

GEMS OF TRUTH

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FROM THE EDITOR

From the years 1962-1968 I published and edited a lay journal that had a small, worldwide circulation but blest many. I would like to resume that publication online. My objective in the 1960s was to uplift, encourage, and sometimes even challenge people's thinking but more than anything else to help people to find an ever closer walk with God. I have the same objective today. In my writings I

express myself as things come to mind on the particular topic at hand. My path has led me to change my mind numerous times. If you disagree with anything I write "take what you like and leave the rest." I have no desire nor feel any need to persuade people to my point of view but in all cases encourage them to think and then come to their own conclusions. I'll send this as an attached PDF file to those who indicate that they want to be on my email list. I realize many people are swamped with too many emails already so I find it best to send to those who personally request to be added. I also encourage you to forward the emails with the PDF link on it that I send to you and encourage your friends to read and possibly subscribe. I would appreciate feedback from my readers very much.

Tom Durst tomdurst1@msn.com (509) 487-1991

DEATH VALLEY EXPERIENCES

Psalm 23:4 New King James Version (NKJV)

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

All of us have times in our life when we feel very much like we are walking “through the valley of the shadow of of death.” Our prayers seem to be unanswered and we may be feeling very discouraged and depressed. These are “death valley” experiences. At such times we need to keep in mind that *our feelings do not determine our relationship with God*. We ever live, move, and have our being in Him and *nothing* can change that (see Acts 17:28; Romans 8:31-39).

Some people wait for a certain kind of feeling to assure them of their acceptance with God and this can be deadly. Our feelings can literally change from one moment to another and they are not a reliable guide. We are God’s child created in His image and likeness in our *true being* and nothing can change that. The more we live in a consciousness of our oneness with God the more we *enjoy* that relationship. Living in neglect or ignorance of God brings suffering and disappointment. I encourage people to do everything they can to help them live in awareness of God and here is where the spiritual disciplines of prayer, study of spiritual literature, and reaching out to others in love in every possible way can be so helpful.

THOUGHTS ABOUT AFTERLIFE

Hebrews 9:27 New Living Translation (NLT)

27 And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes

judgment.

Hebrews 9:27 The Message (MSG)

27 Everyone has to die once, then face the consequences.

Revelation 22:11 New Living Translation (NLT)

11 Let the one who is doing harm continue to do harm; let the one who is vile continue to be vile; let the one who is righteous continue to live righteously; let the one who is holy continue to be holy.

Galatians 6:7-8 New Living Translation (NLT)

7 Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. 8 Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.

There are numerous points of view about life after death among religions and philosophies. Many Christians line up their "proof texts" to establish just what will happen when we die and include in these lists what establishes their point and ignore the verses that contradict it. Whole books have been written on this topic from several Christian perspectives as well as others. We have soul sleep, going directly to an ever-burning hell, straight to a heavenly bliss, annihilation, reincarnation, purgatory, limbo, universalism as well as variations within these beliefs. I have no desire to dispute about it. Even though I do feel that the Near Death Experiences are very helpful [some of them are heavenly and some are hellish] no one yet has taken videos on the other side so that we can know exactly what will happen when we pass from this life. Any belief is in the end an article of faith and while I have my own ideas I still have to recognize their inadequacy. I don't think that those who really strongly feel that their belief about what happens upon death is absolutely correct would lose anything by moving forward in humility. *Because I choose to believe in a certain teaching will not make it true no matter how strongly I believe in it.* Sometimes I've felt that some folks seem to feel if they just keep

affirming something they believe and work hard enough to convince others of it that this will somehow make it true.

I'm very appreciative of the way **THE MESSAGE** renders Hebrews 9:27: **"Everyone has to die once, then face the consequences."** It seems very clear to me that whatever we sow we shall reap both in this life and in the life to come (see Galatians 6:7, 8). This seemed very clear to me even in my childhood years before I received any specific religious teaching. Everyday we face the consequences either good or bad which our choices bring about. I think these consequences will continue after we pass on. I believe that the concept that we will go straight to heavenly bliss upon death regardless of how we've lived in this life is very deceptive if taken seriously. One contemporary very popular New Age guru who has written a whole series of books seems to be saying that even such people as Hitler will go straight to Heaven when they die. I raised this question on his website some years ago and this point of view was defended by whoever responded to my email inquiry about the matter.

My concept of Heaven is that it is a state of consciousness of complete peace, joy, and love without a ripple. I believe this "heavenly" consciousness needs to begin now and to be cultivated throughout our entire lives. I see Heaven as a present growing experience rather than as a location somewhere when we pass on. When our time comes to depart from this plane we shall take our state of consciousness with us. Perhaps it will take many planes of existence or dimensions for us to evolve spiritually into that complete and absolute state of peace, joy, and love (see Revelation 22:11 in its context). Quantum physicists have postulated for many years that there are several other dimensions of existence that we can't discern with our five physical senses. If you want more info on this Google "quantum physics dimensions" and you'll find lots of articles. There is a lot of mystery involved in this whole topic and it seems to be wise to avoid dogmatism about it. Anyway, I seek with all of my heart to enter into our Heavenly state right now and continue to do so everyday. If we are experiencing God's love here and now in our lives we shall be wherever we need to be when we pass from this life to the afterlife.

A human being fashions his consequences as surely as he fashions his goods or his dwelling. Nothing that he says, thinks or does is without consequences.

Norman Cousins

THOUGHTS ON REVELATION

[I copied this off the Internet. I thought it opened up some windows for a deeper, much more spiritual interpretation of Revelation than the popular ones to be found by preachers today. Just give some prayerful consideration to the thoughts below and let them speak to your heart. TD]

Although John wrote the book of Revelation directly for the seven Christian communities, the message is not just for them. It is for the whole world, and it is now in the Bible for us to read and learn from. For example, the abundance of angels in Revelation tells us that God is working everywhere in our lives. And the Lamb in Revelation teaches us that our innocence and goodness are our strongest protection. You don't have to be big and powerful to defeat evil. Evil does not stand a chance against your purity and love.

There are a lot of big messages we get from Revelation, but the main one is that there is nothing to fear, because evil is powerless and God's kingdom is here. John talked about this when he said: "I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ" (Rev. 12:10).

John shows us how God is here with us, so we do not need to be afraid of anything. God and His love are our strength, and not even a great red dragon can destroy God's love.

"One of the dangers from which the Church should pray to be delivered is idolatry of the letter of Scripture. The letter exists for the spirit, not the spirit for the letter. Literalism is the grave in which spiritual religion is buried. The New Testament is a book which is to be spiritually interpreted. It has no greater enemy than the thorough-going literalist who would fetter its free thought by confining it within obsolete forms. It has no greater friend than the teacher who can give to its time-worn metaphors freshness and power by translating them into the language of the present." (James M. Campbell - The Heart of the Gospel: A Popular Exposition of the 14)

Contact the Editor with comments and requests to be on the email list:

tomdurst1@msn.com Phone: (509) 487-1991

The website below has my personal testimony and a series of articles.

<http://www.tomdurst.com/>

