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Extending the

Hand of Fellowship

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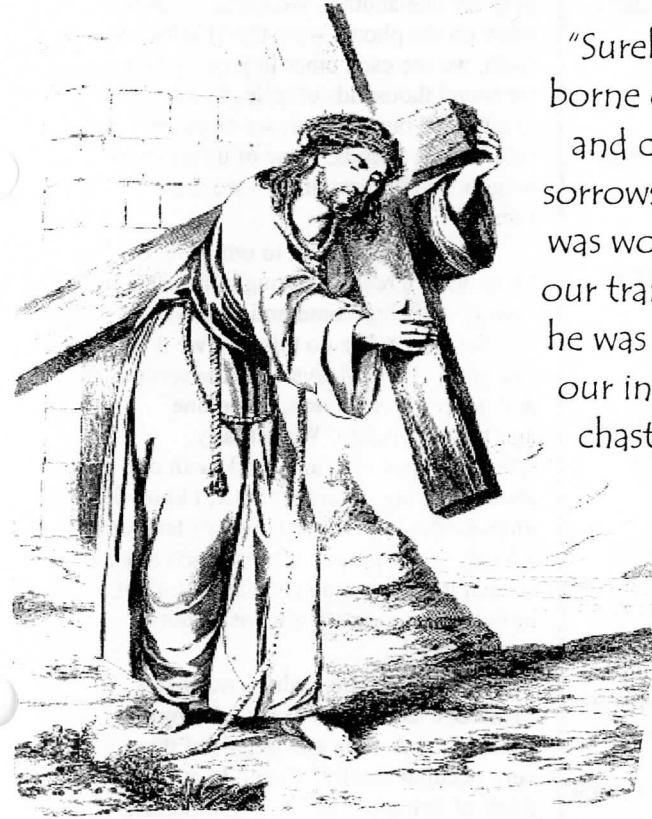
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"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:.... But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Isaiah 53:4-5

What's Inside



APRIL

From The Editor:

The people of the Church of Christ are definitely a peculiar people. We experience this peculiarity every day. We are each other's support, we constantly pray for one another, we speak to each other on the phone, we e-mail back-and-forth, we see each other in grocery stores, we travel thousands of miles to minister to and visit one another, we are each other's best friends, some of us are even neighbors, and best of all—we are a family.

It's hard to explain to others all the blessings we receive through our Church Family. God has commanded us to meet together often. We do this, but we don't just go to church, leave after the service and generally not speak or see one another in between. We actually fellowship and play and work with one another during the week. Now, I know it's more difficult for those who live far from a local, but just think of how much more special it is when you can call or e-mail, or even take a vacation to visit your church family.

It doesn't matter where we live—Mexico, Canada, Honduras, Philippines, Africa, U.S.A.—we are all part of this very peculiar family. I would hate to think of living life in any other manner.

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"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;"

1 Pet 2:9

Crucified With Christ

Apostle Joel Yates

Each day we are called to remember the love of God toward all mankind in sending His only Son to give us life. We are reminded of this love every time we read the popular reading found in John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"*. I have often wondered how hard it must have been for God to give up His Son for the lives of others and how difficult it must have been for Christ to willingly give up His life for us.

I frequently think about the scene depicted in scripture of Christ at the garden of Gethsemane, recorded in Matthew and Luke. Christ, knowing He was the infinite sacrifice, knew what would be required of Him all of the way to the crucifixion. Yet as a man He went against His nature to give in to God's will. In Matthew, He prayed three times to let this cup of fate pass from Him, yet He was praying for strength to do His Father's will. In Luke we are told an angel was sent to strengthen Him for this task.

Matthew 26:36-44, *"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it,*

thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words."

Luke 22:41-44, "And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Hebrews 5:7-9, speaking of Christ, says, *"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;"*

These verses give a different picture—one I am better able to relate to. I can only imagine how fearful death on the cross must have been. I can understand looking for a way out, yet knowing there is no other way. This brings me to what God has required of us in His word.

Matthew 16:24-26. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Christ was able to see the "big picture" as He approached His Father in the garden, and He needed strength and courage to accomplish the task. We know we are commanded to follow in the footsteps of our Lord. We are told here that if we want to follow the Lord we must deny ourselves and take up our cross, keeping in mind the "big picture." Living for ourselves means losing our souls, and our soul is more important than gaining the whole world. We know the world has much to offer us as

Christians, and often we find ourselves distracted with its cares, sins and pleasures. Christ, when explaining the parable of the sower, spoke of the seed which fell among the thorns and warned us of the power of the world to choke out the Gospel from the lives of those who become accepting of its ways.

Luke 8:14, "And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection." God, knowing that the nature of man is to follow after the appetites of the flesh, showed to us the cost of following Him. We can see it in the example of Christ, who was able to put to death the weakness of the flesh, as terrifying as it was, and do the will of His Father. We also are directed in scripture to present our bodies a living death (sacrifice), not conforming to worldly desires in order to follow the will of God.

Romans 12:1-2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Galatians 5:24-25, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

I believe most of us would agree that in putting to death the desires of our flesh from affections and lusts, we find that living in the world is a difficult and frightening task. It requires total changes in lifestyles, giving up pleasurable activities and replacing the things we have given up by denying ourselves. I find myself from time-to-time wanting to stay in the garden and not walk the difficult road. Yet, I realize there is no other way to find the true treasure and receive the blessed reward promised to each of us that endure. Christ Himself showed us the agony of choosing to give up His life. He sought strength from His Father, which was granted, and it strengthened Him to walk the road to Calvary. In like manner, we are promised help from the Lord when we strive and labor to conform to God's ways, as recorded

in Matthew 11:28-30.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

This brings us back to the question asked of us by Christ so long ago: *What will you give in exchange for your soul?* I think most would agree we would not exchange anything for our salvation, but we each know others who have felt the same way and yet have gone astray. I find a great example in scripture about someone who had all the world had to offer and yet considered the great reward promised of God to be of greater value.

