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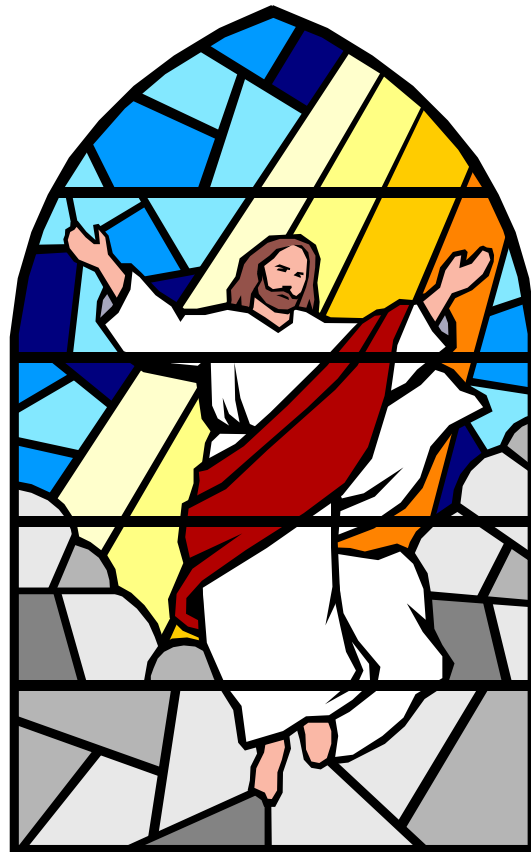


# *“The Vine”*

*Growing Together in Christ*

Newsletter for New Hope Christian Fellowship

## Truly He Is Risen!



**Also In This Issue:**

Suffering, A Life Remembered, Glory & Faith

## From Pastor Dennis

### The Living One

One thing I have learned from my experience as a pastor is that God created humans with a strong will to live. I have shared some intimate moments with dying friends. Often my last words are to 'release them;' to let them know that if God has shown them it is time to take them home, that it is O.K. for them to submit to his will; to 'let go of this life.' At the right time; at the last moment, they finally do 'let go.' It is true that the mind & will of a person can lengthen their life.

Two oncologists, Ernest H. Rosenbaum, MD, and Isadora R. Rosenbaum, MA, wrote the following article, "The Will to Live" from [www.cancersupportivecare.com/attitude.html](http://www.cancersupportivecare.com/attitude.html):

"How often do you use the expression 'the will to live?' Does it have any meaning? Can it prolong your life? Can it bolster your immune system? In our oncology practice, we can unequivocally affirm that the expression does have meaning and that it can vastly improve the quality of life and may even prolong the life of a cancer survivor.

"As medical professionals, we have always been fascinated by the power of the will to live. Like all creatures in the animal world, human beings have a fierce instinct for survival. The will to live is a force within all of us to fight for survival when our lives are threatened by a disease such as cancer.

"We often ask our patients to explain how they are able to transcend their problems. We have found that however diverse they are in ethnic or cultural background, age, educational level or type of illness, they have all gone through a similar process of psychological recovery. They

all consciously made a decision to live. Their will to live means that they really want to live, whether or not they're afraid to die. They believe that their life is not over and they're willing to do whatever they can to squeeze more out of it."

We all want to live, don't we? That

should be no surprise. Wise king Solomon said God has "planted eternity in the human heart." (Eccl: 3:11) It is our destiny to live forever.

Easter is the season of life, of new beginnings, new life, and new growth. Easter is when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus - that miraculous event that gives us new hope. If Jesus who died now lives forever and ever, so can we! We also have new hope that relationships, which are dying and may even seem "dead," can be revived and live again!

