



Interviews with God

- **I ASK:** “*Can one die for the sins of another?*”
- **THUS SAITH THE LORD:** “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; . . . and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all.” Isaiah 53:5–6.
“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:6–8.
- **TO WHICH I RESPOND:** “My God, I thank Thee that Jesus has taken the sinner’s place on the cross. This is the amazing wonder of all time, yet it is none the less true that Thy Son has come into the world to give His life a ransom for transgressors. He takes all my sin and He calls it His own. His righteousness, He calls mine. Lord, even in eternity I cannot sufficiently praise Thee for this manifestation of Thy wonderful love. Amen.”

Different ways to pray

“And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it. And Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord” Isaiah 37:14.

Hezekiah, King of Israel, received a threatening letter from a much more powerful king—the King of Assyria. The Assyrian potentate demanded unconditional surrender, and told Hezekiah not to trust in God. The letter was graphic, warning that resistance meant the Israelites would have to suffer in a most degraded and humiliating manner before they died (2 Kings 18).

So Hezekiah went to the temple **“and spread it out before the Lord.”** Then he prayed: **“O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubim, Thou art the God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth, Thou hast made heaven and earth. Incline Thine ear, O Lord, and hear; open Thine eyes, O Lord, and see, and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God”** (Isaiah 37:16–17). Hezekiah basically said, ‘Lord, would You read this? Please do something about it!’

And God did. Indeed, what He did was spectacular. **“Then the Angel of the Lord, went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand. And when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses”** (Isaiah 37:36). So, what piece of paper would you like to spread out before the Lord? A financial statement that’s overwhelming? A

divorce decree? A medical diagnosis? An angry email? Any piece of paper that causes you stress can be an invitation to prayer, and a candidate to be spread out before the Lord. If it's important to you, it's important to Him. You say, 'I've never done anything like that before.' Try it. Give it to God, trust Him, and watch how He works things out for you.

Further study: Revelations 19–22, Mark 11:12–26, Psalm 129, Proverbs 12:27–28.

A Short Exposition of 1 Peter

(Continued from June – August 2019 edition)

Why are true Christians to bless and thank “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?”

1 Peter 1:3: **“Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”**

(a) ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’

The Christians to whom St Peter wrote this letter needed encouragement because they were suffering much for their faith in Christ and their loyalty to His Word. There is no better way of cheering up those Christians struggling to bear their heavy cross which weighs down upon them, than by reminding them of all the wonderful things that Christ has done for them. When they realize what an enormous debt they owe to Christ for His grace and mercy, and when they fully understand that the purpose of their cross is to strengthen their faith and draw them closer to their Saviour, they too will do as St Peter urges: “Bless, praise and thank their Heavenly Father.”

(b) ‘Blessed’

‘Blessed’ comes from two Greek words meaning ‘to speak good words about someone.’ Hence it means ‘to praise, to celebrate with praises.’ This particular Greek word is used only of God in the New Testament. In the New Testament when a true Christian BLESSES GOD, it refers to the act of praising, thanking and speaking well of God after having realized all that God has done to save him by sending Christ to suffer and die for his sins, by giving him His Word in its truth and purity and for keeping him in the true faith through the Word. This praising and thanking of God PROVES itself in the LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN. Out of love to Christ the Christian stops his murmuring, complaining and speaking against God when he has to bear the cross and joyfully, faithfully and steadfastly follows His Saviour in happy days as well as in the dark night of tribulation, in sorrow, as well as in joy. His motto is: ‘LEAD THE WAY, LORD, AND I SHALL HAPPILY FOLLOW.’ Let us imitate Chrysostom—the ancient Church father who was banished from his country, thrust into misery, and had much to suffer because of his faithfulness to God’s Word, yet died with those wonderful words on his lips: “God be praised for everything!” Let us remember the words of St Paul: **“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”** 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

It is so important that out of love to Christ we learn to bless, praise and thank Him for all that He has done for us, EVEN IN THE MOST DIFFICULT TRIBULATION which these last days offer. If we don’t then the Lord will remove His wonderful blessings (His Word and grace) from us. That would be the worst fate that could possibly happen to us; for then we would lose our eternal salvation.

(c) ‘The God and Father’

In this expression there are not two persons referred to, but the one and the same person, namely, the first Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Father. The word ‘Father’ is a further description of the Person called God. There is an important Greek rule of grammar to remember here over against the Jehovah Witnesses and others who deny the doctrine of the Trinity and the Deity (Godhead) of Christ.

