

BEYOND TODAY

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D-DAY

+75 Years:

What Should We Learn?

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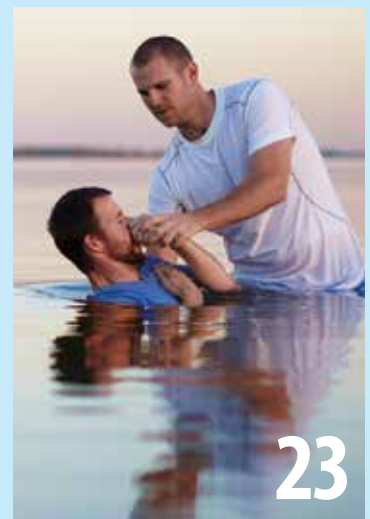
More important than having the Bible at hand is having its life-giving words ingrained in our hearts—trusting and following their guidance.



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When Dreams Become Nightmares



Scott Ashley
Managing editor

This summer's commemoration of the 75th anniversary of D-Day—the Allied landings in northern France that breached Adolf Hitler's Atlantic coast defenses—will be especially poignant for the simple reason that very few who took part in that struggle will be there. Most now rest in their graves, and memories of that day steadily slip away into the long night.

Each day several hundred World War II veterans pass away, and those remaining are in their 90s. Soon none will be left, and the world will be poorer for it.

Most of my uncles served in various branches of the U.S. military during that conflict. My father volunteered for the Marines while still in high school, but the war ended before he could be sent into combat. When I was growing up, the war was still a fresh and raw memory for many. I never heard my uncles talk about their experiences—some things must've been better left unsaid. One of my wife's uncles came home in a box, felled by shrapnel from an artillery shell in the last year of the war.



It's hard to imagine the horror of that fateful day as 18-, 19- and 20-year-olds charged into a pounding surf and across 200 yards of open beach amid a hail of bullets and shells—fired by other 18-, 19- and 20-year-olds wearing different uniforms. Many young men on both sides didn't live to see another dawn.

What factors led to this maelstrom of death and destruction? Much of the blame can be laid at the feet of one man—a failed artist and former soldier, Adolf Hitler, who never rose above the rank of corporal in the First World War. Yet through a highly unlikely chain of events he rose from obscurity to become Germany's chancellor and then dictator.

He spelled out his dream in his two-volume work *Mein Kampf* (“My Struggle”), written during and shortly after his 1920s imprisonment for stirring up political unrest. It outlined his racist ideology (the Aryan Germans were the “genius” master race, and the Jews the “parasite” race to be eliminated), Germany's need to expand (by conquest of other countries) and how his National Socialist (Nazi) movement would gain and exercise power in a new and much more powerful Germany.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, he proclaimed his new regime the *Third Reich* (*reich* meaning “realm” or “empire”). This signaled another aspect of his dream, because the first and second reichs of German history were the Holy Roman Empire of 800-1806 and the German Empire of 1871-1918. The Holy Roman Empire dominated Central Europe, and the German Empire controlled most of Central and much of Eastern Europe before its fall at the end of World War I.

Hitler saw himself as the leader of a new German-led

empire that would dominate Europe for another thousand years, along with the whole world, and he set about making his dream a reality. In terms of direct conquest, he was far more successful than his predecessors, establishing German rule over a vast territory—stretching from deep inside Russia in the east to the Atlantic Coast in the west, and from the tip of Norway in the north across North Africa in the south. The German eagle emblem was raised over these lands just as the Roman eagle standard (which Hitler copied) had been raised over them almost 2,000 years earlier.



And this is where dreams grow dangerous—and indeed become nightmares. Hitler set out to do exactly what he had described in *Mein Kampf*. He began his proposed extermination of the Jews (and succeeded in murdering 6 million). Germany needed *lebensraum* (“living room”), so he invaded, plundered and enslaved his neighbors, leading to the deaths of millions more.

His National Socialist Party indeed ruled a new and stronger Germany, but his dream of a German-led Europe turned into a nightmare for Europe and Germany alike. His campaign of conquest eventually ground to a halt and was then forced to retreat, surrounded by enemies on all sides.

When the Allied landings on D-Day proved successful, Germany's days were numbered. Less than a year later Germany surrendered, but not before the country had been pounded into near-oblivion. Hitler died in ignominy, committing suicide in his underground Berlin bunker as Russian troops closed in. Perhaps his lasting legacy was proving that sometimes nations' leaders can be their people's worst enemies.

But what does this have to do with us today? A great deal, actually, for Bible prophecy reveals that history has a way of repeating itself. And sobering prophecies from the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation show us that another power-hungry ruler will arise in the time shortly before Jesus Christ's return. He will be leader of a bloc of nations collectively called “the Beast”—a term reflective of its nature, which will be like a wild, carnivorous animal. You can read more about this in the articles in this issue.

Jesus Christ warns us to “watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36). In *Beyond Today*, we want to help you understand where our world is headed so that you may grasp the urgency of these times and, as Jesus said, “to stand!” BT

D-DAY +75 Years:



“Dad, what is this picture of?” I asked. “Oh,” he replied, “that’s the first American cemetery in Europe in World War II. After D-Day, June 6, I sent a team of men with a bulldozer to dig it on Omaha Beach.” The faded black-and-white photo with a few smudges and wrinkles had been

in a box with dozens of other photos my father brought back from his experience in World War II. Sure enough, looking at the sign and the small fence around the plot, you could read what it said: “Here marks the site of the first American cemetery in France, World War II.”

I was looking at the resting place of dozens of American soldiers who died on “bloody Omaha,” the Normandy beach that took the heaviest casualties on that momentous day 75 years ago.

Before my father, Lloyd McNeely, died, I was able to have him go through these pictures with me, writing some notes on the back so we would know the story after his passing. Otherwise they would just be a box of photos filled with unknown people, places and experiences.

My dad was an American soldier, a combat engineer assigned to the 149th Engineer Combat Battalion of the 6th Engineer Special Brigade. This group was among the first wave of soldiers to hit the beach as dawn broke over the northwest coast of France on June 6, 1944. Combat engineers had the job of clearing the beach of mines, barbed wire and other obstacles and establishing paths up the bluffs from the beach so that the oncoming waves of tanks, jeeps and other soldiers could

land and quickly begin pushing inland.

As the head of this allied spear being thrust at Adolf Hitler’s vaunted Atlantic Wall, these men had to perform their job quickly and effectively or the entire invasion would be stalled. Behind them were thousands of ships carrying many thousands of men. These engineers, along with paratroopers who had been dropped behind the lines during the night hours, had key jobs to perform so the invasion would roll smoothly.

On Omaha Beach these men met the toughest Nazi defense. Strategically placed machine guns in concrete bunkers and behind reinforced embankments began raking the beach with deadly fire. Landing the men from the specially designed landing craft was challenging. Men dropped several yards off the beach in deep water were overwhelmed by the weight of the 70 pounds of gear they were carrying on their backs. Many drowned before reaching the beach.

In this deadly killing ground, those who made it to the beach were raked with machine-gun fire and forced to find whatever cover they could. An estimated 2,400 American soldiers were killed or wounded on Omaha Beach that day.

D-Day has always held a special place in my life. My father survived this hell. He was a staff sergeant in charge of a platoon of men. He would have been at or near the front of one of those landing ships when the front opened and the men began scrambling out.

If you’ve ever watched the opening scenes of the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, it depicts a soldier being shot through his helmet as the gate dropped on one of those craft. It is a gruesome but accurate scene. It could easily have happened to my father, but it didn’t. He was spared and came home after the

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by Darris McNeely



Sgt. Lloyd McNeely during WWII.

war, and a few years later I was born. Had he died on Omaha, I would not even be here to write this article. My father, along with thousands of other Allied soldiers like him, carried out incredibly brave acts on that day.

The greatest invasion in history

What was my father a part of? The Normandy Invasion—D-Day—was the largest amphibious invasion not just of World War II, but in all history. It included troops from the English-speaking nations of America, Great Britain and Canada. Nearly 7,000 ships of all kinds and more than 11,000 aircraft carried nearly 2 million soldiers from England across the English Channel to France.

On that first day alone, 156,000 men landed in France. Ten thousand of them became casualties, with more than 4,000 confirmed dead. The Germans lost more than 1,000 soldiers. Nothing on this scale had ever been attempted in ancient or modern warfare.

The landings occurred on five sections of the French Normandy coast code-named Utah and Omaha (American sectors) and Gold, Sword and Juno (British and Canadian sectors). The Allied troops were commanded by U.S. Gen. Dwight Eisenhower. His second was British Gen. Bernard Montgomery.

D-Day was termed “the longest day” by German field marshal Erwin Rommel. Gen. Rommel commanded German troops in this region, and his tactics created the formidable obstacles encountered by soldiers on the beaches. “The longest day” began shortly after midnight when paratroopers from the British 6th Airborne and American 82nd and 101st Airborne units dropped

behind the German lines.

The first strategic location captured was Pegasus Bridge on the Caen Canal, taken by British paratroopers. Historian Andrew Roberts says: “Pegasus Bridge was the only possible route to reinforce the 12,000 men of the 6th Airborne Division who were about to bear the brunt of concerted

attempts by the 21st Panzer Division [German tanks] and several other German units to descend on Sword Beach and fling the invaders back into the sea before they had established the bridgehead” (*History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900*, 2007, p. 340). (For more on all this, see “D-Day and Divine Intervention” beginning on page 9.)

The Canadian soldiers who landed on Juno Beach fought valiantly. Their troops advanced seven miles inland, more than any others. Roberts says the Canadian troops, with names like the Queens Own Rifles of Canada and Royal Winnipeg Rifles, “were the only units to achieve all their objectives on D-Day” (p. 342). He also includes a little-known quote from Gen. Eisenhower that “man-for-man the Canadians were the best soldiers in his army” (p. 343).

The French Resistance, knowing the Allies were coming, played a key role in the liberation of their country. About 3,000 members of the Resistance cut 950 rail and road lines of communication, which significantly delayed German reinforcements being sent to Normandy from southwestern France.

The New World liberation of the old

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Britain and the members of the British Empire had held the line until the invasion armada could be assembled. Visiting the United States and Canada, he was able to secure guarantees of financing and materiel, known as Lend-Lease, from President Franklin Roosevelt and Canadian Prime Minister MacKenzie King. At a dinner in Ottawa on Dec. 30, 1941, Churchill was told Canada would be giving \$1 billion directly and would convert British debts of \$700 million into an interest-free loan.

Churchill understood the special connection between the English-speaking peoples. He also knew America could not stay out of the European fight indefinitely. He further knew that the British would need the might of America to come to their aid if they were to survive and for there to be any hope to push back the dark tyranny that had descended on Europe and other parts of the world. At stake were all the hard-won freedoms of Western civilization.

In perhaps his most famous speech of defiance, given before the House of Commons on June 4, 1940, Churchill knew that the other English-speaking nations (Canada and America) could be counted on. In his famous “we shall fight on the beaches” speech, he ended with what would amount to something of a prophecy:

“We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God’s good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old.”

The “New World” did indeed step forth to liberate. D-Day was the largest military effort mounted by the English-speaking peoples of the world.

The Atlantic Wall at last overcome

Hitler’s Nazi army had anticipated the Allied invasion for some time. World War II had already lasted nearly five years since Germany invaded Poland in September 1939. By the spring of 1940 France had fallen, and the countries of Central and Western Europe were under the control of the fascist Axis powers of Germany and Italy. Hitler tried to subdue England by an aerial bombing campaign known as the Battle of Britain, but England bravely held out. Failing to defeat England, Hitler set about fortifying the European continent’s Atlantic border from Norway to the Pyrenees at Spain.

Securing Europe by this “wall” was a massive, if not near-impossible, project. Hitler knew that in time there would be an invasion of the continent that would seek to turn back all the Nazi advances. His failed effort to defeat the Soviet Union finally led in 1943 to his full attention of defending himself from an expected invasion of Western Allied troops.

When the sun set on D-Day, “the longest day,” the Allied troops had punctured this vaunted wall of defense. Days and

months of hard fighting still lay ahead. But the beachheads were secure. In less than a year the Allies would push through Western Europe into Germany. By early May 1945 the German army capitulated, Hitler committed suicide and the war in Europe was over.

Caught up in something bigger

Earlier I mentioned my father’s small role in this great conflict. Again, what exactly was he part of? My father came to know war in all its cruel forms, and when he was discharged he wanted no further part in the making of war. But he did not really understand the full scope of the conflict.

Lloyd McNeely was a farm boy from southeast Missouri. Along with three of his brothers he answered the call and went off to war. He did not understand all the political and historical forces that worked to create that global event. He and millions of other soldiers and the civilian populations were caught up in an event bigger than the sum of all their lives, the defining event of their generation.

I have briefly described the history of the invasion. D-Day was a key turning point in World War II. World War II was in some ways the second round of World War I, which had ravaged Europe a generation earlier. These massive conflicts were the largest in history, both in size and implication.

Daniel’s vision of modern times

Bible prophecy did not specifically foretell these two wars, but it does give an outline of the rise of powers in the modern age that fit what happened in Europe and Asia.

Prophecy shows the rise of great powers that are described as “beasts.” The prophet Daniel saw a vision of the four winds stirring up a “Great Sea” (Daniel 7:2). The waters are the nations of the earth, and the winds are the forces that act among the nations to propel the rise and fall of nations and the wars that rage between great powers. “And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings” (verses 3-4).

Daniel watched and saw three other beasts rise out of the “waters.” The second was “like a bear” (verse 5). The third was “like a leopard” (verse 6), and the fourth was something “dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong” and “had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet.” This beast “was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns” (verse 7). It is this fourth beast that focuses Daniel’s attention.

Later he says: “Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others” (verse 19). He was told: “The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces. The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom” (verses 23-24).

Daniel was seeing the advance of history from his day in the seventh century B.C. to the end of the age, the time leading up to and including the second coming of Jesus Christ. The fourth beast is understood to be the empire of Rome, and the 10 horns are successive revivals of a political/religious system modeled on the Roman Empire.

A study of history shows the fulfillment of these remarkable



Sixth Engineer Special Brigade Memorial set up in France.

prophecies in the form of successive revivals of the Roman Empire. The empire received a “deadly wound” when the Western Roman Empire fell in A.D. 476, but this wound was to be healed (see Revelation 13:3, 12). The ninth horn of this beast began developing prior to World War I. Its most dreadful form emerged in the 1930s with the rise of Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler and the fascist government in Italy led by Benito Mussolini.

Both of these men signed agreements with the Roman church that gave legitimacy to their fascist regimes.

Declaring the reappearance of the Roman Empire, Mussolini formed an alliance with Hitler, bringing about the Rome-Berlin Axis. Hitler proudly proclaimed Germany’s Third Reich, envisioning a new German empire that would rival the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation established by Otto the Great. From 1939 until 1945 the Allied and Axis powers fought the Second World War, battling and bloodying each other across Europe, Africa, Asia and the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Germany’s dream of a Europe united under a new empire almost succeeded—at a horrendous cost.

And there is yet to arise the 10th horn, a final beast-like power, modeled again after Rome, that will plunge the world into war once more—yet this time an age-ending period of trouble worse than World War II or any other war.

What will be the outcome?

D-Day: the beginning of the end

D-Day was an assault on a despotic tyrannical power on the European continent, long foretold to rise in the prophecies of your Bible. Had the Nazi war machine succeeded in its plans, we would be living in a vastly different world. Leaders like Winston Churchill understood what was at stake and why there needed to be a response to defeat that “dreadful and terrible” beast that had arisen from the nations.

The coalition of English-speaking nations that mounted the assault on the Atlantic Wall and Fortress Europe was unique

in world history. First, it came from the combined wealth of Great Britain, the United States and Canada. These nations represent peoples with a birthright that originated with the promises God made to the patriarch Abraham. These nations are the wealthiest in all history. That they held their wealth and power at this critical moment in history was not a coincidence. God provided for their time on the world stage and gave them the power to do what they did (see Acts 17:26).

This alliance of nations was able to cast a spear into the heart of this beast power and kill it—turning back its power. The Americans especially had the industrial capacity to gear up a war effort that churned out tanks, airplanes, armaments and munitions to wage total war. They could grow the food, manufacture the clothing and produce the materiel to support soldiers across the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. The nation was at first reluctant, but once roused “the arsenal of democracy” made the critical difference, tipping the scales in favor of the Allies.

What this means today

All of this seems such a paradox. War is the scourge of mankind. More than 60 million people died in World War II. Yet millions more *would have died* had this beast power not been defeated. Free nations of the world fought back against this tyranny. But another tyranny arose in the Soviet Union. With the conclusion of World War II, the world was plunged into a “Cold War” that lasted another 40 years. Two more great conflicts were fought in East Asia, first in Korea and later in Vietnam. There are unresolved issues from both these wars. War, no matter how “just,” is still war. People suffer, lives are ruined and more conflict is spawned.

