

Personal from. . .

Ronald L. Dart

Thinking About the Last Days

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come (2 Timothy 3:1).

Predicting what's going to happen next in the Middle East is a fool's game. Or, maybe it's a prophet's task. Since I'm not a prophet, and I'm trying not to be a fool, all that's left is to look at what's going on in the Middle East in the light of the Bible. Christian people pay close attention to what happens in the Middle East for good reason. It's because of something Jesus said in response to a question by his disciples. Country boys that they were, the disciples were exclaiming over the beauty of the Temple when Jesus shocked them into silence. "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down," and then he walked on to the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24:2 NIV).¹

This actually came to pass a few decades later when the Romans sacked Jerusalem, burned the Temple, and killed Jews in their thousands. They say that in the years following you could actually walk by that site and not realize that anything had ever been there. But there's one

curious thing about all that. It happened in 70 A.D. to be sure, but it had also happened some 650 years before that, when the Babylonians came, sacked Jerusalem, and destroyed Solomon's Temple. The Temple that the disciples were admiring in Jerusalem on that day was not Solomon's Temple, but a second Temple built after the return from Babylon.

You've heard the old saying that history repeats itself. It does. History repeats itself, because human nature does not change, and men keep doing the same stupid things over and over. And if that were not enough, the nature of God doesn't change either. As he said to the prophet Malachi, "For I am Jehovah, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed"

(Malachi 3:6).²

To some degree, this little comparison between human nature and the divine nature accounts for a lot of the repetitive nature of prophecy. If an event happened because of a given condition, and the condition recurs, it will happen again—perhaps with new technology. While I was pondering this one day, I came upon a Scripture that almost spells it out. God was challenging Israel because of their constant chasing around after one god and then another. Through the prophet Isaiah, God said this, "Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come."³ If you're going to understand the future, said God, look at history

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Bear Much Fruit

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." Many of our family members have found that supporting the work God is doing through CEM is a way to "bear much fruit." In so doing, they are able to help with such things as: the *Born to Win* broadcast; getting the Gospel out via CDs, DVDs, and printed literature; publishing YEA lessons to anchor our children and teens to Christ; and an adult Bible study course. Working together as a team can multiply the effectiveness of what you are able to give. All donations are gratefully received and judiciously used.

Youth Day 2007

Remembering Paul!

By Joe and Sandy Weicks

The Feast of Tabernacles (FOT) is just a few months away. That means it is time to start planning another fantastic Youth Day! As an essential element of CEM's youth ministry program, the Youth Day service has become not only an established tradition at CEM's FOT site, but one of its most important services that is enjoyed by all.

The Youth Day service is important! It gives our children, teens, and young adults the unique opportunity to participate in—actually lead—our worship service. On Youth Day, our youth provide opening and closing prayers, lead the song service, provide special music, perform Bible skits, teach God's Word, and share their faith in a unique and inspiring way. In short, the Youth Day service is a youth ministry to the church.

This year's Youth Day theme is *Remembering Paul*. As we tell the story of Paul's life, we hope to also share the message of faith and salvation for which Paul lived and died. To do this, *we need help*. If you're a child, preteen, teen, or young adult through college age and would like to participate by performing special music, providing a Scripture reading or testimonial, act in a skit, or assist in any other manner, please contact Joe or Sandy Weicks at sandyjoeweicks@bellsouth.net or 601-853-1776. We would love to hear from you! To the adults who will be celebrating the Feast in Fort Walton Beach, FL with CEM, come support our youth and join us for this special worship service as we remember Paul!

God's Challenges

By Lenny Cacchio

No, I don't accept it all on faith. The God of the Bible does not expect you to chuck your reasoning powers at the sanctuary door. Rather, we read of Paul's admonition to the Thessalonians to "test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21 NKJV), or as the old King James has it, "Prove all things."

"Prove" can mean lots of different things. Writers such as Lee Strobel offer proof of God through rules of evidence which he presents admirably in his "Case For" books—The Case of Christ, The Case for Faith, and The Case for a Creator.

Geniuses such as Isaac Newton saw the laws of physics as proof of an ordered universe and thus the need for a supreme lawgiver.

Apologetists such as Josh McDowell brilliantly answer questions skeptics often raise regarding authenticity of Scripture and, as he says, evidence that demands a verdict.