The apostle John is given a fantastic vision of our exalted Lord in his glory in "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: 'Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.'" Revelation 1:17-18

Jesus is "the Living One." He died once, but will never die again. He died, so that we could inherit eternal life. Do you want to live? Then a crucial question is "how are you and Jesus doing?" Have you come to him? Do you know him? He has love and life to give you. "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:11-12)

***I am the First  
and the Last.  
I am the  
Living One; I  
was dead,  
and behold I  
am alive  
forever and  
ever!***

## ***The Vine*** ***Growing Together in Christ***



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# Preaching The Gospel

## Romans: Part Five - The Hope of Glory

The last three articles of this series addressed the main components of God's plan of salvation. We described the reasons for God's terrible wrath being poured out on sinners, resulting in the condemnation of all humanity. Next we marvelled at the gift of life that God bestows upon all who are justified through faith in the blood of Jesus. Then, we looked at the life-long process of sanctification, through which the Holy Spirit transforms our hearts and minds as we move toward Christ-likeness.

But, salvation is much more than just being released from the penalty for our sins. It is more than simply being spared from punishment so that we can go on with business as usual. No, it is nothing less than the promise of eternal life (Rom. 6:23). Not an eternity filled with more of what we've already been experiencing here on earth. It is the hope of GLORY (Rom. 5:2). Being adopted as a true child of God (Rom. 8:14-15), and that means living forever with Him in the place where He is (Rom. 8:16-17). This future glorification is a sure thing for all those who trust Jesus, because as Paul writes, "whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Rom. 8:30, I suggest you read all of Romans chapter 8).

But, what is this future state of glory? Can we know how it will be, what it looks or feels like? Revelation says, "The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light" (Rev. 21:23). The author of Hebrews writes, "You have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ... (Heb. 12:22). This is a place beyond our wildest dreams, an existence unlike anything we can imagine. It will be glorious, and it will be our home forevermore.

Someone once asked me a very revealing question, "What if I get to heaven and don't like it there? Then what?" But, if we could only see our

heavenly Father, just a tiny bit of His kindness and power, His radiance and beauty, we would not ask such questions. Being with Him in the place where He resides is the ultimate aim for a human being. We were created for just that purpose; to honor and glorify God. In our fallen state we are unable to fulfill our purpose (Rom. 3:23). Hence, the sense of futility we experience in our daily lives. Without Jesus to rescue us from the grip of our sinful nature we can never be the agents of praise that we were created to be.

Though we are justified by His grace, our knowledge of Him is still incomplete. We have not received the full promise of His glory yet (Rom. 8:23). But, one day we will know Him as we are known, and then we'll truly be able to glorify Him, thus fulfilling our purpose as people of God. Within His great joy, our joy will also be complete.

The final outcome of salvation is a state of eternal glorification with God (Rom. 8:14-18). This hope of future glory is certain because it depends solely upon God's mercy and power, not on human effort (Rom. 8:28-30).

The plan of salvation is a profoundly simple message that is truly good news for all who put their trust in Jesus. -  
By Dr. Sandy Blank

### Glorification: Up Close and Personal:

*"For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet*

*have, we wait for it patiently." - Romans 8:24-25*

In these verses Paul is speaking about glorification. It is something that all believers hope for because they know it is a promise from God to them. "And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." (Romans 8:30) **See Glory on Page 10**



## Remembrance

### Quillion Brown

August 16, 1934 - March 16, 2007

Throughout his 33-year career at our denominational headquarters, Quillion Brown influenced the lives of hundreds of young adults.

Quillion got the opportunity to mentor and minister to many young people. Whereas a student might see a teacher 2-3 hours per week, the student employees working with Quillion would benefit from his supervision and influence 20 or more hours each week. I told Quillion that he was really a minister and counsellor to most of those young adults, much more than any ordained minister had time to be. And Quillion took not only his vocation seriously; he valued his higher calling as a Christian. He constantly shared his wisdom, Bible knowledge and Christian living principles with his workers.

Over the weeks of the illness that led to his death, Quillion received cards and letters from many parts of the world - from people whose lives he had touched. During one of my visits to his home, Quillion shared several of those cards with me, telling me that he had no idea he had made such a deep impression on those individuals.