This rule is as follows:

“When two nouns in the same case are connected by the Greek word ‘and,’ and the first noun is preceded by the definite article ‘THE,’ and the second noun is NOT preceded by the definite article, the second noun refers to the same person or thing to which the first noun refers, AND IS A FURTHER DESCRIPTION OF IT.”

Eg Ephesians 4:11: “...and some, pastors and teachers”

Note: Here Pastors and teachers refer to the same person. Here we learn that a pastor must at the same time be a teacher. He is a teaching-pastor.

Note: Here St Peter refers to the First Person of the Holy Trinity Who is both TRUE GOD and at the same time ‘FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.’ If you wish to study this interesting rule of Greek grammar further, look up 2 Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 1:3; 2 Peter 1:11; 2:20 and 3:18.

(d) ‘Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’

There is a tremendous depth of Scripture doctrine in these few words. Since the Holy Spirit inspired these words using St Peter as His instrument to write them, they are there for a purpose. The word ‘LORD’ is the Greek word ‘Kurios,’ which is the equivalent to the Old Testament ‘JEHOVAH’. Here Christ in the word ‘LORD’ is called the ‘one and only true God.’ In Philippians 2:11 we read, “**That every tongue** (on the last great day, TJW) **should confess that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD** (Kurios = the one true God), **to the glory of God the Father.**” They will be compelled to confess this willingly or unwillingly.

Please NOTE and LEARN Colossians 2:9, “**In Him (Christ) dwelleth all the fullness of the GODHEAD BODILY!**” 1 John 5:20, “**This (Jesus Christ) IS THE TRUE GOD, AND ETERNAL LIFE.**”

Then the word ‘JESUS’ also has a very important meaning. The angel told Joseph in Matthew 1:21, “**She (Mary) shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS; FOR** (indicates the reason for giving this name) **HE SHALL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS.**” Hence Jesus means ‘SAVIOUR, REDEEMER, HELPER.’ Every time we think of the name ‘Jesus’ we should remember His wonderful work of Redemption, how He came into this sin infested world to buy us all back from sin, death and the power of the devil. The Hebrew equivalent for ‘Jesus’ is ‘Joshua’ or ‘Jeshua.’ Like Joshua, the successor of Moses, the son of Nun, who led the children of Israel into the land of promise, so Jesus, “**the Captain of our salvation,**” Hebrews 2:10, delivers us from our great enemy, Satan, and leads us into the heavenly Canaan. Like Jeshua, the high-priest, who led the Jews back from the Babylonian captivity, Ezra 2:2; 3:8, so Jesus our Great High Priest, has delivered us from the slavery of Satan.

The name ‘CHRIST’ means ‘the promised Messiah’ or ‘the ANNOINTED ONE.’ In Psalm 45:7, we learn: “**Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath ANNOINTED THEE WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE THY FELLOWS.**” The Greek word ‘Christ’ means the same as ‘the MESSIAH.’ In John 1:41 Andrew says to his brother Simon Peter, “**We have found MESSIAS, which is, being interpreted, THE CHRIST.**” Christ was anointed far above His fellows or associates. These ‘fellows’ or ‘associates’ were the kings, prophets and priests of the Old Testament who were anointed with OIL. Read Leviticus 4:3; 6:20; Exodus 28:41; 29:7; 1 Samuel 9:16; 15:1; 2 Samuel 23:1. The oil symbolised the Holy Spirit and by this act they were set apart and consecrated for their work in the service of the Lord. Read 1 Samuel 16:6; Psalm 89:9; Isaiah 45:1. Christ was not anointed with OIL; but according to His human nature only (for His divine nature from eternity was in possession of all the qualities of God), Christ was ANNOINTED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHOUT MEASURE. Read Acts 10:38; Isaiah 61:1.

Therefore CHRIST is our great:

- PROPHET—Who, has given us His inspired, inerrant Word and through this shows us the way to eternal life and what we are to do to show Him our THANKS, Deuteronomy 18:15;
- HIGH PRIEST—Who, fulfilled the Law in our stead perfectly, sacrificed Himself for us, and still pleads for us with His heavenly Father, Galatians 4:4,5; Hebrews 7:26,27; 1 John 2:1–2;
- KING—Who with His almighty POWER rules over all things, governs and protects His Church and finally leads it to glory, Matthew 28:18; John 18:36–37; 2 Timothy 4:18.

