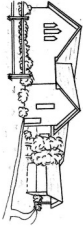
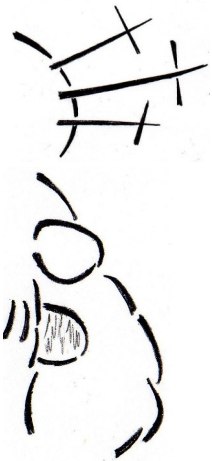


**NORTHWOODS  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH**



**4723 GRIFFITH AVENUE  
CHEYENNE, WY 82009**

**WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH. JOHN 4:24**



**HE IS NOT HERE. HE IS RISEN!**

# THE NORTHWOODS NEWS

## Easter

By

Rich Cesal



**Easter, the most important Christian remembrance and celebration. Of course, Easter would not have happened without Jesus' birth at Christmas. But, the substitutionary atonement death, the rising from the dead and the ascension are the events which give hope to a world lost in sin. These events are what make Jesus the Christ, the Redeemer, the Savior. Paul tells us in Rom 5:8, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Christ rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God as we are "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb 12:2).**

Obviously the first Good Friday was a time of great sadness as Jesus had to suffer on the cross to set us free from our sins. But then at the time appointed by God He rose from the dead to give us the assurance of the promise of life after death. So Easter follows Good Friday and our sadness turns to extreme joy. As it says in Heb 8:6, "But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises." Better than what covenant and what promises?

The first covenant which was the Covenant of Works which promised life to those who were perfectly obedient to God and death to those who

were disobedient. Adam's sin broke that covenant and God provided a second covenant, the Covenant of Grace, which promises a redeemer (Gen 3:15). The theme of the Covenant of Grace is carried throughout the entire Bible. Man needs a redeemer to remove God's wrath for his sin and thus to rely entirely on God alone for his salvation. This covenant was enforced in different ways in the Old Testament but with the advent of Jesus, a new covenant was given.

Now Israel has broken many covenants that the Lord made with the people of Israel over the years from Adam's time. The Lord forgave Israel each time and made more covenants with them which they always seemed to find a way to brake. But then it was prophesized in Jeremiah that a new covenant will be made.

Jeremiah 31:31-33 says, "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." It is said of God, Jesus, and the New Covenant, "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second." (Heb 8:7). This then is the "better covenant . . . established on better promises." (Heb 8:6).

And so it can be said, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." (Heb 9:14-15).

Here then is God's greatest gift to mankind, his Redeemer and the only way for redemption and salvation from the wrath of God. So how could this momentous event become so degraded as is the case of the commercialized Easter?

The commercialized Christmas is somewhat understandable because the giving of gifts leading to Santa Claus came from the events surrounding St. Nicholas which dates back to the 3rd century. Over the centuries, the legend of St Nicholas grew into the modern day Santa Claus. With modern communications and advertising, the retail store owners commercialized the giving to children especially in the toy market. But there is no such excuse for Easter.

Easter is not the merging of a non-biblical practice with a biblical event although there was some celebrating in pagan cultures of the summer solstice. The commercializing of Easter was brought about by

merchants solely wanting to increase sales. The prostitution of the most sacred event in Christendom can be placed entirely on those wanting to make money and of course a lot of the blame can be placed as always on those who should be enraged over what is happening but remain basically silent. Those entrusted to bringing the gospel to a sinful world, abdicated their calling by not speaking out against the practices. I can only imagine what would be the case if an Islamic holy day was distorted by the secular public. How did so many in the pulpits become so deaf to the corruption of the most sacred event in Christendom?

I believe it has something to do with the whole seeker sensitive evangelical movement. Bible colleges teach a watered down theology based entirely upon choosing Jesus and it is the Bible college graduates who fill the pulpits in so many of today's evangelical churches and not seminary trained individuals. I've had discussions with evangelicals who claim that seminaries are totally unimportant.

But the Easter Bunny and Easter egg hunts have nothing to do with Christ's sacrifice for us on the cross. They only give secular society a means to cover up the true meaning of Easter and cash in on the distortion. It also gives them a way to piggyback on the Easter holiday.

I'm sure the common position on the Easter Bunny is that it's a harmless time for a children to have fun. We can celebrate that and also go to church on Easter morning.

I don't know how many Easter Sunday mornings I sat in a pew in a church (Presbyterian of course) before this particular Easter morning in the new Presbyterian Church we began attending in Florida. I'm sure I had heard the Easter message of the risen Christ on all those other occasions. I don't remember ever really thinking about what that meant other than Jesus was spiritually alive. I think I thought of His rising as being spiritual. More than just a ghost but less than a person.

