



The G.E.M.

Volume 2 Edition 4

The Grace Electronic Magazine

April 2008

TIME OF FREEDOM

Welcome to the April edition of The G.E.M. Can you believe it, April already. Time is going by so quickly that Christmas is such a distant memory, especially since Easter has already passed us by. Before we know it, we will be planning for Christmas this year.

One thing however that we can be grateful for, is that because of these two events in history, we as Christians can enjoy freedom. Not the freedom that the world enjoys, as will be celebrated later this month, but a freedom that comes from Christ and is in Christ. Be sure to check out our main article on page 3 for more about that.

In keeping with this theme, our Missions Spotlight focusses on a country that likes to consider itself truly free, the United States of America.

You will also see that we have made a few changes to The G.E.M. We have replaced our promotions page with a fun page, with a picture for the children to colour, along with our usual Word Sudoku, and some other fun tidbits.

Finally, be sure to visit our website. We have made things a little more user friendly, have added quite a few new links and have also include some exciting new downloads. Check it out at www.gracemedia.co.za.

Until next time,
God bless. †



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THE BRIDGE

There was once a bridge that spanned a large river. During most of the day the bridge sat with its length running up and down the river parallel with the banks, allowing ships to pass freely on both sides of the bridge.

But at certain times each day, a train would come along and the bridge would be turned sideways across the river, allowing a train to cross it. A switchman sat in a small shack on one side of the river where he operated the controls to turn the bridge and lock it into place.

One evening as the switchman was waiting for the last train of the day to come, he looked off into the distance through the dimming twilight and caught sight of the train lights. He stepped to the control and waited until the train was within a prescribed distance when he was to turn the bridge. He turned the bridge into position, but, to his horror, he found the locking control did not work.

If the bridge was not securely in position it would wobble back and forth at the ends when the train came onto it, causing the train to jump the track and go crashing into the river. This would be a passenger train with many people aboard.

He left the shack and hurried across the bridge to the other side of the river where there was a lever switch he could hold to operate the lock manually. He would have to hold the lever back firmly as the train crossed. He could hear the rumble of the train now, and he took hold of the lever and leaned backward to apply his weight to it, locking the bridge. He kept applying the pressure to keep the mechanism locked.

Many lives depended on this man's strength.

Then, coming across the bridge from the direction of his control shack, he heard a sound that made his blood run cold. "Daddy, where are you?"

His four-year-old son was crossing the bridge to look for him. His first impulse was to cry out to the child to run, but the train was too close; the tiny legs would never make it across the bridge in time. The man almost left his lever to run and snatch up his son and carry him to safety, but he realised that he could not get back to the lever in time. Either the people on the train or his little son must die. He took a moment to make his decision.

The train sped safely and swiftly on its way, and no one aboard was even aware of the tiny broken body thrown mercilessly into the river by the rushing train. Nor were they aware of the pitiful figure of the sobbing man, still clinging tightly to the locking lever long after the train had passed.

They did not see him walking home more slowly than he had ever walked: to tell his wife how their son had brutally died.

Now if you comprehend the emotions which went through this man's heart, you can begin to understand the feelings of our Father in Heaven when He sacrificed His Son to bridge the gap between us and eternal life. Can there be any wonder that He caused the earth to tremble and the skies to darken when His Son died? How does He feel when we speed along through life without giving a thought to what was done for us through Jesus Christ?

When was the last time we thanked Him for the sacrifice of His Son?

by Joseph Vogel †

TRADING HOURS:

Monday – Friday:

9am – 5pm

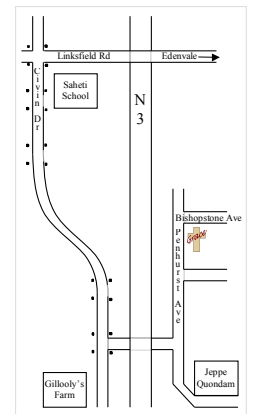
Saturday:

9am – 2pm

*Closed Sundays and
some Public Holidays*

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Directions: From the N3, take the Linksfield Rd off ramp. Turn right up hill. Stay in left lane. Turn left into Civin Dr. At 4th set of lights, turn left under bridge. At t-junction turn left. Through the boom. We are ± 200m on the right hand side. Entrance is in Penhurst Ave.



MISSIONS SPOTLIGHT

United States of America

Capital: Washington DC

Official Languages: English

Currency: US Dollar

Population: 303,641,000

Government:

Federal Presidential Constitutional Republic

The United States is a culturally diverse nation, home to a wide variety of ethnic groups, traditions, and values. There is no true American ethnicity, as nearly all Americans or their ancestors immigrated to America within the past 400 years. The mix of cultures may be characterised as a melting pot or as a pluralistic salad bowl in which immigrants and their descendants retain distinctive cultural and religious characteristics.

While American culture maintains that the United States is a classless society, economists and sociologists have identified cultural differences between the country's social classes, affecting socialisation, language, and values. The American middle and professional class has been the source of many contemporary social trends such as feminism, environmentalism, and multiculturalism. Women, formerly limited to domestic roles, now mostly work outside the home and receive a majority of bachelor's degrees. The changing role of women has also changed the American family. The extension of marital rights to homosexual persons is an issue of debate, with more liberal states permitting civil unions. Forty-four states still legally restrict marriage to the traditional man-and-woman model.

