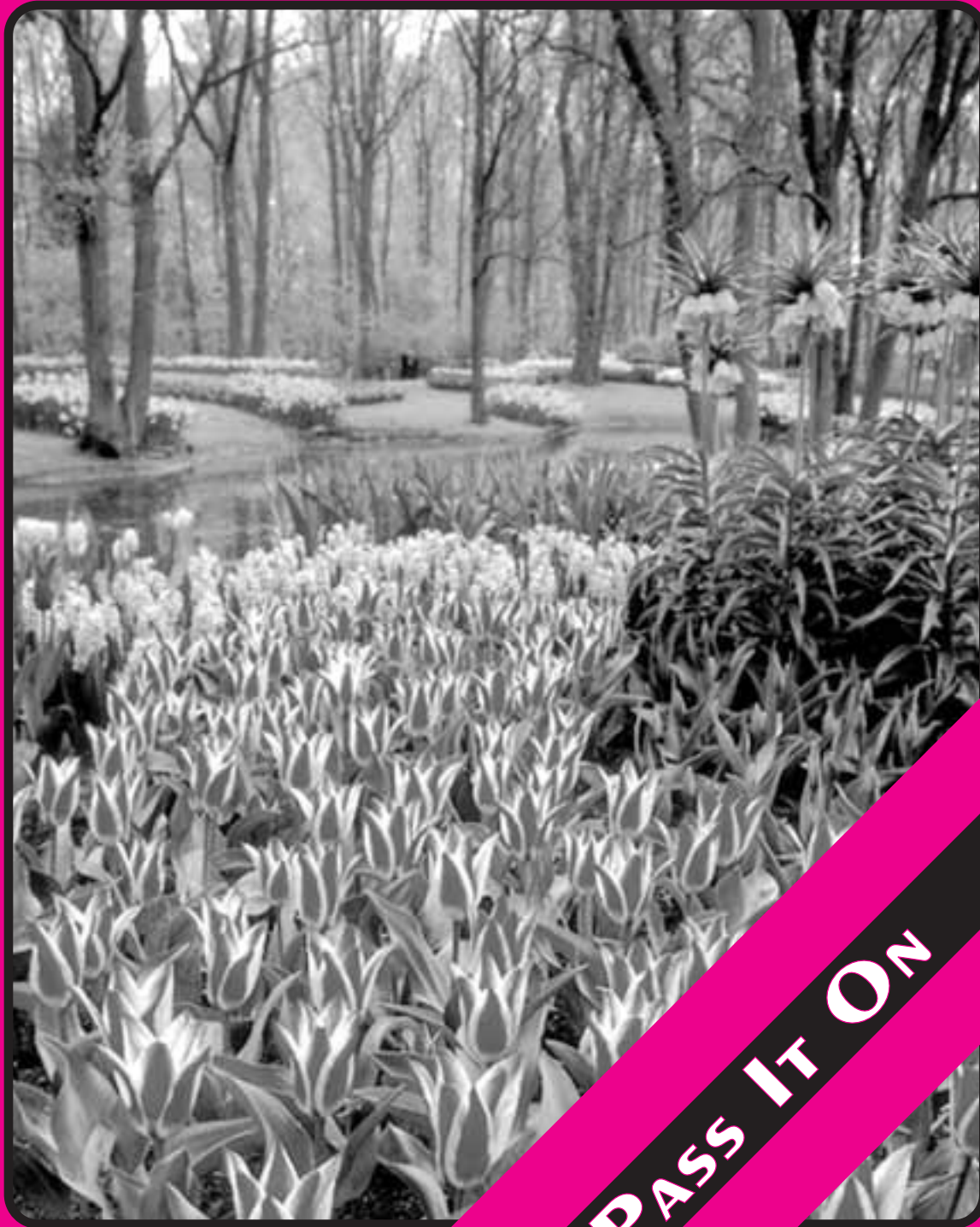


EVANGEL

The Good News of Jesus Christ



PASS IT ON

Raised up

In the latest issue of *Evangel*, I wrote an article entitled *Already Broken*. Through Paul in Ephesians 2, I showed how you live in a broken world. I showed further how you are broken. It's all broken because of sin . . . but can it be fixed . . . can you be fixed? The answer by God's grace is that, yes, the broken can be restored! The dead in sin can be raised up with Christ! You can find God's gracious answer to the broken state caused by sin in the verses four through seven of Ephesians 2. Those verses read as follows:

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ.

Mirror, mirror . . .

