

[Restoring the Lost Art of Confession](#) - Vance A.

Stinson

He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

[Put a Period After It](#) - Lloyd W. Cary

Here's how to stop sin and destructive behavior before it gets a hold on you!

[Question&Answer](#) - Vance A. Stinson

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### The Two Faces of Sin

- Can you answer these questions?
- What are the "two faces" of sin?
- What is the relationship between forgiveness and accountability?
- Why does God allow punishment and correction?
- What is the right way to deal with sin?

**T**he scandal in the White House has stirred public debate

#### Feature

#### Upcoming Events

October 23

### Courtenay, BC

Mr. Charles Groce will conduct a special Friday-night Bible study on Vancouver Island in British Columbia. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. and will be held at Marsland Housing Coop, 2960 Back Road, in Courtenay, BC. Call Joan Seal at (250) 338-8478 if you need additional information.

October 24

### Richmond, BC

Mr. Groce will conduct Sabbath (Saturday) services at 2 p.m. in Richmond, BC, at the Abercorn Inn, located at 9260 Bridgeport Road. If you have any questions, please call Joan Seal at (250) 338-

about forgiveness and morality. Should a morally stained leader whether political or religious be forgiven? If so, what does that entail?

We want to offer you a special sermon tape entitled "Two Faces of Sin," delivered in February of 1998 by Mr. Ben Chapman, chairman of CGI's ministerial council.

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## October 24 Toronto, Ontario

Mr. Bill Watson, a speaker on the Armor of God television program, will visit the Toronto CGI fellowship group. Sabbath services begin at 1:30 p.m. and will be held at the OFL Building, 15 Gervais Drive (at Eglinton Avenue, just west of Don Valley Parkway). Call Horane Smith at (416) 742-0371 if you need further assistance.

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## Put a Period After It

**Here's how to stop sin and destructive behavior before it gets a hold on you!**

by **Lloyd W. Cary**

**R**ecently, as I was driving down a country road, I put on the brakes as I approached a major crossroad, and, without warning, the pedal mooshed all the way to the floor! I had no brakes whatsoever! Narrowly avoiding a potentially fatal accident, I sped across the highway and coasted to a stop about a quarter mile past

the intersection. Later, I ingeniously concluded that most accidents happen simply because for whatever reason people do not stop in time.

Carried a step further, it seems to be a universal failing of mankind that we get into all sorts of troubles because we do not stop indulging in destructive behavior in time to avoid hazardous consequences. People either cannot or will not stop what they should, when they should. Failure to stop is one of the principal causes of trouble in this troubled world.

Some of us do not stop eating when we know we should, and we suffer all kinds of health complications and perhaps even death because of it.

Others of us do not stop indulging in "adult beverages." We become embarrassingly inebriated at the onset and then run the risk of becoming alcoholics in the long run.

Still others of us do not stop gossiping and listening to gossip, and instead become embroiled in suspicions, criticisms, accusations, arguments, hurt feelings, character assassination and finally, sin. Like links in a chain, one thing leads inevitably to another. Why not stop it before it starts?

To take the illustration further, too often we do not put a stop to our runaway emotions of anger, resentment, envy, and lust. We replay our "mental tapes" of real, imagined, or misperceived incidents, injustices, and occasions over and over and overmagnifying the offense each time when we know we should stop it. Adding emotional negatives to a situation is like throwing gasoline on a fire: it merely escalates the problem.

A major hotbed of emotional turmoil is hurt feelings. Everyone wants to be recognized, appreciated, and, in some way, admired. When someone deflates our ego, takes advantage of us, or does not give us the recognition we feel we deserve, our feelings are hurt. This breeds feelings of resentment toward the person or organization we feel offended us, and we begin playing back the old negative "mental tapes" that lead to inappropriate actions. We then go on to "justify" inappropriate behavior and attitudes. Our pride becomes involved and an "us versus them" attitude sets in that is difficult to check. The solution? When we find ourselves rehearsing imaginary arguments with others, stop right there. Nip it in the bud. Forget it. Ignore it. Forgive it. But do not add to it! Do not let emotional escalation in the form of fear, worry, or retaliation take hold of you. Instead, do as Christ said we should do and "turn the other cheek" so we will not become a part of the problem.

## Ending Destructive Behavior

When I complete a sentence, I put a period after it. I stop. That is the end of it. I do not drag the same sentence on and on and on. Likewise, we must learn to put a period after our destructive behavior and character habits. Ending such

behavior turning around and going the other way is what the Bible calls, simply, "repentance" (Luke 13:3). We must put a stop to sin, which the Bible describes as "the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4).

