

YOUNG



Volume 8 Number 1

PRECIOUS SEED

Edited by
STEPHEN BAKER

THE MORAL MAZE
**The Influence of
the Media**

Page 1

Tips for Testimony
Page 4

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR
THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
Redemption
Page 5

LOOK AT A BOOK
Hebrews
Page 7

YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED is a supplement of *Precious Seed International* designed for those young in faith. Its purpose is to restate timeless truths from the word of God for a new generation of Christians and to kindle a biblical approach to current issues in the world in which we live. *YPS* is published by *Precious Seed International*, Pitcot Farm, Pitcot Lane, Stratton-on-the-Fosse, Radstock BA3 4SX, UK, and is also available separately from the main magazine.
FEBRUARY 2011

The influence of the Media

By **JIM ARMSTRONG** Stevenston, Scotland.

There is no doubt that in the 21st century the impact of the media on our lives is much more pervasive than at any other time in history. Previous generations could access the media through traditional channels like radio, television and newspapers.

Today, mass information is available through every conceivable medium. The buzz word of the modern age is 'viral' and, bearing in mind its origin, it's a very apt description when used to describe the growth and use of the media in our society. For example, the viral spread of an Internet message involves a convergence of different methods of online communication, including blogs, social networking sites, and mass media coverage. This is a powerful and effective way of reaching a massive number of people.

So, it is self evident that information is delivered to us using a plethora of channels - newspapers, television and radio are just the tip of a very large iceberg. It is now regularly accessed through smart phones, computers and various wireless devices. The average person uses technology extensively and provides the modern media with an easily accessible audience to constantly influence with whatever the current message may be.

Fifty years ago Christians concerned about the influence of the media in their life would find it relatively simple to exercise control. They would do so by not buying newspapers, not listening to the radio or watching television. In this way the vast majority of the impact of the message could be avoided. Even today, this might be a means of limiting media intrusion for many, but, for a lot of people, this would not be a realistic solution. Refusing to access the media might limit many Christians in their secular jobs, as most are expected to use technology as a regular means of communication and in keeping up to date.

I would make one further point about the media before I get into its impact on the life of the Christian. In my view, the mass media has three main aims:

Advocacy - Marketing, advertising and communication - political and social.

THE MORAL MAZE

Entertainment - It uses all mediums for this from electronic all the way through to the printed page and **Public service announcements**.

I don't think any Christian would disagree that this world is going in the opposite direction to the message in God's word. Paul reminds us about people, 'whose minds the god of this age has blinded . . . lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them,' 2 Cor. 4. 4 NKJV. The message and the influence of the mass media is, therefore, normally contrary to what we find in God's word.

When we see the moral decline of the world we live in - the immorality, the greed, the promotion of self and celebrity, the rejection of God's word as outdated and irrelevant - is it any wonder that the media represents this view?

If we bear in mind the content of the mass media and its aims, is it a good idea to allow it to have a real influence in our Christian life? This is the question I will seek to answer in the remainder of this article.

I would like to focus on two areas to explore this question. The first is **time** and the second is **influence**.

One of the most precious commodities we have at our personal disposal as Christians is our time. There are only twenty-four hours in a day, seven days in a week and fifty-two weeks in a year. When you add up all the things that take this time away - work, sleep, family responsibilities, study etc. - what we have left is extremely precious.

What does the Bible have to say about our time and what we should get involved in?

No matter where you look - in the Epistles, the teaching from our Lord Jesus, the Old Testament - the words used to give advice to the person looking to live for God are all about activity and sacrifice. We are encouraged to strive and run like the athlete aiming for the prize. I don't think for a minute Sir Steve Redgrave got his seventeen gold

medals because he potted about on the lake every Sunday afternoon!

Second Timothy chapter 2 is a great section which gives us a picture of what we should be doing with our spare time. Paul uses the example of the soldier, the athlete and the farmer to demonstrate how we, as Christians, should be seeking to live for God. I will use verse fifteen as my text for this article. **'Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth,'** 2 Tim. 2. 15 NKJV.

Economists use the term 'opportunity cost'. They use this to refer to the option which was not taken up when a decision for a certain course of action is taken. For example, if I have one million pounds to

invest and the choice is between building a new hospital wing or a school. The opportunity cost of me deciding to build the hospital wing is the cost of the school that I'm not able to build.