The sermon this Easter morning was about, as usual, the empty tomb. But there was something different. The pastor was actually saying that Jesus bodily rose from the dead. The tomb was actually empty. No body. He rose with a real body. Not the body He died in but His old body changed into a glorified body that possessed supernatural attributes but was none the less a physical body, not a spirit. How could I have missed that message all those times in the past?

That Easter was the beginning of the Holy Spirit having me in His sights. Just as Lewis wrote to Sheldon Vanauken, written about last month, I think "the Holy Spirit had me in the meshes of His net and I was not going to get away." Shortly after this, I attended a new members class. Now I was in church all my life. I cannot ever remember a time when I didn't believe in God and I didn't know about Jesus. However, it was during this class that everything took on a new meaning. I realized for the first time that Christ died for me. Not the world, but for me. I came to feel that if I were the only person who ever lived, Jesus would have gone to the cross just for me.

And so, that Easter message had a new meaning. The meaning given

accurately in the Bible. Jesus bodily rose from the dead and after 40 days ascended into heaven and is now seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

All those people in the world who corrupt the most memorable day in Christendom of celebrating and remembering the resurrection of the Christ and confuse this with the Easter Bunny should pause to think of how they are sinning against their Holy God. But then, the fear of God is gone from our public discourse and also in so many churches. May God have mercy on their souls. As Jesus said as He was dying on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Ω

## Session Report

This month we celebrate the death and resurrection of our savior. We have been given an incomparable gift by God in His son. Take the time leading up to Easter to reflect on the love, mercy and grace God has shown you through Jesus.

You have noticed by now the yellow paint on the sidewalk at the church. It is there to serve as a warning about the hazard of the uneven segments of concrete that several of you have become memorably familiar with. We have someone coming this month to fix the concrete to eliminate the hazard. Please be careful leading up to that time.

Vacation Bible School is coming - June 16-20. The theme this year is "Genesis 1: Space Probe". We are excited about the opportunity again to minister to children in the name of Christ. We are in need of many volunteers. We are having meetings the 4th Sunday of each month to plan and prepare. Please see Tim Anderson for details.

Please welcome Jeff and Devota Robins. They have met with the session and are joining Northwoods. Take the time to welcome them and to get to know them.

The session approved Lord's Day evening Prayer meeting to be held immediately prior to evening Worship. See Mike Newsom for more info.

The session also approved the formation of a Capital Campaign Committee. See Alex Ramig for more info.

Our friends at Grace Community Church in Chappell, NE are sponsoring a workshop April 25 & 26. It is entitled *Raising Kids to Do Hard Things*. It is a "wisdom-workshop" for parents and grandparents of children of all ages. It "connects the dots" between the various aspects of our lives so that those who attend it can receive insights into what really works, what doesn't work, what really doesn't even matter, and why. The teacher is Gregg Harris - the Director of Noble Institute, a non-profit family-training organization. You can find more information at the web site <http://www.nobleinstitute.org/>

## Announcements

Apr 6—Fellowship Dinner, after worship; Evening Worship

Apr 9—FEAST, 6:00 PM; Study 6:45 AM

Apr 13—Lord's Supper during worship; Evening Worship

Apr 17—Ladies Brunch, 10:00 AM, Jessica Lewis' home

Apr 19—Men's Breakfast, 8:00 AM

Apr 20—Easter Worship, 10:30 AM; Evening Worship

Apr 23—FEAST, 6:00 PM

Apr 27—Worship, 10:30 AM; Evening Worship

Worship time—10:30 AM      Sunday School—9:15 AM

Evening Worship—5:00 PM

### Nursery Schedule for April

6th-	KELLEIGH ANDERSON
13th-	ZANE NEWSOM
20th-	ESTHER DAVISON
27th-	HEATHER NORGAUER

Please trade with someone if you are unable to do nursery duty on the assigned day.



Autumn Duncan	2nd	Sharon Auzqui	20th
Benjamin Anderson	12th	Barbara Williams	21th
Kaya Pillivant	15th	Mike Anderson	24th
Jonathan Anderson	18th	Chet Hornung	29th
Edie Vosler	19th		

Tom & Laura Twitchell	4th
Alex & Janet Ramig	6th
Rich & Charmayne Cesal	12th



Hear the bells ringing  
They're singing that you can be born again  
Hear the bells ringing  
They're singing Christ is risen from the dead

The angel up on the tombstone  
Said He has risen, just as He said  
Quickly now, go tell his disciples  
That Jesus Christ is no longer dead

