

Ronald L. Dart Ministries



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NEWSLETTER

December 2018

Cold Comfort

By Ronald L. Dart

I hope I don't shock you too much when I say that the Bible is not a particularly comforting book. I know the hope it gives is comforting. I know the relationship with God it offers is comforting. But one night, I was paging through the Bible looking for some comfort and I wasn't finding much. I wanted to read something to make me feel better, and I wasn't finding it.

It was a moment of revelation, in a way. Don't get me wrong, there are places in the Bible where I find great comfort, but the Bible is *not* a "feel good" book. After that, while doing some study in the prophets, something else dawned on me. As far as I can tell, God never sent a prophet to tell people how well they were doing. So when a prophet showed up, it was generally bad news.

When King Ahab, for example, saw Elijah walking his way, he said, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" Ahab knew the score, and it was confirmed by Elijah's response: "I have found you," he answered, "because you have sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD. He says, 'I am going to bring disaster on you. I will consume your descendants and cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel—slave or free'" (1 Kings 21:20-21 NIV). Now, that is not especially comforting, even if you aren't Ahab. But Elijah was not your smooth, slick preacher. He was a hairy man, wore leather, and if he appeared today, he would probably ride up on a Harley Davidson motorcycle.

Now where do you find the comfort in this passage? Well, Ahab repented, at least after a fashion. He tore his garments, fasted, wore sackcloth and went softly around the palace. And God relented, somewhat. He said he would defer the terrible things prophesied to the next generation. That is cold comfort, I suppose, but maybe better than none.

On the other hand, there is a prophet who speaks of comfort. Isaiah penned this song, adapted so beautifully

into Handel's *Messiah*: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins" (Isaiah 40:1-2 KJV).

But this comes at the end of a long period of chastisement and correction. A people who have been battered and bruised are at last being comforted, but only after having received of God's hand double for her sins.

So when you pick up your Bible to read, you aren't picking up a short-term comfort. What comfort you find in the Bible, and you do find it, is long term. As Paul cautioned the Corinthians, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19 KJV).

I am stepping gingerly around the edge of something very important here, a question that dogs us throughout our lives. I am considering why it is that we have so many trials, so much pain in this life, even after we have turned our lives over to God. It has slowly dawned on me that God is not very concerned with my comfort.

C. S. Lewis said something interesting in this regard. He said that when a man calls on God, it is usually just to

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clear up a few issues, to relieve this pain, that ache, solve this weakness. But when we call upon God, he moves into the house with ladders, saws, hammers, and starts knocking down walls and rebuilding the whole house. And that process is often very painful.

God is after much more than merely saving our miserable hides. He is going to make us into sons he can be proud of. And in order for that to happen, we have to learn the meaning of a very important word. In the second and third chapters of the Book of Revelation, we have seven letters to seven churches.

There is not a single one of these churches that is faultless, any more than there is a single one of us who is without flaw. After the evaluation they each receive, and after the correction offered, the Spirit says this to each of the churches in turn:

- “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who *overcomes*, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (Revelation 2:7 NIV).
- “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who *overcomes* will not be hurt at all by the second death” (v. 11).
- “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who *overcomes*, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it” (v. 17).
- “To him who *overcomes* and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations: he will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star” (vv. 26-28).
- “He who *overcomes* will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels” (Revelation 3:5 NIV).
- “Him who *overcomes* I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name” (v. 12).
- “To him who *overcomes*, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down

with my Father on his throne” (v. 21).

I have heard endless speculation about the meaning of these seven letters. Most of that speculation has been fruitless, and often misleading. But there is one thing that is perfectly clear if you can hear it. Every single one of us, and every single church, has something to overcome. What God wants us to do is to struggle, to improvise, adapt, overcome, and to become stronger in the process.

Why should we think our road should not be hard? Why should we think our load should not be heavy? Jesus’ words to his disciples at the last supper are instructive. “If ye love me, keep my commandments,” he said. “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14:15-16).

I don’t know why the King James translators chose the word they did. The word is not “comforter,” it is counselor. The road ahead is not comforting. It is challenging. We have much to overcome, many battles to win. We will need a counselor.

Later, Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (v. 27). Then why did Paul and his companion end up beaten and thrown in jail? If Jesus intended to give us peace, why do we hurt so much? The answer lies in Jesus’ qualifying statement: “I am not giving you the peace the world gives.” The peace Paul and Silas had was the kind of peace that allowed them to sing hymns in the middle of the night that finally led to the conversion of their jailor.

Jesus had more to say on that last Passover: “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:1-2 NKJV).

If you don’t produce, you’re cut out of the vine. If you do produce, much of the baggage you carry around is going to have to be jettisoned. Pruning, for a man, is bound to hurt. It doesn’t stop there. “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s

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sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me” (John 15:18-21 NKJV).