The opportunity cost of me spending more time with the world's mass media is the time lost

doing things that assist my growth as a Christian. The cost to me is the time lost which I could have spent with my Lord and Saviour.

Even more damaging is the influence of the world's media on the life of the Christian.

It is clear from any study of God's word that sitting on the fence is not an option for a Christian. Jesus said, **'No servant can serve two masters'**, Luke 16.13 NKJV. The more we spend focusing on the message and the direction given by the media through whatever channel we pick, the more we will be influenced by its message and the impact on our life will be detrimental.

Let me pick one example. The world laughs and mocks the view that sex is something that should only take place between a husband and a wife. Every other kind of lifestyle and sexual practice is



promoted on our TV screens, our magazines, Internet and in the written page. I don't watch any 'soaps' but I would be surprised if any 'soap husband and wife' has not had a story about extra martial affairs or worse in the plot at some point. All this conspires to tell us that anything goes and that nothing is wrong as long as everyone consents. It's an influence which, I believe, has, at its heart, the goal of attacking the biblical view of marriage.

The more time we occupy ourselves with this kind of material the more we're influenced to conform to the world; the more we are pressured to go with the majority view.

Many reading this might disagree and think this doesn't apply to them. Let me take a great example of the corrosive influence of the world in contrast to the purifying influence of the things of God.

If you were able to speak with Lot on the day he chose the well-watered plain of Jordan and explain that as a result of his choice he would end up:

- living in Sodom
- being involved in the government of Sodom
- offering his daughters to be raped by the men of Sodom
- losing his wife in judgement from God and end up sleeping with his daughters.

I think his choice might have been altered. If there was ever an individual who was influenced by the ways of the world and did not realize it until it was too late, it was Lot.

We are living in days where this world needs men and women of God to shine like beacons of light in a very dark place. We are to be like salt, preserving the world we live in from great evil. Someone once said about our society, 'The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today . . . is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips and walk out the door and deny Him by their lifestyle. That is simply what an unbelieving world finds unbelievable.'



One word of caution before I finish with a challenge! Our response to the world and its media which is very anti-God is not to condemn the world. That's not our responsibility. We are to be marked by love - we are to love our neighbour as ourselves. Of course, we should make a stand against anything that is against scripture but we need to ensure we are marked by love and not a superior hypocritical spirit. This was the Pharisees' mistake.

So far, this article could be read as an attack on the mass media and its influence. You may argue that news, for instance, enables us to know what is going on in the world? You would be correct. You might ask - Is it wrong to pray (personally and collectively) for trapped miners, the victims of a tsunami, the dangers of destructive wars breaking out? Again you are quite right as we are

told in scripture to pray for kings and all in authority. What, however, I am advocating is the spiritual maturity to use the media, as opposed to abusing it. The question for me, as I conclude this study, is how much I allow the media, through its various channels, to steal my time and influence, my thinking.

How much time do I spend in God's presence in prayer and reading His word? If I were to record how I spend my time, would I be embarrassed to share the findings with anyone else? If being a Christian was a criminal offence and the evidence was reading, praying and spending time with God alone, would there be enough evidence to convict me?

How much do I know about the sports, television programmes, celebrity and current affairs of this world in comparison to knowing God's word? How much of my time is spent with rubbish compared to time spent on my knees praying for my family, colleagues, friends and contacts.

How much do I let the mass media impact upon me? If, like me, after writing the last two paragraphs you can feel tears running down your cheeks, the answer is too much!

TIPS FOR TESTIMONY

By **DAVID SINGER** a Liverpool-based retired teacher

My first post was in a very rough comprehensive school where there was no Christian witness. Thankfully, I found that there was another believer at the school, who was also in assembly fellowship. I approached him to see if we could start a Christian Union (C.U.) at lunch time. He agreed to help, whenever possible, if I organized it. The C.U. started within weeks of my arrival at the school. Initially, there was a great response from the students and I was amazed to see so many attend regularly. We shared the gospel and provided opportunities for the students to ask questions. We had a special session which was specifically geared to this at the end of each term. Everyone at the school knew that I was a believer and they were happy for me to run the C.U. This opened up very many opportunities to witness to staff as they wanted to know why I chose to teach maths instead of R.E. My reply was that if I taught R.E. they would think that I only did it for the money. However, doing it this way had a greater impact through the testimony of my sacrifice of time and energy to bring the good news to students.



