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Editor's Introduction

Welcome to another issue of YPS. I have enjoyed reading the articles that we have in this issue. I hope that you find them as interesting as I did. In fact, I find all the topics that we are dealing with really relevant to my understanding of God and to my day-to-day experience as a believer. For instance, the second article on prayer addresses some really important issues about why we pray, what we pray for and the need to look for answers to our prayers. We have a new author in this issue, Dr. Phil Mullan of Belfast; he talks about how he found training to be a doctor strengthened his faith. The current worldview is that science and learning are at odds with faith so this makes for an interesting read. Paul Coxall continues to walk us through Psalm 139 and while doing so reminds us that God is everywhere. The second article in the 'Preaching with a Tablet' series will fascinate the 'techies' in our readership – I like it, and found it helpful. 'Adventures in Acts' should focus your mind on the power of preaching the word of God.

Can I suggest that you take your time reading this issue? Read one article a week (maybe you can't put it down and must read it all at once) and take time to think over what you have learned, what difference it will make to the way you think and how it will affect your behaviour as a result. My prayer is that as a result you will 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2. Pet. 3. 18.

Stephen Baker

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 available separately from the main magazine.

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

from Psalm 139

BY PAUL COXALL ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND

In the last issue of YPS (Feb. 2014), we commenced a study of Psalm 139, and discovered something about the character of God. In the second section, vv. 7-12, David considers God's presence. He understands that God is in all places at all times. The word used to describe God being everywhere is **'omnipresence'**. The prefix 'omni' comes from the Latin and means 'all'. This attribute of God is difficult for us to understand. We are all tied to a location. If I am in one place, I cannot be in another. If I am at work, I cannot also be at home. If I am in Singapore, I cannot be in London. However, God is not limited in this way. God is present everywhere at all times. There is not one part of God in one place and another part in another place; He is wholly present in all places. Although God is present everywhere in all of His creation, He is distinct from it.

How did the knowledge of God's omnipresence affect David? How should it affect us?

David asks two rhetorical questions, 'Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?' v. 7 ESV. The answer is implied within the question; you cannot escape from God. It was not as if David wanted to avoid God's presence, but David was involved in the very useful act of 'preaching to himself'. We do not know the circumstances or events that led to David having these thoughts. He could have been in physical danger. He may have felt alone, and isolated. It is helpful if, at times, we 'preach to ourselves' truth that we know about God. The truth that we have learned in the past can, by God's grace, strengthen and empower us in any present situation. As one old preacher said, 'The trouble with some people is that they listen to themselves rather than speak to themselves'.

David develops his thoughts on God's omnipresence by reflecting on three occasions when someone might think that God could be absent from them.

Heaven and Hell

David selects the example of heaven and hell in verse 8. If God is present in these two extremes, then He is present everywhere in between. The fact that God is present in heaven will not surprise anyone, but the fact that He is present in hell will surprise many. God's presence produces different effects in different places. Usually, when the Bible speaks about being in God's presence, it is speaking of a place of joy, Ps. 16. 11. God is not limited by location; His presence, and blessing, can be known wherever a believer is. Even in a Nazi Concentration Camp during World War 2, Corrie Ten Boom knew something of God's presence! God's presence in hell ensures that judgement, and justice, are dispensed.



