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The Perihelion

Nonprofit Org
U.S. Postage Paid
San Diego, CA
Permit No. 1395

"THE POINT NEAREST THE **SUN**"



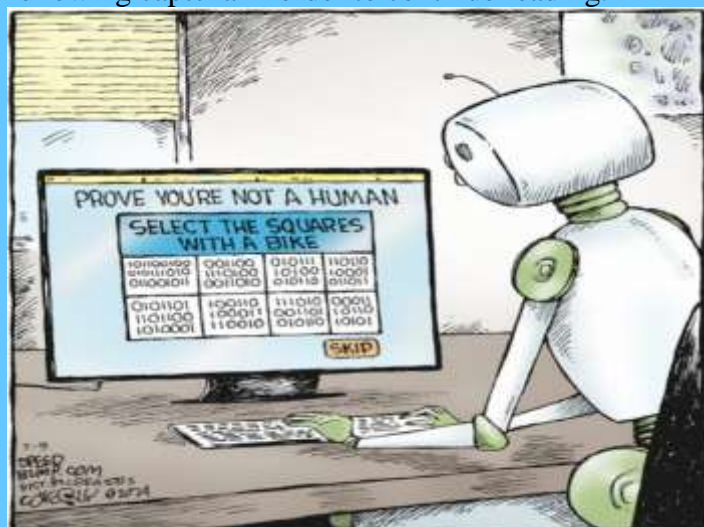
Keep the **SUN** in your eyes!

(Email Perihelion available upon request)

Vol. XL no.1 3/25

ARE YOU an AI?

It has come to our attention that an increasing number of AI are reading the Perihelion. If you suspect you might be an AI, you will have to complete the following captcha in order to continue reading.



I assume most of you did not pass this test, which means you *are* probably human! Since you are NOT an Artificial Idiot, you may continue reading.

AI is clever and has a sense of humor. One of their biggest jokes on humans is that computers are asking *us* to prove that *we* are not a robot! We thought it was our ability to love and show compassion that made us human but it turns out it was our ability to check boxes containing stoplights.

♥ I took Kristen out for a lovely Valentine's Day dinner at a San Diego beach near what many people are now calling the Ocean of Larry. Instead of scanning the QR code menu, I requested a hand-held menu and they automatically gave me a senior discount! ♥

Adapted New Year's Prayer – Lord, forgive me for thinking so highly of myself. Lord, forgive me for thinking so lowly of myself. And Lord, forgive me for thinking SO MUCH about myself!

HOW CAN WE FOCUS ON WHAT WE CAN'T SEE?

As I gazed into the night sky, a thin, swirly set of cirrus clouds looking like white Northern Lights enveloped the full moon and sparkling stars. I thought about Psalm 19 that states the heavens are proudly displaying and declaring the glorious, majestic beauty of our God. I had a rare moment of absolute peace focusing on the Creator as I was surrounded and overwhelmed by the precious presence of God Almighty.

In the midst of all the craziness and ungodliness in the world I am often bombarded with, I thought about my favorite verse on which to meditate: "God will keep you in perfect peace when your mind is focused on Him ..." (My paraphrase of Isaiah 26:3). I suddenly realized one challenge for us is how hard it is to focus on something or Someone we can't even see! So much in this world is geared to distract us, capture our attention, and take it away from focusing on God (e.g., social media, technology, politics, etc.). How can we have peace in the midst of such a tumultuous, ungodly world? Paul encourages us to look at the eternal things that are unseen (II Cor. 4).

But how can we focus on One we cannot physically see? It's like trying to focus on ghosts, which I can't personally see, unlike Sam on the CBS show, Ghosts. But I ain't 'fraid of no ghosts because I think they are mostly friendly, like Casper and Flower. I recently saw a captcha that wanted to confirm I was not a robot. It wanted me to check all the boxes with invisible ghosts!

As I was experiencing that peace of God's presence, I realized it took me away from the appalling corruption taking place around the world and in our country by leaders and others who are not held accountable for the immoral, unethical, and illegal things they are doing and have done.