And as already mentioned, Bible prophecy shows yet another global power will one day arise and seek to enslave the “bodies and souls of men” (Revelation 18:13). Could America and Britain mount another round of opposition and defeat this coming superpower? Prophecy shows they will not. Many factors are working against the strength of both countries. Yes, America still has the strongest military in the world, and both nations are nuclear powers. But each country is also deeply divided internally, and both face uncertain futures.

Great Britain is in the process of leaving the European Union and, in doing so, fracturing its own political structure. More than half the nation voted to leave, but those who desire to remain in the EU are among the wealthiest and politically powerful. The process of leaving is opening large wounds in the nation that may not heal. Britain’s push to exit, commonly called “Brexit,” will lead Europe to reshape itself as a continental power, its historic role in the world.

U.S. President Donald Trump has pushed for Europe to take on more of the financial burden for its defense. While this is not a new U.S. stance toward Europe (recent presidents have said the same), the personality of Mr. Trump and his aggressive posture and positions on various issues alienate European leaders. They transfer their anti-Trump feelings to the geopolitical position of Europe vis-a-vis Russia and the Middle East, creating the potential for major change. His words and policies have had the effect of driving perceived wedges between America and Europe.

Both these developments could provoke changes strong

enough to awaken slumbering spirits. Europe will undergo changes to preserve and remake itself, reasserting itself in the world as a power to be reckoned with. The ghosts of the past will rise. European integration has stumbled. The changing demography and massive unassimilated immigration is provoking fear. Combine that with a growing sense that the elites do not relate to the common people, and we see a volatile mix. Add in a crisis from an unknown source, and a power could arise on the continent that stuns the world.

Europe is not an irrelevant dusty old museum for American tourists to visit. It is more than scenic and culinary delights for travel and leisure enthusiasts. Europe is where nearly 345,000 American soldiers died during the last century. Their many well-tended graves bear witness to this fact. What happens in Europe concerns America and every nation.

A united Europe is bigger in territory and population than the United States. Its problems and pluses have a direct bearing on the American economy and policies with regard to other nations. What happens in the Middle East and Asia and with Islamic terrorism is directly impacted by Europe. The European continent is relevant to all of us, and we need to better understand its historic and prophetic role.

Again, Bible prophecy shows a final Roman revival *will* arise in the world. This great power will have as its heart the political power of Europe. In union with the Roman church, it is called “Mystery, Babylon the Great,” and is shown as a global political, economic and spiritual power.

When we gather and examine all prophecies about this event, it appears that this system will be seen as the world’s solution to all its ills. It will hold a hope and promise for peace and prosperity for all. A massive deception will envelop people, even those who are watching for its appearance. Even discerning true Christians could be deluded (see Matthew 24:24). When the mask of deception is removed, this power will be revealed for what it is at its heart—a satanic manifestation that will bring war and suffering at unprecedented levels.

Will America and Britain stop the coming tyranny?

The tragedy at this moment of history is that the English-speaking peoples will not be able to mount another D-Day-style assault on this tyranny. The time of their power and influence will have passed. Prophecy shows that the descendants of Jacob will experience a time of unprecedented and devastating trouble and that their power will fail (Jeremiah 30:7).

America’s growing culture wars are only a symptom of a greater spiritual disease, an incurable wound so severe that a cure is unattainable. No medicine will be found to heal and correct the moral slide. Its allies will turn their backs and not lift a hand to give aid to soothe the pain. God says this will be because of sin, great national sins that are an affront to Him. It’s hard to believe, but there will be a time when God says that the nation at large is beyond repentance and that He will not hear the sorrowful cries of the peoples who have been blessed by Him until after the nation is punished (Jeremiah 30:12-15).

Right now there may still be time for America and other nations of British descent to turn to God. Can it happen? It could, but the possibility seems remote. Yet *you* can turn to God and change your life. You can gain understanding of God’s plan for the nations, including the English-speaking nations. To

help in this, be sure to request our free study guide *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. It will give you the story from your Bible of the future of the English-speaking peoples.

The greatest liberation lies yet ahead

Once the English-speaking nations punched through the Atlantic Wall on D-Day, Hitler’s reign of terror over Europe was essentially finished. Within a year the Third Reich was defeated, and Europe began to rebuild. Hitler’s fate was sealed by sunset on D-Day.


The outcome of God’s plan is even more certain. God has laid down His promise to redeem mankind. In Genesis 12 He promised Abraham: “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing . . . and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:2-3). This promise included physical and spiritual aspects.

The spiritual dimension of this promise refers primarily to God sending Jesus Christ, whose life, death and resurrection provide the liberating salvation for all humanity. Christ is the King of the coming Kingdom of God. He will replace all human government at His second coming. “Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever’” (Revelation 11:15, English Standard Version).

Jesus has not returned yet, but His coming and victory are sure. Satan’s reign as “the god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4) is all but over. There is not much time left.

The physical part of the promise has been fulfilled in large measure in the English-speaking nations of the modern world, led by Great Britain and America. Their influence, wealth and power has been the greatest blessing to all nations in the modern world. That God has fulfilled the physical promises to the seed of Abraham in this age is a marker that He will fulfill all the spiritual promises to all mankind through Jesus Christ at His second coming. The world will then experience a liberation from the evil influence of Satan. “Sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 35:10; 51:11).

My father was caught up in a great struggle for freedom. I did not follow his steps and go to war in the human arena. Instead, I have been caught up in the larger spiritual cause of the Kingdom of God.

I always wondered what he thought about my choice in life. On his deathbed he gave me his blessing. I think he knew my choice will herald a better world, a better solution to the problems of mankind. He will rise from the grave one day and will be given understanding of the larger pieces of history and the Bible. God speed that day of freedom for all! 



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D-Day and Divine Intervention

On this 75th anniversary of D-Day, a crucial event in the push to Allied victory in World War II, we look back on the remarkable miracle of its success—an answer to prayer and the fulfillment of destiny.

by Tom Robinson

It's been 75 years since D-Day, June 6, 1944, when Western Allied forces during World War II launched the largest invasion in history with nearly 7,000 ships of all sorts and more than 11,000 planes, crossing the English Channel and landing more than 150,000 troops (and more over the days that followed) on the beaches of Normandy to free France and the rest of Europe from Nazi tyranny.

German leader Adolf Hitler had prepared a vast defensive network of artillery, gun emplacements, mines and other deadly obstacles stretching from the west coast of France up to Norway. This "Atlantic Wall" had to be breached for the Allies to press forward and defeat this evil, genocidal regime that with its Axis partners was intent on continuing the carnage of many millions while trying to conquer the world.

Famed war correspondent Ernie Pyle, who arrived at Normandy the day after D-Day, noted that the Allies achieved victory "with every advantage on the enemy's side and every disadvantage on ours." Yet, as he wrote, the total Allied casualties "were remarkably low—only a fraction, in fact, of what our commanders had been prepared to accept." Pyle concluded, "Now that it is all over, it seems to me a pure miracle that we ever took the beach at all."

What was miraculous about D-Day, and why would God have intervened?

The weather and other surprises—flukes or God's handiwork?

Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander (and later U.S. president), said later on the 1952 anniversary of the

operation launch: "This day eight years ago, I made the most agonizing decision of my life. If there were nothing else in my life to prove the existence of an almighty and merciful God, the events of the next twenty-four hours did it . . . The greatest break in a terrible outlay of weather occurred the next day and allowed that great invasion to proceed, with losses far below those we had anticipated."

The Allies had tried to plan for every eventuality, but they had no control over the vital weather. They hoped for good weather to make the 100-mile sea crossing to Europe, as had miraculously occurred in the mass evacuation from Europe at Dunkirk early in the war. What they didn't realize was that bad weather—the windiest in 20 years—would hand them success beyond all expectation.

D-Day was originally scheduled for June 5 and could only be postponed for the short term to the 6th or 7th, while the tides were still low and the moon was full for visibility (along with clear weather), especially for clearing or avoiding mines in the surf. Otherwise it would have to have been put off a good while later.

With the terrible weather that sprang up on June 5, it looked like the operation was a no-go, but meteorologists reported a break was about to occur in the weather to allow the 17-hour crossing, though there was as yet no sign of any calming. Eisenhower made the agonizing decision for the ships to launch on the 5th (to arrive the next day) in the face of severe winds. As it turned out, the weather was only marginally better on the 6th, yet enough for the invasion to succeed even with weather-related losses.



What really helped win the day was that the Germans could not believe the Allies would cross the English Channel in such awful weather, and they were caught completely unprepared. They had stood alert at low-tide and full-moon days in May, but they now did not see the need. Half the German division commanders and a fourth of the regiment commanders left for war games exercises in Brittany. Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, in charge of the Normandy defenses, decided to travel 500 miles to Germany to celebrate his wife's birthday. He came back at word of the invasion, but it took him all day—by then too late.

Also, Adolf Hitler and other leaders under him were convinced by Allied ploys and their own theories that the Allied invasion was going to be further east. And when it arrived they assumed it was a diversion, with the real landing to take place elsewhere—a belief that Hitler bizarrely clung to up through August!

Meanwhile, most of the *Luftwaffe* (German air force) planes based in Normandy had been relocated to Germany to defend against increasing Allied bombing. With that and the bad weather, German planes were not patrolling the English Channel. Moreover, this was the only night the German U-boat submarines did not patrol it. So the Allies encountered hardly any enemy forces on the way.

Confusion among German defenders

A key early step in the invasion was for paratroopers to come in gliders at 100 mph with no guiding lights and to land secretly next to two critical guarded bridges and secure them—to keep the Germans back and prevent the Germans from destroying them so the Allies couldn't use them. The weather helped in this too, hiding the gliders in the low clouds as they flew by stopwatches until they dropped out at 200 feet, when the pilots could then see.

The first paratroopers to land were stunned, British platoon leader Maj. John Howard later stating: "When we came to our senses, we realized there was no firing. *There was no enemy firing.* It all seemed quite unbelievable." The 22 paratroopers trotted over the bridge, the terrified guards dove into the bushes, and the garrison was taken in 10 minutes. But two German tanks arrived, with four more on the way. The paratroopers had only a single anti-tank gun, and with one chance succeeded in hitting the tank right in the middle, setting off all the ammunition inside—the burning tank now blocking the German advance and enabling lost paratroopers to be reoriented.

The Germans were not then able to counterattack there or across the wider area. They now had only two panzer (or tank) divisions near the Normandy landings. Early in the morning, Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt ordered these to move in, not believing such a large-scale invasion could be a deception.



Gen. Dwight Eisenhower talks to U.S. paratroopers on the eve of D-Day.

"The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. . . Let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking."— *Gen. Dwight Eisenhower*



Canadian soldiers land on Courseulles Beach in Normandy as part of the D-Day invasion.

But he had to get approval, as these forces were under the German high command. Approval was not given, as Hitler had to give the order, and he was still sleeping—and he didn't awaken until noon. Hitler's approval did not come until 4 p.m., and by that time the weather had cleared and Allied aircraft ruled the skies over Normandy, smashing anything that moved on the ground. (Much more could be said of Hitler's terrible blunders, which some speculate may have resulted from disease or drug and chemical interactions affecting his brain.)

Many remarkable things happened on D-Day. The landing at Utah Beach was actually in the wrong place, but this worked out in the Allies' favor, as the beach was less defended there. Of course, other places saw far worse fighting. The taking of the Normandy beaches was still horrific, with thousands dead or wounded. Yet the casualty count had been expected to be many times higher. And the victory allowed the liberation of Europe to follow over the next year.

The weather that seemed poised to thwart the Allied cause in reality greatly helped it. And the Nazi leadership was in many ways confounded. Eisenhower and many others saw

this as clear help from Almighty God. In fact, newspapers at the time declared the events of D-Day, Dunkirk, El Alamein, the Battle of Britain and a number of other battles to be miraculous, particularly in the wake of widespread prayer to God for deliverance.

U.S. and British leaders and people look to God

Gen. Eisenhower told the troops embarking for Normandy: “The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you . . . The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory! I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory! Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of

conquest. They fight to liberate . . . They yearn but for the end of battle, for their return to the haven of home. Some will never return. Embrace these, Father, and receive them, Thy heroic servants, into Thy kingdom.

“And for us at home . . . help us, Almighty God, to rededicate ourselves in renewed faith in Thee in this hour of great sacrifice.

“Many people have urged that I call the nation into a single day of special prayer. But because the road is long and the desire is great, I ask that our people devote themselves in a continuance of prayer. As we rise to each new day, and again when each day is spent, let words of prayer be on our lips, invoking Thy help to our efforts . . .

“And, O Lord, give us faith. Give us faith in Thee; faith in

our sons; faith in each other; faith in our united crusade . . . With Thy blessing, we shall prevail over the unholy forces of our enemy. Help us to conquer the apostles of greed and racial arrogances. Lead us to the saving of our country, and with our sister nations into a world unity that will spell a sure peace—a peace invulnerable to the schemings of unworthy men. And a peace that will let all of men live in freedom, reaping the just rewards of their honest toil.

“Thy will be done, Almighty God. Amen.”

As word of the invasion spread, prayer vigils were quickly organized throughout the country. Many businesses closed for prayer.

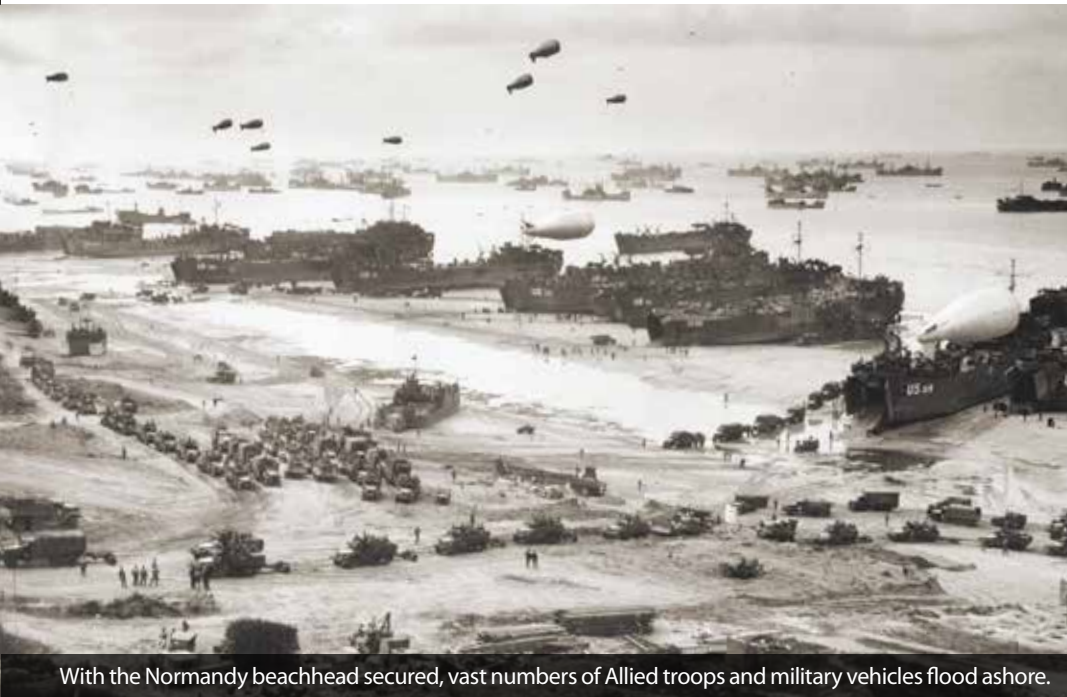
“This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes”

Britain’s King George VI said in a worldwide radio address on D-Day:

“Four years ago our nation and Empire stood alone against an overwhelming enemy, with our backs to the wall. Tested as never before in our history, in God’s providence we survived that test . . .

“Once more a supreme test has to be faced. This time the challenge is not to fight to survive, but to fight to win the final victory for the good cause . . . That we may be worthily matched with this new summons of destiny, I desire solemnly to call my people to prayer and dedication.

“We are not unmindful of our own shortcomings, past and present. We shall ask not that God may do our will, but that we may be enabled to do the will of God; and we dare to believe that God has used our nation and Empire as an



With the Normandy beachhead secured, vast numbers of Allied troops and military vehicles flood ashore.

“Such an historic march of events can seldom have taken place in such a short space of time . . . Let us say to each other, ‘This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.’”— *Gen. Bernard Montgomery*

Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.”

British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery had told the troops, “Let us pray that the Lord, mighty in battle, will give us victory.”