Many heard the gospel through this avenue as over thirty children attended regularly and, on special occasions, the numbers rose to over one hundred. Specific topics for the meetings were announced in school assembly, on notice boards in school and in my teaching room. There were occasions when teaching colleagues were personally invited. Some came, especially when former students they had taught were invited in to speak.

My teaching career saw me eventually move on to a grammar school. The opportunities to present the gospel and influence people were numerous.

Occasionally, I had opportunities to invite visiting Christian speakers to address a school assembly.

On one occasion I was able to arrange for a visiting Christian speaker to address three hundred sixth-form students as part of their preparation for university.

Some years I was able to influence up to eighty students to attend Christian youth camps for a week when they would hear the gospel each day as well as enjoy other activities provided. I was also able to advertise outreach meetings such as local Gospel Tent meetings as well as other activities taking place in our local Gospel Hall.

I found that living the Christian life and doing my job well as 'unto the Lord', Eph. 6. 5-7, spoke volumes to others and gave ample opportunity to witness to staff. Some did not like 'born-again Christians' and made it obvious. Generally, if

people were in my company they would not swear or speak ill of the Lord but when people did someone would remark, 'Dave is here' and it stopped. If any difficult Bible questions arose from crosswords they would always ask me. Further, if any readings or topics were required either by staff or the Head for assembly they would ask for relevant passages and the relevant points, thus providing further opportunity to witness. It was known that I did not attend pubs for birthdays, go on pub crawls or gamble and often, when I was invited to, others would confirm that 'Dave does not do those things'. This saved me justifying my position. Having taken my stand, others had high standards for me.

I feel it is vitally important for believers to pray about pursuing careers that will not compromise their Christian testimony. Christians should seek employment that will provide opportunities to witness to others. This can be a most effective testimony for the Saviour today.

Building Blocks of the Christian Faith

REDEMPTION

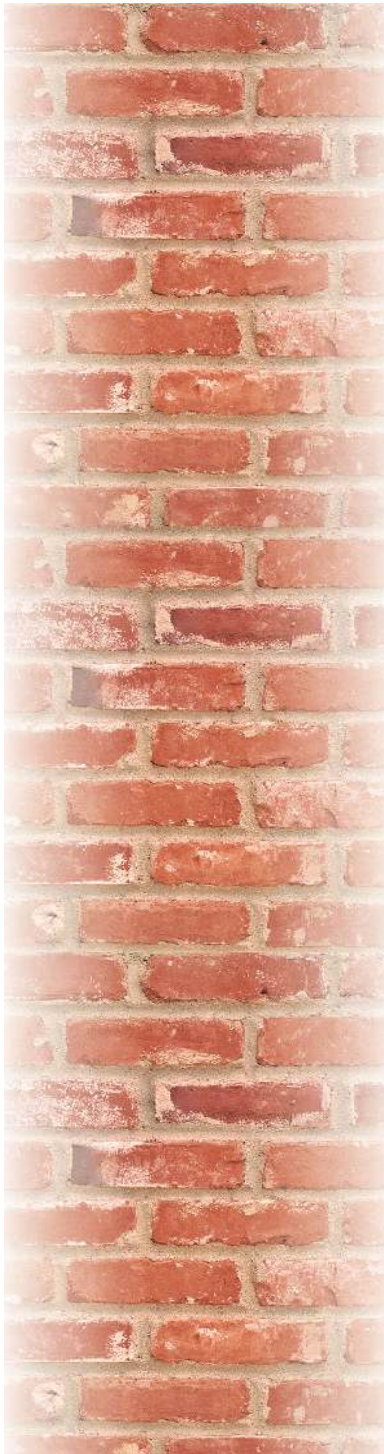
By **TIM TOTTON** Cambridge, England

Redemption – what does it mean?

The word 'redemption' is not commonly used today and perhaps for many it now refers merely to some vague religious 'God-talk'. While redemption is a word found in the Bible, up until relatively recently it was also a word used in everyday life. For example, if you were short of money, you could take a personal possession, perhaps a watch, to a pawn shop and sell it. The pawn-broker would keep the item for an agreed period of time at which point you could return and buy it back or, if not, the pawn broker would be free to sell it to anyone. Buying back the item was called 'redeeming' and the price you paid was the 'redemption price'.

