

BULLETIN

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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Updates from Rusty Hancock

Every day I pray for the Kingdom of God to come, and soon! But I have to confess, I enjoy my present life right now, in this, the Dispensation of Grace. No, I am not blind. I am fully aware of the hardships, evil, tragedy, and misfortunes that occur on a daily basis in this world. Maybe it's because my glass is usually "half full" that I can find a positive spin in just about anything.

My grandpa (Otis Q. Sellers) once wrote, "It cannot be emphasized too strongly that God's present method of dealing with mankind, His present attitude toward all men is one of absolute grace. We are today living in and under the dispensation of the grace of God. God may be passively gracious, or He may be actively gracious, but at present if He cannot act in grace, then He will not act at all."

About three years ago my mother became seriously ill. She lost strength and could barely breathe. For over a month the doctors could not figure out what was causing her illness. I prayed and cried constantly; I thought I was going to lose her. Mom had a conference call with her sons to update us all on her condition. The doctors had been able to diagnose the problem. She had cancer, multiple myeloma. (Here comes the positive spin, glass "half full" thing.) As horrible as cancer is, at least we now knew what Mom was dealing with. Proper medicines, treatment and therapy could be applied to fight off this disease. Soon Mom was back to attending Dodger games, concerts at The Hollywood Bowl, plays, and vacations. (I've given up trying to slow her down.)

Because we live in the Dispensation of Grace and God's acts are untraceable, I cannot state as a matter of fact that God had any role in her recovery. But inside my heart and soul, I believe God has touched her in a positive way. I cannot prove this, but my existence, demeanor and attitude rely on my belief that God does play a positive role in my life.

Although Mom continues to recover, for some reason she stopped participating in an activity that had dominated her entire life--writing. She kept a daily

journal. She wrote books, short stories, and poems. It was her passion, and then it stopped. (This is why she has not had an article in the Bulletin for about three years.)

A few months ago I got a request from a gentleman on the East Coast. He wanted some biographical and historical information regarding my grandpa. I gave the request to Mom, and a couple days later I opened an e-mail that she had sent the gentleman. It was a multi-paged written response. My mom had written! I couldn't get past the first page because my eyes were filled with tears. I prayed and thanked God for my Mom's return to writing. But then I thought, did God have a hand in this somehow? Once again, it cannot be proven, but I like to believe that God's grace was involved.

I look at other aspects of my immediate life, starting with my grandpa. He was a brilliant Bible student, writer, and teacher. His insights, understanding, and interpretation of the Bible is unparalleled. I often wonder, did God have a hand in his studies? Again untraceable, but I firmly believe that God "nudged" him at times in the right direction.

I reflect on my career as a Police Officer. I walked away after 30 years relatively unscathed. I went to the Emergency Room a half dozen times with minor injuries, but retired in good health. A few times I walked away from rather harrowing experiences, and each time I wondered, "How did I survive that?" Just as I was retiring and looking for the next chapter in my life, the health of David Hetteema (late Director of The Word of Truth Ministry) was starting to decline. The Word of Truth desperately needed someone to take over the day-to-day operations for the Ministry to survive. I stepped in and will lovingly continue to run the Ministry as long as God grants me good health.

I can't stress enough that there is no proof of God's present actions, but I firmly believe that I am surrounded by His Grace. He has touched me multiple times!

The Covering Cherub's Mission

By Nathan C. Johnson

The LORD in Ezekiel 28:1-10 speaks to the ruler of the ancient city-state of Tyre, calling him the "prince of Tyre." He warns this ruler, who thought himself wise and called himself a god, that he would die as a man and would hardly be able to say, "I am a god" to the one who slew him.

After speaking to this human ruler, however, the LORD goes on to speak to one He calls the "king of Tyre." We might well imagine this one was another human ruler of that ancient city until we start reading some of the things God says of him. Ezekiel 28:12-13: *"You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created"* (New King James Version throughout). From these words we can see that no common ruler of men is meant, for this one was in Eden, the garden of God. Since the only ones we know who were in Eden were Adam, Eve, the LORD Himself, and the serpent Satan, the possibilities for the identity of this one are limited. Since Adam and Eve were dead thousands of years before Ezekiel wrote and the LORD is clearly not meant, this word seems to have been spoken against the serpent, the devil himself, who had been in Eden and caused its corruption.

This one who had been in Eden had been perfect, full of wisdom and beauty. Like man, God had created him upright (Eccl. 7:29), intending him to stay upright and not to become the wicked enemy he later became. He was created with great wisdom and beauty, and his appearance was further enhanced by being richly decorated with every kind of precious stone. He was a master of music, made so from the day he was created.