As the forces approached Normandy, U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt took to the airwaves with this call: “In this poignant hour, I ask you to join with me in prayer.”

He publicly prayed: “Almighty God: Our sons, pride of our nation, this day have set upon a mighty endeavor, a struggle to preserve our Republic, our religion, and our civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity . . . They will need Thy blessings. Their road will be long and hard . . .

“They fight not for the lust of conquest. They fight to end

instrument for fulfilling His high purpose.

“I hope that throughout the present crisis of the liberation of Europe there may be offered up earnest, continuous and widespread prayer . . .

“If from every place of worship, from home and factory, from men and women of all ages and many races and occupations, our intercessions rise, then, please God, both now and in the future, not remote, the predictions of an ancient psalm may be fulfilled: ‘The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will give His people the blessing of peace.’”

Did God answer this great outpouring of prayer? Many are justifiably convinced that He did.

After the Allies swept triumphantly through France in 1944, Gen. Montgomery felt compelled to say: “Such an historic march of events can seldom have taken place in such a short space of time . . . Let us say to each other, ‘This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.’”

A God who intervenes and answers national prayer

The Bible reveals that God cares about what happens in the affairs of nations and intervenes in working out His overall plan. “For wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings” (Daniel 2:20-21)—sometimes to punish sinful nations and rulers (compare Genesis 15:16; Isaiah 10:12)—and also to protect His servant people from annihilation.

He chose the people of Israel to fulfill a very special destiny. In prophesying of the Israelites in the last days, God promised to make Joseph’s descendants through his sons Ephraim and Manasseh the most blessed nations in the world and strengthen them against their enemies (Genesis 49:22-24), declaring that their descendants would “push the peoples to the ends of the earth” (Deuteronomy 33:17). He further said the Israelites would be “like a lion . . . Your hand shall be lifted against your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off” (Micah 5:8-9).

Other verses show that God would also discipline the Israelites through losses to enemies. But He promised that if His people would humble themselves in prayer, He would forgive them and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14).

All of this plays a huge part in what happened at D-Day and the various other instances of divine intervention during World War II and in other conflicts. For, as incredible as it may seem, the prophecies regarding end-time Israel have been

fulfilled primarily through the United States and Britain and other nations of British descent. In fact, these nations are in large part actually formed of the descendants of Joseph! (Be sure to read our free study guide *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* for the proof of this identity and heritage.)

Though this truth is unknown to most, many over the



German forces surrender to Allied soldiers in France, August 1944.

“I have the feeling that God has . . . brought us to our present position of power and strength for some great purpose.” — *President Harry Truman*

last few centuries have had a sense of the promises to Israel applying in some ways to these great Bible-believing nations.

Leaders who recognized the hand of God at work

Observe what Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister at the time of D-Day, said in his memoirs of the *First World War* regarding an encounter with Scripture just after he took charge of the Royal Navy:

“That night when I went to bed, I saw a large Bible lying on a table in my bedroom. I thought of the peril of Britain, peace-loving, unthinking, little prepared . . . I thought of mighty Germany . . . wave after wave of valiant manhood . . . of the sudden and successful wars by which her power had been set up. I opened the Book at random, and in the 9th Chapter of Deuteronomy I read—

“Hear, O Israel: Thou art to . . . possess nations greater and mightier than thyself . . . a people great and tall of whom thou hast heard say, who can stand before the children of Anak!

U.S. Army

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“Understand therefore this day, that the Lord thy God is he which goes over before thee; as a consuming fire . . . Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thy heart . . . but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

“It seemed a message full of reassurance” (*The World Crisis*, Mentor edition, 1968, pp. 58-59). Indeed it was.

During the *Second World War*, the same Churchill, now prime minister, gave a message in 1942 stating: “I sometimes have a feeling of interference. I want to stress that. I have a feeling sometimes that some Guiding Hand has interfered. I have a feeling that we have a Guardian because we have a great Cause, and we shall have that Guardian so long as we serve that Cause faithfully.”

At the victorious conclusion of the war, Churchill led the British House of Commons to “give humble and reverent thanks to Almighty God for our deliverance.”


Harry Truman, U.S. president at the end of World War II, later remarked in 1951: “I do not think that anyone can study the history of this nation without becoming convinced that Divine Providence has played a great part in it. I have the feeling that God has created us and brought us to our present position of power and strength for some great purpose. It is not given to us to know fully what that purpose is.”

Will we continue to look to God?

While these men did not grasp the big picture of what God was working out, they and others at the time still realized who had saved them and seen them through. Do we?

It’s heartrending to contemplate, but it will not be long before the world is plunged into the worst time of trouble ever—far worse than World War II. America and Britain will not then succeed in beating back the enveloping tyranny but, having drifted far from God, will experience devastating defeat and destruction.

Yet, thankfully, a great deliverance will at last come—from the same God. The Father will send Jesus Christ to return to the earth in awesome power. Descending with the hosts of heaven, Jesus will come in divine war, crushing the armies arrayed against Him. Overthrowing the tyranny of wicked men and of Satan behind it all, He will take over the governing of the whole world, then bringing an *end* to war and guiding mankind into the way of peace.

As we remember D-Day, let’s be grateful for God’s great intervention then and at other times and, humbling ourselves in prayer, continue to trust Him now and for the future deliverance He will ultimately bring. 

LEARN MORE



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Europe's Great Divide: Which Vision Will Prevail?

Europeans are torn between two competing paths—a bigger and more powerful European Union or individual countries having their own national control. Where is this divide leading?

by Justin Palm

What do Europeans talk about when they talk about Europe?
They talk about money: *“Why do some countries have to step in and bail out other ones who’ve been irresponsible?”* . . . *“But don’t we have to do something big like that to keep all our economies going?”*

They talk about religion: *“Do most people even care anymore about traditional Christianity or Catholicism?”* . . . *“What about Islam? Can we all live together if we’re afraid of each other, or we look down on each other, or we’re blowing each other up?”*

They talk about politics: *“Power should go back to the people instead of unelected bureaucrats or elected officials who don’t represent us. We should have more say in what’s happening.”* . . . *“But isn’t this what we all signed up for? We might have to give up some things, but I think they know what they’re doing.”*

They talk about immigration: *“It’s all well and good to take people in, but how can we support everyone? How can we pay for it all? And what does it mean for our culture and security?”* . . . *“Don’t we have some kind of responsibility to them though? Where else are they supposed to go?”*

Europeans have a lot of opinions, and a lot of *differences* of opinion. This is because the European Union (EU) is a great mix of more than 500 million people across 28 individual countries under one European flag—counting Britain, though it has voted to leave.

The other EU countries are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

Nations often have their own unique personalities and identities. For European nations, this involves their relation to the rest of Europe, with some nations having a stronger European heritage than others. Far more than do people in America, Britain, China, Russia, Venezuela and Nigeria,

Europeans talk about their nation *and* their continent. Yet there are often many clashes between the distinct nations and cultures of Europe. In many ways it seems a miracle that citizens within Europe’s various countries have been able to come together over the last 75 years.

Why was the European Union created, and why have so many nations joined? Looking at how we got here helps explain today’s divisions over Europe’s future.

Conflict over differences

In the first 50 years of the 20th century, Europeans and others around the world let their differences of opinion give way to unbridled passion. Blood was spilled in unprecedented numbers and ways. The Sixth Commandment about killing people was cast aside by many. The first half of the 20th century was a time of hate, power, control, tyranny, slaughter, national zeal, midnight rallies, concentration camps, suffering, mass migration and new weapons.

Then on August 6, 1945, an American plane dropped a new kind of weapon that instantly killed 70,000 people in Hiroshima, Japan. Three days later, another bomb was dropped that instantly killed 40,000 people in Nagasaki. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had previously called the scale of the atomic bomb “the Second Coming in Wrath.” This terrible weapon brought an end to a war that had already killed 60 million people—yet its introduction threatened the possibility of even greater death and destruction in the future.

American President Harry Truman toured Berlin in 1945. He was shocked by survivors so numb they were past the point of feeling. As one biographer describes it:

“The motorcade passed miles of ruin and devastation, bomb craters, blackened burned-out buildings, and seemingly endless processions of homeless Germans plodding along beside the highway carrying or dragging bundles of pathetic belongings. They were mostly old people and children who appeared to be headed nowhere in particular, with nothing

but blank expressions on their faces, no anger, no grief, no fear, which Truman found extremely disturbing . . . Most of those trudging past never bothered even to look up” (David McCullough, *Truman*, 1992, p. 414).

Millions of people carried the awful memories of war with them in their hearts as they rebuilt the world. They vowed to never let such mass killing happen again, especially with the onset of the nuclear age making human extinction possible.

The idea behind the European Union

European political architects had an idea: Create a system of interconnectedness between their nations. If, the logic went, we weave our countries together like a Gordian knot, then one country deciding to start a war to bring down other countries



An elderly woman is escorted from the ruins of Caen, France, in 1944.

Millions of people carried the awful memories of war with them as they rebuilt the world. They vowed to never let such mass killing happen again!

would bring destruction on itself—thus deterring war.

Europeans started working together under this premise, beginning with economic cooperation between nation states. People in six core countries—Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands—agreed on some basic principles and decided to make it binding. They first formed the European Coal and Steel Community in the 1951 Treaty of Paris. This was a precursor to soon afterward drafting a broader and more cohesive partnership in the Treaty of Rome on March 25, 1957, on Rome’s Capitoline Hill, creating the European Economic Community.

The phrases used in the treaty’s preamble are beautiful in their noble intentions (emphasis added):

“DETERMINED to *lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe . . .*”

“ANXIOUS to *strengthen the unity of their economies and to ensure their harmonious development by reducing the differences existing between the various regions . . .*”

“RESOLVED . . . to preserve and *strengthen peace and liberty, and calling upon the other peoples of Europe who share their ideal to join in their efforts . . .*”

The preamble ended with, “. . . and to this end . . . have agreed as follows,” the terms of the treaty then being spelled out.

The king of Belgium, the president of West Germany, the president of France, the president of Italy, the grand duchess of Luxembourg and the queen of the Netherlands signed their names.

The European Union thus took its first breaths.

This began a process of independent nations gradually ceding sovereignty to a supranational entity. As the years went by, more countries answered the call and joined; more treaties were signed; bureaucracy expanded; countless *European* laws were passed; Brussels became the capital; people traded their currencies for a shared currency; leaders opened their borders; the European power became stronger and more integrated, striving toward “an *ever closer union*.”

What became the European Union grew, and grew, and grew—and as it did, the contract was further and further changed. Leaders were giving up *some* of the direct governance of their own nations to have a small say in governing *all of* Europe.

Enter the Eurosceptics

Doubt entered some people’s minds—doubt about the fairness of this evolving agreement, doubt about whether it was worth it, doubt about the end goal, and the big question: Does Brussels really have *our* country’s best interests in mind?

To some, Europe had become something like Frankenstein’s monster—too big, out of control and dangerous. Although Mary Shelley’s scientist had good intentions, to bring life and hope, the creature became something grotesque. It tells the scientist, “I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel.”

Two camps formed, and now they are pushing two competing ideas for Europe’s future. One wants to press on with the founders’ vision. Another group, the

Eurosceptics, wants more national control.

Britain became the first nation to actually vote to leave. On June 23, 2016, after much debate and campaigning, 51.9 percent of British voters decided it would be best to exit the union. This referendum started a messy divorce process.

After the vote, Nigel Farage, leader of the UK Independence Party and member of the European Parliament, addressed the assembled Parliament on June 28. Some members booed him as he summarized the argument against the European Union:

“When I came here 17 years ago and I said that I wanted to lead a campaign to get Britain to leave the European Union, you all laughed at me—well I have to say, you’re not laughing now, are you? And the reason you’re so upset, you’re so angry, has been perfectly clear, from all the angry exchanges this morning . . .

“You as a political project are in denial. You’re in denial that your currency is failing . . . You’re in denial over [German Chancellor] Mrs. Merkel’s call [in 2015] for as many people as possible to cross the Mediterranean [into the European Union]—which has led to massive divisions . . . within countries and between countries.

“The biggest problem you’ve got and the main reason the UK voted the way it did is because *you have by stealth and*

deception, and without telling the truth to the rest of the peoples of Europe, you have imposed upon them a political union . . .

“What happened last Thursday [in the Brexit vote] was a remarkable result—it was a seismic result. Not just for British politics, [or] for European politics, but perhaps even for global politics too.

“Because what the little people did, what the ordinary people did—what the people who’d been oppressed over the last few years who’d seen their living standards go down did—was they rejected the multinationals, they rejected the merchant banks, they rejected big politics and they said actually, *we want our country back, we want our fishing waters back, we want our borders back.*

“We want to be an independent, self-governing, normal nation. That is what we have done and that is what must happen. In doing so we now offer a beacon of hope to democrats [that is, those who advocate popular government rather than control by unelected bureaucrats] across the rest of the European continent. I’ll make one prediction this morning: the United Kingdom will not be the last member state to leave the European Union” (emphasis added).

No one yet knows how the Brexit situation will affect the European Union, but Farage is not the only one to speculate that others will follow suit.

Who should rule?

Whatever the fallout of the Brexit situation, Germany and France have promised to keep the European project alive. But people in Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and other nations are becoming more and more sceptical of the European Union contract.

Hungary went so far as to build a 325-mile wall on its border with Serbia and Croatia to block illegal immigration. Thinking that leaders in Brussels were not doing enough to protect them, the Hungarians took matters into their own hands.

Italians are now trying to take back more national control, with mixed results. *The New York Times* reported: “After months of torturous negotiations, acrid insults, internal tensions and enough social media airtime to fill a Netflix series, Italy’s populist leaders bowed to the demands of the European Union to roll back its expensive, rules-flouting budget” (Jason Horowitz, “Italy and E.U. Reach a Budget Deal, as Populist Plan Runs Into Reality,” Dec. 19, 2018).

Let’s step back. Besides the two visions for Europe’s future, there is still a deeper issue at heart. Europeans for the most part, including leaders, want essentially the same thing—*peace and prosperity*. They want to make an impact on the world. They want to survive, thrive and live. The arguments are over the *best way* to achieve these goals, yet these come down to deep divides in outlook.

People in the EU camp believe that centralized power in Brussels is best for the people.

Eurosceptics believe individual nations know best how to govern themselves.

And of course, with corrupt human nature, people often believe that they could coach the team better if they were in charge. On the other hand, there are many who would prefer

to hand responsibility off to others, even trading freedoms for a sense of security.

Is ever-more-powerful human government the answer?

An ancient dream answers once and for all who should rule on the world scene. It holds the *missing dimension* that frames Europe’s past, present and future.

A king’s disturbing dream

Many centuries ago, a Babylonian king named Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that frightened him. He could not understand it and refused to even tell anyone what he saw in his dream. None of his magicians, astrologers or sorcerers could tell him the dream or its interpretation.

But one man in his kingdom was given the interpretation in a night vision. The Hebrew prophet Daniel stood before King Nebuchadnezzar and was able to tell him what he had dreamed.

Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed of a giant statue of a man with a golden head, silver chest and arms, bronze belly and thighs, iron legs, and feet and toes that were a mixture of iron and clay. A mysterious stone struck the feet, and the entire statue was crushed and blown away. The stone grew into a mountain that filled the earth (Daniel 2:28, 31-35).

Daniel then told the king the divine interpretation:

“Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory . . . *you are this head of gold*. But after you shall arise *another kingdom* inferior to yours; then another, *a third kingdom* of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.

Who should ultimately rule? Not people, but God. Only His government will be able to bring people peace and prosperity!

“And *the fourth kingdom* shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. Whereas you saw *the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided*; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay.

“And as the toes of the feet were *partly of iron and partly of clay*, so the kingdom shall be *partly strong and partly fragile*. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, *they will mingle with the seed of men*; but *they will not adhere to one another*, just as iron does not mix with clay” (verses 36-43).

The statue, starting with Nebuchadnezzar, represented four successive great empires—Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. The “fourth kingdom,” Rome, would continue in some fashion until the end time, the feet with 10 toes being a final revival of this system in the end time.

While this coming revival of the Roman Empire will not look exactly like today’s European Union, it will be centered in Europe and will likely have roots in the European integration project going back to the 1957 Treaty of Rome.

And Daniel 2 reveals that division within Europe will not

be resolved in political integration. Competing visions will remain. The coming superstate will be “divided . . . partly of iron and partly of clay . . . partly strong and partly fragile.” People with different nationalities will not be able to agree on everything, but prophecy indicates that both groups will partly get their way.

Other prophecies show that religion will also play a major role in the rise of this kingdom. A powerful element among today’s Eurosceptics is a desire for Europe to return to its strong religious roots. Historically, religion helped unite Europe under the reigns of the Holy Roman Emperors Charlemagne (A.D. 742-814) and Otto the Great (A.D. 912-973).

