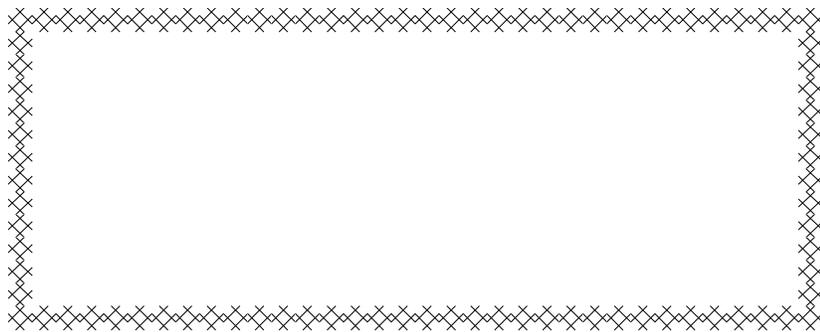
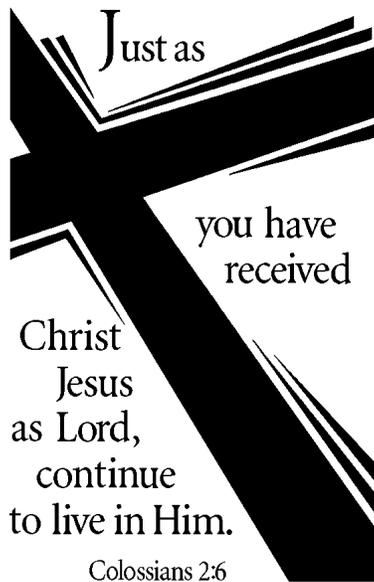


For HIS Glory
Prison Ministry
Emmett and Ann O'Donnell
P.O. Box 291301
Kerrville, TX 78029-1301



Pray for the spouses and children of men and women in prisons.

December, 2018

In this little issue, and Lord willing, *every* issue, our *only* purpose is to honor Jesus Christ.

The old way which wicked men have trod is *a way of unbelief*. Noah was sent to tell those ancient sinners that the world would be destroyed by a flood. They thought him an old fool, and mocked him to scorn. For 120 years that “preacher of righteousness” continually lifted up his warning voice. He threatened that the world would certainly be deluged, and the ungodly sons of men would surely be swept away. He pointed to the ark of safety which he was building in testimony against them, and besought them to humble themselves, and break off their sins by righteousness—but they would not believe the prophet, preacher of righteousness though he was. They turned his most earnest words into jests, and his tender invitations were made the subject of their scorn.

This was the old way, and the old way has not lost its pilgrims. In different forms, and different ways, the atheism of the human heart still

THE OLD WAY

By Charles H. Spurgeon

continues to discover itself; yes, and discover itself in Christian congregations, too. You that are unconverted surely do not believe that you will be condemned by the righteous justice of God, or you would not be so much at ease. If you solemnly believed in the justice of God, you would not dare to bring it down upon your heads! If you really, and in very truth believed in the Great Assize, and in the Judge of all, you would not spend your lives in violation of the law, and in bringing upon yourself the penalty!

Oh, if you believed that there is a hell for such as die out of Christ, you would be afraid

to remain out of Christ another day! You would seek your chambers, fall upon your knees, and cry to God for mercy that He would now accept you, and let you be reconciled to Him through His blood. Alas, you hear of God’s anger, and you profess to believe in it, but you act like infidels—and as you act, so you are! This old way of disbelief has always ended in confusion, for the Flood did come, and their disbelief could not arrest its rising. The angry waters burst out from their lairs like beasts of prey, hungry for human life, and the rebellious race was utterly destroyed! Even thus most surely shall the vengeance of God overtake us, whether we believe it or not, unless we fly to Christ, the Ark, and are housed in Him from the coming tempest.—Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software.—Sermon #859, Vol. 15—*The Old Way of the Wicked*—Read/download entire sermon on www.spurgeongems.org.

The Blessing of Thorns

Sandra felt as low as the heels of her shoes as she pushed against a December gust, and the florist shop door. Her life had been easy, like a spring breeze. Then in the fourth month of her second pregnancy, a minor automobile accident stole her ease.

During this Christmas season she would have delivered a son. She grieved over her loss. As if that weren't enough, her husband's company threatened a transfer. Then her sister, whose annual holiday visit she coveted, called saying she could not come.

What's worse, Sandra's friend infuriated her by suggesting her grief was a God-given path to maturity that would allow her to empathize with others who suffer. "She has no idea what I'm feeling," thought Sandra with a shudder.

