

Virtual Christian Magazine

Hope And Encouragement
For The Real World

Inside This Issue...

Stepping Into the Lifeboat
by Katherine Rowland.....1

Steady as She Goes
by Robert Berendt.....3

Real Sailors and Genuine Christians
by John Elliott.....4

Planning for the Last Minute
by Katherine Rowland.....6

The Temple and Tabernacle Responsibilities of the Sons of Korah
by Nathan Albright.....7

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Stepping Into the Lifeboat

Sometimes we must make difficult decisions in life. Our choices will and do impact our lives.

by Katherine Rowland

The ocean liner *Titanic* sank one April night almost 100 years ago, with a loss of about 1,500

lives—only 700 passengers survived the sinking. Few catastrophes have so engaged the human heart and mind as this disaster at sea. The *Titanic* remains very much alive in the public consciousness. There were many factors in the accident that led to the sinking and in the loss of so many lives. Many people are shocked at how few lifeboats were carried by the *Titanic*. However, the liner did carry enough lifeboats for 1,178 passengers. Why, then, did only 700 survive?

There are many factors, but it is generally agreed that the first few lifeboats launched carried far fewer than the maximum of 40 passengers; one carried only twelve. Passengers had been told that the ship was sinking. They were told to board the lifeboats. And still, the lifeboats were launched while only partially full. Why?

Accounts seem to agree: the passengers were reluctant. The ship was not sinking especially rapidly at the outset, and the electricity remained on for most of that time. On one side of the ship, the officer in charge of loading the lifeboats took literal the ruling that women and children were to board lifeboats first, and would not allow any men, other than the lifeboat crew, to board at all until all the women had boarded. Many women, reluctant to leave their husbands and the perceived safety of the ship, declined to

board the seemingly riskier life



boats.

The designer of the *Titanic*, J. Bruce Ismay, was helping to load lifeboats and he stepped into a partially filled lifeboat when there were no other passengers willing to board. Some passengers died when they did not have to, because they refused to leave the comfort of where they were even when they had been told the risks of staying. It's easy to look back over history and wonder at this,

but how often do we choose to stay where we are, doing what we're doing, because taking the next step would be difficult, scary, or uncomfortable? The passengers of the *Titanic* were not the first in history to risk their lives through reluctance. If we turn to Genesis 19:12-16, we read about Lot and his family.

“Then the men said to Lot, ‘Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take them out of this place! For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the LORD, and the LORD has sent

Virtual Christian Magazine – August 2011

us to destroy it.’ So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, ‘Get up, get out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city!’ But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking. When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, ‘Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.’ And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.”

In Numbers 13 and 14, we read about the spies who were sent into Canaan. Ten of the spies carried a report that the inhabitants of the land were huge and unable to be fought. Only Caleb and Joshua encouraged the Israelites in the name of the Lord, saying, “Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it” (Numbers 13:30). The Israelites responded to the bad report by wailing that they should go back to Egypt. What they saw ahead seemed so risky to them that they would rather go back to open slavery than take the chance that was offered.

Most of the time, we are not called to make the type of decisions that Lot and Israel were called upon to make. Many of our choices are smaller. How do we react when we have to take a step into the future without knowing for sure what lies ahead? I know that I

tend to panic at first. Within the past few years, I have been encouraged to begin school and to take a full-time job—both undertakings of great enterprise for me. It was really scary to take the first step, and it was really tempting to stay right where I was, doing what I knew how to do. How rich my life has been, though, because I eventually chose the scary option!

We moved this year and as the idea of the move came to light, I could imagine few things that made me as anxious as the idea of trying to pack everything up and head into new territory after we’d had so many years to form ties to one place. As I was sorting through the emotions involved, I was reminded of Abraham, who was told to leave his comfortable surroundings and go somewhere new and remote. Abraham’s response was to pick up his tents and go. I thought of Noah, who did what he was told to do even though it made him a laughingstock for a time. I thought of the disciples, who followed Christ even though most of the time they couldn’t fathom the depths of what He was doing. I thought of Paul, who spent the remainder of his life either on the road or in prison, preaching the Gospel because that was what God had told him to do.

