

"If you look at the world, you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. If you look at God you'll be at rest."

— Corrie ten Boom

What think ye of Christ?

important spiritual matters for you

Issue 5

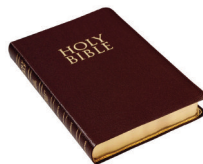
This copy of *faithmatters* comes to you with the compliments of:



We hope you have enjoyed reading this pamphlet and that you will decide to read the Bible for yourself. We are not asking that you join a church, or become 'religious' or turn over a new leaf, but that you find the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour and Friend. He can forgive your sins and assure you of peace in your life and a place in heaven.

If you do not have a Bible or New Testament of your own then do purchase one. They are available quite cheaply in most bookshops like Waterstones, or W. H. Smith, and in different versions to suit your reading taste.

Contact us through our website www.faithmatters.org.uk where you can access a digital version of this magazine, order a New Testament and other helpful booklets, read the Bible, and of course email us. Distributors can order the next issue there as well.



Crisis WORLD

By the time you read this many more will have died from the deadly Ebola virus of which there is no known approved treatment or vaccine.

Ebola is not a new virus but was identified in 1976. We have been touched by images of dying children lying on beds and we pray for many who suffer with no hope of a cure and those families who have lost loved ones.

As it spreads to other countries the whole world is watching. Governments are holding emergency meetings and screening processes are being put in place at airports to deal with this **global crisis**.

Few can deny that the world is in crisis today with nations fighting against nations, famines, plagues and earthquakes all making this planet look as if it is out of control. Is there an answer?

These crises are not new – The Bible not only describes them but Jesus prophesied thousands of years ago that they would take place!



Jesus said that the conditions in the world before He comes back to this planet to reign would be very similar to what we see today.

But first He said he would come back and remove all who are born again from the world so that they will be saved from the coming judgment. This could happen any moment.

...That is why faith matters!

Not faith in dead religion or a church but faith in a real living person, the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

The articles inside describe how different people came to a crisis point in their lives and how Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became their personal Saviour in this world of sorrow, suffering and pain. We trust you too will find the answer - remember Jesus said:

'ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' John 8.32

Jonathan Black London

CAN WE BE SURE?

By Paul McCauley, Belfast

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Rom 3.23.



We just have to wait and see – at least that's what so many people say when it comes to the issue of where they are going to be beyond death.

So when someone says he is sure he's going to heaven many people respond, silently if not verbally, Who does he think he is? They think the statement stinks of pride, smacks of presumption and is seriously premature. But is it?

Is it pride to say I know I'm going to heaven? It would be if getting there depended on how good I am, but that's one of the unique things about the Christian Gospel – it states that none of us is good enough for heaven, Rom. 3.23, but God has provided a Saviour for us, 1 John 4.14.

Imagine that you know someone who needs life-saving surgery and the operation is very risky. You ask how he feels about the surgery, and he tells you he has no worries at all. Now you would never think of accusing your friend of pride. You recognise that his confidence isn't self-confidence; it's confidence in the surgeon. He has committed himself



to safe hands and so he has no worries.

This illustrates why I can say I know I'm saved. It's not a claim about how great I am; it's a claim about how great my Saviour is. We all have this problem which is not merely life-threatening but soul-destroying. It doesn't just take people to the grave,

but to hell. It's the problem of sin and we are helpless to do anything about it. However, there is one who has offered to take on my case. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. He has the qualifications to deal with my sin because of who He is - He's fully God and truly man, John 1.1, 14, and because of what He's done - He died for our sins and rose again, 1 Cor. 15. 3-4. Thus He is uniquely qualified to save us from our sins, Acts 4.12. That's who I'm trusting to save me.

So when I say I'm sure I'm saved, it's not pride, I'm depending on the work of Christ. But is it not presumption to say you know for sure? It would be if I didn't have the Word of God. The Bible has proven its claim to be the inspired Word

of God. That means we can safely and sensibly trust its message. It is full of promises that if we give up on our own efforts, abandon man-made methods of salvation, and put our trust in Christ to save us, our sins will be entirely forgiven, we will be brought into a right relationship with God now, and will be with Him in heaven forever, 1 John 5. 12 – 13). It's not presumption; I'm relying on the Word of God.