Quillion loved to talk about God's love and grace, and after our church's new emphasis on grace in recent years, Quillion talked about grace even more. Almost every Sunday when I locked our church doors - two hours or more after the worship service, I would see Quillion still out in the parking lot talking with one of his friends, often his Bible open.

He loved reading the letters of Paul, who was known as the apostle of grace. At one of my home visits, he read me sections of Romans 5. During my last visit, Quillion couldn't talk. When I told Quillion that I was going to read his favorite chapter of the Bible to him, Romans 5, he nodded and smiled. (You may want to read Romans 5 on your own to read what I read to him.)

Quillion is now enjoying the fullness of God's grace - he has inherited eternal life and a place in his heavenly Father's home forever. It was Jesus who said, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." (John 3:36).

When Quillion was diagnosed with fast-spreading cancer, just a couple of months ago, at

first he was shocked. He was so full of life, and still had so much to say about God's love and grace to others; he was surprised that God was calling him home. After a few weeks, Quillion accepted God's will and was at peace. Any fears that he had at first were now gone. He was looking forward to glory, although still concerned for his wife, children and grandchildren. Quillion has now inherited eternal life with his Lord. He is in the safe and loving care of God forever.

Funerals are a time to celebrate the life of our loved ones. Quillion left a legacy that lives on in all of us. In the years ahead we will carry with us his words, his smile, his wisdom, his love.

Can good come from our time together today? Yes. It is Quillion's great desire that we all come to grasp a little better today God's grace and love. Quillion's prayer for you today is the same prayer that Paul prayed in Ephesians 3:17-19: "And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." (*Excerpts from the Eulogy given at Quillion Brown's funeral service by Dennis Pelley on March 30, 2007.*)

### Quillion's Gift

Although I had only known Quillion Brown for less than a year, his warmth and gentility made an impression. I enjoyed our occasional chats after services, and found him to be a thoughtful and contemplative gentleman.

Upon learning he was in the hospital, I visited the day following his operation and we talked for an hour. He was in good spirits, and was hopeful that he'd be able to watch part of the Superbowl game the next day!

Several days later came the devastating news that Quillion had inoperable cancer, and had perhaps a few short months to live.

After his release we visited again at his apartment. As I sat with him, he told me that he was at peace, and that since his time had come, he felt comforted by his faith in our Savior.

Then, he mentioned three wishes.

Quillion wished he could visit his hometown in Tennessee, and we talked about how

See Gift on Page 5



## Remembrance

### Gift from Page 5

beautiful it would be there in the springtime soon approaching. He liked going for walks, and knew he would enjoy strolling there again, just to 'smell the roses' so to speak. And enjoy the splendor of all those beautiful trees one more time.

Another wish was that he could go to services, to be with all of you again. He missed seeing you. I reassured him that many friends from church were praying for him, and he appreciated that. But still, it wasn't the same as being there, and he hoped for that.

Finally, he said, he would like a "good burial" meaning, I think, one in our Christian tradition with friends gathered around.

Near the end of our visit that day, he kidded me with a comment that could have been taken two ways. I laughed in the understanding of how he meant it. And a few minutes later I left, telling him I'd see him again.

Two days later, an interesting thing happened. Quillion called me because he was concerned that I might have taken his joke the wrong way. He wanted to be sure I had taken it the way it was meant and that he hadn't offended me.

I assured him that I had understood his intent, and we had a chuckle over his joke again. Only later did it hit me. This gentle man, terminally ill, was concerned with me and my feelings. He called me to make sure I was doing okay!

The next week I visited him again after getting permission from his wife Erica. When I arrived, however, she informed me that he was so weak and disoriented that he was not able to speak, and that he probably wouldn't recognize me.