So, what is the bottom line? Sometimes God’s calling will lead us to make drastic changes in our lives: where we live, what job we have, how we behave. If we are willing to risk stepping into the lifeboat of God’s will, we will be rewarded for our faithful attitude. If we choose not to act because we are afraid, we risk being a spiritual statistic along the lines of a Titanic passenger or an Israelite who

Pg. 2

thought Egypt was a much safer bet. Like Abraham, we must listen for the Lord’s voice and then be willing to step ahead in His direction.

For more interesting reading request your free copy of “*Transforming Your Life - The Process of Conversion*,” “*What is Your Destiny?*” and “*Making Life Work*.”

STEADY AS SHE GOES!!

When people know that you are a follower of Jesus Christ, they expect your conduct and behavior to be steady and strong regardless of the circumstances.



by Robert Berendt

The Bible tells us that one of the wonders of this world is the way in which a ship plies the waters (Proverbs 30:19). The way of a ship in the midst of the sea in all likelihood is directed at the awesome sight of a sailboat tacking into the wind, or using the wind to maneuver. Even today, sailing fascinates people. Early this year, I had occasion to spend a few days aboard a huge ocean-going ship, where I noticed some fascinating things. One was the awesome feeling I got with the seeming inevitability of the ship to move forward, and the great effort needed to change course or to dock. There is something

Virtual Christian Magazine – August 2011

steady, measured and intentional that makes one feel that the forward motion is reliable and hard to change. The statement “steady as she goes” gives a feeling of control over a huge power and force. Indeed, the momentum built by such a huge vessel is enormous. It seems that the force is lasting and enduring.

Endurance, or continuance in a given direction, is vital to the character of a follower of Jesus Christ. The word endurance means: “the state or power of enduring or bearing: a suffering patiently without sinking: patience: lasting quality: maximum performance under given conditions” (Chambers Concise 20th Century Dictionary). In Matthew 10:22 Jesus says, “He who endures to the end will be saved.” 1 Corinthians 13:7 states that love “endures all things.” Endurance is a quality of character that people admire and respect, just as they admire the continuous forward motion of a huge ship.

Paul’s example of endurance

Many of the references in scripture about endurance imply that the going will not always be easy. There will be storms, contrary winds and currents, as well as the continued maintenance and course corrections that every ship needs. Paul is an example of one who endured hardships and every imaginable effort to move him off course; yet, he remained “steady as

she goes.” Paul teaches endurance by what he suffered

and admonishes all who read his letters to expect and overcome problems in life. Perhaps one of the strongest message threads of Paul’s writings is that of endurance. In 2 Thessalonians 1:4 he compliments the Thessalonians by writing: “So that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure...” In 2 Timothy 2:3 Paul encourages Timothy to “endure hardship as a good soldier” and states in verse 10, “I endure all things for the sake of the elect.”

Many people know that you are a follower of Jesus Christ. They expect your conduct and behavior to be steady and strong regardless of the circumstances. As a matter of fact, when a storm strikes or the current is strongly against you they expect you not to falter or flag in your direction and course. Paul was saying as much when he endured for the sake of others. He was after the great prize that God offers to all: eternal life in the family of God with endless blessings, joy, peace and happiness for all eternity. Paul was very aware of all who were watching him. He was setting an example and could say, “imitate me” (1 Corinthians 4:16). Many of the admonitions of Paul show the need to remain faithful and steady in following the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Paul’s words to the leaders in the church (the deacons and ministry) are loaded with this implication. 1 Timothy 3 is a chapter devoted to explaining what a leader in the Body of Christ is to be like. Throughout it, we see the need to remain steady and reliable.

Never lose sight of your goal

Endurance may be the most significant ingredient that is

needed to stay on course. One must know the direction and have the ability to zero in on the target or goal. The steady forward progress toward a goal through storms and bad weather, as well as in good sailing conditions, is what is so admired. A sailing ship is even more fascinating when one thinks of the constant effort needed to maintain course and direction. There is something about a huge ocean vessel that inevitably turns my mind to thinking about the course of a converted person. Both vessels teach adaptability and staying steady at the same time. The enduring to the end that Jesus admonished requires a state of mind that is set on achieving the goal no matter what may come. A Christian does have the loving hand of God guiding him through the storms; however, God does not always calm the waters on which we sail. He allows us to develop the character that Christ revealed so that we can be more like Him.