Some might still object, it's premature, you could be misinterpreting the Bible. That objection might carry some force but for the fact that God doesn't just promise heaven to the one who repents, He promises new life now. God's Spirit indwells those who are saved; giving them new aims, appetites and abilities so that they know this is real, Rom. 8.16. So, it's not premature, I have the witness of the Holy Spirit.

So you don't need to doubt where you're going to be in the eternal world. For those who accept God's offer of forgiveness through Christ, the Bible guarantees they will never perish. Those who do not accept that offer, the Bible guarantees they will perish forever. **...You can be sure of it!**

My conversion story

by Ian Campbell, South Shields, England



"A camping holiday in the majestic fjords of western Norway made a real impression upon me. Such grandeur, such beauty!"

I was born in 1949 and my parents, because of their nominal association with the Church of England, had me 'sprinkled/baptised' when I was a few weeks old. During this ceremony, the vicar told the assembled family members, 'This baby is now a child of God.' Nothing could have been further from the truth! I was made to attend Sunday School, but these occasions made little or no impression upon me. One thing I remember well

from my final year in junior school was the weekly radio broadcast entitled HOW THINGS BEGAN, there was no television in schools in those days! It was all about evolution. It gripped me and it took no effort on my part to focus on the loudspeaker in the corner of the room. Little did I realise at that time that the information being pumped into our classroom every Friday, was the Devil's lie.

Evolution means 'There is no God'. It robs humankind of its God-given dignity and glory. Unlike the beasts in the field, we are made in the 'image of God'. Evolution teaches that you and I are just some great cosmic accident, and we're of no more value than the algae in the pond or slug on the cabbage leaf. I swallowed the lie, 'hook, line and sinker'.

However, as I progressed into my late teens and well into the 'Swinging Sixties', I did begin to question these things. A camping holiday in the majestic fjords of western Norway made a real impression upon me. Such grandeur, such beauty! In the same summer I went hitchhiking to Scotland, my aim being to reach John O'Groats in the extreme north. It was at Inverness that I managed to get a long lift that would have enduring, positive consequences. The driver, a former alcoholic, was now a tea salesman on the road visiting his clientele on the north-east coast. He spoke only of one thing and that was God's 'so great salvation'. He was a Christian and spoke readily and sincerely of his own conversion, impressing upon me the need to get right with God, my Creator through Christ's death upon the cross. His words were both direct and challenging, and I almost asked him to stop the car so that that he could help me to get 'saved'. I let the chance slip by, and as the driver dropped me off, he little realised how effective his witness had been. For years afterwards I would lie under the bed sheets at

night saying, 'Should I trust Christ? Should I receive Him?'

Following A levels, I started a four-year course at Sunderland Art College. Student life was exciting and yet with all its so-called liberties and freedoms, it seemed to me shallow and at times base. I know now that it was my God-given conscience that was starting to work overtime. I was beginning to feel the burden of sin pressing on me. Whilst this was unpleasant, it was the necessary starting point to getting right with God. John Bunyan's classic book, Pilgrim's Progress, begins with Pilgrim saying to his wife, 'I, your dear friend, am in myself undone by reason of a burden [sin] that lieth hard upon me.' His wife, obviously unaware of her own sinful condition, thought he had gone crazy, but for Pilgrim the burden of sin was dreadfully real and he desperately wanted to seek out the remedy for his grave condition. Like Pilgrim, I too was burdened about my sin, and though separated by several centuries, we both found the solution at the same place – the Cross!