There he was, lying on his side, motionless. I walked over and leaned down to talk to him. I was choking up and I didn't know what to do, except to take hold of his hand and blurt out "Hello Quillion, it's Michael." He didn't have enough strength to turn his head and look up, but his eyes moved upwards to look at me. And when he saw my face, he gently squeezed my hand. We had connected, and that was all that mattered.

He realized a friend was with him, and I spent the next few minutes talking and stroking his shoulder. His eyes closed, and I said a prayer for him out loud so he could hear. Then I told him "I'll see you again, my friend!" And I left.

Two days later he went home to be with our heavenly Father. I was deeply saddened when I read the email from Pastor Dennis. But I also

thanked our loving Father that our friend Quillion did not have to suffer long, and that he was now in a better place.

The story would end there but for answering the question "What was Quillion's gift?" The answer is simple, really. He gave the gift of uncomplicated, beautiful friendship. And that extended to concern about the feelings of others while he was on his deathbed.

I suppose the fact that I received this from someone who was facing his last days made it seem all the more precious because of his courage and faith. One thing I know. All the days of my life, I will never forget his gift of friendship and outgoing concern. Thank you, friend.

- By Michael Cooney

### *Milestones in the Life of Quillion Brown*

- Quillion Brown was born August 16, 1934 to Almonia & Hezekai Brown in Nashville, TN.
- Quillion was the youngest of four: Annie Jean Hardison of Los Angeles, CA, Mary E. Pilgram of Nashville, TN and the late William Brown.
- Quillion served his country in the United States Army at Fort Sills, OK.
- In 1969 Quillion became a member of the Worldwide Church of God in Nashville, TN While attending there Quillion met his wife, Erica. After dating for a year, they were married on Sept 6, 1970 in Nashville.
- He worked in the Custodial department of The Worldwide Church of God for 33 years and retired in 2003.
- Quillion leaves behind his wife, Erica, three children: Philip, Kevin and Melody Brown, and four grandchildren: Sinclair, Malachi, Symphony and Tyler Brown.

### Three Days From Page 10

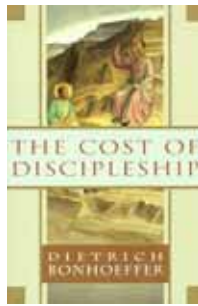
There is only ONE verse that uses the term "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth!" There are twenty verses that say Christ's resurrection would be "in three days" or "the third day." According to a basic rule of biblical interpretation, we would normally seek to understand one verse in the light of twenty, not the other way around.

-Excerpted from the booklet by Ralph Woodrow.

## Christian Suffering

### The Cost of Discipleship

Okay, I admit it. I'm becoming a bit obsessed with Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Our Thursday night Bible class changed the pace a bit and as a nice bridge between studying Paul and James it was thought that a real life example showing the relationship of faith and works would be appropriate.



What better person to study than Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian who lived from 1906 to 1945. His life spanned two World Wars. His Christian faith was put to the test during the rise and rule of Adolph Hitler. His words and writings are as instructive to us today as they were when he wrote them.

Bonhoeffer wrote, "*The Cost of Discipleship*" in the 1930's. In it he lays out just what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

He wrote it during a time that what he called 'easy believism' was rampant in the Christian community. He wrote at a time when the Nazi's were clamping down on all those who didn't give the regime their total loyalty. In fact, many church leaders and institutions threw their support behind Hitler and the Nazi regime as it grew and became more influential in German life.

The book is loaded with powerful teaching. The part that has been particularly meaningful to me has been his words on suffering and the cross.

When I first began to read the Bible in my teens, the scriptures dealing with Christian suffering elicited strong emotions. I took Christ's words seriously.

In retrospect I believe I was willing to take up my cross and follow Christ. Whatever that cross was and wherever carrying it would lead.

In the early years of my Christian walk I think I believed that carrying that cross was heavily tied into such things as obeying commandments, (the Sabbath, Holydays) & rules and obeying & being loyal to an organization. I believed I was doing what God wanted me to do. So I took it seriously.