It is interesting to note that eight of the Ten Commandments are stated in "negative" terminology ("Thou shalt not"), and even the remaining two the Fourth and the Fifth are stated in the negative elsewhere. It is often easier to tell someone what not to do than to state all the things one can do. "Thou shalt not" is simply God's way of saying, "Don't do it." "Cease." "Desist." "Halt." "Put on the brakes." "Stop indulging in ungodly behavior." "Repent." "Put a period after it."

If you know you eat too much, predetermine how much you should eat, and when you have reached your limit, simply stop. Do not continue. Put a period after it. If you drink too much, stop. Put a period after it. If you have a problem with gossip or listening to gossip, repent. Stop. No more. Cut your losses. Determine you have come thus far and that's it. Put a period after it.

In order to stop (put a period after) harmful behavior whether physical, emotional, or spiritual we must first become aware that the behavior is, indeed, detrimental. God's Word is like a looking glass, telling us where our flaws are. We are often told to "examine ourselves," to see ourselves from God's perspective and to make the necessary corrections (Lamentations 3:40; Haggai 1:5; 2 Corinthians 13:5).

When we find ourselves replaying our old negative mental tapes of anger, resentment, envy, or lust, we need to simply break those cycles. Become aware. Then, stop. Stifle. Terminate. Put a period after them. Replace the pernicious tapes with a positive, advantageous tape. Study the Word of God instead (Philippians 4:8). It is said that we cannot actually "break" God's laws they are unalterable rather we dash ourselves mercilessly against them. It is up to us to put on the brakes, summoning the character and self-discipline we need to control our emotional "roller coasters" before they control us, before we crash headlong into God's immutable laws and suffer the inevitable consequences (Romans 6:23).

Several years ago, First Lady Nancy Reagan had a simple but effective answer to the drug problem: "Just say no!" Although it may sound oversimplified to some, it works. That's what it takes in the end. That's how we must react to sin. Just stop. Do not continue in destructive behavior. Repent. Just put a period after it.

Can you just say "no" to destructive behavior, to negative emotions, and to sin? Thanks be to God that, with His help, we can. Period.

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## Questions & Answers

by *Vance A. Stinson*

### What is the soul?

**Question:** The book of Genesis says that God created man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Another scripture says that we should not fear those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul, but only God, who can destroy both body and soul in hell. What does this mean?

*A.F., St. Catherine, Jamaica*

**Answer:** The Hebrew term *nephesh*, translated "soul" in the Old Testament, generally means "being," but has several nuances of meaning. Genesis 2:7 states, "And the Lord God formed the man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." The term translated "being" ("soul" in the KJV) in no way indicates immortality. The same term is translated "creature" in Genesis 1:24 and 2:19, and refers to the animals God had created. The term refers to the essence of life in 1 Kings 17:21,22.

The Greek term translated "soul" in the New Testament is *psuche*. Greek translators used this term in translating the Hebrew *nephesh*.

In Matthew 10:28, Jesus states, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." This passage shows clearly that the "soul," however one defines it, can be destroyed. Both body and soul can be destroyed in Gehenna (translated "hell" here), which is the consuming fire that will completely destroy all the incorrigibly wicked in the Day of Judgment. There will be no resurrection for those who are destroyed in Gehenna.

Men can destroy the body. They can render a person completely unconscious. But they cannot destroy that part of the individual that houses the identity. Only God can do that, and He will do it only for the incorrigibly wicked. This does not mean, however, that a person remains conscious after death. Rather, it means simply that, after death, individual identity is preserved and remains in an unconscious state until the resurrection.

Matthew 10:28 is another way of saying, "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell [Gehenna]; yes, I say to you, fear Him!" (Luke 12:4,5).

Men can kill, but cannot prevent God from raising their victims to life again. Only God can destroy permanently.

## Should we worship Jesus?

**Question:** I fully believe that Jesus is the Son of God. I am confused with one question here though. Are we to worship Jesus Christ, when God states in the Old Testament to only worship Him?

*J.R.C., Parchman, Mississippi*

**Answer:** The Bible clearly teaches that only God is to be worshiped. But it is a mistake to assume that the term God is restricted to the Father only. John 1:1 states, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was

God." This same "Word," we are told, "became flesh and dwelt among us" (verse 14). The Word was none other than Jesus Christ. He was with God (the Father), and He was God. The one Godhead consists of two divine Persons, God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son.

