

1953

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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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DON'T EVER GIVE UP A Challenge To All Caregivers

Part One
By Bob Spurlin

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines **caregiver**, “concerned about or extend care, to feel interest or concern, to give care for the sick.” In short the “caregiver” is the life and blood for the one receiving care. Caregivers that offer their time and energy while denying themselves of life's basic pleasures should come to realize the tremendous sacrifice they make to their loved one. Several years ago the American people learned that President Ronald Reagan contracted the Alzheimer's disease. This was a shock to the nation as sympathy was far-reaching in its concern for the former president and the devastating disease which he suffered. The former First Lady, Nancy Reagan, was in need of encouragement and empathy as she faced the biggest hurdle of her life. Family members began to speak up, informing the American people of the all-consuming task and dedication of the former first lady in her care of the president.

This illustration only serves to keep us knowledgeable of the countless unsung heroes that give the care and compassion to their loved one, who is suffering with a terminal or devastating disease. As a preacher for some 30 years it has been my pleasure to visit the sick and shut-ins often. Many of these find themselves confined because of their physical abnormality and illnesses that make such necessary. Many family members and friends often forget the wife, husband, mother,

father and those providing the primary care for their loves ones. The caregiver faces 168 hours a week in seeing to the necessary duties and at times mundane tasks for the loved one. Dropping by for a short visit, shaking the hand of the shut-in, and extending a token “howdy” to the caregiver doesn't relieve one from their duty to the shut-in and caregiver. We are all busy and most have family duties, jobs and other time-consuming responsibilities. Let us be aware of the Golden Rule stated by the Lord Himself. Jesus said, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12). We could easily spend an hour or so relieving the “caregiver” and let him or her get out to relax for a while. They might enjoy having a meal or visiting with other Christians, which would give a real “shot in the arm” and rejuvenate them as well as lifting their spirits. This writer has seen this done regularly as the church, mindful of this need, will assign volunteers to give the caregiver a periodic break, freeing them with some rest and recreation. This will not only give the caregiver a much-needed pause from their task, but will give us the opportunity to visit and become aware of the lifestyle of the shut-in. Let us remember the words of Paul, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of

faith” (Galatians 6:10). We must be “opportunity conscious” and you have my promise that great satisfaction and contentment will swell your heart with gladness.

OBSERVATIONS FROM A SHUT-IN

My beloved wife, Beverly, and I married on July 17, 1971, as we served the Lord's church in various places throughout the southeastern part of our country. The arrival of a son and daughter made our family complete. Despite the good times and bad, we were a happy foursome. This preacher happened to come along when local congregations were not compensating the preacher in a financial way that would make life comfortable. Nonetheless we never felt deprived of the essentials and loved the work that we did in spreading the good news to a lost world. Beverly was always the best wife and mother that a man could possibly want. When we would decide to leave a place and move elsewhere, more times than not, the church would give us a “going away party.” Consistently, many Christians would say, “Bob, you go along and leave if you like, but Beverly and the kids are staying with us!” This preacher would respond, “We are a package deal, and where I go, they go.” We were always a close family and through it all we stuck together like glue.

Little did we know that before our twenty-fifth anniversary Beverly and I would be told that I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Compounded with that shocking news, four days later our beautiful daughter, Bethany, would suffer a fatal automobile accident. Even though we both suffered a devastating loss when

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our daughter suddenly perished, my beloved wife and caregiver had to begin providing daily care for her husband. We both wept together and sobbed as we tried to cope with the loss of our daughter. My wife, although grieving, was unceasing in her role as a "caregiver" to a husband suffering with such a progressive disease as multiple sclerosis. Together we studied our Bibles and discussed God's word and in time our convictions were proven correct that faithful Christians would go into paradise (Luke 23:42-43). Beverly was the "sole breadwinner," teaching second grade, which is no small chore, plus traveling twenty-five miles round-trip doubled the fatigue when she would return home in the afternoon. (In July of 2001, we were able to make a move enabling Beverly to be five minutes from school).

