

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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They Had Been with Jesus

Dan Huff

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

When we look at the Apostles, they had not been to the rabbinic schools. They were fisherman. However, it was not their ignorance; it was their boldness because “*they had been with Jesus.*” This truth stood out and made an impression on the Sanhedrin Council.

The Apostles’ conviction on the truth of who Jesus is moved them to personally make changes in their lives, from being fishermen to being followers of Jesus, to being witnesses and bearing testimony of Jesus (Acts 1:8). For they had witnessed His character; they had drunk deeply from His teaching, considered the pieces of evidence which brought them to the verdict (speaking of Jesus): “*And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12, ESV). They spoke boldly and were steadfast, uncompromising, and tenacious in what they had seen, heard, and touched.

When people look at you and me, when they hear the words we speak as we daily interact with them at work and at school, and examine our character, can they see in us that we have been with Jesus? We are not the Apostles of Christ. We did not walk with Him in the flesh; however, we have their testimony. We walk with Him by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), through the witness and testimony of the Apostles.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life — the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was

manifested to us — that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full (1 John 1:1-4).

For they were led into all truth by the Spirit of truth (John 16:15).

The things that are written and preserved for us are there to

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plant a seed of faith in the hearts of the seeking and open-minded readers (1 Peter 1:22-25). It is through adherence to the Apostles’ testimony that we can have fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus. The word of God, when taken in, nurtured, cherished, and protected, has the power to change —transform—lives if we are willing.

Some years ago there was a cartoon of Garfield the cat. He had tied several books to his head, and the caption was, “I’m learning by osmosis.” Sometimes Christians want the word of God to be in them without the effort of prayerfully studying and applying. Many want to be associated with Jesus, and the benefits that come from Him, but don’t want to get close enough for Him to change them. They don’t want to commit.

If you have obeyed the Gospel because of your faith in Jesus Christ, Paul says you “*have put on Christ*” and “*have been united*

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together with Him" in your baptism (**Galatians 3:27, Romans 6:5**). This is just the beginning of the transformation process. Now, you need to grow to be mature and maturing Christians. It is the Lord's desire that we be changed and transformed from who we were (broken, in bondage to sin, worldly, and selfish). He can make us whole, free from sin and self, so that we can serve the Lord and His people.

It is God's plan and desire that we mold and shape our lives into the image of His Son (**Romans 8:29**), allowing His character, His life, and His light to permeate all of our being, inside and out. The Lord is seeking plants: children that look like Him! In this transformation process, we must constantly be pulling those stubborn weeds of the works of the flesh that can choke out the spiritual seed and our life in Christ, out of the garden of our hearts—putting them to death, killing the old man and his ways (**Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5ff**). We must focus our minds and efforts on bearing the fruit of the Spirit.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-24**).*

We may not be what we want to be, but with the Lord's help, we are not what we were before committing to Christ, putting Him on, and being united together with Him in baptism. Prayerfully, we can be a little more each day like the Master: sharing a touch of love with those we are around each day, going the extra mile, and suffering long in patience. Desiring and seeking out the good in situations—no matter how difficult. Shining a ray of kindness, holding fast faithfully, and practicing a little more self-control. Doing what is right in God's sight, even when it might not be easy or always appreciated, proves what is *"that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"* (**Romans 12:1-2**). Living the transformation to His glory and praise!

Have you been with Jesus? How has being with Jesus changed your life?

"The Savior of All Men" -- How?

Steve Wright

God is, by nature, a Savior. In **Hosea 13:4** and **Isaiah 43: 3, 11**, as well as other places, we see God asserting that He alone is God and that besides Him, there is no Savior.

In **1 Timothy 4:10**, we read, *"For to this end we toil and strive because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe."* Now, before we talk about the word *"especially"* in that verse, let's digest what comes before it. How is God the "Savior of all People?" Does this mean "Universalism?" No, it cannot mean Universalism because that would clearly violate so many other scriptures, such as **Matthew 25:41-46** and **Revelation 20:11-15**.

Eternal punishment for man was not the plan that God had in mind. Remember, God is the author of life, not death. Our progenitor, Adam, is the author of death. Yet our all-knowing God, in eternity, originated a plan of salvation from death for man. Most people, however, will reject His plan and will, therefore, spend eternity in Hell. But this is not the "salvation" mentioned in our question.

Are you breathing God's good air? Does the rain fall upon your fields or garden? Did the sun rise for you today? The answer to all of these questions is "Yes!" but not just for you but for everyone else, too!

As we contemplate this, let's consider the word *"especially"* in **1 Timothy 4:10**. The text requires this word to mean that ALL people enjoy God's salvation in some way, a way that is being compared to another way that those who believe in God also experience. So, two types of salvation are implied here: one temporal and one eternal.

