

Present Truth

2 Peter 1:12

Dear Readers,

February/March 2015

“Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love” (2 John 1:3). I pray that you are doing well and thriving in the knowledge of God’s incredible love.

Printer Update: I am sorry for the delay in getting this to you. Our printer is reaching the end of its life and it had more troubles recently. We are in the process of getting a different one, but it has taken longer than expected. Please keep us in your prayers.

What the World Needs

by Lynnford Beachy

Many have thought that the opposite of love is hate, but in reality it is selfishness. “God so loved the world, that he gave...” (John 3:16). Love is demonstrated by giving. Anyone in the world, regardless of race, culture or religion, takes notice when someone unselfishly does an act of kindness. The world longs to see genuine love manifested. “For we know that the whole creation groaneth

and travaileth in pain...” “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God” (Romans 8:22, 19). Jesus explained how “the sons of God” will be manifested. He said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). What the world needs is genuine, unselfish love.

To get a greater understanding of love, we must look at some history. Before the beginning of this world, God created angelic beings, endowing them with free wills; the ability to choose to be loyal to Him or not. God could have



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created robots that have no choice but to do what they are programmed to do, but how satisfying would that be? Would you be happy with a robot that is forced to say, "I love you, I love you, I love you"? God wanted to have fellowship with beings who love because of their own choice. Yet, to create beings with a free will is a big risk. Eventually someone could turn away from Him. That is exactly what happened with one of God's angels, called Lucifer, the devil, or Satan. He was created perfect, but he decided to go astray.

We read about this history in Ezekiel chapter 28, where God says to him, "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God;... Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee" (Ezekiel 28:12-15).

Satan was once a perfect and highly-exalted angel (cherub). At this time, he was "full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty." He loved God with all of his heart, because he knew that God loved Him. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Unfortunately, iniquity (evil or sin) was found in him. He decided to turn away from God and go his own way. God continues His message to Satan, "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings,

that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more" (Ezekiel 28:17-19).

Here we find that Satan's heart was lifted up because of his beauty. Have you ever met a really beautiful person who has let their beauty go to their head? This type of person is usually proud and unkind. This is exactly what God said happened to Satan. In this process, his wisdom became corrupt. He started seeing things differently than they really were. He started looking at God as selfish and unfair. He even decided that he could do a better job than God at ruling the universe (Isaiah 14:12-14).

Satan's Campaign

Thus began a campaign by Satan to convince others that God is no good, that He is selfish and unfair. He was so successful in his mission that one third of the angels joined him in his rebellion (Revelation 12:9, 4). Satan then tricked the human race to accept his new corrupted view of God. "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die” (Genesis 3:1-3).

At this time, Eve understood that the forbidden fruit was harmful for her and that God was good to withhold it from her. Satan that fact. “And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Genesis 3:4-6).

When Eve saw that the fruit of “the tree was good,” her view of God was changed. While she saw that the fruit was bad, she knew that God must be good to withhold it from her, but as soon as she saw that the fruit was “good,” she perceived that God must be bad for withholding it from her. This was Satan’s goal: to get Eve to look at God as unkind and selfish. This has been the great controversy ever since; it is over the character of God. Does He really unselfishly love us, or is He selfish and unkind?

God’s Amazing Promise

The new view of God’s character that Satan introduced to the universe is an incredibly big problem to deal with, and it requires an incredibly big solution. God could have just wiped Satan out of existence at the first sign of rebellion. But what would that have

accomplished? Some would see this as proving Satan’s charges correct. They would wonder if God was right to deal with it so drastically. It would have allowed for sin to come back, through someone else. But God is going to make sure that this will not happen ever again. He promised, “What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time” (Nahum 1:9). He also promised that He will make a new earth where He will “...wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:1-4).

For God to ensure that sin will never come back, that no one will ever again question His love, His methods, or His laws, He has to deal with the problem very carefully and completely. Satan’s accusation is that God is no good, that He is selfish and unkind. To answer this charge, God had to do something incredible that would leave no chance for that accusation to ever arise again. He had to do something that would prove forever, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that there is no selfishness in Him at all. Here is how He did it: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9).