No smooth road here. I don’t know what I thought I was looking for that night I wanted comfort, but it wasn’t this. I didn’t want people mad at me. I didn’t want people persecuting me. But when I think about it, the way not to be hated is to keep my mouth shut. If I do what Paul did, and go out and take the world by the throat, someone is going to cause me some pain. I have no promise of God that I won’t get hurt. Short term, of course. How bad can it get? “These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you” (John 16:1-4 NKJV).

It can get so bad, you lose all your old associations. You can even lose your life. Perhaps you can see what I mean when I say that the Bible is not a feel good book. But Jesus is still not finished. “Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you” (John 16:20-22 NKJV).

Living through the process of the betrayal and suffering of Jesus; being a witness, however distant, of his death on the tree; seeing him abused and watching him die must have been the hardest days of his disciples’ lives. But before it happened, he offered them comfort of a sort. “Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have *overcome* the world” (John 16:32-33 NKJV).

There’s that word again. I have *overcome* the world. He said this before his hours of suffering. Then came Jesus’

prayer for his disciples before he began that long night. There is comfort in Jesus’ words, but they aren’t easy words. They speak of help through periods of grief and suffering.

One of Jesus’ parables is instructive here: “And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat?’ But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink?’ Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do’” (Luke 17:7-10 NKJV).

This is something that we fail to understand about the Law of God. Obedience is your duty, not your merit. So you can’t earn salvation by the Law. The Law defines the bare minimum standard of conduct in the world.

I watched a television program titled *A Johnny Cash Anthology*—no doubt prompted by the movie, *Walk the Line*. It was composed of clips of his performances, interspersed with commentary from performers and others who knew him. It was enjoyable, but what struck me most was how much better the old, faded, wrinkled Johnny Cash was than the young, callow, Johnny early in his career. He was somewhat beat up and scarred, inside and out. But his work was far and away better, and even as his voice faded, it carried more conviction than ever.

We don’t all get better as we age. Some of us give up the fight. Some are embittered by the struggle. Some of us tend to whine a lot. Some feel sorry for themselves. Some read the Bible in vain hoping it will make them feel better. Problem is, the Bible is about making you better, and that may have little to do with your feelings. This is what Solomon was driving at when he said this: “Better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, For that is the end of all men; And the living will take it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, For by a sad countenance the heart is made better” (Ecclesiastes 7:2-3 NKJV).

Some time ago I had the startling thought that I will likely depart this life at the very time when I have the very most to contribute. And I take great hope, and even comfort, in knowing that God, even at that moment, will not be finished with me.

About God

Ronald L. Dart

If I only had two minutes to tell someone about God, what should I tell them? What is the most important thing to know about God? If we think very long about this, we'll find that we know a lot about God, but that some of the things we think we know are contradictory. And that suggests that we may have taken a wrong turn someplace and developed an idea of God that is too complex—that allows contradictions. And that leads me to an important principle. It was Moses who said it: “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever.” (Deuteronomy 29:29 NIV).

So there are things we can know about God and things that are unknowable for us. So naturally, we busy ourselves about the secret things, things that cannot be known. Why not pause for a moment and consider what

is actually revealed about God? Of all the things that may actually be known, what is the most important?

Here is what God himself said to Jeremiah: “But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:24).

So I can tell you that God *can* be understood and known. This is a lot all by itself. I *can* tell you that God is affectionate and exercises loving-kindness. I *can* tell you that God is wise and firm—he exercises judgment. I *can* tell you that God has standards. He *can* be depended on. He is constant. He exercises righteousness. Now if a person can come to understand and believe these simple things about God, a lot of bad ideas will go by the wayside.

Who Benefits From Your Giving?

How can you give to God when he owns everything? Then when you do make your offering to God, who is the beneficiary—God or you? God has given you the awesome opportunity to “store up treasures in heaven” and reap eternal rewards. It takes faith, especially in hard times. But tithing is a command from God, and the obedient Christian cheerfully obeys. Christian Educational Ministries looks for every opportunity to spread the Gospel, and we can only go through the doors God opens with the resources given to us by your tithes and offerings. We are so grateful to each one of you for giving so generously so everyone can benefit.

Thinking About Christmas

Are you planning to celebrate the birth of Christ on December 25th? The meaning of the nativity of Jesus has been corrupted by the pagan-filled commercialism of the Christmas observed these days. But if not at Christmas, when should we celebrate the birth of Christ? If we do not observe Christmas, when do we preach from the second chapter of Luke? When do we share the awe of a few simple shepherds as they gaze upon a one-day-old baby boy who will one day rule the world? If not Christmas, what? To find answers to these questions order your free copy of the booklet

Too Late for Christmas and find out.

