

OUR MESSAGE FOR THE NEW YEAR

■ *Dr. John D. DeBrine* ■

A burly lineman for the University of Michigan checked into the hotel the day before the game of the year with Ohio State University. The Michigan coach had given explicit instructions that his players were to get a good night's sleep and were not to leave their rooms.

The wayward lineman, however, wanted to go out on the town and see the city of Columbus by night. So he put a floor lamp on the bed and put covers around it so it looked like he was already asleep in bed. It really did look convincing. The lineman left the room with confidence. At 1 AM the coach went around to all the rooms and did a bed check. He opened the door and turned on the light. The covers were still wrapped around the lamp, but one thing had now changed: the coach had now switched on the floor lamp. The bed lit up and betrayed the deceptive lineman's darkness.

The light does that – the light reveals our darkness."

Jesus Christ said, "*I am the Light of the World*" (John 8:12). Because of this, our program for the new year is to **preach Christ** as Colossians 1:28 declares: "*Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*"

I have greatly enjoyed studying and teaching Hebrews on Songtime USA. (If you can't hear the broadcast you can get the highlights of the series on our Songtime Audio Magazine.) Hebrews gives the greatest picture you'll ever find of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospels tell what Jesus did (died, buried, resurrected) but Hebrews tells what Jesus Christ is doing **now** – "...*He ever liveth to make intercession for them.*" It is on the basis of this, I call your attention to three words: **so great salvation** (Hebrews 2:3). To appreciate the impact of "so great", I noted other places where this demonstrative pronoun is used. Look at II Corinthians 1:10, James

3:4 and Rev. 16:18. After a brief look at those texts you'll soon conclude that we must be cautious not to become immune to the miraculous. We live amid the extraordinary and we must never let it turn into the ordinary! Let us begin the new year by asking why our salvation is called "so great".

I. IT IS CALLED "SO GREAT" BECAUSE OF THE ONE WHO SPEAKS IT

Hebrews 2:3 includes this statement – "*which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord*". We must never forget that this is not our Gospel. It is God's Gospel (Romans 1:1) That immediately tells me that if man is involved in the message I am hearing, then it isn't God's Gospel. Now God's Gospel is so powerful that it takes care of "the idols" of life. Let me explain. When I get on a jet in Boston to go to Philadelphia, I am immediately separated from Boston. The "unto Philadelphia" takes care of the rest. I don't waste my time dwelling on what I have left. A fanatic doesn't understand this. A fanatic is an artist at taking a small piece of life and making it into the whole of life. Perhaps the best way to drive this point home is by Scripture. Read I Thessalonians 1:9 "*For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.*"

Don't reverse the order and try to turn from idols. You must first turn to God and discover the



Outside the Chapel at Willow Valley Resort in Lancaster, PA. The Songtime tour group in November enjoyed a wonderful time of fellowship as well as experiencing the "sights and sounds" of Noah in the new Millenium Theater. Join us in December of 1999 for a return trip to Sight & Sound, a visit to the Bernsville Christmas display plus a night in Bethlehem. Make reservations now - the bus fills up fast!

Continued on Next Page

power to turn from idols. I am witnessing to a young man who has a live-in. He has had a child with her and is paying child support on two other children. On more than one occasion he has heard me preach and his reaction has been: "John you want me to give up my life style." He then reminds me of national leaders who carry Bibles and live in sin. "Why am I so bad?" is his implication. My reaction is always the same – "Declare your complete helplessness and come to the Lord Jesus Christ. At that point you'll have the power to turn from your 'idols'". You can't do this without Divine intervention. We have both come to the conclusion that he really isn't an atheist but he can't find God for the same reason a thief can't find a policeman. He fears our "so great a salvation". Proclaim it in the New Year. Tell people that eternal life is not only a present but a possession. It is not only a gift but it involves the person of Jesus Christ. "And there is the testimony that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." -1 John 5:11

We Love to Get Letters!

"After reading my morning devotional, I realized that I have not been faithful in my commitment to giving to you as I had promised. I always justified not sending in a gift because I knew others would support it. After being convicted I do believe that God still wants me to give as I am able."

