

flesh" — apparently a physical affliction that God allowed to continue in Paul's life to keep him from becoming conceited because of the wonderful revelations he had received (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). Paul even pleaded with the Lord to remove the thorn, but God gave him grace to endure the affliction rather than granting a miraculous cure.

In his letter to the Philippians, a book written near the end of the events recorded in Acts, Paul tells us about Epaphroditus, a faithful servant of Christ, who became deathly sick in Rome (Philippians 2:25-30). Though Paul could not heal him, God did ultimately bring Epaphroditus back to health, but not through a miraculous healing.

The young pastor [*sic*] Timothy suffered from "frequent illnesses," including a troubling stomach disorder (1 Timothy 5:23). Paul counsels him to use wine in moderation to calm his stomach. Paul did not say, "I'll heal you," or "Find a healer"; he told him to take some medicine.

In Paul's final letter, written just before his death, we read these words: "Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus" (2 Timothy 4:20). Paul uses the same Greek word here to describe Trophimus's illness that he used in referring to Epaphroditus's near fatal sickness.

The contrast is remarkable! At the beginning of the book of Acts, multitudes are being healed; at the end of New Testament history, the companions of the apostles have to be left behind because of serious illness. The New Testament writers do not express regret that the intensity of spectacular miracles had begun to decrease. The apostles do not chastise individuals or churches for their lack of faith. They simply recognize that this period of abundant miraculous works was ending.

News:

Please continue to pray for Tatyana's daughter Olga who is undergoing treatments for cancer.

Prayer List:

Healing: *Jerry Robinson's mother Norma. Mike and Sandy Cavasos, Ben Atchley, Faye Atchley, Nicolas and Annie Self, Jonda Gardner, Dave Morse, Richard Tuey.*

Travels: *Tatyana Knowlton, John and Sharon Cunningham.*

Back issues are posted at
<http://saffordchurchofchrist.org>



Safford Church of Christ

3888 S Hwy 191, Safford, AZ 85546

14 July 2013

Sermon Topics

A.M.: Guest Speaker

Wayne Hall

P.M.: Joy of the Redeemed

Isaiah 35

**Wednesday: The Last Chapter of
Solomon's "Golden Age"**

1 Kings 9

Pulpit Evangelist

Ken Knowlton: 428-5974

Elders

Ben Atchley: 428-2246

Greg Briggs: 428-8756

John Cunningham: 428-0895

Services

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| Sunday Bible Class | 10:00 A.M. |
| Sunday Morning Worship | 11:00 A.M. |
| Sunday Evening Worship | 6:30 P.M. |
| Wednesday Evening Class | 6:30 P.M. |
| Thursday Ladies Bible Class | 10:00 A.M. |

God Searches and Knows

Neil Short

In Psalm 139 the psalmist approaches God not as a sinner who needs forgiveness but rather as a righteous man who wants acquittal. The occasion for the psalm is probably a circumstance in which the psalmist is being falsely accused of a horrible sin (Psalm 139:23). The psalmist praises God for knowing the psalmist better than he is known by any man – even the psalmist himself.

God knows.

Psalm 139:1-6 presents God as one who has intimate knowledge of the psalmist – particularly what the psalmist is thinking. Do you find God's "all seeing eye" to be a comfort or does it make you feel uncomfortable? If you

wish to hide something from God, how might you make changes in your life so that there is no longer anything to hide?

Verse 5 uses war siege language to describe how God has encircled the psalmist. The language is threatening – even the part that says, “You... lay your hand upon me.” This kind of touching is generally disciplinary; but a father who disciplines rightly and lovingly is a great comfort to an obedient child. Is God’s touch a comfort or is it painful?

God accompanies.

Psalm 139:7-12 praises God for being everywhere. Clearly, the psalmist does not want to hide from God; but if circumstances take him to a place that some may think is beyond God’s presence, the psalmist is comfortable that God will be there. Do you ever go to a place where you wish God wasn’t?

God creates.

Psalm 139:13-18 acknowledges God as the one who created the psalmist. These verses are all about creation! All of them!* Verse 13 describes God as a weaver who formed the psalmist when he was just a little shapeless blob in his mother’s womb. Verse 14 is a bit difficult to translate; but the gist is that the way a person is formed in the womb so marvelous that it is yet another example of how God is awesomely wonderful. Verse 15 describes the psalmist’s skeleton. The fact that it was formed in the earth reminds us that our lives began out of the ground and “to the dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19).

Verse 16 describes something that even today is unreadable by science. That is, the part of a person’s genetic code that gives him a long or short life. It’s written in the code; but so far nobody but God can read it. King James Version is best here with “... in thy book all my members were written.” The other translations are acceptable too as long as we realize that what was written was the length of the yet-unformed person’s proclivity for a long or short life (and not the future daily events of the persons life).

In Verse 18, God, being busy with forming babies is not too busy to intimately know the psalmist.

God sustains in judgment.

God judges righteously, which is a comfort for those who walk in God’s ways. The psalmist seems to be threatened by man’s judgment in Psalm 139:19-24. The psalmist knows that God will judge him rightly. Those who try to bring down the righteous with false accusations are enemies of God and enemies of the psalmist.

In verse 23 the psalmist requests God’s judgment upon himself. In your prayers, do you make such requests to God? Even for a man who is striving to be blameless, this request can be difficult to form into a prayer (Hebrews

10:31). Do you think you can come to the point in your life at which you can voice this prayer?

In verse 24 the psalmist requests corrective discipline if God sees that he needs it. Discipline is also something that we would rather do without. It’s almost always painful (Hebrews 12:7-13)! If we are to be God’s children we should expect, hope and pray for God’s discipline (John 15:2).

* I sound very emphatic here because Psalm 139:16 is often used to prove that God predestined everything about the psalmist’s life (days). Whatever you believe about the nature of predestination or foreknowledge, this verse does not show that God foreknows everything or that he predestines everything.

Diminishing Miracles

Douglas Connelly

excerpt from his book *Miracles: What the Bible Says*

<http://www.ccel.us/miracles.ch2.html>

Although miracles occur throughout the book of Acts, two facts become clear. First, the number and frequency of miracles do not approach the level of miraculous activity during Jesus’ ministry. Second, as you read Acts and the New Testament letters, you will notice some hints that the intensity of miracles began to decline during the seventy years following Jesus’ resurrection. In what is probably the earliest New Testament letter, James tells those Christians who are sick to call the elders of the church for anointing and prayer (James 5:14-16). James does not urge believers to seek out a healer or even to look for another Christian with the gift of healing. The matter is to be handled quietly within the context of the local church.

In the letter of Galatians, written early in Paul’s ministry, Paul talks about his suffering from a physical illness: “As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself” (Galatians 4:13-14). No one knows for sure what Paul’s illness was precisely, but the point is that Paul was sick and was not miraculously healed.

In another one of Paul’s letters, the apostle talks several times about gifts of healings and gifts of miracles that were operative in the church (1 Corinthians 12:9, 28, 30). But in 2 Corinthians, written a few years later, Paul says that he was suffering from “a thorn in [the]