don't it always seem to go, that you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone?"



Eric's Ephanies

REFRESHMENT ANYONE? By Eric Honea

Which feels better, to refresh a brother or to be refreshed? I believe when we bring relief to others we feel good about our actions but we often do not really understand how much it means to them. Often the benefactor has almost forgotten a good deed or a timely word spoken years earlier and is quite shocked to one day hear the testimony of the one blessed describing just how much it meant and what a lasting impact that word or deed had on their life. We certainly do well to help those who have problems which we do not have but it is only when we are in pain that we realize how much relief is worth. Like the "woman having an issue of blood twelve years, who had spent all her living upon physicians, and could not be healed of any" [Luke 8:43] we cannot get away from our own problems or pain. Others may care but they don't feel the pain twenty four hours a day. I know of no illustration more graphic of the gnawing desire for relief than Jesus' story of Lazarus and the Rich man: "Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire." [Luke 16:24] The problem of pain is central to the story of Job. In Job 2:4-5, Satan says to God concerning Job: "Skin

for skin!...A man will give all he has for his own life. But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."

I have only a few times experienced ongoing pain that I could not get away from. In those instances when relief did come it could hardly be described. What a blessing to refresh the brethren or be refreshed by them! Like the mouse who pulled the thorn from the Lion's paw we may form lifetime friendships. We cannot feel someone else's pain. Learning empathy is clearly something which we must consciously strive for. Let's draw inspiration from the Bible verses below which remind us how wonderful refreshment of all types is for those we can bless:

Prov 15:30—"A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones."

Prov 16:24—"Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones."

Prov 25:11—"A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver."

Isa 52:7—"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

Eric's Epiphanies continued from page 5

Acts 14:17—“And yet He [God] left not Himself without witness, in that he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness.”

Rom 15:32-33—“...so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed.”

1 Cor 16:16-18—“I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.”

2 Cor 7:13—“In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was, because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you.”

1 Thess 3:6-10—“But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. How

can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.”

1 Tim 5:9-10—“Let none be enrolled as a widow under threescore years old, (having been) the wife of one man, well reported of for good works; if she hath brought up children, if she hath used hospitality to strangers, if she hath washed the saints' feet, if she hath relieved the afflicted, if she hath diligently followed every good work.”

2 Tim 1:16—“May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.”

Philemon 7—“Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.”

Let us seek to fulfill these scriptures in our own lives by refreshing all we come in contact with, that our Father's name might be glorified!

Bible Quiz



Where was it?

1. Lazarus and his two sisters live here. (John 11:1)
2. Amos was born here. (Amos 1:1)
3. The river where Jesus was baptized. (Mark 1:9)
4. Where Cain went after killing Abel. (Gen 4:16)
5. The mountain where the ark rested after the flood. (Genesis 8:4)
6. The island that Barnabas came from. (Acts 4:36)
7. The city where Peter had a vision of a sheet from heaven. (Acts 10:5-13)
8. The city where Philip preached causing great joy. (Acts 8:5-8)
9. The town where Paul and Silas were put in prison. (Acts 16:9-12)
10. The 1st place where the Israelites camped after crossing the Jordan. (Joshua 4:19)



A Daughter's Heart Gratitude...

By Melissa Slinn

At the end of November of 2010, the small town that I grew up in experienced the sudden loss of two dear members of the community. One, a 23 year old single mother, who could easily put a smile on the face of everyone she came in contact with and the other a high school teacher, who inspired his students to do more than they ever thought possible. Both of these losses were a shock to those in the town as well as those, like me, who have relocated throughout the country. I was especially affected by the loss of the high school teacher, Jack Nuthall, because he was one of my favorite teachers in high school. He provided me with opportunities that a lot of students who attend small country schools do not have. He gave me the opportunity to be the editor of our school newspaper, and he also set me up with an internship at a local newspaper. He truly cared about each of his students and we all knew it.

Within hours of both of these deaths, Facebook memorial pages were created. Hundreds of people went to these pages to post their condolences to the families and to share their memories. Most of the entries also stated how the person had touched their life and how much they appreciated them. Hundreds and hundreds of postings were written thanking people - who can no longer read them - for all that they did while they were alive. The more I read these postings, the more it made me start to think about how often we tell each other how much we appreciate each other - while we are still alive. And also, how often do we thank the Lord for each other?