In a way what Paul does in Ephesians 2:1-3 is have you look in the mirror. He has introduced you to yourself as God sees you. The picture has not been pretty. The face you see is maybe one you don't completely recognize. Nevertheless, it is you. Nevertheless this is not a story about just one person – you. Paul does not stop with verse three, but he continues in verse four with a wonderful word of interjection – *but*. That word *but* lets you know that someone else has entered the story and stands in contrast to you. Moreover, the word that follows tells you that this "someone" is God. *But because of his great love for us, God . . . !* God can change the ugly face of sin in the mirror to a face that beautifully reflects his original purpose in creation – a face that reflects his image.

Who is this God? Paul says he is *rich in mercy*. How fascinating that in the previous verse he can talk about people under God's wrath, and now, he can talk about God's rich mercy. Without trying to explain how they fit together Paul declares both statements true. God's wrath is poured out, but so is his mercy. It is this consistency in God's dealing with you that can bring comfort to you. Yes, you should thank him for his wrath and mercy, his anger and love because both are just. He is just to pour out his wrath on sinners. Each one of you by nature falls short of the perfect glory of God. However, he is also just to show his rich mercy towards sinners.

How can this be? How can God be rich in mercy? How could God love you when you were dead in your sins? The answer comes in one word: Christ! It is because of Christ that God can be rich in mercy. It is because of Christ that God loved

you, even when you were dead in your transgressions and sin. It is all because of Christ!

What has God done?

Verse five – "*God . . . made us alive with Christ.*" What has God done? How were you made alive with Christ? Note the words of verse five that follow, *even when we were dead in transgressions*. Paul is saying to the Ephesians and to you that God made you alive with Christ while you were dead. Paul is saying to the Ephesians and to you that when you consider your life in Christ you must look away from yourself and to the life of Christ. God made you alive in Christ when he raised Christ from the dead! To understand this verse and the following verses you must see that God considers you to be united to Christ. You are united to him in his death, so that you have died to sin. You are also united to him in his resurrection, so that you are alive!

Maybe you know the words of the Apostles' Creed. *And on the third day he rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven and he sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.* The *he* of these words is Christ. Now Paul says not only *he*, but also *you with him!* You were made alive with Christ. You were raised up, you ascended with him, and you were made to sit with him in the heavenly places. Of each of these three events, Paul says of you and you: *with him!*

What a comfort you have that God has credited to you the work of Christ. As Christ died, you died with him. As Christ lives, you live with him. As Christ ascended, you ascended with him. As Christ sits in the heavenly realms, you sit with

with Christ



him. Why is this such a comfort? Well, as Paul puts in Romans 8:37 *"We are more than conquerors through him who loved us."* When your life is hid with Christ, then you are no longer subject to the ruler of the kingdom of the air. You no longer follow the cravings of your sinful nature. Instead, you are united to Christ!

But is it for me?

If this is not the way you experience life, or if you know that you are still dead in sin you might be asking the question *how does this apply to me?* Well, God has made his promises to you. He promises in his rich mercy and love the benefits of Christ's work to all. He calls each of you without partiality, and you must receive it in faith.

Paul in verse eight says *"For it is by grace you have been saved through faith."* Through faith, these promises are realized in your life. By grace, through faith, you are made alive together with Christ. You are raised up with him, and you sit with him in the heavenly realms. You sit with him in a place of security, a

place where nothing can separate you from his love. Nothing, not even says Paul, death. By faith, you belong to him body and soul, both in life and in death.

Why did God do it?

Why did God make you alive with Christ, raise you up with him, and make you sit with him in the heavenly realms? Back to verse four. *He is rich in mercy.* To the dead, that is, to those helpless to save themselves has come God's mercy. To those under wrath because of sin has come God's great love. To those under judgment because of sins and trespasses has come God's grace, his undeserved favor. Why his mercy, his love and his grace? Because it was his good pleasure in Christ to rescue you from death, wrath and judgment. But this is not all! God is not just someone who rescues you from death. He also gives you life. Life in Christ! Moreover, that life has its own purpose. That life also answers the question – why did God do it?