Speed

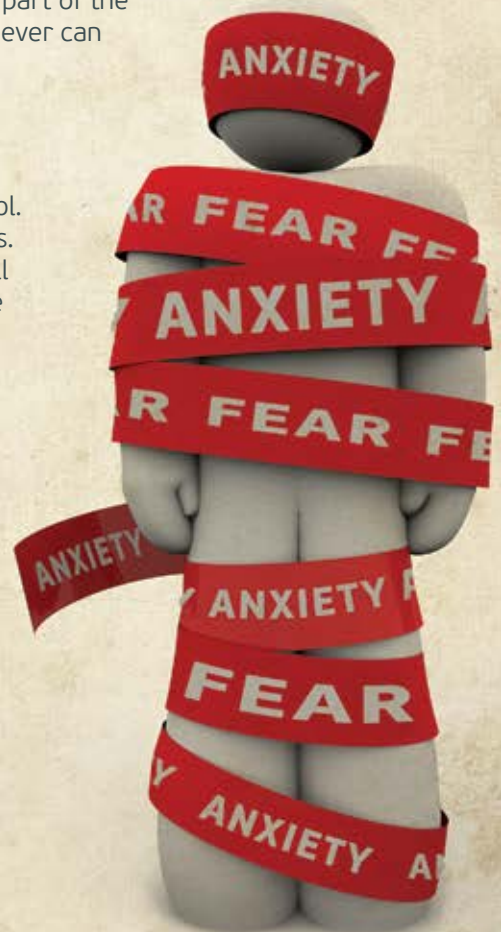
David then reflects upon speed and travel deep into earth's oceans. In verse 9, we read the delightful expression 'the wings of the morning', which refer to the sun's rays that travel from the East to the West as dawn breaks. David knew that light travelled fast. We know that light travels at over 186,000 miles per second. If any of us could travel at the speed of light, we would be able to travel around the equator seven times in one second! David reflected on travelling at the speed of light to the remotest part of the sea, and knew he would still be in God's presence. Every believer can be assured that distance and speed are no barrier to God.

Darkness

The Bible frequently uses darkness in a spiritual sense, Col. 1. 13, but, in verse 11, David speaks of physical darkness. Darkness is often used by people as a cover for wrong! All kinds of sins are committed when people think that no one can see them. Darkness causes fear and anxiety in young and old alike. The biblical character Job also knew that darkness was no hindrance to God's presence, Job 34. 22. In fact, darkness makes no difference to God. He is able to be as present in the dark as He is in the light.

We can be comforted and strengthened as we reflect on God's omnipresence. Whether alone, in distress, in a strange place, or in a whole new set of circumstances, God can lead us. May our meditations on God's omnipresence bring us blessing!

To be continued.



ADVENTURES IN ACTS: PART 3

What happens when we witness?



BY JEREMY SINGER BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

Our study in Acts is picking up speed – from now on we will highlight only key themes from each section. In chapters 3 to 7 the focus is on Jerusalem. This is the city where ‘our Lord was crucified’, Rev. 11. 8. Now Jerusalem also becomes the place where the Lord’s ambassadors are rejected.

The Jews Refuse

The miraculous healings performed by Peter are a taste of the ‘powers . . . of the coming age’, Heb. 6. 5 YLT. In the recorded sermons, there are promises that repentance will trigger the Messiah’s return, Acts 3. 20, and the ‘putting right of everything that’s wrong’, v. 21, my paraphrase.

On three occasions in this section, the Jewish leaders hold a council. Each time they refuse to accept the apostolic message. Their responses become increasingly hardline.

- 1) They forbid the apostles from preaching, 4. 18.
- 2) They repeat their ban, and flog the apostles, 5. 40.
- 3) They angrily reject Stephen’s message, and stone him to death, 7. 57-58.

Like Pharaoh centuries before, their repeated refusals harden their hearts, until God gives them up, cf. Rom. 1. 26. In terms of Bible prophecy, this is a key moment. Israel will now be sidelined in God’s purpose, 11. 25, until the nation realizes a future opportunity for repentance, Zech. 12. 10.

Preaching has Consequences

We see a recurring cycle in these chapters. *Preaching* leads to *conversions*, which lead to *persecution*.

The **first cycle** begins with Peter’s message in the temple, Acts 3. 21-26. A crowd has gathered to listen as a result of the lame man’s sudden cure. Peter takes advantage of the situation to preach an impromptu (but Spirit-enabled, 4. 8) gospel message. He urges his audience to ‘repent and turn to God’, 3. 19. He contrasts God’s judgement upon Messiah rejecters, v. 23, with God’s blessing upon Messiah acceptors, v. 26.

As a result of this short yet powerful message, many people are saved. There are now around 5,000 believers in Jerusalem, 4. 4, up from earlier counts of 3,000, 2. 41, and 120, 1. 15. The seed is falling into good soil – ‘honest and good’ hearts are receiving God’s word, Luke 8. 15.

