

◆ THE EDIFIER ◆

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"Laying Aside Every Weight"

Bowed over under the weight, the old man stooped, as he walked along. Carrying the weight of collected junk - bottles and cans, plus other assorted stuff! Some of it his refuse ... some of it from others. Either way, it was to be cast aside, not to be carried indefinitely. Remnants of the past, remnants from past living. Past living - in his life and the life of others.

Yet, in a similar way, we often drag burdens through life. Burdens due to our past life and the past life of others. Wrongs we have done, and wrongs that others have done to us.

In fact, one of the biggest burdens in life can be guilt. Guilt that comes from unforgiven sin. Guilt that can block the "freedom in Christ" that Christians were destined to enjoy.

Instead, Jesus came to earth, to carry the burden of our past that we often drag through life. *"His burden is light"*, he said (Matt. 11:30), and *"my yoke is easy"*.

In Heb. 12:1, Paul instructed us that we should *"lay aside every weight"*, and *"run the race with patience"*. Paul here was very clearly talking about an Olympic analogy in the ancient world.

The *"so great a cloud of witnesses"* (Heb. 12:1), were the great examples of faith from



Heb. 11, who surround us, to cheer us on, like an Olympian in a stadium that runs the race of our Eternal Life. While we run, we need to strip away and cast aside every weight that slows us down, just like Olympic athletes today perform with the minimum of excess clothing so as not to be slowed down. In fact the Greeks used to perform completely naked! Of course, we are not being called to run either physically or spiritually naked, but I'm sure you get the picture!

"Guilt" is one such weight that can hold us back. Guilt from sin is the problem. So what is the solution?

The one and only answer is, as always – Jesus Christ!!

In verse 2, Paul continues, *"Looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

Did you notice that Jesus is "author"? He sounds the gun at the start of the race. He's also the Judge at the finish line. He's the "finisher" of our faith. He's also the coach, the trainer and Chief Encourager along the way.

The penalty for that sin has already been paid. Part of that penalty is guilt. So, why pay for it again? Why bear it again? Jesus "endured the cross". Why carry the cross again, that has already been borne?

A magazine dedicated to uplifting and transforming peoples lives through the uncompromised word of God.

The cross was so heavy that Jesus collapsed under its weight, after having been beaten and scourged through the night. He also endured the agony of the crucifixion throughout that day.

Why bear the stripes on your soul, that have already been inflicted on your Saviour? *“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows”*, Isa. 53: 4, and *“with his stripes you are healed”* (v5). *“Griefs”* and *“sorrows”*, include guilt and shame.

In fact, Paul says that Jesus *“despised the shame”*. He didn't just endure it, he *“despised”* it. Since he was Emmanuel (God with us), and God hates sin and God doesn't dwell with sin, the Sinless One *“despised the shame”* as he paid the price for sin. So as Christians we should let the Saviour do His job! We have no place living in guilt and shame!

Let's bear in mind 2 areas that need to be cast off, laid aside and laid upon our Saviour:

- 1) The guilt from **not having forgiven ourselves**, even though God forgave us, and
- 2) The resentment of **not having forgiven others**, even though God's Son died for them.

Jesus the Son of God, was the prophesied Messiah, destined to *“bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives”* (Isa. 61:1). Guilt and shame lead to broken heartedness.

Let's learn to **“let go and let God”**. Let go - of the anger, the resentment, the bitterness, the guilt,

the shame. Let go – of the past. Let go – of the rubbish, our rubbish and the rubbish of others that we drag through life. Let God – heal, bind up the broken hearted. Let God – proclaim liberty to the captives.

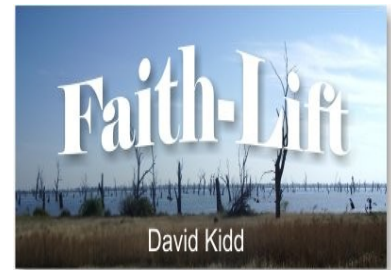
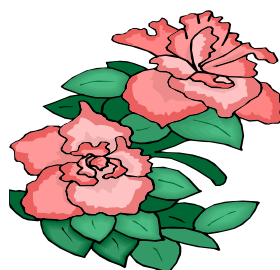
Freed from the burden, the old man stood up straight. He stretched, no longer doubled over under the weight. He let out a long and deep sigh of intense relief. He rubbed his lower back, where the pain had been. “Ahhhh”, he picked up his pace with a spring in his step and walked with confidence with his head held high. No longer did he need to carry the junk from either his past, or the garbage from the past lives of others.

It felt so great to be free at last!

