

The Last Fight

By Robert Turner

On the ruins of a theater in Ephesus there is a memorial to an athlete of the 2nd century A.D. which reads: "He fought three fights, and twice was crowned." Watch out for that last step! You see, those "athletes" fought to the death. A man's last fight was always fatal. So, the crown meant only that one changed opponents; and sooner or later the last would slay him.

What a difference in this crown, and that of the apostle Paul: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day..." (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Paul did more than fight "unto death" — he fought unto life, eternal. If his fight of faith cost him his earthly life, it only meant he was now free to claim the crown that counted most (Revelation 2:10, 2 Cor. 5:6ff.). How different from those who die without hope.

Paul sought an enduring victory — one that could not be taken from him. He exhorted Timothy, "La hold on eternal life..." (1 Timothy 6:12). This called for training, perseverance, and above all, self control (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). The athlete trained his body only to prolong the day when it would fail him; but Paul trained his that it might the better serve the Lord, and thus serve his eternal purposes.

We are all engaged in some sort of battle, and in a very real sense it is "unto death." The fatalist, the fool, resigns himself to shortchange. Though he fights 3,000 times, he can expect but 2,999 temporal crowns, not one of which he can take with him beyond that last fight. The futility of it all is enough to make a man throw in the towel.

The Faith gives purpose to life. The Christian fights, hard and often. But he has submitted himself to God's will, "strives lawfully" (2 Timothy 2:5), and his fight is never in vain. Jesus Christ has provided for him a crown, and not for him only, "but unto all them also that love his appearing."



Mark 10:42-45 - But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. ⁴⁴ And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Sick

Richard Wood (Melanie Smith's Uncle)	Lori Holloway	Mike Reed (Friend of Long's)	Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister)
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	Bill Rhodes (Toni Herd's Uncle)	Philip Locke (Jeremiah Johnson's Uncle)
Josie Keith (Friend of Heath Fowler)	Grandparents of Mary Ann Roberts	Easton Alexander (Phillip Box's cousin's baby)	Jerry Sandlin (Megan Lee's Grandfather)
Gaylord Huffman (Jennifer Daniel's Grandfather)	Quinton Addison (April Jerkins Grandfather)	Erlene Davis (Walker Davis' mother)	Mary Smith (Nathan Smith's Grandmother)
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Dave Brown (Friend of the Lanier's)	Dale Herd (William Herd's brother)	Larry Alexander (Friend of Phillip Box)
Marty and Aubrey Meeks, Russell Dickerson (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Stacey Harrell (Marcus Harrell's Dad)	Ann Robinson (Sharon Bailey's Mom)	Debra Lowe (Toni Herd's Friend)

November Birthdays

- 1 - Jason Williams
- 2 - Debbi Coleman
- 3 - Darla Hahn
- 6 - Lauren Ledford
- 6 - Troy Godwin
- 7 - Leah Donahue
- 7 - Amy Godwin
- 8 - Ashley Miller
- 9 - Michael Hubbard
- 11 - Davis Fultz
- 13 - Toni Herd
- 13 - Emerson Daniels
- 15 - Rafia Qadeer
- 16 - Nichole Pender
- 17 - Art Daves
- 20 - Andrew Smith
- 23 - Mary Ann Roberts
- 24 - John Burns
- 25 - Timothy Stone
- 25 - Silas Weldon
- 27 - Scott Fowler
- 29 - Richard North
- 30 - David Simpson

News and Notes

- Remember Matthew Johnson, David Golden and Tim Morton in our prayers as they are deployed overseas.
- Please remember Greg Lanier's father, Don Lanier, in your prayers.
- Our monthly men's business meeting will be today at 3:30 PM.
- Our monthly singing will be tonight.
- Let us pray for the safety of all who are travelling this week.
- We are thankful for those who are visiting with us today. Please take time to fill out a visitors card.
- CD's of today's sermons will be immediately available in the foyer.

