

Virtual Christian Magazine

Hope And Encouragement
For The Real World

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.”—Romans 13:1

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Trees of Righteousness

By Rainer Salomaa

Trees are a part of our lives. There are few places without them, and they provide us with so much. What can God teach us using trees?



THE BIBLE HAS A FAIR AMOUNT TO SAY about trees. It begins with the two trees in the Garden of Eden and ends with the tree of life, which bears 12 types of fruit and which has leaves for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:1-2). Christ taught a parable about a fig tree (Matthew 24:32). Instructions were given to Israel about the cutting down of trees during the time of sieges (Deuteronomy 20:19-20). Pagan practices of worshipping in groves are denounced. So are idolatrous customs that use trees (Jeremiah 10:1-5).

The Scriptures contain many analogies likening Christians to trees. In the book of Psalms, David wrote, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. *He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper*” (Psalm 1:1-3, emphasis added throughout).

The Scriptures contain many analogies likening Christians to trees.

The prophet Isaiah wrote, “That they may be called *trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD*, that He may be glorified” (Isaiah 61:3).

In another passage, a wife is called a fruitful vine in the very heart of her house and the children are called olive plants (Psalm 128:3).

Trees grow

If we carry through with this thought, then there has to be growth (represented by tree rings). There also is some pruning and getting rid of dead growth. There also has to be usable fruit.

The Passover season can be a wonderful time of growth. Just as trees grow rapidly in the springtime, drawing moisture from the wet soil, so can we, during this season, grow more in the stature and fullness of Christ, as we focus on Him, feasting on the bread of life (John 6:32-58). We are asked to examine ourselves in this growth process as we look to the Son of God and the light of His Word to direct our ways. Our spiritual tree rings reveal the times of growth; some seasons, perhaps, being better than others.

At this season of the year, let us grow and flourish, enduring the pruning, drinking deeply of God's Word and His Holy Spirit in order to bring forth fruits of righteousness.

Pruning—it's necessary to produce

Pruning is also done at that time of year. Sucker growth is cut off. Fruit trees are trimmed back to make them more productive. Dead branches are cut off and burned or taken away as refuse, paralleling what Christ stated when He said, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:1-2).



Pruning can make it appear that there is negative growth, but in the long run, a tree that is pruned produces more and better fruit. Fruit is guaranteed if we abide in Christ. On the Passover evening in A.D. 31, He told His followers, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples" (John 15:5-8).

Just as trees help make this planet so beautiful by providing shade, oxygen, fuel, paper, food, furniture and countless manufactured products, so individual Christians can serve others by producing fruit. God is pruning each of us as individual Christians so that much more fruit will be born in order to better serve all of mankind."

Small beginnings

In Matthew 13:31-32, Christ said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

It will have begun small, but with the process of growth God's Kingdom will ultimately encompass the entire earth. Even the largest tree in the world, General Sherman in California's Sequoia National Park, which towers more than 274 feet high and is over 100 feet around the base, began with a tiny seed that weighed 1/6,000 of an ounce.

At this season of the year, let us grow and flourish, enduring the pruning, drinking deeply of God's Word and His Holy Spirit in order to bring forth fruits of righteousness. Let us stand tall and look up to our Elder Brother and Captain of our Salvation, as trees of righteousness.

God—Our Protector

By Dan Anderson

In 2007 there was a terrible bridge collapse in Minnesota. This tragedy was just one of many events that have occurred in recent years. How can we deal with these types of incidents and other trials in our lives?



DO YOU REMEMBER HEARING about the 35W freeway bridge collapse in Minneapolis and the loss of life and injury that occurred in that tragedy? On Aug. 4, 2007, Fox News reported:

Minnesota officials say they don't yet know how many cars were traveling the span during the collapse. But judging by the length of road, the lanes that were open, time of day and widely accepted traffic formulas, Northwestern University engineering professor Joseph Schofer estimated that 100 to 150 vehicles were on the bridge.

On Thursday, authorities cautioned that the number of missing could rise, in part because there was no way to know how many victims were in the water. Some people without family in the area may not have been reported missing, Police Lt. Amelia Huffman said.

The missing included a 23-year-old pregnant woman and her 2-year-old daughter, who was in the back seat of the family's car when the bridge crumbled.