Those thinkers deserve every accolade they receive, but there is another type of proof that the Bible heartily endorses and indeed enjoins upon us. It revolves around what that word "test" means as used in 1 Thessalonians. We find exactly the same word translated the same way in Luke 14:19, where a man refuses an invitation because he just bought a team of oxen and he wants to "test" (NKJV) or "prove" (KJV) them.

How would a farmer prove his team of oxen? Would he research his dictionaries and biology texts to see if they are really oxen? Rather, the farmer would "prove" or "test" his oxen by taking them into the field and put them to the test.

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first. Only then may you understand the end of it all. The things that are to come are *reflections* of things that have already happened. The terminology adopted by Bible students for this sort of thing is “type” and “antitype.” The word type comes from the Greek and means a model, a shape, or a form. Antitype refers to the later reality of which the first was only a type. So we have types and antitypes all through the Bible. It is, however, a mistake to assume that you have only type and antitype, two occurrences. You may have many more.

So, the things to come are reflections of things that have already happened. If you are a prophet, your prophecy has to have roots in history or it is meaningless. This is one of the most helpful things to know when you encounter a would-be prophet. He might be a person who comes to your church and says, “I have a word of prophecy from the Lord.” Does the prophecy have roots in history? If not, you can safely brush it aside.

Now consider Jesus’ disciples oohing and aahing over the grandeur of Herod’s Temple and compare it to something Jeremiah said in one of his prophecies. God customarily sent Jeremiah down to the city gates, where people came to conduct business and try cases. The Lord told Jeremiah: “Stand in the gate of the Lord’s house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of Jehovah, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,

Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, “The Temple of the LORD, The Temple of the LORD, The Temple of the LORD, are these” (Jeremiah 7:3-4).

I can almost see Jeremiah standing there repeating this, sweeping his arm first to the west, then to the east, then to the south, exclaiming at all the magnificent buildings—each with “this is the Temple of the Lord.” I can hear Jesus’ disciples exclaiming the same words in awe of the Temple and all that it stood for as they showed the buildings of the Temple to Jesus.

Jeremiah said there must be no half baked amends. It is time for the real thing. Standing on the courthouse steps he called for honest judgment between a man and his neighbor, for an end to the oppression of widows, orphans and strangers. He called for an end to guilty verdicts on innocent men. Moreover, he called for them to cease and desist from following the practices of other gods, practices which were destroying the nation, and had even penetrated the Temple environs. Do these things, God said, and I will allow you to dwell in this place for ever.

But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless. Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, “We are safe”—safe to do all these detestable things? Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of

robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD (Jeremiah 7:8-11 NIV).

His words echo down through time to the day when Jesus ran the money changers out of the Temple. Matthew tells us that Jesus overthrew the tables of the money changers and said: “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matthew 21:13).

Jeremiah, having warned the people that there was no safety in proximity to the Temple, offered this admonition from Jehovah: “But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel” (Jeremiah 7:12).

Go to Shiloh. Okay, but what is to be learned at Shiloh? Years ago, my wife and I were driving north from Jerusalem to find a place called Jacob’s well. As we drove along, I noticed a small sign pointing to the right to a place called Shiloh. I couldn’t recall the context, but the words of Jeremiah, “Go to Shiloh,” were in my ears. I was familiar with the phrase, because I kept coming across it in a class I taught in college. So, when I saw that sign and remembered the words, “Go to Shiloh,” I said we’d better do it. I slammed on the brakes and took a right turn without thinking. We bounced over a rather poor road for a little while and then came to the end of the road. I stopped. I got out. I looked around and I saw, well, nothing. Absolutely nothing.

It turns out, that was the point. I recalled the history of the place, but

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it was only when I got back to where we were staying and read the context of Jeremiah's prophecy, that I really understood what Jeremiah was driving at: "And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim" (Jeremiah 7:13-15).

That had happened. Ephraim had long since gone into captivity into Assyria, and because Judah didn't listen, the same thing would happen to them. So, there I stood on a bald patch of ground that once was Shiloh and there was nothing there. Off in the distance, there was a small very old mosque and sometimes I wonder if even that was symbolic.