From this marvelous description we might well start to wonder why God made a being with so many advantages over other beings He created. Ezekiel 28:14 gives us an idea: *"You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones."* This one is called a cherub. Many people have the idea that Satan is a fallen angel, but their reasoning for this seems to be that angels are the only kind of heavenly being they know about and so they figure that must be what he is. The Bible, however, sets forth three kinds of heavenly beings: angels, cherubs, and spirits. Since the cherubs are found closest to the throne, we might well suppose them to be the highest of these three. It should not surprise us, then, to learn that Satan is one of these.

His full title here is "the anointed cherub who covers." We know that one who is "anointed" is marked out for special service to God. This word "cover" has to do with hedging in, protecting, or defending. In Ezekiel's vision the cherubs did indeed surround and "protect" the throne of God. Yet since the LORD does not die (Hab. 1:12), we might wonder why He would need protection. We read that this cherub was given great power in wisdom, beauty, and song, not mentioning physical power or warlike might. We could conclude that this anointed cherub was created to defend not the person but the name of God. When we consider all God says He will do for the sake of His name (Ezek. 20:9, 14, 22, 44), it makes sense that He would create a being like this for the purpose of defending His name, His great reputation. All the wisdom, beauty, decoration, and musical talent he was invested with would work marvelously to help him.

A terrible problem arises in Ezekiel 28:15, however: *"You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you."* That a being with so much raw talent and created for such a high purpose fell is a devastating loss. Verse 17 tells us why he fell: *"Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor."* The one who was made with great wisdom and beauty in order to extol the glories of the LORD became caught up in his own beauty and wisdom instead and therefore became corrupt. Yet his talent and abilities remained, with grave consequences.

If Satan was created to defend the LORD's reputation, then upon falling he became the perfect agent to damage that reputation. When we consider the world around us and the view of God it has, we can see how successful he is in perverting his original mission. Every natural disaster is ascribed to God, and every senseless death and every gruesome crime is laid at His doorstep. The Christian world firmly believes that God's vengeance demands eternal, conscious torment for all His enemies. The world is dominated by Satan's ability to convince them that his view of God is correct. The guardian cherub who covers is ever at work to destroy the reputation he was created to defend.

How may we poor, simple, human beings overcome the lies of the greatest PR agent ever created in order to see God as He really is? One means is open to us: by holding fast to the true picture of God revealed in His Word, the Bible. Like Christ did when tempted by Satan, we must answer his lies by "it is written." Only then will we see past the cherub's lies to know the truth of God.

Slaying the Dragon

By Andrew Brown

Fighting the fire-breathing dragon used to be a common dream. The strong warrior, facing the dreaded foe, always won the battle. These childhood dreams fade, but the essence of them is reality. To believers life is a fight to live according to Christ's victory. We must not allow ourselves to become oblivious to *"the great dragon...the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world"* (Rev. 12:9, NASB unless noted). Are you trained to battle this dragon?

God set up the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as an *opportunity* for Adam and Eve. Satan attacked his unsuspecting prey in the garden questioning the validity of God's Word and accusing Him of withholding, *"Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'"* (Gen. 3:1). Eve perceived Satan as an ally; thus, the confrontation was slyly masked. Accusations against God's goodness or defiance towards Him are signals to come to the defense of truth. The battle was on for Eve--no more training, no more studies. Time for the skills test and Eve failed. Great wealth exists in reviewing the play-by-play behind her fall. Her words reveal three colossal mistakes, and all pertain to how she handled God's Word.

"Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him" (Prov. 30:5). Eve's refuge started to crumble when she SUBTRACTED from God's Word. She said, *"We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die'"* (Gen. 3:2-3, NKJV). Satan's prey stumbled when she eliminated the word "freely" (Gen. 2:16). God allowed feasting freely from all other trees; His provision was one of abundant blessing. Next, Eve ADDED the words "or touch it." A good principle--why play with poison? However, this addition was presented as a fact to be proven false. *"Do not add to His words, or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar"* (Prov. 30:6). God had given no command for touching. Finally, she MINIMIZED and softened the guaranteed outcome. *"You will surely die"* (Gen. 2:17) was altered to *"lest you die"* (Gen. 3:3 NKJV). Death was a concrete, definite promise from God, not merely a wishy-washy possibility. This improper handling of God's Word led to Eve's sin. She was careless and unprepared for Satan's direct counter, *"You surely will not die"* (Gen. 2:4). The dragon seized his opportunity.