We have seen in the past, and continue to see, a great many tragedies in our world—earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, hurricanes and, of course, the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001. The list could continue ad infinitum. During tragedies like these, we often see innocent peoples' lives snuffed out in a matter of minutes or seconds. Many times the focus is put upon the children and how tragic it is for families who lose a child in an untimely death.

These types of tragedies will inevitably engender the following questions: "Where was God?" "Why didn't God protect us?" "If there is a God, why does He allow such horrible accidents?"

For many people, it comes down to a very basic question: "Does God exist?" People like to take personal credit for any successes they have. If something goes wrong, however, they are quick to blame God.

Do you believe that God protects those who call upon Him? Every year in our church, we have a special ceremony to ask God to bless the little children. And nearly every time we have an opening or closing prayer at a church service, we ask for God's protection. Do we believe He will protect us? Of course! Does He? Absolutely! Does He sometimes allow even those who pray for His protection to experience an accident or even a tragedy? Yes. Have you ever been in an automobile/motorcycle—or any kind of accident? Do you believe that even in that accident God protected you—saved your life? Do you know of anyone who has died in an accident?

We have seen in the past, and continue to see, a great many tragedies in our world.

I think most have experienced an accident of some sort. If you've been around for a long time, you surely have heard of those who believe that if it were not for God, they would have had much worse things happen. How many people on that Minnesota bridge fell more than 60 feet and suffered little or no physical damage? How many surfaced from their cars after plunging headlong into the river?

So, how should a Christian approach this subject? What if someone on the job, a relative or an acquaintance asks you, "How could a loving God allow this to happen?" What would you say? Would you be ready to give an answer?

If we look at God's Word, we see that there are some reasons that accidents and tragedies occur in this world. We also need to understand this subject—not only for our own peace of mind, but to help others understand, if the situation ever arises.

Consider three principles that can help us keep tragedy and disaster in perspective.

We are all flesh and blood!

First, to some extent what we're talking about is physical inevitability. Man is physical. We're all temporary! Look at Hebrews 9:27: "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." Another verse that illustrates this point is 1 Corinthians 15:50 where Paul writes that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

God never intended that mankind would live forever in the flesh. You cannot find any scripture to support such an idea. In spite of mankind trying to perpetuate his physical existence by every means possible—be it technology, medicines, surgeries or cryogenics—the truth is that we deteriorate and wear out! Of course, some of us wear out faster than others due to genes, lifestyle, exercise, diet, accidents or some other factor.

If we look at this subject with the realization that we are physical and at some point in the future we will expire, we will be able to understand why God allows death. Let's face it, we can't turn ourselves over and see our expiration date. God has power over death through the resurrection, and all who die will live again, in their own order as shown in 1 Corinthians 15:23: "But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming." Part of this understanding involves knowing God's plan (revealed through His annual Holy Days) and knowing that all mankind will have the opportunity to have life eternal at some point in the future.

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Why are there tragedies and accidents in the world today?

Second, we need to consider who is behind tragedy and disaster. Is God responsible? "We know that...the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19). This is not God's world. YET! Satan is the destroyer (Abaddon and Apollyon in Hebrew and Greek, Revelation 9:11), the deceiver (Revelation 12:9), the father of murders (John 8:44). He persecutes the Church and tries to devour the sheep of God like a lion (1 Peter 5:8). We must understand that God allows Satan to have some power over "natural disasters" on this earth (for now)—but he and his minions will be vanquished at the coming of Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:8 and Revelation 20:2). Though Satan rules this society, he is still limited in what he is allowed to do.

In this world, we learn to trust God and endure—to avoid and resist Satan at all cost (1 Peter 5:9-10). We must turn to God in the face of disasters and according to His will—He will protect us!

The principle of cause and effect

Many times personal catastrophes are the result of going against that which is right (transgression against *spiritual* laws is *sinning*). What about an event where a 2-year-old was hit by a car? Lots of questions can be asked about a situation like this: Was he taught properly to stay out of the street? Where was his mother or guardian? Maybe it was the driver's fault—was the driver speeding or impaired? These same sorts of questions can be extended to any accident.

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Think back to the Minnesota bridge collapse. If a bridge is allowed to deteriorate into a state of disrepair, and you put 150 cars on it during rush hour and it falls down, someone must have overlooked something. Is there an engineering design or principle that would have prevented its collapse?

Can you even imagine mankind doing anything he wanted and knowing that there would never be any penalty or consequence? What kind of a miserable, topsy-turvy world would that be? Would

we all be automatons doing what comes naturally and having God watching every move we made? We'd never get burned when we touched fire, never die if we jumped off a building—the list could just go on and on.