Joy to the world, He has risen, hallelujah  
He's risen, hallelujah  
He's risen, hallelujah

Hear the bells ringing  
They're singing that you can be healed right now  
Hear the bells ringing, they're singing  
Christ, He will reveal it now

The angels, they all surround us  
And they are ministering Jesus' power  
Quickly now, reach out and receive it  
For this could be your glorious hour

Joy to the world, He has risen, hallelujah  
He's risen, hallelujah  
He's risen, hallelujah, hallelujah

The angel up on the tombstone  
Said He has risen, just as He said  
Quickly now, go tell his disciples  
That Jesus Christ is no longer dead

Joy to the world, He has risen, hallelujah  
He's risen, hallelujah  
He's risen, hallelujah  
Hallelujah

Written by Anne Ward Herring

# Growing in Grace: The Discipline of Stewardship

By Alex Ramig RE

With this article (the second in a series) I will high light the importance of stewardship for all Christians by noting that the Bible says a lot about the subject. Many authors make comments as follows: *The Bible says more about money and possessions than any other topic except for the Kingdom of Heaven.* If you do a Google search, you can find articles with questionable titles like: *101 Biblical Proverbs about Money.* But, there can be danger in large volume. Because the Bible says so much about stewardship, money and possessions, many have been tempted to develop an imbalanced theology of stewardship.

Kevin DeYong points out that it is easy to see where prosperity theology comes from. Take a few promises of the Mosaic covenant out of context, take the promise in Malachi 3, mix in some of Jesus' statements about receiving whatever you ask for in faith, and you can unwisely cook up a little health and wealth gospel.

It is also possible to cook up an imbalanced austerity theology. Point out that Jesus had nowhere to lay his head, turn to the story of the rich young ruler, stir in the parable of the rich fool, and you'll have a theology that says money is bad and so are those who have it. But, you could also make a biblical argument that God loves rich guys. Just look at Abraham and David.

So, how should we think of stewardship? What biblical principles should we keep in mind as we manage the wealth or poverty that God

has provided? There are few things the Bible talks about more often. This is good, because there are few things as relevant to all people everywhere as is a Biblical Theology of Stewardship.

At this point, we need to be sure that we all agree on a definition for Stewardship. Here is one that seems appropriate...it comes from the PCA Foundation web site.

*A Steward, by definition, is a caretaker. In times of old, the Steward of a manor was one who was carefully chosen and employed by that manor's Master to watch over and care for the Master's property. The Steward, far from being the owner himself, is rather a trusted servant. This also is the Biblical concept of Stewardship. God is the owner of all, and we are His carefully appointed caretakers (Ps. 24:1 - "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it").*

In my last article, I discussed the stewardship principles of ownership and sacrifice. As mentioned above, with this article I have focused on the importance our Lord assigns to stewardship by emphasizing that the Bible has much to say about the subject. Following is a collection of Scripture texts organized under the headings you see below. There is some redundancy, but with God's Word that is good. The list is by no means exhaustive and you may have your own favorites that you would like to add. If so, please let me know. In future articles, I will continue our work of developing a theology of stewardship.

In the interest of Newsletter space, I reference only book, chapter and verse. For your personal study, a copy with full texts is available in our Church foyer.

May the Lord grant us grace to grow in this vital discipline.

## How Stewards view Ownership

We like to think that we own this and that. Read what God says:

Genesis 1:1, Genesis 1:28, Deuteronomy 8:17-18, Job 41:11, 1 Chronicles 29:14, Psalm 24:1, 1 Corinthians 4:7, 1 Corinthians 6: 19-20

## How Stewards view Contentment

We look for contentment in all the wrong places. God says we learn to be content, regardless of our circumstances.

Isaiah 55:2, Philippians 4:11-12, I Timothy 6:6-7, Hebrews 13:5

### How Stewards view their Possessions

Warning: Possessions can function as idols in our lives.

Ecclesiastes 5:13, Matthew 6:19-21, Mark 4:19, Luke 12:15, Ephesians 4:19, 1 Timothy 6:10, Hebrews 13:5

### How Stewards spend their Time

We often forget that stewardship includes Biblical management of the time the Lord graciously gives us.

Psalms 90:12, Psalm 139:16, Ephesians 5:15-17

### How Stewards Live

Stewards live by the living, inerrant, authoritative, all sufficient word of God (the bread of life).