John's Gospel is not alone in declaring the divinity of Jesus Christ. The Synoptic Gospels Matthew, Mark, and Luke inform us that Christ is greater than the Temple (Matthew 12:6), is Lord of the Sabbath day (verse 8), has power to forgive sins (Mark 2:5,10), has power to baptize with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8), is the ultimate Judge of the wicked (Matthew 7:21,23; Luke 3:17), and accepts worship (Matthew 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 28:9,17).

We can come to only one logical conclusion: Jesus Christ is truly God! He is therefore worthy of our worship.

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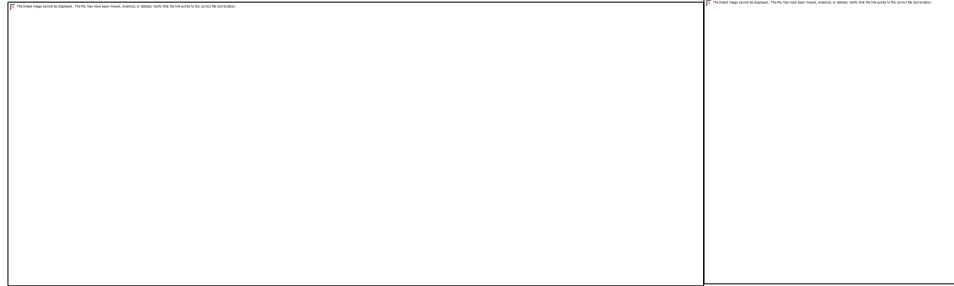
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## Restoring the Lost Art of Confession

**He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).**

**by Vance A. Stinson**

**S**everal years ago, I took a job as a salesman. I didn't know the first thing about how to make a living in sales, but I was willing to take a shot at it. The salesmen who sold me on the idea were convincing. They told me of how the earning potential in sales was practically unlimited, of how they had achieved great success, and of how I could imitate their success. Indeed, the new job looked promising.

Within a week or so I was off to a five-day "sales cruise." Interestingly, the men I worked with were religious types. In fact, my trainer was a part-time preacher. I can't say much for his theology, but he sure knew how to sell! He was one of those salesmen who could take a box of matches to hell, as the old saying goes, and sell them for fifty cents each!

Unfortunately, within less than an hour on the first morning of my training, the job began to seem much less attractive than before.

Our first prospect that morning was an elderly gentleman who was raking leaves in his yard. We whipped into his driveway, jumped out, and introduced ourselves. The gentleman was friendly, but a bit uncomfortable.

After a few moments of small talk and commenting on the beautiful weather, the sales pitch was made. The old fellow didn't want our product. My trainer began applying pressure. No sale. More pressure. Still no sale.

Finally, after a lot of arm-twisting and a few failed attempts to move the prospect

toward a close, my trainer realized he was wasting his time. He then turned his attention to a nearby house, and asked who lived there. The old fellow was reluctant to give us any names, but finally told us that a Mrs. Jones lived there.

We then hurried over to Mrs. Jones' front door and knocked. When Mrs. Jones came to the door, my trainer introduced himself and said, "Mrs. Jones, your neighbor, Mr. Smith, highly recommended you."

I was stunned! Mr. Smith did anything but "highly recommend" her. He didn't even want to give us her name. Yet, here was this religious type, this so-called "preacher," resorting to blatant fabrication most of us call it lying! in order to get a foot in the door and make a few bucks.

This was the first of several such misrepresentations of the truth I witnessed that week. I began wondering how a man who professed Christianity and who was seen frequently in the pulpit, supposedly expounding biblical principles, could so twist the truth and still sleep soundly at night. Surely he knew he was being less than honest

Or did he?

Think about it for a moment: Do you think the salesman would have admitted his deceptive tactics? Not likely. In fact, he probably was unwilling to admit his guilt even to himself!

As I thought about it, I realized that my trainer had convinced himself that his tactics were above board, that he was actually doing the people a favor! He had managed to justify his actions. After all, he reasoned, the people need this product, and I'm doing them a favor when I do everything I can to get them to buy it. Good ol' me-I'm just out here taking all this heat from resistant people, just trying to help them!

Not only was he deceiving prospective buyers, he was actually deceiving himself!

Self-deception is a very real phenomenon, and the Bible is not silent on this matter. We readily see the ulterior motives of others, but it's not so easy to admit our own internal faults and flaws.

If we are to overcome our sins, live godly lives, and achieve spiritual maturity, then we simply must recapture the lost art of confession.