- WDAC (PA listener)

"I listen to you over WDER (Derry NH) when I can but sure appreciate getting the Audio Magazine. I recycle my tapes to my sisters, my church family and to one of my co-workers. I really enjoy listening to the two Dave's."

"Thanks Marge for another wonderful tour! The long ride on the bus was so enjoyable as we sang together, played games etc. You are a wonderful leader and made everyone feel so "special". Noah was awesome and the lunch in an Amish home were high-lights of the weekend for me. I'd recommend any trips that you plan. The fellowship, beginning each day with prayer and your warm personality are lacking in many trips I've taken with other groups."

- Rhode Island listeners



**II. IT IS SO GREAT A SALVATION
BECAUSE OF THE RESULTS
ACCOMPANYING IT**

"God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his own will." (Heb 2:4) When I recently heard Bill Blount describe what he witnessed from the church in China, I realized that we American Christians do not live amid the extraordinary. I can go to a church this Sunday and listen to prayer requests – then wait six months and return and I'll hear the same requests! How much more effective if we heard what has happened in our life that is only possible because we are Christians. That is what Hebrews 2:2-4 is all about. Let me concentrate on the phrase, "Gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will". What does that mean? It means exactly what I Cor. 12:7 teaches. It means exactly what I Peter 4:10 teaches: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." The issue for you in the New Year is this: What does God want you to do? Are you doing it? If you can't answer this, write for the pamphlet "Eight Ways to Discover Your

Spiritual Gifts". Space does not permit me to list the challenges of last year. I had to deal with unbelievable divorces, with pastors wanting to quit and with Christians in panic as they have been storing food and water in the event of a computer glitch a year from now. I also almost cancelled a service in a New England community. Let me tell you why. A pastor called to report that a group of witches have been praying to Satan to destroy every church in their community. He then reported that every church had been impacted including his own. One pastor from a rather liberal church theologically said, "I don't know about Satanic influence but I'm out of here." My first reaction was to avoid that situation but fortunately I was studying Hebrews 2 and was reminded of our "so great a salvation" and the fact nothing can challenge the omnipotence of God!

We have one task in 1999 – because we have "so great a salvation". Be determined to allow Acts 1:8 to happen to you! "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Songtime on the Road

January 10 - Perry Hall Baptist Church 3939 Schroeder Avenue in Perry Hall, MD.

January 24 - Glorious Gospel Church 627 State Street in Springfield, MA - 10:00 AM

January 31 - Dennis Church of the Nazarene in Dennis, MA (Cape Cod) - 11:00 AM

January 30 - Feb. 2 - National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Nashville, TN. Visit the Songtime booth and meet Dave Donnelly & Dave Beguerie.

February 7 - First Baptist Church Main Street in Waldoboro, ME

February 28 - Tremont Temple Baptist Church 88 Tremont St. in Boston, MA - 11:00 AM

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■ Questions & Answers ■

Dr. Bob Burrelli - GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

Q: I heard a pastor teach that Christians are able to change God's mind through prayer. Is this right? If not, then what sense is there in praying?

A: Shivers run up and down my spine when I hear teaching of this sort, not only because it is erroneous, but because it breeds inappropriate behavior, wrong expectations, and disappointment in Christians who don't know any better.

Let's understand, first, that God cannot change His mind; He is immutable. Malachi, speaking as God's mouthpiece, said I the Lord do not change (3:6a). James teaches the same thing: Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows (James 1:17). The writer to the Hebrews (6:13-19) drives home this truth in more detail, in speaking of the God of promise: For when God

made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." . . . So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. The Sovereign has determined the end from the beginning. His plans are perfect and sure. No one or nothing can frustrate God. He will always keep His promises.

In light of this truth, the unbeliever is

faced with the harsh reality that if he is not among those who obey the gospel and repent and believe, God's condemnation certainly remains on him; God will by no means clear the guilty (Exodus 34:7). That is a truth that will never change.

On a more positive note, the fact that God is immutable comforts the redeemed people of God, because they can be sure that the One who called them into salvation will keep them saved, love them unconditionally, glorify them someday, tend to all their needs, and conform them into the image of Christ.

