



CREATOR

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SAFE IN WORSHIP

You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance.

Psalm 32:7

We invite you to join us on a special treasure hunt. What we seek is far more valuable than gold, silver, pearls, and money. It involves a voyage that launches with the fear of God and ends with “the chief end of man.” Along the way, you will be filled with the sweet delight of Jesus our Creator and your “ocean passage” will become *an expression of godly worship*. “What is this great adventure and priceless treasure?” you ask. We seek the face of the Almighty in order to “glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”¹

When You said, “Seek My face,”

my heart said to You,

“Your face, O LORD, I shall seek.” Psalm 27:8

Will we be safe on this voyage? It all depends. Before we board ship and set sail, we must be properly prepared. Ours is a difficult and potentially precarious expedition because we will travel through the most dangerous of territories—*the nature of God*. True worship is like that; even a brief survey

of the Bible confirms it: Aaron’s sons suffered incineration because of their use of strange fire in the temple; Uzzah was instantly killed by the hand of God for allowing his fingers to carelessly touch the Ark; Ananias and Saphira fell dead in their tracks for lying to the Holy Spirit. Yet worship of our Living God can also be delightful. It produces a strange alloy of terror and joy!

In His great lovingkindness, our Lord Jesus Christ reveals His Father’s glory by three means: *His Word, His Creation, and History* (His Providence). In this issue, we focus on Creation’s testimony to God’s glory. When we explore nature it is as if “we enter into the Holy of Holies. Benevolence, and mercy, and justice, are everywhere.”² Nature, if you will, is a temple of God and “in His temple everything says, ‘Glory!’” (Psalm 29:9). The late pastor, C.H. Spurgeon, agrees—“the whole world is also a temple for God . . . all



¹ Answer to Question 1 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, “What is the chief end of man?”

² Charles Spurgeon commentary on Psalm 36:7

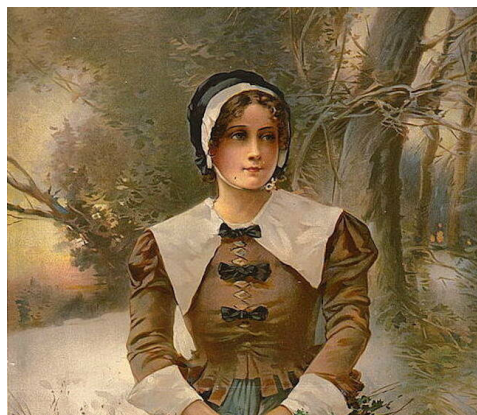
things are vocal in His praise.”³ There are many adventures we can have in this life but none is more urgent, necessary, or rewarding than this:

*So let us know, let us press on
to know the LORD. Hosea 6:3*

In the original Hebrew, “press on to know the LORD,” literally means *to hunt after* the knowledge of God with *zeal* . . . as a treasure hunter!⁴ Puritan pastor Matthew Poole explains further: To press on to know the Lord is “an increasing knowledge, which by a diligent [devotion] to the Word and Works of God these shall” be discovered, and God will be truly worshiped. Growing in a knowledge of God, through our study of the Bible and His Creation, is absolutely essential to true worship. Nature teaches us the excellencies of *Christ our Creator*, Scripture teaches us the excellencies of *Christ our Savior*, and History (Providence) teaches us the excellencies of *Christ our Lord*.

If God is worthy of worship—and He is!—then please allow us to encourage all true Christians to grow in a sweet knowledge of Jesus *our Creator*. Our Lord is immanent⁵ throughout the universe, that is, His presence permeates all things; at the same time, He remains infinitely distinct from Creation. All nature cries out, “Christ’s Spirit is here. He protects us and provides for us—please see His glory revealed in all the ways He cares for us!” To know God in this way we must get outdoors and experience His handiwork first-hand. Saints throughout history have understood this, living their lives close to and immersed in Creation. Unfortunately, many today live insulated from the natural world and the glories it proclaims.

Nothing in the universe could be more worthwhile than the adventure we are about to embark upon. Our exploration is safe when our hearts are centered on the worship of



our Creator, Savior, and Lord. There is no more peaceful place than in the midst of God’s praise, and Creation praises Him loudly! Danger enters into our realm when we take our eyes off Jesus, when we allow His character to be distorted in our minds, or we become careless in our travels.