However, I think that possibly over time a subtle change began to take place. I remember conversations with friends about what the line was that we would not cross when it came to laying down our lives for our faith and I seem to remember it revolving around breaking the Sabbath and standing with an organization as long as it adhered to certain truths.

Had *the things* that I thought God wanted me to do become a substitute for *the One* that I was truly supposed to lay down my life for?

As time went on I didn't think that much about suffering as it related to Christ. The scriptures on Christian suffering seemed distant, not relevant to the world in which I lived.

Then our organization experienced Richter scale like shocks to our thinking, our theology, and our view of God. As the shockwaves slowly subsided and members and the organization sorted out the affects of these tremors, people began to pick up the pieces. Some began to slowly reconstruct their shattered theology. Others took more of a wait and see attitude. Still others left the organization for groups that they felt more aligned with in belief and thought. And others drifted away to remain alone, confused, angry, afraid, and hurt. Some are here even to this day.

I was one who took the wait and see approach. Slowly inching my way onto what seemed to be firmer ground. It was a gradual process; one that continues to this day.

Occasionally since then I would find myself still trying to come to grips with the issue of Christian suffering. It was clear that Jesus' destiny was to suffer and die. But that was His calling for a very specific purpose, wasn't it? Surely that wasn't the sort of thing a Christian in today's western world would be expected to endure, was it? After all God loved me and wanted the very best for me - didn't he?

Of course, some of the words of Jesus and the apostles made it quite clear that Christians were supposed to suffer. The apostles seemed to welcome it, expect it, and even rejoice in it.

In the process of wrapping my mind around Christian suffering I somehow felt that if I was at least aware of the possibility that a Christian may have to suffer sometime, that sheer awareness of that fact might somehow allow me to avoid it.

During the last couple of years I became aware of and started to read publications like the *Voice of the Martyrs* or *Open Door* - sponsored by organizations that serve the persecuted church. Their pages detail the experiences of those who truly suffer for the name of Jesus.

It was downright uncomfortable reading of the brutal treatment many in its pages have had to go through. Beatings, imprisonment, being ostracized, separated from family, and in some cases even martyrdom. I didn't want to read it sometimes. It documented the people who took their call by Jesus very seriously -- some to the point of death. **See Suffering on Page 7**

## Christian Suffering

### Suffering From Page 6

There was this uneasy feeling of squaring *my* "Christian walk" with the one I would view every month or so in these periodical's pages.

Then I read Bonhoeffer. The first sentence of the foreword of the book hit me like a fiery dart right in the heart. "When Christ calls a man," says Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "he bids him come and die." (- Bishop G.K.A. Bell) Talk about being jerked out of your comfort zone.

His whole chapter on suffering is equally as powerful. He puts a very human very practical face on Christian suffering.

And Bonhoeffer is just echoing the scriptures. "...If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever would lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it." -Mark 8:34-35

Paul makes the case that if we are to share in Christ's glory it is only fitting that we share in his suffering. (Romans 8:17; 2 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 2:12) He even goes as far as saying, "*I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...*" - Phil 3:11

Bonhoeffer says, "every Christian has his own cross waiting for him... And some God deems worthy of the highest form of suffering, and gives them the grace of martyrdom."

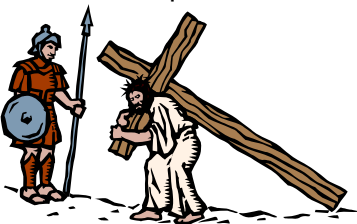
Little did he know when he penned those words he would be speaking to himself. Eight years after the book was published he was dead -- martyred by the hands of the Third Reich.

Because of his death his words are made so much more meaningful and have an enduring quality that they may not have without his martyrdom.


Because of the life, writings and death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer the whole subject of Christian suffering is made dramatically clearer to me. That clarity is much appreciated, welcome and needed.