How often do we take people in our lives for granted? How often do we say "Thank you" or "I appreciate you"? In our church, everything that is accomplished is done so through volunteers. From the elders that teach us to those who clean the church, we have a lot of opportunities to be grateful. I know that one of

the hardest places for me to remember to show my appreciation is in my own home. It is easy to take for granted that my husband is going to get up in the morning and go to work to support us financially. These things become commonplace. But when I do remember to show my appreciation, it makes it a little easier for him to continue to get up each morning and go to work. When we show our appreciation to those serving in the church, it makes it easier for them to continue to serve.

Showing our gratitude is not hard to do. It can be accomplished by a kind gesture or simply by saying, "Thank you". Some other ways to show your appreciation could be to write a note or buy someone a cup of their favorite coffee. Small things can go a long way in making someone feel appreciated.

We also need to remember to be thankful to the Lord. We have so many things to be thankful for, but one of the things that we should remember to be thankful for is each other. We can take a lesson from Paul, who began most of his letters by telling the people he was writing to that he was thanking God for them daily. When was the last time you thanked God simply for putting someone in your life? Do we remember to thank Him for these blessings on a daily basis? We often tell people who are going through trials or illness that we are praying for them, but how often do we tell each other that we are grateful to God for them?

This year, I am going to work towards becoming a more appreciative person. I have so much to be grateful for - my family, my friends, my church; the list can go on and on. I am going to work hard to remember to thank people for the things they do for me and my family. But most importantly, I am going to thank God daily for all of the many blessings He provides.





Of Interest...



Attendance
November 21—106
November 28—93
December 5—112
December 12—87

Upcoming Speakers & Studies

January 2
Food Pantry
 Sermon—Mike Knapp
 Our Church Prayers—Tim Chabot

January 9
 Sermon—David Elliott
 Hymn Stories—Faith Schwebke
 12:00—Elder, Deacon, Trustee Mtg

January 16
 Sermon—Tim Chabot
 Study—Andy Weeks

January 23
 Sermon—Joe Funari
 Study—Wayne Urbaniak
 11:15—Business/Budget Meeting

January 30
Pot Luck
 Sermon—Wayne Urbaniak
 Study—Wayne Urbaniak

February 6
Food Pantry
 Sermon—Andy Weeks
 “Marriage Attitudes”
 Study—Andy Weeks
 “Marriage is Whaaat?”

February 13
 Worship with Communion
 Sermon—Larry Urbaniak
 “Christ in You”—Part 1
 Study—Joe Funari

February 20
 Sermon—Larry Urbaniak
 “Christ in You”—Part 2
 Study—Joe Funari

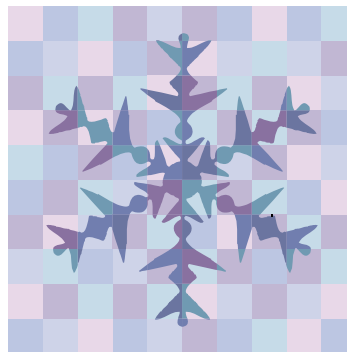
February 27
 Sermon—Larry Urbaniak
 “Christ in You”—Part 3
 Study—Joe Funari

Mark your Calendars...

- ♦ Friday, February 4, 6-8:30 PM—Conscientious Objector Seminar—Paul Jezuit
- ♦ Aaron Kuehmichel will serve us on March 13th
- ♦ Don't forget to mark you calendars for our Annual May Convention which will be held on April 30th and May 1st this year.

Sunday Services

Prayer Meeting- 8:15AM
 Worship- 9:00AM
 Sermon- 9:30AM
 Second Service-10:30-11:30AM
 Sunday School-10:15AM
 Study/Youth For Truth-10:30AM



First Monday of the Month
 Men's Meeting at Church, 6:30PM

Tuesdays
 Weekly—Church, 10:30AM
 Every Other Tuesday—Church, Philippians, 7:00PM
 Alternating Tuesdays—Pioneer Club at Church, 6:15PM
 Every Other Tuesday—Women's Meeting—Church 12-2PM

Thursdays
 Weekly—Women's Meeting—Church, Exodus, 7:00PM
 Weekly—Joe Knapp's Home, 6:45PM