By John Pike

The measure of a Christian is not in the height of his grasp but in the depth of his love.

Clarence Jordan



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YOU ARE OF PURER EYES



One day about 600 B.C. the Prophet Habakkuk of Judah was having a very intense conversation with God - a very serious discussion. In this conversation Habakkuk says something very important about purity and holiness that impacts our lives today. Before we get to that though, it's important to follow the conversation between God and Habakkuk to understand its context.

Habakkuk 1:1-4 says:

The burden which the Prophet Habakkuk saw. O Lord, how long shall I cry and you will not hear? Even cry out to You, "Violence!" and You will not save. Why do you show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; There is strife, and contention arises. Therefore the law is powerless, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore perverse judgment proceeds.

Habakkuk was disturbed. He was very troubled, basically for two reasons. Firstly he was troubled at what he saw - violence and sin all around. Are you troubled at seeing violence and wickedness in this world? Are you really? Think about it. How violent and evil are many of the things you enjoy watching on your television or computer screens. How troubled are you really?

The second reason why Habakkuk was disturbed and troubled was because he didn't think God was doing anything to curb the sin and violence. Are you likewise troubled in this way? Do you know people who won't come to Christ because it seems to them that God doesn't care or isn't doing anything about the suffering in the world?

Now God responds to Habakkuk in a surprising, shocking, and astounding way. He says:

Look among the nations and watch - be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told to you. For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, a bitter and hasty nation which marches through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling places that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful; Their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves. Their horses also are swifter than leopards, and more fierce than evening wolves. Their chargers charge ahead; Their cavalry comes from afar; they fly as the eagle that hastens to eat. "They all come for violence; their faces are set like the east wind. They gather captives like sand. They scoff at kings, and princes are scorned by them. They deride every stronghold, for they heap up earthen mounds and seize it. Then his mind changes, and he transgresses; he commits offence, Ascribing this power to his god."

So God tells Habakkuk what He's going to do about the violence and wickedness. He's going to cause fear and dread to come upon the world and against Habakkuk's people by raising up the Chaldeans. Things are going to get worse before they get better. Do you think this made him feel any better? This only troubled Habakkuk even more.

In verses 12-13 Habakkuk says:

*Are You not from everlasting, Oh Lord my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, you have appointed them for judgment; O Rock, you have marked them for correction. **You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness.** Why do you look on those who deal treacherously, and hold your tongue when the wicked devours a person more righteous than he? **(my emphasis)***

Can you see that Habakkuk is still trusting here in the Holiness and purity of God? "My holy one," he says, "we shall not die." He trusts that God will judge the wicked.

Notice again in verse 13 how Habakkuk tells God that He is of purer eyes than to behold evil or wickedness. The highlighted part of this verse all too often is taken away all by itself and separated from the rest of the verse. As a result, some reach the strange conclusion that God cannot look upon wickedness at all, despite the second part of the verse questioning why He indeed looks on those who deal treacherously? Therefore, in context, the verse can't really be meaning that it is impossible for God to look at evil. Certainly, elsewhere, the Bible contradicts such a conclusion. Just consider God's omnipresence and omniscience (being everywhere and being all seeing). Consider also Genesis 6:11-12 from the days of Noah which says:

The earth also was corrupt before God and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth and indeed it was corrupt.

Psalms 53:2-3 also says:

God looks down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there are any who do good who understand. They have together become corrupt ...

So what then is Habakkuk really saying about God when he says in verse 13 "you are of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on wickedness"? Habakkuk is expressing his bewilderment that his holy and pure God would stoop to tolerate such wickedness. Remember the context, especially verse two which said "O Lord, how long shall we cry, and you will not hear?" Habakkuk repeats this in the latter half of verse 13 which, as I said before, is often isolated from the first part of the verse:

Why do you look upon those who deal treacherously and hold your tongue, when the wicked devour?

God does see evil, but Habakkuk is surprised that His holy God would allow it to continue. Let me explain this in another way. Has a non-Christian ever apologised to you for their evil? Perhaps it was their bad language and they apologised because they thought that Christian ears shouldn't hear such things. Or perhaps you were watching a movie with them and there were some vile scenes appearing and they didn't feel this was suitable for you as a Christian viewer to behold. Even the unbeliever knows that there are certain standards of purity for the believer that should be upheld!



Habakkuk, like the unbeliever toward us, was thinking the same about God. He's too pure and therefore shouldn't have such evil before His eyes. Habakkuk wondered why God didn't stop all the wickedness that was afflicting His

pure and holy eyes. Now God could have stopped it, but everyone on Earth would have had to die because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Thank God for his everlasting mercy!