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The Auburn Beacon



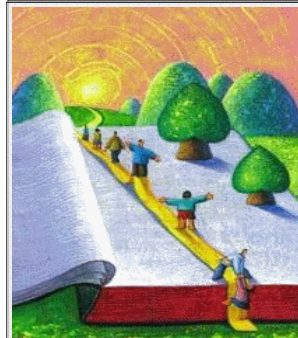
Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

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Enjoying the Bible

By Mark Roberts



Thoughts to Ponder

The whole history of the world is discovered to be but a contest between the wisdom of God and the cunning of Satan and fallen men.

Do You Have a Bible Question?
Call (334) 734-2133 or
E-mail:
LarryRouse@aubeacon.com



SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

Ask about our home Bible Study Groups!

Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

Grisham. Clancy. The Oprah Book Club. Hillerman. Amazon. Rowling. Barnes & Noble. Homework.

What do all these have in common? Whether it is Clancy's latest techno-thriller, Grisham and his lawyers, Hillerman's Navajo mysteries or Rowling's wizards they can all be found (with a good cup of coffee!) at Barnes & Noble, ordered online at Amazon.com, or maybe even recommended by Oprah in her book club — and they all show how Americans love to read.

Many Christians enjoy reading the latest bestseller but have never thought of enjoying the reading of Scripture. Yet if we want to spend more time in the Bible the issue isn't willpower or time management but "want to." We do what we want to do. When we learn to enjoy the Bible we will want to read the Bible. Do you know how to enjoy the Bible?

First, appreciate your Bible. For some Bible reading is the Christian's homework. With heavy hearts they open the Bible ready for the drudgery of reading. Of course, with such expectations, it is drudgery! Yet David praises God's word,

Some of the greatest enjoyment we will ever gain from the Scriptures will come after we have closed the Book and we are thinking about what we have read.

That is the process of reflection spoken of in **Psalm 119:97:** "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day."

announcing "Oh, how I love Your law!" (Psalm 119:97). Perhaps we should realize we don't "have to" study, but by the grace of God we have this wonderful privilege.

Throughout history many have given their lives that we might have the freedom to read the Scriptures in our own homes, in our language. Recently I read Alister E. McGrath's book, *The Story of the King James Bible*. His book reminded me that at one time owning the Bible was against law. Possessing a Bible was punishable by imprisonment or

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even death!

Have we forgotten what a blessing it is to have a Bible, and with it, the education to read it? Even now a large majority of the world's population either cannot afford a Bible, is not allowed to own one, or could not read it if they could get one. We need to see this freshly: it is a blessing to read the Word of God!

Second, focus on benefits. It is true that we read Clancy and Grisham for enjoyment. Thus, you may be thinking "The Bible isn't to be read for entertainment—so how can it be enjoyable?" Yet we enjoy many things that are not purely fun or entertaining. For example, I run. That is not always enjoyable, but I love the benefits that come to me from doing it. Focusing on those benefits gets me out there to make my runs.

Similarly, the Bible provides notable and significant benefits to every Christian. For example, the Bible teaches us about our God. We can learn some things about our Creator from creation, but we can never know God as He would have us without the written word (**1 Cor. 2:11ff**). Further, reading Scripture equips me to deal with temptation. Jesus answered every temptation with Scripture (**Luke 4:4ff**), and if I read Scripture I will know Scripture and can do the same. It is the Word that teaches us right from wrong, and shows us the consequences of wrong so we will want to do right (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**). Those two benefits just scratch the surface of the value the Bible has for us. Perhaps we would enjoy reading more if we made a list, as we read, of all the good things the Bible does. Try it and see — you'll be surprised at how often you have to stop and note that God's word is working for you!

Third, read what connects. All Scripture has value but not every passage speaks to my situation and circumstances equally well. Someone who works in government and is trying to make a difference for the Lord will read

Esther differently than I will, won't they? The Bible is a wondrous book, full of poetry and law and history and songs. In all of that you can find something that dramatically speaks to you, which has immediate force in your life. That material connects with you — and you will enjoy reading it again and again.

Certainly, there is a place for deeper study and for taking in the "whole counsel of God." There is, however, also a place for returning to familiar ground, passages that always seem to contain something new and potent for our walk with God. For me, it is the Psalms. I love them. They have variety, color, and depth. I never have a "ho hum" attitude with the Psalms. When I am preparing a sermon from the Psalms I will look forward all week to the time I get to spend in that Psalm. I enjoy it! Find the parts of the Bible you like and you will enjoy them too.