The Bible also says, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). Here we find that the gift of God’s Son was the

greatest gift He could have possibly given, and we can be certain He will freely give everything for us.

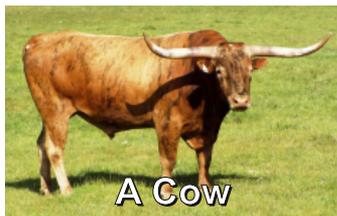
The Gift of a Son

God tested Abraham's love by saying, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Genesis 22:2). Why didn't God ask him to give up his favorite cow, or his riches? Abraham could still be selfish and give up a cow or even all his riches. God asked Abraham to give what was most important to him, to demonstrate clearly that He loved God with all of his heart. God intervened to stop Abraham from taking the life of his son, saying, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Genesis 22:10-12).

This was the ultimate test of Abraham's loyalty and love. It removed all



**What would
be more
important?**



possibility of him being selfish. Abraham's son was on the top of the list of his treasures. It proved, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Abraham would have freely given up everything else. Any lesser gift would have allowed him to still be selfish. This is a picture of what God did for us, and nothing less would have completely answered Satan's accusation.

Right after explaining God's love in giving His Son, John wrote, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4, 5). Here we are told that the only way we can overcome the world is if we believe that Jesus is the Son of God. This is true because this is the key to understanding the depth of God's love for us. If Jesus was anyone other than the Son of God, then God's gift would fall short of answering Satan's accusa-

tions, and it would fall short of transforming our lives so that we love God with all of our hearts (Mark 12:29, 30). It is impossible to love God with all your heart unless you know that He loves

you with all of His heart. Our love for God is proportionate to how we see His love for us (1 John 4:19). If we think that God loves us a little, then we will love God a little. If we think that He loves us with all of His heart, then we can love Him with all of our hearts. It is impossible to love God more than we see that He loves us.

The Identity of Jesus Christ

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets” (Matthew 16:13, 14). Jesus wanted to focus the attention of His disciples on His identity as someone more than just a human. “He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:16-18).

Jesus was thrilled with Peter’s answer about His true identity. He assured him that this revelation came directly from God, His Father, and then He said that upon this truth He would build His church. The identity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God is the foundation of His church. This is the key to understanding God’s love,

enabling us to be transformed into His image (2 Corinthians 3:18).

John wrote near the end of his book, “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30-31). John claimed that the number one point he was trying to get you to believe through his book is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. This is the foundation of Christ’s church, the key to overcoming the world, and the only way to appreciate the love of God in its fullness.

A Real Son

When did Jesus become the Son of God? Some have claimed that it was when He was born on earth, but that is when He became the Son of man. He was already the Son of God before. “God sent His only begotten Son into the world” (1 John 4:9). Hundreds of years before Jesus came to earth, the Bible said, “Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?” (Proverbs 30:4).

In the same book, the Bible also says, “When there were no depths, I was brought forth [born]; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth [born]” (Proverbs 8:24, 25).

Here someone claims that they were born before the hills. Continuing, "While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him" (Proverbs 8:26-30). This is Jesus Christ speaking of Himself, and He claims that He was born before anything was created.

Jesus also said, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5:26). According to Jesus He received life from His Father. He is really "the only begotten [born] Son of God" (John 3:18).

Some have supposed that God was just using the word "Son" to express a divine relationship that we could never understand. However, God is the one who invented the arrangement of humans having a father and a son. He did this long after He had a divine relationship with His own Son. If He meant for us to understand something different about Him and His Son, He could have made us differently, or used a different word to describe it. Instead, He made us in His image, with the ability to have a father and a son, and then He declared about Jesus, "This is my

beloved Son" (Matthew 3:17; 17:5). If He wanted us to believe anything else about Jesus Christ, He did a very poor job explaining Himself. In fact, the Bible says that Jesus is "...the Son of the Father, in truth and love" (2 John 1:3). How and when He was begotten is not for us to know, for that was not revealed, but God said that it happened and that Jesus is really His Son. We can be sure that He was begotten before anything was created, for "God... created all things by Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:9). "...all things were created by him" (Colossians 1:16), and "...without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3).

