

Faith Of Our Youth

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"The Voice of Young Christian Faith"

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Two Seas Compared

by Jeff Fogel

High in the mountains of northern Israel are a number of mountain springs that flow fresh and clean from deep within the earth. These springs form streams and flow together to form the Jordan River. The Jordan River flows south to a body of water known as the Sea of Galilee. The south end of the Sea of Galilee, again, becomes the Jordan and flows for fifty to sixty miles to another body of water. However, this body of water is quite different from the Sea of Galilee. There is no outlet for water flow and no life dwells within her depths. The taste of the water is bitter and it thirty percent mineral content. This body of water is known as the Dead Sea. It is the lowest point on the earth at approximately 1300 feet below sea level.

These two bodies of water are often used to compare what types of individuals we are. For example, in the song book entitled "Sacred Selections for the Church" by Ellis Crum, there is a song titled, "There is a Sea." The first verse of this song describes the Sea of Galilee, the second describes the Dead Sea, and the third asks us a question: "Which shall it be for you and me, Who God's good gifts obtain?" Then the song describes Christ, what he has done for us, and what he left, for a time, in order to give himself for us.

There are four major subjects that can be addressed when comparing the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. They are purity, ability to hold life, deception, and the ability to receive and give.

The Sea of Galilee is a pure body of water, while the Dead Sea is very impure. Jesus taught in Matt. 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Both bodies of water have the opportunity to receive from a pure source, being the mountain springs. We, as Christians, also have the opportunity to receive from a pure source which is the living water offered to us by Christ. John 4:14 mentions, "But whosoever drinketh of

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"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning..." (Rom. 15:4)

If this scripture were seriously studied and then applied, it would be the answer to many spiritual problems that confront us. We believe that all that is necessary to find the plan and method to produce a thriving church is found by turning back through the pages of the Old Testament.

When we turn to the book of Nehemiah, we see that when Nehemiah went down to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall, he met the same obstacles that confront the church today. It is generally agreed that the people must "have a mind to work" (Neh. 4:6). All too often we overlook the question that should confront us: "What is successful and efficient work?" It is possible for a congregation to diligently and unceasingly labor and still not accomplish their goal, because they fail to labor according to God's plan.

In Neh. 4:17 it states that the builders on the walls of Zion worked in this manner: "Everyone, with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon." Within this verse of Scripture we find two kinds of work--constructive and defensive. Both were absolutely essential. Thus we see these men did not devote all their efforts to construction of the wall, but also used their efforts to defend what was already built. If they had used "both" hands speedily to rebuild the wall, only to have their enemies destroy it because they were not prepared to defend it, what would they have accomplished?

In the task of "rebuilding the walls" of spiri-

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the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." To maintain purity in our lives, we must continue to drink from this pure source that Christ offers us. This requires a study of God's word, devotion to prayer, spending time in fellowship one with another, and, most important, being cleansed by the blood of Christ. Purity also requires that we share our abundance, whether physical or spiritual, with others who are in need.

Deception is another major topic when describing both seas. If I fill two bottles with water, one from the Sea of Galilee and the other from the Dead Sea, could you tell the difference just by looking at them? The answer is no. To tell the difference between the two, you must take a drink from both bottles. Only then can you tell there is a difference. Water from the Dead Sea is deceptive. Even though the water looks clear and pure, its taste is bitter. Satan is also deceptive in how he appears. II Corinthians 11:14 mentions, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." This should be no surprise since Satan is the "Father of all lies." The Devil's weapons, temptations causing us to sin, are also deceptive. Sinful actions look enjoyable, but the end result is sorrow and bitterness. The story of David and Bathsheba portrays this well in II Samuel chapter 11.

While the Sea of Galilee is able to support an abundance of life, such as fish and other creatures, the Dead Sea cannot support life. This is true with mankind. When man chooses to walk in darkness instead of the light, God cannot dwell within, for God is light. In order for life to dwell in man, he must "walk in the light," then he can have fel-

lowship with Christ and his saints. "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:5-7).