Our exploration will exalt our Lord if we start with the Bible. Many well-meaning people have wrongly interpreted the teaching of Creation because they did not first possess a working knowledge of God found in Scripture. (On the *kids’ kreation* page we have supplied a partial list of verses that proclaim a few of God’s countless attributes. We urge you to study and memorize these before going out into nature.)

THE ANATOMY OF WORSHIP

What does it mean to worship? Is it singing hymns? Going to church? True worship does involve these things yet is much more. The Holy Spirit illustrates worship this way: “By the mercies of God . . . present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Romans 12:1 ESV). Adoration of God involves loving Him with *our whole life*—24 hours a day, seven days a week. Exploration is essential to an expression of sincere praise to the Lord. All Creation honors God continuously through its physical appearance, behavior, and song.

3 From Charles Spurgeon’s commentary on Psalm 29:9

4 Godly exploration is a subcategory of seeking the Lord’s glory.

5 Immanent = God personally sustaining the universe.

And it greatly encourages us in the first and strongest motive to study nature—the fear of the Lord.

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10) and is *the solid ground* upon which we stand before Christ. Jesus teaches us that “true worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and Truth” (John 4:23). It is the Holy Spirit who makes our lives *a living praise*, while all revealed Truth becomes *the substance* of that praise. Ultimately, God’s command to “Seek My face” (Psalm 27:8) is *the heart and soul* of worship. And the joy that issues forth from obedience to Christ in seeking becomes *our crown*, which we gladly cast before our King (Revelation 4:10)!⁶ In summary:

- *The ground of worship* is the fear of God;
- *The Life of worship* is the Holy Spirit;
- *The substance of worship* is revealed Truth;
- *The heart of worship* is humbly seeking our Creator’s face in obedience to Christ;
- *The crown of worship* is joy in the Lord.

If we circle back to the fear of the Lord, Scripture warns us to “offer to God *acceptable worship*, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:28b-29 ESV emphasis ours). It is critical that we recognize what is true (acceptable) worship and what is false worship.

FALSE VS TRUE WORSHIP

Do you not fear Me? declares the LORD. Do you not tremble in My presence? . . . Though the waves toss, yet they cannot prevail. Jeremiah 5:22

We have just seen that true worship honors God and produces the ineffable joy of His character in our hearts. False worship amounts to *contempt for Christ* and is *extremely dangerous*. (Remember Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron—Leviticus 10:1-2?) But what does this have to do with exploring Creation?

⁶ True worship involves all Three Persons of the Trinity.

The God-honoring exploration of nature is worship. But if we go out into nature unprepared or in a shallow or flippant way, we will likely meet with trouble. We should explore with joy, but just as the “fear of the Lord” is the solid ground for all worship, so it is the foundation upon which Creation has been built. The more we recognize this, the safer we shall be. In His great kindness, Jesus shields us from much of what could harm us outdoors. Many creatures might bite if we act carelessly, but God has put the fear of people “on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea” (Genesis 9:2). Most animals will flee rather than attack us. This is all the more reason to explore with reverence to our good Creator!

We can illustrate true and false worship using one of the greatest natural forces here on Earth . . . a hurricane.⁷ The person who has humbled himself before Christ’s Cross has become precious in God’s sight—“He encircled him, He cared for him, He kept him as the apple of His eye” (Deuteronomy 32:10 ESV). The hurricane has an eye; its only refuge. The body of the storm—with its raging winds, penetrating hail, and blinding lightning—represents God’s wrath. The true worshiper abides in Christ and finds peace and calm in the central “eye” of His all-consuming character. The false worshiper approaches God apart from the Cross and is swept away by the storm’s anger (Psalm 50).



⁷ Read about hurricanes in the *CREATOR Journal* Volume 18 Number 2.

Tragically, the secular explorer engages in false worship because he or she approaches nature's testimony to the revealed character of the Creator while denying His existence. This person can never learn anything of God's nature by exploring because the "god" worshiped is not the God of revealed Truth. Sadly, the atheist will cry out at the end of his life, "I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One" (Proverbs 30:3 ESV).⁸ The powerful winds of false worship end up destroying a person's life and soul.

