

Present Truth

2 Peter 1:12

Dear Readers,

April 2004

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 1:7) I pray that you are receiving many blessing from heaven. I would like to let you know that Pastors Allen Stump and David Clayton, of Smyrna Gospel Ministries and Restoration Ministries respectively, are in Australia holding evangelistic meetings across the country. Please keep them in your prayers as they share the good news about God’s love with our dear brethren down under. They will be returning near the end of April. Please remember that the West Virginia camp meeting is coming up very soon. It will be held here from June 15-19. I certainly hope to see you there. Please contact us for more details.

The REAL Passion of Christ

by Lynnford Beachy

There is a lot of talk about Mel Gibson’s recent movie on the passion of Christ; a movie which emphasizes the physical pain and suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many writers and commentators have sounded their voices either promoting the new movie or opposing it. I have no desire to be another voice in the wind on this subject. What I would like to do is illustrate the real significance of the sufferings of Christ.

The most outstanding feature of Christ’s suffering is overlooked by many Christians, largely because of an obstacle placed in their way that hinders them from grasping the enormity of Christ’s sacrifice on their behalf. That obstacle is the doctrine of the trinity, invented and promoted by Satan himself, for the specific purpose of hiding God’s love.¹ An additional fruit of this deadly doctrine is the idea that death is not really death, but a continuation of life in another realm, confounding the reality of Christ’s death even more.

Many people have expressed that Mel Gibson’s new movie has given them a more vivid picture of Christ’s sufferings. It is wonderful for people to gain a deeper appreciation of Christ as they contemplate how much He endured for our salvation. Yet, if His sacrifice is limited to His physical sufferings alone, then the greatest part of His sacrifice is overlooked. Bodily pain was only a small part of the agony of God’s dear Son. When the sins of the world were placed upon the Son of God, and the signs of His Father’s approval had been removed, the

sorrow that pierced His heart was so great that His physical pain was hardly felt.

The extreme anguish Christ experienced at the cross is described in the following verses: “Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah.” (Psalm 88:6, 7) Here it says that Christ was laid in the lowest pit. This is not speaking of a physical location where Christ was laid, but of the experience He endured in death. Christ suffered the worst death that anyone has ever, or will ever, suffer. Others have suffered equally or even greater if His sufferings are limited to His physical pain alone. Many martyrs throughout the Dark Ages were tortured for several days or even weeks before being put to death. Christ suffered physical torture for less than a day. It is not the intensity or duration of His physical pain that we should focus on to gain a true picture of His sacrifice for us. There is something more, something that will touch our hearts like nothing else can.

The emotional struggle

Christ’s death was the worst because His relationship with His Father was closer than anyone has ever experienced. Therefore, the loss of that relationship

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by George McDaniel

1. For a thorough study on the trinity doctrine, explaining its ascendance and outlining its dangers, please contact us and request our new book entitled, *God’s Love on Trial*.

caused Him the greatest anguish that anyone will ever suffer. As He realized His Father's displeasure, fearing that His separation would be eternal, it literally broke His heart. Jesus said through the Psalmist, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels." (Psalms 22:14) "Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none." (Psalms 69:20) When His heart burst, it filled the pericardial space (the space between the heart and the pericardial membrane surrounding the heart) with blood, and the red blood cells soon separated from the clear plasma so, when His side was pierced, two distinct streams flowed out: one, a clear fluid, and the other a red stream of blood. The Son of God died of a broken heart, not from the whippings or the nails in His hands and feet.

In fact, death by crucifixion was usually a slow process, normally taking several days before a person would finally die. Those who suffered in this manner did not die from loss of blood pouring out of their hands and feet. As long as they had strength in their legs, they could hold themselves up to breathe, but as soon as they lost the strength of their legs, they would sink down and suffocate to death. That is why, when they wanted to take the bodies off the cross, the soldiers first broke the legs of the two thieves who were crucified with Christ. "Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him." (John 19:32) This was not to cripple them to keep them from running away, but to end their lives quickly. "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." (John 19:33, 34) When the soldiers came

to Christ, they found that He was already dead, but they couldn't believe that anyone could die that quickly. Even "Pilate marveled that He was already dead." (Mark 15:44 NKJV) In disbelief, one of the soldiers pierced His side to make sure He was dead. To their surprise a stream of water flowed out along with blood, indicating that His heart had literally burst from intense anguish.

Doctor Bernard Palmer explained the two streams in this way:

"The only viable possibility is that, just before he died, there was a tear in His heart, which led to a rapid filling of the pericardial space with blood. This itself would rapidly stop the heart due to what doctors call 'cardiac tamponade.' It is interesting that Jesus did die a 'cardiac type' death - He was not comatosed but awake when He realised something was going wrong, and said 'It is finished,' and suddenly died. It therefore seems likely that Jesus literally died of a broken heart!" (Taken from a transcript of a lecture delivered in 2002 to medical students by Bernard Palmer, Consultant Surgeon at Lister Hospital, North Herts, England, online at www.livingwordnet.com/bvp/evidence.html.)

There was something that took place with Christ much more than just the physical pain He suffered. Something so great that He would have died even if the the Roman soldiers had not beaten Him and hanged Him on a cross. Just before the soldiers came to take Him captive, Jesus pleaded with His Father the third time, "Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Luke 22:42-44) If an angel had not come to strengthen Him, He would have died right there in the garden under the load of our sins. His agony was so great that He sweat as it

were great drops of blood. This only takes place under extreme stress. It is very obvious that the real passion of Christ was much deeper than the physical pain inflicted upon Him by the Roman soldiers.