The United States government does not audit Americans' religious beliefs. In a private survey conducted in 2001, 76.5% of American adults identified themselves as Christian. Protestant denominations accounted for 52% of adult Americans, while Roman Catholics, at 24.5%, were the largest individual denomination. A different study describes white evangelicals, 26.3% of the population, as the country's largest religious group; evangelicals of all races are estimated at 30–35%. The total reporting non-Christian religions in 2001 was 3.7%. The leading non-Christian faiths were Judaism (1.4%), Islam (0.5%), Buddhism (0.5%), Hinduism (0.4%), and Unitarian Universalism (0.3%). Between 1990 and 2001, the number of Muslims and Buddhists more than doubled. 14.1% describe themselves as agnostic, atheist, or simply having no religion.



Extracted from Wikipedia.com

GREEN DOT SALE

Selected items
Less 15 %

While Stocks last



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Shekel Card holders receive an extra 5% on the Green Dot Sale

DIARY OF EVENTS

Mighty Men 2008 Conference

18-20 April 2008 at Shalom Farm, Greytown
For more information visit: www.shalomtrust.co.za

The Heart of Success Seminar

With Rob Parsons
18 April 2008, Indaba Hotel, Fourways
For more information contact: events@fotf.co.za

Beauty for Ashes Women's Conference

16-17 May 2008, Mosaiek Teatro, Fairland
For more information visit: www.beautyforashes.co.za

Christian Business Expo

Date changed to October 2008
For more information visit: www.christianexpo.co.za

Top 25 Must Reads

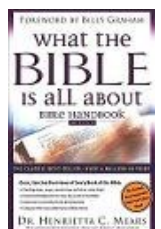
What the Bible is all About
by Dr Henrietta C. Mears

Everyone who has a Bible should have a copy of *What the Bible is All About*. In clear, concise language, it gives you an excellent overview and understanding of every book in the Bible - and makes it come alive as never before.

Discover why this is one of the world's best-selling Bible handbooks with more than 4 million sold.

User-friendly in every way, it makes it easier than ever for you to plant the Word in your heart on your lifelong journey with God!

R 150.00



BREAK THE CHAINS

One of the most dramatic scenes ever captured on film is the execution of William Wallace in the movie *Braveheart*. Wallace was being tortured for his crimes of treason against the crown of Britain. This brutal act was an attempt to give Wallace a final opportunity to renounce his deeds and realign his allegiance to the King. When Wallace is given some relief to speak, through the pain of disembowelment, he cries out, "Freedom!"

Freedom – a word that has stirred up many hearts in the world and caused more change in nations than any other. From great leaders like Martin Luther King Jr to Mahatma Ghandi, the idea of freedom has been in the forefront of many people's minds. And South Africa has certainly been no exception.

Since the collapse of our apartheid government fourteen years ago, many of our nation's leaders and citizens have been celebrating the freedom that they have long been denied. However, some of the "freedoms" to be exercised like abortion, homosexuality, pornography, religious pluralism and many other immoral activities, have much to be desired. It is obvious that many people have a false concept of freedom.

The church, however, has not been innocent in this regard either. Many feel a similar sense of freedom in not observing what they feel are old fashioned practices. They feel free from the law. They feel that the burden of the law has been lifted, and that they are no longer under bondage. They believe they are free from many of the teachings of Scripture. That Christ did everything for them, setting them free from any practices except an indistinct obligation to love God and their fellow man.

FALSE FREEDOM PROPHESED

Scripture warns us about false promises of freedom. One such warning in 2 Peter 2 states: "For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity - for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him." (vv18,19)

In verse 18 we see the word "empty." This word suggests the idea of futility or frustration – of something that can never attain its goal. The false teachers' words, while superficially attractive, cannot produce the spiritual fulfilment that they offer. As we read in verse 19, one such promise is freedom. The result therefore is not freedom, but rather bondage. Bondage to the depravity that the false teachers are themselves in bondage to.

One practical example of this is the sale of

indulgences that was practised in the church during the Middle Ages. People were promised freedom from purgatory for their families and themselves as a reward for their "gifts" towards the church. The "freedom" was not worth the paper it was written on, never mind the spiritual freedom it was promising. Instead a "fake freedom" was promised by people who were only trying to put more money into the coffers, and to keep them under their man made rules.

JESUS BRINGS TRUE FREEDOM

Christ came to bring freedom. Luke writes that when Jesus was handed the book of Isaiah to read in the synagogue in Nazareth, He found the place where it was written "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (4:18-19).

Christ came to free us from sin through His atoning sacrifice. Hebrews 2:14-15 tells us that Jesus "shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."

God's calling frees us from wrong spiritual concepts. Galatians 4:3-7 says: "So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir."