The Bible says, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the

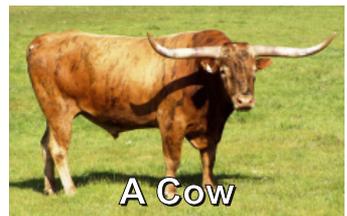
Conclusion

angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Hebrews 1:1-9).

Paul was showing the exalted nature and identity of Jesus Christ in comparison to created angels. Over and over, his reason for claiming Christ is superior to the angels is that Jesus is the Son of God. He did this by using the words, “His Son,” “heir of all things,” “express image of His person,” He received a name “by inheritance,” the Father has “begotten” Him, “Father... Son,” and “firstbegotten.” The most exalted view of Jesus Christ that we can have is when we see Him as the divine, “only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14). This understanding remains true to the Bible and vindicates God’s character of love that He demonstrated by giving His beloved and only begotten Son.



What would be more important to God?



God has completely responded to Satan’s accusation that He is selfish. He demonstrated this in such a way that throughout all the ages of eternity no one will ever bring up such a charge again. The gift of His Son was to demonstrate God’s unselfish love, and to redeem all those who will accept Him.

The magnitude of God’s love is only appreciated when we understand Christ’s true identity as the only begotten Son of God. As Satan’s number one goal in life is to misrepresent God’s love, it is to be expected that His number one attack against our understanding of God’s love would be to misrepresent the gift of God’s Son. This is done through a multitude of unbiblical teachings about Jesus. Some claim that He was just a human, others that He was an angel, while still others claim He is the same person, or being, as the Father, or that He is a coeternal (same-aged) partner of God, the Father. All of these attacks against the true identity of Jesus Christ as the actual Son of God are attempts to hide the magnitude of God’s love in giving His

Son to die for us. Any of these theories would allow God to still be considered selfish. They minimize the gift of God and fall short of answering Satan's charges against His character.

The world needs to see that God loves them absolutely and unconditionally. God loves you so much that He would give up anything for you. He is actively pursuing a relationship with you. He is selfless in His interests for your salvation and peace. He said, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil..." (Jeremiah 29:11). David expressed, "How precious are your thoughts concerning me, O God! How vast in number they are! If I try to count them, there would be more of them than there are grains of sand. When I wake up, I am still with you" (Psalms 139:17, 18 GWV).

God doesn't stop thinking about you. He is more determined than a man pursuing a woman whom he loves. You are the object of God's affections, and He will not stop seeking to have a relationship with you. All of His thoughts concerning you are peaceful. Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44). God, the Father, sent His own Son "...to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

Do not despair if you recognize your own unworthiness. Rejoice, because you are just the type of person that Jesus came to save. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a

righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8). Jesus promised, "...him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

A couple weeks ago my Brother Tim and I were visiting a juvenile detention center and met a young man from a gang. He had tattoos all over his arms, hands, and even on his face. He was drawing pictures depicting his life in gangs, but his face was lighted by a peaceful smile. He told us that seventeen days earlier a jail minister had been passing by and stepped in his cell to tell him, "God still loves you. He has not forgotten you." He had been feeling rejected by God, but that short message was a sign to him that God still loves him. He said he broke down into tears and then gave his life to the Lord. The short time we visited with him made it clear that his conversion was genuine. He was so excited that God cared for someone as sinful as him. He was also confident that God would be with him when he was transferred to an adult prison.

The world needs to know that God loves them. This can change their lives. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). Jesus said, "At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God" (John 16:26, 27). >>

Nicaragua and Costa Rica Trip Report

by Lynnford Beachy

On January 29, Brother Alfred Izarry and I took a two-week trip to Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Alfred would be my translator for this trip. As usual, the airplane ride allowed us to make friends with some passengers and share some literature. We were greeted at the airport in Managua by our Brother Pedro Robles-Mena (who would accompany us in all of our travels), and his brother, Orlando.