So now we know the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was not the second shrine of God that had been destroyed. It was the third. Now, I've not been appointed a prophet of God and I'm not stupid enough to appoint myself, but I have a sinking feeling that what has happened three times, will happen again. Why? Because we're still here, and we're still making the same mistakes.

Returning to the occasion when Jesus warned his disciples that the Temple would once again be

destroyed: When the disciples had recovered sufficiently to ask some questions, they had a big one. "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3).

The disciples plainly understood Jesus to be talking about the end of the age, not merely another sacking of Jerusalem. That happened again in 70 A.D., but it was not the end. They understood all this because they knew what the prophets said. They knew that there would be a destruction that would come in the last days. What they now wanted to know was when it was going to happen. What Jesus said in reply to this question is called the "Olivet Prophecy" because of where it was given—on the Mount of Olives.

The remainder of chapter 24 and all of chapter 25 answer the disciples' questions. Part of it may be familiar to you. He said, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. I took the time to look through a number of translations because there is sometimes a misunderstanding of this. People think it means, "People will come in my name admitting that I am the Messiah and will deceive many." I don't think so. I gather he is saying, "Many will come saying, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many.' Thus, there will be false messiahs. You will hear of "wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For

nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:6-8).

As a boy growing up during World War II, I recall someone saying that wars and rumors of wars were a sign of the time of the end. I think there were a lot of people during World War II who thought we were nearing the end. What I didn't hear from any of them was what Jesus actually said: "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but *the end is not yet.*"

So wars and rumors of wars are not a sign that the end is here. The signs that Jesus spoke of have been coming from that time until this. These things, said Jesus, are only the beginning. That sounds a little creepy in the present world situation, as you look around and think that maybe what we are seeing today is only the beginning, that the worst is yet to come. Jesus went on: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another" (Matthew 24:9-10). I suppose it happened, and I suppose it will happen again because Jesus said it would. I also suppose it because I know human nature, but it's distressing nonetheless.

Jesus was talking to his disciples at this point, but it has an eerie echo of the days of Jeremiah. In those

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days, Judah was hated of all nations. But the words may have more than one meaning. Look at where the Jews sit in the world. They are hated of all nations. It is sobering to think about it when you look at Jewish history. What have they done to be hated as they are? How is it that we have anti-Semitism so rabid in the world, yet it seems the Islamists who are murdering men, women, and children, are *not* hated of all nations? People make excuses for them. People try their dead-level best to keep from condemning them for what they have done. They condemn Israel instead. They don't condemn the Arabs; they don't condemn Islamists. You see this double standard everywhere from the United Nations to the Arab press, from Western television to Al Jazeera, and all the way to Reuters. They all blame the Jews, not the people that hate *them*.

Why do they hate the Jews? People offer all kinds of reasons for their hatred, but I think the real reason is that they are a people chosen by God. They are, for better or worse, his covenant people. And, pursuant to his promises, they have survived. They have been punished, but they have survived. They have been destroyed, but they have survived. The whole world is guilty of anti-Semitism. It is there for any objective person to see. Efforts to stamp out Jews have gone on throughout history—one of the most recent is called the Holocaust—and the Jews have survived. For now.

Jesus went on to say: “And many false prophets shall rise, and

shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (v. 12). He seems to have been talking about people who really did love God, but because they lived in an environment of so much iniquity, even those who loved God grew cold. Jesus continued, “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” You can't stand firm part of the way and be saved, you have to stay with it *all the way to the end*. “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

There seem to be markers along the way, and preaching the Gospel to all nations is one of them. Another is a specific warning to those in Judea to get out of Jerusalem: “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes” (vv. 15-18).

The reference to Daniel here is of more than passing interest. In the second century B.C., there was a man named Antiochus Epiphanies who ruled Palestine from Syria. A major part of his policy was the Hellenization of the area under his rule, which entailed the vigorous suppression of Judaism. He set up an altar of Zeus in the Holy Place of the Temple, which Daniel saw as the “abomination of desolation.”

Antiochus had fancied himself to be a god who greatly resembled Zeus Olympus. Zeus was known as Baal-Shanim, that is, lord of heaven. The Hebrews didn't want to write or pronounce the pagan term, Baal, so they substituted “abomination,” and “shaman,” as a typical play on words. It was written “desolating one.” Thus Zeus, lord of heaven, is loosely referred to as “abominations, one who makes desolate.”⁴

Something like this happened again and again in Jerusalem. Even Caligula tried to erect his own statue in the Temple about 40 AD, and then Josephus applied the appellation to the destruction of the Temple by Titus in 70 AD.

