

THE EDIFIER

Volume 22

CHURCH OF GOD 7TH DAY

SEPTEMBER 2016

The Greatest One of All

A shattered community

Jim Cartwright was a bus driver at a country school in Kaitaia, a small New Zealand town. He lived next door to Keith Dodd, who had ten children. Each year Jim would take a class away on a school camp in his bus. Tragically though, in 1983, Jim parked the bus next to a cliff overlooking the sea while he quickly crossed the road to buy a packet of cigarettes. He failed to put the handbrake on and before he'd even finished crossing the road the worst thing you could ever imagine happened. The bus with Keith's 10 children, 20 other children and parents rolled toward the cliff and then fell into the sea. No one survived. You can just imagine the guilt and pain Jim felt, but you can also imagine, even worse, the incredible sadness and loss experienced by Keith and the whole community.



Also remember, these two men were neighbours. After spending two years in prison for his criminal negligence, Jim moved back to his home next to Keith. It certainly wasn't easy for Keith to forgive Jim for what happened – all for a lousy packet of cigarettes. However, they continued to live in harmony.

Heroic righteousness

One day Keith noticed smoke coming from Jim's house. Jim had not given up smoking, and it was later discovered he'd fallen asleep while smoking in bed. His cigarette had started the fire. Since it was early in the morning, chances were that Jim was still inside. What was Keith to do? The house was now a

flaming inferno. Would he risk his own life to save Jim? Thoughts crossed his mind about how Jim had destroyed his own family, but he decided he couldn't just stand by and let Jim burn to death.

The local community had gathered near the blazing fire. They could see that any attempt to go inside the burning house would be a very dangerous and stupid thing to do. They were not willing to risk their lives for the man who had brought so much pain to their community. When Keith declared his intention to rescue Jim they tried to stop him. Keith would not be deterred. He was willing to sacrifice his life. Holding his breath, he ran in. His clothes caught fire, but he was able to drag Keith out. He saved Jim's life, but both of them had to spend six months together in the Auckland burns unit battling to survive their serious burns. Sadly, six months later, Keith lost his battle for life, but Jim survived. Would you call Keith Dodd a hero? I would. Do you

admire his courage and great sacrifice? Do you respect the righteousness of this man? Do you know anyone who would do what Keith did for you if you had sinned against them or hurt them so badly? Do you? Do you know God?

God's righteousness

There's something I need to tell you. I want to encourage you with the true story of the gospel. As great, as admirable and as righteous as Keith's act in this story was, God's actions toward us are vastly greater. We look at what Keith did in this story

and we think – what a righteous man he was. Clearly what he did for Jim shows us he was a man who stood out among men as a hero. No one else was willing to forgive Jim.



Our God's righteousness is shown through the gospel in a similar, but much greater way. Consider what Romans 3:21-26 says. As you consider it, look for the truth of how the good news of Christ's life death and resurrection (the gospel) shows us that our God is righteous, and count how many times the word righteousness or justice appear:

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present

time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

A person who is willing to forgive others who have hurt them and who is willing not only to forgive them in their mind, but also to show it by their actions displays righteousness. We see this in verse 25 where God was willing to pass over the sins committed against Him. The word *forbearance* in verse 25 means God held back from giving us the punishment we deserved. He endured it and held back. He was willing to forgive the sins against Him, and oh what terrible sins they were.

Keith lost 10 children because of Jim's accidental act. God has lost so much more than 10 children, and not just by anyone's accidental actions, but by countless deliberate actions. God is the Father of all. The Bible in Acts 17 describes all humankind as God's offspring. How many millions of God's children have been deliberately hurt, killed or led away from Him by evil persons who have rebelled against Him? We can't even begin to appreciate how serious our sin is to God though until we reflect upon what God felt He had to do for our sins to be forgiven. Sin troubles Him so much He considered it necessary to send Jesus to die for the sins of the world. Now I don't think we can fully understand why God had to do it this way, but God's doing it this way sends a powerful message about the seriousness of sin.

The greatest rescuer

There's something else I need to tell you though. Romans 3:21-26 also tells us God is the greatest One of all in another way. Jim not

only needed forgiveness from Keith to be saved from the destroying flames – he also needed a rescuer. Keith could have forgiven Jim in his heart and done nothing to rescue him, but he didn't. He was the hero rescuer. No one else was willing to rescue Jim at all costs. Only Keith was willing to pay the ultimate price.