Some, surprisingly unconvinced of this truth, turn to passages such as Genesis 6:6 to prove that God in fact does change his mind. The King James reads, And it [man's wickedness] repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth . . . Forgetting, for a moment, that this verse is descriptive and not a teaching passage on the subject of God's unchanging character, it should be obvious even to the casual reader that the word, "repented," is used in a curious fashion. The Hebrew word being translated here really means "pain" or "grief". It carries no notion of repentance or changing of mind whatsoever. Moses is telling us that God was sorrowful. He was grieved, much in the same way the Holy Spirit is grieved at our disobedience. This is why you and I, and pastors, need to give passages such as this, which may seem to be teaching that God changes His mind, more than a casual reading. We must study! When we do, we find that they teach the exact opposite-God is unchangeable. And when we compare this truth with the whole of God's teaching on the divine character, our findings are confirmed. There really is no shadow of turning with Thee!

Let's understand, secondly, that if God is incapable of changing His mind, the answer to the question of whether Christians are able to change God's mind through prayer should be obvious; No, we cannot. That being the case, our listener asks, "Then what sense is there in praying if we cannot change God's mind?" I shall answer that question in next month's issue.

A "HYMNSTORY"

■ Bill Dagle ■

With Christmas behind us and with the beginning of a new year, we all look forward to what the Lord has for us in '99. Maybe this will be the year that the world will finally see how great our God truly is as we all purpose to be soul-winners for Him. Just maybe you'll be the one who will win that last soul, prompting Jesus to return. Can you imagine what it will be like? On that great day, I wonder what song we will sing....

In 1885, a poem was written in Sweden by a 26 year old preacher named Carl Boberg under the title of "O Store Gud" which is translated "O Great God". It was a warm summer day when Carl and some of his friends had gone to a meeting some two miles from home. On the way back they were caught in a thunder storm. The storm broke with all its fury and then moved on and disappeared. Afterwards, a rainbow appeared in the sky, inspiring this young preacher to write the poem.

Over time the poem was translated into many different languages and found its way to countries all over the world. While working in western Ukraine and later in sub-carpethian Russia, an English missionary by the name of Stuart K. Hine gave us the inspiring original English words as we know them today. His experiences as a missionary, plus the grandeur and beauty of his surroundings, gave him the words for the hymn we know as *How Great Thou Art*.

It is interesting to note that this hymn has been used in some unusual settings not normally thought of as religious. Between the years of 1971 and 1977 a southern gospel group, the Stamps Quartet, traveled with Elvis Presley as backup in his concerts. Before the night would end, Elvis and the Stamps would sing "How Great Thou Art" and every night it would be the biggest song on the program. It has been said that some songs are gospel music "standards", but *How Great Thou Art* is the "standard".

As music prepares the heart for the message that "ye must be born again", why not purpose today to give that message to as many as you can this year. I guarantee that these words will take on new meaning: "When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation, and take me home - what joy shall fill my heart! Then I shall bow in humble adoration, and there proclaim, my God, how great thou art!"

SONGTIME TOURS & EVENTS IN 1999 & BEYOND!

"Springtime in Vermont" - May 6-9, 1999

As we make our way to Stowe the first morning we will visit the Vermont Country Store – have lunch in Rutland stopping at some spots of interest along the way. We'll arrive at **The Trapp Family Lodge** in time for afternoon tea. After checking in, we'll enjoy a 5-course gourmet dinner at the Lodge. Springtime is a wonderful time of year to visit as two of Maria VonTrapp's favorite flowers *Edelweiss & Snowdrops* – along with thousands of tulips - will be in bloom. After a hearty country breakfast we'll explore Stowe – visiting the quarries in Barre, the creamery in Cabot, the Vt. Teddy Bear, Ben & Jerry's and much more. We'll then stay at the **Golden Eagle Resort** and enjoy the facilities there prior to dinner in the hotel restaurant. Saturday we'll head south toward the Woodstock area where we'll enjoy our stay at the **Inn of the Six Mountains** – visit the home of Calvin Coolidge, Simon Pearce studio and other sites before our dinner at the Inn. A time of fellowship and games will round out the day. Sunday morning after a delicious breakfast, we'll travel over to the Woodstock Congregational Church for services where Dr. C.Everett Koop's son, Nathan, serves as pastor. Registration of \$100 pp will hold a spot on the bus for you. Cost includes 3 nights accommodations, daily breakfast & dinner, gratuities, tours and motorcoach. **Single-\$530/pp, Double-\$400/pp and Triple-\$360/pp.**