Fourth, reflect on your reading. Reading novels may be interesting but that kind of reading doesn't necessarily change us. Even reading history, like Stephen Ambrose writes, can be a profound experience but it doesn't compare to what happens when we read the word of God. Some of the greatest enjoyment we will ever gain from the Scriptures will come after we have closed the Book and we are thinking about what we have read. That is the process of reflection spoken of in **Psalms 119:97**: "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day." Meditation has come to mean something esoteric or bizarre but in the Bible it simply means deep thought about the text. This is the key to making the Bible part of everything we do. I must think about the context of the passages I have read, and who the characters are and where they are geographically — all the fact parts of the text. Yet beyond that I must then prayerfully ask God to bless my reading so I can see from this text what I need to change, repent of, or even do more of. I must think about how this reading changes me. That is what separates reading the Bible from reading a bestseller.



When God Thinks of the church of Christ

By Gardner Hall

When God thinks of the church of Christ, He thinks of those growing in Him with obedient hearts in spite of imperfections (**John 17:6**).

* When God thinks of the church of Christ, He thinks of saved individuals (**Acts 20:28**). *When men think of the Church of Christ they think of parties, either a broad conglomeration of alliances such as the "one cup Church of Christ," "liberal Church of Christ," "conservative Church of Christ," etc. or one of those parties individually.*

* When God thinks of the church of Christ, He thinks of a number of individuals unknown to men (**2 Tim. 2:19**). *When men think of the Church of Christ, they think of a loose association of local churches whose numbers can be approximated, for example 1,260,838 in the United States according to Mac Lynn's 1994 directory. Perhaps they will focus more on the numbers given for a more narrow association of churches ("non institutional," "one cup," "no class", etc.).*

* When God thinks of the church of Christ, He sees an indivisible body composed of individuals with different levels of spiritual growth (**1 Cor. 1:13; 2 Peter 3:18, Rev. 2,3**). *When men think of the Church of Christ, they think of a group of local churches that has divided through the years over issues such as instrumental music, premillennialism and institutionalism. They say that the "next thing that will divide the church" (the conservative alliance, or collection of churches) will be the marriage, divorce and remarriage issue.*

* When God thinks of the church of Christ, He thinks of those growing in Him with obedient hearts in spite of imperfections (**John 17:6**). *When men think of the Church of Christ, they think of those who conform to unwritten creeds composed of doctrines that "leaders" have declared to be essential.*

* When God thinks of leaders in the church of Christ, He thinks of spiritually poverty stricken servants, who are "last" in the minds of men and yet whose quiet

examples transform others (**Matt. 5:3,16;19:30; 20:25-28**). *When men think of leaders in the Church of Christ, they think of editors of papers, leaders in colleges or well known preachers who hold many gospel meetings.*

* When God thinks of the Savior of the Church, He thinks only of His Son, Jesus Christ. *When men think of the Church of Christ, they think of an alliance of local churches that David*

Lipscomb "saved" from the Missionary Society, Foy E. Wallace "saved" from premillennialism and other leading editors have "saved" from other dangers.

* When God thinks of where to find the church of Christ, He thinks of the hearts of men (**1 Samuel 16:7**). *When men think of where to find the Church of Christ, they think of church directories.*

* When God thinks of the church of Christ, He thinks of those who have responded to the spiritual attraction for those who are of good ground - the gospel of Jesus Christ (**Romans 1:16; 1 Cor. 2:2**). *When men think of the church of Christ, they think of an alliance or movement that itself is the primary attraction to those who are of good ground.*

* When God thinks of the church of Christ, He thinks of a glorious body of saved individuals who are allowing themselves to be transformed into the image of His Son, in spite of the wrangling and political maneuvering of men (**Eph. 5:25,26; 2 Cor. 3:18**). *When men think of the Church of Christ, they either think of a religious movement that has fragmented itself into dozens of warring factions, each claiming to "have" the truth on dozens of difficult issues, or they think of one of the factions.*

What do you think of when you think of the church of Christ?

