



New Testament Expositor

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Finding Comfort in Times of Sorrow

“The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Yea, though, I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. I will fear no evil: For you are with me: Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Psalm 23). This Psalm is one of the most well-known. It is of great comfort to Christians that the Shepherd leads us in this life, protects us from danger and gives us comfort in our greatest trials.

Jesus is referred to as a shepherd in both the Old and New Testaments. In John 10:11, He refers to Himself as the Good Shepherd. Not only is He the Shepherd, but as the Shepherd he is willing to give His life for the sheep. Who are His sheep? Those that follow Jesus are His sheep. The sheep recognize the voice of the Shepherd. The sheep have protection because of the Shepherd’s care.

Psalm 119:50

This is my comfort in my affliction,
for Your Word has given me life

Looking to the Shepherd, the needs of the sheep have been provided. “I shall not want.” I should not worry or be concerned what may happen to me because the Shepherd cares. The Shepherd’s compassion is that the sheep are always safe. Jesus spoke these words concerning the worries of life, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 3:33-34). Unlike an animal, man has need for more than basic instinctual things. Man has a need for the spiritual, which the Shepherd will provide.

My soul is restored when baptism for remission of sins takes place. The sin that separated me from God has been forgiven through the sacrifice of the Shepherd. The Shepherd died for the protection of the sheep (Matthew 27:50). I have been re-established with a relationship with God in which hope now reigns supreme. Because of the care of the Shepherd, I may be in the presence of God one day throughout all of eternity. The Apostle Paul states to the

Romans, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in a newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

This newness of life gives me the path in which I should walk because the Shepherd is my example. His path leads me to God. His path was of perfection on this earth. When the Shepherd came to the end of His earthly path, He sat down on the right hand of God (Hebrews 12:2). The path of righteousness is not an easy one to follow. It is a path that must be traveled with sacrifice and obedience. The path is narrow (Matthew 7:13-14). Jesus however, leads us in the way of righteousness on this path, giving us all comfort from the evils of the world. This comfort comes from knowing that in Him a greater home awaits (John 14:1-6).

The goodness of God will dwell in us regardless of what the situation may be. Romans 8:28 states, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Many times we are unclear as to why things happen the way they do. So many are dealing with the death of close family members while others are suffering with their own mortality. I don’t always have the words to give the comfort that I would like others to experience. However, the words of comfort that I do speak are from the greatest comforter of all. Apostle Paul stated, “Be anxious for nothing for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ” (Philippians 4:6-7).

One of the greatest comforts is that I can face death with joy and confidence in my heart. All mankind will walk through this valley. For those that are not of the Shepherd, it is a dreadful valley that has no promise. For those that walk in paths of righteousness, there is no fear. It is my prayer that you are a faithful sheep of Jesus. In Him all comfort and hope may be found. When we die faithful in Christ, we do not have to mourn as those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13). We can rest assured that one day they will stand before Christ with the hope of Heaven being cleansed by His shed blood. If you are not faithful to Christ, please prepare yourself for that day. For those of us who are faithful in Christ that wait with heavy hearts of sorrow, take solace in the great promise in Christ Jesus that one day we may all be reunited to never be separated again.

(Scott M. Judge is the minister of the Elm Grove Church of Christ in Elm Grove Ohio)

PRACTICE MATTERS –THE RED PYRAID

Egypt and its pyramids, geometric shapes, and patterns have continued to fascinate people for many years and for good reasons. It is interesting to read some of the wild theories some put forth about Egypt. For example, some in the 1960s claimed the pyramids were built by space aliens, supposing there is no way the Egyptians were capable of such feats.

One of the things that I observed about Egypt is that pyramids did not “drop out of the sky perfectly formed and arranged.” The pyramids at Giza, though one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, are not the only pyramids in Egypt. In fact, one source suggested there are nearly 100 pyramids of various sizes in Egypt. Also, there were various efforts to construct pyramids with various degrees of success (and failures). One of my favorite pyramids we visited is called the Red Pyramid (or is called in Aramaic a term that means “bat pyramid”). It was constructed ca. 2590 BCE by Pharaoh Sneferu of the fourth dynasty of the Old Kingdom Period. It is believed it would later serve as his burial place.

The Red Pyramid is in the necropolis of Dahshur about 15 miles from Cairo. It is not the largest of the pyramids, but it is the largest in Dahshur. This pyramid is the first to be smooth sloped rather than the step formations of early pyramids. We visited the Red Pyramid on a beautiful Sunday, June 2, 2024. The high temperature expected for the day was 95 degrees, so we went early in the day to avoid the excessive heat.