Verse seven, *in order that in the coming ages he might show the*

incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. The words *"in order that"* tell of God's purpose in your life. God is using his work in you, his joining you with Christ, to do something wonderful. He is showing the incomparable riches of his grace in kindness. If you are a Christian, then, when people see you walking in service to Christ, they must be prompted to ask why and who? Why are you so different and who made you so? The answer is, *you are different because you are no longer dead in sin, but alive in Christ and the one responsible for this is God who has shown you his grace in Christ Jesus.* In this way God can use you that he might show to others the great riches of his grace in Christ Jesus. And, what about when you look at yourself in the mirror? When you look in the mirror then by God's grace you no longer see what is broken but you see yourself restored through grace in Christ. I encourage you to read on in the next issue where I will describe how God shows himself to the world through you.

Doug Vandeburgt

Let not your heart

Someone once said, “Saying good-bye is a little bit like dying.” And how true this is! Two people have gotten to know each other. They have shared many moments of joy and sorrow together. And now, after having been together for a long time, they have to say good-bye. Who knows when the next time will be when they will meet! The departure of the other is like losing a little bit of yourself!

What is true for saying good-bye after having known someone for quite some time, is even more true for saying good by when you know someone is going to die. Then for sure the farewell is a little bit like dying. The other person dies, but you die a little bit yourself too. Never will you be able to speak to the other again! Never will you be able to see the smile, hear the voice, be encouraged by the other’s ability to understand you and empathize. And what makes matters even more troublesome is that you have to continue to live without the other. How will you be able to do this? What will now happen to the plans you had together for the future? Will your plans and aspirations now also die along with the death of your loved one?

Jesus’ departure

What you and I sometimes experience, Jesus’ disciples also experienced. For three intense years, they had been with their Master. They had enjoyed his friendship, witnessed his miracles, listened to his preaching, been comforted by his understanding. Now He was about to leave them.

They are together in an upper room somewhere in Jerusalem. Jesus had sent two of his disciples into the city and told them they would be met with a man carrying a jar of water. They were to follow him. Then when this man entered into a house, they were to say to the owner of the house, “The Teacher asks: ‘Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’” The owner would then lead them to a large room in the house which was furnished and ready (Mark 14:15).

Well, now Jesus and his disciples are in this large room which had been prepared for them. And He tells them He is soon about to die. “My children,” He says, “I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come” (John 13:33).

However, one of Jesus’ disciples – not understanding that Jesus was referring to his death and subsequent resurrection and ascension into heaven – replies, “Lord, where are you going?” To which Jesus replies, “Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later” (John 13:36).

Troubled hearts

You can well imagine how confused and troubled Jesus’ disciples must have felt. They had left their homes, friends, occupations, everything for the sake of following Jesus. Now He was about to leave them and go to a place where they would not be able to go! At least, not for the time being! How this good-bye felt a little bit like dying!

To make matters worse, what about their plans for the future? They had hoped and dreamed that Jesus would rid them of their wrong rulers: pagans on the one hand, compromised Jews on the other and, half-way in between, Herod and

his family. Jesus had not yet done this! What would now become of these dreams and aspirations? Would their hope for the coming kingdom of God then not be fulfilled after all? And how in the world would they ever be able to continue to fulfill their tasks in the future, with Jesus no longer being physically present among them?

Trust in God and trust in Jesus

Jesus, understanding their confusion, fears and anxieties, then encourages them with these beautiful words, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me” (John 14:1). The disciples already trusted in God. They believed what the God once said about Himself: “God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?” (Numbers 23:19) Well, because they already believed that God could be relied upon and trusted, they should now also believe or trust in Jesus. They should also trust that what He told them about the coming kingdom of God would be fulfilled. For He and the Father are One (John 10:30). He is in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 14:11). And so, when He speaks, He will not fail to act. When He promises, He will not fail to carry through. Also what *He* has said will be fulfilled.

Preparing a place

That is why Jesus continues and says, “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). Here Jesus is telling his disciples that heaven is like one big house with lots of room for people like themselves.

be troubled

Because Jesus wants them to also one day enter heaven like He Himself, He is now leaving them to go and prepare a place for them.

This reminds us of that large room Jesus and his disciples were having their farewell conversations. Somehow, without the disciples knowing how, this room had been prepared for them in advance. In much the same way, Jesus would now also prepare them for heaven and heaven for them. He had already done that during the three years He had been with them. He would continue to do that with his death on Calvary's cross where He would die as an atonement for their sins. Then, once He had arisen from the dead and ascended into heaven, He would continue his work of preparation. He would pour out his Holy Spirit who would help them to understand what the kingdom of God was all about and enable them to preach the gospel of this kingdom to people far and beyond Jerusalem. He would dwell in the hearts of all believers changing them from the inside out and enabling them to live for their God. He would plead their cause before his Father's throne and grant them all the mercy and help they need. He would lead and guide all of history till that glorious kingdom of God would descend from heaven on a renewed and rejuvenated earth.

