

(i) Scripture.

Each shall bear his own burden.

Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teaches in all good things.

Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatever a man shall sow, that also shall he reap.

For he that sows to his own flesh, shall reap corruption from the flesh; but he that sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life: but let us not lose heart in doing good; for in due time, if we do not faint, we shall reap.

So then, as we have occasion, let us do good towards all, and specially towards those of the household of faith.

Galatians 6. 5-10 (*J. N. Darby's New Translation*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Jesus Christ, the son of David' (Matt. 1. 1).

'The very first word about Him recorded in the first of the four Gospels deals with His descent from the royal line in Israel; and thus the written record is named "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham".

'To emphasize His royal character, Matthew reverses the historical sequence, putting David before Abraham'.

(Alva J. McClain, *'The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God'*, page 268.)

The eight 'witnesses' to the Lord Jesus in the Gospel according to John.

(i) John the Baptist: 'There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a *witness*, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear *witness* about the light' (John 1. 6-8; cf. John 1. 19; 5. 33).

(ii) The works which He did: 'The works that the Father has given me to accomplish ... bear *witness* about me that the Father has sent me' (John 5. 36; cf. John 10. 25, 37-38).

(iii) The Father: 'The Father who sent me has Himself borne *witness* about me' (John 5. 37; cf. John 5. 32; 8. 18).

(iv) The Scriptures: 'You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear *witness* about me' (John 5. 39).

(v) Himself: 'Even if I do bear *witness* about myself, my testimony is true ... I am the one who bears *witness* about myself' (John 8. 14, 18; cf. John 5. 31).

(vi) The Holy Spirit: 'When the Helper ('Comforter', 'Counsellor') comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear *witness* about me' (John 15. 26).

(vii) The apostles: 'You also will bear *witness*, because you have been with me from the beginning' (John 15. 27; cf. 1 John 1. 1-2).

(viii) The writer of the Gospel: 'This is the disciple who is bearing *witness* about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his *witness* is true' (John 21. 24; cf. John 19. 35).

'Through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life' (Rom. 5. 18).

'It was not His keeping of the Law that constituted a righteousness that can be reckoned to us, nor can we thereby be viewed as though we had kept the Law. It was on the Cross that He took our place as under the curse of the Law, being made sin for us ... It is necessary, then, to bear in mind that we are justified, not by the righteous life of Christ, but by the "blood of Christ" (Rom. 5. 9); that is to say, by His expiatory sacrifice for our sins.

'The accurate rendering of Romans 5. 18 is of very great importance: "So then as through one man's trespass judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life" ...

'As Adam's act of disobedience constituted all his descendants to be sinners, so Christ's one act of righteousness in His death on the Cross brought justification to all who believe on Him. It was not the righteousness of His life which effected this (though that was indeed preliminary to His death, proving Him to be alone adequate for the work of atonement) but the righteousness of His death.

'So, in the next verse, "As through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One shall the many be made righteous". Here again, the context shows

that the culminating act of obedience in His death is in view (compare Phil. 2. 8); the death of Christ thus regarded is set in contrast to the one act of disobedience on the part of Adam’.

(W. E. Vine, ‘*The Gospel of the Bible*’, pages 93-94.)

Three ‘finished’ works according to Scripture.

(i) ‘Moses finished the work’ (Exod. 40. 33).

(ii) ‘Hiram finished the work’ (2 Chron. 4. 11).

(iii) ‘Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, “Father ... I have finished the work’, John 17. 4.

‘Down’.

The one who refused steadfastly to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple (Matt. 4. 6) or to come down from His cross (Matt. 26. 40, 42), willingly laid down His life for us (John 10. 15) and then sat down triumphantly at God’s right hand (Heb. 10. 12).

The New Testament and the return of the Lord Jesus.

‘Twenty-three of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament state that He is coming. One out of every thirty verses in the New Testament either speaks directly of His coming or of the end times surrounding His coming. For every biblical reference to Jesus’ first coming there are eight that point to His return. Clearly the biblical writers did not want their readers to miss this truth’.

(M. Howell, ‘*Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians (Christ-Centred Exposition)*’, page 118.)

The return of the Lord Jesus.

We should be prepared as though Christ were *coming this very moment* and prepare as though He *may not come for yet another millennium*.

