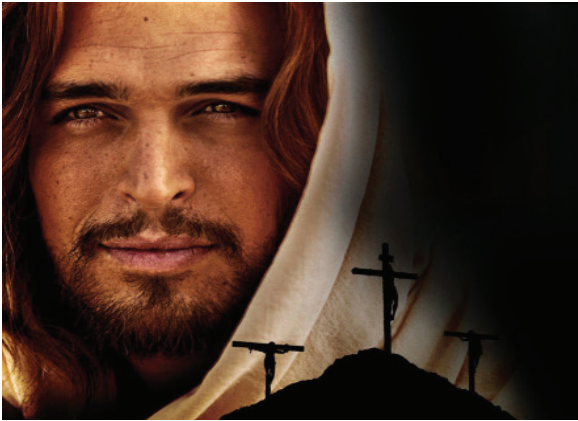




**An undenominational publication  
devoted to the teachings of Jesus and  
His apostles and dedicated to those  
who want to know more about the Bible**

Volume 14, Number 4, 4th Quarter 2022.

## **ONE SOLITARY LIFE**



Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher.

He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put His foot in-

side a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself.

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. While He was dying His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth – His coat. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Twenty long centuries have come and gone, and today He is a centerpiece of the human race and leader of the column of progress.

I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that were ever built; all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that One Solitary Life.

**—James Allen Francis**

# DOWN IS UP!

How does the world measure greatness? The focus is on self fulfillment. *“I want to be myself!” “Be all you can be!” “What’s in it for me?”* It’s a me first, self serving mentality. Worth is measured by one’s level of achievement in wealth, position, power, beauty, or prestige. What do you think Jesus would say about all this?



One day, Jesus’s disciples were arguing about which of them was the greatest.

Imagine that! Knowing what was in their hearts he beckoned a little child to come to him, held him in his arms and said *“Unless you turn and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven”* This answer must have startled them since their picture of greatness had been the opposite of being humble like a child.

On another occasion, after being asked by James and John if he would give them the seats of honor on his right and left in his kingdom, the other disciples became indignant. Jesus said *“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. Whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.”*

At the last Passover feast with his disciples Jesus gets up from the table, kneels down, and begins washing their feet, performing the task of the lowest servant. They were totally shocked. Peter even refused to let Jesus do it at first until Jesus told him he would no longer be his disciple if he refused. Jesus said *“I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”* What was the point of the Lord of all doing the task of the lowest servant? If he could lower himself to do this for them, then they could be servants of their fellowmen.

Being a Christian means living a life of service to others, and counting others as better than ourselves. We are commanded to do good to others, especially believers, and we are described as God’s handiwork, created to do good works. We are told that those who humble themselves will be exalted, and those who exalt themselves will be humbled.

# WHOM SHOULD WE FEAR?



Recently, we have seen people ostracized, defamed, and ridiculed because of statements that do not hold up to woke culture's standard of political correctness. Even churches have been under fire for standing up for righteousness.

An ungodly culture seeks to control people through fear. This is a tactic used to control God's people from

the beginning. Jesus faced attempts at intimidation from the religious leaders of His own time. When sending His followers out to preach, Jesus addressed how they should respond to intimidation.

In Matthew 10:24-25 Jesus states that a servant is not above his master, and if culture mistreated Jesus, it will mistreat His followers. As we know, Jesus *was* mistreated. Thus, we can *expect* to be mistreated as well. How then should the followers of Jesus respond to intimidation that sometimes includes violence?

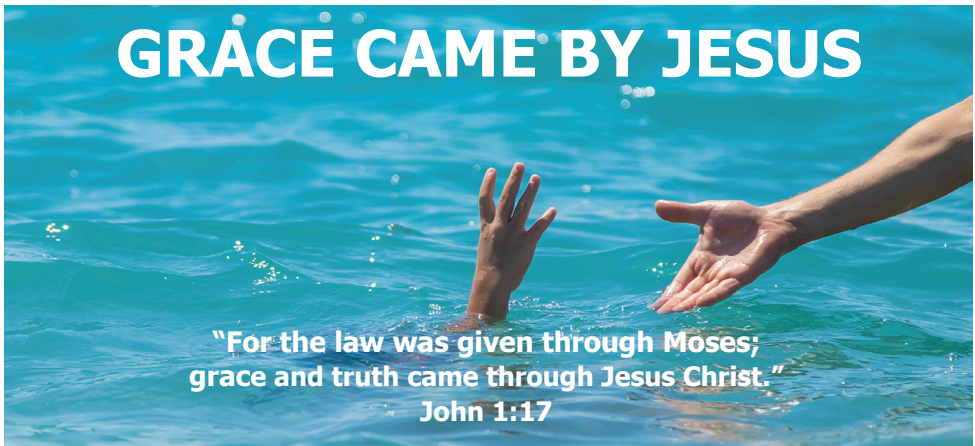
Jesus says, "*Do not fear them*" (Matthew 10:26). Why shouldn't we fear intimidation? Jesus explains that the forces of evil are only able to destroy the body, but they cannot touch the soul (Matthew 10:28). The persecutions from the hostile world can only result in Christ's followers going to be with God in heaven.