This is what we should think of when we hear or read the name ‘CHRIST.’

Here St Peter calls the First Person of the Trinity “the FATHER of our Lord Jesus Christ.” God the Father has no other Son like Jesus. It is because Jesus is UNIQUELY begotten of the Father from eternity, that He is TRUE GOD. Read John 3:1. Since the Father is almighty, all-knowing and present everywhere, and since Jesus is begotten of the Father from eternity, THEN Jesus is ALMIGHTY (Matthew 28:18), ALL-KNOWING (John 21:17) and PRESENT EVERYWHERE (Matthew 28:20) just as His Father is. If Jesus was not TRUE GOD then He would not have been able to conquer Satan’s power, because Satan is next in power to God; nor would He have been able to pay for the sins of the world, for no mere human being nor any of the angels can do that, Psalm 49:7. If He were only TRUE GOD and not at the same time a true man, then He could not have died, for God cannot die. He had to be both true God and true man in order to save and redeem us. Therefore, every religion which denies that Jesus is true God is hopeless, useless and blasphemous.

However, by addressing God as ‘Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,’ St Peter urges us to do two more things:

- 1) That the only way we can approach God the Father in prayer or to be received into ETERNAL LIFE is THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS. Galatians 3:26;
- 2) That true Christians are to regard Christ’s Father as their true Father, as Doctor Luther tells us in His explanation to the Introduction of the Lord’s Prayer: “God would by these words tenderly invite us to believe that He is our TRUE FATHER and that we are His TRUE CHILDREN, so that we may, with all BOLDNESS AND CONFIDENCE ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.”

Another interesting fact is St Peter’s reference to the LORD’S PRAYER:

- OUR—1:4, at the end
- FATHER—Chapters 1:3,14,17,23; 2:2
- IN HEAVEN—1:4, at the end
- HALLOWED BE THY NAME—1:15–16; 3:15
- THY KINGDOM COME—2:9
- THY WILL BE DONE—2:15; 3:17; 4:2,19
- DAILY BREAD—5:7
- FORGIVENESS OF SINS- 4:1,8
- TEMPTATION—4:12
- DELIVERANCE FROM EVIL—4:18.

St Peter refers to PRAYER itself in chapter 3:7 and 4:7.

Next time we shall have a look at FIVE REASONS Why True Christians are to bless and thank the “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Can we choose our end?

On 1 November, Brittany Maynard, a young newly-married woman, took her own life rather than suffer the effects of her rapidly progressing brain cancer. In the UK recently, a mother won the right to kill her severely disabled autistic daughter who was in continual pain. Increasingly, assisted suicide and euthanasia are being championed as brave and ethical ways to end the suffering of oneself or a loved one who is unable to make that decision for him- or herself.

While few of us have experienced the terrible situations that are increasingly driving people to seek to hasten death, the Bible speaks clearly about this issue and forbids self-murder or ‘compassionate’ murder of another person. So while we should certainly empathize with those who are facing what seem like impossibly painful choices, we should also point them to the hope we have in the Gospel.

Life is valuable—it is a gift from God.

Genesis 2:7: **“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”**

Job 12:10: **“In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.”**

Acts 17:25: **“Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life and breath and all things.”**

Not only does He give life, but He knows the exact lifespan that each person will have and sustains that life, Job 14:5, **“Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.”**

“Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect, (unborn), and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them” Psalm 139:16.

Since life comes from God, and because people are created in God’s image, murder is a severe sin against God. Cain, the first murderer, is held up in Scripture as the ultimate cautionary tale of a wicked person (1 John 3:12; Jude 1:11). After the Flood, God commands Noah’s descendants to carry out capital punishment on any murderer (Genesis 9:5–6). In the Mosaic Law, murder was punished with mandatory execution; no ransom could be accepted (Numbers 35:31). And even in the case of accidental death, the manslaughterer faced exile to one of the cities of refuge, meaning his entire life was uprooted in an instant for an indefinite period of time (until the death of the current high priest).

Suicide was seen as a supremely dishonourable death. In fact, the only cases of true suicide in Scripture are Saul, Ahithophel and Judas, all infamous characters. Saul had disobeyed God and was rejected by Him, and had continued in his rebellion as far as necromancy (trying to speak to the dead). His suicide was to avoid an inevitable slaughter at the hands of the Philistines, but it was still a dishonourable and nearly unprecedented act (1 Samuel 31). Ahithophel was a counsellor to Absalom when he attempted a coup of his father’s kingdom, so his suicide was just a further confirmation of his dishonourable character (2 Samuel 17). Judas despaired after betraying Jesus; he knew what a terrible sin he had committed, but rather than repent and seek forgiveness, he went and hung himself (Matthew 27). There is **no** case of approved suicide or murder in the Bible.