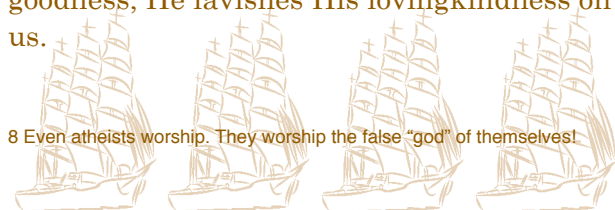
BE PREPARED

How then do we rightly prepare for our voyage and what must we do to remain safe? First, we must humbly examine what we know or do not know about Christ and His handiwork. The faithful seafarer commits himself to the study of maps and charts and destinations before sailing. As a teenager, the famous circumnavigator, Ferdinand Magellan, eagerly studied the subject of ocean travel. This prepared him for the day when he would set out to circle the globe in a ship. Such discipline decreases the risk of harm and greatly increases the enjoyment that can be found in Creation.

A serious study of whatever aspect of nature we wish to explore better prepares us to see Christ's character when outdoors. And as we have mentioned, it especially trains us to recognize "the fear of the LORD" that runs throughout Creation.

*Let all the earth fear the Lord;
Let all the inhabitants of the world
stand in awe of Him. Psalm 33:8*

Jesus could have filled Creation with nothing but terrifying things. In His infinite goodness, He lavishes His lovingkindness on us.



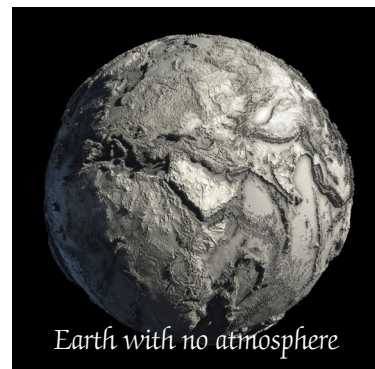
⁸ Even atheists worship. They worship the false "god" of themselves!



*The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD.
Psalm 33:5*

Let us diligently read the Bible to know the character of our Lord, and let's study how Christ Jesus designed and constructed plants, animals, landscapes, and ecosystems. Decide what it is that you want to see: A spectacular waterfall? A breaching whale? A luna moth? A starling murmuration? With a little research, you can discover when and where to observe these wonders, and how difficult and safe it is. Here are the essentials of God-honoring exploration:

- Fear God because of His goodness (Psalm 34:8-11). What would the Earth look like without Christ's goodness and kind provision in the face of the world's sin and rebellion? If our Lord removed our atmosphere, for instance, the oceans would evaporate into space and all life would perish.



Earth with no atmosphere

- Seek the face of Christ as revealed in His Word (Psalm 27:8). This will prepare you to see reflections of His character in all that He has made.
- Prepare diligently (Proverbs 13:4 ESV). The more you read about nature, the greater will be your enthusiasm for exploring it.⁹ Lord willing, you will experience many, “Oh! Look at that!” and “Thank You, Lord!” moments.
- Explore with courage (Joshua 1:7) and be extra mindful that Jesus liberally displays “the fear of LORD” throughout Creation. True exploration can be safe if we recognize potential dangers. Go with confidence, but please take no unnecessary risks. It’s always best to explore with others, and if you’re a child please go with an adult.
- Behold! Allow the Lord to open your eyes (Matthew 6:26-30). Some of our most thrilling and rewarding discoveries come unexpectedly as we follow His lead. Practice, “Look and listen!” God rewards those who are diligent in His work.
- Delight in your discoveries and marvel at Christ’s character revealed by them.
- Give thanks for what Jesus reveals to you. “Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 5:16-18).
- Please allow all that you discover to strengthen you in hope. The world today looks bleak to many people, but please remember—Jesus has overcome the world, sin, and death! Deserts often appear lifeless until the arrival of spring rains.

The Atacama—driest desert in the world—after rain



⁹ Please consider reading past issues of the *CREATOR Journal*. In them you will find many topics of God-honoring science.

DANGEROUS OR NOT?

The world today is a dangerous place, yet there is no greater shelter than being immersed in the sweet worship of our God. So, let us set out together on our voyage with great anticipation of discovery. In our explorations, we will quickly realize that God has graciously provided us with a mind and eyes, and other senses that can discern the colors, patterns, and movement frequently found outdoors. With a little practice, it becomes easy to distinguish a rose from an azalea. Jesus has also given us a natural ability to discriminate between much of what is safe in nature and what is not, for “The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge” (Proverbs 15:14 ESV). If we work at studying Christ’s creatures, we will learn which are safe and which are not. We can then avoid . . .

- walking where it is dangerous,
- touching what might harm us,
- tasting or eating what is poisonous.