Anyone hearing Jesus use the term, though, would have applied it solely to Antiochus. But for some reason Matthew adds this little phrase “Let the reader understand,” as though the obvious meaning was not necessarily the intended meaning. We'll have to wait to see what that might mean, but Jesus goes on to say this: “And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (vv. 19-21).

When I read this, the thought came to mind, unbidden, that one of the truly disturbing things about war is the destruction of innocent life. Normally you would like to think that women and children would be spared, but because they are weak, and because they could quickly

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become a burden, pregnant women, infants, and sucklings, are dealt with very harshly. The Germans killed them outright when they were exporting the Jews in boxcars to Buchenwald, to Dachau, to Auschwitz. The mind boggles at things that were done, but it has always been so; it always will be.

But what I have seen in more recent times in the Middle East may have served to clarify a passage from the Old Testament that disturbs a lot of people. The story arises from an incident in the reign of Israel's first king. Samuel came to King Saul with a message from God: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (1 Samuel 15:2-3).

The first thing to know about this incident is that, when Israel first came up against Amalek, the Amalekites ambushed the rear of the Israelite column, which is where the women, the children, and the animals would have been. Men normally fought from the front; they protected their women and children who were behind. And the expectation is that real men would have met them head on and they could have fought. It would seem that there were rules of engagement in those days that called for sparing women and children, because what the Amalekites did was reprehensible

and incurred the lasting vengeance of God himself.

There were people, in those times, who lived by these rules and people who did not. And here is the key: if you were fighting a people who cared nothing for life, you would lose if you fought by humanitarian rules, for they fought from *behind* women and children.

One of the most stunning examples of that I have ever seen occurred in the Iraqi war when General Tommy Frank's boys were fighting their way through Iraq toward Bagdad. They were ready to cross a bridge and, what should they encounter, but men fighting behind a line of women and children ranged across the bridge. The Iraqis, army or irregulars, were using human shields. Something like this occurred in the more recent war between the Israelis and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

I thought about all this when I considered the command to King Saul. The Israelite army would be coming up against the Amalekites who would have had their women and children up front. The Israelites would have hesitated, as the Americans and the Israelis did. And they would have lost again to the Amalekites.

Saul's men were told they would have to fight through that, and that included women and children. Now, with the Hezbollah fighters not caring who they kill, and actually fighting from behind women and children, the Israelis encounter a situation not that different from when Saul went after the Amalekites.

Thinking about Jesus' words in the Olivet prophecy, it is very clear

that he is talking about the time of his return. It seems very clear to me that the prophets are showing us that, as we come down to the last days, there will be yet another holocaust. Only after that will a lasting peace be achieved.

¹ NIV Scripture quotations taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

² Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures cited are the King James Version paraphrased.

³ Isaiah 41:21-22.

⁴ G. Beasley-Murray, article "Abomination of Desolation," *Holman Bible Dictionary*.

Christian Educational Ministries

Statement of Cash Flows For the Three Months Ended April 30, 2007

Receipts:	
Contributions	\$321317
CEM Bookstore	21592
Interest Income	4542
	\$347450
Expenses:	
A/V Supplies	\$ 7285
Rents	11057
Office & Adm. Expenses	6303
Mailing Expenses	6396
Postage	17507
Printing	8481
Radio Expenses	192662
Telephone & Utilities	2218
Youth Ministries	6341
CEM Bookstore	3466
Foreign Operations	1282
Conference Expenses	2420
Employee Benefits	25569
Wages & Payroll Taxes	103662
Total Operating Expenses	394649
Decrease in Fund Balance	(\$47199)

Maximize CEM's Resources

The Internet is the most powerful communication tool in history, and it is proving of enormous benefit to the Gospel. The *Born to Win* website, for example, provides many innovative ways to more effectively evangelize and teach disciples. CEM is trying to utilize this tool more effectively with each passing day. The following are some ways that you can benefit from CEM's website.