Friday, January 30

In the morning we went to visit with some of the brethren I had met on our previous visit in June. They had some questions about whether Jesus is really the Son of God. They proposed the idea that God only used the word “Son” because He was limited by our human language, and couldn’t explain His relationship to Jesus in any better way. I informed them that God is the one who invented the concept of “son” in our human experience. If He wanted us to believe something else, He could have made us differently or used another word. I believe He made us with the ability to have sons so that we can understand His relationship to His Son. Alfred pointed out that there is no biblical authority for the concept of the Father and Son simply role playing, pretending to be Father and Son. We discussed other aspects of God and Christ, such as whether or not Jesus was all powerful while He was a human. When we left, they showed

an interest to study the Bible to see if these things are so.

That evening we had our first meeting in Nicaragua, which was focused on how Christ in you makes you free. The practical application of Jesus, the Truth, in your heart, was very well received. During the presentation, a neighbor in the community walked by and stopped to see what we were talking about. He was noticeably drunk, and I welcomed him to come in. He remained outside listening, but was interested.

Sabbath, January 31

The first message was shared by Brother Alfred about the God of the impossible. It was great to see how the people were blessed by this practical message. I could not understand the whole presentation because it was spoken in Spanish, but I am learning.

For the next message, I shared about the promise of God’s Spirit at Pentecost and how God gave a new aspect of this amazing gift, which did not exist before. We saw clearly that the knowledge and experience Christ gained while living as a human allows Him to help us in a greater way than could be done before this experience (Hebrews 2:18; 5:8). We also saw the dramatic change in the Covenants when Jesus died for us; how the old ceremonial system of shadows and types was temporary, pointing people to the real work of Jesus Christ in the heavenly Sanctuary, which began after Jesus was raised from the dead

to become our High Priest (Hebrews 2:17; 8:3). The brethren seemed to really appreciate the message.

The drunk neighbor from the night before returned with his son, and listened attentively. Afterward, this man, Samuel, urged me to visit him at his home so I could pray for him and his family.

On Sabbath afternoon we visited a lady and had a study in her home. I shared my testimony of how the Lord rescued me from drugs and alcohol. I then shared with her about the love of God in giving His Son to die for us. We had prayer with her to receive Jesus as her Savior, and she accepted. Afterwards we stopped by to visit Samuel. I shared with him my testimony about how God pulled me out of drugs and alcohol, and shared the Bible verses that changed my life (Ezekiel 36:26, 27). We were happy to see that he dedicated himself to the Lord as well. Please keep Samuel and this lady in your prayers.



Alfred, Samuel, and Lynnford

In the afternoon, we addressed some questions people have. We looked at 1 John 5:7 and Matthew 28:19, two of the verses that have given many people questions. I explained these things in the same way as I explained them in my book, “Answering Objections,” available in printed form upon request, or you can read it on our website. This was a lively discussion that brought in some helpful insights and a deeper appreciation of God’s love.

One young lady asked an excellent question: “If God knew that Satan was going to sin, why did He create him?” Questions along this line are my favorite type of questions. We discussed the fact that God did not want us to be robots that can only do what He commands. Instead He wants us to have a free will. We read about the history of Satan’s fall, and the question about God’s character that Satan introduced to the universe (Ezekiel 28:13-17; Genesis 3:1-6). We read about God’s promise

in Nahum 1:9 that He is going to deal with the sin problem so completely that it will never rise again (Revelation 21:4). We saw that once doubts about God’s love were introduced into the universe, God had to do something extreme to demonstrate that He loves us with every fiber of His being to insure that sin will not come back.

We read, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). This verse shows that the gift of God's Son was the greatest possible gift He could give and removes any chance of Him being selfish. Any lesser gift would have left doubts about God's love. He could still be selfish and give up a cow, a human, or even an angel. The charge against His character was so big that it required a monumental demonstration of His absolute unselfish character. Anything less would have allowed sin to rise again.

God could have destroyed Satan as soon as he started going astray, but that would only prove Satan's charges to be correct. God had to allow Satan to demonstrate the terrible results of separating from the source of all goodness, so nobody would ever seek to go down that road again. When it is all finished, sin will never come back.

This focus on the love of God as the answer to the great controversy over His character became the primary message I shared all over the countries of Costa Rica and Nicaragua. We found it to be incredibly helpful in addressing many issues.