It’s good to remember that many things in nature *may appear harmless*. Yet, there are many wild plants and animals that can be difficult to tell apart. Two years ago, my wife, Colleen, and I were staying in western New York state. One day I found a delightful, fuzzy caterpillar moving slowly along a busy dirt path. Not wanting it to get crushed underfoot by other hikers, I allowed it to crawl onto the back of my hand so that I



Which organism in each pair is dangerous?



The coral snake possesses a very potent venom and should not be handled! Milk snakes are relatively harmless.

All parts of the hemlock plant—flowers, leaves, seeds, and roots—are extremely poisonous. It's not recommended that you eat Queen Anne's lace, but it's safe to handle.

Despite its name, the assassin bug is not dangerous (to people) but has a piercing mouth part making its bite quite painful. Although cicadas sing very loudly and look quite alien, they are perfectly harmless!

The mushroom on the left is edible; the one on the right is a species of *Amanita* or Death Cap. If eaten, it can cause liver failure and death.

Walleye can bite, but are also very delicious when cooked! Our Lord Jesus saturated the cute pufferfish with the most powerful toxin found in any vertebrate. It is over 1,000 times more poisonous than cyanide.

could relocate it to a safer spot. I will never do that again! Within minutes, my hand began to itch terribly and a bright red rash soon developed, which only got worse over the course of several days.¹⁰ It took a full two weeks for my hand to clear up.

It is the wisdom of God applied to the knowledge of His Creation that keeps us safe. Our Lord does not want us to avoid all risk, but by applying His wisdom to each situation of life, we can discern when and where and how we should explore. Ultimately, the glory of God is where we find security for “the name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe” (Proverbs 18:10).

TO BEE OR NOT TO BEE?

The story I'm about to share with you *should not be repeated!* I tell it because, for me, it was a wonderful way to experience the fear and joy of my Creator.

A few years back, I was hiking at a nature preserve in Colorado when I came across several tall flowering weeds (seven feet at least) full of countless honeybees. While observing the bees, I spied a narrow passageway through the plants. After careful consideration, I decided to walk into the midst of the weeds. The potential danger was obvious, yet the Lord used my background in biology and medicine to reassure me that the risk was reasonable. Unlike my experience with the caterpillar, I was quite familiar with the normal behavior of honeybees and I had had no allergic reaction to their stings in the past, so I entered.

As I stood between the three or four enormous weeds, completely surrounded by the chorus of buzzing bees, I oddly found myself at complete peace, praising Christ in my heart in the midst of so many alien creatures. As the Creator of honeybees, He revealed Himself to me as dangerous, yet safe because I trusted and delighted in Him! What

¹⁰ Caterpillars possess tiny hairs, called setae, which may contain toxic alkaloids like those found in the poisonous sap of the milkweed plant.

a paradox: God is extremely dangerous *and* He is utterly safe before those who humbly love Him in obedience. This experience with the bees became a rare moment of worship I shall never forget.

Our Lord Jesus, from time to time, may allow us to be stung by a bee or a wasp. The account above does not prove that I am safe from all bees. Yet if we abide in Christ—who is “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24)—we are safe in the midst of what might be His wrath. There are many dangerous things in nature that He could turn against us. That He usually doesn’t, should move us to grow in a holy fear of Him.

WORSHIP OR WRATH?

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry. Psalm 2:12 KJV

One thing that must be emphasized at this point is that *our King expects to be worshiped*. All people must come to grips with the two options we have before God: worship Him or suffer His wrath. *Worship or wrath*. Some might reel at such a statement, but what does the infallible and inerrant Word of the Lord say? “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him” (Psalm 2:12 ESV).

SAFE IN THE STORM

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming. Ephesians 4:14

Satan and the world will use every weapon against us in an attempt to drown our praise (Ephesians 6:10-12). His ultimate goal is to steal our joy, “for the joy of the LORD is [our] strength” (Nehemiah 8:10). Chief among these military weapons are satanic lies. Our Lord instructs us to take “up the