### Confession: Key to Spiritual Growth

The apostle John wrote, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8,9).

Most of us admit that we are sinners, but we tend to come short of admitting to ourselves the full truth about the motives and attitudes that lie at the roots of what we say and do. The problem is not a lack of conscience; it's a lack of willingness to endure the discomfort of facing up to our innermost drives.

In describing those he terms "the evil," Dr. M. Scott Peck writes, "The problem is not a defect of conscience but the effort to deny the conscience its due. We become evil by attempting to hide from ourselves. The wickedness of the evil is not committed directly, but indirectly as a part of this cover-up process. Evil originates not in the absence of guilt but in the effort to escape it" (People of the Lie, p. 76).

This uncanny ability to cover-up, hide from, and escape guilt is not restricted to "the evil," however. All of us have this ability, and to some extent we all put it to use. And until we are willing to give the conscience its due, we will continue to deceive ourselves.

This proclivity to hide from our own sins is so powerful that we sometimes transform our faults into virtues. For instance, the person who enjoys revealing the secret sins of others convinces himself that he's "just telling the truth." When confronted by someone he has hurt, he says, "I guess I'm just too honest for my own good." Thus, he denies his conscience its due by turning his viciousness into the virtue of honesty.

When I was being trained in sales, I asked my trainer what he thought about the use of high-pressure tactics in selling. (Of course, I knew that he resorted to such tactics and seemed to be proud of it!) He answered, "Some people say I'm a high-pressure salesman. I'm not, I'm an aggressive salesman." He knew that "high-pressure salesman" carries negative connotations, so he avoided that characterization. But "aggressive salesman" implies hard work and dedication-virtues anyone would be proud of.

We sometimes see this same phenomenon in the church. The person who comes among us with his own hidden agenda and desire to gain a following for himself manages to convince himself that he's "just trying to help people see the truth." He may even convince himself that he has a divinely appointed mission to "straighten out the church."

Such people simply do not acknowledge the truth about their motives. They come among us looking for a platform. They wish to display their spiritual brilliance and theological genius. They may spend long hours "searching the Scriptures," but they hide from themselves the fact that their primary motive is to draw attention to themselves. Their vanity and spiritual pride is transformed into righteousness.

The platform-seeker does not go home at night and search his soul. He doesn't kneel before God and admit, "I'm filled with vanity." He doesn't strip away the layers of deception; he doesn't lay his heart bare before God and say, "This is the real me;

these are my real motives." Rather, he prays for "more truth," convincing himself that he is humbly seeking deeper understanding and a closer walk with Christ.

When confronted, the platform-seeker identifies himself with the apostles and prophets who faced opposition from the ignorant and unlearned. When rejected, he adopts the old martyr complex, and convinces himself that he is being "persecuted."

Such persons are locked into a no-growth zone. Until they learn how to give their conscience its due-until they recapture the lost art of confession-they will be up to the same old antics next year, and the year after. Or, they may burn out, abandon "religion," and then set out to find new ways to feed their vanity.

Not only do people deceive themselves to avoid the pain of guilt, they deceive themselves because they have a personal itch that needs scratching, and, unfortunately, they seem never to find a stick long enough to reach the itch. So they keep searching for a longer stick-something that will give them the relief they so desperately desire.

Such persons often fall into the seemingly inescapable pit known as the "Messiah Trap." They may appear to be the most loving people on earth, but in reality their expressions of "love" are attempts to prove their own sense of self-worth. Like the platform-seeker, the "Messiah" is unwilling or unable to face his real motives.

No one wants to feel worthless, but it's important to understand that we cannot find the peace of mind we naturally desire until we first admit to ourselves our own motives and attitudes-those deeply buried drives and feelings that form the underpinnings of our behavior.

True peace of mind comes only through honest, open-hearted confession. Once we confess-once we give our conscience its due-we are then able to abandon self as the means whereby true peace of mind may be obtained. Only then can we find the one means through which justification is made possible.

## No Justification Without Confession

We hear a great deal these days about "self-esteem" and of establishing a good sense of "self-worth." We are even told by some that one of our greatest problems is that we don't love ourselves enough. We are left with the impression that self-hate, or lack of self-esteem, is at least partially responsible for the ills of society.

Perhaps the "I'm OK" philosophy has its place, but should adulterers, thieves, liars, and murderers perceive themselves as "OK" people? No, of course not. What about the salesman who distorts the truth, and the platform-seeker who has his own hidden agenda? Should such persons apply "positive self-imaging" and learn to perceive themselves as "OK" people?