Like Frankenstein’s monster, the “fourth kingdom” will have unprecedented power. It will cause death and destruction far beyond what was done by the Axis Powers in World War II. In fact, the end-time superpower will bring mankind to the brink of extinction without God’s intervention.

Leading up to this, despite the division there will be a final transfer of national power and sovereignty over to the European superstate and its leader. The 10 toes of the image in Daniel 2 are found as 10 horns in a prophecy in Revelation 17, revealed to be 10 rulers in this final Roman revival. The apostle John is here told:

“The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour [a brief time] as kings with the beast [the final dictator]. These are of one mind, and they will *give their power and authority to the beast*. These will make war with the Lamb [the returning Jesus Christ], and the Lamb will overcome them” (verses 12-14).

“The kingdom shall not be left to other people”

This brings us back to the stone that smashes the image in Daniel 2:

“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and *the kingdom shall not be left to other people*; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the *stone* was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure” (verses 31-45).

Many Bible verses describe Jesus Christ as the “stone.” At His second coming, He will strike down this final European-centered global empire. Mankind’s final, best effort to bring peace and prosperity will become a tyrannical beast and then at last be toppled with Christ’s return. This “stone” becomes a mountain that fills the earth—the Kingdom of God being established over all nations.

God will take the reins of power and end the corruption of human misrule: “The God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and *the kingdom shall not be left to other people*.”

Here is the lesson God wants all of us to learn: *People* cannot truly solve people’s problems. *Nations* cannot, and *federal superstates* cannot. Who should ultimately rule? Not people, *but God*. Only His government will be able to bring people peace and prosperity!

What does this mean for the future?

Which competing vision for Europe’s future will win in the end?

The Eurocentric vision currently championed by Germany and France has dominated the continent’s thinking in recent years. But ironically, these champions of greater European unity have sown the seeds of greater *disunity* by encouraging massive immigration from third-world countries. In so doing, they have actually helped give birth to a pushback or countermovement.

That countermovement is the more nationalistic vision now being advocated by many in Hungary, Poland, Italy and other states. A powerful element in this movement is the desire for European nations to return to their strong religious roots—which, as mentioned, led to previous attempts to unite Europe in earlier Roman revivals, such as those under Charlemagne and Otto the Great in the Middle Ages.

How will these competing visions of Europe’s future play out? For the near future, we simply don’t know. Europeans are deeply divided, and the continent is facing tumultuous times. And tumultuous times can lead to catastrophic results. It was the unstable conditions of the 1920s and 30s that led to the political ascent of Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler and their Axis, forming what they viewed as a reborn Roman Empire. They promised stability, and they produced a measure of it—until disaster came!

Ultimately, though, Bible prophecy is clear. Again, as the prophet Daniel assures us, “The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.” A new and final European-centered superpower will form as indicated in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and other prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. It will be “partly strong and partly fragile” because the peoples of which it is composed “will not adhere to one another.”

But that doesn’t mean that such a superpower cannot wield terrible power and wreak enormous damage on the world, as Nazi Germany and fascist Italy and their partners did during World War II (see “D-Day + 75 Years: What Have We Learned?” beginning on page 4). In fact, this new superpower will be involved in the most horrifying warfare humankind has ever seen—so deadly and devastating that humanity would be on the verge of extinction if God did not intervene.

As age-old prophecies draw ever nearer to their fulfillment, we would do well to heed Jesus Christ’s instruction in Luke 21:36: “Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man”!

Continue reading *Beyond Today* magazine and watching *Beyond Today* TV to stay abreast of where today’s trends are taking your world! **BT**



LEARN MORE

Europe has long been torn between competing visions for its future. In the last century this led to two world wars. What lies ahead for Europe’s future? Download or request our free study guide *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* to learn what prophecy reveals!

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Expert on civilization collapse raises red flag

The BBC recently started, as part of its BBC Future department of stories, a new series of articles called “Deep Civilisation,” focused on “the long view of humanity.” Its stated intention is to “stand back from the daily news cycle and widen the lens of our current place in time” (“Deep Civilization, BBC”). The series’ description also points out: “Modern society is suffering from ‘temporal exhaustion,’ the sociologist Elise Boulding once said. ‘If one is mentally out of breath all the time from dealing with the present, there is no energy left for imagining the future,’ she wrote.”

Such musing can be a noble pursuit, this “wider lens” resulting in news analysis different from the usual “noise.” The series further aims to “explore what really matters in the broader arc of human history and what it means for us and our descendants.”

One of these “Deep Civilization” articles, titled “Are We on the Road to Civilisation Collapse?” (Feb. 19, 2019), presents some worrisome trends. The author, Luke Kemp, is a researcher based at Cambridge University’s Centre for the Study of Existential Risk. Extrapolating forward from history and present conditions, he offers some conjecture about what could bring us down. And he’s not optimistic about where things seem to be headed.

While some of his concerns are debatable, Dr. Kemp importantly notes that our societies being linked

as never before can lead to greater problems on the world scene:

“Worryingly, the world is now deeply interconnected and interdependent. In the past, collapse was confined to regions—it was a temporary setback . . . Moreover, the weapons available during social disorder were rudimentary: swords, arrows and occasionally guns.

“Today, societal collapse is a more treacherous prospect. The weapons available to a state, and sometimes even groups, during a breakdown now range from biological agents to nuclear weapons.”

He offers this sobering analogy: “Think of civilization as a poorly-built ladder. As you climb, each step that you used falls away. A fall from a height of just a few rungs is fine. Yet the higher you climb, the larger the fall. Eventually, once you reach a sufficient height, any drop from the ladder is fatal.

“With the proliferation of nuclear weapons, we may have already reached this point of civilisational ‘terminal velocity.’ Any collapse—any fall from the ladder—risks being permanent. Nuclear war in itself could result in an existential risk: either the extinction of our species, or a permanent catapult back to the Stone Age.”

Kemp concludes by telling us to keep our eyes and ears open: “We will only march into collapse if we advance blindly. We are only doomed if we are

unwilling to listen to the past.”

A biblical proverb comes to mind about an attitude that brings calamity: “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18,



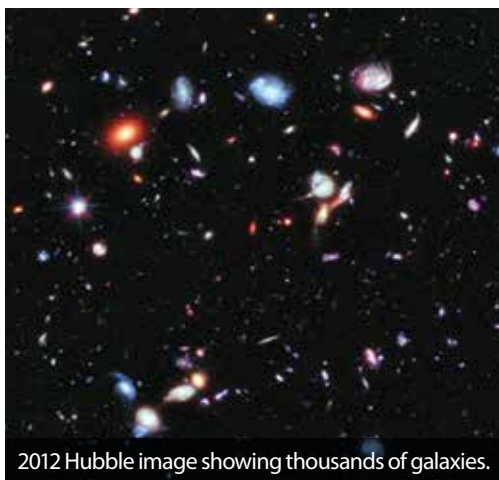
emphasis added). Bible prophecy shows that cataclysmic events truly are coming on our civilization. But the causes are outside the understanding of the world’s prognosticators, and these events will not end the way they think. To learn more about what lies ahead, read our free study guide *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* (Source: BBC.)

Hubble analysis reveals larger universe, more stars than expected

Despite tremendous advances in cosmology, as well as imaging and analysis technologies, scientific understanding of the size, structure and content of the universe is not well understood—as recent findings continue to demonstrate (in stark contrast to the authoritative tone of many textbooks).

The Hubble Ultra-Deep Field (HUDF) images are a startling example of both the developments taking place as well as the limitations of our current knowledge. In 2003, the HUDF project began capturing light from a small patch of space that appeared completely dark in previous imaging. The original results, involving about 100 hours’ worth of exposure time, revealed that this dark patch of sky was teeming with galaxies—more than 10,000 of them, each with millions of stars of its own! (Nadia Drake, “When Hubble Stared at Nothing for 100 Hours,” *National Geographic*, April 24, 2015).

Numerous additional exposures from the Hubble telescope, combined with groundbreaking image processing techniques, have revealed even more from what was once thought to be “a patch of sky filled with absolutely nothing remarkable” (ibid.). A 2012 composite of 230 more hours of exposure while focused on this same area yielded a “deeper” image, picking up even fainter light signatures from



2012 Hubble image showing thousands of galaxies.

more distant galaxies (Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias, “Making the Hubble’s Deepest Images Even Deeper,” *Phys.org*, Jan. 24, 2019).

The latest surprise was published in the academic journal *Astronomy and Astrophysics* in January 2019, when improved composition methods applied to the same images analyzed in 2012 detected much more light than prior techniques revealed, showing some galaxies almost twice as large as previously measured, equating to billions more stars hidden in plain sight!

The trend in cosmology is upward revision in the estimated size of the universe—new findings indicating greater complexity are confounding expert predictions. Even more remarkable is that this concerns just the *observable* universe. It’s been

commonly accepted that far more galaxies lie beyond a point where no light is able to reach the earth at all, meaning they cannot be observed by any telescope we could build!

Through great effort, mankind has merely begun to glimpse the breadth and magnificence of what our Creator has made. Meanwhile, God “counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name. Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite” (Psalm 147:4-5). (Sources: *National Geographic*, *Phys.org*.)

U.S. recognizes Israel's claim to long-disputed Golan Heights

Facing a seemingly endless battle against implacable foes, the state of Israel has constant concern over its security.

Earlier this year on its southwestern border, "Israel's military said it struck dozens of Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip and the Islamist group launched numerous rockets into its territory, raising the risk of a wide-scale conflict two weeks before an Israeli election"—this after Israel declared Hamas responsible for an earlier attack (Dov Lieber and Felicia Schwartz, "Israel Strikes Hamas Targets in Gaza After Rocket Attack Near Tel Aviv," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 25, 2019).

The same week U.S. President Donald Trump, who has shown himself a stalwart ally of Israel, signed an official proclamation recognizing the Golan Heights region in the opposite part of the country, northeastern Israel next to Syria, as territory belonging to Israel.

This elevated land overlooking northern Israel, including the Sea of Galilee, is strategically valuable. The Syrian military used to regularly fire artillery shells at Israeli settlements in Galilee from here until Israel seized the Golan Heights after being attacked in the Arab-Israeli war of 1967. Since then, holding on to this

territory has been considered vital to Israeli security.

Following President Trump's recognition of this area as rightfully belonging to Israel, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu asserted that territory



Israeli tanks in the Golan Heights in the Six-Day War.

seized from an aggressor in war does not necessarily have to be returned, as many contend. "There is a very important principle in international life," Mr. Netanyahu said [March 25] after attending the Golan signing ceremony at the White House. "When you start

wars of aggression, you lose territory, do not come and claim it afterwards. It belongs to us" (David Halbfinger and Isabel Kershner, "Netanyahu Says Golan Heights Move 'Proves You Can' Keep Occupied Territory," *The New York Times*, March 26, 2019).

Israel's annexation of the Golan was and remains a defensive move, and some see the same rationale for continued control over and even possible annexation of the so-called "West Bank" area, also captured in the 1967 war.

The volatility of this region will remain a continual focus for our publication. Jerusalem is at the center of major prophetic events leading to the return of Jesus Christ. The ongoing feud we see in the Middle East is not a conflict that will go away before that. No political negotiating or maneuver-

ing will bring real and lasting peace here. This area will not know true peace until Jesus Christ returns and establishes a Kingdom of peace. Read our free study guide *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* to learn more. (Sources: *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*.)

Erosion of privacy continues

In January 2019, an investigation by the online technology news organization TechCrunch blew the whistle on the "Facebook Research" app, resulting in the app being withdrawn and banned from Apple's app store. The report noted, "Since



2016, Facebook has been paying users ages 13 to 35 up to \$20 per month plus referral fees to sell their privacy by installing the iOS or Android 'Facebook Research' app" (Josh Constine, "Facebook Pays Teens to Install VPN That Spies on Them," TechCrunch.com, Jan. 29, 2019).

The age of social networking has brought individual privacy con-

cerns to the forefront. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and others are engaging ways to keep in touch with family and friends. However,

many have come to recognize that these are actual businesses whose primary commodities are our attention and personal information—both of which they leverage to sell highly targeted advertising space. As the saying goes, "If you're not paying for it, you are the product."

What is most troubling about this development is that it encouraged teenagers as young as 13 to voluntarily sell even more detailed data than what Facebook already regularly collects from its users.

One could argue that adults have the right to sell their private information, but targeting children who do not fully understand the potential negative impact of such a decision is wrong. This is a disturbing step beyond merely making children's information into a commodity, and it's already the accepted business model of these companies.

Proverbs 15:21 says, "Folly is joy to him who is destitute of discernment, but a man of understanding walks uprightly." The allure of social media, especially for teenagers, is partly fueled by peer influence or fear of missing out on what friends are doing online. Sadly, the call to "have fun" is too often not tempered by an assessment of the risks or consequences.

The underhanded data collection and privacy invasion committed recently by Facebook will no doubt be repeated in numerous ways by other companies, and represents just one small way that technological advancements are changing the world in which we live. We must be watchful and discerning, now more than ever. (Source: TechCrunch.)

How can you make sense of the news?

So much is happening in the world, and so quickly. Where are today's dramatic and dangerous trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? You're probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. So are we. That's one reason we produce the *Beyond Today* daily TV commentaries—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy. These eye-opening presentations offer you a perspective so badly needed in our confused world—the perspective of God's Word. Visit us at ucg.org/beyond-today/daily/





To Kill a People: Abortion and the Soul of America

Recent actions by state legislators to allow the murder of full-term children forces every one of us to consider how far we have come in the culture war and where it is taking the nation.

by Darris McNeely

Lately I've begun to think America has crossed a line, a point of no return, and awaits the judgment of God for the horrendous national sin of legalized abortion. More than 60 million legal abortions have been performed in America since the Supreme Court legalized abortion with its landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. Since this ruling, which in effect legalized the procedure in all 50 states, it has become the most divisive social issue of this generation.

Politicians seeking high office stand a precarious chance of being elected if they advocate an anti-abortion stand. Every nominee to the United States Supreme Court must avow support of a woman's right to abortion, assuring all that he or she would not seek to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, or face outrageous and horrendous opposition. In the meantime, clinics perform thousands of abortions each day, and a generation of children are unborn, their lives and tiny bodies ripped from their mother's womb.

What makes me think it's too late?

In the pages of *Beyond Today* we've covered abortion a number of times, citing scriptures showing that a life in the womb of a mother is considered by God to be human and that to take that life is murder. We've also done *Beyond Today* television programs on this subject. We have raised our voice when the annual March for Life rally takes place in Washington, D.C., on the anniversary of this horrible Supreme Court ruling. (Search for "abortion" on our website at ucg.org to learn much more.)

The Supreme Court decision on abortion is an affront to God's sovereignty over human life. He is the Creator and Giver of life. He tells mankind, "You shall not murder." The Bible shows that the unborn within their mother's wombs are individual, living human beings (Exodus 21:22-23; Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:39-45). God views the killing of innocent children

as evil and an abomination (2 Kings 16:3; 21:2-6; Jeremiah 32:35)—depraved actions that are utterly reprehensible and deserving of death (Leviticus 20:2-3). The invasion of the mother's womb to remove a developing human life violates a space created by God to nurture life until it is fully brought forth in birth. Make no mistake: The Supreme Court's ruling has *transgressed the eternal spiritual law of God*.

It's bad enough that more than 60 million legal abortions have been performed since 1973. It's made worse by the fact that it has gone on so long in plain sight of all Americans that it has become an accepted part of our culture—a culture rightly called by others a culture of death and a "silent holocaust." We go about our lives giving in to the "established law" thinking, as we are told, that it is a "woman's right" and that nothing can be done to reverse the carnage.

Perhaps nothing can be done through the nation's legal system to turn back this great evil. Marches, protests and lobbying have changed nothing. A few months ago a news report mentioned that in one recent year, abortions *did* go down slightly in America. For that I am glad. I pray abortion will suddenly end through our selfish, hedonistic culture turning around to acknowledge God in a true change of heart. But, hope as I might, I do not see that happening.

New York law crosses a deadly new line

In January, the New York State legislature passed what is called the "Reproductive Health Act," which legalizes the unthinkable. To a cheering crowd of politicians, Governor Mario Cuomo signed this macabre law that allows medical personnel (no doctor required) to kill a fully formed child up to the moment of birth if needed to protect the "mother's health"—a loophole that, when construed as including mental and emotional health, is large enough to allow abortion for practically any reason at any time.