In the Garden of Gethsemane

Christ ate His last supper with His disciples and, afterward, "they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be **sore amazed**, and to be **very heavy**; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch." (Mark 14:32-34)

When Christ entered the Garden of Gethsemane He began, for the first time, to be "sore amazed," literally meaning: "to be struck with terror." (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*) Something happened to Christ that terrified Him. We also read that He was "very heavy," literally meaning: "to be in distress of mind, (to be sated to loathing)." (*Strong's Greek Dictionary*) To be "sated to loathing" means to satisfy totally (the appetite or a desire) so fully as to cause a sudden violent hostility or disgust of feelings, to the point of abhorring those feelings. (See *Grolier's New Webster's Dictionary* on "sated.")

For the first time in Christ's life, He was flooded with terror, and filled with feelings that were disgusting to Him. What were those feelings? The Bible says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and **the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**" (Isaiah 53:6) The sin (and the guilt that went with that sin) of all the world was placed upon the Son of God. The result of sin is explained by Isaiah, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." (Isaiah 59:2) Whenever a person sins against God, it causes a separation

between himself and God. We call this feeling guilt. Just think of the most guilty, dirty feeling you have ever had, and multiply that billions upon billions of times, and you will have some idea of the guilt Christ was experiencing in the Garden of Gethsemane. He had always done those things that please His Father. He said, "He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him." (John 8:29) Jesus Christ delighted to do the will of His Father, and He knew that His Father was pleased with Him. He never sinned against God, not even in thought, so He did not know what it was like to feel His Father's displeasure and the awful feeling of guilt and shame.

All this changed when He entered the Garden of Gethsemane. When my sins and your sins were placed upon Him, and He stood before God as if He had done the wicked things you and I have done, then for the first time that perfect peace between Him and His Father was broken up. He staggered under the weight of our sins. He left His disciples and, no longer able to stand, "He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt." (Mark 14:35, 36) Three times He pleaded with His Father to take this experience away from Him.

The Son of God entered into an experience that even He did not foresee completely. Just a few hours earlier He told His disciples, "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." (John 16:32) He said, I know you will all leave me tonight. I know that I will be forsaken of my friends, but that's all right, because my Father will be with me. He will not leave me alone.

But, when He entered into the Garden of Gethsemane, and the sins of the whole world were placed upon Him something took place that He had not fully understood. He had just told His disciples that His Father would not leave Him alone, but now He began to feel a separation from His Father, so great that He faltered under its weight.

Did Jesus know all things when He was here?

Some people may say, "Wait a minute, Jesus couldn't have been surprised by anything because when He was here He knew all things." But that is not what the Bible says, it is a fruit of that old Trinitarian absurdity. It is part of the obstacle placed in people's way, by Satan, to hide God's love. When Jesus was here He said, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father [only]." (Mark 13:32; compare with Matthew 24:36) It also says, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." (Luke 2:52) It is impossible to increase in wisdom when you already have it all. When Jesus came to this earth, He was limited by the human body prepared for Him, and He had to learn things just as you and I do. He only knew what He had learned by the normal processes of life, and what His Father had miraculously revealed to Him. It is true that Jesus knew the thoughts of others at times, but this was no sign that He knew all things, for Peter, Elisha, Daniel, etc., all had the thoughts of others revealed to them by God. (See Acts 5:1-4; 2 Kings 5:25-27; Daniel 2:28-30.)

So this experience Christ went through was truly an experience of entering the unknown. It is one thing to say, "I know I am going to die," but it is another thing to experience it. I can tell you I am going to die, but I cannot tell you what it is like. The same was true with Christ. There was an element that caught Him by

surprise. He told His disciples that His Father would be with Him throughout this experience, but when He entered the Garden of Gethsemane He began to feel His Father withdrawing His presence. The separation grew worse until He finally cried out with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46) Truly He has "trodden the winepress alone." (Isaiah 63:3)

The separation was so awful that He pleaded with His Father to spare Him from this dreadful hour. He "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death." (Hebrews 5:7) Notice that He was pleading with the One who could save Him from death. He was not pleading with Himself, but with His Father, the only One who could save Him from death. He did not possess the power to save Himself, for He said, "I can of mine own self do nothing." (John 5:30) In this struggle He relied totally upon His Father for help. He had no other place to go.

Was Jesus all powerful when He was here?

Some will say, "Wait a minute, Jesus Christ was all powerful when He was here, so He did not have to rely upon His Father for help." Here again is the stamp of Satan, a fruit of the Trinitarian doctrine specifically designed to hide God's love. Jesus said Himself that He could do nothing on His own. Right after His resurrection, He told His disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18) No amount of power could be given to someone who already possesses it all, but Jesus said "all power is given me." He was given all power by His Father after He was crucified and rose from the dead, which is very clear evidence that He did not have it while He was here, confirming His own words when He said He could do nothing of Himself. All the miracles performed by Christ while He

was here were done by the power of the Father. Every great miracle that Jesus performed, was performed in a similar manner by His disciples or by prophets in the Old Testament, including raising the dead. (See 1 Kings 17:22; Acts 20:9, 10) This is no sign that they had all power, but a sign that God was with them, as He was with Jesus. Peter said, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; **for God was with him.**" (Acts 10:38) Jesus said, "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." (John 14:10)