Hebrews 12:1-15 has some interesting and powerful statements to make about this subject. to make about this subject. In Hebrews 11, we are told to consider the witnesses that lived before us as those who remained steady. We are told to “run with patience.” Every runner knows that much of the ability to run is a mental mindset or conditioning that one is determined to stay the course, to adjust to adversity and keep going. We read that Jesus Christ also endured the cross and many other areas of suffering. We are told that God is involved in correcting and chastening us. Even that correction requires our patience and steady endurance. That is how we build the

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Virtual Christian Magazine is published by the United Church of God, an International Association, 555 Technecenter Dr., Milford, OH 45150.

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Although the staff strives for truth and accuracy in its reporting, analysis and Bible commentary, *Virtual Christian Magazine* is not a doctrinal publication. Articles do undergo both an editorial and a review process.

Scriptural references are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., publishers) unless otherwise noted.

character that pleases God. We are told to keep our paths straight and steady and to look diligently lest we fail. A ship needs a constant check for course and conditions. Unseen currents have an effect, as do

the conditions that may be obvious, like the wind. Our lives are filled with both unseen and visible forces. We need to cope with them and never lose sight of our goal and the determination to get there.

Never give up

It is predictable that we go through a mental desire to stop; we feel alone and wonder if what we are doing is worth it all. We need reassurance from time to time; thus, the stories are recorded for us in the Bible. Those steadfast people who are living today also encourage us. Parents, grandparents and the ministry are some of the people we look to as examples of steadfast behavior. When we do not find good examples there, we become disappointed and sometimes deeply hurt. In Romans 8:33-39 Paul expressed that our true faith and trust must lie in God and in our Savior Jesus Christ. In every situation, our Father is there to encourage and strengthen us with His love and help. Our part lies in recognizing the goal and determining to stay the course with the knowledge, that God is watching and will intervene when He knows it is best for us.

We must develop endurance in our lives. Many people now living and who will live in the future are depending on you and me to do that. We are the examples for those who follow. The next time you see a sailing ship tacking into the wind, perhaps you will see yourself. Always continue to move toward the safe harbor, the Kingdom of God, which God has prepared for us.

To read more about how to stay on course, request the booklet, *The Road to Eternal Life*.

Real Sailors and Genuine Christians

Are you the “real deal,” or merely a wannabe?

by John Elliott

Stepping aboard his 24-foot sailboat, Robin Graham sailed away from waving parents at the Port of Los Angeles and slowly became a speck in an endless landscape of white-capped waves and deep blue ocean swells. It was his 16th birthday the day he plunged through a world in which everything rose, twisted, turned, leaned and fell, constantly, day and night. His record-breaking ocean voyage circumnavigated the perilous globe and was unique in all of history.

Meanwhile, north of Los Angeles, another 16-year-old *studied* ocean sailing in a class taught by a certified U.S. Coast Guard instructor. That teen poured over coastal waterway charts in a class that analyzed



their ciphered depictions of shorelines, depths, navigational aids, hazards, latitude, longitude, restricted zones, navigational aids, compass adjustments, currents, and endless rules. The boy plotted imaginary courses using headings and bearings adjusted for obstacles, sea-lanes, currents, tides, and wind direction. In time, the class' sailing knowledge was tested and he was officially “certified” in marine sailing. Earlier in

Virtual Christian Magazine – August 2011

your life, you became intrigued with Christianity. You heard from others what it was like and desired to learn more. You were educated through teaching and you studied until you became a “certified” Christian at baptism. Since then, you have been taught Christian principles and instructed from God’s Word in preparation for directing a godly course in your life.

2 Timothy 3:15-17 says “...and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you *wise* for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (16) All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for *instruction in righteousness*, (17) that the man of God may be complete, *thoroughly equipped* for every good work.” (Emphasis added throughout)

Question: Are you a *real* Christian?

Question: Was the “certified” teenager a *real* sailor? The answer to both could be “yes.” In reality, religious people have biblical knowledge, just as the teen had nautical knowledge. Having knowledge of how to sail expertly, and receiving advice from experts, can make one feel as if he is also a competent sailor. But a *learner* of sailing cannot be compared with one who actually sails the high seas. Similarly, a learner of God’s Word may feel godly, but he cannot be compared with one who actually lives by every Word of God (Luke 4:4).