The bill also removed all criminal penalties—meaning if a child escapes the forceps, the vacuum, and the potassium cyanide often administered for abortion and is born live, even at full term, its life can be terminated without any criminal charge. To celebrate this law, the governor ordered the Freedom Tower in Manhattan to be lit pink—signifying a “victory” for women’s rights. It should have been illuminated in blood red for the unspeakably horrible law that it is.

Not to be outdone, the Virginia statehouse a few days later saw similar legislation introduced. As it was being debated, the supposedly moderate Governor Ralph Northam, an obstetrician, went on radio to describe what the law meant:



“For men will be lovers of themselves . . . unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal . . .”

“When we talk about third-trimester abortions, these are done with the consent of obviously the mother, with the consent of the physicians, more than one physician, by the way,” Northam said. “And it’s done in cases where there may be severe deformities, there may be a fetus that’s non-viable. So, in this particular example, if a mother is in labor, I can tell you exactly what would happen. *The infant would be delivered. The infant would be kept comfortable. The infant would be resuscitated if that’s what the mother and the family desired, and then a discussion would ensue between the physicians and the mother.* So, I think this was really blown out of proportion.”

Did you catch what he really said? A baby could be born alive, then “kept comfortable” while the mother and physicians decided whether it would live or die. And the newborn could then be executed with no legal consequences for its murder.

The Virginia bill would have allowed such procedures to be done in unlicensed clinics with the consent of only one physician—and as late as the end of the third trimester of pregnancy. This bill was killed in committee, but damage was already done. The brazen raw desire of abortion rights

activists has been laid bare. The brutal evil will of governors, state legislators and activists who, in the name of “women’s reproductive health” and “women’s rights,” are willing to kill fully formed, live-born children is an unspeakable horror.

More to come

Vermont passed a law very similar to the proposed Virginia law. Other states will enact similar legislation. It’s said that Rhode Island Democrats will go even further with a law proposing to allow abortions up to the end of pregnancy for any “health” reason, including “age, economic, social and emotional factors,” these advocates describing all protections for unborn babies as “insidiously restrictive, harmful and patriarchal reproductive laws.”

Some conservative states like Mississippi and Kentucky have passed their own laws prohibiting the procedures allowed now by New York law. These laws have been challenged in courts and blocked for the short term. Again, as happened with *Roe v. Wade*, the issue will likely be determined by judges rather than legislators.

The revulsion many citizens feel at the passage of these laws seems to have created something of a backlash against these extreme acts. But it will probably be for only a short time. It’s highly unlikely that we will see legal abortions eliminated in the nation.

We have reached a point in America where it seems all restraint has been cast off regarding this issue. Gone is the restraint cautioned not that long ago by former President Bill Clinton, who said abortion should be “rare, legal and safe.”

While that statement in no way agrees with what God says about killing the unborn, in the current climate it sounds moderate—and *that is the problem*. The nation has become drunk on this discussion to the point that *it has lost all moral and spiritual mooring*. Those who want to protect life at any stage of development are not heard or not strong enough to make a difference. No leader in politics, education or religion is strong enough to lead a repentance to God and an embrace of the sanctity of life as defined by God in His Word, the Bible.

All kinds of legal protections are in place for birds, mice, turtles and the like, complete with stiff fines and significant prison time for harming their eggs or young. But protections for innocent unborn human beings are rapidly disappearing. Thousands upon thousands of unborn infants are killed by lethal injections every year, but they draw nowhere near the protests or media coverage given to one murderer executed by lethal injection for his despicable crimes. In any sane world this would rightly be viewed as *insanity!*

America and much of the world has reached a moral collapse at a level from which they seem unlikely and unwilling to return. It’s painful to write these words. But this issue of abortion has become the defining issue of our age, and God will call the nation to account for what it has done.

Hideous evil

The raw brutality of these recently passed laws, and the ever-escalating toll of young lives literally poisoned and ripped apart, should stun all who value human life and decency. That

a people would put forward legislation allowing the ending of a life just minutes after leaving its mother's womb reveals a stark level of brutality and inhumanity that's now entered our culture—courtesy of those we've chosen as our leaders!

The Bible contains a graphic description of what our world today has become: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Notice the word *brutal* used here. I think that expresses the attitude behind the current wave of abortion legislation.

How can a doctor who has taken an oath to preserve life perform an abortion? Doctors trained in the biological science of human life in the womb know there is a heartbeat, developing brain and nervous system. They know a life is developing and that it's far more than inert fetal tissue to be removed and disposed of.

To hear Virginia Governor Northam calmly describe what the Virginia law would allow to be done in a clinic with a fully born baby is chilling. It is *raw brutality*. It is ungodly, and those who practice, support and encourage abortion on this scale are leading the nation to ruin. They are killing the next generation. They are *killing the soul of a people*.

Paul wrote the words above from 2 Timothy at the height of the Roman Empire in the first century. His words describe the Roman culture as much as our modern time. The ancient Romans practiced abortion. They and other pagan cultures also allowed infanticide. The father in a Roman family had the power of life and death over his children. If a newborn was deformed or simply unwanted, for whatever reason, it could be rejected by the father and removed from the home and left in an open place, sometimes in the city center or outside on a large flat rock. Left to the elements, the child would soon die.

Yes, there were some people with compassion who might come and take the baby into their own family, and some who might take the child away for a life of slavery. But more often the child would be left to die. Its corpse was then disposed of as a piece of unwanted refuse. This was a brutal civilization that eventually came to an end.

What is to prevent America, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia or any other nation that practices large-scale abortion from disappearing? The facts of history warn us that it *will* happen. Every nation in history that has practiced child sacrifice, infanticide or abortion has collapsed and disappeared. The Bible shows that the nation chosen by God, Israel, also collapsed because it lost its way and was caught up in idolatry—especially the idolatry of the self, the same evil Paul identified in his letter to Timothy.

Gosnell—America's biggest serial killer

While gathering material on this topic I came across a review of a movie released in the fall of 2018, *Gosnell: The Trial of America's Biggest Serial Killer*. It received very little press coverage. After a brief theatrical release it went straight to video streaming channels, and I was able to watch it on one.

Kermit Gosnell was an abortion doctor running an abortion clinic in Philadelphia. For years he performed abortions on poor black women from the west side of Philly. He was busted by police for prescription drug dealing. For anyone who paid his fee, he would sell prescriptions for drugs like Percocet, Oxycontin and Xanax.

When police raided his clinic, they discovered a horror shop filled with frozen fetal parts stored in dairy cartons and plastic containers. Unsanitary conditions and broken equipment were the setting for years of operations where pregnant women, many in late term, were induced into labor to enable partial-birth or full-birth abortions. The babies born alive had their necks snipped with large scissors. Evidence of such murder led to his conviction. Gosnell today serves a sentence of life in prison without parole.

Watching this movie was a horrible experience. The man was a monster. Gosnell would use discarded fetal body parts as bait to fish clams and oysters out of the bay to use in feeding the exotic turtle collection he kept in his abortion clinic.

Such cold, brutal habits are barely fit to be spoken. The film shows the vile conditions in which Gosnell practiced for decades, without inspection and investigation by public health authorities.

Abortion clinics in America are comparable in some ways to concentration camps and gulags of another time, with death practiced in plain sight while life goes on. People know they are there and what they do, but it becomes part of the landscape of indifference in the never-never land of the human psyche. Tragically, we fail to realize that the soul of a people is being killed every day these clinics of horror are allowed to operate.

Is it too late?

I realized after watching the movie that Gosnell would not be convicted under the grossly misnamed "Reproductive Health Act" recently passed by New York. What he did in severing the spines of live babies would be considered legal and unindictable. Today he would be continuing his practice unhindered. And maybe he will yet get out on account of laws he was sentenced under being overturned! That's how much we have changed in just a few years.

We have sown the wind and are reaping the whirlwind (Hosea 8:7). The abortion issue will continue to divide America, tearing and trampling our humanity, all in the name of "women's rights" and personal freedom.

I fear it may be too late for a moral revival in America and other nations. God help us all if it is. I hope you as a reader will prayerfully consider your own view of abortion and its impact on us individually and on our nation and the world at large. [BT](#)



LEARN MORE

Why are the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and other English-speaking countries in such a moral free fall? This was prophesied long ago in the Bible! To learn more, download or request your free copy of *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.

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Why Baptism?

The spiritual imagery associated with the biblical instruction of baptism is incredibly rich, deeply meaningful and bursting with hope, joy and anticipation. Discover its hidden treasures!

by John LaBissoniere

No doubt you have greatly anticipated various events in your life. Perhaps it was the day you received your driver's license or the impending day or your graduation from high school or college. Maybe it was your wedding day or the day of the birth of your child. Indeed, there are many exciting days and times you may have looked forward to with great enthusiasm, or will in the future.

I have also personally waited expectantly for various stirring occasions, but there was one that I anticipated more than all the others. I'd like to tell you why it was so meaningful to me in the hope it may inspire those of you who have yet to experience this to look forward to it in your own life. What was the event I had anticipated most of all? It was the day of my baptism, which took place nearly 47 years ago on Oct. 21, 1972, when I was 23.

Now, you may be asking, why baptism? Well, for about 18 months prior to that day, I had studied and learned a tremendous amount from the Bible and Church of God literature, which included a highly illuminating Bible study course. I had also listened regularly to the Church's radio program, which added still more information and inspiration to what I was discovering.

Throughout that period I was awakened to the critical realization that much of what I had been taught previously about Christianity was completely erroneous. Plus, I came to see that the self-absorbed way I was living was not only detrimental to me and others, but was profoundly displeasing to God.

God's calling to repentance

How was I able to come to this understanding? It was due to the miraculous and merciful spiritual calling of God the Father (John 6:44). Through that He helped me to begin recognizing my need for repentance from sin—which is not only the violation of His holy laws but the cause of a separation from Him (John 5:17; 1 John 3:4; Isaiah 59:2). As to repentance, the Scriptures define it as deep, heartfelt regret and sorrow over one's offenses against God and commitment to change (Psalm 51:4; Acts 3:19; 17:30).

Because of God's generous calling and guidance, I slowly came to see that I required a spiritual overhaul—a complete turnaround in the direction of my life—from following my own ways to actively and consistently pursuing God's priorities.

I also started realizing just how much I needed to become like Jesus Christ, who during His human life on earth set the

Baptism is actually a *symbolic burial* of a person's "old self." As the baptized individual rises out of a figurative watery grave, it portrays a resurrection from the dead *to a fresh, new, changed life.*

perfect example of obedience to His Father and selflessly and willingly died for humanity's sins (1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Besides this, I began learning how imperative it was for me to begin building a strong and enduring relationship with God the Father and Jesus, recognizing Christ as my cherished, personal Savior and spiritual brother (Romans 5:8-10; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Matthew 12:50).

Furthermore, God offered me the enormous prospect of being fully reconciled to Him (Romans 5:8-10; Isaiah 5:3). In addition to that great gift, He also provided me with wonderful understanding about His spectacular purpose for all humankind, which centers on eternal life in His divine family and Kingdom. Included in this was the knowledge of His astounding blueprint for the future of the earth and humanity following Jesus Christ's second coming.

But this sparkling treasure trove of divine knowledge would have been utterly impossible for me to have known about, much less comprehend, unless God had taken the marvelous and merciful step of opening my mind. As one illuminating passage explains: "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and *he is not able to understand them* because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14, English Standard Version, emphasis added throughout).

Indeed it goes even deeper than that, because "the mindset of the flesh is *hostile* to God because it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, *it is unable to do so*" (Romans 8:7, Christian Standard Bible).

The apostle Paul, in writing to members of the church congregation in Ephesus, described what their lives were like prior to their conversion, stating that they had "once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air [that is, Satan the devil], the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also *we all once conducted ourselves* in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were *by nature children of wrath, just as the others*" (Ephesians 2:2-3).

Yes, God graciously helped me to perceive my true inner sinful disposition. Without His intervention to help me understand spiritual things, I would have remained ensnared in a selfish, adversarial approach and attitude toward Him and His way of life. To be sure, this is true for *all* human beings. Therefore, until God proactively opens a person's heart and mind and grants him or her repentance—and, as Scripture vividly explains, *even the willingness to do so*—the spiritual understanding we need is impossible (2 Timothy 2:25-26).

Be baptized for forgiveness of sins

So I came to understand all this through God's loving and generous calling. And, just as He did with me, perhaps God is calling *you* at this time. He may be helping *you* to understand *your* nature as a human being while granting you the divine

grace and opportunity to repent of your sins and turn to Him in deep humility and obedience (see Proverbs 16:25; Jeremiah 17:9). He may be leading you to follow a new, exciting divine pathway to formerly unseen and awesome blessings of boundless hope, joy and eternal life in His divine family (Romans 2:4; Acts 11:18; James 1:25).

Let me return, now, to the day I anticipated so greatly. Why did I so look forward to this day I was to be baptized? It's helpful to obtain some perspective by going back in biblical history to the amazing story of the beginning of the New Testament Church on the day of Pentecost, one of God's annual festivals. On that remarkable day, 120 of Jesus Christ's disciples were gathered in Jerusalem awaiting the fulfillment of the spectacular promise He made to them only 10 days earlier—that they would "receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8).

When that tremendous event occurred on Pentecost, "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4). On receiving this magnificent gift of God's presence in their lives, these devoted disciples began generating immediate spiritual results.

Acts 2 records how the apostles began witnessing to crowds of people who were residents of Judea and pilgrims who had traveled to Jerusalem from around the known world to observe this holy festival. The apostle Peter stepped forward with the other apostles and began speaking passionately and convincingly about Jesus Christ to the multitudes.

Included in his inspired oration was this piercing assertion: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

Hearing Peter's stirring message, the listeners felt "cut to the heart" and pleaded with Peter and the other apostles by crying out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Peter answered by exclaiming, "Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Through Peter's moving and convicting message, 3,000 people repented, were baptized and received God's Spirit, which is the very essence of His nature and power (Acts 2:40-41).

From that crucial event in biblical history, the Holy Spirit has been made available to every person God calls who genuinely repents and is properly baptized (Matthew 22:14; 2 Peter 1:10). It is important to note at this point that since baptism is such a serious, life-changing decision, it is reserved *only for those who are mature enough to understand its true spiritual purpose and make the commitment involved.*

Baptism's wonderful spiritual imagery

The only form of baptism we find practiced in the Bible is being fully submerged in water. Why is that?

Baptism is actually a *symbolic* burial of a person's "old self" (Romans 6:1-6; Ephesians 4:22-24). As the baptized individual

risers out of a figurative watery grave, it portrays a *resurrection from death to a fresh, new, changed life*. This is because, in a spiritual sense, the repentant person's sins are totally washed away in the baptismal water through God's overwhelming forgiveness and mercy.

The prophet Micah expressed this wonderful experience by writing, "You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). King David further explained, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalms 103:12).

God also inspired His prophet Isaiah to state: "Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool" (Isaiah 1:18, New Living Translation).

Baptism symbolizes the *complete* removal of sin in a repentant person's life, made possible through Jesus Christ's sacrifice of His own precious blood (Acts 22:16; 1 John 5:6; Revelation 1:5). This allows the person to move forward in life with a renewed and dynamic spiritual purpose (1 Timothy 1:5). It also results in no longer needing to feel guilt over past sins. What remains is a wholly clean and clear conscience and a passionate and determined eagerness "to serve the living God" (Hebrews 9:14).

As for me, I came to see how baptism was an essential action that demonstrated my earnest desire to be thoroughly committed to Christ and the Father in full obedience and faith. It was also a tremendous opportunity for me to pledge to the Father, as Jesus did, "Not *My* will, but *Yours*, be done" (Luke 22:42).

In addition, just as Jesus arose from the grave, baptism gives a repentant person complete assurance that the Father will resurrect him or her from death to everlasting life at Jesus' second coming. Paul wrote: "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:4-5).

So when a person is called by the Father, responds energetically, repents, is baptized and receives God's Spirit, he or she begins a new life of spiritual growth as the old, selfish human nature is gradually replaced with God's selfless, loving divine nature (2 Timothy 1:6; 2 Peter 1:4).

How exciting and thrilling it is! Can you now see why I anticipated the day of my baptism so much? While baptism figuratively cleansed me from past sins (Acts 22:16), it also represented an exhilarating pathway to a transformed life of hope, happiness and purpose. Plus it opened the door to a wonderful and growing relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ (Romans 6:4, 11).

Furthermore, it was the beginning of a thrilling journey toward eternal life in the Kingdom of God. The apostle Peter exclaimed, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5).

Committing yourself fully to God

Baptism was foundational to my conversion journey toward greater understanding of God's Word and His plan. Now, decades later, He continues to guide me each day by His Spirit to help me overcome sin and serve Him faithfully and obediently.


