

deceived themselves, may even be looking forward to the great Day of the Lord, never dreaming they will actually be met with God's rejection, His great wrath, and an eternity in hell. (See Matthew 7:21-23)

I am reminded of a scene from one of the *Star Wars* movies. Luke Skywalker proudly told Yoda that he was not afraid. Yoda's sober reply was, "You will be. You **will** be."

And so it is with all who have outright rejected God (as well as the very **search** for God) and for those who have settled for a form of godliness but who have denied the power thereof to change their hearts and lives, bringing them to a desire and determination to do things God's way. They may not be afraid now, but they **will** be when they stand face to face with God as their all-knowing Judge. Nothing we have done can be hidden from Him—not even our thoughts or motives.

God's love is freely offered to all mankind—now. If we choose to reject His love, or simply do nothing, and fail to return that love by submitting to His authority (John 14:15), we should indeed fear God's wrath and our eternal punishment. That is reality. There will be no "wish-upon-a-star" or Fairy-tale ending where everything turns out okay after all, in spite of what was foretold and deserved. (We **will** reap what we have sown.)

Our prayer for each of you and for every individual we minister to here at GODTEL, is that this message comes through "loud and clear" and that right choices will be made. Sometimes that is as simple as honestly telling God you

have doubts, but that if He is really real to please reveal Himself to you. Then, I strongly suggest that you read the instruction manual (our textbook) that God has provided. He loves you—dearly—but He will judge and punish all disobedience.

Time is running out for planet earth and for lost mankind. Don't procrastinate coming to the Lord. When Jesus comes, our "TESTS" will be graded. Will you pass and graduate ("Well done, my faithful servant"), or fail and be doomed forever ("Depart from Me, I never knew you")?

God's Open Door To Eternal Life, Inc. d.b.a. GODTEL Ministries, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 1975 and based in East Texas, operates three homeless shelters, (in Nacogdoches, Lufkin, and Livingston) which share "Practical Christianity" by meeting physical needs (food, clothing, and temporary shelter) while proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This article is part of a series concerning practical Christian truths. To obtain additional copies, order by Title. For information about other literature, or the ministry in general, write us at one of the addresses below, or give us a call.

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GRADUATION DAY

"...I have finished my course..." 2 Timothy 4:7-8

by Nancy Gentry



School's Out!

but not for Christians.

(That is, not until Christ returns.)

Graduation Day is an exciting and wonderful time of celebration. It marks the successful completion of years of meeting the requirements set forth by the entity with the authority and power to confer a certification of completion of studies—a diploma/degree. That "piece of paper" speaks of hours of doing what someone else tells you to: reading, studying, completing projects, acceptable (if not diligent) class attendance, and

testing, testing, testing. As joyous as an earthly graduation day is, it does not mark the end of lessons and tests for Christians. God's children are always in "school" and are tested daily. The return of Jesus Christ and God's "Graduation Day" (a.k.a. Judgment Day) for His saints is going to be an unspeakably glorious occasion. It will mark the **end** of **all** testing.

For now though, life **is** our school, the Bible is our textbook, the Holy Spirit is our teacher, the world is our classroom, and the moment-by-moment occurrences and conflicts of life are our tests. Of course, **the** test is to see if we will **choose** to apply the truths of Scripture to our lives in all situations. Will we obey God or our desperately wicked hearts? (Jeremiah 17:9) Another way to put that question is, will self follow God's rules or yield to the influences and demands of the world, the flesh, and the devil?

One really nice thing about the tests God gives is, they are open-book tests. All the right answers needed to pass each test are easily obtained from our textbook. We just need to look in the Bible and **do** what it says. (This is impossible, over time, for the non-Christian because the power "to do" comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit, and He only inhabits real believers/doers.)

Studying ahead is an excellent habit to have because when the "pop" quizzes come, there's not always time, or a Bible available, to look up the answers. In John 8:31-32 Jesus lets us know that to enjoy real freedom (freedom from the bondage of sin and slavery to the lusts of our wicked hearts) we must abide (live) in His Word—study, learn, know, memorize. As David

said, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee." Psalm 119:11

One thing is **for sure**: when "Graduation Day" arrives, those who did not believe God, accept His Son, study (2 Timothy 2:15) and pass the test(s) (dying to self and allowing Christ to live His life in and through them) will be extremely dismayed to discover the eternally terrifying consequences of failure. Heaven is so very fantastically magnificent that everyone not going there will grieve and suffer with bitter regret that they ignored the *teacher* and the *textbook*. Then, when they realize the penalty for failure, what agony of remorse they will experience.

***... the moment-by-moment
occurrences and conflicts of life
are our tests...
will we return good for evil?***

Along these lines, as I was studying in Isaiah 13 early one morning, I was greatly troubled by the thought of how terrifying it will be for all those who do not **know** God personally (those who do not believe on, trust in, and obey Him) when we all stand before Him on Judgment Day. Suddenly, the realization of the reality of the truth of the claims of Christianity, and of lost opportunities to be reconciled to our Creator and Judge will give way to bone-and-gut-wrenching terror. I was so burdened, in fact, that I asked June if I could read and comment briefly on those Scriptures prior to his 7:00 a.m. teaching in Proverbs at the mission. Instead, he gave me the whole time and let me present my "devotional" for the morning Bible study. *Here is an overview:*

Question: Have you ever been frightened? Afraid? Terrified? Overwhelmed by dread or a sense of doom? Suddenly realized you had made a serious mistake and felt totally helpless because there was nothing you could do to correct your error? Overwhelmed with "If only's"?

Regret is bitter and being fearful is not a good feeling. However, a healthy fear of painful consequences can keep us from making regrettable choices—like putting our unprotected hand into fire. Once we have been burned, we understand the consequence of choosing to indulge in that action and, if rational, we will not do that again—the cost is too great. Unlike the foregoing illustration about the hand in the fire, many of the deadly choices we make here on earth that keep us from God are actually pleasurable—for now—but they won't last. We must accept, by faith (believing what God has told us in Scripture), that the payment for sin is eternally painful—the price is **too** high.

Unfortunately, many people are so focused on God's love for man (John 3:16) that they have developed a "no fear" attitude toward their Maker and Judge. They forget that the fear of the Lord (rather, of His power to send us to hell where the fires burn hot, but death never comes) is the beginning of wisdom—and wisdom is evidenced by the making of right choices—**doing**, not merely knowing, what God says (James 1:22).

Scripture assures us that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God Who punishes sin (wrong choices—the breaking of His laws). God is **fair** and **just** which means **No One** will "slide by" on Judgment Day. Some individuals, who have