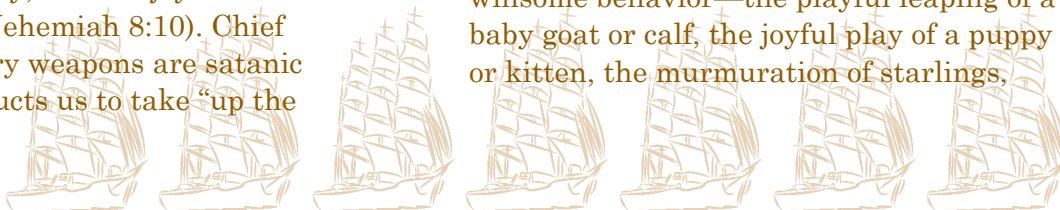
shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one” (Ephesians 6:16). Our faith fixes our eyes on Jesus, “the Hope of Glory” (Colossians 1:27). And it is “this hope [that] we have as an anchor of the soul” (Hebrews 6:19). When we worship—when we truly worship the Living God—we are safe in Christ’s arms!

WORSHIP AND THE WORLD

Many today worry about the harm mankind is doing to the environment and what effect this has on the health of the world. This is a legitimate concern. Yet there is no one more aware of sin’s disastrous effects on nature and culture than our Heavenly Father. He is not only concerned about how our careless deeds affect lives but how these might affect the ultimate priority—His adoration. And despite our wickedness, *God will not allow* His Creation to cease its worship.

God’s Son made all things to praise His Father, night and day. Jesus built into nature many things that—by their very design—worship Him as Creator:

- colorful flowers, birds, snakes, fish, frogs, and insects,
- winsome behavior—the playful leaping of a baby goat or calf, the joyful play of a puppy or kitten, the murmuration of starlings,



- the voices and songs Christ has given to many creatures—bird song, frog hymns, and insect choruses.



When Adam and Eve lived content in the Garden of Eden, they were perfectly safe. Nothing could harm them. Eden was truly a “*theatrum gloriae*” or a *dazzling theater of God’s glory*¹¹ and man’s worship of his Creator! But Adam became dissatisfied with God and craved worldly things. The joy of true worship was interrupted and this brought all mankind into physical and spiritual danger *because it muted God’s praise*.

We can rest assured that our Lord Jesus will not allow His exaltation to be destroyed. Satan is working overtime to silence Christ’s praise among the nations, and in part, he is succeeding. But Christians should not be anxious or lose sleep over the enemy’s temporary victories because Jesus has already defeated him by the Cross! If we resist the devil—by growing in the Word of God, loving Jesus and His character, and joining in Creation’s never-ending worship of our Creator—Satan must flee from us (James 4:7).

The Lord protects His own by filling our lives with His adoration and surrounding us with those things that worship Him. My wife and I live in the mountains of North Georgia and during the spring, summer, and fall our forests echo loudly with the Christ-directed

praise of birds, frogs, and insects. I have made it my habit to spend a few minutes outdoors each night before bed listening to the countless creatures singing to Christ at the top of their lungs.¹² Oh, what joy and comfort this is to my soul!

There are many impediments to godly worship. If we trust in money, possessions, relationships, or accomplishments, we hinder our praise. None of these things are wrong in themselves. But we must humbly kneel before Christ’s throne of grace and, like a child before his parents, look to the Lord—with trusting eyes—to supply all our needs. Waiting on God and trusting Him throughout every day of our lives are vital streams of true worship.

Much of the world appears to be in chaos. People everywhere are actively rebelling against their Creator. Angst has been left in the wake. As true Christians, however, we make the worship of our Triune God our highest priority. We may suffer illness, pain, persecution, and loss during our lives, but our Lord is faithful and will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). And as the Captain of our souls, He will guide us safely into the heavenly harbor. The Puritan William Sedgwick, commenting on Psalm 36:5-7 over 300 years ago, provides us great comfort: “When the whole world is become one sea of confusion, then are the judgments of the Lord a great deep, where not only man, but beasts may rest safely. . . . And though this time is a time of growing and spreading wickedness in man, yet it is a time of sweetest admiration and love in God; and when men that sin do cry out, O woeful man! they that enjoy God, cry out, O happy man! . . . The Lord makes all things naked and bare, that we only may have Him to be our safety.” What a *great comfort* indeed—let us seek the face of God in Christ, our Creator, Savior, and Lord!

¹¹ *Institutes* 1:5:8; 2:6:1, John Calvin

¹² Lord willing, in the next issue of the *CREATOR Journal* we will explore the degree to which Creation worships our Creator and what this means for us.