Plus, through baptism God placed me into His Church, which He commissioned to "go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). The Church is composed of repentant, baptized individuals from all nations, races and economic and cultural backgrounds. Everyone works together to carry out God's work in this age and to love and serve one another as spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ (Romans 12:10; Galatians 6:10).

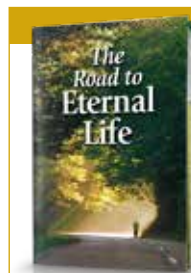
So, what about you? As I posed earlier, could God be calling *you* to a deeper understanding of Him and His Word? Are you coming to see yourself and your corrupted human nature as it really is and why you need to repent of your sins and begin anew while building a strong relationship with your Savior, Jesus Christ?

As I mentioned earlier, it took me about 18 months to come to the point where, after studying and learning, I felt ready to take the next step. That step, of course, was to be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit—which God gives immediately afterwards through the laying on of hands by a true minister of Jesus Christ (see Acts 8:17; 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6).

Considering all of this, I sincerely encourage you to continue studying the Bible. And there are many articles in *Beyond Today* magazine and numerous free study aids, including a 12-lesson Bible Study Course, produced by the United Church of God in print and on its website (at ucg.org/beyond-today). There you can also find many compelling *Beyond Today* video programs to help you gain further knowledge.

Also, if you would like to discuss repentance, baptism, the Holy Spirit, attending services or other spiritual subjects, the United Church of God would be pleased to arrange a private appointment with one of our ministers. You are welcome to contact the Church via the addresses or telephone numbers listed by country or region on page 39 of this issue or by visiting our contact page (ucg.org/contact-1).

Finally, if God is calling you and you are beginning to see your need for repentance, in due course you will be able to make a decision about committing yourself to God. When that time comes (and how long differs with each person), you will, as I did, greatly anticipate the day *you* will be baptized! May God bless and guide you on your spiritual journey! 



LEARN MORE

How can you get started on this path to baptism and a new life? Where do you begin? To understand what the Bible says about this crucial subject, download or request your free copy of *The Road to Eternal Life*. We'll gladly mail your copy to you!

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The Holy Spirit: A Gift of God's Grace



What I learned about grace from a friend long ago helped transform my life. It can do the same for you!

by Darris McNeely

I once knew a woman named Grace. She and her husband were family friends when I was younger. Grace was kind, generous and fun-loving. She was interested in your thoughts, your life and your welfare. She was loved, respected and admired by just about everyone who knew her.

Grace was able to show the love of God and demonstrate to my young mind the fruit of the Spirit of God by the way she lived and carried herself. Charm, kindness and love flowed from her. I didn't realize it back then, but in the brief time our paths crossed Grace taught me some of my first lessons about the priceless nature of grace.

As I sit down to write about how life can be transformed by the Spirit of God, I remember the generous and gracious life of this person I once knew.

Can I convey in one article how to let God live in us through His Spirit? We all need to set our hearts to do so and achieve the state of grace personified by the lady named Grace I knew long ago.

I can think of no more pressing topic for us than to understand how God wants to have a relationship with us through the essence of His nature, the Holy Spirit.

Created to share glory

Jesus Christ tells us that "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). God the Father and Jesus Christ exist in a harmony and unity beyond what we can humanly understand. They are without

beginning or end, eternal, but wanting and willing to share Their way of life and glory with Their human creation. You were created in the image of God with the ability to share part of the glory of God in this life today. But how?

God graciously gives us the gift of His nature by and through His Holy Spirit. With that Spirit we can live a transformed life beyond any semblance of our life before that. In short, God offers us the opportunity to take on His divine nature, thus becoming like Him in character, thought and action.

Let's look at how we receive that Spirit, what that Spirit is and what it can do for our lives.

Repentance to life

When the apostle Peter gave his defense to the Church members in Jerusalem after baptizing the gentile (non-Israelite) converts of the household of Cornelius, he summarized the essence of what happens when one receives the Spirit:

"And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?' When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, 'Then God has also granted to the Gentiles *repentance to life*'" (Acts 11:15-18, emphasis added throughout).



The change of your mind and heart that leads you to seek the crucial connection with God leads to receiving the essence of His nature, the Holy Spirit. This changed orientation is called *repentance*. It leads to a new life with the potential for a close personal relationship with God.

Godly repentance is a change of mind and attitude toward God. It follows conviction by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God acting on our conscience. Repentance involves an awareness of personal sin, which is the transgression of God's holy and righteous law (1 John 3:4). It is accompanied by sincere remorse and resolution to respond to God's calling by obedience and submission to His way of life.

Repentance toward God is not a temporary emotional response. It is a response resulting in a *permanent* change of thought, behavior and direction of life. It results in a determined commitment to turn to God, to forsake a life of sin that separates us from God and to walk forward in all of God's commandments.

Scripture shows that such a mind change—coming to understand that we are sinners who must forsake sin and turn to following God—should be followed by baptism and the laying on of hands by a minister of God (Acts 2:38; 8:17; 22:16). It is then that God gives His Spirit to those who obey (Acts 5:32). It is then that a life of the Spirit can begin—a life graced by God's presence dwelling in us through that Spirit.

Standing in grace

The apostle Paul explains the reality of this new life in some remarkable passages of Scripture. In his letter to the Romans he explains the gift of grace we have through the forgiveness of sin and God's Spirit—His essence—dwelling in us.

He explains the grace we have as something “in which we

stand” (Romans 5:2). The step of faith leading to repentance, baptism and receiving God's Spirit produces peace with God and our Lord Jesus Christ and a deep relationship built from confidence that our Father and our Elder Brother love us. God understands us fully. When Paul says we “stand” in God's grace, he refers to a wonderfully comforting relationship with God, a relationship that is enduring and faithful.

Having made that commitment, we need not worry that God will instantly condemn us when we slip and sin (see Romans 8:1). God does not remove Himself from us (Hebrews 13:5). The connection remains as long as we do not turn completely away from God in refusal to ever repent, totally quenching the Holy Spirit in us.

When we veer from God's gracious relationship with us, through sin or neglect, we will suffer the devastating impact of sin. God has not moved, but *we have*. Life will hit us in the face with excruciating impact. We then have a choice whether to return to a right relationship with God. Yet this is also an aspect of God's grace, as the difficulties are meant to help us, God working all the while to rescue us. Of course, the choice to continue with God, following the lead of His Spirit, ultimately remains ours. And we must strive to maintain that.

Paul explains the work of the Holy Spirit in us as the basis for our hope of sharing in the glory of God. The Spirit of God in us will create the essential quality of endurance and character to withstand the trials of our lives. Grace and righteousness are gifts that create a stable life. Paul explains that grace reigns through righteousness that leads to the hope of eternal life through Christ (Romans 5:21).

So when he then asks, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” the obvious answer is “Certainly not!” (Romans 6:1-2). God's gift of grace and His Spirit should lead us *away* from sin—away from our corrupt natural inclination that leads us *toward* sin. Paul then explains that baptism—immersion in water—is a symbol of putting to death the old self, an outward sign of our inner desire to live a new life with new priorities and a completely different orientation.

Paul likens our emergence from the “watery grave” of baptism to Jesus Christ's resurrection from the grave, with us rising to then walk in a new way of life. With Christ we then live a new life to God, “dead indeed to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:8-11).

How are we doing?

The only right we have to call ourselves Christian—to bear the name of Christ—is through a genuine repentance in faith and baptism in Christ's name. Have you ever examined yourself by this standard? Several scriptures convict us to do so. To the Church members in Corinth Paul said: “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that *Jesus Christ is in you?*—unless indeed you are disqualified” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

The key, we see here, is *Christ in us*. That is the test as to whether or not we are truly Christian!

Paul expands on this in his letter to the Church members in Rome: “Letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. For the sinful nature [of the fleshly mind] is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will.

That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

"But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God.

"The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you" (Romans 8:6-11, New Living Translation).

Here is a key fact to understand about the Holy Spirit. Receiving God's Spirit makes God our Father in a literal manner. That Spirit makes us sons of God. When God gives us His Spirit, the divine nature enters our life, making us literal children of God. To use a parallel, as physical children carry in their makeup genes passed on from their parents, God's Spirit—the essence of His divine nature—literally becomes a part of our life when we are baptized and receive that Spirit.

The beginning of grace

Through this relationship with God, we enter into the life of the Spirit. This is where we begin to live in grace and demonstrate the gracious nature of God.

When I noticed the appealing and kind nature of my friend Grace all those years ago, I was seeing the wonderful qualities Paul called the fruit of the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:22-23) coming out in the warmth of her eyes, the gentle tone of her voice and the kindness shown toward so many people. These qualities drew people to her in friendship. She was using the Spirit to be like God in character.

How? She *let God live in her life*. That is what we do when we *let God live in us* through His Spirit.

This is profound. The truth of the Bible on this subject is never more needed. So many people live confused, complicated lives of despair. Seeking meaning in life often leads down a dead-end street. Don't you want to connect to the purpose for your life? You can! That is what this article intends for you, through Scripture, to come to understand. When God invites us to understand His purpose for creating human life, we are connected to the most important of all knowledge!

At the heart of this revealed truth is the Holy Spirit of God, the divine nature of God in us as a force we can use to live with power, love and a sound mind. Fear need not be a part of our life (2 Timothy 1:7).

Christ in us

Let's go back to the point made above that we are *literally* sons and daughters of God. This is not a vague symbolic religious thought. It is a fact of Scripture, and most people read right over the verses that reveal this truth, never stopping to grasp what God offers us in this life.

As human children we have the DNA of our biological mother and father in every cell of our body. The language in the DNA strands determines our features so that we are

literally formed in the image of our parents. DNA is the definitive identifier of our lineage.

The Spirit of God joins with our spirit to make us children of God. Romans 8:16 tells us: "For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory" (NLT). By the Spirit we are literal heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. We are part of the God family. God is preparing us, as His children and heirs, to inherit all things (Revelation 21:7).

With the Holy Spirit we are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). God's "spirit DNA" is in us, and we take on the character and nature of God our Father and Jesus Christ our Brother and High Priest.

Think on this. What Paul writes takes on new meaning. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20, King James Version). Paul plainly tells us that through the Spirit, *Christ lives in us*.

"I will come to you"

Paul here adds depth to what Christ told His disciples on the eve of His death. Before His arrest, He explained why He had to be killed and then raised and what that would mean for

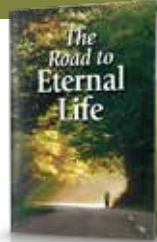
By the Spirit we are literal heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. We are part of the God family. God is preparing us to inherit all things.

them and all who would follow after as disciples—including you today. Jesus promised a "Helper" or "Comforter," from the Greek word *parakletos*. This presence would be with us—in fact, the presence and power of the Father and the Son dwelling within us. Christ called it "the Spirit of truth" and said it "dwells with you and will be in you." And He added, "I will not leave you orphans; *I will come to you*" (John 14:16-18).

Christ's words speak to us today, explaining how we can have a relationship with Him and access the power of the Spirit to live out a meaningful life touched by the kindness and grace of God. His suffering and death provided the means for this to happen. His resurrection from the dead forever made possible the Father sharing His glory with humankind.

"At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and *I in you*" (verse 20). Jesus Christ and the Father are one in purpose and intent. They share the glory we will inherit. They also share the peace and power we desire and need to

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live successfully today. Christ is explaining the key to success in life. Through the Spirit of God living in us, we have power to cope with whatever life deals us.

Hope without despair

A friend of mine recently called to tell me his only daughter had died. She was 39 years old, and though she had some health issues, the sudden death was unexpected. He and his wife were devastated. As we talked he commented on what life sometimes deals us. “It is sometimes a bad hand,” he said, using the well-known analogy of being dealt a hand of playing cards. “And you have to work with it. You cannot change it.” How true. Real life circumstances cannot be turned back. We must “play the hand” we’re dealt.

How much better for us to “play the hand” with the power of God in us, the life of Jesus Christ? That is what God offers with the promise of a “Comforter” or “Helper.” God in us gives hope when there is despair. The Father in us gives a quality of love that leads to a patient endurance of the sorrow and pain. God does not intend that the trials of this life be endured without the calming salve of His grace. It is a bitter experience to go through this life, what William Shakespeare called “this vale of tears,” without the comfort of God’s presence.

This abiding presence of God is like a soothing salve, a lotion that calms and aids in healing. God’s grace ultimately works like a balm that comforts our heart and soul with kindness and patience and love. The abiding presence of God in us provides the hope beyond the hurt, the expectation of joy beyond the depth of sorrow and the gentleness of spirit when life and people cause hurt and harm.

Check the headlines of your life. Chaos? Lack of purpose? Fear? A search for understanding among competing ideas? Life is not meant to be like that. You can find the way out of fear and confusion to a place of love and a sound mind—a place of grace. You can find it in the pages of a book you probably have in your home—the Bible. It contains the words of God waiting to speak to you and reveal the

mind of the Creator of life to you.

Wired into your makeup is the need for this connection with God. The yearning you have to be loved and to be understood—to understand and to show love—comes from the fingerprint of God on your life from conception. We are at first an incomplete creation, in need of the Spirit of God to join with our spirit, forming the connection of grace by which God lives His life in us—transforming us into His image.

You can choose to begin today!

Jesus Christ added another crucial thought while teaching His disciples: “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and *We will come and make Our home with him*” (John 14:23). By the Holy Spirit, the essence of Their nature, both the Father and Son live in the believer. Thus, Christ presented Himself and the Father to be the Source of comfort, help and encouragement provided through the promised Comforter. Part of His purpose in this passage was to point out that He would do far more through the Spirit dwelling in them than He did while He lived among them in the flesh. And this was borne out by the work Christ did through the Church, as recorded in the book of Acts.

We have access today to this power that can make all the difference in our lives. What I saw in my friend Grace was the fruit of the Spirit in her life. Her words and deeds gave benefit and grace to those she knew. To this day I remember her as an example of the grace of God shown through the life of one person. It is what happens when we submit to God in faith and allow Him to live in us.

Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit as “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23; and see “The Fruit of the Holy Spirit: What Are These All About?” beginning on page 30). Taken together these qualities are the essence of God’s nature, the manifestation of His grace. A life led by the Spirit of God will demonstrate these traits. It will transform our lives, giving power to live a life free of fear.

May you begin to do what God requires to begin such a life! **BT**

Who’s Behind Beyond Today?



Who’s behind the *Beyond Today* magazine and television program? *Beyond Today* is provided by people from all walks of life, from all over the world, as enabled by God. We share a common goal—to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of



God and to teach all nations to obey everything Christ commanded (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20). We are dedicated to proclaiming the same message

Jesus Christ brought—the wonderful good news of the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; 8:1). That message truly is good news—the answer to all the problems that have long plagued humankind.

Through this magazine, our TV program, and in dozens of helpful free study guides, we show the biblical answers to the dilemmas that have defied human solution and threaten our survival. We are committed to taking that message to the entire world, sharing the truth of God’s purpose as taught by Jesus Christ and His apostles.

The United Church of God has congregations and ministers around the world. In these congregations believers assemble to be instructed from the Scriptures and to fellowship. For locations and times of services nearest you, contact us at the appropriate address on page 39. Visitors are always welcome.

For additional information, visit our website:

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The Fruit of the Holy Spirit: What Are These All About?

The Bible tells us that God's people will be led by God's Spirit—and that the Spirit will produce specific evidence in their lives in the form of "fruit." What are these, and what are they all about?

by Don Hooser

Are human beings basically good at heart? We might want to think so or wish that were the case, but is it true? What does the Bible say? Have you really looked into what the Bible reveals about the human heart? You might find its diagnosis and description surprising!

The prophet Jeremiah wrote: "*The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?*" (Jeremiah 17:9, New Living Translation, emphasis added throughout).

Jesus Christ said, "For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness" (Mark 7:21-22, NLT).

The apostle Paul wrote: "As the Scriptures say, 'No one is righteous—not even one. No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one'" (Romans 3:10-12, NLT).

Other scriptures portray raw human nature in similar ways.

These scriptures are not meant to describe the overall character of every individual. The world has lots of very nice people and lots of people somewhere in between the extremes. Many factors contribute to the formation of a person's character and personality—family, friends, teachers, religion, laws, environment and everything we allow into our minds.

But people are not inherently righteous. If we were, we would only need to acquire some "improvements" from God. Jesus compared that idea with the foolishness of pouring new wine into old wineskins (Luke 5:36-39). Each person must become a totally "new man" (Ephesians 2:15; 4:24).

The Bible frequently warns of the evil influences of Satan the devil and the demons, the "world" and "this present evil age" (Galatians 1:4). But while we must resist our spiritual enemies on the outside, our biggest enemy is on the inside—*the human heart*. We need a spiritual heart transplant!