Genesis 1:26, Proverbs 21:17, Proverbs 23:5, Proverbs 25:28, Proverbs 27:12

I Timothy 6:17-19, 1 Peter 4:10, Ecclesiastes 5:10, Daniel 5:23, Matthew 6: 19-21, Matthew 25:14-30, Luke 12:15, Luke 12:18-20, Acts 2: 44-47, Romans 12: 1-2, II Corinthians 8:9, II Corinthians 9:6, Philippians 1:27, Philippians 2:3, I Timothy 6:10, I Timothy 6:7-8

### How Stewards care for their Bodies

Stewards are caretakers of their bodies (a temple of the Holy Spirit).

I Corinthians 6:19, I Corinthians 9:25, Romans 12:1-2

### How Stewards exercise generosity and give

God's caretakers are disciplined and, by grace, receive and exercise generous hearts.

Leviticus: 27:30-32, Num. 18: 21, 24, Ecclesiastes 7:11-12, Malachi 3:8-10, Matthew 5:16, Matthew 6:19-20, Luke 6:38, Luke 21:1-4, Acts 20:35, II Corinthians 8:1-5, II Corinthians 9:7, I Timothy 6:17-19, Titus 2:13-14   Ω

# Cosmic Treason

by R.C. Sproul

"The sinfulness of sin" sounds like a vacuous redundancy that adds no information to the subject under discussion. However, the necessity of speaking of the sinfulness of sin has been thrust upon us by a culture and even a church that has diminished the significance of sin itself. Sin is communicated in our day in terms of making mistakes or of making poor choices. When I take an examination or a spelling test, if I make a mistake, I miss a particular word. It is one thing to make a mistake. It is another to look at my neighbor's paper and copy his answers in order to make a good grade. In this case, my mistake has risen to the level of a moral transgression. Though sin may be involved in making mistakes as a result of slothfulness in preparation, nevertheless, the act of cheating takes the exercise to a more serious level. Calling sin "making poor choices" is true, but it is also a euphemism that can discount the severity of the action. The decision to sin is indeed a poor one, but once again, it is more than a mistake. It is an act of moral transgression.

In my book *The Truth of the Cross* I spend an entire chapter discussing this notion of the sinfulness of sin. I begin that chapter by using the anecdote of my utter incredulity when I received a recent edition of *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*. Though I was happy to receive this free issue, I was puzzled as to why anyone would send it to me. As I leafed through the pages of quotations that included statements from Immanuel Kant, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and others, to my complete astonishment I came upon a quotation from me. That I was quoted in such a learned collection definitely surprised me. I was puzzled by what I could have said that merited inclusion in such an anthology, and the answer was found in a simple statement attributed to me: "Sin is cosmic treason." What I meant by that statement was that even the slightest sin that a creature commits against his Creator does violence to the Creator's holiness, His glory, and His righteousness. Every sin, no matter how seemingly insignificant, is an act of rebellion against the sovereign God who reigns and rules over us and as such is an act of treason against the cosmic King.

Cosmic treason is one way to characterize the notion of sin, but when we look at the ways in which the Scriptures describe sin, we see three that stand out in importance. First, sin is a debt; second, it is an expression of enmity; third, it is depicted as a crime. In the first instance, we who are sinners are described by Scripture as debtors who cannot pay their debts. In this sense, we are talking not about financial indebtedness but a moral indebtedness. God has the sovereign right to impose obligations upon His creatures. When we fail to keep these

obligations, we are debtors to our Lord. This debt represents a failure to keep a moral obligation.

The second way in which sin is described biblically is as an expression of enmity. In this regard, sin is not restricted merely to an external action that transgresses a divine law. Rather, it represents an internal motive, a motive that is driven by an inherent hostility toward the God of the universe. It is rarely discussed in the church or in the world that the biblical description of human fallenness includes an indictment that we are by nature enemies of God. In our enmity toward Him, we do not want to have Him even in our thinking, and this attitude is one of hostility toward the very fact that God commands us to obey His will. It is because of this concept of enmity that the New Testament so often describes our redemption in terms of reconciliation. One of the necessary conditions for reconciliation is that there must be some previous enmity between at least two parties. This enmity is what is presupposed by the redeeming work of our Mediator, Jesus Christ, who overcomes this dimension of enmity.

The third way in which the Bible speaks of sin is in terms of transgression of law. The Westminster Shorter Catechism answers the fourteenth question, "What is sin?" by the response, "Sin is any want of conformity to, or transgression of, the law of God." Here we see sin described both in terms of passive and active disobedience. We speak of sins of commission and sins of omission. When we fail to do what God requires, we see this lack of conformity to His will. But not only are we guilty of failing to do what God requires, we also actively do what God prohibits. Thus, sin is a transgression against the law of God.