Of course with the answer to one question clarified, it brings another closely on its heels. "Am I suffering for the sake of Jesus and the gospel?" Dietrich Bonhoeffer's words can only point toward the answer. To find an answer to that question one has to go very deep. And the

real answer is only found in one place. That place is between me and the One who suffered and died for my sins -- Jesus of Nazareth. - By John Siston



### Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Suffering

- "The cross is laid on every Christian."
  - "To endure the cross is not a tragedy; it is the suffering which is the fruit of an exclusive allegiance to Jesus Christ. When it comes, it is not an accident, but a necessity."
- 
- "Discipleship means allegiance to the suffering Christ, and it is therefore not at all surprising that Christians should be called upon to suffer."
  - The cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."
  - "Suffering, then, is the badge of true discipleship."
  - "It is not suffering *per se* but suffering-and-rejection, and not rejection for any cause or conviction of our own, but rejection for the sake of Christ."
  - We have then forgotten that the cross means rejection and shame as well as suffering.
  - "If we refuse to take up our cross and submit to suffering and rejection at the hands of men, we forfeit our fellowship with Christ and have ceased to follow him."
  - "Jesus must therefore make it clear beyond all doubt that the 'must' of suffering applies to his disciples no less than to himself. Just as Christ is Christ only in virtue of his suffering and rejection, so the disciple is a disciple only in so far as he shares his Lord's suffering and rejection and crucifixion. Discipleship means adherence to the person of Jesus, and therefore submission to the law of Christ, which is the law of the cross."
  - "Only the man who is dead to his own will can follow Christ. In fact every command of Jesus is a call to die, with all our affections and lusts."

From *The Cost of Discipleship*, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, first published 1937, First Touchstone Edition 1995

## New Hope Theme - God's Grace

### God's Grace Verses Our Works (Part 3)

As you know, our church theme for 2007 is "Saved by Grace" with Eph.2:8-9 as our theme scripture, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

We've talked about how the vast majority of the unchurched believe that most of the "good" people aren't necessarily religious or avid churchgoers. They also believe that doing "good works" in this life will impress God and then he will reward us for our good deeds after we die.

Then in last month's article, we showed that Jesus, in his Sermon on the Mount, told the people, "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20).

This stunned the average person, because the Pharisees were the most righteous people of the Jewish faith compared to them. And if they weren't "good enough" to make it to heaven, then the average person didn't have a prayer of a chance.

There's another incident in the life of Jesus that we need to examine concerning who goes to heaven. It involves what Jesus told one of the thieves on the cross. It's recorded in Luke when Jesus was condemned to death by Pontius Pilate and then nailed to the cross.

Jesus was placed between two other men destined to die with him. One of the criminals admitted that he had done horrible things in his life and that he was actually getting what he deserved. (Luke 23:41)

Then the convicted criminal did the unthinkable. He asked Jesus for something. He asked Jesus to have mercy on him in spite of his worthless life. He said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42).

This man was in no position to bargain. He didn't have any time left to "turn over a new leaf." His opportunity to accomplish good in his life had come and gone. He was a few short hours away from an agonizing death.

Now if Jesus, like most people, believed that good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell, what would you expect him to say? To our amazement Jesus didn't tell this condemned criminal that he was going to burn for all eternity in the fires of hell. Instead he said, "I tell you the



truth today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

In granting this, did Jesus ignore justice? Or did Jesus bring another message from God that contradicted the belief that only the "good" who do "good works" go to heaven?

So why did Jesus come to this earth? Here's the answer. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:16-17).

Jesus came to earth with a purpose, and that purpose is to reconcile fallen humanity to God the Father. Jesus told his disciples in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Notice that Jesus doesn't say he is a way to God. He boldly proclaims that he is the only way to God; he alone embodies the truth of God; and he alone is the path to ever lasting life.