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



2019 Bible Reading Plan

Let's continue to grow in grace and knowledge in 2019 through a new reading plan. Each day of the week, you will read out of a different part of the Bible. For this plan the Bible is divided into the following sections: *Epistles, The Law, History, Psalms, Poetry, Prophecy, and Gospels*. By switching areas daily, you don't get bogged down several days or weeks on an area that you find difficult to read. This plan was developed by Michael Coley, www.Bible-Reading.com, and he says "I made this plan up myself, after failing at my annual goal of reading through the Bible every year. It has worked well for me for six years and counting!" He has granted us permission to use it this year. For those who really enjoyed the scripture writing program I encourage you to choose a scripture each day from your reading and continue your scripture writing in 2019 as well.

Week #	Epistles <i>Sunday</i>	Law <i>Monday</i>	History <i>Tuesday</i>	Psalms <i>Wednesday</i>	Poetry <i>Thursday</i>	Prophecy <i>Friday</i>	Gospel <i>Saturday</i>
1	Rom 1-2	Gen 1-3	Josh 1-5	Ps 1-2	Job 1-2	Isa 1-6	Matt 1-2
2	Rom 3-4	Gen 4-7	Josh 6-10	Ps 3-5	Job 3-4	Isa 7-11	Matt 3-4
3	Rom 5-6	Gen 8-11	Josh 11-15	Ps 6-8	Job 5-6	Isa 12-17	Matt 5-7
4	Rom 7-8	Gen 12-15	Josh 16-20	Ps 9-11	Job 7-8	Isa 18-22	Matt 8-10
5	Rom 9-10	Gen 16-19	Josh 21-24	Ps 12-14	Job 9-10	Isa 23-28	Matt 11-13

CEM Mission Statement

Christian Educational Ministries (CEM) was founded in November 1995 by Ron and Allie Dart as an independent, non-denominational ministry to serve the public and individual Christians of every kind through the ministry of Ronald L. Dart. Mr. Dart, an ordained minister and evangelist, has served God through hundreds of sermons, broadcasts, Bible Studies, and books—bringing clarity and simplicity to topics.

CEM promotes Ron Dart's radio ministry, *Born to Win*, which is heard from coast-to-coast. His clear, conversational, and inviting style can be heard the world over. The *Born to Win* website, borntowin.net, features more than 1000 of Mr. Dart's timeless sermons and studies at any one time.

Our mission is:

First, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. (Matthew 28).

Second, to teach the disciples of Jesus Christ so that they may be "proficient and equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:17).

Third, to teach and train this generation and the next with studies and programs focused on youth, through the Dart's special passion, Youth Educational Adventures (YEA). (Deuteronomy 11:19, Proverbs 22:6).

Fourth, to bring God's people closer together, through cooperative efforts wherever they may be. (2 Corinthians 5:18).

To this end, we teach the Bible and its Truth, with a goal of helping people make their own lives work while they are a positive influence and blessing to those around them. Follow Mr. Dart and CEM at borntowin.net, Facebook, YouTube, and other media.

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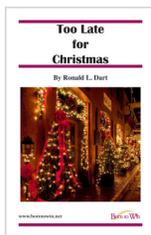
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A Ronald L. Dart Ministry

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Why is it that we have so many trials, so much pain in this life, even after we have turned our lives over to God? Isn't God's first priority our comfort? It seems that God wants us to struggle and grow to become stronger. Where is the comfort? Order this free message on CD or full transcript or go to www.borntowin.net and listen online.

Too Late For Christmas *FREE* Booklet



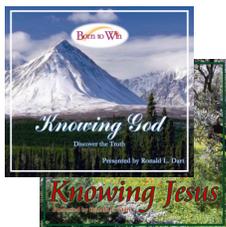
Are you planning to celebrate the birth of Christ on December 25th? If so, did you know that you would be about three months late? What's funny about it is that the whole story is right there in the biblical account of the birth of Jesus, but nobody pays it much mind. Order your *free* copy of this booklet and see what the Bible really says about the time of Christ's birth.

Who is God? Bible Study

Where is God? Who is he? Is God even a "he" at all? Is God beyond human comprehension? Who cares about a God we cannot understand or know? In this study, we will look for God *as he reveals himself*, realizing that the study will be a challenge, but a challenge with a reward at the end. This Bible study will work as an individual or group study. It is being offered for the first time in this format and includes the study book and three CD's with Ron Dart's answers and commentary. Order yours now for only \$7.95 or download for *Free* online at www.borntowin.net.



Knowing God and Knowing Jesus Bundle



If someone who knew nothing about God asked you who He was, what would you say? What is known about God, His character, His plan and His son, Jesus of Nazareth? Jesus was born a baby and lived on earth subject to every temptation that preys on mankind, yet without sin. Explore who he was, what he taught, what he is doing today and how you fit into those plans. Enrich your life by coming to know God and His Son more intimately. This two album bundle includes 20 messages on 10 CDs. The regular price for both is \$44.90, get them both right now for \$19.95 or download for *Free* at www.borntowin.net.

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