Paying the ultimate price

Our God is the greatest rescuer of all. He was willing to pay an infinitely greater price than Keith. In thinking about the price God paid for our sins and our lives, firstly think about the price of the suffering and life of an only son. Patripassionists believe the Father also suffered on the cross with Christ. Whilst this idea was rejected by early Christian theologians, we know any Father endures great suffering when his son suffers. Of course God would have been experiencing great pain during His Son's terrible ordeal. Secondly, think also about the oneness and closeness of their relationship. Their relationship was from before the world began. Jesus' fervent desire was to please His Father. It was a perfect relationship. Thirdly, think about the truth of scripture that God created everything through Jesus Christ, and consider therefore how much more value the Creator's life and well-being are than a man's life.

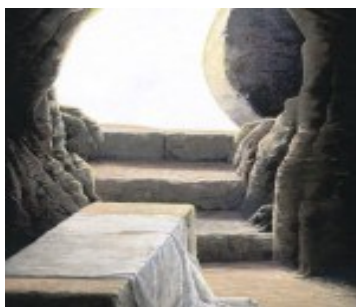
Keith did not know for sure what the extent of his sacrifice would be, but God knew beforehand the price he had to pay and yet still paid it. This is the ultimate rescue story, and as verse 26 says, it was all *to demonstrate [God's] righteousness that He might be just and the justifier*. The one who justifies

is indeed a rescuer. God is the rescuer of the one who has faith in Jesus Christ.

Hero dishonored

There's something further I need to tell you though. Would you be pleased to hear that Keith in our story was greatly honoured and remembered by his community for his bravery and his incredible sacrifice? I am sorry, I can't tell you that. They were not pleased he gave up his life for a man who had caused them so much pain by destroying so many of their children. They regarded Keith as a fool. They used his name as a curse word.

Sadly, the same is true for God and His Son. As Keith wasn't honoured, most in this world do not honour God or Christ, and their names are commonly used as curse words. Most see the gospel as foolishness. 1 Corinthians 1:23 says the Greeks or the Gentiles see the gospel as foolishness. But as the Apostle Paul said, the gospel of Christ is not foolishness, but rather the power of God for the salvation of souls.



The greatest true story of all

There's one final thing I must tell you though. The story of Jim Cartwright and Keith Dodd is fictional. I made it up. You will be pleased to know that no children died. I searched and searched but

could not find a true story of forgiveness that even came close to Jim and Keith's. I could find no greater story of loving your enemy than Jim and Keith's. I could find no greater story of self-sacrifice. I could find no greater story of righteousness. I could find no greater story combining forgiveness, loving your enemy, sacrifice, righteousness and rescue than Jim and Keith's EXCEPT in the Bible, where we find the true story of a loving God who demonstrates His love for us in that while we were still sinners He sent His Son to save us through His suffering and death.

Why share this message with those who are already converted? Because I want to remind us we have the greatest story of all to tell. What's even better is that it's true. There's no greater story of forgiveness, loving your enemy, sacrifice, righteousness and rescue than the gospel.

The story has been presented to you in a way showing God as the ultimate person to love and admire, but I want to challenge you to find your own way of expressing the powerful gospel message to others. I want to challenge you to seek God's inspiration for how you can express and share the great gospel message with others so that you can and *will* share it.

As Christians we have a great responsibility to share. Some of us aren't sharing it or aren't sharing it consistently. If that's you, then you need to ask yourself why, and you need to get answers. If you can't get answers yourself, you need help – both you and the church need you to find the answer to why you're not. If you are not growing in your Christian life

as a person who shares the gospel with others and you don't know how to, then you need to sit down with someone to get the help and direction you need.

If you are reading this and aren't converted, I hope this article draws you toward Jesus Christ and our extraordinary God of love and righteousness. There is no greater thing you could do with your life than to give it to the God of love, hope, peace and comfort - the God who has rescued all who will reach out by faith for His hand of rescue.

Written by David Kidd

for I Know
the plans I have
FOR YOU declares the LORD
Plans to **PROSPER**
You & not to harm you
give you HOPE
AND A **FUTURE.**
-Jeremiah 29:11

WHEN *life* GETS
TOO HARD TO STAND,
kneel

MYSTERY OF GLORY.

The wonder and mystery of the central gospel message, salvation in Christ, is conveyed throughout the pages of the Bible using poetry, prophecy, prose, preaching, praise and parable.