As Christ was struggling under the weight of sin, pleading with His Father to save Him from death, He made the conscious decision that if it meant He must die for eternity so you and I can live with God forever, then He was willing to do it. He decided that He would rather die for eternity than live without us. That is an amazing amount of love. Some have been willing to give their own temporal lives to save others, but very few would be willing to give up their eternal life for another. Yet, there is one record in the Bible, other than Christ, of a man who was willing to do that. His name was Moses. He pleaded with God for the children of Israel, saying, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—;and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." (Exodus 32:32) Moses was referring to the book of life. He was saying, if you cannot forgive them, and give them eternal life, then I don't want eternal life either. Jesus Christ made the same decision. He laid down His eternal life for us. (See John 10:15) That is why the 144,000 will sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. They too will love "not their lives unto the death." (Revelation 15:3: 12:11)

At any moment the Son of God could have cried to His Father to deliver Him, but He went on, knowing that some would be saved. When a

group of soldiers came out to capture Christ, Peter began to fight for Him, but Christ rebuked him saying, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53) He was determined never to give up, even if it meant He would never live again. He had decided to surrender His will to His Father, saying, "Not what I will, but what thou wilt." (Mark 14:36) The Son of God was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:8) Finally, as He died upon the cross, right after He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46), He yielded up His eternal life into the hands of His Father, saying, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." (Luke 23:46) He was saying, "Father, I am giving my eternal life into your hands. If you wish to raise me from the dead, or if you choose to leave me in the grave for eternity, I am leaving that in your hands."

Was Jesus immortal when He was here?

"Wait a minute!" says the objector, "The Son of God was so exalted that He could not die or cease to exist." Again we find the unholy trinity doctrine exerting its unholy influence. This doctrine teaches that Jesus Christ is exactly equal to His Father in every way. Therefore, it is claimed that since the Father cannot die, then His Son cannot die either. But the Bible says there is only One Person who cannot die under any circumstances, and He is God the Father. The Bible says that when Jesus appears, "he shall shew, who is the blessed and only **Potentate** [Sovereign=supreme ruler], the King of kings, and Lord of lords; *Who only hath immortality*, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; *whom no man hath seen, nor can see*: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." (1 Timothy 6:14-16) This can be none other than

God, the Father, for He is the One whom "No man hath seen... at any time." (John 1:18) The Father is the one "who only hath immortality." Yet, we know that we will "put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:53), many angels have immortality, and Jesus Christ is "alive for evermore." (Revelation 1:18)

When the Bible says the Father "only hath immortality" it must mean immortality in an absolute and unlimited sense. The Father is the only One who cannot die under any circumstances. Man can die; "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezekiel 18:20) Jesus Christ was made subject to death, and "died for our sins." (1 Corinthians 15:3) Angels can die; "everlasting fire, [is] prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matthew 25:41) This fire is so hot, it will devour them. God said to Satan, "I will bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.... and never shalt thou be any more." (Ezekiel 28:18, 19) So it is certainly true that God, the Father, is the only Person who cannot die under any circumstances. This excludes His Son, who tasted "death for every man." (Hebrews 2:9)

Are the dead really dead?

This brings up another subject that must be examined before we can understand the true passion of Christ. Are the dead really dead? Satan would have us believe that the dead are not really dead, but consciously living either in paradise or misery. Satan has said from the very beginning, "ye shall not surely die." Satan taught that man could disobey God and still live forever without dying. This statement directly contradicts God who said, "thou shalt surely die." Since that day Satan has continued to teach men that they will not surely die. According to Satan, all men who have ever died are not really dead. Sadly, many Christians believe Satan's lie today. They think

that death is not really death, but rather a continuation of life in another realm. This teaching in Christianity is a fruit of the unholy trinity doctrine. The Catholic Church admits that they formulated the trinity doctrine, and they claim, "The mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic Faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the Church." (*Handbook for Today's Catholic*, page 11) The idea that the dead are not really dead is based upon the false doctrine of the trinity. Notice what Augustine, one of the primary persons who formulated the trinity doctrine, had to say about the death of Christ:

"No dead man can raise himself. He [Christ] only was able to raise Himself, who though His Body was dead, was not dead. For He raised up that which was dead. He raised up Himself, who in Himself was alive, but in His Body that was to be raised was dead. For not the Father only, of whom it was said by the Apostle, 'Wherefore God also hath exalted Him,' raised the Son, but the Lord also raised Himself, that is, His Body." (*Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 1, volume 6, page 656, St. Augustine, "Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament")

It is true that a dead man cannot raise himself from the dead, for he cannot even think. Thus saith the Lord, "The dead know not any thing." (Ecclesiastes 9:6) In Augustine's words we see the very seeds of that unholy teaching about death which claims dead people are not dead. Notice in his statement Augustine rightly remarks that dead men cannot raise themselves, since they are not alive, but then he goes on to make the assumption that Jesus Christ was not dead. This idea could easily be modified to include every dead person. For if, in the Bible, Christ is said to have died, but the trinity doctrine claims He did not die, then it is only logical to believe that when the Bible speaks of others dying that they too must have remained alive. This is

how most of the Christian world today has been duped into believing dead people are really alive somewhere, even though the Bible is so plain on the subject. Let us notice a few verses on this point:

"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." (Psalm 146:3, 4) When a person dies his thoughts perish; he can no longer think. He remains asleep in the dust, unconscious of anything, until the Lord raises him from the dead.

Death is called sleep. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Daniel 12:2) Isaiah wrote, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye *that dwell in dust*: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and *the earth shall cast out the dead*." (Isaiah 26:19) The first thing we notice about this verse is that the dead men shall, at some time in the future, live again. These people are not living now, but they shall live at some time in the future. Right now they are those who dwell in the dust. When we die we return to dust, there to remain in unconscious sleep until the Lord raises us from the dead.

What about the spirit of man?

