

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

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JESUS CHRIST "THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS"

by Marvin Rickett

Many metaphors are used to describe Jesus Christ in the attempt to get finite human beings to understand all that He is. He is referred to as the Lily of the Valley, the bright and morning Star, the Lamb of God, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, etc. Each of these shows a distinctive feature of God's Messiah. One unusual metaphor is "Sun of righteousness." The prophet Malachi calls him that: "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings" (Malachi 4:2). When we hear this metaphor, we tend to think "Son" instead of "Sun" because we hear so often of the Messiah's being the Son of God and the Son of man. But this metaphor says that in some ways, the Christ is like the sun, the "star" of our solar system. How is Jesus Christ like the sun?

The sun bathes our earth with life-giving and life-sustaining rays. It is a body greater in size and energy than our earth. It is very impressive! It is the "greater light to rule the day." The earth utterly depends on the sun to give it physical life. It emits great energy, light and heat. At its distance from the earth, it is pleasant for humankind. It is enduring. We trust the sun to be there for our needs until the Lord brings a conclusion to all things. Certain cultures in the past were so impressed by the sun that they worshipped it. The Egyptians, Babylonians, and others had a sun-god among their deities, and he frequently was the chief of the gods. They failed to look past the sun to see its Creator.

Jesus Christ is like the sun, but in the spiritual sense. Like the sun gives forth physical light, Jesus Christ gives forth spiritual light. He enlightens the soul and heart of man. He proclaimed, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). He brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:10).

Like the sun is the source of physical life on earth, Jesus Christ is the source of spiritual life. He declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). Through regeneration, He brings to life those who were dead in trespasses and sins. He gives eternal life, which is much superior to the temporal life the sun provides.

Theorists have speculated that at the rate the sun is losing energy, it will yet endure and function for millions of years. Compared with our confidence in the sun, how much more should we have confidence in Jesus Christ who is from everlasting to everlasting (Micah 5:2; Psalm 90:2). He is someone with whom we can cast our lot and He will never leave nor forsake us. We depend on the sun rising every morning, we can depend even more on Jesus Christ to be faithful.

The sun is very pleasant as we bask in its rays. It makes us feel good. To describe pleasantness, we speak of a "bright and cloudless day." Jesus Christ brightens our often drab and sinful existence. His salvation from sin warms our hearts and fills us with pleasantness.

The prophet spoke of the Sun of righteousness having "healing in his wings." Just as the physical sun has healing properties, so the Sun of righteousness heals our spiritual illnesses and diseases. Jesus Christ is the Great Physician who preaches the gospel to the poor, heals the broken hearted, preaches deliverance to the captives, effects recovering of sight to the blind, sets at liberty them that are bruised (Luke 4:18).

Though the prophetic passage in Malachi does not say so, Jesus Christ is also the "Son" of righteousness. One definition of son means to "partake of the nature and essence." Son of God means that Jesus Christ partakes of the nature and essence of Deity, which indeed he does: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). He

partakes of the very nature and essence of righteousness. He is totally righteous without a spot or blemish of the contamination of sin. He is the epitome of righteousness and bears the name Righteous (I John 2:1, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.")

Jesus Christ is the source of all the righteousness we may gain. We become righteous by doing His righteousness: "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous" (I John 3:7). All His commandments are righteousness (Psalm 119:172). Therefore, to appropriate His righteousness, we do His commandments.

The Sun of Righteousness does for man's spiritual well being what the sun in the sky does for physical life on earth, only more so.

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SOLOMON TO THE YOUNG REGARDING ENTICEMENT

by Jerry Moffitt

Surely the love of the young and all the wisdom of this man Solomon made him counsel the young against bad advisers and those who entice to evil.

How do the wicked entice? In Proverbs 1:11-19 Solomon said: "If they say, Come with us, Let us lay wait for blood; Let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause; Let us swallow them up alive as Sheol, And whole, as those that go down into the pit; We shall find all precious substance; We shall fill our houses with

(Continued on page 2)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to some temporary health problems we were not able to continue the series "A Plea For Non-Denominational Christianity" this month. Lord willing, the series will resume in the January 1999 issues. Thanks for your patience and understanding.