When people violate the laws of men in a serious way, we speak of their actions not merely as misdemeanors but, in the final analysis, as crimes. In the same regard, our actions of rebellion and transgression of the law of God are not seen by Him as mere misdemeanors; rather, they are felonious. They are criminal in their impact. If we take the reality of sin seriously in our lives, we see that we commit crimes against a holy God and against His kingdom. Our crimes are not virtues; they are vices, and any transgression of a holy God is vicious by definition. It is not until we understand who God is that we gain any real understanding of the seriousness of our sin. Because we live in the midst of sinful people where the standards of human behavior are set by the patterns of the culture around us, we are not moved by the seriousness of our transgressions. We are indeed at ease in Zion. But when God's character is made clear to us and we are able to measure our actions not in relative terms with respect to other humans but in absolute terms with respect to God, His character, and His law, then we begin to be awakened to the egregious character of our rebellion.

Not until we take God seriously will we ever take sin seriously. But if we acknowledge the righteous character of God, then we, like the saints of old, will cover our mouths with our hands and repent in dust and ashes before Him. Ω

## The Power of the Resurrection

Job is presumed by many to be the oldest book in the Bible. And the oldest of books has to do with the oldest of problems:

"Why do the righteous suffer?"

Up to this verse in the story of Job, he is asking questions. Tough ones. "Man dies, and is laid low; man breathes his last and where is he?" (14:10). "If a man die, shall he live again?" (14:14).

They were unanswerable questions that rose from a perplexed and anguished heart. But with his cry of faith, "I know that my Redeemer lives," he is on solid ground. (19:5)

He is led of the Spirit to make the statement that has conveyed assurance to believers down through the centuries. He says, "I know." He points with certainty to the fact that the solution to all problems, the ultimate answer to all questions, whether they be old and persistent or new and passing, lies in knowing that the Lord, our Redeemer lives.

God in Christ is on top of it all.

He lives.

He has conquered the last great enemy which is death.

He is "declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4).

### How Does This Apply To Us?

With Job in spite of every argument to the contrary (and he was deluged with them), we, too, may know that the Redeemer lives. Furthermore, to live successful Christian lives we must know that.

God's plan for the believer is that by the testimony of the Holy Spirit and by opening one's eyes to see the innumerable evidences of God's power and authority in the world of nature and history, we may come to a place where we can say we know.

God's agenda is that we come to know. That is why the Bible was given. "I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13) - know, not guess, not suppose, not wish, not wonder but know.

### Pray With Me

Lord, to meditate upon this magnificent truth brings glory to my soul and a peace that remains unshaken amidst the shattered dreams of a Christ-rejecting world. I know that my Redeemer lives. The bond between us is personal and close.

- I am not a number on a long list of data that has been fed into a celestial computer.
- I have a name and You know it.
- I need a living Redeemer that I can call my own and You are that Redeemer.

I know that my Redeemer lives. God be praised for the ability to know, with knowledge as clear and as sure as Your own Word. There is no vagueness in Your promises, no wondering if You really mean it, no wandering about in the wastelands of philosophical speculation.

I know that my Redeemer lives. I am delivered from the bondage of the fear of death. I am free because I am possessed by One who has power to lift me up and hold me above the entangling alliances of sin and the bitter harvest of eternal, spiritual death.

- He is real to me. I know Him.
- He is my great eternal Redeemer because He lives.
- His voice is rich and warm, not a dead echo of superstition or the faint whispering of wishful thinking.
- His hand is strong and His eyes are kind.
- He lives, and to eternity I shall praise Him that "because He lives, I too shall live."

In the name of Him who ever lives to make intercession for me. Amen.

### **Moving On In the Life of Prayer**

"You ask me how I know he lives, He lives within my heart."

That is the great finale to a familiar and cherished hymn. It is also the experience of the steadfast Christian.

In his or her heart the Christian knows that Jesus is alive and in control and that He will come again, as He promised, to receive us unto Himself.

The secret of joyous living lies in knowing that whatever happens, Jesus Christ is real - He is really ours and we are really His.

Do you know that your Redeemer lives?

Then, by your life show that your Redeemer lives!

**Dr. William S. Stoddard**

### **Have a Need? Contact one of the officers.**

Church Office Hours  
Office Telephone  
Web Site

Tue, Wed, and Thu 8:30 - 4:30  
637-4817  
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**If you have a request for the prayer chain contact  
Branda Church 637-8630 and if not available,  
Kelleigh Anderson 635-2578.**

*Grace to you and peace from God the  
Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who  
gave Himself for our sins, that He  
might deliver us from this present  
evil age, according to the will of our  
God and Father, to whom be glory  
forever and ever.  
Hallelujah, Amen.*