What a glorious work of preparation! That's why we also read in the Bible that God sends preachers of the good news of the kingdom of God to make ready a people *prepared* for the Lord (Luke 1:17). That's why we are reminded that we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God *prepared* in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). That's why believers are encouraged God has *prepared* for them a city (Hebrews 11:16). A city

also known as the new Jerusalem that will come down out of heaven from God, *prepared* as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband (Revelation 21:2). That's why we read that one day believers will get to hear those heart-warming words, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom *prepared* for you since the creation of the world (Matthew 25:34).

The grand reunion

Because of this glorious work of preparation Jesus rounds off the first part of this conversation with his disciples by saying, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:3).

Can you imagine what this means for Jesus' disciples? They were confused and troubled about what Jesus had said concerning his imminent departure. He was going to a place where they could not now accompany Him. Thus, they would have to miss his physical friendship, smile and voice. Their hopes and aspirations for a physical kingdom of heaven here on earth in the near future would not be realized. Yet, one day Jesus would return and they would be reunited. Then they would always physically be with their Lord again. And as far as their hopes for the kingdom of heaven, well these hopes would be fulfilled, in an even more glorious way than they had even imagined: a new heaven and a new earth where the bliss of Paradise would be restored again.

Isn't that ultimately why Jesus left heaven to come into this world in the first place? Did He not come to reconcile all things to Himself, to restore the order of Paradise, to make all things new and beautiful again? Well, his great work of

preparation in heaven is leading to this magnificent goal!

When that is the case, we can trust in God and in Jesus Christ. We can abide in Him and He in us so that one day we will abide with Him and He with us for all eternity in his Father's house with its many abiding places.

Let not your heart be troubled

I started this article by reminding you that saying good-bye is a little bit like dying. The departure of someone you love very much is a little bit like losing a bit of yourself. Especially, if the other one is departing into the realm of the dead. Then even more than at other times, the other's person's departure feels like you are dying a little bit yourself as well as the plans and aspirations you had for the future.

The only way to deal with these and similar situations in your life is what Jesus tells his disciples to do: trust in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now that the Lord Jesus has returned to his heavenly dwelling place, He is continuing his great work of renewal. By trusting in Him and following Him where He calls you to go, you become a participant in this great work of renewal. And when that is the case, those confusing and troubling situations you find yourself in will work together for your good. Jesus will use them to prepare you the life of eternity. And as far as your hopes and aspirations which seemed to have been dashed and ruined are concerned, they will be realized and fulfilled in a more glorious way than you ever imagined. Therefore, let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God and believe in Jesus Christ.

Dick Moes

The Risen Lord calls Peter a Second Time

BIBLE STORY Based on John 21

Peter had spent the whole night on the lake. With some of his friends he was trying very hard to catch fish. Time and again they cast out the net in the hope to haul it back filled with fish. But no. Each time the net came back empty.

And they already felt so empty. There was not much goal left in their lives. They were a bit at a loss. What were they to do now that their Lord Jesus had left them? Three long years they had followed Jesus from town to town. They heard his teachings and saw his miracles. Following Jesus had been a full-time job for them.

But that job seemed to have come to an end. Jesus had been captured by the rulers. He was mistreated, beaten and killed on the cross. The death of their Master had left them devastated, till the news came that He had risen from the dead. And yes, the news proved true. They had seen Him with their own eyes. Jesus is alive again!

Yet, things were not the same as before. True, Jesus came to show himself a few times, but then he went away again. His body was real, but different. When Jesus visited them, he did not have to enter through the door. He was there, all of a sudden. And then he left again, also all of a sudden. His body did not follow the rules of this world anymore. It had become a heavenly body. It was confusing. What did Jesus expect of his special friends? Was their job finished? Seven of the friends decided to go back to fishing, the job they did before Jesus had called them to follow him.

And so Peter had spent the night fishing on the lake with his friends.