Reading biblical admonitions

and hearing sermons about love and serving can make one feel like he is growing in them. Associating with genuine Christians and discussing godliness together can also make one feel as if he or she is a genuine Christian. But the truth is that we must each diligently work to show ourselves approved by God (2 Timothy 2:15) and to work out our own salvation with deep reverence and trembling in fear of making grave errors (Philippians 2:12). Similarly, every sailor must chart and actually sail his personal course across a treacherous ocean with deep respect for the potential grave upon which he sails. As with sailors, it is also with Christians – the lack of tested experience can lead to disaster. “This charge I commit unto you...that thou by them mightest *war a good warfare*; (19) Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith *have made shipwreck*” (1 Timothy 1:18-19 KJV).

Real Sailors

The sunny afternoon was cut by a chilly breeze sweeping the deck of the 31-foot sailboat on its nearly silent voyage passing below the twin towers of the World Trade Center and on to the Statue of Liberty. The “certified,” “instructed,” and twice-sailed man was briefly invited to steer the sleek 31-foot sailboat and for those five minutes of the two-hour cruise, he was the pilot steering its course. The feel of the tiller, the tautness of the sails and the ambiance of Manhattan Island renewed sailing as his beloved sport-of-sports once again. The wind in the sails made him feel good to be a sailor again.

Does knowing that you have God’s Holy Spirit give you confidence of being a genuine Christian? Does being called to be a son or daughter of God assure you of being in the Body of Christ? Does knowing that God will never leave or forsake you provide you with security of your resurrection at the seventh Trumpet? If you re-read those questions, you may notice that all of their components are merely things God does to prepare you to *act*. Yet, their mere presence can give a false sense of spirituality, even before any use of them has yet occurred. An important question we might ask is, “Do I *feel* like a Christian, or am I *living* a Christ-like life?” Experience is expected to follow knowledge as you use godly education and apply biblical teaching to actual hands-on deeds of service in everyday life.

You are a Christian and you are holy because Christ purchased you with His blood. At your baptism, He forgives your sins and hallows you with his Holy Spirit. That state comprises your *starting point*. Jesus gave us the Parable of the Talents (i.e., Holy Spirit) to show God’s intent for us to move beyond being just “certified” as holy children and “educated” in godliness (Matthew 25:14-28). He next describes His responsibility of saving only the *servant* “*sheep*” from among un-thoughtful “goats.” Christ must assess your character by the experience you have gained from using His Spirit to perform godliness in every imaginable situation (Matthew 25:35-36). His selection will involve a quality and degree of experience gained in the living of Christianity. Matthew 25:29, “For to

everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have

Virtual Christian Magazine – August 2011

abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.”

After some 45 years of being associated with sailing, I could easily walk back into the Lincoln Harbor Yacht Club in New York City and say, “Sir, I would like to rent your 31-foot sailboat.” Its owner would certainly ask, “Who are you?” I would answer, “I’m a sailor.” He would reply, “I don’t know you, what boats have you been sailing?” I could inform him that at age 16 I took an official ocean sailing course (inside an office building). And at age 36, my brother demonstrated for me how to trim a sail and how to tack into the wind. And then how I had managed to rent a 25’ sailboat, twice! I could surprise him with, “I have even sailed before on your 31’ sailboat, and the pilot let me steer it.”

“Son,” he would say, “That does not make you a sailor. Our sailors have spent years training with instructors, growing their skills in the sailboat’s systems, operations, performance, structural limitations, maintenance, emergency procedures, river and ocean currents, tacking, marine navigation, and following all the federal and state navigation laws. Meanwhile, what have you been doing?”

I could plead, “Well, I read Robin Graham’s book The Dove, and I’ve spoken with sailors from the high seas, and I would have taken up sailing many years ago, except it was inconvenient, expensive, and

time consuming.” He would shake his head and sigh, “But, you didn’t actually get around to sailing yourself.” “But, I love sailing, and I *know how*,” I would plead! All he could honestly say would be, “Please leave. We only rent to real sailors.”

Similarly, Christ has the responsibility of assigning leadership positions in the Kingdom to only *real* Christians. Luke 13:25-27, “... you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' (26) then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' (27) But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'”

Perhaps you and I are not counted among true ocean sailors. There are some activities we like to experience vicariously and enjoy them in a casual association. However, we need to insure that we are indeed *genuine Christians*, living Christ-like lives of service. Those judged so will be counted worthy of God’s Kingdom. 2 Thessalonians 1:5, “...the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God...”

For more reading on being a genuine Christian, request the booklets: *You Can Have Living Faith* and *Transforming Your Life - The Process of Conversion*.