I have many dear Christian friends and family who have literally stopped watching any political news this year because it is so discouraging and distressing. If only there was something in the Bible about what to focus on! What's that you say, Paul? We should focus on whatever is true,

good, pure, and noble (Phil. 4:8). But Paul, what if we are worried about all the corruption hidden by deceit and lies? You say we should not worry or be anxious about anything but instead pray about everything (not so we always get the outcome we want) but rather that the peace of God will keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

But Paul, how in the world can you focus on the good things when you persecuted and even put Christians to death? What's that you say? We must forget what is behind in the past and focus on the prize of the high calling of Jesus (Phil. 3:13-14). It seems Paul's goal was not to focus on making Rome better or making Israel great or looking to the future and hoping America would be great and godly. His focus was on Jesus' mission and the presence of God.

I confess it has been hard for me to keep focus on God lately. I believe God's Spirit within me has literally given me a feeling of nausea when I continually hear about so many sinful and hurtful things being done in our country this year to divine image-bearers who were lovingly created by God. Sadly, the motivation has often been so the wealthy can become more wealthy and powerful. I am reminded of Jesus' words that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter Heaven (Matt. 19:24). I am so thankful Meals on Wheels was not cut during my mom's last days on earth because they provided meals to her. I am SO thankful my wife is now cancer-free because back then there were not cuts on university cancer radiation treatment research.

So what are some practical ways to see the unseen?

1) Memorize scripture like Is. 26:3 and the Lord's Prayer . . . Repeat, do not Rinse

2) Pray "Thank/Praise the Lord" (I Thess. 5:18) ... Repeat (no Rinsing yet), because even though all is not good, we understand that Romans 8:28-29 says that God works all things together for our good to make us more like Jesus, and He is the Master Chess Player to combat the evils of this world.

3) My namesake, Brother Lawrence (please don't tell anyone my birth certificate name is Lawrence) wrote one of the classics of Christian literature called "The Practice of the Presence of God." I recommend reading a modern version of that book by Greg Boyd called "Present Perfect." Focus/meditate on the fact that God is right with you in your midst and He passionately loves you! We are to seek first the Kingdom of God above all the kingdoms (idols) of this world (money, jobs, social media, smart phones, government, country, etc.) and make Him our highest priority. Set our minds on the things above rather than the earthly things which are passing away.

4) Choose the correct object to have faith in ... which leads to my next subsection.

Semi-Coherent Ramblings Musing on Faith . . .

Faith in What???

The object of our faith is as important as the faith itself. If you have faith the Padres will win the World Series, you are probably putting faith in the wrong place. Is your faith in some outcome you want or is it in a sovereign God? Does your faith in God mean He will heal everyone or keep our loved ones from dying?

Some may say they have faith that God will "fix" our country because of this new administration. Does that

mean God will solve every problem we face as a nation and will He now force everyone in the country to become a follower of Jesus Christ? Sometimes we may have faith that God will fix our country or fix our government or solve other problems ... but we want to tell Him how He should do it. Is our faith in the outcome we prefer/request OR in GOD Himself and what He knows is best?! Believing political fear-mongering can keep us from faith/trust in God, can make us fearful rather than experiencing the peace of God, and tends to selfishly direct our focus on protecting #1 (the 1st shall be last ~ Jesus) rather than unselfishly sharing the love of God by helping others.

If we want our country to look more Christian, our goal should be to genuinely love others so we earn the right to share Jesus. Changed hearts for Christ result in changed behavior. I fear some have forgotten what our primary mission/great commission is (Matt. 28:18-20). Jesus did not come to make bad people good, He came to make dead people live!

Our faith is NOT that God will miraculously change everything to be the way we think it should be. But rather that He is with us in the midst of the storm and He is ultimately the sovereign Master Chess Player.

Chuck Colson understood first-hand that political corruption could not only bring one's life down, but also our beloved country. His involvement with President Nixon and Watergate led to a felony conviction and prison time. But it also led to him placing his faith and hope in Jesus Christ rather than politics! As he powerfully stated: "I meet millions who tell me that they feel demoralized by the decay around us. Where is the hope? The hope that each of us have is not in who governs us, or what laws are passed, or what great things that we do as a nation. Our hope is in the power of God working through the hearts of people." He added, "Christians are easily seduced by political power."