Solomon says in **Ecclesiastes 9:11** that though the winnings usually go to those who have the advantage, this is not always the case because "Time and chance happens to all men!" Consider this also with **Matthew 5:43-45**. God blesses (i.e. saves) people every day in these temporal ways, the good people and the bad people. Notice also how Jesus asks the question here, do you want to be the sons of your father who is in heaven? Then He shows us the way, Don't just love those

who love you! Your Father in Heaven showers His love and salvation upon the evil and the good, the just and the unjust. So, be just like your Father!

Here's the thing: ALL people, whether or not they believe in God, experience His salvation in the temporal sense, while those who believe also experience His salvation in the eternal sense.

Recently, I noticed that up in the sky our national bird was flying. To the person with me (a co-worker) I said, "See the eagle?" He said, "WOW! That is SO cool!" I said, "Yes it is, Hallelujah, Amen!" If you are with me at such a time, you will hear me "hootin' and hollerin'" and loudly proclaiming God's praises. I won't go into detail here, but if you happen to see my wife, you can ask her about how excited I get if I see a flock of snow geese. The point is, show no restraint in acknowledging the Almighty for his wondrous works! You will not influence anyone for the LORD by being a grouch; it won't happen if you don't talk to them! And it won't happen if you are suspicious of them!

God extends His common grace to everyone every day (see **Psalm 145:9; Acts 14:15 – 17; 17:25**). He also graciously extends his loving salvation daily by:

- Restraining sin by giving all men a conscience (**Romans 2:15**)
- Withholding judgment (**Romans 2:3-6**)
- Ordaining government (**Romans 13:1-5**)
- His compassion: the broken-hearted love of pity which He shows to undeserving, unrepentant, unregenerate sinners (see **Exodus 34:6, 7; Psalms 86:5; Daniel 9:9; Matthew 23:37; Luke 19:41 – 44; Isaiah 16:11 -13; Jeremiah 48:35 – 37**).

And always, always, always, He admonishes people to repent. God constantly warns sinners of what will be their end, demonstrating the heart of a compassionate Creator who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and therefore, neither should we (see **Ezekiel 18:30-32; 33:11**)! His eternal salvation in Christ Jesus is offered to all indiscriminately (see **Matthew 11:28, 29; 22:2-14; John 6:35-40; Revelation 22:17; John 5:39, 40**).

So, yes, absolutely, God is, by nature, a Savior! He is a saving God! He finds no pleasure in the death of sinners, so we, like Him, should seek their good and not their harm. God's saving character is revealed daily, even to those who do not believe in him, and eternal salvation can come to them if we see them as He does. So, help them! Be a conduit whereby God may demonstrate his love for them. Rejoice, oh Christian, in the fact that you can enjoy God's salvation in the eternal way WHILE also showing your enjoyment of his salvation in those temporal ways. Smile. Be kind. Enjoy ALL of God's goodness shining through you!

God values everyone; our value system should match His, thereby making us "perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect" (**Matthew 5:48**).

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Glory to God!

The church in **Brookfield, MO** rejoiced in January when **Brittney Bradley** was baptized for the remission of sins. They rejoiced a second time on March 24 when **Ashlynn Russell** was buried with Christ.

The **Chapel Glen Church of Christ, Indianapolis, IN** received **Eric Brickley** as a member of the congregation on March 17.

Blessed Are the Dead

Jesse David Miller, 79, of **Carrollton, MO**, passed away Sunday, April 14, 2024. Brother David served as an elder at the **Carrollton Church of Christ** for many years. He is survived by his wife **Wanda**; children **Amanda (Terry) Martin**, **Sara (Phillip) Smith**, and **Jason (Staci) Miller**; eleven grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. Brother David was preceded in death by his oldest child, **Lana Satterlee**, earlier this year.

*Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them" (**Revelation 14:13**).*



Please check your expiration date!

Here and There

Belated congratulations to **James and Marlene Bennett** of the **Murray Road Church of Christ, Lee's Summit, MO**. They celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on March 6. Seven decades of marriage is quite an achievement, and your editor is thankful for this couple's good example of fidelity.

Special Meetings

2024 Meetings

May 25-26.....Memorial Day, Smart Road, Greenwood, MO
June 8-9.....Vandalia, IA
June 17-20.....Shaver Lake, CA
July 1-5.....Midwest Bible Campout, Eminence, MO
July 20-26.....Murray Road, Lee's Summit, MO
August 31-September 1.....Pleasant Hill, IA
September 29.....Braymer, MO
October 4-6.....Fall Campout, Unionville, MO

The **Smart Road Church of Christ** plans to hold a **Memorial Day Meeting** May 25-26. The service on May 25 will begin at 2 p.m., followed by a meal, and a second service in the evening. The Sunday morning service will begin at 9:30 a.m. followed by a meal and an afternoon service. For more information, please consult the flyer using the QR code.



The season for church meetings has arrived. Using the QR code, you can find a list of upcoming meetings including links to congregation website pages and meeting flyers at *The Gospel Message* website.



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If you would like to announce baptisms, new members, deaths, or special meetings in **The Gospel Message**, please contact **your editor**:

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If you have any questions or concerns about the content of this paper, please either contact **the author** of the article or **your editor**.

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