No, they should not. That is, they should not until they first come face to face with the truth about their real motives, and then turn to the one Source-which is outside themselves-through which they may rightly claim freedom from guilt. The so-called "sin of self-hatred" has been greatly overstated. The apostle Paul says that "no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it" (Ephesians 5:29). Jesus commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves, which means that we should love our neighbor as we naturally love ourselves. If self-hatred were one of man's most common proclivities, Jesus would have never told us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

So any attempt to love self more as a solution to the problem of sinful behavior is futile. Self-love is natural, and need not be nurtured. But self-confrontation is painful, and requires some effort. It requires that we examine our innermost being and honestly confess our sins.

The apostle Paul didn't advocate "positive self-imaging" or such silly exercises as standing before a mirror and repeating "I love you" one hundred times each morning, as some pop psychology guides would have you do. Notice Paul's admission: "For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do" (Romans 7:15). Paul is speaking of his own personal struggle with sin.

He goes on to say, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice" (verses 18,19).

That doesn't sound like a very positive self-esteem or sense of self-worth, does it? Paul did not try to persuade himself that he was something other than what he really was. No "positive self-imaging" or ego-stroking here.

He goes on to say: "I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (verses 21,24).

Paul confesses his sins, his unworthiness, his guilt. But now he brings us to the solution to his problem: "I thank God-through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 7:25; 8:1,2).

Paul did not hide his sins from himself, but confessed. And through confession, he was able to turn wholeheartedly to the only means of true justification and freedom

from guilt. His justification was not self-established through good deeds or through denying his conscience its due. His freedom from guilt was founded solely on the righteousness of God, which was imputed to him through Jesus Christ.

Once his sins were remitted and he was declared righteous-not on his own merits, but through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ he was able to say, confidently, "Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me" (Romans 7:20).

Paul's justification was not because of himself, but in spite of himself. Had he refused to confess his faults, had he hidden the truth about himself from his own consciousness, he would not have been able to confidently declare his freedom from guilt, and he would have closed off all avenues for further spiritual growth.

The same is true of us. If we fail to examine ourselves-our motives, attitudes, and feelings-we too will find ourselves in a no-growth zone. Confession is essential to spiritual growth and maturity. It is paramount to that life-changing experience we call repentance.

Repentance is more than a one-time experience in which we express our sorrow before God and ask for His mercy. It is an ongoing, lifelong process. It is not a continual feeling of downtrodden unworthiness, but a positive commitment to be honest with one's self and to admit the truth about one's own desires, drives, motives, and attitudes. It is the desire to allow the light of God's Word to penetrate the darkened corridors of our innermost being, and the resolve to change when change is needed.

While feeling sorry for one's sins is part of the process of repentance, repentance is more than mere sorrow. The apostle Paul says that "godly sorrow worketh repentance" (2 Corinthians 7:10). This means that sorrow for one's sins leads to repentance, or change. Repentance is the positive result of godly sorrow.

The process of repentance begins with confession.

## How to Confess

Confession entails more than listing the sins one may have committed on a given day. It involves looking deeply within ourselves and honestly examining the motives that underlie our behavior. We call it meditation, and when it is done prayerfully, we can expect some very rewarding results.

The next time you pray in private, spend some time reviewing the things you said and did during the preceding hours. Be honest about your motives. For instance, did you pay someone a compliment? If so, why? Did you do it for the benefit of the other person? Or were you fishing for a compliment in return? If you were fishing for a compliment, then admit it. That may seem to be a trivial matter, but it

illustrates how we tend to hide from our real motives.

Did you harbor resentment toward a fellow employee who was promoted over you? If so, why? Because the person used deceit in getting his promotion? Or because you were envious? Again, be honest. If you were envious, then admit it, and ask God to help you put away your envy.

If you had an argument with your spouse, were you willing to listen to his or her point of view? If not, why? Perhaps it was due to your own stubborn pride. If so, confess it, and ask God to help you overcome this problem.

Had the dishonest salesman admitted his real motives and given his conscience its due, he would have abandoned his deceptive tactics. And if the platform-seeker would be honest with himself, before God, he would give up his hidden agenda.

While confession may be painful at first, its end result is happiness, peace of mind, and deep appreciation for the mercy and loving kindness of God. This truth is expressed beautifully in Psalm 32:

"Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

"While I kept silence [about my sin], my body wasted away through the groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah

"Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah

"Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. Selah

"I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.

"Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart" (NRSV).

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*All Scripture quotations in this newsletter were taken from the New King James Version except as noted.*

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