Sunday, February 1

On Sunday we went to visit a few people, scattered over quite a distance, to encourage them in their walk with the Lord. As we were driving through some of the towns, I was watching the people, asking God to show how I can cooperate in His work

of drawing these people to Christ (John 6:44; 12:32). I was seeking to be available for God to use in whatever way He chooses. The next day I would get an opportunity. In the evening we had another meeting with the brethren we had studied with on Sabbath. Samuel again visited. This time his daughter was with him and he was not drunk. He was very interested in the studies.

Monday, February 2

On Monday we traveled to Costa Rica. During a long wait at the border crossing, we met a lady from Switzerland with whom we had an interesting conversation. Alfred asked her about her spiritual life and learned she was agnostic and could not understand why God would allow all the pain in the world if He really loves us. I asked her if she would mind if I read her a Bible verse that explains the reason behind all of this. She was reluctant at first, but it led to an hour-long Bible study on the history of the fall of Satan and how he introduced the questions about God's character that needed to be answered by Him sending His Son to die for us. She was very interested to learn concepts that she had never considered before. Please pray for her. I did not get her name, but God knows it. I felt this was an answer to my prayer the day before.

We stopped in Tilaran, Costa Rica, to visit with Henry and his lovely family. We arrived just in time to have a study with some people Henry had invited from his community. The Lord greatly blessed in this meeting. I



Pedro, Alfred, and Lynnford with Henry and his family

wrote to my wife and told her that I believe the Lord used me to share His love probably more powerfully than He had ever done before. Everyone was happy to learn more about God's incredible love for us as the answer to Satan's charges.

Tuesday, February 3

After a delightful breakfast we visited a few brethren to share a study on God's love similarly to how it was shared the night before. They were interested to hear what we had to share and were willing to study things out more thoroughly to see if these things are so. Afterwards, we took a bus to San Jose, where we stayed in the home of our brother, Federico. It was nice to visit with this

family whom I had met in our previous trip last June.

Wednesday, February 4

We boarded a bus in the morning for a long trip to near the border of Panama. Our route took seven hours, and we arrived around 3pm, where we were greeted by Brother Dennis. I was delighted to see him again. I had met him in June when we had meetings near San Jose.

Dennis has a humble missionary spirit that was delightful to be around. He brought us to a lovely house where we would stay for the next few days, and hold meetings on Sabbath. Dennis then brought us to visit Juan who holds church services in his house on the border of Panama. We

asked if he had any questions about the Bible. He asked, “Was Jesus created or born?” “Is the Holy Spirit a separate person?” “Is Jesus God?” and “Should we use Hebrew names to address God and Jesus?” We opened the Bible together to see what God has to say about these things, and he was delighted to learn how clearly the Bible answers these questions. (For a thorough study on these topics, please read, *Understanding the Personality of God* and the article in the November 2005 issue of *Present Truth* entitled, “Must we use Hebrew Names to be Saved?”)

Thursday, February 5

In the afternoon, we visited a lawyer and had a study with him in his office. He was eager to learn about the plan of salvation and the amazing love of God in giving His Son. He had not heard it explained this way before and was eager to meet with us again on Sabbath to discuss it further.

That evening, two Italian families came to the house to study with us. Sergio introduced himself, and then clearly explained several things he believed, including the idea that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are three functions of the same person (Jesus only). After explaining this, he turned to Pedro and asked, “So what do you believe about these things?” Pedro, calmly redirected the question to me. I said, “I would like to answer that question with some Bible verses.” So we read Ezekiel 28:12-19; Genesis 3:1-6; and Romans 8:32. I explained that God’s love was questioned by Satan, and Eve was tricked

into thinking God didn’t love her, so she ate the forbidden fruit. I explained the great controversy and God’s method of restoring His creation to a relationship with Him by sending His Son to die for us.

This was new for him, and hard to accept. He asked, “How could God have a Son since He is a Spirit.” We read Daniel 7:9-13, which demonstrated that the Father has a form, sits on a throne, has white hair, etc. This verse surprised him. It also surprised him to see that Jesus was shown to be a separate Person who approached the throne of His Father (Daniel 7:13; Revelation 4:2,3; 5:1-7). He had never envisioned God as an actual person. We read Philippians 2:5-9 and saw that Jesus was in the form of God before coming to earth in the form of man.