Needed: a radical transformation of our hearts

What we especially need to understand is God's plan of salvation revealed in the Bible. That plan involves the process of replacing our natural minds and hearts *with the mind and*

heart of God so we can be admitted into the family of God! This miracle is accomplished primarily by the power of God's Holy Spirit working within us. (To better understand how we receive the gift of God's Spirit, see "The Overwhelming Force" beginning on page 34. And how God uses that Spirit to work within us is explained in "The Holy Spirit: A Gift of God's Grace," beginning on page 26.)

God says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways" (Isaiah 55:8). Our thoughts and ways must conform to God's thoughts and ways, which is why Paul wrote that you must "*be transformed by the renewing of your mind*" (Romans 12:2). This is a *radical transformation* indeed!

In Philippians 2:5 Paul wrote, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." That's what we need! We can have the mind of Christ by the Holy Spirit dwelling within us.

But just what does the holy, righteous, pure and perfect character of God look like as it's being developed in a person? What are the virtues, attributes, characteristics and qualities the nature of God expresses? God inspired Paul to list nine key virtues of God's character in Galatians 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."

The Greek word translated "fruit" in Galatians 5:22 is singular because it is referring *collectively* to nine virtues—that is, the *produce* of the Spirit or what the Spirit produces—in the life of a Christian in whom that Spirit dwells. However, we sometimes refer to plural "fruits of the Spirit" when we are focusing on the individual virtues.

Can people have those virtues without the Holy Spirit? To some extent, people can have love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control without the help of the Holy Spirit. Earlier we mentioned some of the many influences that shape each person's character and personality, either for the good or bad.

However, without the help of the Holy Spirit, those good qualities will be shallower, weaker, less reliable and less consistent. And while some people have some of those virtues, it is much less likely that they will be filled with all nine virtues.

Galatians 5:22-23 is quite inspiring since "fruit of the Spirit" refers to the virtues *produced by the Holy Spirit* rather than by



What does the holy, righteous, pure and perfect character of God look like as it's being developed in a person? God inspired Paul to list nine key virtues of God's character in Galatians 5:22-23.

our mere human efforts. With the Holy Spirit, one can have much more of these virtues than he ever could by human effort alone. Knowing this should motivate anyone who has not been baptized to seek to be baptized so he or she can receive God's Spirit.

Contrasts in Galatians

The book of Galatians is one of Paul's most corrective epistles or letters. Highly disappointed and alarmed that many Church members who had correctly understood and responded to God's calling were later led astray by false teachers, he points out numerous contrasts between God's truth and the false teachings that had infected them.

Paul draws a major contrast between the "works of the flesh" in Galatians 5:19-21 and the "fruit of the Spirit" in verses 22-23. The Greek word for "flesh" is *sarx*, Paul using a form of this word to refer to the corrupt sinful nature of the human heart. Paul could perhaps have used the word "fruit" (Greek *karpos*) in place of the word "works" (Greek *erga*) because in this context both terms are referring to *products, results or effects*.

However, it may be that Paul is subtly pointing out a related problem—the heresy infecting the churches in Galatia that a person can be *justified* (made spiritually guiltless and righteous) by human *works* rather than by grace and faith in God (see Galatians 2:16-17; 3:11, 24; 5:4).

We suggest you carefully read and think about verses 19-21 to better appreciate the contrast with the wonderful fruit of the Holy Spirit in verses 22-23. Following are brief summaries of each of the nine fruits Paul lists.

The fruit of love

Love obviously belongs at the head of the list. Godly love is so all-encompassing that it can include all the other fruits.

"God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16). The two "great" commandments are to love God and to love all of God's children, which is everyone (Matthew 22:35-39). That means that the Ten Commandments are telling us exactly how to love God and how to love our neighbors.

Love is a major theme of the Bible, which is God's "instruction book" for mankind. In the New King James Version, the word "love" appears 362 times.

In the Bible's use of the word "love," whether as a verb or a noun, the emphasis is on *action* and *doing*, not feelings and emotions. We love God by obeying, worshipping and serving Him. For example, 1 John 5:3 tells us, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments."

We love people by how we treat them. God says to love your neighbor as yourself, which means we are to treat others as

well as we treat ourselves. The Golden Rule is spelled out in Matthew 7:12: "Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets" (NLT).

Godly love is summarized in 1 Corinthians 13, the beautiful "love chapter." Paul here said if I "have not love, I am nothing" (verse 2).

The fruit of joy

Some people tend to think that joy is not really important, especially if they equate it with just having fun or only a nice aftereffect of some pleasant experience. But real joy is far beyond that.

As a matter of fact, God wants real joy to be one of our high-priority goals. God commands His people to *rejoice*. "Rejoice" means to *think joy* and *express joy*. In the New King James Version, "joy" appears 158 times and "rejoice" appears 199 times!

Once we understand God's truth, we should feel a sense of "my cup runs over" with gratitude for all that God has done, is doing, and will do for us (see Psalm 23:5). Rejoicing is a way of expressing that gratitude.

A joyful person uplifts those around him and makes the world a better place. Therefore, expressing ourselves cheerfully is an important responsibility regardless of how we are feeling inside.

All of the fruits of the Spirit are important ingredients to being "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14-16). People are much more likely to have a good impression of our religious beliefs if they see joy and the other virtues in our character and personalities.

The fruit of peace

The word “peace” is found in the New King James Version 397 times! The importance of peace can’t be overstated. The world will become a paradise after the “Prince of Peace” returns to the earth (Isaiah 9:6).

It’s a huge blessing when we can be in a peaceful environment, but by having God’s Spirit within us we can have inner peace even when we are suffering or surrounded by turmoil. Paul sums this up beautifully in Philippians 4:6-7: “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus” (NLT).

The epistles of Paul and Peter begin with the encouraging greeting of “grace to you and peace.” It’s significant that coming under the grace of God at repentance and baptism enables us to have profound peace.

We are to be “peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9; see also Romans 12:18). We are well-equipped for that if we have God’s Spirit.

The fruit of longsuffering

The majority of English Bibles translate the Greek word *makrothumia* as longsuffering, but others translate it with more modern terms such as *patience*, *tolerance* or *forbearance*. The meaning seems to be a combination of all these words. It definitely has a stronger meaning than today’s view of the word *patience*.

The Greek word *makro* (from which we get *macro*) means “large” or “long.” The root word *thumos* means “temper.” Therefore, *makrothumia* literally means *long-tempered*, the opposite of *short-tempered* or *having a short fuse*. Compare with 1 Corinthians 13:4: “Love suffers long.”

Jesus Christ is “longsuffering toward us” (2 Peter 3:9).

Thankfully He doesn’t lose His temper toward us!

“You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and *slow to get angry*” (James 1:19, NLT). Our relationships with others should be “with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2).

The fruit of kindness

The apostle Paul accurately foretold a selfish, cold, unmerciful and hard-hearted world “in the last days” (2 Timothy 3:1-3). Many people have been neglected, shunned, abused, ridiculed, bullied and starved for human kindness!

The fruits of the Spirit obviously overlap in practice. Kindness clearly relates to love, longsuffering and gentleness.

Kindness includes being tenderhearted, merciful and compassionate toward others. To exercise kindness often involves some *self-sacrifice* and *generosity* on our part, especially of our time. But know that God will bless you for that sacrifice (see Philippians 2:3-4; Matthew 5:7; 10:42; 25:34-40).

Jesus Christ practiced a kindness that was radical for that time and culture. He respected, loved, healed and helped every type of person, including women, children, minorities, the poor, the sick and those with disabilities. When He saw suffering, He was “moved with compassion” (Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 18:27). We must follow His example!

Some people are kind only to their family and friends, while others treat their families worse than anyone else. Both of those examples are sinful (see Luke 6:27-36; 1 Timothy 5:8).

The fruit of goodness

In the Bible, the “goodness” of God often refers to His gracious generosity in providing abundantly for mankind’s needs (Psalms 23:6; 65:11). When we know we have been blessed by God, we like to say, “God is good!”

Other Fruit of the Holy Spirit

The word “fruit” can mean benefits, effects or results. There certainly are *many* benefits of having the gift of the Holy Spirit besides the nine fundamental qualities listed in Galatians 5:22-23 as the fruit of the Spirit. Let’s notice some others presented in Scripture.

- Ephesians 5:9 actually has the same phrase found in Galatians 5:22—“fruit of the Spirit.” Ephesians 5:8-9 says: “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth” (emphasis added throughout). These form a good summary of the results God’s Spirit will produce in the lives of believers, which are listed in greater detail in Galatians 5:22-23.

- In Romans 14:17, Paul spoke of the “righteousness, peace, and joy produced by the Holy Spirit” (International Standard Version). This overlaps the list in Galatians 5:22-23 and adds the crucial

element of *righteousness*.

- God’s Spirit miraculously enables a person to deeply understand God’s spiritual truth. Without the help of God’s Spirit, a person is spiritually blind (see 2 Corinthians 3:14; 4:3-4; Matthew 13:16-17). Particularly profound is what 1 Corinthians 2 says about the “deep things of God” being a “mystery” and “hidden” until God *reveals* them “through His Spirit” (verses 7, 10). “No one comprehends the thoughts of God except [by] the Spirit of God” (verse 11, English Standard Version).

- Another wonderful result of God’s Spirit at work in a person’s life is brought out in 2 Timothy 1:6-7, where Paul tells us the “gift of God” is not “a spirit of fear, but of *power* and of *love* and of a *sound mind*.”

- God uses His Spirit to *lead and guide* us, even to “teach” us what to say when we’re under pressure (Romans 8:14; Luke 12:11-12). Jesus also said the Holy Spirit will “bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (John 14:26).

- In Ephesians 1:13-14, Paul speaks of “the gospel of your salvation” and goes on to say: “When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, [which] is a *deposit guaranteeing our inheritance* until the redemption of those who are God’s possession” (New International Version; see also 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5). That perspective gives us a firm foundation for our faith.

- When God gives anyone a spiritual gift, it is by His Holy Spirit that He does so (see Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12).

- With God’s Spirit dwelling in us, we have a close, intimate relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 John 1:3, 6-7). And along with Paul, we can say, “Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).

Many more benefits of God’s Holy Spirit could be listed, but space prohibits exploring them further here.

But God's goodness is much more than those things. It is the very essence of God's nature—His righteousness and holiness. To the extent that we have God's goodness, we have godliness or God-likeness.

The Bible gives us God's complete "instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). To be good, we must learn what is good and then *do* good.

God summarizes His standards of goodness in the Ten Commandments. King David wrote, "All Your commandments are [or define] *righteousness*" (Psalms 119:172).

Some people make the mistake of thinking they are good if they have a lot of Bible knowledge. But if they aren't *living* by

The gift of the Holy Spirit within us greatly strengthens a person's ability to stay faithful to all his commitments, especially his commitment to God.

that knowledge, God is more displeased with them than He is with someone who has no knowledge (see James 4:17; Luke 12:47-48). We must be "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22; see verses 21-25).

The fruit of faithfulness

Most Bible versions translate the Greek word *pistis* in Galatians 5:22 as "faithfulness," although it is usually translated as "faith" in other verses. It seems clear that faithfulness is primarily what Paul was referring to in this verse, but faithfulness is closely related to faith. We could say that faithfulness is being *full of faith*, which enables a person to persevere and remain steadfast, loyal, trustworthy, devoted and true to his commitments.

When a person is baptized, he is entering a covenant with God and promising to remain faithful to God. "He who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22). In a wedding, both the bride and groom promise to remain faithful to each other throughout their lives.

The gift of the Holy Spirit within us greatly strengthens a person's ability to stay faithful to all his commitments, especially his commitment to God.

All those who have committed their lives to Jesus Christ hope to hear these words when resurrected to eternal life: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:21-23).

The fruit of meekness and gentleness

The next Greek word in Galatians 5:22-23 is *praotes*. Older English Bibles usually translate it as "meekness," but since that word has drifted from popular usage, newer Bibles usually translate it as "gentleness."

People often misunderstand meekness, partly because it rhymes with weakness, but true meekness is a *great strength*. It's an ideal word for describing elephants because a tamed elephant is extremely strong yet also very careful and gentle.

Be aware that gentleness refers mostly to *actions*, whereas meekness refers to *attitude as well as actions*. Meekness produces gentleness.

Consider the great contrast between meekness and some of the "works of the flesh," which Paul lists as "hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions" (Galatians 5:19-21).

God highly prizes meekness and gentleness. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

The fruit of self-control

For the last virtue in Galatians 5:23, some older Bible versions say "temperance," but that word has changed somewhat in meaning over time and has come to mean *moderation*.

"Self-control" is a good translation. It includes self-discipline. A true disciple must be self-disciplined. Many people overeat, overdrink, over-spend and overindulge in lots of things. It's fitting that self-control is the last in the list as that implies that we need self-control to

maintain all the other virtues in this list.

Of all the things we have to govern in this life, *self* is often the biggest challenge. We must rule over our appetites, desires, impulses and reactions. *Many* people are ruled by their *feelings* and can't control their anger. In fact, one measure of maturity is *emotional control*.

We must wage spiritual warfare, "bringing *every thought into captivity* to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

However, self-control is not human willpower. Ultimately, effective self-control is not *self alone* controlling self. Shortly before Jesus returned to heaven, He told His disciples that they would soon receive "power from on high" (Luke 24:49). That power from God is what we must have to rule over self! And it requires yielding to God working in us.

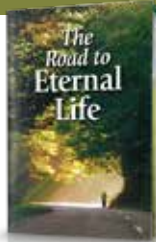
Concluding words

To conquer the "works of the flesh" and produce the fruit of the Spirit, we need the gift of God's Holy Spirit dwelling within us. (See also "Other Fruit of the Holy Spirit" on page 32.)

In the next chapter of Galatians is this inspiring message from Paul: "If you live to satisfy your sinful self, the harvest you will get from that will be eternal death. But if you live to please the Spirit, your harvest from the Spirit will be eternal life. We must not get tired of doing good. We will receive our harvest of eternal life at the right time. We must not give up" (6:8-9, Easy-to-Read Version).

So, how do you measure up? Does your life show the fruit of God's Spirit? If not, what's stopping you from doing what God says you should do to receive the great blessings that come with that? **BT**

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The Overwhelming Force

The nations of the world seek power to resist real or potential enemies. But what about you? When you have God and His indisputable power on your side, you can be fully confident He will see you through every trouble you face.

by John LaBissoniere

In modern history the concept of “overwhelming force” has been applied to warfare. For instance, during World War II the German word *blitzkrieg*, meaning “lightning war,” was a coordinated rapid and concentrated attack by tanks, infantry, artillery and aircraft creating an *overwhelming* military superiority.

More recently, the “Powell Doctrine,” a media-created term named after U.S. Gen. Colin Powell, emphasized “*overwhelming* strike capabilities” by the deployment of large quantities of armor, aircraft and ground forces against Iraqi troops in Kuwait during the 1990–91 Persian Gulf War. Similarly, in a possible future conflict with the Lebanese terrorist organization Hezbollah, the Israeli military plans to counter it by launching what it calls a “massive and *overwhelming*” force.

A parallel concept to overwhelming force from a *defensive* perspective is illustrated by the phrase “peace through strength.” This means that for a nation to maintain peace and discourage military assault, it must be stronger than any potential adversary. To illustrate, during a speech on March 23, 1983, U.S. President Ronald Reagan said, “We maintain the peace through our strength; weakness only invites aggression.”

While these strategies apply to potential or real *physical* conflict between nations, they are *also* relevant in a *divine* sense to individual Christians, since Scripture explains that we are engaged in *spiritual* warfare (2 Corinthians 10:4). And there is an “overwhelming force” available to help *you* handle every trial and trouble you face. Plus, there is a way you can always experience *spiritual* “peace through strength”!

“You shall receive power”

The biblical festival of Pentecost commemorates the spectacular day when God first imparted His Holy Spirit to live within a group of people in the New Testament period. This great event is recorded in Acts 2, where 120 disciples were gathered together in Jerusalem to observe this critical annual Holy Day. Shortly thereafter, due to the apostles’ inspired preaching, more than 3,000 people were converted, baptized

and received the Holy Spirit (verse 41). Acts 4:33 exclaims, “And *with great power* the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all” (emphasis added throughout).

This “great power”—denoting God’s gift of the Holy Spirit—infused the apostles and other disciples with tremendous spiritual dynamism and courage (Acts 1:8). The word “*power*,” which is translated from the Greek word *dunamis* (the Greek word from which we get “dynamite” and “dynamo,” indicating great power), means “miraculous strength and might.” It is synonymous with the English word “*force*,” which the dictionary describes as “energy, power and intensity.”

So, the “great power” the disciples demonstrated after God gave them His Spirit proved to be compelling, forceful and, yes, *overwhelming*. Indeed, this Spirit is the *essence* of God’s very own indisputable, vibrant and powerful divine nature!