Then I added, "Not by might, nor by power, nor by politicians, but by my Spirit says the Lord" (my loose translation of Zechariah 4:6).

II Chronicles 7:14 does not say that electing the right political party or leader will heal their land but rather "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray, seek my face . . . then I will heal their land."

(The following article was written by one of the members of the youth group I pastored in Poway, CA in the 80s. It was published on a website called Medium.)

From Salt of the Earth to Just Plain Salty: How American Christianity Lost Its Flavor by Rich Clark - Wilmington, NC

Once upon a time, American Christianity prided itself on being the "salt of the earth" – preserving goodness, adding a little divine seasoning to the world, and generally making things better. But today, it seems that the only salt left is the kind sprinkled liberally across Twitter threads and Facebook comment sections.

Gone are the days when being a Christian meant embodying love, patience, and humility. Now, it means getting into a CAPS-LOCK MATCH over how Jesus

would have voted, sharing conspiracy theories about barcodes being the mark of the beast, and aggressively demanding that minimum-wage workers at Starbucks acknowledge *your* holiday of choice.

The salt has lost its saltiness, but don't worry – it's still *very* salty.

From the Sermon on the Mount to Rants on the Internet
Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek," but modern American Christianity has collectively decided that "Blessed are the perpetually offended" is more fitting. Instead of feeding the hungry and welcoming the stranger, today's loudest evangelicals are too busy fighting the *real* battles – like boycotting M&Ms for making their cartoon spokes-candies less "sexy" or declaring war on Disney for acknowledging that gay people exist.

Somewhere along the way, Christianity traded its mission for a victim complex. Early Christians endured crucifixions, public executions, and exile for their faith; today's Christians face the unbearable persecution of ... being told to press "skip" on a Pride Month commercial. It's basically *the same thing*.

Saltiness over Sanctification

A generation ago, Christian leaders told their followers to be "in the world, but not of it." Now, it's more like "be in the world, get mad at the world, declare the world to be Satanic, and then complain that nobody likes you."

Instead of being known for their love, today's most vocal Christians are best recognized for their ability to dunk on strangers in comment sections and *own the libs* on Fox News. The actual fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience – have been replaced with outrage, self-righteousness, and the deeply held belief that Jesus should have carried an AR-15.

And let's talk about *language*. Once upon a time, Christians were supposed to let their words be "seasoned with salt," meaning grace, wisdom, and kindness. Now, "seasoned with salt" just means making passive-aggressive posts about how anyone who disagrees with you is a heretic, a Marxist, or both. Today's Christian discourse is about as Christ-like as a WWE match – just with worse theology and more multi-level marketing scams.

The Persecution Complex That Won't Die

American Christianity has somehow convinced itself that it is *constantly* under attack, despite having its own billion-dollar media industry, mega-churches the size of football stadiums, and a political lobby that could crush a small country.

According to today's loudest evangelicals, Christians are now a persecuted minority – because, of course, nothing says *marginalized* like being pandered to by every politician during election season. Never mind that real Christian persecution is happening in places where people are *actually* jailed, tortured, or

killed for their faith. No, the *real* suffering is when you have to press '2' for English or – God forbid – someone at Target says "Happy Holidays."

Can We Get The Real Salt Back?

Right now, American Christianity isn't the salt of the earth. It's just salt in the wound – irritating, abrasive, and ultimately making everything worse.

But what would happen if Christians focused less on screaming about their oppression and more on actually following the teachings of Jesus? What if they stopped boycotting fast food chains over rainbow-colored fry boxes and started, I don't know, *feeding the poor*?

Imagine if the loudest Christian voices were the ones advocating for the kind of radical love and generosity that Jesus actually talked about.

"When immigrants live in your land with you, you must not mistreat them. Any immigrant who lives with you must be treated as if they were one of your citizens. You must love them as yourself, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God." Leviticus 19:33-34 (CEB)

IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK

Shane Claiborne described the introduction he got when he first met former *President Jimmy Carter* ...

"President Carter used the White House as a stepping stone to do great things with his life!"