Even life with suffering is valuable

Some people may affirm the broader principle of the value of life, but may argue that there is a point at which a person’s suffering outweighs the value of his or her life, and it thus becomes acceptable to end that life. However, this is not biblical.

There were many sick and disabled people Jesus healed throughout His ministry—some of whom had been disabled for years before Jesus healed them, with no prospect for natural recovery—and Scripture never indicates that these people were less valuable than their able-bodied neighbours. Indeed, some of the most touching characters of the Gospels are the people who assist the disabled: the friends of the paralytic, for example, who dismantled the roof of a house to get him near Jesus (Matthew 9). Or the parents of demon-possessed children, who had cared for them for an undisclosed amount of time before Jesus cast the demons out (Matthew 15:21–28; 17:14–18).

Jesus' example shows us that the appropriate thing to do for disabled and suffering people is to alleviate their pain, but not to kill them. We do not have the power to provide miraculous healing for people, but modern medicine has come a long way regarding palliative and hospice care. In many cases, even people with serious illnesses can live out their final days in relative comfort. Sometimes if certain medication is given in high enough doses to adequately alleviate suffering, it is known that it will likely have an unintended side effect of hastening a death that was coming soon anyway. In such cases, a delicate 'trade-off' decision has to be made, with the patient, the medical carers and the family all involved in finding the appropriate balance between alleviating suffering and prolonging the process of dying.

This is however quite different from providing people with pills that have the primary purpose of ending their life. That is **not** a legitimate extension of this principle. In fact it would compromise the quality of the efforts to provide the best care possible. It is much less expensive to kill someone than to medicate them so their final days are more comfortable, so if this became widely seen as an 'ethical' way to deal with terminal illnesses, it would tend to undermine the good work of palliative and hospice care.

The 'death with dignity' crowd claims to care about the suffering person in the last stages of a terminal illness. If that is really true, they should be throwing their efforts and funding into efforts to improve the care that is already available to ease the pain of people who are dying, not trying to get them to die sooner.

In fact, it is likely that caring about the comfort of dying people may not be the highest priority of most activists, especially those who promote the strategy of Voluntary Stop Eating and Drinking (VSED) to people who want to die, as it does not require anyone else to participate. Anyone will die from starvation and dehydration if they refuse to eat and drink, but it is a terrible, painful way to die.

A fact sheet from the Patients' Rights Council states: As a person dies from dehydration, his or her mouth dries out and becomes caked or coated with thick material; lips become parched and cracked; the tongue swells and could crack; eyes recede back into their orbits; cheeks become hollow; lining of the nose might crack and cause the nose to bleed; skin begins to hang loose on the body and becomes dry and scaly; urine would become highly concentrated, leading to burning of the bladder; lining of the stomach dries out, likely causing the person to experience dry heaves and vomiting; body temperature can become very high; brain cells dry out, causing convulsions; respiratory tract also dries out causing thick secretions that could plug the lungs and cause death. At some point the person's major organs, including the lungs, heart, and brain give out and death occurs.

In fact, euthanasia advocate Dr Helga Kuhse said 30 years ago: "If we can get people to accept the removal of all treatment and care—especially the removal of food and fluids—they will see what a painful way this is to die and then, in the patient's best interest, they will accept the lethal injection." So one might be justified in seeing the VSED strategy as promoting ill people killing themselves in a horrifically painful way, in order to get a less painful way of killing ill people legalized.

The danger is of seeing death as a solution, not a problem

Where assisted suicide has been legalized, it has rapidly expanded to allow killing of people who are not terminally ill. In the Netherlands, people have committed assisted suicide because they are depressed. One woman killed herself because she didn't like 'losing her looks' as she aged. In this horrifying case, the healthy woman left for Switzerland without telling her children where she was

going. They only learned of their mother’s death when they received her ashes and death certificate. And most worryingly, disabled children may now be euthanized in Belgium and the Netherlands.

These cases are not part of the ‘face of assisted suicide’ that proponents put forward as those who should be allowed to bypass terrible suffering followed by inevitable death. But these cases are the logical extension of the idea that death is a solution to suffering.