If we see negative effects in our lives, we should evaluate them to determine if they are the result of inappropriate actions. Where necessary and possible, we should be able to make necessary adjustments (for instance, repentance which includes *changing* from sinning to obeying God). Change the cause, so you get the desired effect!

We are free moral agents and can choose to do right or wrong. God told the nation of Israel that He wanted them to be a model nation for all other nations and to choose life (see Deuteronomy 30:11-19).



Ultimately God will give each person an opportunity to choose His way. We have been given the opportunity to choose that way now. Very few today understand what the right choices are, but someday the whole world will come to understand! But even though we have that opportunity, sometimes it's hard to make the right choice. If we balance on the edge of a cliff over a canyon or a river, there's a chance that we will fall. If you choose to do dangerous things or choose a dangerous activity to participate in, God will sometimes allow you to suffer the penalty.

We can avoid many tragedies in this life if we choose God's way over the way of this world. You will be blessed and protected, but sometimes even God's people are victims of:

Time and chance

Ecclesiastes 9:10-11: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going. I returned, and saw under the sun that—the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all."

"Time and chance" doesn't mean that we roll the dice and gamble every time we step out of our houses. As Christians, we pray each day for God's blessings, guidance, deliverance and protection. We live our lives with confidence and faith in God. Notice what Satan said to God: "Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land" (Job 1:10).

"Time and chance" just means that sometimes things happen that we never expected. God is carefully guiding and molding those He has called into His Church, so what happens to them will not ever be simply time and chance. But when we don't see what God is doing behind the scenes, it often seems to be time and chance. The point for everyone to remember is, things will often happen that you don't expect.

Circumstances occur over time, accidents happen, cars drive on the wrong side of the road, bridges fall down; there are hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, violence, terrorism, etc. We need to be on guard and vigilant in this world, and of course, we need to do our part to do what's right.

In Luke 13:1-5 Jesus used an example similar to the Minnesota bridge collapse. He explained that those who died when a tower fell on them didn't deserve to perish because they were worse than others. He used their tragic experience with "time and chance" to teach that when a person repents and commits to following Jesus, their lives are not left to arbitrary tragedy. Even if they fall victim to what seems to be a random circumstance, they can be assured that God is aware and is watching over them.



We need to also realize that at times God will allow us to encounter a trial to test our faith.

Trials are a test of faith

God promises to never test us beyond what we can endure (1 Corinthians 10:13), which is one of the most encouraging verses in the Bible for a Christian. Combine this with Hebrews 11:6 ("But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him") and we see that our faith must be unwavering—knowing that our future is not based on the physical. There are several scriptures about trials. This is because God allows some trials and gives us other trials! It's part of the life of a Christian to suffer in this world. We can learn valuable lessons from enduring, and we're admonished by Christ to endure to the end.

Ultimately God will deliver us from even the most difficult and severe circumstances (see Psalm 34:17-22). For some this will be when we enter His Kingdom! It may not necessarily happen in this life!

Being content with what you have (see Philippians 4:11-13) can also apply to trials. Sometimes when we go through very difficult trials, we can be discouraged and we may even ask God to remove a trial. When we experience a trial, God is working specifically in the situation so we might learn the most we can in this life and develop patience and overcome! He knows what we need, when we need it and the difficulty we can endure!

Ultimately God will deliver us from even the most difficult and severe circumstances.

Conclusion

God is our protector, but we must do our part. And we must live life with the understanding that we were not meant to live forever in the flesh. God does protect us according to His will (see Psalm 91:1-16). According to His will, this means "in our best interest" (even though we may not be able to see it at the time)! He wants us to make it into His Kingdom and be part of His eternal family. He knows how to protect us and how to work in our lives.

God wants us to be in good health and to prosper in this life, and that's good! But that is not all there is to life. It's true that we have a great future ahead of us, and we need to focus on that

future, not on the physical. What happens in this life cannot even be compared to the things that God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Enjoy each other. While times are good, kiss your mate, hug and kiss your kids! Praise and thank God for your blessings. Ask God to protect you, according to His will, and only give you trials that you can endure!

And in every circumstance remember the promise in Hebrews 13:5-6: "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'"

For more information on this subject, please request our free booklets [Why Does God Allow Suffering?](#) and [God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind](#).