Peter and John soon discover that faithful, fearless preaching has troublesome consequences. The two apostles are arrested and imprisoned, 4. 3, along with the healed man, v. 14. New converts can be persecuted as much as mature believers. In this early skirmish, Peter reiterates his clear gospel message to the Jewish rulers, culminating in a key evangelical statement, v. 12. After this first encounter with the authorities, the apostles are given an injunction to prevent them from preaching. They weigh up man’s authority against God’s and decide that God’s authority overrules any earthly court. If we face similar confrontations today, we should follow Peter’s lead and behave with

ADVENTURES IN ACTS



prayerful consideration, v. 24, courtesy, vv. 19-20, spiritual sensitivity, v. 8, and determination, 5. 42.

The **second cycle** follows a similar pattern. Peter preaches, vv. 20-21, as part of a blanket coverage of Jerusalem with the gospel, v. 28. The authorities intervene to imprison, v. 18, interrogate, v. 27, and punish, v. 40, the apostles. They also issue a further banning order, although this is just as ineffective as the previous one, v. 42. Thus, the preaching continues, and people continue to get saved, 6. 1. Conversely, if we do not share God's word with people, Rom. 10. 17, we cannot expect them to get saved.

The **third cycle** involves Stephen, a prominent Christian worker in the early church. His name means 'victory crown'. He is the first martyr, Acts 7. 60, to receive the 'crown of life' from the Lord, Rev. 2. 10. As with Peter's message, Stephen provokes the gospel-hating Jews to drag him before the ruling council. There, 7. 2-51, Stephen gives a brief history of Israel's record of rejection. In the past they exiled Joseph into slavery, v. 9, refused Moses' deliverance, vv. 27, 39, persecuted God's messengers, v. 52 and finally murdered the Messiah, v. 52.

This account incenses the council to such fury that they expel Stephen from the council chamber, and stone him to death, v. 58. Stephen's beautiful vision of Jesus standing on God's right hand, v. 56, strengthens the faithful servant in his distressing circumstances.

What about the positive consequence of Stephen's sermon? It provokes persecution, but also sets in motion a chain of events in the life of Saul of Tarsus, v. 58. Stephen's assurance in the face of death convicts Paul. It is one of the 'goads' that prick his conscience, 26. 14, eventually leading him to Christ. Stephen's suffering finally results in a massive chain reaction of blessing following Saul's conversion. This should encourage us to witness steadfastly and leave the results with God.



THE ACTS OF GOD

Lydia, Suffering, Temple, Jerusalem, Joy, Servant, Pharaoh, Regeneration, Christ, Jew, Prophecy

PREACHING WITH A TABLET

Part 2: Best Bible 'Apps' for Preaching

BY R. SCOTT THOMSON USA



'The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of God will stand forever', Isa. 40. 8 ESV.

This is the second article in a series about using a tablet computer to preach.

In my initial article I addressed the question of why someone would want to use a tablet computer for preaching. In this article we are going to explore the next logical question: which Bible applications ('apps') should I use for my Bible study?

A quick search of the 'apps' that are available reveal that there are well over thirty to choose from. Some are free, some are not. Some of the 'apps' are simple, others offer many diverse features. Some would be better suited for general reading and others for in-depth study; however, my purpose here is to explore which specifically help in preparing and delivering a bible talk.

Before listing the best 'apps' though, we must identify the features which will be most useful for our task:

- **Translation of choice** – Obviously the 'app' should offer the translation you will be preaching from. Personally, I prefer to preach from the ESV, and sometimes from the NKJV, so both of those translations are a requirement for me. However, the first item that you should check for is whether or not it supports the translation(s) you require.
- **Ease of use** – The 'app' should be extremely simple to use. For technology to be useful it MUST work when it is needed to work. This is especially true when speaking to an audience. If the 'app' is so sophisticated that you have difficulty quickly navigating to the appropriate scripture passage then you should consider a different one.
- **Scalable fonts** – While preaching you will probably desire a larger font size than when you are reading privately. The ability to change the size of the font quickly will allow you to easily adapt to your physical surroundings and allow you greater freedom of movement while speaking.
- **Split screen-capability** – Many 'apps' offer split-screen functionality to simultaneously view two different Bible translations. This, of course, may be well suited to your preaching style. However,

I am specifically referring to an ability to split the screen to display both the scripture text and your notes. A very powerful feature that extends this functionality is for the 'app' to automatically recognize scripture references in your notes, and provide links to the scripture text so that the verse appears automatically.