They were completely amazed to learn that the Bible is so plain on this subject. They began questioning many things. It was thrilling to see God’s love break through the barriers that had been erected. They were not ready to accept what was shared, but were certainly ready to take a fresh look at the identity of Jesus Christ. They left with the desire to study further and invited us to eat lunch with them the next day.

Friday, February 6

In the morning we had a study with Dennis and Pedro, sharing some new insights on the subject of baptism.

We went to the home of Sergio for lunch, followed by a study with his family and some of his neighbors. They still had some question about

their new understanding of Jesus as the Son of God. They were excited to learn about the reality of Jesus Christ as a separate individual from His Father, which opened up a new appreciation of the love of God in giving His Son to die for them. They said they would meet with us on Sabbath to learn more.

That evening, we traveled to the border of Panama to have a study with two gentlemen who are involved in evangelism through radio, distributing literature, and a health food store. They were very friendly and open to hear what I had to share. As had been my custom, I started by sharing the history of Satan and the great controversy over God's character. They were able to see the Biblical evidence for Jesus being the only-begotten Son of God and decided to study it further to see if these things are so. Please keep them in prayer that sharing God's love

can be the primary focus of their missionary work.

Sabbath, February 7

We had an early morning study with a young man named Josue. He has a similar background to mine, and it was refreshing to see his zeal and enthusiasm. He had questions about the plan of salvation and why sin exists.

For the main Sabbath services we had a mixed multitude of people attending. There were several from the Hebrew Roots movement, desiring to go back to aspects of the ceremonial law. The lawyer, Sergio, and several others were also there from different backgrounds. I had not met most of the people, so again I shared the wonderful love of God in giving His Son as the answer to questions about His character. This stimulated a lively discussion. Several from the Hebrew Roots movement believed that Jesus



San Vito Group on Sabbath

Christ began his existence when He was born of Mary in Bethlehem. We saw clearly from the Bible that Jesus is really God's Son, born of His Father before anything was created.

There was a bit of an uproar about this because one individual had a Spanish Bible translation that was actually a paraphrased version, presenting Jesus' preexistence as nothing more than thoughts in God's mind. This version was hailed as one of the most accurate translations of the Bible, but it completely eliminated the words, "begotten," or "Son" from John 3:16. When discussing this with those promoting it, we found that the translator of this Bible actually claimed that the original New Testament was transmitted orally in Hebrew, and was eventually written for the first time in Greek. The translator felt free to change any words of the Greek text as he felt appropriate, according to his understanding of what he thought the Hebrew thoughts were. This made for a pretty sad paraphrased version of the Bible, based upon one man's preconceived ideas. I shared with them four Bible tests to perform on any New Testament Bible translation to see if it follows the Protestant majority texts (5,000+ manuscripts), or the Catholic Vaticanus and Sinaiticus (2 manuscripts). They were surprised to find that their translation failed every test, and was based upon the two faulty manuscripts. (If you would like to know the tests, simply compare John 1:18; Romans 8:1; Ephesians 3:9; and Revelation 22:14 with the KJV. If these texts agree with the KJV, then it

follows the 5,000+ manuscripts, and is probably a pretty good translation. (For a thorough study on this read the article entitled, "Which Bible Should I Use" in the March 1999 issue of *Present Truth*.)

In the afternoon, we opened the meeting for questions and answers. Almost everyone accepted the Biblical evidence that Jesus Christ is literally the only begotten Son of God, and that God's love cannot be questioned after such a great sacrifice as this. Many expressed their heartfelt appreciation for receiving a greater glimpse of the love of God.

In the evening Brother Juan, whom we had met the first night in San Vito, stopped by with his mother and son, Pablo, to ask some questions about the book, *God's Love on Trial*. Pablo also asked about sacred names and feast days. God blessed us with strength to last throughout the day. We had begun around 6am, and ended after 10pm, talking with people nearly the whole time. God especially strengthened Brother Alfred, who talked more than anyone due to translating in both directions.