There is an opportunity to go inside this pyramid, but one must climb up a significant distance, then climb down into the structure. It was not exactly built for a tall person, and someone had cautioned me about making sure I was in good shape before attempting to do so. Our guide, Romani, told me there was nothing special to see other than being able to say, “I was inside a pyramid in Egypt.” As tempting as that might be, I elected to walk around the entire pyramid which took some time to complete. The Red Pyramid is approximately 224 feet high (fourth highest) and 720 feet wide at the base (second largest). So, walking around would be 2880 feet or just over a half-mile. There are over 150 layers of stone that make up this pyramid. It is astounding to stand at its base and just look up at the side. Scholars suggest the pyramid may have taken approximately 10-17 years to build. The slope of the pyramid was made at a 45-degree angle, which was different from the other pyramids prior. Decades of improved building techniques had developed to the point that the pyramid would not be of the step-model of prior dynasties.

The pyramid did not originally appear red though constructed by reddish limestone. The reddish limestone was overlaid with a white variety of limestone called Tura. Sadly, those overlay stones were removed for other building projects in Cairo, and now there is just a hint of what it may have originally looked like. The Red Pyramid has three chambers inside, but we are unsure of the exact contents because of robbers and looters.

So, the pyramids were not built by space aliens but over centuries with varying degrees of success. It is an apt illus-

tration that practice matters! When one looks around Egypt there is evidence of re-working, re-shaping, and re-using. All of which demonstrates they were searching to improve things, a process managerial experts call “continuous improvement.” It reminds me how time consuming it can be to build up a congregation. There are many details that went into the construction of the pyramids (quarries, transportation, labor, managerial, etc.). Similarly, there are often many details in the building up of a congregation that are often forgotten along the way. If one is to build up a congregation, perhaps the pyramids are a reminder that practice matters! So does patience!

SOURCES:

Silverman, David P. editor. *Ancient Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Stadelmann, Rainer. “The Pyramids of the Fourth Dynasty.” *Pyramids: Treasures, Mysteries, and New Discoveries in Egypt*. Zahi Hawass, editor. Novara, Italy: White Star, 2024.



This is the reddish limestone that was used to build the Red Pyramid though there was a layer of white limestone to cover the entire pyramid originally. Photograph by David R. Kenney, June 2, 2024.

**There is an opportunity to go
inside this pyramid.**



One of the corners of the Red Pyramid. Photo by David R. Kenney, June 2, 2024.



One of the sides of the Red Pyramid. Notice the smooth stones at the base. Picture by David R. Kenney, June 2, 2024.



Seeking His World and FHU Graduate School of Theology members at the base of the Red Pyramid. Photograph by Romani Gaballa, June 2, 2024. Above the group is the entrance into the Red Pyramid.

Wonderful Purpose

A few years ago, I was asked to speak at a VBS. The theme for the week was “Exploring the Wonders of the God Who Loves Us.” My assigned topic for that night was “Wonderful Purpose.” The assigned reading was the conversion of Saul in Acts 9 and Ephesians 2:1-10. It is a challenging thought to consider, “What is my purpose in life?” When I was younger, I had my purpose figured out or so I thought. I was going to take the field every Sunday in the Astrodome in Houston, as I suited up for the Oilers. I spent a lot of time and focus on that dream and for a while forgot the realities of what God’s purpose was for me. Chasing

dreams is for every individual but must be done with God’s commands in mind. Solomon summed up what man’s focus in life should be, “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgement, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 11:13-14). Let us consider the purpose God had for Saul as well as the direction the Apostle Paul gave to the Ephesians.

Saul was a man who had brought great persecution upon the church, thinking that this was the will of God. He was a Pharisee who had excelled in education and training in the traditions of his fathers (Galatians 1:14). Saul had the wrong understanding of God’s will, and before being confronted by Christ on the road to Damascus, had the wrong purpose. After this confrontation, Saul was directed to go on to Damascus where Ananias (who had a vision from God) was instructed to meet with Saul. Ananias, through great fear, questioned God about meeting with Saul because of Saul’s violent history against the Lord’s church. It was then that God spoke to Ananias about the great purpose that Saul would fulfill. But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, Kings, and children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake” (Acts 9:15-16). Indeed, Saul served a wonderful purpose in his life by spreading the gospel of Christ and he suffered physically, emotionally, and mentally for doing so. The man who once brought Christian men and women into prison as well as consented to the death of other Christians (Acts 8:1) would become a great servant of purpose for the Lord.