Having finished Art College, I started a postgraduate teaching course at Newcastle University. It was at this time that two young men called, uninvited, to my home. They were Jehovah's Witnesses. They started to speak to me about the Bible, and in particular they majored on the end-time events found in Matthew ch.24. I found what they were saying to be very interesting but, due to my scanty Bible knowledge, was unable to

discern if what they were saying was true. I have since come to understand that the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses are indeed 'doctrines of demons'. I purchased a booklet from them. It was called THE TRUTH THAT LEADS TO EVERLASTING LIFE. I read it enthusiastically and raced through John's Gospel in one evening. My interest in spiritual things was deepening and I arranged for the two Witnesses to call back for a home Bible study. However, I was cautious and did wonder if what I was reading from their literature was indeed the truth. How could I find out? Who could I turn to for wise counsel?

At university I played football with a few other students, one of whom I was informed had studied theology. I decided to approach him and ask if he had a point of view on these vital matters. It was a 'red-letter day' for both him and I. In the providence of God, it turned out he only lived three miles from my home and attended a local church in South Shields! He arranged to meet me the following day. He asked me to bring the booklet I'd purchased and he'd bring his Bible. We sat together in the refectory, and systematically he went through their doctrine and exposed their errors by using the yardstick of Scripture. It was obvious that this student was very, very familiar with the Bible. He even came to the home Bible study I'd arranged with the two young men and they left with their tails between their legs, somewhat overwhelmed by the Bible knowledge of my colleague.

I bought a Bible and with great keenness continued reading through the New Testament. I started to attend Gospel meetings in various Gospel Halls in the locality. The Gospel made absolute sense to me and there was no resistance on my part. I was a sinner: Christ had died for sinners upon the cross and I needed to accept God's abundant provision for me as outlined in the 'glorious Gospel'. In the quietness of my own bedroom, I received Christ as my Saviour, abandoning myself to His amazing grace and trusting God's Word which declares that God is 'just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus' – Romans 3:26.

Now it could be truly said
that I was a child of God!

That step of faith brought me into 'a large place' – forgiveness, peace with God, eternal life etc. God's salvation is wonderful beyond my understanding and I can testify that its wonder never diminishes even with the passing of over forty years. I was subsequently baptised by immersion and received into fellowship at Hebron Hall, South Shields. I am eternally grateful that Christ died for my sins upon the cross, was raised again the third day, and that through His mercy and grace I ever came to hear the Gospel and responded to it positively. 'Blessed (happy) is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered,' Psalm 32: 1.

Swimming Pool Prayers,



Jeremy Singer, Bridge of Weir, Scotland

'And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.' The Bible - Luke 18: 9-14

Modern society is often superficial. So long as celebrities look good, they are happy to feature in Hello Magazine or in the gossip columns of the daily newspapers. And we are just as eager to admire them, following their antics with avid interest. However in all honesty, we know that what's on the inside matters most. Heartfelt character counts for more than skin-deep beauty.

In the Bible passage above, the Lord Jesus recounts a story of two stereotypical people. The first man is a respectable religious teacher. He

says the right words, wears the right clothes and mixes in the right society. The other man is a treacherous tax collector. He works for the occupying Roman forces. He overcharges people for their income tax and pockets the difference. No one likes this miserable, money-grabbing man. In the story, we overhear both people saying their prayers. The Temple in Jerusalem, where the two men meet, is like a swimming pool – the first man is praying at the shallow end whereas the second man is in at the deep end.

“Man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart,” 1 Sam. 16. 7.

The Shallow End

The religious teacher vainly tries to remind God of how good he is. This man appears to be law-abiding and charitable. Perhaps we feel similar – we carefully stick to speed limits and generously donate to Children in Need. Outwardly, we seem to be entirely moral and upstanding. However, such a character is entirely superficial. At this point, we need to learn an important lesson:

Man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart, 1 Sam. 16. 7.

God’s penetrating gaze gets below the surface. He scans and assesses our innermost motives and instincts. Here is God’s universal verdict on

humanity: The heart of man is deceitful and desperately sick, Jer. 17. 9

So none of our good works count, since we are sinful on the inside. Like mouldy fruit at the market stall, we might have clean and shining exteriors but conceal rotten flesh inside. The key question is: are we prepared to acknowledge our problem? This first man won’t face up to the issue at all, either because of ignorance or apathy.