Also, assisted suicide and euthanasia inherently devalue disabled life. The right to die may become a ‘duty to die’. In fact, one strong motivator for people seeking assisted suicide is the desire not to become a burden on loved ones. What these people need is assurance that they are loved and that their life still has value, not a prescription of lethal amounts of medication.

There is an urgent spiritual question for those who face death in months or weeks—precisely the people who may seek assisted suicide: are you ready for eternal life? Scripture teaches clearly that when we die, we will go to one of two destinations. Our default destination is a place of judgment, away from the presence of God and all the good things He gives to His people. We all deserve to go there, because we have all broken God’s law.

However, God’s Son, Jesus Christ, died to pay the penalty for our sin, so that we could be reconciled to God and adopted into His family. Furthermore, Christ was raised and promises that we will be raised to bodies like His that will never die or get sick or old. Those who trust in Him will go to be with Him at death to await the resurrection of the dead. He describes this place as Paradise, a lovely, restful place where we will be with Him and other believers.

It may seem unloving to tell dying people that they are going to Hell unless they believe in Jesus, but quite the opposite: it is the most loving thing we can do. In weeks or months, those facing terminal illnesses will face eternity either with Jesus or apart from Him, and so the dying person has only a little time left to repent from their sins and trust in Christ.

Even fading life is worth living

It is too late for Brittany Maynard, who unfortunately committed suicide, despite pleas from other people suffering similar terminal illness to avail herself of the option of palliative care. However, it is important for Christians to know that when faced with a terminal illness, killing oneself is not an option. And we should support the efforts of those who help to ease the last days of dying.

(Adapted from *Can we choose our end? Assisted suicide and euthanasia are not the answer* by Lita Cosner— <https://creation.com/>)

The Duties and Obligations of Office Bearers

(Continued from June – August 2019 edition)

The Chairman —Part II

The Chairman should be given the respect he deserves and addressed as Mr Chairman, since all within a meeting is addressed through him, even if they are replying to a question or an argument from another individual.

The Chairman is to be impartial in conducting the meeting, not giving favours to this or that member while refusing the same privileges to others. A fair hearing must be given to all who obey the rules. Every member should have an equal chance to speak, so long as they keep within the limits of time and do not repeat themselves. The Chairman is there not to impose his will on the gathering, not to stage-manage the outcome, but to act as a non-playing referee and to conduct affairs in an orderly manner according to the rules of meeting procedure. He is to allow the group to reach their own

decision. Just as the crowd is indignant if the umpire deliberately gives favours to one side, so a meeting has every right to be unhappy if their umpire is unfair in his rulings. A Chairman can go away satisfied, happy that he has performed his tasks, not if the outcome has been according to his way of thinking, but if the meeting has been conducted efficiently.

Therefore, the Chairman has every right to move or second motions, but generally refrains from doing so, lest his impartiality be questioned. If he wishes to speak at length on any contentious matter, he should ask the vice-chairman to take the chair while he has his say.

If a dispute concerning meeting procedure arises, or if he is uncertain what course of action to take, the Chairman should not hesitate to ask for the guidance of the pastor, the older members of the Society, and the meeting itself. If a unanimous decision is not come to as regards procedure of the meeting, the matter should be decided by a majority vote of the meeting.

The Chairman need not normally vote in general matters where a clear majority reigns. However, if he sees that the meeting is almost equally divided on the matter, the Chairman has the right to a deliberate vote (his first vote shown when the meeting votes) and a casting vote (an extra vote taken when the number for and against the decision is equal). It is not compulsory for him to use this casting vote. He may desire to refrain from using it so as not to be accused of forcing his individual opinion upon the gathering. In such a case, he should declare that the motion is not carried since a majority is not gained.

If the Chairman does use his casting vote, he should vote in accordance with what he judges to be the general opinion of the meeting, even if that not be the same as his first vote.

Finally, a good dose of sound, Christian common sense goes a long way in solving problems that arise.

The Chairman should remember that the powers he has by virtue of his office have been given to him by the Society. Therefore he should regard himself, not as their superior or ruler, but as their servant.

The Society revolves to a large extent around their Chairman. If he is negligent or fails in his duties, this will very much affect the welfare of this group. But if, out of love to the Saviour, he with zeal uses his gifts to perform his tasks to the best of his abilities, he can be confident that his Society will be successful and its members have an interesting and enjoyable time.

(Next time we will look at Meeting Procedure).