When reading the scriptures, we may find ourselves wondering about the heavenly dimension where Jesus has for the time being returned. How do we then grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ? How do we comprehend all that Jesus asks us to believe? Why are there only a few glimpses into the heavenly dimension by so few prophets? Like a well-written story, we hunger for more details about this promised “glory”. Unlike those in ages past who mostly accepted the mystery of life, our era of scientific rationalism wants to dissect everything into manageable bytes. However, the lesson that we must learn is finding satisfaction in the “mystery” element – being content that ultimately, in due course, we will understand and experience our awaiting hope of glory. We cannot begin to comprehend the details of what exists beyond time, space and matter! We also learn from the parable that we’re not the “potter” but rather the “clay”.

Thus, as hard as we often try, we simply fail to comprehend the depth and height and greatness of the glory revealed in the heavenly – even when such glimpses are generously made available. A good example that comes to mind is found in Matthew’s gospel account.

Of the twelve, Jesus took just three of his closest disciples, Peter, John and James, into the wilderness and atop a remote mountain. And there, in the isolation of that pristine environment, Jesus allowed them, suddenly in vision, to gain a glimpse of a heavenly dimension. Known as the Transfiguration, the disciples momentarily saw Jesus glorified shining “brighter than the sun”, and with him in conversation were two others whom they immediately recognised as Moses and Elijah – prophets from antiquity who were deceased long ago!

Yes, these were two of the greatest men in Hebrew history: Moses who was instrumental in the giving of the Law, and yes, there was Elijah, the quintessential and epitome of all the prophets! So, what was this vision all about? Just as the disciples were grappling with and trying to comprehend what they were experiencing, a voice came from heaven, saying, *“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him.”* (Matthew 17:5)



How would you have responded to such a heavenly, other-dimensional experience? Would you have fared any better than Peter who, for example, as the most outspoken of the disciples, without hesitating suggested that they build three cubby houses to accommodate Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Of course, this definitely wasn’t what the vision demanded – we immediately sense the folly of trying to create booths to “accommodate” the heavenly. Peter profoundly misread this situation and as a result profoundly misspoke!

What about John and James? We don’t know much about their reaction from this account except that they either fell down in great fear or simply fainted. Many years later, however, in the Revelation vision that Jesus gave to John, John became so overwhelmed by what he saw and heard that he inappropriately prostrated in worship before the angelic messenger – an idolatrous act for which he was promptly rebuked. Most prophets, including Isaiah, Daniel and Ezekiel, trembled and often fainted when confronted with a glimpse into the heavenly dimension.

Thankfully and understandably today, we are largely shielded from such other-dimensional experiences, partly because we cannot cope with them, and, as Jesus taught, even if someone were to miraculously rise from the dead it still would be insufficient to convince an unbelieving heart. (Luke 16:31)

God wants us to remember, however, that like an unborn baby, we’re still not yet equipped to

Continued on page 6



She Hath Done What She Could

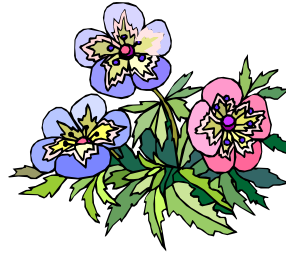
Jesus came to Bethany
 To Simon's house one day.
 As they sat at meat, He heard
 A group of people say —
 "My, how wasteful! It's a shame!
 The price, if it were sold,
 Could bring relief to our poor.
 Three hundred pence We're told!"

They spoke of precious ointment
 Of spikenard, which they said
 A woman brought to pour upon
 Her Saviour, Jesus' head
 Then Jesus spoke, "Let her alone!
 She hath done what she could!
 Anointing me for burial,
 This deed of hers was good.
 The poor you will have always;
 But I must go away.
 Everywhere the Gospel's preached —
 Tell of her deed this day!"

Written by Mable Jo Baker.

Printed in the magazine, "Afterglow".

The **anointing of Jesus** is one of the relatively few events reported by each of the four Gospels,



Consider Your Ways

*There are many ways to serve the Lord
 Through worship, prayer and song;
 Attending Sabbath school and church
 A faithful member of the throng.*

*To help the "good news" to be spread
 To distant lands and near
 Our tithes and offerings are another way
 Of serving our Lord so dear.*

*Remember, 'tis He that gives us wealth
 And expects a portion returned
 So that His work may not be hindered
 And salvation's plan may be learned.*

*Our time and talent are other ways
 Of serving the Lord divine;
 By seeking first the Kingdom of God
 And living not my will, but Thine.*

*Consider your ways and give Him first place
 In your heart and service, too;
 Then you and others will be blessed
 Because all God's promises are true.*

Jean Raver

Continued from page 4

embrace the resurrected, fully-glorified rebirth splendour promised to us, when we will see our Heavenly Father face to face!