A Christian is called away from superstition, error, bondage, deception, guilt, depravity, ignorance and a destructive life, from being a captive of satan and facing eternal death. He is called to freedom in Christ, receiving forgiveness of sins through His shed blood, enjoying freedom from guilt, having an awareness of the truth of God and, as a free gift, the hope of eternal life.

RIGHT LIVING

The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Christ paid the death penalty for us, freeing us from death row through His sacrifice. We have been set free, but, as Paul wrote, this freedom does not give us license or permission to continue to do the very things that brought on the death penalty in the first place (Romans 6:11-22). Paul wrote in Galatians 5:13, "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love."

Many of us suffer the weight of guilt and shame over past and present sin. As a result we attempt to live perfect lives. When things go bad we scramble to discover the sin in our lives that caused God to withhold His blessing. This is bondage.

We need to strive to be godly (God-honouring), but godliness is not the elimination of sin in our lives; godliness is how we deal with the sin in our lives. We will never fall out of God's grace and love. Romans

8:35-39 says that nothing can separate us from the love of God. This passage also implies that, while we can do nothing to lose God's love, we also can do nothing to earn more of it.

Many Christians believe that God will love them more or extend more favour and blessing to them if only they perform better. This too is bondage. We must not allow ourselves to be so wrapped up in the action of life that we take our eyes off the God of our lives. The truth is that God's blessing, through Christ's grace, is lavished or poured upon us (Ephesians 1:7-8), like being under a refreshing waterfall on a hot summer's day.

The way we are to walk in this new freedom is a process of us learning how to allow God's Spirit to transform us step by step. Christ has removed the veil from our hearts and the Holy Spirit will transform us as we learn to walk by faith. But it is a process. Do not be like the Judaizers of Paul's day who accepted Christ as their Saviour and were set free, but then they wanted to return to the bondage of keeping the letter of the Law.

There is much bondage in the world today. Sin abounds and deviant behaviour, immorality, addictions, anger, and selfishness are infecting our society. Do not allow these bondages to enslave you. Christ has called you into freedom. Allow the Holy Spirit to keep you in that freedom.

So this Freedom Day, let us not only celebrate the freedom of our nation, but let us also celebrate the freedom in our soul. As John 8:36 promises us, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." †

"SO IF THE SON SETS YOU FREE, YOU WILL BE FREE INDEED."

FREEDOM DOES NOT GIVE US LICENSE TO DO AS WE CHOOSE

Inspirational Read

Why the Ten Commandments Matter by D. James Kennedy

Dr Kennedy looks at the Ten Commandments and shows how they are, in fact, a prescription for a happier life – and a guide for a safe and productive society.

R 150.00



FUN PAGE

INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES

"Satan called a worldwide convention. In the opening address to his evil spirits he said, 'We can't keep true Christians from going to church. We can't keep them from reading their Bibles and knowing the truth. We can't even keep them from having conservative values. But we can do something else. We can keep them from forming an intimate, abiding experience with Christ. If they gain that connection with Jesus, our power over them is broken. So let them go to church, read their Bibles, and have their conservative lifestyles, but steal their time so they do not have time to have an intimate fellowship with Christ. This is what I want you to do: keep them busy in the non-essentials of life and invent innumerable schemes to occupy their minds.' How tragic it is that the devil has been so successful in getting so many believers to overextend themselves today in this world's pursuits to the neglect of fellowship with Christ."

- Don Currin



"The devil has seldom done a cleverer thing than hinting to the church that part of their mission is to provide entertainment for the people, with a view to winning them..... providing amusement for the people is nowhere spoken of in the Scriptures as a function of the church.....the need is for Biblical doctrine, so understood and felt that it sets men aflame."

- Charles Haddon Spurgeon



"The branch of the vine does not worry, and toil, and rush here to seek for sunshine, and there to find rain. No; it rests in union and communion with the vine; and at the right time, and in the right way, is the right fruit found on it. Let us so abide in the Lord Jesus."

- Hudson Taylor



"The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us; just as the roof of a sunhouse does not attract the sun because it is bright, but becomes bright because the sun shines on it."

- C.S. Lewis



"I have held many things in my hands, and have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess."

- Martin Luther

COLOUR ME IN



The Rainbow... God's Promise.

"I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of a covenant between me and the earth.... Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life."
(Genesis 9:13,15).



WORD SUDOKU

This puzzle works in the same manner as normal Sudoku, except that the numbers have been replaced with letters.

When complete, revealed in the shaded area will be the word that completes the following verse:

The plans of the _____ are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful.
[Proverbs 12:5]

Answer in next edition.

Last Month's Solution

S	C	O	N	R	D	L	A	U
A	D	R	C	L	U	S	O	N
N	U	L	O	A	S	C	D	R
L	R	D	S	O	N	A	U	C
C	A	U	L	D	R	O	N	S
O	N	S	U	C	A	D	R	L
D	S	C	R	U	O	N	L	A
U	O	N	A	S	L	R	C	D
R	L	A	D	N	C	C	U	S

Letters Used

E G H I O R S T U

	G		E			I	R	O
			T	G	S			
							S	
				R		E	G	
U		E		S				
	R							
			O	E	G			
G	H	S			U		O	

God Bless You