Redemption – setting a slave free

In Bible times, redemption was a well-known idea and was often used in connection with slaves. You could be a slave for different reasons. Perhaps you had been captured after losing a battle and forced into slavery. Or, perhaps you had lost all your money and the only alternative to starving was to sell yourself, and maybe even your whole family, into slavery. But if you had become a slave, were you bound to be a slave for your whole life? Well, in principle, you could slowly save your meagre earnings and eventually buy your freedom. However, there was also provision for someone to buy you out of slavery – to 'redeem' you. The law allowed such a person, perhaps a



wealthy relative, to make arrangements with your owner to pay the redemption price. This would involve the redeemer going to the local pagan temple and paying the agreed redemption price plus a small 'cut' to the temple priests. The temple would then pay your owner and your ownership would be transferred to the temple's god. This elaborate deal was necessary to ensure you remained a slave in status, but, of course, being a slave to a pagan 'god' meant that you were essentially free and could do as you please.

Redemption – in the Old Testament

In the Bible, redemption always contains the idea of being set free on the basis of payment. This payment is often called the 'ransom', so payment of the ransom price would secure release. In the Old Testament, slaves and prisoners of war could be redeemed and, in some circumstances, when a person's life was forfeit (e.g., because his ox had gored someone to death) there was provision made allowing a ransom to be paid to prevent the person being put to death, Exod. 21. 28ff. Another Old Testament concept was that of the 'kinsman redeemer'. Here, a kinsman (a member of your family) had an obligation to redeem various family members and possessions. It might mean marrying the widow of a deceased family member, e.g., Boaz, Ruth 3. 13, or buying one of the family out of slavery, Lev. 25.

48ff., or reclaiming a field which had been sold in time of financial hardship, Lev. 25. 26. In all these instances the redemption comes at a cost, usually a financial payment. However, in the Old Testament God, as *Jehovah*, is frequently said to have redeemed Israel, whether it be from slavery in Egypt, Exod. 6. 6; 15. 13; Ps. 106. 10, or the later deliverance from captivity in Babylon, Isa. 43. 1; 48. 20; Jer. 31. 11; Mic. 4. 10. This use of the word redemption has led some to suggest that, when applied to God, it means simply 'to deliver' and loses the idea of paying a ransom – after all, who does God pay a ransom to when redeeming his people? However, careful reading of such passages often shows that the redemption which *Jehovah* brings about is not effortless, but it requires exertion (note the 'outstretched arm', Exod. 6. 6). The effort is regarded as the 'price' and *Jehovah's* action is at cost to Himself.

Redemption – in the New Testament

The New Testament writers take up the imagery of redemption to apply it to the Christian. As sinners we are in slavery to sin and to Satan, and we need someone to provide redemption. But what could be the redemption price? Jesus answers the question in His own words, 'Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many', Matt. 20. 28. Elsewhere, we read that it was Jesus who secured our eternal redemption 'with his own blood', Heb. 9. 12 NKJV. That is, at the cross Jesus gave His life as the ransom price to buy us back from slavery to sin. We, just like that Roman slave, have been redeemed and had our ownership transferred to Jesus Christ – we have become servants (or literally 'slaves') of Jesus Christ, Col. 4. 12.

We could never buy our own freedom; nothing we can do could release us from Satan's power – we could be ransomed only 'with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot', 1 Pet. 1. 19 NKJV. But if Jesus' life was our ransom, then who was the ransom paid to? Here we must be careful not to stretch the human analogy

of redemption too far. Although we were slaves to sin and to Satan, no 'ransom' was ever paid to 'sin' or to Satan himself. They didn't have the power to demand such a payment, and it was not Satan whose holiness was offended by sin requiring a penalty to be paid. Rather, the penalty for sin was paid by Christ, and received and accepted by God the Father. This is not the same as saying Christ was paid as a ransom to God the Father, as it was not He who held us in bondage but Satan and our own sins. We must simply rest in the joy and peace of knowing that the price has been paid and we have been redeemed.