(Hank Hanegraaff, Foreword to ‘99 Reasons Why No One Knows When Christ Will Return’ by B. J. Oropeza, page 9.)

Three impossible things:

(i) ‘It is impossible for God to lie’ (Heb. 6. 18).

(ii) ‘It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins’ (Heb. 10. 4).

(iii) ‘God raised Him from death, setting Him free from its power, because it was impossible that death should hold Him prisoner’ (Acts 2. 24 {*Good News Bible*}).

‘Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatever a man shall sow, that also shall he reap’ (Gal. 6. 7).

‘There’s a law at work. Not a law like, “You must do this!” More like how gravity is a law of nature. It’s how the world works. You don’t have to like it. You don’t have to agree with it ... If you jump, you will go up. Then gravity will bring you down. We say people get “tripped up”, but that’s not true. People always trip down. Gravity is a natural law ...

‘When you put a certain type of seed in the ground, you get a harvest that corresponds with the seed you planted. True in agriculture. True in life. If you plant good habits, you’ll get good outcomes. If you plant bad habits, don’t be deceived and expect good outcomes

‘If you don’t like what you’re reaping, change what you’re sowing. If you don’t like the harvest, change the seed’.

(Craig Groeschel, ‘*The Power to Change*’, pages 175-176.)

‘From a mother’s womb’/‘from birth’: five men in the New Testament.

(i) John the Baptist: ‘He shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb’ (John 1. 15).

(ii) An unnamed blind man in Jerusalem: ‘As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth’ (John 9. 1).

(iii) An unnamed lame man in Jerusalem: A man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate’ (Acts 3. 2).

(iv) An unnamed lame man at Lystra in Asia Minor: ‘At Lystra there sat a man, impotent in his feet, being lame from his mother’s womb, who had never walked’ (Acts 14. 8).

(v) The apostle Paul: ‘It pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by His grace’ (Gal. 1. 15; cf. Jer. 1. 5).

‘When Joshua was by Jericho ... behold, there stood a man over against him with a drawn sword in his hand’ (Joshua 5. 13).

‘A second reason for Joshua’s passive acceptance of the messenger occurs in the description “with a drawn sword”.

'This expression appears in two other places in the Bible, with reference (i) to the angel who stops Balaam and his donkey (Num. 22. 23) and (ii) to the angel who stands ready to execute punishment for David's census (1 Chron. 21. 16).

'A figure with a drawn sword is one not to be toyed with'.

(Richard S. Hess, 'Joshua: Tyndale Old Testament Commentary', page 126.)

'The prayer of faith' (James 5. 15).

The following (possibly apocryphal) stories are told about the actions of two young girls:

1. 'As the drought continued for what seemed an eternity, a small community of mid-west farmers was in a quandary as to what to do. The rain was important not only in order to keep the crops healthy, but also to sustain the townspeople's very way of living.

'As the problem became more urgent, the local church felt it was time to get involved and planned a prayer meeting in order to ask for rain ... The pastor soon arrived and ... as he began asking for quiet, he noticed an eleven-year-old girl sitting in the front row.

'She was beaming with excitement and lying next to her was her bright red umbrella, poised for use. The beauty and innocence of this sight made the pastor smile to himself as he realized the faith this young girl possessed that the rest of the people in the room seemed to have forgotten.

For the rest had come just to pray for rain ... she had come to see God answer'.

(Tania Gray, 'The Red Umbrella', accessed at <https://strengthforthebattle.com/2013/01/12/2-thessalonians-31-5-prayer-requested-prayer-offered/>.)

2. 'I heard a story once about a young girl who wrote a letter to a missionary, trying to encourage him and lend her support. Evidently, she'd been told not to request a response to her letter because the missionaries were very busy. So, when the letter arrived, the missionary got a kick out of reading, "Dear Mr Missionary, we are praying for you. But we are not expecting an answer".

'I think that little girl unintentionally summarized the prayer lives of most Christians. We do a lot of praying, but we don't expect an answer'.

(Rick Warren, 'Why God Sometimes Delays Your Answers to Prayer', accessed at <https://pastorrick.com/devotional/english/why-god-sometimes-delays-your-answers-to-prayer/>.)

'They built the altar of the God of Israel' (Ezra 3. 2).