If you haven't signed up for CEM's *Internet Newsletter*, don't delay. You are missing some important information. It is easy to do. At the top of the home page at www.borntowin.net, you'll see a scrolling line that says "click here" to sign up for the email newsletter. That takes you to a page that explains the advantages of receiving regular emails with up-to-date information on literally every new thing we are doing. You won't miss a thing, not a broadcast, a sermon, a letter, or a newsletter. By signing up for this *FREE* service, you will find it easy to forward these links to friends and acquaintances.

In addition, any news updates, scheduled trips, conferences, and festival updates will be emailed to you immediately instead of having to wait until the next scheduled letter. You also get links for any new "Online Exclusive" radio programs as soon as they are up, so you won't miss them. You can immediately download or stream the program. Also you will get links to new essays or news items.

We urge you to visit the *Born to Win* website often. Check out "What's New." We wouldn't want

you to miss the many exciting things you can use to grow as a Christian and share with others. Such things as information on Ron Dart's latest books, YEA! Let's R.E.A.C.H., and honoring our graduates are currently in this box.

As you browse *Born to Win's* home page, notice the following things of interest: *Born to Win* audios, the radio log, radio archives, sermon downloads, a calendar of events, a holy day calendar, information about the Feast of Tabernacles and the Memorial Day Retreat.

Podcasting will likely catch your attention as well. Most of you understand that podcasting is a means whereby radio programs and the latest sermons will be *automatically* downloaded to your computer to listen to at your convenience.

You will also see the "Learning Center," loaded with such things as inspirational materials, helpful links, Ron's blog, suggested reading, topical studies, reflections on the Bible, and books that are under construction. You can study the Epistles of Paul here. Got questions? Here's the place you can ask them. There's another opportunity for you. You can also join CEM and Friends' Forum.

There's more! You can read the *Teaching to Win* newsletter for parents, teachers, and people who have a passion to make a difference in the lives of our children and teens. Download YEA sample lessons for all five age groups. Access is available through the CEM Bookstore for all of those

sermons and broadcast albums you've been wanting to hear and to give as gifts to your friends and family. You can order full-color YEA books to systematically teach your children and Christian Origin books to study the Bible at church or in an in-home fellowship group.

There's another convenience you may not have considered on *Born to Win's* website. You can make donations online by credit card, direct bank transfer, or PayPal. Doing this can save you time, trouble, postage, and mistakes. If you have trouble understanding how it is done, get in touch, and we'll help you.

God's Challenges
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In the book of Malachi we see a gauntlet thrown down before the people of God. "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that their may be food in my house. Try me now in this, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10).

The idea is to try it out and see if it works, and there can be no better way to prove what God says than to do what he says. Try living the lifestyle that we find in the teachings of Jesus, such little things as going the extra mile, forgiving others for wrongs done to us, and avoiding the greed and lust for stuff so endemic in today's world. Do these things and all the rest and watch the magic they can display in transforming both you and the world around you (<http://www.kccog.org/>).



Of the three books Ron Dart has written, *Law and Covenant* is perhaps the most important because the two subject ideas are fundamental to the message of the Bible. Yet they are shockingly misunderstood and misapplied. Some take a literal approach to biblical law and adopt customs that make no sense in the modern world. Others think

that the Law has become irrelevant or, even worse, that it has been abolished and nailed to the cross.

Man has made a fundamental error in understanding the Law. We tend to think of the Law as regulatory and absolute because this is the way we encounter the world. Some think the Law is arbitrary. But God doesn't make mistakes. The Law is a revelation of the way things are. Law is about understanding God and his purpose for man. Covenant is closely related because it is about knowing God, personally, intimately, and about being in a relationship with him. Nothing is more central to the Christian relationship with God than the covenant we have with Jesus.

Law and Covenant will untangle mysteries and bring simple, understandable insights. Ron Dart addresses such provocative questions as:

- Can a society regulate morality?
- Are there limits to any perceived right to privacy?
- Can a Christian own a slave?

These are addressed in the following chapters:

- The Jigsaw Principle
- Law and Meaning
- Jewish Law
- Freedom and the Law
- The Avenger
- The Pagan Feminine
- The Meaning of Grace
- Covenant, First Step
- The Social Contract
- Covenant and Government
- The Purpose of the Law
- Understanding the Law
- Moses and the Covenant
- Divorce Law
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and equipped for every good work.*