



Christian Ambassadors, Inc.

My Brother's Keeper

Volume 22, Number 3, Third Quarter, 2017

GROWING on the WORD

A scripture study

The Word of God is the source of light, truth and power, for those who seek its meaning and apply it to their life. Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh, and we seek to follow him.

John 8:12 (NIV) – “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

John 12:46 (NIV) “...No one who believes in me should stay in darkness.”

Each issue of “My Brother’s Keeper” features a WORD study. This issue’s Word Study comes to us from Sharon K. Griffiee, Co-founder of Christian Ambassadors, Inc.

Salvation – God’s Workmanship

By: Sharon K. Griffiee

Works cannot buy God’s Love

As we begin our Word Study it is important to state up front, that works have nothing to do with earning salvation. Though we may try, all the good works in the world cannot make us right with God. Why not? God simply does not deal with us based on our level of human achievement. God, in his mercy, deals with us

based on the level of our deepest human need. Our innermost need is to be forgiven of the sin that has separated us from God. Only an act of free forgiveness of the grace of God can bring us back into right relationship with Him. His saving grace is accessed through our faith.

Ephesians 2:4-5; 8-10 (NKJV) – “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ... For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

These verses of scripture speak vastly of God’s nature, of who He is, and the extraordinary life He has prepared for us. Given that God is rich in mercy; his very nature is to give freely because of his infinite love for us. Salvation, brothers and sisters, is a pure gift of God. Salvation is God’s workmanship, it is his handiwork, and it is his masterpiece!

Wait a minute. The scripture also says, “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works...” You might question, ‘But I thought we weren’t supposed to focus on our good works.’ True; we are not to put our focus on good works – that is, human works achieved without God. However, when we determine to put our focus on God, His workmanship can and will be achieved through us!

As we receive through faith, God's gracious gift of salvation, we step into a totally distinctive life *created* in Christ Jesus *for* good works. We could also express it this way; God has prepared a path of good works *beforehand* for all believers, which *He will perform* in and through them as they walk by faith.

As believers, we must ask ourselves, "Is God truly working in and through us?" Or, is some other force influencing our attitude and behavior? There is a common expression used today in which people are heard saying, "That person sure is *a piece of work!*" You may have used this expression yourself, as I have on occasion.

The Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines "*piece of work*" as: a complicated, difficult, or eccentric person. The dictionary states 1928 as the time when this expression probably began. Other sources use 1713 as its first known usage. Regardless, we need to identify what/who motivates *the work* we are walking in on a daily basis. Are we thought of as a "piece of work" others make unfavorable comments about, or someone others thankfully point to, as *His (God's) workmanship* created in Christ Jesus?

Set apart – Zealous for good works

Titus 2:11-14 (NKJV) – "*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.*"

Jesus is our great God and Savior! He is our Holy Redeemer who gave Himself for us! We need to wrap our mind around that! It makes perfect sense that Jesus gave Himself for us so that He might redeem us from every lawless

deed; that he might purify for himself His own *special* people. Brothers and sisters, Jesus wants an intimate relationship with every one of us. If we cherish Jesus, the same way he cherishes us, good works will be the expected outcome. Our love for Jesus will be all the motivation we need to drive us into his presence; fervently seeking him with all our heart, and allowing him to do His purifying work in us.

Work out your own salvation

Change does not happen overnight. People too often allow themselves to become victims of their same old habits and temptations, and guilty of their same old failures. The Apostle Paul knew this all too well, and for that reason was writing to encourage the Philippian saints in his absence. Knowing he would not be there in person to counsel them, his letter of exhortation was tempered with compassion for he addressed them as *my beloved*.

Philippians 2:12-13 (NKJV) – "*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*"

Paul did not hold anything back, but stated rather forcefully, "work out" your own salvation with fear and trembling. Paul was not telling the Philippians to work *for* their salvation, but to *work out*, in their daily life, what God had already worked *in* them through His Spirit. They were to "work out" the salvation God had already given them. In other words, the Philippians must show evidence that they were making continual progress in their discipleship journey. After all, there is much more to salvation than just "getting saved". An internal transformation must be taking place and this requires concentrated effort. Following Jesus is about seeking God's will and then doing it!

Jesus stated this clearly when he said,

Matthew 7:21 (NIV) – "*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the*

kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

To apply Paul's teaching to the Philippians to our own lives, we must come to a greater understanding of what is involved. This “working out” with fear and trembling is to be done with complete trust in God, with reverence and awe, not relying on our own strength. Think about it, God would not ask us to become spiritually mature in our salvation, without first energizing and creating in us the *desire* to carry it to full completion.

