

Why the Bible

Our Faith Trip

By Howard Lower

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This is a true story of a professional football coach who had an award winning golden retriever dog. One day this dog dropped a white dead rabbit at the coach's feet. It was dirty, but immediately the coach went into shock. This was the neighbor's white prize-winning rabbit. What would happen to his dog if the neighbor thought the dog had killed his rabbit? All kinds of things went through the coach's mind - including the neighbor would never forgive him.

The big, burly coach came up with a plan of attack. He took the rabbit into the kitchen and carefully put it in the sink, cleaning it with warm soapy water, removing the blood and dirt from the rabbit. He then used a hair dryer to blow the rabbit's fur dry until its coat was clean. He then brushed the hair out to make it look perfect - as if alive.

The coach then waited until the middle of the night to crawl under the fence and place the rabbit in its hutch. This was no easy task for this big, big football coach. He managed to get back home without being seen. He then went to bed very pleased with the thought of his neighbor thinking his rabbit had died a natural death. The Problem was solved, he thought.

Just after daybreak, the coach heard a loud banging on his door. He sleepily went to the door and was shocked to see his neighbor. The neighbor was angry saying somebody placed his prize-winning rabbit in its hutch last night. Whoever did this is a pervert and needs to be dealt with before he does some other idiotic thing in this neighborhood. Then the neighbor calmed down a bit to let the coach know his rabbit had died yesterday morning and had been buried three feet in the ground.

Covering up only multiplies and results in painful consequence. Wouldn't the truth have solved the problem? The coach was led astray by the devil's diversion. I feel this story is rich in our own humanity over the ages. Let's take a look at what God is telling us to do, as individuals and as a church.

Individually, you are on a trip. Your trip in life affects a lot of people, your spouse and children, your relatives and friends and organizations. How does it apply to your church? We, at Bethany Church, are about ready to take a trip as a congregation. This will probably be the most difficult trip we have ever taken in this church. How are we going to react to the changes? I suspect we are no different than those who God has called on before to make a trip. How did the people, God called, handle their calling? Did they handle the stress of a "new way" easily? Did all people do as God had led them to do?

Let us look at some key times of history. Let's look at the covenants God made with man. Just perhaps, perhaps, this will answer some questions for you.

First, what is a covenant? It is a legally binding obligation (promise). Throughout history God has made covenants with his people - he would keep his side if they would keep theirs.

For instance, Covenant 1) is God's promise in the Garden of Eden. Genesis tells us of the wonders God gave man if only in Genesis 2:17 we do not eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat of it you will surely die.

The devil is introduced in Genesis 3:15 "From now on, you and the woman will be enemies, and your offspring and her offspring will be enemies. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Let me rephrase this verse in a simpler way. From now on Satan and mankind will be enemies. Jesus Christ will crush Satan by rising from the dead. Satan will make repeated attempts to defeat Christ during his life on earth, but Satan's attempts will not succeed. God has made Satan and mankind enemies.

How is Satan going to try and destroy us, God's people? Satan's ways are simple.

Satan's Plan (the five d's of the devil) is to:

- ☞ seed **Doubt** which makes you question God's Word and his goodness;
- ☞ create **Discouragement** which makes you look at your problems rather than at God;
- ☞ spread **Diversions** which makes the wrong things seem attractive so that you will want them more than the right things;
- ☞ seed **Defeat** to make you feel like a failure so that you don't even try;
- ☞ have you **Delay** so you put off doing something so that it never gets done.

Covenant 2) The world in Noah's day was filled with evil, except for one person and his family – Noah. Noah, under God's direction, took 120 years to build the Ark as the last chance for human life on earth. He built this huge boat on dry land. Noah made this long-term commitment to the project as the only follower of God left. Noah did not let Satan win by having doubt, discouragement, diversion, defeat or delay. Genesis 6:22 "So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him."

