

Living to Win

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Personal from. . .

Ronald L. Dart

Unshaken

A little over a month ago, at the end of a very bad week, I had occasion to speak in Austin, TX. A lot of the folks were reeling that week, because they knew the pastor and many of the people who had been killed in the bloody shootings at the Living Church of God in Wisconsin. Coupled with the litany of other things that had happened, from the tsunami in South East Asia, the kidnaping and murder of a little girl in Florida, to the killing of Terri Schiavo (and I must call it that), the folks were a bit dazed and some were even questioning their faith.

What worried me, and what led me to speak on the topic that day, were the attempts to explain these things or to make sense of what happened. It was worrisome, because you can't make sense of something that is essentially senseless. And in our attempts to find meaning in things like these, we are apt to create meaning that can allow us a measure of comfort, while it seriously misjudges what really happened. I was also concerned that these events seemed to have seriously shaken the faith of some.

I will confess that I was a little

surprised at the degree to which the faith of some, not just the brethren in Austin, was shaken by this. They couldn't understand why God would allow it to happen. Let me stop and explain something right here: That little word "allow" is mischievous. Try to remember this: Everything that happens in the world is something that God allows. There are no exceptions. If He hadn't allowed it, it wouldn't have taken place.

But the use of the word in this context betrays a fundamental error in understanding what God is doing. Some have bought into a false presumption and they struggle with how a God, who is supposed to be good, could allow such evil to exist in the world. This is a slanderous idea. The truth is utterly simple: God is good. God made man free. If you are not free to do

wrong, you are not free. If you are not free to suffer wrong, you are not free.

Now back to the word, "allow." It suggests, in the minds of some, that *what God allows must be His will*. But if everything that happens in this world is the will of God, why would we need to pray, "thy will be done?" And how can we say that it was God's will that a man walk into a church and start killing people? That is a monstrous allegation.

But I know I have still not answered the key question here: "This shouldn't happen right in the church. God could have protected them, why didn't He?" Astonishingly, more than one person has thrown up these questions as though the church should never have to suffer loss. One wonders where they got this idea.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at

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What things should you look for when supporting a ministry? The first thing to ask, "Is this ministry relevant?" It should deal in realities. Its teachings from the Bible should offer some life application. The short test for relevance is, if it doesn't make a difference in your everyday life, it isn't relevant. The *Born to Win* program was started with the motto of "Making Life Work." If we're helping to make your life work, we would appreciate your support.

Incredible Family Bible Retreat By Allie Dart

After arriving in the beautiful Ozark Mountains, two trips to the Mountain Home Wal Mart Super Center were made to buy supplies, food, drinks and decorations to be stored at Bel Arco Resort. Ron and I made the third trip on Friday. Ron had his shopping cart and list, and I had mine. Well, that was when we entered the store. By the time we had selected everything, we discovered it would take four carts to hold our goods. While checking out, Ron brought the car up for loading.

Oops, another surprise! We quickly discovered there was no way that we could get everything in one car. Fortunately, the Skip Martins had just arrived and were just around the corner. A quick call from one cell to another got us enough space in their vehicle to get everything transported to the resort.

The things in our two cars were for four different events. After unloading, a massive sorting was in order. One corner of the Town Hall was for the Food and Fellowship to feed hungry travelers as they arrived that evening. Another corner was reserved for the Children's Nature Walk sack lunches. The Tropical Pool Party needed a corner all by itself. And the food and supplies for the Pie and Ice Cream Social took space in another corner. Skip and Diane Martin and Sharon Richardson grabbed yet another list and began counting plates, forks, napkins, bottles of drinks, bags of chips etc., and put them in the right place for each party. Okemah Epperson showed up and helped with setting up. Before long, everything was organized and the Town Hall was transformed with patriotic decorations into a festive place for about 150 brethren to gather for Food and Fellowship. By 6:45, eager travelers were anxious to dig in and eat. Thanks to so many helpful people, everything was temptingly ready. A noisy hall hosted a constant stream of friends arriving, greeting each other, and eating until about 9:30 that evening. Kids were also registered for their YEA classes and seminars and got their special books with patriotic covers.

The next morning at 9 a.m. high-impact, family-oriented seminars began. YEA teachers made their way into their classrooms to set up and decorate. They were ready to greet eager students when they arrived at 10 a.m. Five age groups met new teachers, made new friends, learned more about how to live by God's Word, and completed exciting activities. Young people between the ages of three through 19 were plugged in with God all weekend.

The 12-15 year-old Intermediate class had eight boys and no girls. They loved their teacher, Linda Benton, and she loved them. A son of one of the helpers at Bel Arco played computer games with these eight boys and they invited him to attend their class. He fit right in and seemed to enjoy it as much as the other boys.

Mary Beck made peanut butter sandwich lunches for about 30 kids, and took them on a Nature Walk between their Sabbath YEA class and the worship service. Many a little tot was ready for a nap while Ron Dart gave an inspirational sermon titled, *The Love of Your Life*, that kept the attention of the young, mature, single, and married.

Brent Kern treated us to a fabulous concert Saturday night. It was followed by the Pie and Ice Cream Social which was enjoyed by all.

Brian and Stephanie Smith graciously hosted a kids' Tropical Pool Party Sunday afternoon. Between dips in the pool, youngsters enjoyed pizza, chips, cookies, a delightful punch, and fresh fruit and melon.

About 20 brave brethren boarded canoes and paddled their way down the beautiful Buffalo National River on Sunday afternoon. If any canoe turned over, no one was about to admit it. Those tired and hungry water lovers returned just in time to enjoy the hamburger cookout in the pavilion that evening. This was followed by a most enjoyable sing-along that made its way through the hymnal.