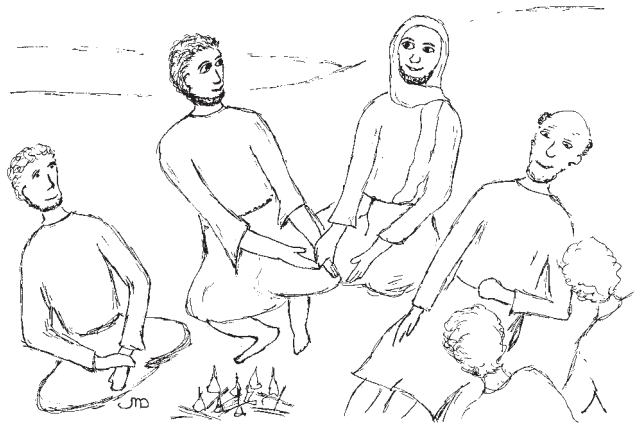
Peter had always loved his Lord very dearly. He was very troubled now, not only because he missed his Master, but more so because he had lied about his love for Jesus. Three times in a row he had said that he had never heard of the man Jesus. How could he still be a special servant of his Master, if he did not even want to show his love for Jesus in time of trouble? He had loved his own life more than the honour of his Lord.

Suddenly the friends in the boat wake up from their troubled thoughts. Their eyes are drawn to the shore. A man is calling them. "Cast your net on the other side, and you will catch fish," the man says. Without hesitation they obey the his word. And they are not disappointed. When they pull in their net, it is filled with fish.

At that moment one of the friends recognizes who that man on the shore is. "It is the Lord", he says to Peter. Yes, it is! Peter jumps overboard and wades to his Master. He longs so much to serve his Lord again. With all his might and soul he wants to do his Master's work.

How good it is to be with the Lord again. Together the friends and their Lord have breakfast. No one asks, "Who are you?" They begin to feel better. The meal strengthens their bodies; the nearness of Jesus strengthens their souls.

Then Jesus turns to Peter. Immediately Peter understands that the Lord is going to talk to him. He tenses up. He remembers very well how he lied three times about



knowing Jesus. He remembers the look in Jesus' eyes after his third lie. He remembers also how the pain in Jesus' eyes filled his own eyes with bitter tears of shame.

"Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" The words of Jesus cut through Peter's heart. Why does his master not call him Peter, his special name? Peter means rock. That was the name the Lord Jesus gave him when he was called the first time. Peter was to be the rock on which Jesus could rely. How it hurt Peter that Jesus does not call him "Rock" anymore!

But Jesus does call! And Peter answers, "Yes, Lord! Yes! You know that I love you." "Feed my lambs," the Lord answers.

Before Peter fully understands what it all means, his Master's voice sounds a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter cringes. He still is not Peter for his Master. But his answer comes right away. "Lord, you know that I love you!" The Lord repeats his assignment to Peter, "Look after my sheep."

A third time the voice of Jesus breaks the silence. Again, those piercing words, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter's heart is heavy with sorrow and repentance. It hurts him that the Lord is asking him the third time. But he also understands now better than ever before how much he must have hurt his master by saying three times that he did not know Jesus.

Peter is near tears. "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you." Again the Lord repeats his assignment for Peter, "Feed my sheep." Then Peter and his Lord look at each other. Jesus speaks again. "When you were young, you did as you pleased. But now, in my service, your freedom will be restricted. As you take care of my people, you must go where you may not want to go."

How glad and relieved Peter is! Jesus called him again! All the other helpers could hear it too. Peter can work for Jesus again. But he cannot be a coward. He realizes that he cannot be a rock for Jesus if he relies on his own courage. He has no courage. He is weak. He can only be strong in the strength of his Master, his Lord Jesus.

But he will do it. He will take on the task. Strong in Jesus' love he will speak about his Lord before people in the streets and before kings in the courts. The Lord has called him a second time. He is forgiven. He may go on serving. Yes, he will follow his Lord.

Jane

Activity Page

SERVE THE LORD

It is a joy to serve the Lord. You can serve the Lord in many ways. You can serve Him as child or as grown-up. You can serve Him at home, at school or at work. You serve the Lord when you do not work to please yourself, but when you do your job to honour the Lord.

It makes a difference. When you help with the dishes, you can do that in different ways. You might do it because your parents make you. Or you might do it because you like a clean kitchen. Or you might do it because you are allowed to watch the hockey game when your chores are done. But these are all ways to please yourself or other people. It is different when you help along because you want to serve the Lord. Then you please the God of Life. Serving the Lord lifts you up from your earthly troubles and prepares you for a life of heavenly bliss.

ROCK FACTS

In the Bible Story on page 6 you can read that the Lord Jesus called Peter "Rock." On this rock Jesus can build the church. Peter was to preach the Good News to the world. Peter's preaching became the rock on which the church was built. A rock is a very solid foundation. In other places of the Bible we read that God Himself is the Rock. We can count on God for our present safety and eternal well-being.