Covenant 3) Abraham, Genesis 15:12-21; 17:1-14 Abraham's descendants would become a great nation if they obeyed God. God would be their God forever. At 99 years old Abram, a wealthy livestock owner, followed God's direction and moved out in faith. God changed his name to Abraham as he obeyed, leaving his home and friends and traveling to a new land where God promised him long life and millions of descendants and many more promises were kept by God.

Yet all around Abraham, God was not happy with Sodom and Gomorrah and the evil in the city as the people allowed doubt, discouragement, diversion, defeat, delay tactics of the devil to occur. They were not obedient to God and were destroyed.

Covenant 4) At Mount Sinai, Exodus 19:5, 6 Israel would be God's special people, a holy nation. But they would have to keep their part of the covenant – obedience. Moses is God's intermediary to Moses people. The covenant was God promised to bless the Israelites by making them the nation through whom the rest of the world could know God. In return, the Israelites promised to love and obey God in order to receive physical and spiritual blessings. Moses received the Ten Commandments and many more rules and laws.

Yet the devil continued to attack mankind with doubt, discouragement, diversion, defeat and delay. Moses continued to fight the devil yet he, himself, failed to obey God once and never put foot in the Promised Land.

Covenant 5) The Priesthood, Numbers 25: 10-13 Aaron's descendants would be priests forever.

Covenant 6) tells us of David in 2 Samuel 7:13; 23:5 that salvation would come through David's line through the birth of the Messiah. David regarded God's interests as more important than his own. David had many weaknesses including adultery with Bathsheba and he murdered her husband. The result was David's actions created a cycle of suffering for his family and nation.

Covenant 7) The New Covenant, where Forgiveness and salvation are available through faith in Christ. Let's look closer at this covenant. Hebrews 8:6-13 has been read for you. Let's look at Hebrews 8:10 and 11.

¹⁰ But this is the new covenant I will make
with the people of Israel on that day, says the Lord:
I will put my laws in their minds
so they will understand them,
and I will write them on their hearts
so they will obey them.
I will be their God,
and they will be my people.

¹¹ And they will not need to teach their neighbors,
nor will they need to teach their family,

saying, 'You should know the Lord.'
For everyone, from the least to the greatest,
will already know me.

Under God's new covenant, God's law is inside us. It is no longer an external set of rules and principles. The Holy Spirit is in each of us and reminds us of Christ's words, activates our conscience, influences our motives and desires, and makes us want to obey. Now doing God's will is something we desire with all our heart and mind.

Luke 19:10 And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those like him who are lost."

Then we are given authority by Christ to go out in his name ...

Luke 9:1 One day Jesus called together his twelve apostles and gave them power and **authority** to cast out demons and to heal all diseases.

Luke 10:19 And I have given you **authority** over all the power of the enemy, and you can walk among snakes and scorpions and crush them. Nothing will injure you.

Satan is also patient and present trying to create doubt, discouragement, diversion, defeat and delay within us as individuals and as a church.

Many have worked very hard on a mission statement that would be our guide on how we are to do God's work. Many of your prayers were raised up to God allowing God's will

to be stated in this mission statement. You asked for God's guidance and I believe it was given. The Holy Spirit is in this church. The mission statement is "Go and bring people to faith and freedom in Jesus Christ."

This mission statement is leading us down God-given-paths we have been directed to take. Now we are in for the biggest and toughest task, ever, for this church. Are you ready to have the Holy Spirit direct you or are you going to let the devils 5 d's (doubt, discouragement, diversion, defeat, delay) rule us and influence us. Satan is standing by rubbing his hands and waiting for a chance to help us fail. Do you want to be on God's side or the other side? If you feel doubt, discouragement, diversion, defeat, delay, then fight those feelings off with prayer and participation. Unite with your brothers and sisters – your extended family in Jesus Christ. Unite to bring others to faith and freedom in our Lord and Savior.

Only with the Holy Spirit on our side can we succeed. How do we make the trip a good and Godly trip? By being true to the Covenant God has made with us through Jesus Christ. When we are true to this covenant we are told we will be greatly rewarded. Remember, God has never broken His Word.

Are you ready for the trip of your life?