As Saul had focus and purpose in his life following his conversion, it allowed him to teach others of the great love of God and the hope of eternal life that comes through Christ. The apostle Paul, as he would later become known, made many missionary trips to spread the good news of the Gospel. One trip included a stop in Ephesus. Finding disciples, he began teaching and many were converted to Christ (Acts 19). Sometime after leaving this city and traveling to other cities, he communicated through letter with these disciples at Ephesus. His goal was not only to help them understand their great riches but also to encourage them on their spiritual walk. They had been made alive through Christ (Ephesians 2:1). They were spiritually dead and without hope because of sin at one time, but God showed His great love and mercy so that through Christ they were made alive with Him (Ephesians 2:5). Because of this, they and subsequently, we, are His workmanship (Ephesians 2:10). We are created for good works so that we should walk in them. Our purpose then is not to live a life to fulfill the lusts of the flesh but rather one that is filled with Christ-like intentions. To do the will of the father who is in heaven. We should live by “GPS,” God’s Plan for the Sinner. This plan gives us the route that leads to heaven and directs us to walk humbly (Micah 6:8). It allows us to be fruitful (Colossians 1:10). Not only should we walk with Christ, but we should also be a witness of the greatness of Christ (1 Peter 2:9). Having a purpose for God will allow us to teach (Matthew 28:18-20) and be a light (Matthew 5:14-16).

Continued on Pg. 4– Wonderful Purpose

House to House Heart to Heart

2026 Publication Topics

JANUARY • What If I Am Lost? • Back Page: When Were You Saved?

FEBRUARY • Three Reasons I Want to Go to Heaven • Back Page: What Happens When We Die?

MARCH • God's Invitation to an Honest Conversation • Back Page: The Bible Is the Answer to All of Your Problems

APRIL • I Want to Look upon His Face • Back Page: Are You Addicted?

MAY • Does the Bible Authorize Women to Preach Publicly? • Back Page: Are You Looking for a Church? We Are Looking for You

SPECIAL ISSUE • Is Jesus the Only Way?

JUNE • Three More Reasons I Want to Go to Heaven • Back Page: Will God Forgive Me? How Do I Forgive Myself

JULY • Do We Have to Join a Denomination? Why the First Century Church Is Better • Back Page: Don't Join a Denomination

AUGUST • They Saw Jesus Alive • Back Page: You Can Live Forever

SEPTEMBER • God's Secret to a Good Life • Back Page: How Do I Study the Bible?

OCTOBER • King Jesus' Kingdom • Back Page: Is the Sinners' Prayer in Romans 10:9-10?

NOVEMBER • How Many Churches Did Jesus Build? • Back Page: You Are Worthy

DECEMBER • Kingdom or Church • Back Page: This Is the Community You Need

Continued from Pg. 3 - Wonderful Purpose

This life of purpose leads us to victory. Jesus overcame the world (John 16:33) and in Him we will also.

The apostle Paul is often looked at for his life of servitude and encouragement for others. Paul once lived a life with the wrong purpose but when directed by God, he became one of the greatest examples of purpose that we can study. Paul thought about his purpose often as he went about living a Christian life. He became a man of great love for the Lord's church and suffered greatly because of it. The wonderful purpose for you and me is to live with the same mindset. I am a sinner and yet God loves me. I face a decision as to how to live my life and living for God will bring me His mercy. Living for God brings that mercy which gives me hope and God desires for me to have that hope of eternal life (2 Peter 3:9). I pray that God's servants think often of what lies ahead of them and the purpose that they must fulfill.

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AREA EVENTS UPCOMING

January 23-24, 2026; Ohio Winter Lectures: You Can Trust the Bible" 1130 Fishinger Rd. Columbus, OH 43221, 614-451-4886

February 1-5, Freed Hardeman Lectures. Freed Hardeman University 158 East Main St. Henderson TN 38340

February 20-22, Challenge Youth Conference. Pigeon Forge, TN, info@cyconline.com

April 5-8, 2026, Gospel Meeting with Phil Sanders at the church of Christ at Rio Grande.

April 12-15, 2026, Gospel Meeting with Ron Thomas at the New Martinsville Church of Christ

A Christian student at Ohio State University? Be sure to check out www.buckeyes4christ.com

WORKS WORTHY OF CONSIDERATION

West Virginia School of Preaching
(www.wvsop.com)

Warren Christian Apologetic Center
(www.warrenapologetics.org)

Southeast Institute for Biblical Studies
(www.makingpreachers.com)

Added to the Church
(addedtothechurch.com)

In Search of the Lord's Way
(www.searchtv.org)

House to House Heart to Heart
(www.housetohouse.com)

Gospel Broadcasting Network
(www.gbntv.org)

Each month there is an elders / preachers meeting at the Blackburn Hills Rd. church building (Athens, Ohio), where David Brothers preaches. It's designed for elders and preachers, but others are welcome to attend. Please email Scott or Ron for more info.