God’s supremacy and unconditional strength is made plain throughout the Bible. The apostle Paul described Jesus Christ as “far above all principality and *power and might and dominion*, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come” (Ephesians 1:21).

Also, the prophet Jeremiah wrote about God’s tremendous authority and strength by stating, “No one is like you, LORD; you are great, and your name is *mighty in power*” (Jeremiah 10:6, New International Version). Likewise, the author of Psalm 147 said, “Great is our Lord, and *mighty in power*; His understanding is infinite” (verse 5).

The embodiment of God’s love

While the Holy Spirit is unquestionably God’s overwhelming force, it’s *significantly more*. It is the definitive embodiment of His flawless love, integrity, character and righteousness (see “The Holy Spirit: A Gift of God’s Grace,” beginning on page 26). Indeed, the Eternal Creator is utterly pure, completely virtuous, fully knowledgeable, entirely wise and limitless in intelligence. To be precise, He is *unequivocally perfect* in every way (Psalm 18:30).

Looking further into Scripture we see how God, *through His*

Holy Spirit, has manifested His overwhelming power as well as His *personal, caring nature*—most especially toward those who deeply love, honor and obey Him. For example Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, said, “For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name” (Luke 1:49).

In addition, notice how the prophet Jeremiah described the astounding umbrella of divine protection and encouragement that God *personally provided* to him: “But the Lord *is with me* as a mighty, awesome One. Therefore my persecutors will stumble, and will not prevail” (Jeremiah 20:11).

Furthermore, the writer of Psalm 94, attributed in the Greek Septuagint to King David, expressed how God was not only rock-solid but completely reliable toward him personally: “But the LORD has become *my fortress*, and *my God the rock in whom I take refuge*” (verse 22, New International Version).

As God fully supported and sustained these and other servants through the overwhelming force of His Spirit, He promises to do *the same for you* if you love Him and are striving to do His will! God’s caring and generous guarantee of assistance He offers to you is summed up in this reassuring passage: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). You can *personally* take immense solace in knowing that when God is on your side, no power on earth—even one that *seems* overwhelming—can spiritually subjugate or destroy you.

Even so, because of the troubles and pressures experienced in daily life, it may *appear* at times that God is not there for you. The psalmists such as David felt this way at times in facing intense stress and persecution. Psalm 94 asks, “LORD, how long will the wicked, how long will the wicked triumph?” (verse 3). But the same psalm answers this question a few verses later by stating, “For the LORD *will not* cast off His

Your staff, they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4).

When considering this magnificent guarantee, can you see why we should all strive to overcome our anxious thoughts and worries? (See Luke 12:29 and Philippians 4:6.) Without a doubt, you can depend unconditionally on God who said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

In knowing this, the apostle Paul persistently remained emphatically optimistic even while contending with arduous trials and hardships. And *you* can do the same!

In addition you can, like Paul, be a loyal and zealous disciple of Jesus Christ, focusing your mind and efforts on loving and obeying God while seeking His Kingdom and righteousness (Matthew 6:33). Paul summarized this vital conviction when he wrote, “For in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). He personally accomplished this by relying *not* on his own paltry strength, but on the *overwhelming* force and the perfect guidance of his Creator.

Paul also wrote: “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Paul and the apostle Peter knew, however, that patience and endurance were absolute requirements when undergoing trials. Peter wrote, “Therefore humble yourselves under the *mighty hand of God*, that He may exalt you *in due time*” (1 Peter 5:6). So, it’s not by *your* doing and not within *your* time frame, but *God’s*.

Finally, the promises and rewards that God holds out to you are astounding! You can have the overwhelming force of God’s Spirit with you at all times and enjoy peace through strength because you know that God will help you in every

battle you face (Philippians 4:6-7). Plus, Jesus clearly identified what’s in store for you as one of His faithful disciples in His

soon-coming Kingdom: “And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give *power over the nations*” (Revelation 2:26).

Therefore, stand firm in always maintaining your focus on the great goal of the Kingdom of God, and don’t allow anything to dissuade you from obtaining it. You can know with *absolute certainty* that God is fully willing and able “to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the *power that works in us*” (Ephesians 3:20).

And what is that power? It’s the *overwhelming force* of God’s Holy Spirit! **BT**

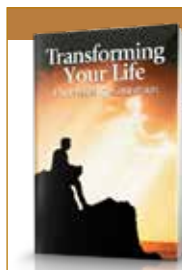
While God fully supported His servants through the **overwhelming force of His Spirit**, He promises to do the same for you if you love Him and are striving to do His will!

people, *nor will He forsake* His inheritance” (verse 14).

The apostle Paul made a similar declaration in stating: “What will separate us from the love Christ has for us? Can trouble, distress, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, or violent death separate us from his love? As Scripture says: ‘We are being killed all day long because of you. We are thought of as sheep to be slaughtered.’ The one who loves us gives us an *overwhelming victory* in all these difficulties” (Romans 8:35-37, God’s Word Translation).

Anxious thought is unnecessary

What should this outstanding passage mean to you? It shows that you need not be burdened by negative thoughts and feelings or overpowered by *any* trial or trouble. This is absolutely true because you have the incontestable power of God and His deep love on your side. You can fully count on His unwavering commitment to always be with you and see you through every distress or difficulty so that you can ultimately obtain eternal life in His divine family. As David wrote, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for *You are with me*; Your rod and



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“The Words That I Speak to You”

More important than having the Bible at hand is having its life-giving words ingrained in our hearts—trusting and following their guidance on our journey through life.

by Robin Webber

A young man packing his suitcase for a journey said to a friend: “I’ve nearly finished packing. All that’s left is putting in a guidebook, a lamp, a microscope, a volume of fine poetry, a few biographies, a package of old letters, a songbook, a sword, a hammer and a few tools.”

“But you can’t get all that in your suitcase,” replied his friend.

The young man smiled and said: “Yes, I can. It’s right here.” He placed his Bible in the suitcase and zipped it shut.

This story speaks volumes about what the young man valued and why he placed so much stock in God’s Word. He saw Scripture as all-encompassing in guiding him in every circumstance that might arise on his journey.

A series of TV commercials for a credit card asks the question, “What’s in *your* wallet?” Let’s go a step further and ask not merely what’s in your wallet, or your suitcase, but what is packed away in your heart? Allow me to be blunt: How we personally unpack the relevance of the opening story here and pack our hearts moving forward is crucial towards heeding Jesus Christ’s invitation of “Follow Me.”

The young man with the suitcase was truly onto something, and his actions mirror what Jesus said in proclaiming, “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). Much of Jesus’ audience that day, upset at other difficult things He said, abandoned Him (verses 60, 66). As they left, He turned to His 12 closest disciples and asked a question that demanded a choice: “Do you also want to go away?” (verse 67).

Peter spoke up: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (verse 68). Peter was echoing the sentiments of the young man packing his suitcase: *It’s all right here, having everything needed for what lies ahead.*

Perhaps it’s time to repack!

Now regarding ourselves, we may be sincere in making room for God’s holy Word in our life, but let’s be real for a moment and admit that the prevalent culture is incredibly

demanding and consumes much of our personal lives.

Technology and social media offer a world of boundless information at our fingertips, tickling our curiosity. There are more people knocking on the doors of our minds and peering through the windows of our lives in one day than our forebears could ever have imagined.

It’s doing something to us! We exist in the most connected yet *disconnected* society ever achieved by human design. Perhaps it’s time for us to repack, correctly this time, being mindful of who is on the journey with us—our Maker and the One we ascribe as our Master!

Now why is it so vital to keep Holy Scripture in the forefront of our desire? Consider the request-laden words of Christ regarding those who would pursue His invitation of “Follow Me” in His prayer to God the Father in John 17:15-17: “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. *Your word is truth*” (emphasis added throughout).

Jesus noted that while His followers would remain here below in the 24/7 setting of this world, they would be set apart by fortifying themselves with the words of God in Scripture.

In making the ongoing choice of one 24/7 world over another that seemingly fills up our time and attention, let’s consider the example of Jesus Himself, who continually existed in His Heavenly Father’s 24/7 world.

In responding to challenges He would say, “It is written . . .” or “Have you never read in the Scriptures . . . ?” He knew well the words of Job 23:12: “I have not departed from the commandments of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.”

His focus on what sustains real life, which enabled Him to withstand temptations in the wilderness, is expressed in His quoting of Deuteronomy 8:3 in Matthew 4:4: “But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”’”

In the true test of survival, He was connected to a different 24/7 world. After all, bread feeds the body, but one’s

fundamental existence is sustained by “words that . . . are life” (John 6:63). We can eat our fill of bread but still be starving in the most important sense.

Putting first things first

Now, please, I’m not asking you to sell your car or throw out your smartphone, but I am encouraging you to consider your priorities and put first things first. Jesus plainly told those who already believed in Him that to be His true disciples, heeding His invitation of “Follow Me,” they had to “abide” in His word (John 8:31).

The word “abide” here is translated from the Greek word *meno*, which means to “stay, remain, dwell deeply.” It’s not enough to have a Bible packed away in some proverbial suitcase or real one. You must regularly open it and allow God to mold you through its words. You can have the best of intentions, but let’s be real—a *closed* Bible might as well be a *lost* Bible. You might as well not have gone through the effort to pack it!

What is Jesus telling us in John 8:31? Discipleship begins with belief!

Where does such belief or faith spring from? God’s own Word tells us in Romans 10:17, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Yet let’s go deeper. This isn’t simply addressing our auditory system, but “the words that I speak to you” are designed to pierce the inward recesses of our heart, the factory of our motivations, leading us to turn to God in obedience and reliance.

Hebrews 4:12 says God’s Word is “living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” When we

Bible in his suitcase knowing it possessed everything that would be required for success on his travels.

Again, leading the way in this was Jesus, the ultimate sojourner, who fully trusted the Word of God that He read, internalized, believed and cried out as His last words in a loud and knowing statement: “Into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23:46; see Psalm 31:5). God’s Word was packed in tight and reached for in this moment of great need, giving assurance that He had successfully “finished” the journey set before Him to be our Savior (see John 19:30).

Perhaps the words of our Heavenly Father and Christ are speaking to you right now through this column. My intent is quite simple: To help you consider that what we value the most we’ll make space for and do. How much do we treasure the invitation to a new way of being human, a new way of being a man and woman, the call to a new spiritual community called the Body of Christ with a sense of purpose that moves far beyond the next distracting text message or Twitter feed?

Such a privilege is ours!

Have you ever considered that you have the divinely granted privilege to directly hear from God’s throne room? Consider that you are granted “the wisdom that is from above” (James 3:17) from *the living Word of God*, Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-3), who gave us the *spoken words of God* (John 6:63; 12:50; Hebrews 1:1-3), now set before us as *the written Word of God* in our own tongue.

Yes, written at the expense of our Savior’s life and the lives of brave men like Bible translator William Tyndale, who was strangled and burnt at the stake for giving the English people the “wisdom of God” in their own tongue. His last words at the stake were “Lord! Open the King of England’s eyes.”

Hopefully, this column has opened *your* eyes to the value of being sure you pack more than a Bible in a suitcase, but pack it away in your heart to prepare for the bumps, curves, dips and mountaintop experiences that

will come along the way on the greatest journey offered to humanity to follow Jesus Christ into the ultimate Kingdom experience.

As we do, let’s remember that there’s a difference between walking with Christ and allowing Him to walk inside us, which is our Heavenly Father’s desire from the beginning. What value is our Father’s plan of development for us from the *living Word* to the *spoken word* to the *written Word* if the final step is never taken to pack it away in our hearts?

This ultimate step is perhaps given voice best in Psalm 119:10-11: “With my whole heart I have sought you; oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! *Your word have I hidden in my heart*, that I might not sin against You.”

What is the psalmist saying here? That God’s words are to become so “hidden” or so deeply embedded that nothing—whether man, Satan or homegrown worry—can ultimately tamper with God’s loving purpose for you. Are you ready to pack or repack starting right now? Now is the time, not tomorrow, to open your heart, open your Bible, and internalize, as Christ said, “the words that I speak to you”! **BT**

There’s a difference between walking with Christ and allowing Him to walk inside us, which is our Heavenly Father’s desire from the beginning.

choose in faith to “abide” in the Scriptures, God speaks to us through them, molding and probing our entire being inside and out in deep care for us.

Listening well, developing trust

Okay, you’re ready to pack or repack, but let’s stop a moment and consider a nagging reality before proceeding.

How often have you noticed that what you read and what you end up doing are at times disconnected? Much of our study and reading is like the boy who read aloud in school. The teacher asked him to tell what he was reading. The young boy replied, “I don’t know—I wasn’t listening”!

Reading the Word of God was always intended to be directly listening to God. When we not only “hear” but “listen” to God’s Word, we begin to “abide” in the framework of His will rather than ours, and this seamlessly segues into the next aspect of properly responding to “the words that I speak to you.”

The moment you accept the words of God, such belief turns to trust—so much so that you make no decision without first considering His words. It’s like the young man placing his



Responses to March-April issue

I wanted to compliment your magazine on the March-April 2019 issue. The article "The Exodus Plagues: Judgment on Egypt's Gods" was so informative and beautifully laid out.

From the Internet

The last two issues of *Beyond Today* magazine had some of the best articles I have read! Well written and very educational. I also just watched the *Beyond Today* TV episode "Will I Go To Heaven?" on YouTube. Best video I've ever seen on the subject. I just wish family and friends could see the real truth, and stop believing what they have been taught in today's churches. Thanks so much for the magazine and the great videos. I'm continuing to learn more about the truth of the Bible every day!

From the Internet

Excellent piece "What Would Jesus Do?" Clear, concise, and gets to the important point quickly: "Follow Christ." This issue was one of the best ever. Inspiring. Thank you.

From the Internet

Spiritually uplifting magazines and TV program

Thank you so very much for your awesome ministry! It is so very refreshing to hear the true gospel message. And your magazines are truly spiritually uplifting. Thank you again. God bless you.

Subscriber in Saskatchewan, Canada

I would like to send you a big *thank you* for all the literature I have received and the 12-lesson Bible Study Course. I just completed all but two that I think were lost in the mail. I have all the booklets you are offering and they are in my tall bookcase. Thank you very much! I continue to study and watch the TV program *Beyond Today*.

From the Internet

I watch your program on TV all the time. We love listening to the true word of God, and to those who teach it. God bless you all and the volunteers. Thank you.

From the Internet

Thank you for your works of proclaiming this good news of God's Kingdom to be established soon on this earth. It's needed urgently,

to help give hope to this suffering world. God bless you all.

From the Internet

Cancellation request

I see numerous so-called "Christians" inventing ways to not observe the most important day of Christianity, Easter Sunday. Making it look their way allows them to sit at home more often and dodge their Christian duty. Cancel my subscription.

Former subscriber

We're sorry to see you go. We advocate for a robust, active Christian faith that transforms an entire person from the inside out into a new creation in Jesus Christ. We aim to make our teachings as biblical as possible, which is why we proclaim the need to observe the biblical Sabbath every single week as well as the annual biblical festivals, these very same occasions having been observed by Jesus and the New Testament Church. As explained in our last issue, Passover is rich with meaning for Christians today. But the celebration known as Easter is nowhere to be found in the Bible, and in fact has very troubling origins. We explore those origins and the meaning of Passover in our Bible study guide Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?, which you can download or request for free at ucg.org/booklets.

Persuaded to find a church

I would like to be connected to Passover celebrations in my local area. We would also like to be connected to churches in this area. Thank you.

From the Internet

We have been seeking a church close to our home. Most of our learning comes from online, but we miss the fellowship. What are the requirements to be part of your organization? We are looking for a church that follows what you outlined as your beliefs.

From the Internet

We have congregations all over the world. Find the one closest you at ucg.org/congregations. We hope to hear from you!

Donations to help spread publications

This is to express my humble gratitude for sending regular magazines, newsletters, booklets and Bible study materials. They have helped me in my spiritual life, and I share them in my church. I am sending a small offering. My prayers are always there for your ministry.

Subscriber in Canada

Thank you for *Beyond Today* magazine and the study guides you have been sending me. My husband and I have obtained a greater knowledge of the Bible by reading these publications. We are including another donation to help with the cost. Please keep up the good work. God is blessing you beyond measure.

Subscriber in Canada

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Are you on Facebook? If so, visit our *Beyond Today* magazine page. See what other readers are saying. Find links to interesting articles and Web commentaries. Become a *Beyond Today* magazine Facebook fan!

I really enjoy Beyond Today magazine. It gives a good understanding of the Bible and highlights information not given in mainstream Christian faiths. I highly recommend this magazine to all.

—K.T., Facebook fan



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