Evolution: A Published Obituary

By Kevin Ford

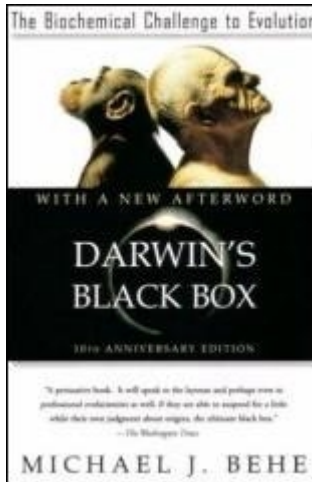
The theory of evolution has been the fundamental basis of much of the scientific thought for the last century and a half, but its influence extends far beyond science.



EVOLUTION LIES AT THE VERY CORE of atheism. To account for the existence of the incredibly complex and awesome creation that is all around us, the atheist must somehow do away with the need for a Creator. Evolution is his essential bastion of belief, and its demise would be a prospect too appalling to contemplate.

The Christian, on the other hand, can derive great comfort from the apostle Paul's statement in Romans 1:20, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." This is as true today as it was in the first century. Creation is truly one of the great proofs of God's existence and power.

As the world's leading secular religion, evolution has come under increasing attack in recent years from within the scientific community. Critics traditionally include the so-called "creation scientists," those professing fundamentalist Christianity and a belief in divine creation. However, their numbers now include an increasing number of noted scientists who have attacked the theory on purely scientific grounds. Included in this latter group is Michael Behe, professor of biochemistry at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, who in 1996 published a book titled *Darwin's Black Box*.



Although Dr. Behe seems determined to maintain a clear boundary between science and religion, he claims that the evidence presented in his book proves the impossibility of life having evolved. He does list a few examples of creationist writers getting their facts wrong, but considers that, in general, the response of evolutionists to the creationist arguments has been totally inadequate.

The title of his book is based on the fact that, to Darwin, the workings of the cell were a complete mystery—a "black box." Darwin had to concede that for his theory to be credible, science had to show that life, at least at the cellular level, was relatively simple. In fact, science—especially biochemistry, a branch of science little more than 50 years old—has shown the diametric opposite.

Proof at the cellular level

Here is a partial example of Dr. Behe's description of how the eye sees (biochemically speaking): "When light first strikes the retina a photon interacts with a molecule called 11-cis-retinal, which rearranges within picoseconds to transretinal. The change in the shape of the retinal molecule forces a change in the shape of the protein, rhodopsin, to which the retinal is tightly bound..." (*Darwin's Black Box*, pp. 18-19). This mind-numbing description continues for 2 1/2 more paragraphs, but the explanation is not yet finished! He devotes another two paragraphs to the cell's procedures to turn off the proteins and revert to its previous state. This, he says, is "a sketchy overview" of the biochemistry of vision. According to a footnote, readers who want a more complete version are directed to pages 938-954 of a biochemistry textbook!

Prospective readers should not be put off, however, by the foregoing. For the most part, the text is surprisingly readable and quite often entertaining. He makes liberal use of everyday analogies to explain his points, some of which are quite colorful (such as how a man's neighbor claimed to have jumped across the hundred-foot chasm separating their properties!). He uses the construction of a mousetrap to explain the concept of an "irreducibly complex system." And he scoffs at one evolutionist's attempt to explain a supposed evolutionary development by likening it to an attempt to explain the workings of a stereo system as "plugging a set of speakers into an amplifier, and adding a CD player, radio receiver and tape deck."

In the second part of the book, phenomena such as blood clotting and antibodies are discussed in detail. The third part includes a presentation of

As the world's leading secular religion, evolution has come under increasing attack in recent years from within the scientific community. The response of evolutionists to the creationist arguments has been totally inadequate.

many aspects of scientific history such as the Big Bang theory. Although Dr. Behe is not a creationist, he appears to offer a very even-handed evaluation of the debate between evolution and its critics. For example, he states, that theologian William Paley's 19th-century work *Natural Theology* is generally considered to have been thoroughly discredited by evolutionist Richard Dawkins and others; yet, in his opinion, none of Paley's arguments against evolution were ever really answered!

In the concluding paragraph of his book, Dr. Behe hints at the startling conclusions of biochemical research: "The simplicity that was once expected to be the foundation of life has proven to be a phantom; instead, systems of horrendous, irreducible complexity inhabit the cell. *The resulting realization that life was designed by an intelligence* is a shock to us in the twentieth century who have gotten used to thinking of life as the result of simple, natural laws" (ibid, p. 252, emphasis mine).