Philippians 2:13 (NKJV) – “... for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”

When we resolve in our heart to be obedient to God, for His good pleasure, there is no way we can take God's work *in us* for granted. It is not a matter of us doing what we can, and then expecting God to do the rest. No, God's participation is throughout! He works simultaneously with us, creating in us a relationship of harmonious agreement.

So, what is the meaning of this *fear and trembling* that Paul speaks about? It signifies our holy fear of God, which is our awe and respect for Him, which causes us to literally tremble at the thought of sinning against Him. We admit our total weakness and that our good intentions are not always carried out. That alone drives us to seek God with the certainty that:

- 1) Without God's help we cannot effectively face life. We need his insight and discernment.
- 2) We gladly submit to God's energizing power, strength, and desire for us, because we clearly do not want to grieve God by slipping back into sin.

Working out our salvation can be thought of as our ongoing, painstaking journey in life to clean up our attitude and depart from whatever might offend God and discredit the name of Christ.

Turning to the Book of James, he admonishes,

James 4:7-10 (NLT) – “So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee

from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief...Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.”

“Humble yourselves before the Lord.” This is good news from James! How so? As we humbly submit to God, we are also resisting the devil with our actions, so the devil has to flee. With the devil out of the picture, we are in good position, brothers and sisters. With our loyalty to God firmly in place, God works freely in us to lift us up and honor us throughout the whole process of our spiritual growth journey. It is important to remember that *we* are God's workmanship and He wants us to succeed.

Servants of righteousness, the end result

Referring back to the second chapter of the Book of Philippians, Paul gets to the heart of the matter, of why God is so emphatic about His desire to work *in and through us*. He said,

Philippians 2:14-16 (NKJV) – “Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life...”

The world today, like theirs, is crooked and perverse. People have turned their backs on God and the truth. If God's children are to reach those who are alienated from God, they need to stop their complaining and disputing among themselves. They must unite as one *in Christ* and allow His work to be accomplished *through* them. Children of God, without fault, must hold fast to the word of life to truly shine as lights to a lost and needy world! Amen.



Sharing the Good News

“We are therefore Christ's Ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

II Corinthians 5:20-21

**From: Bret S.
Indiana State Reformatory
Pendleton, Indiana**

Dear Sharon & CA,

I hope this letter finds you in blessed health and knowing that my prayers are with you for the work you do in helping bring God's Word to so many.

I just read a back issue of “My Brother's Keeper” that another inmate passed along to me. I must say, it brought me back in touch with our Lord Jesus Christ, as I've been slipping so to speak. And that brings me to this letter to you and Christian Ambassadors. I need to know what I need to do to be added to your active mailing list, so I can receive “My Brother's Keeper” first hand. I would greatly appreciate it and would be forever grateful. May God bless you and keep you safe always.

Very truly yours, Bret

**From: Michael C.
River North Correctional
Independence, Virginia**

Dear Sharon,

I want to thank Jeffro, a brother of Christ, who first gave me your address. And what a blessing CA has turned out to be! I pray and read my Holy Bible each morning. I have been incarcerated for over 24 years now. I have not much longer left.

Thank you for your Christian love and faith in action. Please pray for me and I will return you in my prayers to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, as well.

Thanks go out to all the brothers and sisters of God's great family incarcerated, and on the outside of these fences as well. Thank you, Sister Sharon Griffiee.

Yours truly, Michael

**From: Robert H.
Arrowhead Correctional
Canon City, Colorado**

Dear Christian Ambassadors,

Hello there. My name is Robert and I am fortunate enough and blessed to be one of the very many people that you happen to have on your mailing list.

Your quarterly letters, messages, word studies, etc., have been sent and received by myself for years now. Each one has taught me at least one thing I didn't know, fully understand or comprehend, about our Lord and Savior. And even about what is written in His Word. They have helped me out so much so, that I can't even put it into words fully.

All I can say is, “Thank you Lord, and brothers and sisters at Christian Ambassadors, for everything you've done, are doing, and will continue doing for us prisoners who are also in Christ.” I also want to say thanks to my friend, Joe. For if it wasn't for him, I never would have been asked to be placed on your mailing list, in the first place.

So, I would like to pay it forward, by asking you brothers and sisters, to add another lucky name to your mailing list.

Thank you guys! May God continue blessing you and your ministry. And continue to work through you and the letters you send out.

Sincerely, Robert

**From: Lawrence M.
River North Correctional
Independence, Virginia**

Dear Sister Sharon,

Peace be with you. I send these words by faith, with the hope they find you in good health and in all things giving thanks.