In the book of Job it says, "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." (Job 32:8) Daniel explained, "I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body." (Daniel 7:15) A spirit is the part of a person that can be grieved. In Mark's gospel we read, "And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?" (Mark 2:8) The king of Babylon had a dream, and he told his wise men, "I have dreamed a dream, and my

spirit was troubled to know the dream." (Daniel 2:3) A spirit is the part of a person that can perceive or understand things, and can be grieved or troubled. These few Bible texts confirm the definition of "spirit" found in *The American Heritage Dictionary*, which says, "The part of a human being associated with the mind, will, and feelings."

What happens to this spirit when a person dies? Solomon wrote, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:7) Notice that this refers to all people who die, whether they are the most righteous saint, or the most wicked sinner. When any man dies, there will be a time when he lives again, whether he is raised in the resurrection of the just, or of the unjust. (Acts 24:15) His mind, which contains his life history, will be given to him again at his resurrection. He will come forth from the grave with the same character and manner of thinking that he had before death. When the dead are raised, God will give them back their spirit (or mind), which was in them before. During their sleep in the grave they were not alive anywhere.

Every person will be raised, therefore, God has to retain a record of his life, so that same person can return at the resurrection; God retains their spirits in an unconscious condition. Solomon wrote, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" (Ecclesiastes 3:21) At death, the spirit of an animal goes down to the earth because there is no need for God to retain it, for there is no resurrection for animals. But the spirit of man goes upward to God, there to remain in an unconscious condition until the resurrection.

"But," some may say, "don't the righteous go straight to heaven when they die, and the wicked go to a place of torment?" "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of

the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.... For *David is not ascended into the heavens*: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand." (Acts 2:29, 34) David will be in heaven, but he has not yet ascended to heaven. His spirit has gone back to God in an unconscious condition, waiting to be reunited with his body. The same is true of the wicked. "That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath." (Job 21:30) The Lord is reserving the wicked for the day of destruction. They shall be brought forth, or raised from the dead, to the day of wrath. They are not suffering right now.

I would like to use a cassette tape to illustrate what the Bible is saying. Suppose I put a cassette tape in a cassette recorder and begin to record information on the tape. As long as the tape is in the tape player, it can function. I can record information onto it, and play back what is recorded. But as soon as I remove the cassette tape from the cassette recorder, it can no longer function. The tape without the recorder is useless, just as the tape recorder is useless without a tape. Neither can function by themselves. If I remove the tape and destroy the tape player, I can replace it, but if I destroy the tape, then I have lost the information, it is not replaceable. The body and spirit are similar. As long as they are united, they can function, but as soon as the spirit is taken out of the body, the body turns to dust again, and the spirit is unconscious, unable to function at all. At the resurrection, God will take that same spirit and put it into a new body, and it will again function just as it did before. But if the spirit is destroyed, then there can be no resurrection. This is what takes place at the second death.

The first and second death

John wrote, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrec-

tion: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Revelation 20:6) Here we are told the blessed and holy people will take part in the first resurrection, and the second death will have no power over them. The first resurrection takes place at the second coming of Christ. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and *the dead in Christ shall rise first*." (1 Thessalonians 4:16) Immediately following, the righteous will "live and reign with Christ a thousand years." (Revelation 20:4)

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." (Revelation 20:5) During the thousand years the wicked will not be alive anywhere. When the thousand years are finished, they will live again; they will be raised in the second resurrection. Then there is a great white throne judgment where the wicked will be "judged every man according to their works. And death and hell [will be] cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:13-15) The lake of fire is called the second death, a death from which there is no resurrection. This is where God will "destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28) "They shall be as though they had not been." (Obadiah 1:16) They will not live forever to burn for eternity, for they do not have immortality. "Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it." (Isaiah 47:14)

"But," some may say, "a soul cannot die." That is not what the Bible says. To the contrary, the Bible says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezekiel 18:20) This is not talking about the first death, from which all

will return; but the second death, from which none shall return. That is when the soul dies. There is no such thing as natural immortality of the soul, for the only people who will become immortal are the righteous who shall "put on immortality." (1 Corinthians 15:54) When man sinned, he was banned from eating the fruit of the tree of life to keep him from living forever in a sinful condition. "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden." (Genesis 3:22, 23) Only those who gain the right to eat from the tree of life will live forever. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Revelation 22:14)

The idea that man has a naturally immortal soul is a fruit of that old Trinitarian absurdity, which undermines the beauty of God's love demonstrated in the death of His Son. If we are confused about death and immortality it makes it impossible for us to understand how much Christ sacrificed for us.

The death of God's Son

The Bible says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23) The penalty for sin is death. Not the first death, which we know of as "sleep," but the second death. Those who reject salvation and stand before God to suffer the "second death" will consciously realize that they will never live again, knowing that they have forfeited all the glories of heaven. This utter separation from God, and the realization that they will never live again, is the worst experience the wicked will endure. Their physical pain, which will be severe, will only be a small part of their suffering, the worst part will be

that they shall know that “they shall be as though they had not been.” (Obadiah 1:16)

The Bible says, “We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” (Romans 5:10) He tasted “death for every man.” (Hebrews 2:9) God’s dear Son died in my place, “the just for the unjust.” (1 Peter 3:18) He took the penalty which I deserve, and that penalty is the second death. I understand there was some difference with Christ, since He was raised from the dead, and all those who die the second death will not be resurrected. However, the experience He endured was equivalent to the experience of the wicked when they will die, knowing that they will not be coming back. This is the understanding that Christ had when He cried out with bitter anguish, “My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me.” (Matthew 27:46) Christ had to have this experience in order to pay for the penalty of sin. Some may say, “But He didn’t burn in the lake of fire.” True, but remember, the wages of sin is death, not suffering. “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.” (1 Corinthians 15:3)

In the most well-known Scripture that prophesied of Christ’s death, it says, “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when **thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.**” (Isaiah 53:10) Notice that the soul of Christ was made an offering for sin, not His body only. This is very significant, because Jesus said, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in **hell** [Greek: *gehenna*=lake of fire].” (Matthew 10:28) Jesus is talking about two different deaths here, the first death is where a person kills your body but cannot kill your soul, and the second death is where God destroys both your soul and body in

hell fire. As we noted earlier, the soul, or spirit, can be compared to a tape where information is recorded and played back, when a person dies the first death, called sleep, his body dies (like destroying the tape player), but his soul, or spirit, has not been killed; it has just lost its ability to function. But the second death is where the soul or spirit is destroyed with the body. That is like destroying the cassette tape along with the recorder.