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(Continued from page 1)

spoil; Thou shalt cast thy lot among us; We will all have one purse: My son, walk not thou in the way with them; Refrain thy foot from their path: For their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood. For in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird: And these lay wait for their own blood; They lurk privily for their own lives. So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; It taketh away the life of the owners thereof." The wicked promise to lurk secretly for the innocent. Sometimes secrecy can be part of the allurements of sin. The adulteress and the harlot say, *"Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant"* (Proverbs 9:17). In writing the words, *"lurk for the innocent without cause,"* Solomon puts down not the words the wicked use but the actual truth. (13) **PRECIOUS POSSESSIONS AND SPOIL**. The wicked next entice by greed. Later, Solomon warns us, *"But he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished"* (Proverbs 28:20). If they sought wisdom they would learn that the Lord is the one to make poor or rich (1 Samuel 2:7). The treasuries which come from wickedness do not really profit (Proverbs 10:2). Real treasure is found in righteousness, wisdom, and truth; but in our brief life, why not be materially poor and spiritually rich be-

fore we go to heaven? Riches have wings (Proverbs 23:4), and in a brief time we can learn the hard way, "Shrouds have no pockets." Toward the end all learn that what we should have striven for in this life is found in piety - "peace!" Jesus says to send your riches on ahead (Matthew 6:19-20). Besides, the more one loves money, the less satisfied he is with money; and when one is greedy of abundance, abundance makes him dissatisfied with increase (Ecclesiastes 5:10). Seek contentment (1 Timothy 6:6) and peace (1 Peter 3:10-11), if you want to be happy. (14) **CAST LOT AMONG US**. Then comes the enticement of equal comradeship and good companionship. Slowly we all will learn the lesson one spake, "It is better to be alone than in bad company." Thieves, like all who pamper the flesh, are brutish. You can no more expect care, love and honor among thieves than you can expect one dog to wait for another. Then when confession time has come, you will not have to learn that the first law of human nature is rank survival. (15-16) **Don't walk with them**. Solomon even says keep your feet from their path. One of the ancients, after he had suffered a horrible, terrifying shipwreck, had his window facing the sea bricked over, lest it lure him again, by its beauty and peacefulness, to ever travel on it once more. This young son cannot see in the distance where blood flows and money is ripped from poor and pitiful fingers. Cries, senseless violence, and murder are down the path. Exercise your higher faculties. There is still time to recognize the best of all ways out of such paths is to never enter. (17) **VAIN IS THE NET SPREAD WHILE THE BIRD WATCHES**. The bird sees, but it cannot comprehend. Violent men are not wise men. They cannot see far into the future. God save the young person who is only motivated by short-term rewards. Old men see best in the distance. (18) But some grow blind before they grow old. Solomon next says they lay wait for their own blood. How many are blown up with bombs which they made to kill others? How many died with guns or knives in their hands, weapons which were intended for the innocent? Don't plant one foot in their path. Down there they plunder their self respect, steal their own peace, and forage for their own death. (19) What is their motivation? They are **GREEDY FOR GAIN**. Many a crime and many a death comes at the price of gold. And all the while

greed is ever in the irritating company of all - mighty discontent.

The grandson says, "I'm going to make a million dollars. "Then what will you do?" The aged grandfather replied. "Then I'll make another million, then another, and another." "After all that, what will you do in the end?"

"Well," the grandson replied, trying to sound wise and philosophical, "I'll get a comfortable couch and lie peacefully in the shade and enjoy the song of the birds and the stir of the gentle breeze."

"Yes," the grandfather said, "But you can go do all that right now."

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"I PRAY THAT YOUR LOVE MAY ABOUND YET MORE AND MORE"

by Bob Winton

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgement; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11).

The apostle's prayers in behalf of the saints at Philippi included several components which we would do well to include in our prayers for each other. A closer look at these items will help us to appreciate their value.

Paul prayed for an increase of their love. Love can expand and grow; it can increase in its degree, intensity, and scope. It can abound more and more to include not only brethren, friends, and relatives, but also enemies, neighbors, and strangers. We can increase our love for God and his word. The apostle specifies two areas in which he prayed for an increase in their love: in knowledge and all discernment.

Thirteen components of love are identified in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself

unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Knowledge and discernment are incorporated into these thirteen attributes of love. Love is the guiding force behind a Christian's relationship with both God and man. "And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. 13:3). "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha" (1 Cor. 16:22). "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:20,21).