Conclusion

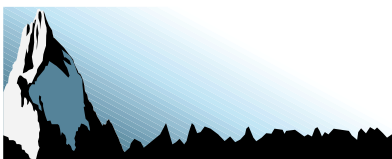
Habakkuk was right. God shouldn't have to see all of this wickedness. Nevertheless, His merciful hand is still outstretched to all mankind.

But what about us – are there various types of evil that we should seek to avoid looking upon and can avoid looking upon? Are our eyes too pure to look upon evil too? David, the Psalmist, writes in Psalm 119:37:

Turn away mine eyes from looking at worthless things and revive me in your way.

The King James Version uses the words "and quicken me in your way." 'Quicken' means to bring back to life. Do we need to be revived? Let's turn away our eyes from looking at worthless things and be quickened or revived in the ways of the Lord.

By David Kidd



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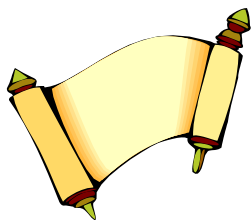
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Ten Commandments of Grace

Grace has been called God's Riches At Christ's Expense. It has been said of grace that if peace (shalom) was the characteristic or keyword of the Old Testament for the Hebrews, then grace has become the Christian's word in the New Testament. Grace is a very, very important concept for Christians and the depth of meaning to be gleaned from the Greek word 'charis', translated as 'grace', and the importance of grace in Christianity, should never be underestimated.

Holman Bible Dictionary gives the following definition as the central meaning of grace for Christians – 'Grace is the undeserved acceptance and love received from another, especially the characteristic attitude of God in providing salvation for sinners through Jesus Christ'. The meaning of 'charis' is even broader than this, as you will see as you consider the 10 commandments of grace below which I have derived from 10 verses.



1. *Sing with grace in your heart* (Colossians 3:16)

The word 'charis' includes joy and thanksgiving, so we follow this instruction when we sing to God with joy and thanksgiving in our hearts.

2. *Accept that God's grace is sufficient for you* (2 Corinthians 12:9)

This is instructing us to be content with God's provision in our lives. Don't think that God's gifts to us, such as the Holy Spirit, the Word, forgiveness, and the promise of eternal life, amongst many other things, are not enough to sustain us – they are!

3. *Let your speech always be with grace* (Colossians 4:5-6)

This command is not so easy to understand in terms of the central meaning of grace as defined above, but 'charis' is very broad.

As salt makes our food more acceptable or attractive to eat, how we say things should make what we say more acceptable or attractive. The Apostle Paul also writes in Ephesians 4:29 'Let no corrupt communication proceed from your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification that it may impart grace to the hearers'.

4. *Do not receive God's grace in vain* (2 Corinthians 6:1)

We obey this command by continuing in the faith until death. Also, if our lives are not bringing God's blessing to others, are we really using the grace God has shown for any good purpose?

5. *Grow in grace* (2 Peter 3:18)

By showing undeserved kindness more and more to people who have perhaps wronged us or with people who don't deserve our love, or whom at least we think don't deserve our love, we are growing in grace.

6. *Let your heart be established with grace* (Hebrews 13:9)

We need to be strong and built up in the central aspects of Christianity, such as grace, and not with foods or every wind of doctrine which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.

7. *Thou shalt not frustrate the grace of God* (Galatians 2:21)

In context some of the Galatians were frustrating God's grace, or setting it aside, because false teachers had caused them to think that they needed to earn God's grace, when in fact God had already given it to them. We too might frustrate God's grace if we try to earn what He gives us freely.

8. *Be strong in God's grace* (2 Timothy 2:1)

We must not only grow in grace, it must be one of our strengths. For it to be one of our strengths we will obviously then need to give grace priority in our lives.

**9. Be a good steward of
God's grace (1 Peter 4:10)**

The grace we have been given by God, just as the talent given to each servant in the parable, should not be buried in our lives, but rather should be used wisely for the maximum benefit of others and the kingdom of God.

**10. Receive God's grace
(Galatians 3:14)**

We obey this command by believing in Jesus as Lord and Saviour, by repenting of our sins and then by accepting God's forgiveness or pardon.

God is truly gracious toward us and His grace is truly amazing.

***Suggested Group Bible
Study**

The scriptures in brackets above can be used to present a very challenging and edifying Bible study. Just go through each text one by one firstly asking if the group can identify the command relating to grace in the verse and then secondly by asking them to explain the meaning of the command. (two one hour sessions may be needed to complete this study adequately)

By David Kidd



The Potter's Hands

The Potter's hands are calm,
while He moulds us in His love.
He crafts each single vessel,
with His blessings from above.