'When the Jews came back to Jerusalem and were in fear of their enemies ... the first thing they built was - what? - a high wall? No, they built an altar. God was their confidence and strength'.

(J. N. Darby, 'The Church, a Habitation of God through the Spirit', Collected Writings, Volume 12, page 248.)

'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him' (Psa. 37. 7).

'Over the years, I've often leaned on three verses that have helped me wait patiently on the Lord. "Stand still" (Exod. 14. 13), "Sit still" (Ruth 3. 18), and "Be still" (Psa. 46. 10).

'Whenever we find ourselves getting "churned up" within, we can be sure that we need to stop, pray, and wait on the Lord before we do some stupid thing'.

(W. W. Wiersbe, 'Be Amazed (Minor Prophets)', page 134.)

The apostle Peter's references to 'silver and/or gold'.

'Silver and/or gold' contrasted with:

(i) The power of the name of the Lord Jesus: 'Silver and gold have I none, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk! ... why do you stare at us, as though we had made this man to walk by our own power or holiness?' (Acts 3. 6, 12).

(ii) The preciousness of the blood of the Lord Jesus: 'You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver or gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot' (1 Pet. 1. 18-19).

God's providence at work on the day that Martin Luther was thunderstruck.

It was 518 years today that, on 17 July 1505, Martin Luther entered St. Augustine's Monastery in Erfurt, Germany, to become a monk.

The background was that, just two weeks before, on 2 July 1505, as twenty-one-year-old Martin was returning from his family's home in Mansfeld, he was caught in a terrifying thunder storm a few hours outside of Erfurt, at the University of which he was studying law.

Lightning struck so near him that he was thrown to the ground and, at that moment, he called out to Saint Anne (*): "Help me and I will become a monk!" Martin survived the thunderstorm and, to his father's disgust and anger, Martin honoured his solemn vow.

That stormy event radically changed the course of Martin Luther's life—the carefree law student was transformed into a humble monk searching for God and His grace.

The rest, as they say, is history ... Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that, *in God's good providence, that thunder-storm changed the course of history!*

(*) *Why Saint Anne?*

According to Roman Catholic tradition, Saint Anne (the imagined mother of the Virgin Mary), was the patron saint of miners. Martin's father, Hans Luther, owned a copper mine. It is very likely, therefore, that would have been a shrine to Saint Anne in Martin's childhood home, which he had only just visited. Martin had probably prayed to Saint Anne before he set out on his journey to Erfurt. In his moment of terror, it was hardly surprising, therefore, that, as a practising Catholic, he cried out to Saint Anne for help; Saint Anne may have been the only mediator he knew!

But Martin later knew better; 'No one, not even an angel of heaven', he declared, 'could make restitution for the infinite and irreparable injury and appease the eternal wrath of God which we had merited by our sins; except that eternal person, the Son of God Himself, and He could do it only by taking our place ... This our dear Lord and only Saviour and Mediator before God, Jesus Christ, did for us by His blood and death, in which He became a sacrifice for us', 'Sermons of Martin Luther', Volume 2, page 344.

(Main sources: <https://www.luther.de/en/blitz.html>; <https://www.britannica.com/summary/Martin-Luther-Timeline>; <https://www.ligonier.org/posts/luther-and-thunderstorm>.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

1. Albert and Winnie lived in Nova Scotia, Canada. On the occasion of their 50th Wedding Anniversary, their son, John, flew all the way from Australia to celebrate their Golden Wedding with them.

On the evening of the special congratulatory meal which had been arranged for Albert and Winnie, John was moved to tears to hear his father speak many times to Winnie in the most endearing terms —'Darling', 'Honey', 'My love', 'Sweetheart', 'Sunshine', and so on.

When Winnie was out of earshot, John confided to Albert, 'Dad, I am so pleased for you both. And I think it is wonderful that, after 50 years together, you are still calling Mum by those loving pet names'.

Looking rather shamefaced, Albert responded, 'Well, to tell you the truth, son, *I forgot your mother's name about five years ago*'.

2. When hurrying downstairs one day, Gilbert fell headlong down the whole flight of stairs. Hearing the loud noise, his wife, Ethel, rushed out of the kitchen to find Gilbert lying dazed at the foot of the stairs.

'Did you miss a step?' Ethel asked anxiously.

'Definitely not', Gilbert replied, '*I hit every one of them!*'