During the early stages of this crippling disease my father was conscientious in seeing my needs met. The first few years of this battle against MS my father would transport me to the doctors, bathe me, and supply whatever need was necessary. My wife is no longer able to lift me, therefore my family: Jere, Calvin, and my son, Paul would drop by at their convenience

to bathe me. It became necessary for my father to suspend any lifting of me, because of his open-heart (bypass) surgery, but during the early years of my confinement his help was indispensable. Summarizing, it has been a family affair in my personal care, but my beautiful wife has been the constancy of my support and the lifter of my spirits. This prejudiced shut-in has seen my chief caregiver daily. Rarely, if ever, does she complain, although she has every reason to do so.

(continued next month)

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[Editors Note: Regular readers of **FCGN** will recognize the name of brother Bob Spurlin as one who has provided an inside look into pain and suffering by one "who has been there" and still endures through faith. Bob's helpful insights have assisted many in coping with the difficulties of life and he continues to do so through his writings on this subject. The above article is from his latest book, entitled, **Don't Ever Give Up!** Again he has given us a marvelous collection of faith building and soul lifting chapters to help us with our daily needs. Bob may require help from others with his daily life, but he is not just a receiver, **he is a caregiver himself!** Proceeds from the sale of Bob's books help him in his ever increasing expenses in dealing with his disability, hopefully enabling him to continue to provide excellent teaching from the Scriptures and life to aid us in coping with our own problems. As before, his book, **Don't Ever Give Up!**, is available from him postpaid for \$11.50 at the address above. Why not order several and give them to friends or family, or members in your church that are suffering. Also, send Bob and Beverly a card and encourage them!

- Ted J. Clarke]

ITEMS WHICH PROMOTE GROWING OLD GRACEFULLY

By Bob Winton

Be Physically Active. It is obvious to everyone that inactivity leads to physical weakness, makes one an easy target for disease and accident, and can shorten our days. Physical activity promotes good health and strength, and gives us a sense of happiness and usefulness. "Bodily exercise profiteth for a little . . ." (1 Timothy 4:8, ASV).

Lead an Active Spiritual Life.

" . . . Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8). "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children" (Titus 2:1-4). God blesses his faithful servants. "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil. And who *is* he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (1 Peter 3:10-13).

Keep Your Mind Active. Our thoughts determine how we live. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). What is in a man's heart determines the kind of person he is or will become. If we fill our minds with godly thoughts and motives, a godly person we will be. But the converse is also true: evil thoughts and motives will corrupt us. The "little voice" inside you is the real you; it is called the inner man, the soul, the spirit, the heart. What it says,

plans, and purposes will determine your conduct, words, life, and eternal destiny. It will always be present, even though the body is dead. You cannot get away from your spirit for it is you. What we do not use, we lose. This rich truth applies to our muscles, our talents, and our mind. If we do not keep our mind active, it will lose some of its normal powers.

Maintain a Positive Attitude.

If we fill our minds with negative, bitter thoughts we will inevitably talk and act accordingly. The dangers involved can be serious. We may lose our friends, for no one enjoys being around a bitter person. We can alienate our family. We might grow so morose that we lose our peace of mind. One who is bitter and negative cannot at the same time be content, a trait that each Christian is expected to maintain. We must avoid complaining too much about our health and personal problems. Just because one is a senior citizen does not mean it is too late to accomplish more. Cato was 85 when he began a study of the Greek language. Tennyson was 83 when he wrote "Crossing the Bar." Verdi was 85 when he wrote "Ave Maria." Abraham was 75 when he began his sojourn in Canaan (Genesis 12:4). Moses was 80 when he was called to lead Israel from Egyptian bondage. Elderly Christians can know they are still worth much to the Lord, especially during this time when apostasy is rending the body of Christ asunder. Even in the face of declining health, financial problems, and other difficulties, there may be a silver lining. "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word" (Psalms 119:67). "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned

out of the way; but let it rather be healed. (Hebrews 12:11-13).

Be Interested in Other People.

We are told to love our neighbor as we love ourselves (Mark 12:31); we are to be helpful to others. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). If we turn inward on ourselves, we are bound to think our problems are greater than anyone's problems. The greatest single problem of society is selfishness. This can afflict older people. There is the danger of withdrawing from others and filling ourselves with self-pity. There are great advantages we have, despite our ailments and personal problems: "I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalms 37:25; cf. Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:13, 19; Romans 8:31-34).