"Good afternoon, can I help you?" The shop clerk's approach startled her.

"I...I need an arrangement," stammered Sandra, "for Christmas."

"Do you want beautiful but ordinary, or would you like to challenge the day with a customer favorite I call the Christmas Special?" asked the shop clerk. "I'm convinced that flowers tell stories," she continued. "Are you looking for something that conveys 'gratitude' this Christmas?"

"Gratitude? Gratitude for what?" she thought to herself. "For a careless driver whose truck was hardly scratched when he rear-ended me? For an airbag that saved my life but took that of my child?"

"Not exactly!" Sandra blurted out. "In the last five months, everything that could go wrong has gone wrong." Sandra regretted her outburst, and was surprised when the shop clerk said, "I have the perfect arrangement for you."

Then the door's small bell rang, and the shop clerk said, "Hi Barbara...let me get your order." She politely excused herself, and walked toward a small workroom, then quickly reappeared carrying an arrangement of greenery, bows, and long-stemmed thorny roses. Except the ends of the rose stems were neatly snipped...there were no flowers. "Want this in a box?" asked the clerk.

Sandra watched for the customer's response. Was this a joke? Who would

want rose stems with no flowers! She waited for laughter, but neither woman laughed. "Yes, please," Barbara replied with an appreciative smile. "You'd think after three years of getting the Special, I wouldn't be so moved by its significance, but I can feel it right here, all over again," she said as she gently tapped her chest.

"Uhh," stammered Sandra, "that lady just left with, uhh...she just left with no flowers!"

"Right...I cut off the flowers. That's the Special...I call it the Christmas Thorns Bouquet." "Oh, come on, you can't tell me someone is willing to pay for that?" exclaimed Sandra.

"Barbara came into the shop three years ago feeling very much like you feel today," explained the clerk. "She thought she had very little to be thankful for. She had lost her father to cancer, the family business was failing, her son was into drugs, and she was facing major surgery."

"That same year I had lost my husband," continued the clerk, "and for the first time in my life I had to spend the holidays alone. I had no children, no husband, no family nearby, and too great a debt to allow any travel."

"So what did you do?" asked Sandra. "I learned to be thankful for thorns," answered the clerk quietly. "I've always thanked God for good things in life, and never thought to ask Him why those good things happened to me. But when bad stuff hit, did I ever ask! It took time for me to learn that dark times are important. I always enjoyed the 'flowers' of life, but it took thorns to show me the beauty of God's comfort. You know, the Bible says that God comforts us when we're afflicted, and from His consolation we learn to comfort others."

Sandra sucked in her breath as she thought about the very thing her friend had tried to tell her. "I guess the truth is I don't want comfort. I've lost a baby, and I'm angry with God." Just then someone else walked in the shop.

"Hey, Phil!" shouted the clerk to the balding, rotund man. "My wife sent me in to get our usual Christmas arrangement...12 thorny, long-stemmed stems!" laughed Phil as the clerk handed him a tissue-wrapped arrangement from the re-

frigerator.

"Those are for your wife?" asked Sandra incredulously. "Do you mind me asking why she wants something that looks like that?" "No...I'm glad you asked," Phil replied. "Four years ago my wife and I nearly divorced. After 40 years, we were in a real mess, but with the Lord's grace and guidance, we slogged through problem after problem. He rescued our marriage. Jenny here (the clerk) told me she kept a vase of rose stems to remind her of what she learned from 'thorny' times, and that was good enough for me. I took home some of those stems. My wife and I decided to label each one for a specific 'problem' and give thanks to Him for what that problem taught us."

As Phil paid the clerk, he said to Sandra, "I highly recommend the Special!"

"I don't know if I can be thankful for the thorns in my life." Sandra said to the clerk. "It's all too...fresh."

"Well," the clerk replied carefully, "my experience has shown me that thorns make roses more precious. We treasure God's providential care more during trouble than at any other time. Remember, it was a crown of thorns that Jesus wore so we might know His love. Don't resent the thorns."

Tears rolled down Sandra's cheeks. For the first time since the accident, she loosened her grip on resentment. "I'll take those 12 long-stemmed thorns, please," she managed to choke out.

"I hoped you would," said the clerk gently. "I'll have them ready in a minute." "Thank you. What do I owe you?" asked Sandra. "Nothing," said the clerk.

"Nothing but a promise to allow God to heal your heart. The first year's arrangement is always on me."

—Author unknown.

***PRAY DAILY
FOR GRACE
TO BE HOLY!***