When Christ died, the Bible says His soul was made an offering for sin, not His body only. “He shall see of the travail of his **soul**, and shall be satisfied:... he hath poured out his **soul** unto death.” (Isaiah 53:11, 12) He literally gave up His eternal life for us. He said to His Father, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” (Luke 23:46) He was saying, “Father, I am leaving my spirit, the record of my existence, my eternal life into your hands. If I must die for eternity so that others can be saved, I am willing to do it, and I will leave that decision in your hands.” He said, with Moses, “Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—;and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.” (Exodus 32:32) Jesus Christ is the good shepherd, and “The good shepherd giveth his **life** [Greek: *psuche*=soul] for the sheep.” (John 10:11) While the Son of God was dead in the sepulchre, no part of Him remained alive. Both soul and body remained in the grave. David “spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in **hell** [Greek: *hades*=the grave], neither his flesh did see corruption.” (Acts 2:31)

Jesus said, through the Psalmist, “I am counted with them that go down into the pit:... Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more [those who die the second

death]: and they are cut off from thy hand. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them: **I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.**” (Psalms 88:4-8) When the Son of God died upon the cross, He could not come forth on His own. There was only one Person who could save Him, His Father in heaven, to whom He prayed with strong crying and tears.

Praise be to God, that His Father did not leave Him in the grave. The Bible says at least thirty times that God, the Father, raised Christ from the dead.² For example, Galatians 1:1 says, “Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and **God the Father, who raised him from the dead.**)” Christ did not raise Himself from the dead or else He was not really dead, and His words could not be true, “I can of mine own self do nothing.” (John 5:30)

Paul also emphasized, in Ephesians 1:19, 20, that “the exceeding greatness” of the Father’s “mighty power” was demonstrated “when he raised” Christ “from the dead.” If Christ had actually raised Himself from the dead, as some people believe, then Paul’s words could not have been true. It would not have been the Father’s power, but the power of Christ, which would have been demonstrated.

Didn’t Jesus say He had power to take back His life?

There are some who use the following verse as proof that Jesus Christ did not really die completely: “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might **take** [Greek: *lambano*] it

2. Acts 2:24,30,32; 3:15,26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:23,30,33, 34,37; 17:31; 26:8; Romans 4:24,25; 6:4; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:15; 2 Corinthians 4:14; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 1:2.

again. No man **taketh** [Greek: *airo*] it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have **power** [Greek: *exousia*] to lay it down, and I have **power** [Greek: *exousia*] to **take** [Greek: *lambano*] it again. This commandment have I **received** [Greek: *lambano*] of my Father." (John 10:17, 18)

The Greek word λαμβανω that was translated "I might take," (with Strong's number 2983), can mean take, but also means "to receive (what is given), to gain, get, obtain, to get back." (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*) Please notice that this word is also used in verse 18 but is translated "have I received." Christ laid down His life that He might receive it again. The Greek word εξουσια that was translated "power" can mean power, but also means "authority, permission." (*ibid.*) Christ had permission to lay down His life so that He could receive it again from His Father. A more accurate translation of these verses would be: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might **receive** it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have **authority** or **permission** to lay it down, and I have **authority** or **permission** to receive it again. This commandment have I **received** of my Father." One translation renders it: "Therefore, doth the Father, love, me, because, I, lay down my life, that, again, I may receive it:—No one, forced it from me, but, I, lay it down, of myself,—Authority, have I, to lay it down, and, authority, have I, again, to receive it: This commandment, received I, from my Father." (*Rotherham Translation*) Christ could not, and did not, raise Himself from the dead or else He would not have been dead to begin with.

The Psalmist, describing the complete death of Christ, wrote: "Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? Selah. Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in

the land of forgetfulness?" (Psalm 88:10-12) Christ experienced death, where the dead do not praise God, neither are His wonders known, for "the dead know not any thing." (Ecclesiastes 9:5) When Christ was asleep in the tomb, He was as the rest of the dead who know not anything and whose thoughts have perished.

Did the Son of God really die?

There are some who claim that Christ came down from heaven and inhabited a human body and that, when it came time to die, only the human body died while the divine being who came down from heaven remained alive. With this view we would have to conclude that there was only a human sacrifice made for our redemption. No matter how exalted the pre-existent Son was, no matter how glorious, how powerful, or even eternal, if the manhood only died, the sacrifice was only a created, human sacrifice, for Christ's human body was prepared for Him. (Hebrews 10:5) It is contrary to reason to believe that a human sacrifice is sufficient to redeem mankind, and it is contrary to Scripture to say that only half of Christ died. Let us see from the Bible why this is so.