This explains why, when God came as the incarnate Jesus, he mostly taught using basic, easy-to-understand parables rooted in first century fishing, domestic livelihood and agriculture that local villagers could understand. Today, God continues to convey his will and purpose throughout the scriptures, telling of this glory through: Poetry using rhythm and rhyme; Prophecy foretelling and forth-telling; Prose given letter by letter, word by word; Preaching sermons long and short; Praise in the Psalms and glimpses of angelic worship; and only as Jesus could, Parables that are metaphors of a greater reality.

Thus, somehow engrossed in awe and wonder, we too must become content in the mystery that words in this life simply can't accommodate. As Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans (8:23, 26 paraphrased): "All creation yearns for the revealing of the sons of God... and the Spirit in us affirms this in 'groans' that words cannot express."

Cherish the mystery, be content in the wonder, and just believe in Jesus and all he tells us.

Written by John Klassek

Looking Back *Insights from pages past*

DISTILLED DEW

"My speech shall distil as the dew" (Deuteronomy 32:2).

God sees us in Christ. But the people have got to see Christ in us.

Men dispute the claims of God upon them, Criticism from our enemies is good for us.

They will find out our weak spots for us.

We seldom look for the answer to our prayers the way it comes.

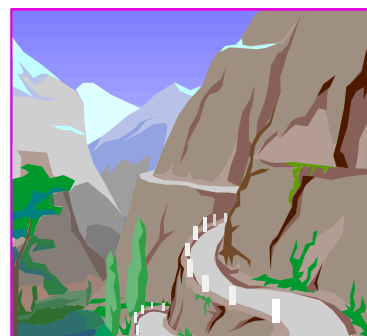
A guilty conscience needs no accuser. The most guilty are generally the most anxious to justify themselves.

Prejudice against a person or his ministry can blind one altogether to any good in him.

Do not bring the Scripture to prove your doctrine, but test your doctrine by the Scriptures.

All battles must be fought out on the Word of God. The truth will overthrow error quicker than anything else in the world.

Editor's Note: "Distilled Dew" a series of maxims by Frank Bartleman, first appeared in the **February 25, 1935** issue of the Bible Advocate magazine.



The **Kingdom** *of God*

Spiritual, Literal or Both ?

The kingdom of God is realized in three phases.

Luke 22:18

"For I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

Luke 9:27

"But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God."

Please send for the
free booklet

Answers to "Test Your
Knowledge"
1. 2. 3. 2.

Youth Vibe



Priorities In Your Life



Make God your number one priority, no matter how busy you get, no matter how much you have to do, no matter what, spending time with God needs to be your number one priority. This is one choice you will not regret making.

Ecclesiastes 12:1

Remember now your in the days of your, Before the difficult come, And the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them": NKJV

Exodus 20:3

"You shall have no other before" NKJV

Matthew 6:33

But first the kingdom of God and His, and all these shall be added to you. NKJV

Luke 12:34

For where your is, there your will be also. NKJV

2 Tim 2:22

..... also lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith,, peace with those who on the out of a pure heart. NKJV



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Which of the following is **NOT** one of the 10 Commandments given in Exodus 20?

1. *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*
2. *Remember the Sabbath day.*
3. *You shall not covert.*

Who says: "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

1. *Abraham*
2. *Job*
3. *Ruth*

Jesus's disciples were called Christians for the first time in the city of:

1. *Rome*
2. *Jerusalem*
3. *Antioch*

In the book of Titus, the following list of characteristics "not arrogant, or quick tempered, or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain" is prescribed for:

1. *Husbands*
2. *Bishops*
3. *Disciples*



Top 10 Reasons for Observing the Sabbath

The question is frequently asked, "Why do some people observe a day of rest and worship on Saturday instead of Sunday?" The fundamental answer is because they believe that the Bible identifies Saturday as the Sabbath, the day of the week that God reserved for rest and worship. While many reasons could be given, this booklet gives the top 10 reasons for Sabbath observance.

**Please send for the
FREE BOOKLET**

Produced and Distributed by **CHURCH OF GOD 7TH DAY (Australia)**

Postal Address: P.O. Box 29, Tanunda SA 5352

Web Address: www.cog7aus.com

Editor Phil Kordahi

Assistant Editor David Kidd