

THE REDTHREAD

THE GIFT OF SALVATION

Acknowledge to yourself and to God that you have sinned (Romans 3:23).

In sorrow for your sins, turn from them to God and ask His forgiveness (Isaiah 55:7).

By faith receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, believing that He died in your place on the cross (John 3:16).

BETWEEN TIMES

1 CORINTHIANS 12:20 BIBLE STUDY

1. The Body of Christ
Ephesians 1:3-14

2. Your Place in the Body
Romans 12

3. Becoming a Part
1 Corinthians 12:12-27

4. The Body's Power
Acts 1:3-8

5. Behavior in the Body
1 Peter 2:1-25

6. The Body Unified
Ephesians 4:1-11

7. Edifying the Body
Ephesians 4:11-16

8. Gifts in the Body
1 Corinthians 12:1-11

9. Fellowship of the Body
1 John 1:1-10

10. The Body's Witness
John 17

WHY & HOW

THE RED THREAD exists to be an encouragement to the men and women currently separated from family and friends in correctional institutions. It is published on 2nd and 4th Wednesdays by **Crimson House Ministries** at 1616 North Robberson, Springfield, Missouri, 65803. Please send all correspondence to that address. Subscription information is available online at: <http://readingroom.crimsonhouseministries.org/>

WHAT KIND OF NAIL ARE YOU?

"But now are they many members but one body." (1 Corinthians 12:20)

"Christians are like nails," the officer stated with a look of deep thinking, as if forcing the thought out from the very bottom of his mind. In silence I waited for his application while my thoughts moved quickly seeing those Christian "nails" at work. Officer Linder had come straight to the back table, walking with that particular gait and with that sparkle in his eyes that reflected his enthusiasm for learning something new from God's word, just a little thing to "chew on" through the long hours of duty. We had shared things before and always rejoiced in the truths of the scriptures and in the fact that Christianity, even in a prison environment, is not divided by the color of the uniforms.

Raising his voice to overcome the piercing noises, he went on. "You know, nails can be used to build anything—a shelf, a playhouse, a building—as long as each nail does its job to keep joints around it well attached." We meditated on the idea for a while and rejoiced at the inspiration the Spirit had provided.

Christians are, in fact, like nails. Nails of different sizes, of different colors, with a variety of heads, and made for different uses within the same purpose of building. The same way Christians are all different. Christians have different body features, they are made up of different races, have different backgrounds, and have different gifts. But they have the same purpose of building the Body and bringing honor to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Some nails are thin and small to fit fine jobs like holding trim around the house. Some are medium in size and strong enough to hold the trusses together. Other galvanized nails

are able to endure the effects of the weather, and some other nails are made of steel, strong and thick enough to keep the building attached to the foundation.

All Christians possess skills to contribute to the edification of the Body. Some have the refined gift of beautifully singing to the Lord. Some can do the finest works from embroidering to setting up computers, from photography to fixing leaking pipes. Their small service to the saints is invaluable.

Some Christians have the skills of encouraging others, of lifting up the ones who need support. They can enter into their brethren's lives and "endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." In a way, they keep the members of the Body united, like the trusses of a building are attached to each other.

The "galvanized" Christians are equipped to work in the outside environment and serve the Lord while mowing lawns, building houses, trimming trees, planting flowers, pouring a driveway. Yet from the spiritual point of view, a galvanized Christian repels the influences of the world as a galvanized nail repels rust. Those who teach and preach God's Word are like concrete nails which keep the body of believers attached to our foundation...the Lord Jesus Christ! They minister the Word and watch that every joint may supply to the edification of the building.

As I write, many faces come to mind, many dear "nails" that I have known through the years. Some are like screws that are able to pass successfully through rough elements...the troubles of life, when using the appropriate power, the strength from above. Some are life roofing nails that hold each shingle in place with the purpose of providing a layer of protection to those around

them as they care for and help others. Some nails are hidden within the frame of the building, like those that hold insulation in place. Likewise there are a number of saints devoted to fervent prayer. We don't often hear about them, we don't see them at work, but their function is essential for the adequate "temperature of spirituality" within the building.

Cogitating on these things, I also remembered the cruel nails that pierced the hands and feet of my Lord. The enemy of our soul also uses nails but to kill and destroy, to corrupt anything that may honor Jesus Christ. He throws nails to our minds, bad thoughts that will tempt us to please our flesh and go the way the world goes. He will throw "his nails" to frame you, to make you believe his lies and doubt your faith in the Savior. We are to watch out for these kinds of nails and be always on guard, ready to use the shield of faith.

