

# THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Volume 65, Number 1

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Publisher ~ Doug Twaddell

January, 2023

## Out of Sight, Out of Mind?

Ben Fry

Back in the early to mid-1930s, Jean Piaget conducted some research in regard to the way that intelligence develops in humans. One of his conclusions dealt with the idea of object permanence. Through his experiments, he decided that children, specifically those under the age of 2, did not have a sense of objects still existing if they could not see them. He likens this to when you play a game of peek-a-boo with a child. They are surprised every time you peek out at them. However, as children get older, they gain this concept and are able to recognize that just because they can't see something doesn't mean that it no longer exists. The game of peek-a-boo becomes pointless to them.

While many have come along and challenged many of Piaget's ideas, there is still some truth in his conclusions. It can be very easy for us not to think about things that are not immediately around us. I have often had the issue of not thinking about things or people because they were not frequently visible to me. As has been said many times, "Out of sight, out of mind."

But is this attitude something that we should embrace, or is it something that we should strive against?

If we look at the example of Paul and his mindset, we can very quickly see through his letters that he constantly thought about those he had ministered to. In Ephesians, he talks about how he bows his knees before the Father so that the Father might strengthen them (**Ephesians 3:14-19**). Many of his letters express a similar idea. Paul was constantly praying for the churches, and his visits to them were frequently years apart. They were constantly out of sight, but never out of mind.

Similarly, many of my brothers and sisters have a prayer list that they constantly update. These lists can include those who are sick, those who are in ministry, churches, people they are concerned about, and many others. In this way, they have the same attitude as Paul. They are constantly thinking about those who are away from them.

A second thought that occurs to me deals directly with our Lord and Savior. As Jesus reminds us, "God is spirit" (**John 4:24**). We do not have the ability to discern spirits; they are like the wind. We can see their effects, but we cannot see them. And though Jesus spent time on earth as a human, he returned to the

Father after his resurrection. We cannot see the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit. This difficulty is brought up in **1 John 4:20**, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." John enjoins us to love those we can see, to show that we love him whom we have not seen.

These are ways in which we need to remember that just because something is out of sight does not necessarily mean it should be out of our minds. The game of peek-a-boo needs to be one where we know what is going on and do not forget what has been hidden from our sight.

We should always remember our Lord. We should remember our brothers and sisters. We should wrestle for them in prayer. We should show our love to the Father through our love for our brothers and sisters. These are things that though they are out of sight, should not be out of mind.

*Paul was constantly praying for the churches, and his visits to them were frequently years apart. They were constantly out of sight, but never out of mind.*

But there are other things that we should indeed keep out of sight and out of mind. In **Matthew 13**, Jesus tells the parable of the sower. In this parable, there are four different types of soil. The third type of soil is soil infested with weeds and thorns. The Lord tells us that these represent the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. These things can get in the way of the word working in our hearts. These are things that we need to keep out of our hearts and out of our minds.

This goes back to the Lord telling us that we are not to be angry with our brother, we are not to look at others lustfully, and we are not to hate our enemies. These are thoughts that we are to avoid. Paul tells Timothy to avoid irreverent babble and those who have the appearance of godliness but deny its power. Titus is told to avoid quarreling, foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law. All of these things are labeled as unprofitable and worthless.

So we end up with things that we are to keep in our minds, and things that should be out of our minds. How do we make

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the right things permanent in our minds? The things we choose to make permanent in our minds will stay there. It is the things that make into habits we will be stuck with. So, as Paul says in **Philippians 4:8**,

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*

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## A Godly Man Shipwrecked

Joshua Riggins

In **Acts 27**, Luke records an interesting narrative that adds insight into and lessons from Paul. Peter remarks in **1 Peter 2:12**, *"having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation."*

Paul appealed to Caesar (**25:11**), and was later placed into the hands of Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment (**27:1**), to sail for Italy. Paul, we're told, was one of several prisoners under the watchful eye of Julius, but it appears that he was treated more favorably than the rest (**27:3**). Paul's good conduct won Julius over.

The journey began with difficulty (**verse 8**), and the timing did not present favorable conditions for the rest of the trip. Luke mentions a Fast in **27:9**, and this appears to date the trip somewhere around the seventh month and the Day of Atonement. It was generally understood that from that point (our September/October) to the end of March/April, sailing conditions were not favorable. Beyond this, Paul appears to have received special knowledge regarding the outcome of sailing, saying, *"men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss"* (**27:10**). Consider the remarkable nature of Paul's presentation. Paul was a prisoner. Who would listen to a prisoner? Although the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsmen (**verse 11**), it seems that he listened willingly to the words of Paul. Paul was different because his honorable character continued to make its godly impact.