Dr. Behe is one of a new breed of scientist willing to break the conspiracy of silence within the scientific community on Darwin's flawed theory. As a result of his research, we as Christians can echo more than ever the words of the Psalmist: "For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well" (Psalm 139:13-14, New Revised Standard Version).

"Intelligent design" is a controversial new movement consisting largely of academics and scientists who recognize that the Darwinian model of evolution is erroneous.

With science unable to answer the awkward questions evolution does not address, a new school of thought is emerging that tries to explain the origins of the universe. "Intelligent design" is a controversial new movement consisting largely of academics and scientists who recognize that the Darwinian model of evolution is erroneous. They insist that life must have begun with an "Intelligent Designer."

However, the movement does not acknowledge God as the Creator of the universe, and it tries to marry creation and evolution. It is a hybrid of truth and error. Agape Press quotes an article in *The New York Times* that says legislators in Michigan and Pennsylvania are working on incorporating intelligent design into the school curriculum. Earlier this year, an hour-long program examining intelligent design was aired on CBC Radio.

For more valuable information, read the following three free booklets: [*Is the Bible True?*](#) and [*Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*](#) and [*Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?*](#)

Our “Rod of Iron”: A User’s Guide

By Kevin Ford

What does the book of Revelation mean when it describes the saints helping Christ rule the nations with “a rod of iron”? What training is necessary to use this tool?



MANY OF CHRIST’S FOLLOWERS are familiar with the scriptures that reveal their destiny to rule with Jesus Christ after His return to this world. In Revelation 5:10 Christians are described as being made “kings and priests to our God, and we shall reign on the earth.”

The prophecies of Daniel describe the time when “the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High” (Daniel 7:27). Jesus indicated to His disciples in the parable of the pounds that some are to have rule over 10 cities, some five, etc. (Luke 19:17, 19).

One of the most dramatic scriptures, however, is that found in the message to the Thyatiran church. “And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’—as I also have received from My Father” (Revelation 2:26-27, emphasis added).

Is the Kingdom of God to be a time when those still living out physical lives on the earth will be kept in subjection by a divine dictatorship of terrifying and brutal power?

Is the Kingdom of God to be a time when those still living out physical lives on the earth will be kept in subjection by a divine dictatorship?

A shepherd's rod

Let's examine a few descriptions of the Kingdom of God to see if we have an accurate picture of how Jesus Christ and those assisting Him will wield authority in the coming age. First notice an interesting point from the Greek text. The verb translated "rule" in Revelation 2:27 is *poimanei*, derived from the word for a shepherd (*poimen*). It is the same word used by the apostle Paul in Acts 20:28 to describe the care that overseers are to show toward the Church of God.



A literal translation of the Greek word for "rule" is *shepherd*. Several Bible versions translate it that way. The Concordant Literal Translation renders Revelation 2:27 as: "He shall shepherd them with an iron club." The rod or club carried by a shepherd was, of course, primarily for the protection of his sheep, not to frighten or punish them. It could be used to fight predators or to guide and rescue sheep.

Part of Revelation 2:27 is a quote from Psalm 2, a psalm about how God's all-powerful Son will one day be on earth to conquer the rebellious nations and establish His firm rule as King of all the earth. Christ's future reign—especially the initial establishment of His reign—is referred to in this way in Revelation 12:5 and 19:15.

Psalm 2:9 is correctly translated in the New King James Version as "You shall *break* them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them [the opposing armies of the nations] to pieces like a potter's vessel." This is referring to how the Messiah will break the violent rebellion of the world's nations in order to bring about under His peaceful millennial government.



A key lesson of Revelation 2:26-27 is that the glorified *saints* are linked with the above scriptures. They will *assist* and *share in* Christ's rule over the earth, as shown in Revelation 20:4, 6.

Once rebellious opposition to Christ's return is put down, Christ and the saints can then proceed to patiently teach and gently enforce His laws and teachings.

In Zechariah 14:16 we read that God will issue an edict commanding all nations to send representatives to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. What if a nation refuses to heed the command? Is such disobedience conceivable or even possible in a world of immortal saints each armed with an iron rod? The answer may be surprising.