Sunday, February 8

Our bus left at 5am for a six-hour trip to San Jose, where we were greeted by our Brother Alonzo Corrales. After a few hours of preparing for the afternoon study, we met with Alonzo's group of about twenty souls. After much prayer I felt it necessary to share the history of sin and how God's love was manifested in His giving His Son. In connection with this, I shared the fact that the

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word “name,” in the Bible often refers to character, and how the real message that Jesus came to share was the character of God, not a proper pronunciation of His name. (Many in Costa Rica have gotten involved in thinking that it is a requirement to correctly pronounce the Hebrew version of Jesus’ name for salvation.)

I pointed out that the Greek name “Iesous” is the very best possible transliteration into Greek of the Hebrew name, “Yeshua” (There is no Y or SH sound in Greek and masculine names end with an S), and had been transliterated into Greek hundreds of years before Jesus came to earth (in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint). I pointed out that there are no magic word sounds that are going to save you. God will accept you whether you call on Jesus in English, Iesous in Greek, Yeshua in Hebrew, or whatever your language. God is not concerned with the sound of a word, but with a

heart transformed by His love and indwelling Spirit. (Please read the November and December 2005 issues of *Present Truth* for a thorough study on this topic.) It was very helpful to see the drastic contrast between a God who is willing to give everything for your salvation and one who will kill you if you fail to pronounce his name just right.

We also saw the contrast between the temporary ceremonial laws that were added because of sin, and the eternal moral laws that will exist throughout all eternity.

The Lord blessed in this meeting, and people were able to gain a deeper understanding of God’s love and compassion. Many expressed their thankfulness for learning that God is too loving to be concerned about hearing a specific sound of a word. It was thrilling to see how God restored Alfred’s voice to translate for this meeting. His voice had been taxed through all the meetings. He actually



San Jose Group on Sunday

had to talk a lot more than I did, and his voice suffered because of it. After many prayers, God miraculously restored his voice just minutes before getting up to translate the message. Praise God!

Our bus left from San Jose at midnight for a nine-hour trip to Granada, Nicaragua.

Monday, February 9

After a few hours' rest, we visited some brethren to have prayer with them and encourage them in their walk with the Lord.

Tuesday, February 10

We left Granada for Managua, where we would stay the night. On the way, we shared a study on the love of God with a pastor and his wife. They both seemed very appreciative of the simple message on God's love in giving His real Son to die for us. We arrived in Managua at the home of a pastor who invited us to stay the night in his home. We studied the subject of God's love in giving His Son. He was very reluctant to accept anything different from what he had already known, but he agreed to study some of the literature we left with him. We stayed the night in his home and left the next morning for the United States.

On the airplane I sat next to a Spanish woman and her young child. She did not speak any English, so I had a chance to practice my little bit of Spanish. I asked her if she likes to read, and she was eager to receive the booklet, *Christ in You*, in Spanish. She read the entire booklet in about 30

minutes. She said she really liked it, and when I told her I have another one, she was eager to get that one as well. I gave her a copy of *God's Love on Trial* in Spanish. She read the first chapter before we landed in Houston. Please pray for her, as well all the brethren in Nicaragua and Costa Rica whom we were able to meet.

It was wonderful to see my wife and three children greeting me in the airport. It is difficult to leave my family for a trip like this, but it is certainly rewarding to return to their warm smiles and hugs.

Conclusion

I was very blessed to have Brother Alfred to accompany me on this trip. Not only was he an excellent translator, but a precious brother to share ideas with. This was encouraging and helpful in spreading the gospel.