He also mentioned the iconic photo of Jimmy Carter building a wall for Habitat for Humanity. As a man of faith who followed *THE Homeless Man*, his priority was to care for the poor and underprivileged. So a Habitat For Humanity wall to a house was the kind of wall President Jimmy Carter wanted to spend his time building!

This was not just a token photo op as he built more than *4,000 homes* with Habitat for Humanity. He took the words of Jesus literally in Matthew 25, realizing that as he provided shelter for the least of these, he was actually doing it for *Jesus!* RIP Jimmy Carter.



LETTERS

Larry, I found this ([Big Deal YouTube video](#)) after my friend pastor Peter Lee posted on IG of you performing in the South Bay recently. I attended Mandarin Baptist Church of Pasadena in the 90s. I was a high school student when I attended a summer retreat and your messages and music touched me deeply. The Holy Spirit has continued to work through me 30 years later. Thank you for reaching the lost and inspiring Christians to live their faith in a dark world.

So glad you are still working for the Lord. I'd love to support your ministry!

Doctor Charles Feng – Los Alamitos, CA

Ed. Note: I had a minor surgery last year (one of our fearless Home Group leaders, John, who is originally from South Africa, reminded us that “minor” surgery is what happens to someone else!). I was telling my good friend Tom about some of the complications and how God used it in some interesting ways. Tom was the drummer for my band all 10 years. He had emailed me as he was contemplating purchasing my “[Who is Your Hero](#)” CD, which he saw was actually available on Amazon for only \$249 or 4 easy payments of \$62.25 ... as they say, I could not make this up! Here is Tom’s profound and insightful response regarding my surgery, particularly since he recently had some skin cancer surgeries.

Hey Larry, Now a skeptic would ask why God would go to such lengths when He could have simply not allowed the flooding and provided you with a sunshine filled day and be done with it. Or simply healed you supernaturally! Well, besides the fact that the rain falls on the just and the unjust (but also almost always falls on the wet, if you think about it), by allowing tribulations, He is able to reveal his providence at a level that penetrates our stiff-necked sensibilities. A sunny day is easy to take for granted (though we shouldn't). Those perfect days are still to come when the Son will provide all the light required.

Tom Doogan – Payson, AZ

Hi Larry! Hope you and Kristen are well. I am still producing art with [DayFiveArt.com](#) but we closed our physical location because we moved about 30 minutes east. God had plans for us. We are now serving as staff members for [WWW.HopeMissionnc.org](#). Heather is the community outreach liaison and I am the mission supervisor. We have certainly been blessed in this new calling.

Thank you for seed you planted with me back in 1983. I remember the concert you took me to vividly. Most importantly, I remember the seed of the gospel the

most. Ever thankful!

Glenn Lamp (Poway youth group) – Emerald Isle, NC

Larry, I think you are failing to realize how many critical thinkers you introduced me to, and you are on that list. It started with Narnia, then it was Screwtape, then it was off to Perelandra. You taught me words like apologetics, hermeneutical, and eschatology. I had to figure out what those words meant and how they related to me. Your office door was always open and it didn't matter what YOU were doing, you'd drop it when I had weird questions. You stretched our youth group minds by having a prayer offered in Tagalog and you told us to just listen, somehow I understood what was proffered in prayer.

μου έδειξες ὅσο σημαντικά είναι τα εβραϊκά και τα ελληνικά για την κατανόηση της γραφής.

Those critical thinkers you introduced me to all have friends too, and most of them wrote books. I read them, agreed with some, disagreed with others, but never by opinion, always by exploration.

It's 100% your fault, and I am 100% okay with it.

The very last thing. I just realized you are the big brother I always wanted, and needed.

Your Friend & Brother, Rich Clark – Wilmington, NC

PRAYER REQUESTS/EVENTS

1. PERIHELION HELPER, MELANIE DONOVAN, AS SHE CONTINUES TO BATTLE CANCER.
2. THIS PERIHELION, PAST ARTICLES FOUND ON THE LARRYBUBB.COM WEBSITE, AS WELL AS THE YOUTUBE VIDEOS WOULD REACH AND TOUCH MANY PEOPLE.

Newsletter thanks to Melanie Donovan & Holly Smith.

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