People gathered back on Memorial Day morning for more relevant seminars. Ron Dart ended the Family Retreat with some thoughts on the importance of being mindful of others. This Family Retreat was certainly a growth event for the entire family – it was truly a *Time to Remember!* It deserved an encore. And we hope you'll join us next year over the Memorial Day weekend for another Family Bible Retreat wherever we have it.

Unshaken

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Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

But wait, this shouldn't have happened, should it? Actually, yes. When God knocked down Paul on the road to Damascus, He was taking the first steps in showing Paul “what great things he must suffer for my name's sake.”

What on earth ever gave any Christian the idea that we should make it through this life without suffering evil at the hands of men? On the night of the Last Supper, Jesus told His disciples plainly, “These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not stumble. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service” (John 16:1-3).

But it shouldn't happen right in the church, should it? Should we expect this from someone who is himself in the church? No, I suppose we shouldn't, but have we forgotten Judas? And have we forgotten the exhortations in the letter of Jude that made it clear that our enemies would even come to church with us (Jude 1:8-12)?

Then there is another question to address. How does a person get to the place where he brings a gun to church and starts killing people? Demon influence? Perhaps. But there are times, I think, when we comfort ourselves by blaming the devil for our own failures. When I was doing my recording of the Psalms, I came across one that has always troubled me, and I did my best to under-

stand it. The psalmist said, “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies” (Psalm 58:3).

I have long had a problem with this, because it seems to take away the element of choice. The first significant insight on this came my way in a magazine article. There is a narrow window in the early life of a child for learning language. The window opens, and then closes. It is very early. Unless a child hears a lot of spoken language during that time, he will always have a problem with language.

And so I asked myself, “Is there a window in which a child learns how to love, who to love, and in what way?” Then along came Bill Jacobs with his series on *Spiritual Growth and Human Development*. Bill is a psychologist and does work with prisons. He commented in a sermon that inmates in prison share a common trait: An inability to trust. He went on to point out that babies come into the world hardwired to trust their mothers, and that the ability to trust is cemented in place in the first two years of life. This is empirically true and frightening at the same time. It means that parents can make mistakes in the first two years of a child's life that will ultimately ruin his life.

These windows are only open a short time, and they are very, very early. And once a child is past them, the die is cast. As Bill Jacobs said, it is possible to change these things later in life, but *it is very, very hard*.

Now, lest I frighten prospective parents, *this is not hard to do, if you do it at the right time*.

Reinforcing your child's trust is the most natural thing in the world. The baby starts out hardwired to trust the mom. The mom is hardwired to love her baby. But even that can go terribly wrong with effects that last for generations.

I honestly think the main reason we are shaken by things we don't understand, the main reason we don't understand and grope for meaning, is because we aren't reading our Bibles consistently. If we were, we would have a stronger sense of the possibility and scope of human evil. One of the biggest problems we have is denial. We simply don't want to acknowledge that people like this exist, and when they turn up, we are blind sided. That's bad enough, but it is worse when we turn around and blame God for it.

The time is coming when God is going to shake the heavens and the earth so that only those things that cannot be shaken will remain. If that is to be us, then we have much to do between now and that day.

Unshaken in the faith,

Ronald L. Dart

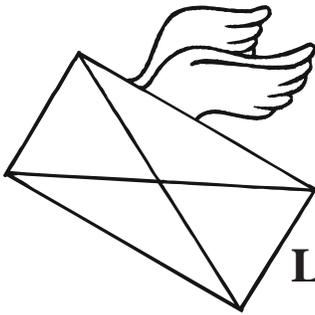
P.S. I would very much like to send you a *FREE* cassette tape of the sermon on this topic from my Austin visit. It is titled: “Unshaken.” To get a free copy, just check the box on the enclosed card and return it to us. The tape is *FREE* and without obligation, but your contribution will be very welcome and carefully used.



Bargains on eBay

Good news!

CEM has established the beginnings of an eBay store to make a number of our albums and series available at auction that will be running all the time. You may be able to pick up some items for half price or less. Join the fun while picking up valuable bargains. View our brand new eBay store at Born to Win eBay Store.



Letters to the Editor

"I am writing to let you know that the tapes on the Book of Psalms have really had an effect on my life in recent months. Many of the Psalms have helped me to understand how I should relate to God. They have also put a song of thanksgiving in my heart and enriched my prayer life. It has also given me a love for God's Word again which had decreased over time due to the cares of the world. . ." WH

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Dart and all the CEM staff,

"We had a wonderful spiritually uplifting weekend at Bull Shoals (Bel Arco). Thank you for all the hard work. You are a blessing to so many! God bless you." D&LS

Calendar of Events

Meet The Teacher - Columbia, South Carolina - Ronald L. Dart, speaker of the *Born to Win* broadcast will be at the Embassy Suites, Greystone Blvd. and I-26, Saturday, July 30th at 2 p.m. You are invited to come *Meet The Teacher*. For directions or other information call Ralph or Jenny Hanahan at 803-732-7869 or hanahan@bellsouth.net, or call CEM's office at 1-888-BIBLE 44.

Help at the Feast With School Assignments

Many teachers give their students assignments to do while they are at the Feast. Pat Nelson, a school teacher, has graciously volunteered to organize help for our kids at the Feast in getting their assignments completed. This would be an afternoon project. If you would like to volunteer to help, please write Pat Nelson at CEM or e-mail her at adm@cemnetwork.com. Children and parents, please listen for an announcement at the Feast with details on when and where this will take place.



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That the man of God may be proficient and equipped for every good work.