When we increase in knowledge of God's word, we can increase in love. Without knowledge of the Bible we would not know about the necessity of love and what love is. Love without knowledge in religion is aimless and dangerous. It can cause one to ignore sin and error, and to disregard truth. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:13,14). Zeal without knowledge is also dangerous (cf. Rom. 10:1-3). Excitement is to the soul what fever is to the body: it can be indicative of some great problem.

Knowledge is the key to living the Christian life successfully. We cannot do our duty unless we know our duty; the only way to learn it is through study. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge" (2 Pet. 1:5). "But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Pet. 3:18).

With increased knowledge, we can better see our obligations, better understand our blessings, and better

appreciate the promises given us. Therefore, increased knowledge places our faithfulness on a surer foundation. "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock" (Matt. 7:24-25).

Increased knowledge leads to fuller obedience. Read Matthew 5:38-48; Romans 12; 2 Peter 1:1-12. We cannot do what we do not know; we cannot tell what we have not learned; we cannot learn without study; and study demands diligence and effort in order to learn.

By growing in knowledge, we increase our discernment. "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:14). If our knowledge is weak, we will not have the perception to see why certain kinds of dancing, alcoholic beverages, common by-words, certain apparel, and religious error are sinful.

We need discernment to recognize truth and error, and evil and good. "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*....Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph.5:11,17).

In our prayers for one another, let us remember to pray that the love of each of us might abound more and more in knowledge and in all discernment.

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"ARE YOU A PEACE-MAKER"

by Ted J. Clarke

In His Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." Peacemaking is one of the characteristics which can be seen in God's children. Can it be seen in you? If not, can you truly be called a child of God? Do you believe that your baptism or attendance at worship services can make up for your lack in being a peacemaker? All of us may struggle at times with our relationships with others, but are you one of those who really tries to be at peace

with others? Do you try to encourage others to make peace when they may be "riled up" at another? I am concerned that we do not have as many peacemakers at times as we have troublemakers.

It is obvious that sometimes people are going to be at odds with one another. We can get upset with relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors, spouses, preachers, elders, strangers and a host of other types of people; some close to us, others not so close. Our Lord also said in His Sermon on the Mount, "Therefore all things ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12). This "Golden Rule" is forgotten or not practiced consistently by many of us. **How do we want to be treated by others? The Lord says when we figure that out, that is the way we should treat others!**

Do we want people who are upset with us going around behind our backs talking to others, trying to get others stirred up about how terrible we are? Do we want those who are upset with us about something making hateful remarks to us, or taking "pot-shots" at us as they pass by, without ever giving us a chance to discuss what they are upset about? Why is it that we can so freely talk to everyone **about** the person that we have a problem with, but we will not go in love to talk **with that person**? Many times the person you are upset with doesn't know that you are upset or doesn't know the reason why you are disturbed. The Lord's instruction to be a peacemaker obligates us to make peace, not stir up dissension. You may have a legitimate complaint about something or someone, **but you can sin by creating hatred, strife, and divisions and miss heaven!** Read Galatians 5:19-21 and notice that these things are sins which will cause us to be eternally lost, while "peace" is a fruit of the Spirit which those in Christ will show in their lives (verses 22-24).

Peace-breakers can be those who engage in hurtful gossip with others, but will not give any effort to make peace with the one about whom they gossip. These are not sins that the Lord will overlook. They destroy lives and hurt the work of the church, separating Christians and killing love we are to have for on another. Are you maker or breaker of peace?

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A WORD TO OUR READERS

The elders and deacons, the members of the Lord's church in Mammoth Spring, and myself all express our fervent prayers for you all, that you have a happy holiday season and a healthy and prosperous New Year in 1999!

We are so thankful for the faithful support of many congregations and individuals who enable us to send the Fulton County Gospel News to thousands more than we could afford to do so on our own. We are also very thankful for the readers who can not or choose not to financially support this work, but gladly read and teach the spiritual truths they read in FCGN to others. That too is spreading the word!

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- Editor FCGN, Ted J. Clarke

Love and hatred cannot abide together
in the human heart.

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**GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP
- COLOSSIANS 3:17**

- 1. LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
- 2. PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).
- 3. SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
- 4. GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
- 5. PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-23).

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