Initially, the ship experienced exceptional conditions (**verse 13**). Very soon, though, the perceptions of Paul proved true. A great storm came upon them (**verse 14**), and they quickly lost all sense of control (**verse 15**). Fear prevailed (**verse 17**). They had no concept of direction (**verse 20**). The situation was without hope: *"all hope that we would be saved was finally given up"* (**27:20**).

At this moment, Paul stands up. The first words out of his mouth are, *"men, you should have listened to me."* If he had stopped there, he wouldn't have been much more than an annoyance. Folks who live in hindsight without adding insight to the future only pile on the misery. That wasn't Paul's intention, though. In **verses 22 through 26**, he gives them hope. He used his truthful words from before to bring courage to a frightened crew. He wanted them to trust his vision from God that not only would Paul make it to Caesar, but all of the individuals on the ship would also be saved for Paul's sake. God was going to be able, through one man's character, to save 276 men.

Our character in this world impacts the salvation of others. Jesus tells us,

*You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).*

Notice how Paul accomplished this with the hundreds who did not know or believe in God as Paul did. **Acts 27:25**, *"therefore, take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told to me."* He expressed his faith for all to see, explaining that through God, they would find hope. We live in a downtrodden world where men are seeking every cure for the flesh that ails them. Their ship is sinking, and we know the One who can save them.

After two full weeks amid the storm (**verse 27**), they began to sense land, just as Paul had assured (**verse 26**). The sailors did what they could to keep the ship from running aground (**verse 29**), but they could sense that this wasn't going to end well for the ship. They tried to sneak away on the ship's boat (**verse 30**). However, Paul knew their plan and told the centurion they had to stay on the ship if they wanted to be saved. These were experienced sailors, and Paul's words would not have made logical sense. Who wouldn't abandon the ship and seek for shore? However, they wisely headed the advice and cut the skiff from the ship. Again, Paul's honorable character helped these men obey God. Paul later writes in **Philippians 2:14-15**,

*do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.*

Paul then encourages the men to eat. He takes the bread and thanks God. Place yourselves in the position of the soldiers and sailors on this ship. Here is a prisoner praising God during this horrific situation. Wouldn't it have been one more goad to wonder about this God Paul serves? Notice **verse 36**, *"then they were all encouraged."* Paul's example encouraged the people. When we stand faithful and thankful to God through difficulties in our lives, we encourage those around us. They see our resolve and faith. They see God's love expressed to us

and through us.

**Acts 27** ends with this sentence, *“and so it was that they all escaped safely to land.”* Paul’s faithfulness and godly character allowed God to prove himself before 275 other witnesses. Our actions and words directly impact the perception this world has of God. Therefore, Paul writes in **Romans 12:21**, *“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”* Our good toward others can and will overcome evil in this world. And for those with eyes to see, it will allow them the chance to view God and have the hopeful light of life illuminated before them.

May the Lord allow, through our submission to him, others to come to know the great everlasting hope we have though the world around us is passing away!

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## Prepared

Michael Allen

The book of Jonah has always been a favorite of many over the years, not only because it has a really good story, but also because of the many lessons that can be taken from its text. To that end, there is one word that appears four times in this book that seems to have a big impact on the actions of Jonah. It is the word "prepared."

The story tells us that God prepared four things that directly interacted with Jonah. First, in **chapter 1, verse 17**, Scripture tells us that God prepared a great fish that swallowed Jonah. And for three days and three nights, this great fish not only held Jonah captive, but no doubt also kept him safe from the perils of the sea and transported him to a location that was probably a lot closer to Nineveh. Jonah emerged as a changed man but ultimately still had a few issues to resolve.

After arriving in Nineveh and successfully preaching to the people there, he became angry with his success and was in need of another life-course correction from God. As Jonah sat outside the city, God prepared a plant (**4:6**) that would give him shade, and then God prepared a worm (**4:7**) to destroy the plant and prepared a strong hot wind (**4:8**) that would bring home the point to him, that he should care more about the souls within the city, than for a plant that made him comfortable.