Both seas are able to receive; unfortunately, one fails to give. The

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Dead Sea gives nothing of what it receives from the mountain springs. What are we doing with what God has given to us? Do we share with others, or do we keep everything for ourselves? How sad it is when we continue to receive blessings from God and yet give nothing back, not even a "Thank you"! God sends the sun and rain on the just and unjust. Do we give thanks to God for this? God gave his only Son for our sins so we would not have to die spiritually; yet, how many of the world's people have obeyed the gospel, let alone give thanks for the sacrifice God was willing to make? God also frowns on people whose desire is to hoard possessions and not share with others. Jesus mentions in Matt. 6:19, 20 not to "lay up treasures for yourselves on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal." We are sup-

posed to be laying up treasures in Heaven. One way we can do this is by receiving from God and sharing with others while here on earth. Jesus even told one young man in Matt. 19:21 to, "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."

Although the Dead Sea fails to give to other sources (and if it did, it would give nothing but bitterness), it still receives the fresh abundant resource from the wells of God deep in the earth. Unfortunately, this pure water turns bitter once in the Dead Sea. Regardless, the Dead Sea could never receive the pure water from the mountain springs of north Israel unless the water from these springs first passed through the Sea of Galilee. The people of the world cannot receive the gospel unless it shines through us as Christians. They must first notice the abundance of God's mercy, grace, and love which dwells within us. They must also know that our conduct is such that we are what we claim to be. Then the world will desire, perhaps, to obey the gospel of Christ.

"We are the only Bible the careless world will read." Let us portray the gospel in its pure form, even if the world turns God's abundance sour in their lives. The only return we may get from the world is bitterness and hate, but we must continue to share God's abundance with others. Although the Dead Sea will never be pure, perhaps the lives of sinners will be made pure by the abundance they receive from us as Christians.

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Member of Stull Church of Christ

tual Zion in this age, we need, above all things, constructive and defensive work as Nehemiah used. The sooner we awaken to that fact the better. Let us never cease laboring on the walls of Zion; but, let us use the "sword of the Spirit" to protect what we have. Every member of the Lord's body should be able to protect themselves from false doctrine. If there was ever a time when the Gospel needs proclaiming, it's now! But let us both convert the alien sinner and educate the believer in the way of righteousness.

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Elder of the church at Nixa

Jesus is Sitting Beside You

by Stephanie Moody

*If you could see Jesus sitting beside you,
Would you be watching that horror flick,
That questionable love story,
Or nothing at all, take your pick?*

*If you could see Jesus sitting beside you,
Would your conversation remain the same,
And would your choice of words be different?
You only have yourself to blame.*

*If you could see Jesus sitting beside you,
Would your personality remain as it is?
Would your lifestyle change in any way?
Are you following the path that is His?*

*If you could see Jesus sitting beside you,
Would the world see Him there too?
It's through you that they will be able to see Him.
Are you doing the things that you should do?*

*For Jesus is sitting beside you,
And there He will always be,
But the world can only see Him through what you do,
So ask yourself, "Can they see Him in me?"*

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Member of Martensdale Church of Christ

SHORTCUTS

by Rich Miller

At one point or another, all of us have been faced with a particularly tough problem within our school, work, or personal lives in which a shortcut makes itself available. In moments of weakness, we are tempted to take this shortcut, and often times we do just that. When our course of action backfires, we learn--too little and too late--that no problem or challenge goes away unless it is attacked head on and faced with hard work and diligence.

Unfortunately, the same shortcuts that we are tempted with in our carnal lives are prevalent in our spiritual lives, as well. The major shortcut is usually where brethren tend to "pass the buck" to other brethren of the congregation, who most likely serve in leadership capacities. These let others do most of the Lord's work. We are told in Phil. 2:12 to, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Let us also remember that although scriptures such as Acts 2:38, Gal. 3:26, 27, and others promise eternal life to all who seek it, we must be active participants within the Body of Christ and not just spectators. Consider James 2:14-26 where we are continually reminded to add works onto our foundation of faith. Other passages to keep in mind are Rom. 14:11, 12 and John 9:4. In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, Jesus tells each of the seven churches of Asia, "I know thy works." If we take the time to mediate on these passages, we find that eternal life is something that cannot be obtained by continually trying to "beat the system."

Now, let us look at another familiar spiritual shortcut--perceived inadequacy. Some members of the body feel that they do not have the necessary tools, skills, or talents to be able to effectively work in God's kingdom. Granted, there are certain members of the congregation who, for example, have no qualms with getting up on the pulpit and presenting a lesson, while others shake with dread at the mere thought of doing such a thing. We all have our strong points. The idea is to FIND them and utilize them to let our lights shine bright. Also, we should understand that the common, ordinary Christians are the very backbone of the church! Elders and evangelists are richly blessed individuals who are "apt to teach" as well as lead, but

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