Have a Healthy Sense of Humor. The Bible speaks of the value of laughter. "A merry heart doeth good *like* a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Proverbs 17:22; cf. 15:13, 15). The Bible reports some events that appear humorous to us: Elijah's statement to the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:25-27); the story of Belshazzar's knees knocking because of fear (Daniel 5:5-6); the report of what the demon did to the seven sons of Sceva (Acts 19:13-16). Someone needs to collect and put in a book many of the humorous stories that uplift and encourage. The stories and illustrations are manifold that have done this for us through the years. How dreary our life might otherwise be if we did not have an outlet for our God-given gift of laughter! Since we are made in God's image, the Father of our spirits must have a sense of humor.

These six points were gleaned from interviews with people who were over one hundred years of

age. These several people had these six points in common. The principles promote a happier and healthier life on earth. They can help us in our quest for immortality in Heaven.

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[**Editor's Note:** FCGN has a large number of elderly readers and we are thankful for every one of you! May you all live to be 100+, with sound minds and bodies! May those who are juniors (not yet seniors) follow your great examples and the admonitions in brother Winton's article. I am truly worried that the more elderly people we lose in the church the less faithful we will become. May it not be so!]



THE POSITION OF THE CROSS

By Eddie Gilpin
(Editor 1989-1991)

The cruel form of execution known as crucifixion was practiced long before our Lord ever tabernacled in human flesh. Many guilty and innocent individuals suffered separation of body and soul through the use of this accursed means (Galatians 3:13). However, with the death of Jesus, crucifixion took on an entirely different meaning. The cross went from a contemptual mode of warning, punishment, and execution to an exalted symbol of hope of a born again people.

Much has been said about the priority of the cross in our lives, the place of the cross in Christianity, and the impact of the cross of Christ on the world as a whole. But, what about the significance of its position on that eventful day? Although these other aspects are indeed significant, important, and vital, the position which the cross and its lifeless yet life-giving body held is also notable, consequential, and worthy of one's attention.

Looking at the cross from the standpoint of its position, notice first its placement vertically. From this view, the cross spanned the chasm between heaven and earth. The Bible reveals that "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the

wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14). Spiritual separation from God is the result of sin (Romans 6:23). From the time that sin first entered the world until the crucifixion, the word of God pointed toward the coming Saviour who, through His death, would bridge the gap that man had made between himself and his God (Isaiah 59:1,2). Without the cross there would be no hope of heaven for obedient man (Hebrews 6:19). Without the cross there would be no connecting point for sinful man and his just Creator (1 John 2:2). Without the cross the fissure would remain between God and man without the junction which the Intercessor provides (Hebrews 7:25). The cross fills the void of separation between heaven and earth for those who come to it in obedience and submission to the will of God. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: **No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me**" (John 14:6).

Second, notice the position of the cross horizontally. As prophesied, Jesus was "numbered with the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12), being crucified between two thieves (Matthew 27:38). Man, being created in God's image, has a common bond of brotherhood that binds him with every other man created in that same image (Genesis 1:26,27). No more vividly can that tie that binds be revealed than in the position of the cross.

Jesus died between two men. He must live among men today. Every relationship man has with his fellow man should have the Lord at the very center of it (Matthew 6:33). With Christ between marriage partners, divorce would be eliminated as the husband and wife grow closer to each other by growing closer to Him. With the Lord first in the lives of individuals involved in business deals, fraudulent transactions and the "ripple effect" of illegalities resulting therefrom would cease. With Jesus as the very heart and soul of all we do (which is the way it should be), crime would be no more and wars would be eliminated. The words of the oft-sung song would echo a new meaning to all mankind - "Blest be

the tie that binds, our hearts in Christian love." As the mortar binds the blocks that form a solid wall, mankind can be bound together through obedience to the One who died between two men.

With these things in mind, "how say some" that the cross is of no effect? From the position which Jesus occupied between heaven and earth how can any reason that He was merely "a good man"? As He hung between two common men, how can anyone reason that "fellowship is only vertical" (between God and man) and "not horizontal" (between men)?

The necessity of the cross is a theme that echoes through the annals of Holy Writ. Its place of prominence cannot be denied. Its message and meaning must take priority in the lives of all Christians. Likewise, its position between heaven and earth and its interposition between two common men are lessons that mankind would do well to take to heart. Truly the cross is the center of Christianity.

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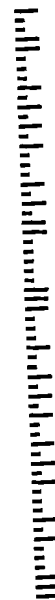


**GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP
- COLOSSIANS 3:17**

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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