A friend in here shared your info with me, and I decided to write to encourage you and let you know you are doing a remarkable job, and makes Jesus smile.

Hebrews 13:3 says, "Remember those in prison as if bound with them," and you do that. Too often a prisoner is silenced by the loneliness of incarceration, out of sight, out of mind. But you have given them a platform, to share their testimonies of what God has done on this side of the barbed wire, to show that even in prison, we can still be free!

Me, I'm just a nobody, trying to tell everybody, about *somebody* who can save anybody. Raised in a New York orphanage, highly involved in crime and gangs, I've done over 36 years in prisons from New York to California. Now with 20 years in, I'm on a 3-strikes life sentence. But I'm serving *Jesus*, not "time", by grace, and if I have to go to Heaven from prison, then so be it, because I know that soon I will trade in this number for a crown.

I hold cellblock Bible studies, give the sermon once a month at our church service, have cried with the suicidal, and walked up to killers and told them about *Jesus*. I have never been afraid to die in prison. I just don't want to be forgotten. I get to go up for parole each year, because I'm over 60 with a terminal illness, but I know it's up to God, and I trust Him.

Stay strong in faith, and remember, there is power in praising the name of Jesus! God bless you.

Still, Lawrence

**From: Daniel J.
Elmira Correctional
Elmira, New York**

Dear Christian Ambassadors,

I remember the exact moment in 1986 when those 12 people announced their verdict. When I think about it, the pain is a bright explosion of colors in my mind...the weight of loneliness so terrible I wished for immediate death.

The despair enveloped me in an early morning fog, and my mind and body felt like it was about to shut down. I was in pure agony. I searched for courage to go on, and in some way stay strong, but I couldn't find it. Off to prison I went, working day and night on my legal appeals, each step taken and all to no avail.

After work one day, I came back to my cell to find a letter on my cell door. It was from the former secretary of the First Baptist Church in Brewster, New York, Ms. Patricia. I can still remember her message in that letter.

'Remember Dan, whatever you've suffered, no matter how bad it's been you can still use it to be a stronger person. And remember this always, nothing is as precious to us as the magnificent gift of life. If you would have life, then fight for it. Spend time in your Bible, for that's a key way to learn who God is as a person. Spending your time wisely goes toward loving God, yourself, and your neighbor as yourself.'

Some years later sister Patricia sent her own sister, Ms. Roberta into my life, always faithful to me over the years, with uplifting in the Lord's Word.

Yet, I know in my heart that the curious thing about friendship with these two sisters, is that it draws me deeper into God's friendship, along with the other people around me with their ministries. May our Lord bless them all!

Thank you very much for all your correspondence [ministry]. God Bless you.

Sincerely, Daniel

Jesus, My Carpenter

By: Lawrence Medici,
River North Correctional Facility,
Independence, Virginia

In a world filled with loneliness,
searching for good,
I laid myself in Jesus' hands,
like a broken piece of wood.

And with his gentle tools of love,
my heart at first he carved,
and filled it with his guiding light,
where it once was dark and starved.

Then he filled my fears with perfect love,
and my doubts he chipped away,
with his promise of eternal life,
and peace for every day.

And as the finish coat he painted,
his precious blood all over me,
then the vice of life was loosened,
and my spirit was set free!

For Jesus now this life I live,
to me He's been so good,
He made me such a happy man,
from just a broken piece of wood.

**From: Michael P.
TDCJ, Estelle Unit
Huntsville, Texas**

Dear Christian Ambassadors,

Praise God, Praise God! I am free! I'm still in prison, but I'm free; no more fear, no more hate, no more anger, no more guilt. I have recently dedicated by life to Jesus Christ and given myself into the hands of his Holy Spirit that I might stand where few others do.

My neighbors and fellow prisoners are witches and devil worshippers; people who claim to hate God, and those who refuse to admit he even exists. I have been beaten and raped by some of these same men.

But, Jesus saved me one night as I prayed to die. He said, "*Yes! Die to sin and live for me.*" He loves me after all I've done? No! He loved me

and forgave me before I was even born. How could I not forgive? Plus he gave me a new heart, a heart to love them. He opened my eyes so that I could see that they are as lost and alone as I was before that night.

The Holy Spirit moved in right away. I am joyously full of his love and peace. He is my teacher and I humbly allow Him to speak through me. He said to reach out to you. I know that you will pray for me.

Bless you, Michael

**From: Alexander G.
TDCJ, Gib Lewis Unit
Woodville, Texas**

Dear Sharon,

Hi, how are you doing? As always, I hope and pray this letter finds you and Alan in very good health in Jesus' name. The same goes with everyone at Christian Ambassadors, Inc.