‘Be Prepared!’ It’s a saying we hear, but what does it mean?

by Katherine Rowland

I live my life according to lesson plans, at least every day that I’m at work. I teach five classes a day by following the lesson plan given to me by my librarian. These plans vary in detail; for some, I have step-by-step instructions, while others are simply lists of a couple of book titles and special instructions for reading them or doing the activity. Success in carrying out these plans relies on a few things:

- Listening to my librarian, especially if I get the chance to have her give the same lesson I will be giving later.
- Being familiar with the lesson plan in advance
- Knowing my material
- Preparing myself

Obviously, these are things that can’t be done in the last five minutes before the class arrives or, worse, once they’re inside the library door and I am theoretically in charge of them. It is a terrible feeling to see a kindergarten class come through the door and then suddenly realize that one has no idea what one is supposed to be doing with them for the next 45 minutes.

Virtual Christian Magazine – August 2011

The time to plan a lesson for a kindergarten class is not when they are at the door or when they are milling around your feet in a confused fashion.

You can't borrow someone else's wisdom and experience when you are alone in that library with the class. The time to plan was when you had time to think earlier in the day or earlier in the week. Once the class is in the room, you have to be ready to carry out the plan and not still be in the throes of making the plan.

It's the same with following Christ. In Matthew 25: 1-13, we can read the parable of the ten virgins who are waiting for the bridegroom. "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord,

open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

The time for buying oil was before the bridegroom was on his way. The time for our preparation is now. We'd better not wait until it seems that Christ's coming is imminent to do the things we know we ought to do. In Matthew 24: 45-51, the parable of the good and the evil servant reinforces this concept. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Clearly, then, we ought to be living our lives in preparation of His coming. We can also look at this from a slightly different perspective to draw additional meaning from those ten virgins and ten lamps. Christ told us in John 16:33 that in this world, we would have tribulations. Indeed, we will all face various trials in our lives. The time to be building the faith and perseverance to endure those trials isn't once they have begun, but rather in the peaceful time

Pg. 7

beforehand. We must be careful that during our times of calm, we don't forget to replenish our stock of oil through study, meditation, and worship of God.

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The Temple and Tabernacle Responsibilities of the Sons of Korah

Just how notable and complete were the services of the sons of Korah to the Tabernacle and Temple system?

by **Nathan Albright**

In 1 Chronicles 9:17-34 we see the intriguing descriptions of the responsibilities of the sons of Korah. Among these responsibilities were the roles of acting as gatekeeper and being in charge of baking the showbread. When we think about the fact that these people were all descendents of Korah, one of the most famous rebels in the history of scripture (Numbers 16:1-40, Jude: 11), the fact that same Phinehas who performed a godly execution of the man of Israel who committed fornication with a Midianite woman, and for his act was granted the high priesthood by God through Moses (Numbers 25:6-18). This means the sons of Korah began their service to God as gatekeepers for the Tabernacle at the very beginning of Israel's time in the Promised Land and kept that service going for centuries.

1 Chronicles 9:22-25 gives the elaboration and organization of this service in the time of David under the instruction of Samuel when Jerusalem was taken over

and the Ark of the Covenant was moved there: “All those chosen as gatekeepers were two hundred and twelve. They were recorded by their genealogy, in their villages. David and Samuel the seer had appointed them to their trusted office. So they and their children were in charge of the gates of the house of the Lord, the house of the Tabernacle, by assignment. The gatekeepers were assigned to the four directions: the east, west, north, and south. And their brethren in their villages had to come with them from time to time for seven days.” Samuel’s advice to David concerning the kingship apparently included knowledge of what people would be best to serve in trusted positions of the temple establishment. It is also noteworthy that while there was a small group of the sons of Korah (the chief gatekeepers) who served normally, during the pilgrim feasts of God their brethren from the villages came to Jerusalem to serve the overflow crowd that arrived during the time of the Passover, Pentecost, and Feast of Tabernacles. During these feasts, the whole nation of Israel would see the sons of Korah serving as the gatekeepers of the Tabernacle and Temple. 1 Chronicles 9:26-27 gives some of the responsibilities of serving as the gatekeepers of the Tabernacle and Temple: “For in this trusted office were four chief gatekeepers; they were Levites. And they had charge over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God. And they lodged all around the house of God because they had the responsibility, and they were in charge of opening it every morning.”