"There is no Rock like our God" 1 Samuel 2.2

"The LORD is my Rock" 2 Samuel 22.2

"The LORD is my Rock, my Fortress" Psalm 18.2

"For you are my Rock and my Fortress" Psalm 71.3

"The LORD is just. He is my Rock" Psalm 93.15 .

JOBS TO DO

You can serve the Lord in any job. It depends on your outlook. In this Word Search you find eighteen things people can do for a living. After you found them all, take the leftover letters as they appear from left to right, starting at the top. These letters form a saying that you must remember.

R	E	M	R	A	F	B	A	K	E	R
R	S	D	E	P	I	L	O	T	R	V
E	B	O	E	O	R	O	T	H	T	E
B	U	C	L	L	E	G	S	O	E	M
R	I	T	R	I	M	G	A	D	A	T
A	L	O	G	C	A	E	I	I	C	S
B	D	R	N	E	N	R	L	O	H	I
R	E	N	I	M	A	M	O	L	E	T
W	R	A	K	A	A	K	R	Y	R	R
E	S	R	U	N	S	M	A	I	D	A

ARTIST BAKER BARBER BUILDER COOK
 DOCTOR FARMER FIREMAN KING LOGGER
 MAID MAILMAN MINER NURSE PILOT
 POLICEMAN SAILOR TEACHER

The sentence reads

_____ .

Dawn



Pay-back Time Never Comes

“... but my hand will not touch you.” 1 Samuel 24:12b

There are times in our lives when it just seems like God is giving us a chance to enjoy sweet revenge. Like when the person in school who always bullied you, begs your help as he frantically collects the papers of his project before the wind blows them all away. Or when the man who has cheated some of your friends stands on a lonely road beside his car, trying to flag you down for a lift.

It's payback time!, you think.

Exactly that kind of thing fell into David's lap. David and his men had gone to the most barren and desolate regions within the promised land: the rocky crags on the western shore of the Dead Sea. But King Saul had been tipped off as to David's presence, and he came with three thousand crack troops to arrest him. Once again, Saul and his troops were so close that David and his men could almost smell them, but Saul did not realize it. As a matter of fact, when Saul needed a bathroom, he sauntered off into a cave, alone, thinking nothing of the danger he was in. But the cave Saul entered to relieve himself in, was the very place in which David and his three hundred men were hiding!

“It's payback time!” David's men told him, “This is the day Yahweh spoke of when he said to you, ‘I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.’” What a sweet moment for these men who had been so harassed by Saul and his armies. *Now's the time. Fulfill the prophecy. Kill King Saul.* It were as though God Himself was urging David to take revenge.

But as David crept silently toward Saul, he asked himself: *May I kill this man? Is he not the man whom God anointed to be king over Israel? How do I dare kill him?* His mind said, *Kill Saul!* But his

conscience forbade it. So instead of attacking Saul, he attacked his robe, and cut a piece from it. We read that David was conscience-stricken for this, and he rebuked his men for wanting to attack Saul. They had no right. Saul was still precious to God.

In this way, David foreshadowed the character of the coming Messiah. Jesus Christ could easily justify the destruction of all those people who were opposing him, harassing him, even plotting to kill him. But he rebuked Peter for attacking with a sword those who had come to arrest him. This was not time for revenge. He could have revenge any time He wanted, for Jesus said, “Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?”

But Jesus did not want to attack and destroy, for the same reason David did not want to attack and destroy. David was restrained by the fact that Saul was appointed and ordained by God to a high office, and no matter how badly Saul was messing up as king in Israel, he still held that office. How then could David kill him? Jesus did not want to

destroy the people who attacked him either because God had appointed and ordained each person to be his image. And no matter how badly people in this world mess up the duties of their office, they still need to be treated with dignity because of that office. Instead of seeking revenge (calling twelve legions of angels to destroy his persecutors) Jesus treated all the people around him with dignity and love. He laid down his life for them.

That is what David did. After Saul left the cave, he called out after Saul, and then Saul realized that David had just spared his life. And David said, “May Yahweh avenge the wrongs you have done, but my hand will not touch you.” He left vengeance to God.

And so should you. “Pay-back time” never comes. Don't seek revenge. Rather, treat people (even your enemies) with honour and love because they are God's image. He will put them on the scales to see how they have fulfilled their office. That is God's right, not yours.

Paul Aasman

EVANGEL

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