In Hebrews chapter one, Paul portrays Christ as being highly exalted, the one who was begotten in the express image of His Father's person. Then, in Hebrews chapter two, Paul explains the necessity of Christ becoming a man so that He could redeem us. In verse nine of this chapter he explains, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Hebrews 2:9) Paul explains the importance of Christ becoming a man, made a little lower than the angels, so that He could die; not so that a human body could die, but so that the divine Son of God could die. This verse would mean absolutely no-

thing if the Son of God did not die completely.

The fact that Christ did die is brought out even more clearly in the following verses: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation [Greek: emptied Himself], and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." (Philippians 2:5-9)

These verses are very clear. The same identical Being who was in the form of God in verse six, died in verse eight. Jesus Christ Himself made it very clear to John that *He* was dead. Jesus said, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." (Revelation 1:18)

What about 1 Peter 3:18-20?

Peter wrote, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." (1 Peter 3:18-20) Some people think these verses prove that Jesus was conscious while His body was dead, and that He went down to hell to preach to dead people. This of course would be absurd, for dead people cannot even think, and they certainly could not hear a sermon. Not only that, if these dead people were already lost, as most would agree, no amount of preaching would benefit them. Christ

would have been wasting His time on two accounts: they could not hear him, and they could not be benefitted even if they could.

The difficulty is cleared up in verse 20. Peter wrote that Christ “preached [past tense] unto the spirits in [present tense] prison.” It is obvious that Jesus preached to these people through Noah (1 Peter 1:11). The preaching was done long ago while Noah was still alive. There is nothing in the verse that requires that these wicked antediluvians (people who lived before the flood) were being preached to while they were in prison, but they were preached to in the past, while they were still alive, but they are now in prison, or dead.

Conclusion

Our salvation was accomplished by the death of the Son of God. “We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” (Romans 5:10) Notice, it was not the death of the Son of man (the human nature or the body only), but the death of the divine Son of God that reconciled us to God.

These few words of Paul mean much more than we can fathom with just a brief reading of them. God loves us so much that He sent His only begotten Son into this world to die for wretched sinners like you and me. This is more than a cliché. The thought contained in these words demonstrates the immense sacrifice that God made in our behalf. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32) If God was willing to give up His own Son for us, it proves, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that He is willing to give up all that He possesses for our benefit, because His Son meant more to Him than anything in the universe. When we understand what took place at the cross, it will melt our hearts like nothing else can.

The trinity doctrine was invented for the sole purpose of hiding God’s


love. Not only does it hide the fact that Jesus Christ is the literal Son of God, begotten of the Father before anything was created, but it also covers up the reality of Christ’s sacrifice for us. It claims that Jesus Christ was all knowing, immortal and all powerful while He was here on earth, which completely removes any possibility of Him being terrified or troubled while He was on earth. Think about it. If you were immortal and all powerful would there be anything that would terrify you or cause you to be concerned about your well being? Certainly not! Surely you can see how dangerous such an idea is when it is applied to Christ. All that we have seen of His internal struggle and emotional anguish could not possibly have been real if He was immortal and all powerful while He was here. But the Bible says that He was in “anguish,” that His soul was “exceeding sorrowful unto death,” that “He sweat as it were great drops of blood,” that He was struck with terror. All of this took place before a soldier laid a hand upon Him. The extreme anguish that Christ suffered for us was real. The trinity doctrine would have us believe that it was all a fake, that He was just reciting words in a play.

My friends, Jesus Christ truly suffered and died for our sins. May God remove every obstacle that would keep us from beholding “what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.” (1 John 3:1) The Bible says that God’s “government shall be upon his shoulder.” (Isaiah 9:6) There was a lot at stake when the Son of God came into this world. God’s entire government rested upon the success or failure of the Son of God. Yes, failure was a possibility. The Son of God had the risk of sinning, and thus losing everyone in the world, along with His own soul, for there was nobody left who could come to die for Him. There can be no good without the possibility of choosing wrong. There can be no temptation without a pull to do wrong, for

“every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” (James 1:14) Jesus Christ “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15) He had humbled Himself to become mortal, and subject to the same temptations and limitations that we are faced with.

Christ died completely for our sins, and trusted entirely upon His Father for help in every situation. When He was struggling with the weight of sin, He “offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death.” (Hebrews 5:7) It would have been a mockery for Christ to have cried out to His Father to save Him from death if all the while He was immortal and able to save Himself from death. Christ died completely, friends, and He relied upon His Father to resurrect Him. He said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46), indicating His complete dependence upon His Father to save Him out of death, and His willingness to entrust His eternal life into the hands of His Father. This He did, knowing that at any moment He could have called upon His Father to rescue Him from His struggles, and leave all of us rebellious sinners to perish for eternity. (See Matthew 26:53.)