But as we take a step back and look at this story, on the whole, there also seems to be something else that God prepared in this story, but it wasn't named specifically. And that was the environment where everything came together to create change within the people of Nineveh. There was a reason that Jonah didn't want to go to this city. It was the capital city of what

would essentially be their enemy, the Assyrians. Later writings would talk about the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib as he worked to conquer the region. The entire book of Nahum is devoted solely to the sins of Nineveh and what the judgment against them would be. One can understand Jonah's hesitation in traveling to this city, based on the assumption that they would never repent, and that his life might very well be in danger the minute he started delivering his message. The bottom line was that Jonah didn't want them to repent. And even though Jonah might not have been personally prepared to deliver his message, we know that the people of this city were ready to hear what God had to say. It was the right person at the right location and time that allowed this monumental change to happen. And whether we consider him ready or reluctant, in the end, he was successful.

As we transfer this lesson to us today, we know that we need to always be ready to discuss the Gospel with anyone who will listen. We never know what has transpired beyond our line of sight; we never know what has been prepared without our knowledge. We can't look at evangelism from the viewpoint of only identifying problems, listing why we will surely fail in our efforts. Maybe just beyond all the obstacles that we see, God has prepared a way for us so that we will succeed. Maybe we too can be the right person at the right location and at the right time, to make a monumental difference in the eternal lives of others.

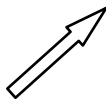
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## Glory to God!

The church that meets on **Prince Road, Alton, IL** rejoiced when **David Savage** was restored and **Sharon Lawrence** placed membership with the congregation.

## Blessed Are the Dead

Dan M. Harman, 87, of Carrollton, MO, passed away on December 1, 2022. Dan was born the morning of January 24, 1935, when it was ten degrees below zero, to **Jesse** and **Bessie (Macoubrie) Harman**. In November of 1955, he met **Marilyn Irene Timmons** while she was working at Mary's Cafe in Carrollton. They were married on February 12, 1956, during a small wedding ceremony at the church of Christ. During his working years, Dan was employed at a variety of jobs all across Carroll County. Dan was a self-taught gunsmith who



***Please check your expiration date!***

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built gun stocks and made guns. If something needed to get done, he could usually figure out a way to make something work. He liked bending old silverware and making it into key chains. Dan learned how to sew so he could make work aprons and seat covers for ATV's, as well as using old leather coats that he could cut up and make pouches for gun powder and bullets. He dabbled in a little bit of everything and he called his collection of car salvage a hobby, so he could use the parts to fix all of his vehicles. One of his favorite pastimes was woodworking and he especially liked making wooden toy boxes and wood blocks for his grandchildren who were an important part of his life. Dan will certainly be missed by his family and everyone who knew him. Brother Dan was a member of the **church of Christ in Carrollton** where he served as a deacon for many years. He is survived by his beloved wife of nearly sixty seven years, Marilyn of the home; his four children, one sister, numerous grandchildren, and many great-grandchildren.

**Vivian Maxine Griffith**, age 98, of Carrollton, MO, passed away December 2, 2022. Vivian was born on July 13, 1924, at the family farm east of Carrollton, Missouri, the daughter of **Charles Clifford** and **Thelma (Grimes) Lightfoot**. After graduating high school, she began working for Social Services of Carroll County. Vivian also worked for the Carroll County Treasurer, and twenty-five years at Banquet Foods in the Accounting Department, the SCS Office in Carrollton, as well as being a private bookkeeper for numerous businesses. Vivian and George were married on November 18, 1945, and they shared a special relationship working together as a team, whether it was helping him on the farm, or raising their children, each and every day was spent together. She loved the outdoors and enjoyed working in her large garden. She was an avid reader and every chance she had, she read to her beloved grandchildren and great-grandchildren. No matter how busy Vivian was, she was always available for her family and friends if they needed anything at all. Life to Vivian was more

about the experience than material things. She was a very faithful member of the **Carrollton church of Christ** and whenever there was something going on at the church, she would be there helping in any way she could. Vivian attended church every Sunday, and would take the neighborhood kids to Vacation Bible School in the summertime. She also loved walking and volunteering at the nursing homes. Vivian is survived by her two children, one brother, five grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, one brother-in-law, and numerous nieces, and nephews.

## *Special Meetings*

### **2023 Meetings**

March 18-19.....Section Church of Christ (Osage City, KS)

April 15-16.....Teen Meeting, Smart Road, Greenwood, MO

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**THE GOSPEL MESSAGE** (USPS:576-040) (ISSN:1054-7991) is published monthly for \$7 per year by **THE GOSPEL MESSAGE**, 1700 S. Ann Ct., Independence, MO 64057. Periodicals Postage Paid at Independence, MO. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **THE GOSPEL MESSAGE**, 1700 S. Ann Ct., Independence, MO 64057