These verses indicate that the responsibilities and privileges of serving as a gatekeeper went beyond the duties that one would normally expect. The sons of Korah who served in this trusted office lived in the chambers in the Tabernacle and Temple near the priests, where they were responsible for opening the Tabernacle and Temple in the morning for the morning sacrifices, and presumably closing it after the evening sacrifice. They also were trusted in charge of protecting and monitoring the treasuries of the house of God, ensuring that the tithe and offering money was properly protected and accounted for. These faithful servants of God were given very serious responsibilities for the security of the house of God.

Let us also remember that the Korahites who served as the Tabernacle and Temple gatekeepers were responsible for enforcing the death penalty on those who entered the temple illegally. In the Istanbul Archeological Museums, there is a stone taken from the second Temple, which I have seen personally, that was once between the Court of the Gentiles and the Women’s Court, beyond which Gentiles were forbidden to cross on pain of death. This stone marked the solemn warning that the lives of those Gentiles who crossed beyond that stone was forfeit, and it was the responsibility of the Korahite gatekeepers of the Tabernacle and Temple to enforce that death penalty on those who trespassed into the house of God. The Apostle Paul was nearly killed by a mob

under the suspicion of this crime of defiling the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 21:26-36). The responsibilities of the sons of Korah in the temple were indeed noble, trusted, honorable, and heavy responsibilities.

Other Tabernacle and Temple responsibilities

Their service as gatekeepers did not exhaust the responsibilities of the sons of Korah in the Tabernacle and Temple of God. 1 Chronicles 9:28-34 gives various other responsibilities of great importance that were also performed by the sons of Korah that are worthy of note.

1 Chronicles 9:31-32 gives the important responsibility of preparing the showbread: “Mattithiah of the Levites, the firstborn of Shallum the Korahite, had the trusted office over the things that were baked in the pans. And some of their brethren of the sons of the Kohathites were in charge of preparing the showbread for every Sabbath.”

This responsibility of preparing the showbread was not an insignificant one. Let us not forget that David and his men ate of the showbread themselves when they were fleeing conquest Israel and extending after the return of the exiles from the Babylonian captivity. These instructions might give pause to from Saul into the wilderness (1 Samuel 21:1-9). Jesus later referred to this incident itself in justifying the disciples’ eating grain in the fields as they walked on the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-5). It shows the importance of the showbread with regard to the Sabbath worship. It also shows the importance of being responsive to the needs of

Virtual Christian Magazine – August 2011

people rather than using religious protocol as a way of forcing believers to fast when food is available. This duty of the sons of Korah, therefore, serves as a quiet reminder of God's mercy to believers through the provision of food.

Finally, let us note the responsibilities of the sons of Korah in the musical service of the house of God in 1 Chronicles 9:33-34: "These are the singers, heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites, who lodged in the chambers, and were free from other duties; for they were employed in that work day and night. These heads of the father's houses of the Levites were heads throughout their generations. They dwelt at Jerusalem." The musical service, a record of which we have in the book of Psalms (of which a sizable portion are known to have been composed by the sons of Korah), was very important. So also was the rigor of the duty of singing before God day and night, so much so that those sons of Korah were exempt from all other duties. These servants of God, like the gatekeepers of the sons of Korah, lived in the chambers in the Tabernacle and Temple complex because of the need for them to participate all day in the service of God from the morning sacrifice to the evening sacrifice.

Lessons for us today

From what we read in 1 Chronicles 9:17-34; the responsibilities of the sons of Korah in the house of God were immense. These responsibilities included serving as gatekeepers, guardians of the house of God

and opening and closing doors, keeping account of the treasuries of the house of God, and enforcing the death penalty on intruders into the temple who defiled it. Likewise, other sons of Korah had noble and trusted offices in taking care of the showbread, as well as the serving vessels of God, and also in the music service before God.

The sons of Korah were therefore a highly visible reminder, generation after generation, of faithful service to God beginning at the very earliest stage of post-any of us who state, "I'll be content to just be a gatekeeper in the house of the Lord." For many centuries, the sons of Korah served conspicuously and faithfully in the house of God, setting an example of service for the people of Israel and Judah. The faithful example of the sons of Korah in fulfilling their appointed service should inspire us all to perform our own service with equal faith, if we choose to follow their example.

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Pg. 9