- **Cloud Syncing between devices** – It is helpful to use a Bible 'app' that is available on other platforms. Even though my tablet is an iPad, my smartphone is an Android based device, and my desktop is a PC. It is very helpful to use an 'app' that is supported in all of the computing environments that you use, and offers the ability to Cloud sync, (i.e., synchronize over the Internet) any in 'app' highlights, bookmarks, and notes.
- **Strong developer support** – It is important to choose a Bible 'app' from a strong and well-established developer. Change happens quickly in the world of technology, so it is important that the developer is committed to constantly updating and improving the software.

So, after considering the above 'app' features for public speaking, which Bible 'apps' do I recommend for your consideration? In my opinion, here are the top four choices:

- **Bible+ by Olive Tree Bible Software, Inc.**
- **eBible.com by Osprit, Inc.**
- **Bible! by Logos Bible Software**
- **YouVersion Bible by LifeChurch.tv**

None of the four 'apps' that I am recommending integrates all of the features discussed earlier in this post. Nevertheless, each 'app' offers enough of these features to be a great app for personal study, message preparation and preaching.

Editor's Note: please remember that this article reflects the opinion of the writer and that there are many other software applications that are useful for Bible study, i.e. e-sword, Logos. I would also like to remind our readers that Bible study is for an individual's personal spiritual growth as well as preparation for preaching.



Science, Code breakers, and Creation

BY DR. PHIL MULLAN BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND

Science has always fascinated me. I remember, many times during my childhood, dissecting plants and bugs, and rushing to peer down at them under my wobbly microscope, which my parents bought for me one Christmas. Ever since primary school, I wanted to study medicine; which I did from 2006 to 2011. Since then, I have had the pleasure of working as a doctor.

Many times at university, lecturers would promote their evolutionary beliefs, claiming that the detailed processes we were learning about had been formed by mindless chance. Yet I found, as I studied the human body in detail, my faith in God was only strengthened. I could not help but adorn my heavy, lever-arch file with Psalm 139 verse 14, 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made!'

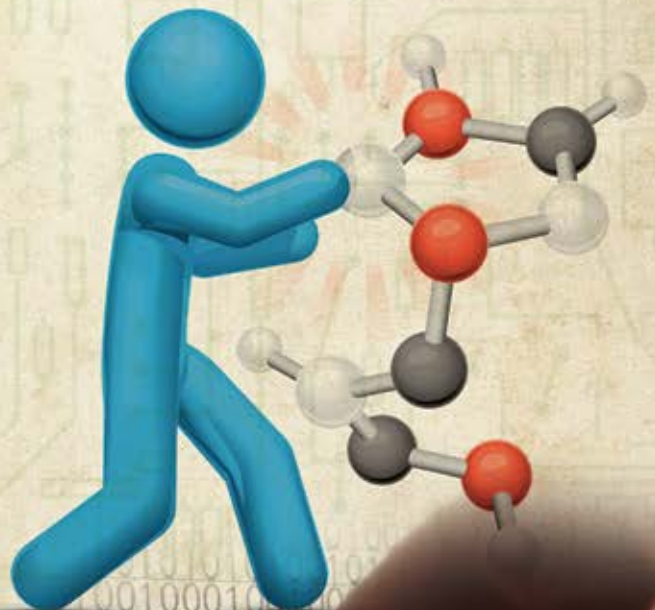
For example, every human cell is built according to the blueprint we have carried from the moment of our conception – our DNA. Every cell contains the entire code and without it, it could not work. It's quite similar to how every 'app' on your smartphone works because there is a specially designed program behind it. Complex coding obviously points to an intelligent engineer, just as a good book points to a creative author. It is no different for DNA. A code that consists of approximately 3 billion units, which, when decoded, results in a fully functioning human, could not just happen by chance. It points to an intelligent Creator.