And so now we also need to ask the next obvious question, "How did Jesus reconcile humanity to God?" The apostle Paul gives us the clearest definitive answer we can find in the book of Colossians. "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation" (Col. 1:21-22).

We also read in 2 Corinthians, "God made him (Jesus, the Son of God) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). This means that God took our sin and imputed (charged) it to Christ, and then took his righteousness and imputed (credited) it to us. It's so important to understand that we have been accepted as being holy by God, it's not what we have accomplished, but rather it's what Jesus has done for us on the cross. Many theologians call this "the great exchange." God has exchanged our sins for the righteousness of his Son.

Scripture tells us of that since the fall of Adam and Eve, humanity has been corrupt and sinful. And that is why Jesus came down from heaven -- to reconcile sinful humanity to God. As Paul summed up in the letter to the Romans. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom.3:23).

**See Grace on Page 9**

## Remembrance

### "Remember Me"

In some fellowships, communion or the Lord's Supper is a quiet, solemn occasion, at times almost funereal. I used to be afraid to talk before or after our ceremony in an effort to preserve the solemnity. It was almost worse than a funeral.

But it's not a funeral, even though we remember the One who died shortly after sharing a last supper with his friends. Jesus said whenever we partake of the Lord's Supper, we are to remember him.

But how should we remember him? Should we wail and grieve like a group of paid mourners? Should we cry and be sad? Do we remember him by being guilt ridden and apologetic because our sins caused him to go through an awful death - a criminal's death - on a Roman instrument of torture?

Perhaps there's a time and place for that - not the guilt, but a time of repentance and confession. Possibly that is best done in private, although sometimes those emotions come out when we think on Jesus' death.

But what if we approach this time of remembrance from a different point of view? Jesus had a lot on his mind the night he sat down with his disciples to eat his last meal and talk with them one more time. He had spent three and a half years with these men and felt great affection for them. In Luke 22:15 he said, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (NIV). In Matthew 26:18 he said he was planning to celebrate it with them. He knew he wouldn't eat it again until the Kingdom of God.

Let's remember him (Luke 22:19) as the son of God who came to earth to live among us and to be one of us. He's the One who gave us, in the form of his person, freedom from the law, the chains of sin and the oppression of death. He gave us freedom from fear of the future, freedom to know the Father and freedom to be called children of God.

Let's be joyful as we remember the One God anointed to preach good news to the poor, who was sent to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and to release the prisoners from darkness. He came to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, to comfort all who mourn, to provide for those who grieve and he bestows on us a crown of beauty instead of ashes,



the oil of gladness instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair (Isaiah 61).

Jesus endured the cross for the joy set before him. It's hard to imagine joy so great. It certainly was not human or earthly joy. It had to be the joy of being God! The joy of heaven! The joy of eternity! It's joy we can't begin to imagine or describe!

This is the One we remember - the One who changed our grief into joy and who invites us to share his life, now and in eternity. Let's remember him with smiles on our faces, a shout of joy on our lips and with light hearts filled with the delight of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord!

- By Tammy Tkach

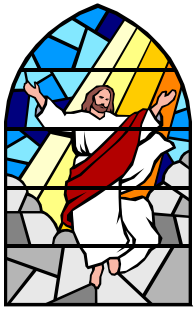
**Grace From Page 8** The fundamental problem all of us have is that we compare our attitudes and actions with others. And as long as we can find someone whose actions seem to be more distasteful or egregious or more sinful than ours, then we easily flatter ourselves into thinking that we are "good" and should be rewarded by God. But, the truth is, we must examine ourselves in the light of the ultimate standard of righteousness, which is God's character as presented in the Bible.

The New Testament teaches that humanity doesn't need a to-do list of good deeds; it needs a Savior. Christianity teaches that when humanity sinned, God opted for forgiveness rather than fairness. He opted for grace and mercy rather than justice. What God offers us is more than fair. The reason good people don't go to heaven is that there aren't any "good" people. There are only sinners. Granted, some aren't quite as bad as others. But from God's perspective, everyone has fallen short of his standard of righteousness.