"It was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (1 Tim. 2:14). Eve was deceived. She actually believed Satan, *"for God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil"* (Gen. 3:5). She thought the Creator was holding out on her and did not

want her best! **Her love was immature.** *"I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ"* (2 Cor. 11:3). Is your mind attentive to God's Word? Have you been retaining the standard of sound words (2 Tim. 1:13)? Are you prepared for attacks on your fortress? Many have abandoned the refuge of God's sound words thinking they will obtain something more satisfying.

The battle was not over; Adam was not deceived. He knew Satan's venomous lies were in opposition to God's Word which guaranteed death for eating this fruit. The Hebrew is to be understood *"dying you will die,"* meaning the poison would start working immediately until death culminated. It was Adam's time for heroics. He must have perceived Satan's words marked him as an enemy (or needing correction). Draw your sword and fight the dragon!

However, Adam idly watched the temptation unfold. Perhaps living in a utopia made Adam unaware his perfect bride could believe those venomous words. What if Adam had sprung into action? The poison was consumed. Lethargy and defeat took over as she handed him the fruit; like a true Romeo, he chose to die with her. Why was Adam's love for God not greater than for Eve? What if his love for God abounded? What if Adam went to God, rather than taking matters into his own hands? Why not rely on God for the antidote? The dragon was successful, and the story cemented into history. The results of his choice are seen every day in the brokenness of our world, but we can train ourselves to stand. *"Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil"* (Eph. 6:11). Learn Eden's lesson.

"Be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking for someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). He is looking for prey. Sin is waiting and its *"desire is for you, but you must master it"* (Gen. 4:7). Master it! Do not sit idly by! The Bible is under attack from every direction, which leaves many doubting and questioning the source itself. What has God really said? God *has* spoken. Let us seek what He has said! Too many ignore it, while others forget or twist it. A few warriors will be ready when the dragon assaults, suited up in the army apparel of Ephesians 6. Engaged with God's help, they are like one of David's three mightiest men, who arose and struck the enemy *"until his hand was weary and clung to the sword and the Lord brought about a great victory that day"* (2 Sam. 23:10). And the victory will be ours!

Is Ecclesiastes for Today?

By Joanne L.H. Johnson

In January I went to my dad's (Milton B. Hammond) funeral service at Rose Hills Memorial Park in Whittier, California. Nathan C. Johnson read portions of Scripture from Ecclesiastes at the graveside service. It "hit home" to most who heard it.

God's Word is interesting for reading and for gaining wisdom, knowledge and understanding in one's life: *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding"* (Prov. 9:10). (New King James Version used throughout.)

Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes for his readers to gain wisdom by reading about Solomon's own experiences and exposition about God. According to the Bible, Solomon was the wisest king in all the earth, as God said when He appeared to Solomon: *"... wisdom and knowledge are granted to you; and I will give you riches and wealth and honor; such as none of the kings have had who were before you, nor shall any after you have the like"* (2 Chron. 1:7-12).

Ecclesiastes shows the foibles of all humanity. Solomon proclaimed that *"... vanity of vanities, all is vanity"* (Eccl. 1:2). Yet he included many beautiful glimpses or details of life, like the ones we find in the third and last chapters of this extraordinary book.

Nathan read at the graveside service the beautiful picture of life revealed in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8: *"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to gain, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace."*

And yet the rest of the chapter holds the keys of life: *"God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work"* (Eccl. 3:17), *"... All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust. Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth?"* (Eccl. 3:20-21).

Most speakers at funeral services proclaim that the deceased go to Heaven at death. Many of my dad's friends have tried to comfort me with the knowledge that he's in a "better place right now." They also have no knowledge of the future resurrection of the dead (see John 11:21-27, **Seed & Bread** No. 80, *Concerning Resurrection*, by Otis Q. Sellers).

However, what does it say in Scripture in regard to what happens to you when you die? Again, we can find wisdom through God's Word in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes. In Ecclesiastes 12:1-7 we discover an elegant image of growing old and dying: *"... Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the well. Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it"* (Eccl. 12:6-7).

God has a purpose for everything written in the Bible: *"... The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright—words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. . . . Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all (duty). For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil"* (Eccl. 12:9-14).

With all its wisdom, Ecclesiastes is a book *for today to be read by all people*. Like it says in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

At least one funeral service (my dad's) was based on God's Word that sad day. I expect to see my dad and mom resurrected in the future Kingdom of God, as well as my late Bible teacher and his wife, Otis and Mildred Sellers, whose studies were based on the Word of God.

"How blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust, and has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood. Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders which you have done, and Your thoughts toward us; there is none to compare with You. . . ."

Psalm 40:2-5, NASB