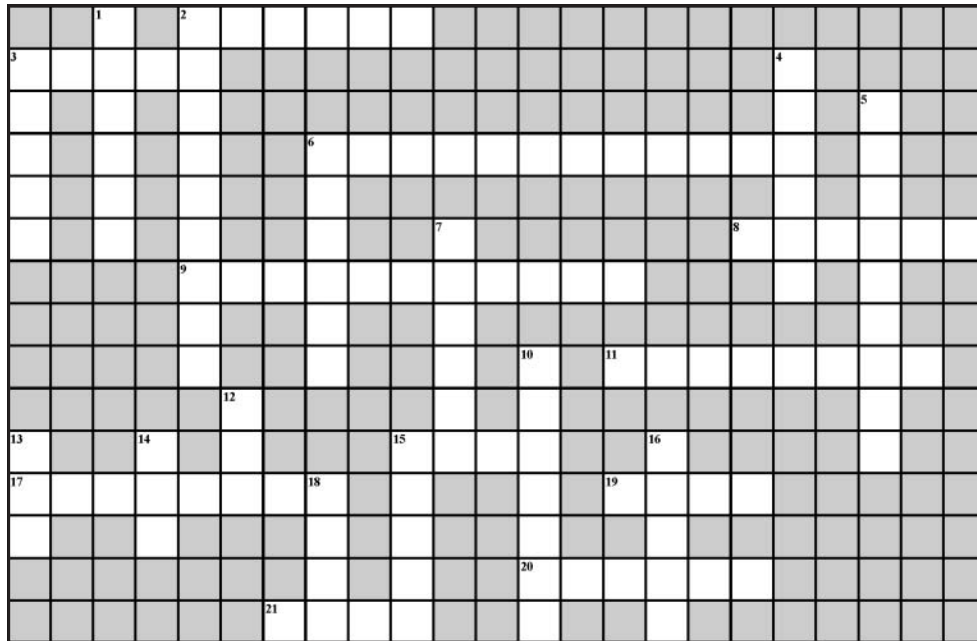
That is how much He loves you and me. When Christ died on the cross, He gave all that He had to give. He offered up His entire being as a sacrifice for sin. His soul was made an offering for sin so that we might live.

My friend, if you have not yet given your life to Christ, if you have not tasted the wonderful joy of knowing that your sins are forgiven and you are at peace with God, I invite you to do it now, before it is forever too late. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Corinthians 6:2) “O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” (Psalms 34:8) 

Something for the Young at Heart

This month we are continuing a series of crossword Bible studies that are based on the "These Last Days" Bible Lessons. In order to maintain the flow of the study, this crossword puzzle is not split into Across and Down sections—Across or Down is indicated at the end of each line.

The Secret of Immortality



- Job refers to man as ____ man. Job 4:17—**1 Down**
- Your life is a ____ that appears for a short time and then vanishes. James 4:14—**7 Down**
- The Father has ____ in Himself, which He has also given to His Son. John 5:26—**18 Down**
- The only wise God is eternal and _____. 1 Timothy 1:17—**17 Across**
- God, the Father is the only One who hath _____. 1 Timothy 6:16—**9 Across**
- Note:** When the Bible speaks of the Father as the only Person who has immortality it must mean immortality in an absolute sense because others have received immortality. Everyone else has received life from the Father, including Christ (John 5:26), and therefore all others can be made subject to death. God the Father is the only Person in the universe who cannot die under any circumstances.
- Christ has brought to light the possibility of life and immortality through the _____. 2 Timothy 1:10—**4 Down**
- Whosoever ____ in Christ will receive eternal life. John 3:16—**5 Down**
- Everyone else will _____. John 3:16—**8 Across**
- Note:** "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life." (John 3:36)
- He that hath the ____ hath life. 1 John 5:12—**14 Down**
- The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is ____ life. Romans 6:23—**10 Down**
- This mortal will put on immortality at the last _____. 1 Corinthians 15:52, 53—**15 Down**
- Note:** This takes place at the second coming of Jesus Christ. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17)

- We will receive a crown of glory when Jesus shall _____. 1 Peter 5:4—**20 Across**
- God told Adam that if he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would surely _____. Genesis 2:17—**13 Down**
- Satan said, "thou shalt ____ surely die." Genesis 3:4—**12 Down**
- The devil is a _____. John 8:44—**19 Across**
- After he sinned, Adam would have to eat of the ____ of life in order to live forever. Genesis 3:22—**15 Across**
- Because He does not permit sinners to live forever, God placed a flaming ____ to keep the way of the tree of life. Genesis 3:24—**3 Down**
- In the earth made new the tree of life will be on either side of the ____ of life. Revelation 22:2—**16 Down**
- They that do God's ____ will have right to the tree of life. Revelation 22:14—**6 Across**
- No ____ hath eternal life. 1 John 3:15—**11 Across**
- Note:** "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezekiel 18:20)
- If we want life, we must ____ the commandments. Matthew 19:17—**21 Across**
- Note:** Salvation only comes through Christ. Keeping the commandments cannot bring us salvation, but *not* keeping them can cause us to be lost. (Galatians 5:19-21)
- By continuing in _____ we seek for immortality and eternal life. Romans 2:7 (2 words)—**2 Down**
- Evil-doers shall be _____. Psalm 37:9 (2 words)—**6 Down**
- In a little while the ____ shall not be. Psalm 37:10—**2 Across**
- The wicked shall consume into _____. Psalm 37:20—**3 Across**

Answers are on page 12

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

by George McDaniel

Factors involved in Aging

I began writing this series on health because of an article the editor wrote on the eight laws of health [see the December 2001 issue]. I thought it would be good to expand some of the concepts he had only briefly covered. It turned out to be a more extensive project than I had imagined at first.

Now that the series on the eight principles of good health is finished, I need to go over it and see if there are any loose ends that need to be tied off. Also, as I read, I sometimes find information that is important or interesting enough to receive wider circulation. This is what will be included in any future articles.

This article is about the aging process and ways to slow it down. There are many theories as to the cause of aging. Some of these are:

1. Free radical damage
2. Cross-linking
3. Glycation
4. Dysfunctional oxygen metabolism

If you are not familiar with these you can look them up on the Internet. These actually turn out to be the consequences of aging and not the cause.

Please read Genesis 2:16, 17 and Genesis 3:22, 23. As you read the following facts, realize that something happened to man, in his physical being, to cause him to begin to die. I believe researchers have found what this is. If man had been able to eat of the tree of life after sinning, he would have lived forever. It seems that the tree of life contained something to activate the gene for an enzyme called telomerase.