No two vessels look alike;
each is seen uniquely in His sight.
He sculpts us out individually,
for His joy and His delight.

The Potter takes our souls,
and turns them on His wheel.
Until He shapes each one of us,
to know His perfect will.

Each vessel is a work of art,
made in the labour of His grace.
He lovingly knows each one of us,
by the silhouette of our face.

The Potter's wheel is mighty,
as He twists and turns each piece.
He shapes each curve and arc,
and then fills us with His peace

No two souls are cast identical,
no two shapes are the same.
But we all have mercy's promise,
when we call upon His name.

For the Potter is an artist,
and He knows exactly what to do.
That is why He shaped and formed,
His image in me and you!

By Deborah Ann Belka

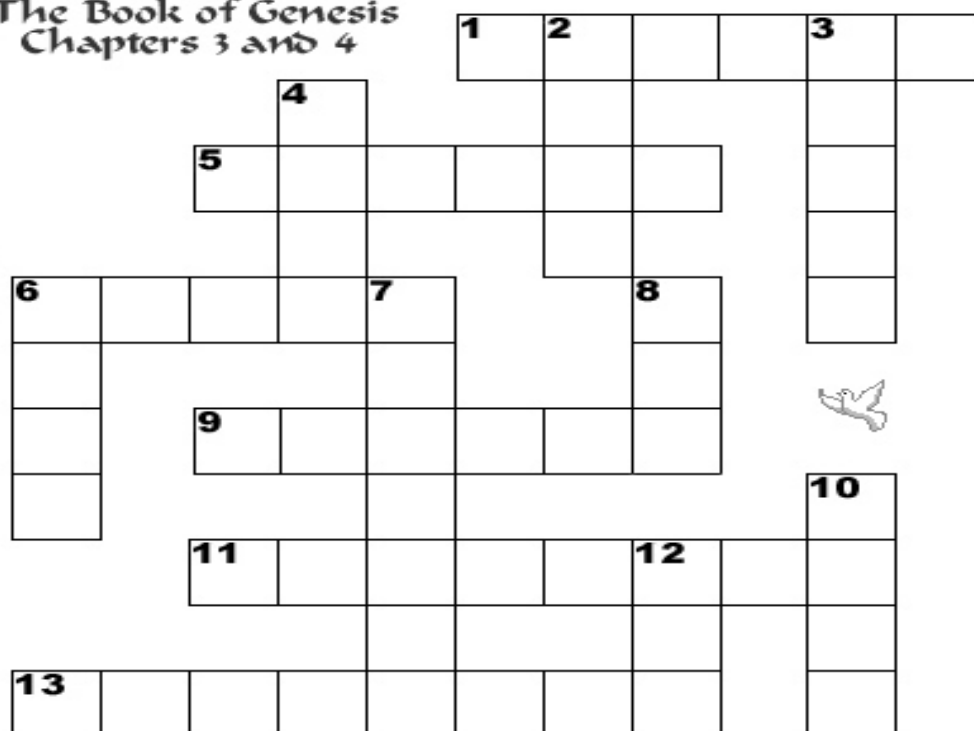


The Youth Section

Crossword No.2

The Book of Genesis
Chapters 3 and 4

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Down

- (2) Adam's second son
- (3) Cain's first son (Gen.4:17)
- (4) Adam's first son
- (6) Adam's third son
- (7) What creature tempted Eve
- (8) Cain lived in this land
- (10) First man
- (12) First woman

Across

- (1) Cain's occupation (Gen.4:2)
- (5) The _____ of Eden
- (6) Adam and Eve's first clothes(Gen.3:21)
- (9) Because of sin the ground was _____ (Gen.3:17)
- (11) Abel's occupation (Gen.4:2)
- (13) Cain became a _____ and a vagabond (Gen.4:12)



Unusual things recorded in the Bible

Methuselah who lived to be 969 years old. Gen. 5 : 27

A bed measuring 13 and 1/2 feet in length and 6 feet in width. Deut 3 : 11

Women who shaved their heads before they married. Deut. 21 : 11 - 13

The sun standing still for a whole day. Josh 10 : 13

An army with 700 left-handed men. Judges 20 : 16

A man whose hair weighed about 6 pounds when it was cut annually. 2 Sam. 14 : 26

A man who had 12 fingers and 12 toes. 2 Sam. 21: 20

A father who had eighty-eight children. 2 Chr. 11 : 21

Army of 185,000 destroyed in one night. Isa. 37 : 36

A day the sun went backwards. Isa. 38 : 8



The Lord's Supper

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