Hebrews 11:24-26, *"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."*

Moses had faith in God's promises to His people about an inheritance greater than any earthly treasure room at any time in history. It says He had respect to the reward promised of God. He looked away from everything else and intently regarded the reward promised of God. What do we really believe, and where does our treasure lie? This Godly man gave up a kingdom and all the world could give anyone at that time in history for the reward of God and demonstrated a wonderful example of sacrifice, suffering, and self-denial. We live in a day when we must be called to a greater faith in the promises of God to His people, and a day of strength and courage shown by the people of God to come out of the world and be separate from it. We must keep our focus on God's great reward and rely on His strength to help us carry our cross. ■

Meredyth's Basket

By Meredyth Malone



To Realize...

To realize the value of one year:
ask a student who has failed a final exam.

To realize the value of nine months:
ask a mother who gave birth to a still born.

To realize the value of one month:
ask a mother who has given birth to a premature baby.

To realize the value of one week:
ask an editor of a weekly newspaper.

To realize the value of one minute:
ask the person who has missed the train, boat or plane.

To realize the value of one second:
ask a person who has survived an accident.

To realize the value of one millisecond:
ask the person who has won an Olympic gold medal.

Time waits for no one, treasure every moment you have.
You will treasure it even more when you can
share it with someone special.

To realize the value of a friend: lose one.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST



Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. Matt 3:13

But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Matt 19:14



And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. Matt 14:29



And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: Luke 22:14-15



And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. Mark 14:36



And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father,

into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. Luke 23:46



Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. John 20:16

“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” John 14: 17-20



reported by Rhea Housknecht

The early part of March, our Sister Kim Yates, made a visit to the emergency room with severe abdominal pain. After several days in the hospital, many tests and exploratory surgery, the doctors concluded that she had a cyst on her fallopian tube. They removed it and she is now recovering very well at home. Your prayers for her were heard and God has blessed her.

On March 4, a warm and sunny day, the Phoenix local had a yard sale. The “merchandise” was donated by the local members making the yard, the entryway and the kitchen overflow. People from all around the neighborhoods, including some of the members, showed up to purchase and take home their *new* treasures. It was a very successful day thanks to the organization skills of Liza Hedrick who headed up the day. All monies collected were donated to aid our Brothers and Sisters in Africa during the terrible drought they have experienced. Thanks Liza and all of the ladies and gentlemen who made this a success!



Men's Retreat

The March 4th weekend may have been warm and sunny, but the next weekend (10th & 11th) was cold and rainy. We were finally blessed with the much needed rain here in the Valley of the Sun. However, the men experienced quite a different type of rain at their annual Men's Retreat up north in Camp Verde. They were snowed upon! How beautiful it must have been to see the snow falling. I'm not sure what the men do up there, but I know it was well spent in fellowship and fun.

Around March 8th Elder Andy Brown, Teacher Andrew Brown and Sisters Michelle Ely and Erica Moser traveled to

India. Elder Dennis and Betsy Trudgen, and daughter Amanda, who live in New Delhi, had made contact with several people who were interested in learning about the Gospel. So this gave the little group of Church of Christ members the opportunity to hold services and teach while there.



William Russell Oar was born at 8:33 a.m. on March 15. He weighed in at 7.9 lbs. and 20" long. William was born prematurely to Tim and Melissa. The efforts of the doctors and nurses in trying to stop him from coming too soon were in vain because William was ready to see his parents. Melissa had spent several days in the hospital so that little William's lungs could develop before he came into this world. He had to stay in ICU a day or two extra as his blood sugar was a little low, but it is now under control and the new little family are doing well at home.

On Wednesday, March 22, Apostle Joel Yates led Daniel Brech into the waters of baptism. Before making his commitment to God, Daniel, who was visiting from Missouri, gave a brief testimony. It was a beautiful baptism, as are all baptisms. I know his daughter, Dolly Brech, was especially thankful for this special day.

"And the first--fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith, unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins; and the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart, cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God." Moroni 8:29

And so ends this month's news. God bless you all!

Your sister in Christ,

Rhea



He Took My Lickin' For Me

Author: Retold by Timothy Robinson
and illustrated by Ben Sowards

Ages: 5 to 12 (although adults could benefit too!)

This is an old folktale about a new teacher in a one-room schoolhouse who had an innovative idea on how to keep order.

Instead of the teacher giving the rules, she decided to let the children make the rules. "Now a rule is not much good without a punishment attached," said the teacher. "What shall we do if someone breaks the rules?"

You'll have to read it to find out what takes place. This folktale is not simply about obeying the rules in school. It is a moving parable about the most merciful act we know anything about--the Savior's infinite sacrifice in behalf of the human race.

This is one of those books that inspires and helps us to remember that we are really, no matter what our age, children of our Heavenly Father. I'm always on the lookout for children's books with object lessons or moral stories that assist children to come to the right conclusion without being told the obvious.

Initially, I picked it up because of the beautiful artwork—it depicts two boys hugging. It reminded me of my own two sons and of an incident that happened in our home years ago. When my son, Andrew, was five or six he willfully rebelled against one of our home rules. Andrew knew he had punishment coming, but I offered to take it for him after I explained the gravity of sin and how it does not just hurt you but affects those around you as well. He immediately burst into tears not wanting me to be punished for what he had done. Years later his younger brother, Nathan, had the same experience, but this time Andrew stepped in to take the punishment for him. Nathan was more than willing until Andrew gave him the same talk I had given Andrew five years earlier. A vital lesson learned! ■