Just writing to thank you for sending me, "My Brother's Keeper", Volume 22, Number 2, Second Quarter, 2017 issue.

In "Growing on the Word", a scripture study, is said, "*The Word of God is the source of light, truth and power, for those who seek its meaning and apply it to their life. Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh, and we seek to follow Him.*"

Believing, that's the key to everything in the Kingdom of God. It's the way we tap into the very power of almighty God. Most all of us know that, but few of us are sure exactly how to do that kind of believing. But praise God, if you are a believer you have something you can depend on, the unchanging Word of God!

One who practices the Word of God strives to live an *unspotted life*. God has provided a clean path over which we should walk. But the muddy ditch of the world is on either side and we must not fall into it.

Thank you once again for sending me, "My Brother's Keeper". May God bless everyone at

Christian Ambassadors. Keep up the good work you are doing in Jesus' name.

Faithful reader, Alexander



What Did He Write?

By: Larry A. Thompson
BVCF, Buena Vista, CO

The story is told of a woman who was caught in the act of being unfaithful to her husband, who was publicly paraded out into the street; surrounded by her accusers and members of the community who were ready and willing to stone her to death. They brought her before The Lord to see what His judgment would be, but the crowd and the accusers were not prepared for the action that He took, because, "...*Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not.*" (John 8:6, KJV) What did He write?

In spite of the fact that He later spoke and said, "*He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her,*" (John 8:7, KJV), the question which remains that we must each answer for ourselves, especially today in such a lust-filled and greedy world that is far too concerned with self-gratification, is; What did He write?

A universal "truth" that cannot be denied, from the first to the last; from Adam to the last baby born is that we have all, "...*come short of the Glory of God;*" (Romans 3:23, KJV), because disobedience has stolen from mankind the pleasure of perfection, and selfishness continues to kill the soul. What did He write?

I don't think it was a message of condemnation, and I don't believe that it was an accusation, or an assignment of responsibility such as, "Where

is the man who sinned with the woman?"; for all have sinned.

I like so many others, have come to the conclusion that what He wrote in the dust on that fateful day was my name, and this hope-filled promise: "*My Grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*" (2 Corinthians 12:9, KJV)

He wrote that for me. What did He write for you?

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Jailhouse Prayer

By: Santiago Vigil
Territorial Correctional, Canon City, CO

As I kneel beside my bed each night
at the close of every day,
I bury my face in my hands
and tears fall as I pray.

Dear God, unworthy as I am
to ask one thing of thee,
please bless the ones I love tonight
and keep them close to me.

I can no longer run to them
and take them by the hand,
but Dear God, you can go to them
and help them understand.

I know things are tough right now
and when the day is done,
they may be lonely; as I am now!
and turn to someone new.

Just help them to keep me in their heart
until we meet again,
cause even though we're far apart
at least I know now, I have them in my heart.

The Power of Jesus

by: Ronald McClary, MCF, Maury, NC

I was blind to my greatest need,
until Jesus planted the divine seed.
Now I see that sin had me bound,
undoubtedly lost, but now I'm found.

Being deaf and dumb could not hear or speak;
now it's the Kingdom of God that I seek.
In poverty, wretched, naked and poor,
invited in by Him who said 'I am the door'.

By me if any man enters in he shall be saved,
includes the immoral, vile, degenerate and depraved.
He fed me with the manna from heaven,
Himself the pure bread that has no leaven.

Let them all come whosoever will,
feast upon Jesus and have your fill.
If any man thirst let him come and drink,
refreshing, satisfying, above all you imagine or think.

Joy, even the water is turned into wine,
even the renewing of your mind.
He will calm the sea in the raging storm;
you have the comforter, no need to be woebegone.

Unclean spirits have no power against the elect,
any boasting by them you simply reject.
The greatest sign, infallible proof is I'm born again,
by Jesus' power no longer dominated and ruled by sin.

My Brother's Keeper

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Inspirational articles and poems, especially from current or former prison inmates, are invited and will be prayerfully considered for publication. **Please request a copy of the publication guidelines before submitting an article for consideration.**

Vision Statement – Christian Ambassadors exists to bring the ministry of Jesus Christ into the lives of people, demonstrating how the gospel teachings can help a person live a more abundant life, filled with joy, hope, and purpose.

If you, a member of your family, or a friend, are imprisoned, wanting to find new hope, purpose and direction in life, please contact us at Christian Ambassadors. Our website can be visited at:

<http://www.christian-ambassadors.org>