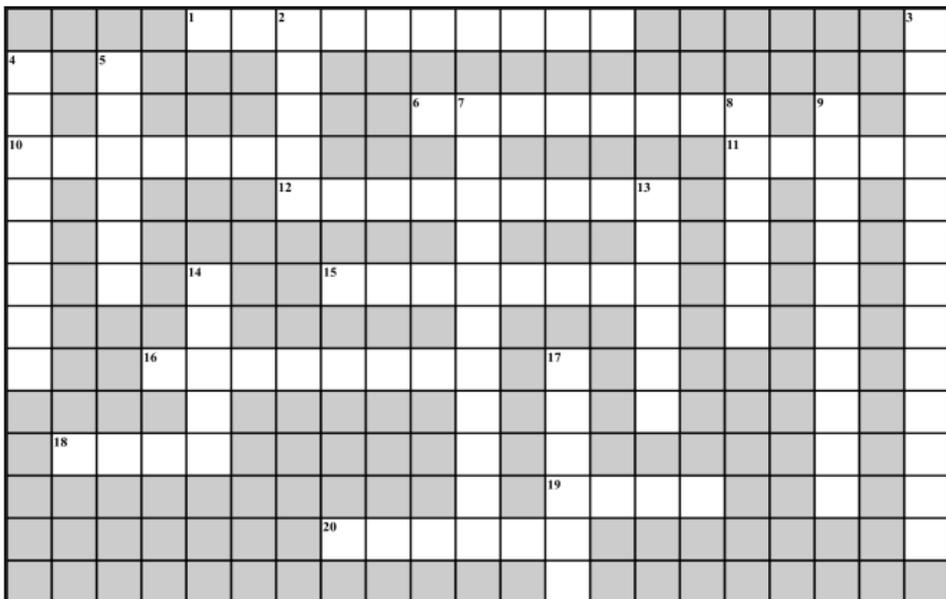
Please pray for all the dear brothers and sisters we met along our trip. Alfred and I will soon be joining other ministers in the Dominican Republic for a camp meeting in April. Please pray that the Lord will bless that trip as well.

There is a lot of work to do everywhere in the world. Please seek the Lord to see how you can cooperate in His work of drawing people to Christ. There are so many opportunities to do something to encourage people to look to Jesus Christ, the answer to all of their needs. I pray that your response to the Lord will be similar to Isaiah's: "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8). >>

Present Truth
Something for the Young at Heart

This month we are continuing a series of studies written by my children. In order to maintain the flow of the study, this crossword puzzle is not split into Across and Down sections—Across or Down is indicated at the end of each line. (The KJV is required.)

Gentleness - by Rebekah Beachy



Answers will be printed on the back page of next month's issue.

- “Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the _____ be able to endure, until I come unto my lord unto Seir.” Genesis 33:14—**15 Across**
- “The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is _____.” Proverbs 15:33—**4 Down**
- “By humility and the fear of the LORD are _____, and honour, and life.” Proverbs 22:4—**17 Down**
- “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the _____, and giveth grace to the humble.” 1 Peter 5:5—**14 Down**
- “Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy _____ hath made me great.” Psalms 18:35—**1 Across**
- “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently _____ those that are with young.” Isaiah 40:11—**18 Across**
- “Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not _____ things, but condescend to men of low estate.

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Be not wise in your own conceits.”

Romans 12:16—**19 Across**

Note: The Greek word that was translated, “condescend” means: “to yield or submit one’s self to lowly things, conditions” (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

➤ “Now I Paul myself beseech you by the ____ and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you.” 2 Corinthians 10:1—**6 Across**

➤ “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, ____, faith.” Galatians 5:22—**16 Across**

➤ “That in the ages to come he might shew the ____ riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:7—**12 Across**

➤ “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, ____ of mind, meekness, longsuffering.” Colossians 3:12—**9 Down**

➤ “But we were gentle among you, even as a ____ cherisheth her children.” 1 Thessalonians 2:7—**2 Down**

➤ “And the servant of the Lord must not ____; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.” 2 Timothy 2:24—**8 Down**

➤ “To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but ____, shewing all meekness unto all men.” Titus 3:2—**13 Down**

➤ “But the ____ that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” James 3:17—**5 Down**

➤ “And the fruit of ____ is sown in peace of them that make peace.” James 3:18—**3 Down**

➤ “Servants, be subject to your ____ with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.” 1 Peter 2:18—**10 Across**

➤ “For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the ____ of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.” Psalms 117:2—**11 Across**

➤ “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her ____ is the law of kindness.” Proverbs 31:26—**20 Across**

➤ “In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with ____ kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.” Isaiah 54:8—**7 Down**

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Answers to Last Month's Crossword Puzzle

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