SAFE IN CHRIST'S ARMS

For it became Him, for whom are all things,
and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons
unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation
perfect through sufferings. Hebrews 2:10 KJV

A life of genuine worship *compels us* to
grow in the sweet knowledge of our Lord.
Worship is the essence of our love to God.
And we can't love someone we don't know. We
are therefore called to "worship the Father in
Spirit and Truth" (John 4:23).

The 18th Century pastor John Gill once
wrote that true Christians "continue and
increase in the knowledge of [Christ]; they
earnestly desire to know more of Him, and
eagerly pursue those means and methods
by which they attain to a greater degree
of it." We again quote Puritan Matthew
Poole to clarify for us what these "means
and methods" are: True Believers desire to
have an increasing knowledge of the Lord
and are energized "by a *diligent attendance*
(commitment) to the Word and Works of
God."¹³ If we truly adore Jesus, then we will
greatly desire to pursue *every and all means*
to know and love Him more!



13 Commentary on Hosea 6:3

This is why a lifelong commitment
to studying His Word and exploring His
Creation is so vital. The Holy Spirit brings
these two essentials together in one Psalm:

For the Word of the LORD is upright, And all His
Work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness
and justice; The earth is full of the lovingkindness of
the LORD. . . . Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all
the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.

Psalm 33:4-5, 8

Our *raison d'être* is to worship God by
knowing Him better, loving Him deeper, and
enjoying Him with every fiber of our being.

How about you? Do you long to dig into
the Bible and explore Christ's handiwork
every day to discover more about Him? Godly
exploration is a voyage into the ocean of
our Lord's incomparable character. Nature
innately knows that the only safe place is in
the worship of its Creator. In order to join
Creation's worship, sinners must first find
safety in Christ the Savior. "Do not be happy,
dear friend, till you are moored to the Rock
of Ages."¹⁴ We will never truly worship God
unless we repent of our sins and believe that
Jesus died on a cross for those sins.

Of all the men who walked the face of
the Earth, no one was more secure than
Jesus. He did face death threats and intense
opposition. But no one—not even Satan—
could harm a single hair on His head.
And when He went to the Cross, He did so
voluntarily. No one took Christ's life from
Him. In love, He gave it up of His own free
will. Christ's death and resurrection are the
greatest acts of love and worship that history
has ever known. We may suffer in this life,
but if we keep our eyes on Jesus, we will
share in the worship of His Father and be
safe in His blood forever.

14 A Voice from the Sea by C. H. Spurgeon, May 1878 *Sword and Trowel*



We plead with you to examine your heart. Are you one who once prayed a prayer “accepting Jesus into your life,” but have not seen much change in your convictions or interests? Do you love His Word and His glory? Or are you still drawn to the world and its rewards? Are you finding yourself given over to the philosophies and pleasures of this present age? If so, please let us encourage you to diligently pray to the Heavenly Father that He would convert your heart to love His Son through the Holy Spirit. There is no other way for you to gain an interest in Christ. All the treasures of the world do not hold a candle to the “Pearl of Great Price” (Matthew 13:46 KJV).



If you love Jesus with all your heart, then we urge you to set aside time each day to worship Him while “sitting at His feet,” as Mary did (Luke 10:39), and soak in all that He has to teach you from His Word. Start your day with Bible in hand and eagerly pour yourself out in prayer. Carve out time each week to hunt for the treasures of His character hidden within His Creation. Join other Believers at a local church and submit yourself to the regular preaching of God’s Word. And finally, “since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart” (1 Peter 1:22). If you do these things, surely the world will hate you and may even persecute you, but know this: You will be perfectly safe in the arms of the Great Shepherd of the sheep—Jesus Christ our Lord! It is in the death and resurrection of Christ that we find perfect peace. May our hearts burn within us to know Him better.

15 *A Voice from the Sea* by C. H. Spurgeon, May 1878 *Sword and Trowel*

Finally, we do well to remember, once again, words from the pen of C.H. Spurgeon: “never feel perfectly safe till you are in port.”¹⁵ Jesus prayed that His disciples would be protected from “the evil one” (John 17:15). If you are His disciple, you can count on His preservation while here on Earth. But it won’t be until we see Christ face to face that we will be secure from all wickedness forever. Heaven is our destination and safe haven. In the meantime, make the worship of the Lord our chief ambition, for **WHEN WE WORSHIP OUR TRIUNE GOD . . . WE ARE SAFE IN CHRIST’S ARMS!**

“Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.”

Revelation 14:7



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