Fairness would demand that we die for our sins. But the good news is that God opted for grace and mercy over fairness. God sent his son to die for the sins of all humanity including yours and mine. The truth is: "Good" people don't go to heaven. It's the forgiven that go to heaven. This is why it's so important to share with others our church theme for 2007 -- "Saved by Grace." "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph.2:8-9). - By Larry Omasta

[This 3-part article is based on the book "Since Nobody's Perfect, How GOOD is Good Enough?" written by Andy Stanley; Multnomah Publishers, Inc. 2003]

## Easter



### Truly He Is Risen

Christ is risen! Truly He is risen! I grew up in the Eastern Orthodox Church and it is an Easter tradition among Orthodox Christians to greet each other with these words, which form the foundation of our faith.

Jesus rose from the dead.

Do you believe it? Do you trust it? There are books written on the evidence for the resurrection. I have heard lectures refuting all the other explanations for why the tomb was empty. No one saw it happen, however. There will never be enough evidence to prove it to many people in this world. Do not worry. Jesus can and does reveal himself to those the Father draws to him.

My faith was weak. I focused on the physical Jesus, and tried to follow what he did on the earth. Is that good enough? I cannot prove it to you, but I know it happened. Jesus showed me that my focus was wrong. He is risen. He is glorified. I am in communion with the risen Christ. He is in me. I am in Him. Does that sound too mystical? Too spiritual? For some it does. Nevertheless, the sheep hear the Shepard's voice. Believers know Christ is risen.

In I Corinthians 15:3-7, the apostle Paul recites what is known as one of the earliest formulas expressed by the Christian church. It is as powerful today as it was over 2000 years ago. The message was simple: Christ died for our sin, he was buried, and he was raised from the dead. Romans 1:4, speaks of how Jesus through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead. I want to know more about Him. I rejoice in what he has shown me already.

Christ is risen! Truly he has risen!

- By Al Baroody

### Glory From Page 3

The past tense of this verse indicates that as far as God is concerned it is a done deal. He will perform what he intended.

To a Christian this verse should be one thing that encourages us every day of our lives. In condemnation, justification, and sanctification we have the elements of sin and suffering to deal with. But not so in glorification. We have this promise of a glorious future with God. A time when all sin and suffering will pass from our lives and our desire will be to do that which is good. When we are glorified we will join the heavenly

host that praises and worships God at his throne. (See Revelation 7:9-13)

Not only will God bring us into a new life of glorification but he is going to change all of the natural creation into a glorious state. We, and nature are waiting for the inheritance we have in Jesus Christ. "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. 17, and if children, then heirs-heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." (Rom. 8:16-17)

We have hope for our future inheritance of our glorified life because God has given his Spirit to us. It is the Spirit of God that brings us to the place that God has chosen us. It is the Spirit of God who one day will unite all our glorified souls with the resurrected glorified bodies at Jesus Christ's return. "What then shall we say to these things?" (Rom. 8:31) - The things he spoke in verses 29 and 30. "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 8:37-39) Saints, we do have a wonderful future and this is the reason to have hope.

- By Tom Hoban

### Three Days and Three Nights— Reconsidered in Light of Scripture

Over the centuries, millions of believers in Jesus Christ—including preachers and teachers, writers and reformers, missionaries and martyrs—have believed that Jesus Christ was crucified on Friday and rose early on Sunday morning.

But because Jesus said he would be "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40), in comparatively recent times, another explanation emerged—that he was buried just before sundown on Wednesday. Then, figuring exactly three days and nights (72 hours) later, the resurrection would have occurred just before sundown on Saturday. On Sunday morning, he was already risen.

The author, having held this position himself, upon reconsideration, came to see it is seriously flawed. It is not based on the total testimony of Scripture.

See Three Days on Page 5