Redemption – in my life

In Romans chapter 6 Paul explains that, while we were once slaves to sin, we are no longer, because Christ has died. Not only has Christ died, but, Paul says, we have been crucified with Him, and consequently we must consider ourselves 'dead ... to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus', Rom. 6. 11. This means sin's stranglehold has been broken, and, while we still struggle with sin, we can be assured that we will never face its

penalty and we will eventually overcome it. Paul, elsewhere, says that we were 'bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body', 1 Cor. 6. 20 NKJV. So, to live out the truth of redemption is to realize that we are now under new ownership and we should live in a way which honours our new Master. But we must not think we are swapping one life of drudgery for another. Paul is eager to remind us that it is for freedom Christ has set us free, Gal. 5. 1. The new life Jesus has bought for us is characterized by true freedom to live lives which honour and, ultimately, glorify Him.

Behind all this there should be a sense of deep (and deepening) gratitude. Imagine the joy the Roman slave felt knowing he had been set free and the love he would have for his redeemer. So it should be for us, and to far greater extent, as we consider our redemption that we respond with hearts of thankfulness and worship.



A LOOK AT A BOOK HEBREWS

By **BRIAN CLATWORTHY** PS Trustee

This book is different from most other New Testament letters in that whilst it ends like a conventional letter, it does not have an opening salutation.

This makes it very difficult to determine who wrote it. In my view the anonymity of the writer is deliberate, because the writer does not wish to

detract from the main object of his writing, which is to present the greatness of the person and work of Christ. Against the backdrop of Judaism and the revered heroes of the Jewish Commonwealth, the writer, in an utterly compelling letter, demonstrates by way of comparison and contrast why no one or nothing can be compared with the person and work of Christ.

The table overleaf shows the dynamics of his convincing argument.



Intertwined with this argument are warnings about neglecting salvation, but also wonderful stories of those who exercised faith in God to encourage us.

The title of W. E. Vine's commentary on Hebrews *Christ All Excelling* is a fitting *motif* for the whole letter.

CHRIST COMPARED AND CONTRASTED WITH	TEXT	WHY?
Prophets	Chapter 1. 1-3	God spoke in the past through His servants the prophets but their messages were incomplete and piecemeal. Now, finally, God has spoken in His own Son. The Lord Jesus Himself is the final message to mankind.
Angels	Chapter 1. 4-2.16	In Judaism, angels were revered because of their involvement with the giving of the law to Moses on Sinai, Gal. 3. 19, etc. Christ, however, has been acknowledged by God to be His eternal Son; therefore the message revealed in Christ must be greater. If therefore every breach of the law was severally judged, how much greater will the judgement be for neglecting God's offer of salvation through Christ?
Moses	Chapter 3. 2-4.6	Moses was merely a servant in God's house. Christ is not only described as the house, but as the Son of the house. Moses led the people of God, but through unbelief many failed to enter the Promised Land. Belief in Christ will mean that God's people will continue to the end.
Joshua	Chapter 4. 8-13	Although Joshua led the people into the Promised Land, he could not give them rest. Christ, the heavenly Joshua, will lead His people into the permanent rest of God.
Aaron	Chapter 2. 17-18 Chapter 3. 1 Chapter 4. 14-16 Chapter 5. 1-9 Chapter 6. 20 Chapter 7 Chapter 13. 11-12	Aaron's priesthood was linked to ineffective sacrifices as well as an earthly tabernacle. Christ not only fulfils the Aaronic priesthood in terms of His calling, but His priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek. It is shown to be superior in the nature of His office, in Himself, in the effectiveness of His sacrifice, and His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.
Covenant and Mediator	Chapter 8.1-9.28	The old covenant established at Sinai had been ratified by animal blood being shed. If the old covenant had been effective there would have been no need for a new one. The death of Christ has ratified the new covenant, which is superior to the old one therefore it follows that He must be the mediator of a better and eternal covenant.
Sacrifices	Chapter 10.1-18	The Levitical offerings were linked to a system that only mirrored reality; they could never completely take away the consciousness of sin. There was therefore a constant remembrance of sin every year. By Christ's one single sacrifice, however, He has forever perfected, for all time, those who are being sanctified. Proof of this superior sacrifice is reflected in the fact that after His sacrifice He sat down in God's presence; something totally alien to the Aaronic order of priests.