About 40 years ago a researcher named Leonard Hayflick discovered by chance that cells grown in culture would only divide about 50 times and then slow down and stop. Today it is known that cells can divide a maximum of about 80 times. Hayflick's cells had already divided about 30 times before they were taken from the subjects. This limit is called the "Hayflick Limit." At the time, it was not understood why this is so.

The cause of cell aging is now known. The DNA strands in the nucleus of each cell have a section on the ends called the telomere (from the Greek, meaning end part). The telomere was once thought to serve no useful purpose, but it is now known to be the determinant for cell aging.

Most of the cells in the body have the ability to reproduce themselves when necessary. When we need new cells to replace damaged or diseased cells, a cell divides to create two new cells. In the process, the cell copies its DNA and passes it on to each daughter cell. However, it is now known that each daughter cell does not receive a complete copy of the parent cell's DNA. Each time a cell divides, a tiny portion of the telomere is lost. Each new generation of cells has slightly shorter telomeres. When the telomere gets sufficiently short, the cell dies.

Thus the telomere serves as a clock for the cell. It determines its life span. It makes the cell mortal. However, we

don't die because we run out of cells. Even if we die of old age, we still have billions of functioning cells with cell divisions remaining.

Something more than the Hayflick Limit is at work in aging. As the telomere shortens, it changes the behavior of the cells. Cells with shorter telomers begin to slow down. They stop contributing to the function of the tissue, organ or gland. When enough cells act old, our bodies can no longer defend themselves from the destructive forces of the environment (such as free radicals), and they become more susceptible to disease.

Two types of cells do not shorten the telomere when they divide: germ cells (ova and sperm, not bacteria) and cancer cells. These cells can divide without limit. Given an adequate environment, they will go on forever. They are ageless.

The key for both cancer cells and germ cells is an enzyme called telomerase. Telomerase rebuilds the telomere back to its original length each time the cell divides. Without it, a cancer couldn't survive beyond 80 cell divisions and would die off while still very small. Without telomerase, egg and sperm cells couldn't survive through generations.

Shortly after an egg is fertilized, the gene for telomerase is turned off. The cellular clock is set at one and starts ticking. When the count gets to 80, the game is over. All our cells have the gene for telomerase, but it is turned off. Needless to say, corporations have been formed to do research on telomerase therapy.

There are ways in which anyone can slow the effects of aging on the body. These strategies can help slow the shortening of the telomeres.

Homocysteine is an amino acid that has been implicated in heart disease. It contributes to the development of hardening of the arteries. Researchers have found that high levels of homocysteine triple the amount of telomere length lost during cell division. Homocysteine can be changed by the body into cysteine, but adequate amounts of vitamin B12, vitamin B6, and folic acid are required. Japanese researchers have found that raising the level of vitamin C in human cells slows the loss of telomeres by 52 to 62 percent.


Restricting calorie intake has been shown to extend life. Animals put on restricted diets have increased their life span by about 30 percent. The animals were fed about 30 percent less than they would eat if given free access to food. Recent research is showing that caloric restriction slows the rate of cell division, which slows the loss of telomeres. There are several ways this can be done. Eliminating non-essential dietary items, such as refined starches, sugars and fats, and eating more high fiber foods, such as green vegetables that are low in calories and high in nutrition, would be a good start. Another way would be to fast regularly; one day a week, or even one or two days a month, would benefit most people.

Another means to delay aging is to exercise. As people get older, they lose muscle mass. Many people blame their weakness, fat gain and sluggishness on just getting older,

but it is largely due to decrease in muscle and its effects on the body, and that is reversible. There is a medical term to describe this loss of flesh: sarcopenia. Sarcopenia causes weakness. This leads to the loss of the capacity to perform activities of daily living. It is a major reason why so many older Americans are in nursing homes. It is also the biggest cause of falls in elderly people, causing bone fractures and further disability.

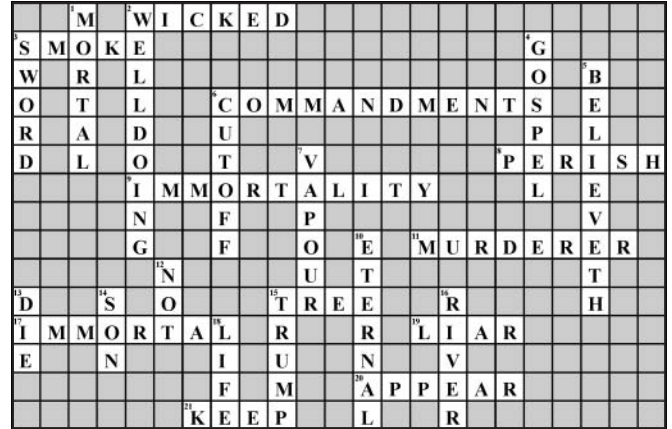
Muscle mass can be rebuilt with exercise, even in very elderly nursing home residents. The most effective exercises target the large muscles of the body. These are the muscles of the thigh and the buttocks. The arms, chest and shoulders muscles only contain about 15 percent of the total muscle mass of the body. These are what most people focus on when exercising. The most important anti-aging, muscle restoring exercises must flex and extend the hip joint.

A recent study looked at the effects of exercise on sarcopenia. Twenty-one frail, elderly men took part in resistance training for 11 weeks. Their muscle fiber increased by up to 60 percent and they showed improvement in balance, strength and physical ability, making them less likely to fall.

You only have one life. The one responsible for taking care of that life is you. The time to start making improvements is now. 

(George McDaniel is my father-in-law, and has been a registered nurse for many years, which, along with much research, has taught him many useful health principles. *Editor*)

Answers to Crossword Puzzle on page 10



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