Yet that is not all. For each cell decodes only the sections of DNA it requires, ensuring we are not all brain, or all bone, or all blood, etc., 1 Cor. 12. 17-20. The human genome is, in fact, a library of millions of different sections of code for different cells, proteins, and tissues, not just one long sentence.

Of course, for a code to be of any use it must be decoded and understood. Every cell in the body has amazingly complex machines, which work tirelessly

decoding DNA, and producing proteins to the necessary specifications. Thus, we have a system that requires every part to be present if life is to exist. As long as there has been DNA, there must have been decoding machines. This is a big problem for evolution, as the only solution is that they were all formed at the same time, i.e., they were created, and did not evolve.

I have come to realize that science doesn't fight against God, but rather it points to God. Surely, we can all join with the psalmist in saying, 'I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made, marvelous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well', Ps. 139. 14!



PART 2

Personal Prayer

BY PAUL MACLEAN MANCHESTER, ENGLAND



The Lord Jesus taught his followers to pray, Matt. 6. 9. He said that prayer, combined with carefully watching our behaviour, is the recipe for Christians avoiding falling into temptation, Matt. 26. 41. Obeying the commands of the Lord Jesus brings glory to God and this should be a Christian's desire.

Failing to pray is a serious mistake as we are at risk of trusting in something or someone else other than God. If we have difficulties or unhappiness in our lives we must pray to God for help. James said, 'You do not have because you do not ask', Jas. 4. 2, NKJV.

When we pass through times of crises we may feel that we no longer know what to do. This heightens our awareness of the need for God's guidance. Elijah is a great example of someone who proved God in prayer, reminding us that 'that the prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective'. Jas. 5. 16 NRSV.

As the Lord Jesus faced the cross He prayed asking God for strength and help to do His Father's will, Matt. 26. 39. If the Son of God prayed like this, how essential then that we should follow His example and pray for help in carrying out His will in our lives.

What should we pray for?

There are many reasons to pray. Here is a sample list:

- We should thank God for His great love in sending His Son to die for our sins.
- We should tell Him how much we appreciate Him and what He has done for us.
- We can tell him what we have learned about Him as we read His word.
- We must pray for ourselves, confessing our sins and asking for forgiveness for any wrongdoing in our lives, 1 John 1. 9. We should do this as often as possible as unconfessed sin will block our communication with God, Ps. 66. 18.
- We should pray for wisdom, Jas. 1. 5.
- We must ask for strength to overcome our weak points and for help to stay out of temptation.
- We can pray about particular things we are worried about and tell God about things we need.
- We are instructed to pray for rulers and those who

are in positions of authority; in the United Kingdom, this would include the Queen, the Prime Minister and his government, our local council and M.P., and our teachers or managers, 1. Tim. 2. 1, 2.

- We should also pray for our enemies and those who hate us, Matt. 5. 44.
- We should pray for all believers locally, in other assemblies and across the world, for missionaries and for those who preach the gospel, Eph. 6. 18, 19.

Pray for believers who are being persecuted, Heb. 13. 3, the sick, and those who are passing through difficulty.

We should pray for the unsaved, which may include friends and family, who are in the perilous position of not yet knowing the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, Rom. 10. 1.

The wonderful thing about prayer is that we can pray for anything, anywhere, anytime, and God will hear us. However, we should be careful that what we ask for is in accordance with God's word. When we have big decisions to take we need to pray. Nehemiah prayed before taking a number of big decisions in his life, Neh. 1. 4, and God led and directed his choices; He can do the same for you today.

Expecting results when we pray

We should expect results when we pray, Matt. 21. 22; we can cast all of our care upon God remembering that He loves us and cares for us, 1. Pet. 5. 7. He has infinite power and wisdom and understands our every weakness. Our prayers should therefore be filled with faith and we must believe that if our request is in accordance with God's will then He will answer our prayer, Mark 11. 24. We can be assured that even if His answer is not what we expected, or doesn't come as quickly as we had hoped, we should never doubt that His answer will always be for our ultimate good, Rom. 8. 28.

So the question is: Are you growing closer to God through personal prayer?

'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God'
Phil. 4. 6 ESV.