The Deep End

The second man in the Lord Jesus’ story is completely different. This swindling tax collector immediately recognises his wrongdoing, referring to himself as ‘a sinner’. He stands far away from other people, filled with a deep sense of shame. He realises that he deserves judgment from God, as he beats on his chest with remorse. In desperation he cries out, ‘God be merciful to me.’ These are the kinds of prayers that God answers – humble expressions of acute need. When we honestly confess our wrongdoing and call out to God, He forgives us at once.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins

and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, 1 John. 1. 9.

Divine forgiveness is based entirely on Christ’s death – which Christians remember with thankfulness every week when they break bread at the Lord’s Supper.

Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, 1 Cor. 15. 3

Trusting in Christ is an entirely inward action, a hidden sense of earnest dependence on God. Faith, by its nature, can never be superficial. It goes deep down to the core of our being. This is how to pray at the deep end – making



MISSING YOUR CONNECTION!

Stephen Buckeridge, London

As an airport chaplain, I regularly meet passengers who are running late. They are often anxious and understandably want to do all they can to make their flight. However, I recently helped someone who had missed a flight in different cir-

cumstances. The passenger had arrived at the airport in good time but had simply become preoccupied with other things until they suddenly realised it was too late to board their flight!



Plans for their arrival several thousand miles away had to be rearranged, a rebooking charge paid and overnight accommodation organised. What no one could help with was their frustration at knowing they had missed out on what they were hoping to do for no good reason. The mixture of embarrassment, regret and powerlessness to reverse the situation was obvious.

As I reflected on the experience of this unfortunate passenger, I thought of how easily we become distracted in our lives. We are all on the journey of life! While death may seem to be the ultimate destination it is only the 'departure lounge' from which we exit this life and arrive in the next! The Bible teaches that there are only two destinations in the next life – heaven or hell. Where will you be when you exit this life? How are your preparations going for your

final destination? The Bible couldn't be simpler when it says 'Prepare to meet your God', Amos 4.12. This is not some distant, vague possibility. Within a relatively short number of years, and perhaps far fewer than we imagine, it is a certainty we must all face.

The warning is all the more poignant as the Bible also says, 'It is appointed unto us once to die and after this the judgement', Heb. 9.27. The wrong that we have all done – such as lying, hurting others and failing to put God first in our lives – offends God, Rom. 3.23. Nothing that offends God's character of holiness can enter His presence in heaven. The only possible destination for those who do not go to heaven is the alternative of hell and eternal punishment. No wonder the Bible warns, "Flee from the wrath to come," Matt. 3.7.

The good news of the Bible is that it is entirely unnecessary to be separated from God for eternity. Before you dismiss this and say I wouldn't want to be with God remember that without God you cannot have peace, justice, truth, joy, life, kindness and so much more. The truth is that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" – this was why He came! Through his perfect life, death and

never met, so reaching heaven is dependent on faith in Christ and the work He has done. The Bible states, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved," Acts 16. 31.

I imagine that one of the worst parts of suffering in hell will be the perpetual thought that it wasn't necessary to be there. Excuses for ignoring God's offer of eternal life



resurrection, a way has been made for God to be able to justly forgive sin. About the matter of arriving in heaven, Jesus said 'I am the way, the truth and the life,' John 14.6. Today, eternal life, peace with God and the knowledge of a wonderful eternal destiny are amazing gifts God wants us to have. It is essential we turn from going our own way and trust Christ to save us from the consequences of sin. Just as boarding an aircraft to fly to a distant destination requires dependence on designers, pilots and engineers we have probably

will seem trivial. What may now seem like the most logical of reasons for rejecting salvation through Christ will be swallowed up in an eternity of regret.

We go to huge efforts to ensure we are not late in everyday circumstances such as catching a flight. Make sure you are not late when it comes to being right with God and possessing eternal life. The Bible warns, How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Heb. 2.3. Trust Christ while you have the opportunity.