The Oberammergau Passion Play & Tour to Austria, Germany and Switzerland - August 2000

This 15 day Songtime tour will visit Heidelberg, Lucerne, Innsbruck, Salzburg, Vienna, Oberammergau and Munich. We'll cruise the **Rhine River**, travel through the **Black Forest** into Switzerland, continue to Interlaken, Innsbruck, Vienna, Salzburg & Munich. Of course we will top it all off by attending the world famous **Oberammergau Passion Play**, an event which only takes place every 10 years. Cost includes airfare, first class hotel accommodations, taxes and custom fees, meals per itinerary, sightseeing and entrance fees, all transfers, free baggage handling & English speaking guide - **\$3899/pp**

Songtime USA Anniversary Banquet June 25, 1999 at 7:00 pm

Join the Songtime team Friday night at Lantana's Restaurant in Randolph, MA as we observe 35 years of daily broadcasts and 50 years of radio ministry for John DeBrine. We'll begin our evening with a concert by **John Starnes** – have the banquet and be blessed by the message brought by Prophetic Prospective's **Dr. Jimmy DeYoung**. Cost of the banquet is \$25 per person. Reserved seating for those with a table of 8 or 10. We will have special tables for our Bermuda Tour and Pennsylvania Tour participants. Anyone needing overnight accommodations may call Marge at the office.

A Week in Branson, Missouri - October 21-27, 1999

Upon arrival in Kansas City, we'll check into our hotel – spend the afternoon at our leisure and then join together for a welcome dinner and get-acquainted time with our tour director, Marge. Day 2 we'll depart for Eureka Springs where we'll visit the **Precious Moments Chapel** and in the evening we'll attend **the Great Passion Play** that includes almost the entire community of Eureka Springs. This will surely be a highlight of our tour. On Day 3 we'll enjoy time for shopping and sight-seeing as we motor west through the countryside heading into the Ozarks. We'll stay in Branson, nicknamed "Music Capital of the World". The Sunday Gospel Show (a musical show featuring Gospel music) and an evening show featuring **Shoji Tabuchi**, a world-class performer and violinist is on our itinerary for the day. Day 4 we'll motor to Silver Dollar City – a colonial village where we'll witness trades people working on various crafts. We'll see a matinee show **The Promise** (a Broadway-style musical based on the gospel). In the evening we'll enjoy a dinner cruise on the paddle wheeler, **Showboat Branson's Belle**, as we cruise on Table Rock Lake. Day 5 we'll attend the **Doug Gambriel Breakfast Show**. The afternoon we are on our own to explore Branson – Attending a matinee show w/ **Bobby Vinton** and an evening show watching the famous **Osmond Family**. Day 6 we'll **Ride the Ducks** – an exciting amphibious ride on army ducks taking in a Branson tour through the countryside and over the hills of the Ozark Mtns. Our final evening, we'll see **Andy Williams** in concert. Day 7 after a hearty Ozark breakfast, we'll board our bus and head back through the foothills of the Ozarks in time to board our plane for home. Departure from Logan Airport (Boston) or Philadelphia. Cost includes airfare, airport transfers, baggage handling, hotel, 6 breakfasts & dinners, motorcoach & admissions as listed in the itinerary - **\$1199/pp**

Count me in! Please send a registration form for...

- "Springtime in Vermont" - May 6-9
- Songtime Anniversary Banquet with Dr. Jimmy DeYoung & John Starnes - June 25
- Tour to Branson, Missouri - October 21-27
- Christmas Tour to Lancaster & Bethlehem, PA - December 1999
- Oberammergau Passion Play, Songtime Tour to Germany & Austria - August 2000

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