However, Jesus does say that there is someone His disciples should fear: "*fear Him who can destroy your body and soul in hell*" (Matthew 10:28). Who is it that can destroy both our body and our soul? The answer is God the Lawgiver, the ultimate Judge. Jesus tells us that we should not fear man, but we should fear God.

Jesus goes on and tells us how much God loves us. God cares for sparrows and knows the number of hairs on our heads. He cares for us and does not want anyone to perish, but that "*all come to repentance*" (2 Peter 3:9).

What should we do? Don't fear the intimidation of an angry ungodly culture. Instead, "*fear God and keep His commandments.*" He is the one before whom we will stand to give account for the way we have lived (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

— **David Rollert**, Lakes Region Church of Christ  
Tilton, New Hampshire



What is the difference between the “*law*” God gave through Moses, and the “*grace and truth*” that came through Jesus Christ? The proceeding verse answers that question: “*For from His fullness we have all received grace upon grace.*” The law of Moses was a gift from God; it was not a mistake. The law was “*given*” but grace and truth “*came*” and keeps coming with boundless capacity. When we fail God does not need to apply more law! What we need is not more law but more grace!

The law “*can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near*” (Hebrews 10:1).

Jesus came to remove the sin of failing to perfectly obey the law. The Son of God personally gave His life as the price that buys us back from the sentence of death.

Now we can experience the fullness of God’s grace through His Son, Jesus. The law’s verdict in Romans 3:23 is this: “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” But God’s gospel of grace overturns that verdict: “*...we are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*”(Romans 3:24).

Does God have enough grace to redeem everyone? The Giver of grace answers: “*The free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many*” (Romans 5:15).

The parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 is a powerful lesson in grace. Having abused his father’s kindness, the prodigal son must have wondered where his father got such grace to celebrate his return. His brother wanted to address his wrongs and apply the law, but his father came to him with open arms...Grace made the difference!

# JESUS & HIS WORD GO TOGETHER

People in the days of Jesus Christ rejected both His person and the message He preached. Some vehemently opposed him. Some said the word or message preached by Christ was too hard to receive. They asked: “Who can accept this teaching?” (John 6:60). Many were not ready to receive His word, and stopped following Him.

A clear description to help one understand Christ as the Word of God is expressed when He compared himself to the light. *“I have come into the world as light so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.... The word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day”* (John 12:46-48).

*Believing* in Jesus Christ and a commitment to *obey* His teachings are inseparable. We must give the same respect to His words as we give to His person. Furthermore, the love and respect we give to God Himself is the same love and respect we give to Jesus, God’s Son. Jesus said: *“I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has Himself given me a commandment --- what to say and what to speak”* (John 12:49-50).



Knowing Him this way will make us take His word seriously. Anyone who fails to accept His words and to obey His commands will be condemned (2 Thessalonians 1:8-10). The *teaching* of Christ and the *person* of Christ go together. Believe in Him, believe His word, do what He commands. It is the pathway to eternal life.

— Paul Oppong, Church of Christ  
North Bronx, New York City, NY



# PUTTING JESUS FIRST

Jesus said: “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law”; and a man’s enemies will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 10:34-39).

Strong words. Demanding words. Words that compel me to ask: “Have I put Christ first - above everything?”

This challenge is as old as the Temptation in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Adam was standing with Eve as she spoke with the serpent. Adam could have resisted Satan’s temptation. He could have driven the serpent away. He could have warned Eve about this deception. He should have done *something*, but Adam *failed* to act. In fact, he participated in his wife’s sin — eating the forbidden fruit with her. They lost their inheritance and set in motion troubles for all future generations; troubles that can only be solved by coming to Christ.

Did Adam fail because he chose his wife over God? Did he fail because he wanted to avoid conflict in his marriage? Did he fail because he was afraid? Was it a little bit of all of the above? We don’t really know the full answer to those questions. In the final analysis neither the man nor the woman put God first.

Are we putting Christ first when we compromise the teachings of Jesus in the pursuit of peace with loved ones, the boss at work, job security, worldly friends or possible criticism or persecution? Are we putting Christ first when we allow our “influencers” to lead us into sin? Are we putting Christ first when we allow our children, rather than Christ, determine our family’s spiritual schedule?

Our priorities will reveal our allegiance. Our activities will reveal our loyalty.

Day-to-day choices in the home, on the job, in the marketplace and in leisure activities reveal our allegiance; whether it is to Christ; to ourselves; to our loved ones; or to Satan. Actions reveal what *matters most* to us.

# HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

Being a “Christian” is not the same thing as living in a “Christian Nation” or being born into a “Christian family”. It is not the same thing as “going to Church”, being able to recite the “Lord’s Prayer” or celebrating the birth of Jesus on Christmas. A “Christian” is one who has made a personal decision to give his life to Christ, to obey His teachings, to trust in His blood to wash away his sins. A Christian is one who trusts in Jesus, grows spiritually in Jesus, one who leans upon Him for spiritual strength; who looks to Jesus to guide and sustain him every single day.

## FAITH IN JESUS

The foundation of being a Christian is a genuine *trust* in Him to forgive our sins and to make us right with God. Faith is more than accepting the historical fact that Jesus once lived on earth. It is a matter of *personal trust* in His saving power. It is abandoning the thought that one can earn his way to heaven by his own skills, moral virtue, by being a good neighbor, paying his taxes, with a little luck thrown in. One must *trust* Jesus to do for him what he cannot do for himself! The Bible says: “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son , that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life*” (John 3:16).

## REPENTANCE OF SINS

Saving faith is obedient faith, a deliberate decision to *turn* from what one knows to be sinful in life. Repentance is more than being sorry for offending God, it is an act of *changing* behavior. We cannot undo our past but we can start afresh; we can walk in a new direction; we can repent. Jesus said: “*Unless you repent you will perish*” (Luke 13:5).

## BAPTISM (IMMERSION) INTO JESUS

The baptism you read about in your own Bible is immersion in water, accompanied by a sincere “*calling on the name of the Lord*” for sins to be “*washed away*” in the blood of Jesus Christ (Acts 22:16). Jesus sent His apostles to teach and baptize (immerse) people in all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). He said one must be “*born of water and the Spirit*” to enter God’s kingdom (John 3:3-5). Those who became Christians in the Scriptures understood they were being immersed to receive “*forgiveness of sins*” (Acts 2:38), and that they were rising from the water to walk in “*newness of life*” (Romans 6:3-4). Have you done what you need to do to be a Christian? You do not need to wait — you can become a Christian today.

# JESUS IS OUR LEADER

A leader is one who leads or commands a group and is successful at leading the way for others. In sports leaders such as the quarterback of the football or head coach of basketball who instructs his players or the captain of a baseball team, provide stability and correctness for their teams. In almost every situation there must be a leader in charge to make everything function as it should and to guide people in the right direction. There is no better teacher or leader than Jesus.

Jesus was an effective leader because He had no doubt about His identity and His ability. He did not let other people define Him; He defined himself. He said His purpose on earth was to save sinners. He led the way. People followed Him and learned from Him. His purpose was that everyone come to Him on bended knee, repent of his sins and be baptized in water to acknowledge the shedding of His blood for the *“forgiveness of sins”* and come forth from the waters to begin a new life in Jesus.

Listen to His leadership call!

*“I am the light of the world”* (John 8:12)

*“I am the Son of God”* (John 5:18)

*“I am the way, the truth and the life”* (John 14:6)

*“I am the bread of life”* (John 6:35)

In making the decision to follow Jesus with true conviction, one realizes that Jesus is the greatest gift he has ever received or ever will receive, and that Jesus sacrificed His earthly life on the cross for all mankind — God’s greatest creation.

Will you let Jesus become your Leader? Will you decide now to follow Jesus? It’s the most important decision you will ever make. Jesus will lead you safely to your home with God in heaven.



— Jeff McBriarity, Church of Christ  
New Milford, Connecticut



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Nathaniel Hios, Minister  
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Web: [kitterycoc.com](http://kitterycoc.com)



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122 Crowell Rd; Zip: 04940; Tel: 207-578-2629  
Bruce Rollins, Minister  
Sun: 9:30 AM (Bible Class), 10:30 AM (Worship)

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Cleve Stafford, Minister  
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Web: [berkshirecountycoc.org](http://berkshirecountycoc.org)



[berkshvts.ma](http://berkshvts.ma)

#### WORCESTER CHURCH OF CHRIST

89 Beaver Brook Prkwy. Tel: 508-754-8625  
John Nat Kissi, Minister  
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Web: [worcestercoc.org](http://worcestercoc.org)



[worcestercoc.org](http://worcestercoc.org)

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336 Salmon Falls Rd; Tel: 207-651-0703  
Sun: Bible Classes 10 AM; Worship 11 AM  
Web: <https://www.facebook.com/RochesterNHCoC/>



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Web: <https://halfmoonchurchofchrist.org>



[halfmoonchurchofchrist](https://halfmoonchurchofchrist.org)

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Sun: 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM (Bible Class and Worship)  
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Kirk Israel, Minister Tel: 802-683-4970  
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Web: [vermontchurchofchrist.com](http://vermontchurchofchrist.com)



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