"And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of Hosts, on them there will be no rain" (Zechariah 14:17). There will be a response from Jesus Christ and His saints to this stubbornness, but it will be a measured and merciful response that will allow time for carnal attitudes to change.

Jesus Christ wants us to welcome Him into our lives (Revelation 3:20). He wants the obedience that comes from our love and gratitude for what He has done for us and from our unshakable conviction that He knows what is best for us—not from the fear of punishment if we do not obey. And He wants just the same from all the billions on the face of this earth who have yet to experience the opportunity given to us.

He wants the obedience that comes from our love and gratitude for what He has done for us...

Although the Kingdom of God will certainly have to be ushered in with a terrifying show of divine power, this is not how God intends to rule the earth for the next thousand years. In the Millennium, the new world leader, Jesus Christ, “will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs in His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young” (Isaiah 40:11).

He says of the people living at that time: “I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods... They shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid” (Ezekiel 34:25, 28, Revised Standard Version).

If God just needed people to wield iron rods, He would have no need of His saints. There is no shortage of thugs and bullies—people accustomed to dominating and terrorizing others—who would qualify for that job.

What He needs are those who have spent their lives developing the character of Jesus Christ—those who can be trusted to exercise great power with love and mercy as well as firmness and justice. “*And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, This is the way, walk you in it, when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left*” (Isaiah 30:21).

Our “rod of iron” will come with a warning label: “Use only as directed by the Holy Spirit.”

Divine Power

By Alvina Martin



The day is drawing to a close,
The evening shades are nigh,
The sun in setting beauty shows
The splendor of the sky.

The moon and stars are set in place,
Each one beams forth its light,
Casting down their welcomed ray
Upon the seas at night.

The sparkling waters colored bright
With tints of red and gold,
Tells man of God's creative power
To all with truth unfold.

He forms the clouds within the sky
To pour abundant rain,
Upon some dry and withered spot
To yield some grass again.

The tall bare trees in forest lands
Drink in refreshing rain,
Bringing forth at God's command
Their bright green leaves again.

The flowers too have felt once more,
The moisture at their roots,
While breathing in the sun's warm air
Come forth the sturdy shoots.

The earth in abundance too doth yield,
The fruits and herbs for man
That we can gather from the fields
According to God's plan.

God cares for every living thing,
Be it man or bird and beast,
Daily thanks to God we bring,
For this continual feast.

To study the proofs of the existence of the Creator of all things, please request the free booklet [*Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?*](#)

Letters to the Editor

Women: The Young, the Old and the Blessed

Much thanks to Louise Owens for taking the time to share your deep faith, wisdom and instruction with all of us! If anyone encouraged you along the way to submit this, Louise, I thank them as well!

— Susan Blumel-Berg

Thanks for openly letting us read your mind. You are an empathetic writer. I felt you and I made a real connection. I was deeply touched by the messages you sent all of us. Thanks for the gracious way you imparted a window into your current stage of life. God willing, I will be there one day. I just turned 57.

How beautiful and powerful are your words. May God help each one of us have time for one another. As you said, to cherish the widow.

I'm glad your life is still sweet—though you seem to be one of the people who undoubtedly sweeten other people's lives. (That's usually the way it happens.)

Thank you, dear sister in Christ, for the lessons of the golden years and for your generous heart toward God and others. I pray God will enlarge our hearts, as His people, to live a grateful life rather than simply a busy life. I sincerely hope I get to meet you one day soon.

— Judy Servidio

“Jacob and Joseph”

I am going through a trial in my life, and every time I find myself focusing on the trial itself, I feel miserable. It is only when I put my trust in God, knowing ALL things work together for the good of those who love Him, I am comforted.

Thank you for the reminder to put my trust in God. I love reading *Virtual Christian Magazine*, as I find the simpleness of each article refreshing, and it gives me much food for thought.

— Helena Wisby

“Secrets of Love”

I'm blessed and encouraged by this piece. Thanks. I would love to have more of such inspiring work. Thanks again.

— Peace O.

“Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”

I received the revelation of “give us this day our daily bread.” God gave me the revelation that Jesus was the daily bread that was spoken in the prayer, and I noticed that every verse after that was speaking of a spiritual walk. I was so excited and wanted to study more and see what “daily bread” meant to others. This is when I felt led to click on your site and read. I am so blessed to have read your article on daily bread, because everything that you wrote was what I received from the Lord.

Just had to share this. Thank you.

Some feedback messages are edited for space and/or clarity