So as the parallel developed in my mind, Officer Linder's words came back. "But nails can also get rusted if they are not used." I thought if we do not use the gifts and skills the Lord has provided us, they will remain undeveloped and indifference will grow towards them. How sad to see a new shiny nail turn into a useless rusted one! Instead of being ready "for the master's use", they will end up like "vessels of dishonor." Yet, it is never too late. They can still be used if they "purge themselves" of their rust; if they let the Lord take the impurities away and enable them to function appropriately in the Body.

The next time you see a nail, think about your specific place and role in the church, and ask yourself "what kind of nail am I?"

--Modesto Rodriguez

PASTOR'S DEVOTION

Malachi 1:2, 3 is the first of eight instances in Malachi's book where the Lord first states a truth, Israel then responds with a snide question, and the Lord answers with examples that support His stated reality.

Israel was now nearly a century away from their Babylonian captivity, their city wall rebuilt as well as their tabernacle, yet their total expectations were still unfulfilled. And now the first word of the Lord from His prophet was, "I have loved you," to which Israel



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LET'S HEAR FROM YOU...

We love hearing from you and so do our readers. Please send your articles, poems, praise reports, testimonies, etc..., to **The Red Thread, Crimson House Ministries, 1616 N Robberson, Springfield, MO, 65803.**

PEACE & JOY

Because my faith in God is strong, my life is filled with hope.
When problems rise and threaten me, He gives me strength to cope.
I don't lose heart when things go wrong, for God will make it right.
I know He always understands and protects me from my plight.
For He sees all and truly cares and knows my every need.
If I keep faith and hope with Him, He'll always intercede.
He'll calm my troubled spirit and smooth my wrinkled brow,
He'll fill my heart with peace and joy, His love on me endow.
I won't lose heart or be depressed because God's love is true,
And He will help me find success in everything I do.

--Name withheld, death row inmate, Raleigh, NC

The Holy One

Most compassionate Protector,
All-consuming Fire,
My Father eternal
Clothed in heavenly attire.
Our Divine Healer,
Ancient of days,
Righteous Judge—
Who can know His ways?
His will only,
Always forever done.
He is Love.
Love is His Son,
The Holy One.



--Name withheld, inmate, Eddyville, KY

PASSPORT INTO HEAVEN



I have read how, in the spring of 1981, a young man was flown into desolate northern Alaska to photograph the natural beauty and mysteries of the tundra. He took along 500 rolls of film, several firearms, and 1,400 pounds of provisions.

As the months passed, the words in his diary changed from wonder and fascination into a nightmare. In August he wrote, "I think I should have used more foresight about arranging my departure. I'll soon find out."

In November he died in a nameless valley, by a nameless lake, 225 miles northeast of Fairbanks. An investigation revealed that though he had carefully planned his trip, he had made no provision to be flown out.

Difficult to imagine, isn't it? How could anyone be so foolish? He made every provision for his journey except how to get home! Unbelievable!

"How tragic," we say. And yet, how many of us make every provision for life here on earth but no preparation for our departure?

God has warned us in his Word, the Bible, that there is life after death...after which is God's judgment. And as he warned the nation of Israel to prepare to meet God (Amos 4:12), he warns us to do the same. We need to do this today. After death it is too late. As God's Word also says, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

And how do we prepare to meet God? By confessing our sins to God and accepting his Son, Jesus, as our personal Lord and Savior. Doing this is getting your "passport into Heaven."

Whatever you do, don't leave earth without it!

--Dick Innes

PASTOR'S DEVOTION

(Continued from page 1)

responded, "How so?" The Lord then gave them a brief history of His protection, provision, and their future security as compared to their father's brother, Esau, and let them know that they were His *willful* choice through His sovereignty. The Lord was saying plainly that He loved Israel in the past, He loves her presently, and He will love her in the future. His love for them wasn't earned or deserved, it was simply His will. The Apostle Paul explained the same to the book of Romans, "though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who

calls—she was told, 'The older will serve the younger'" (Romans 9:11-12 ESV).

"Therefore, God's choice does not depend on a person's will or effort, but on God himself, who shows mercy" (Romans 9:16 ISV).

God's mercy and grace came in Jesus Christ, as the Apostle John penned: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17 KJV). To which Paul then concluded, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:4-5 ESV).

As Christians, being "chosen" by God through our response to Holy Spirit convic-

tion, we too hear the Lord say, "I have loved you." But the key for us is not to respond as Israel did in questioning how, as we look on our bleak circumstances or through unfulfilled *personal* expectations; rather, it is to love Him "back" just as unconditionally as He loves us.

Prayer Focus—Examine yourself to see if there are any conditions you may have placed on God's love for you; anything that He "must" do so you will know He truly loves you. Read Ephesians 2:4-9, focusing on verse 6, and look around from your seat in heavenly places. Thank Him for His great love towards you.

—Pastor John



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