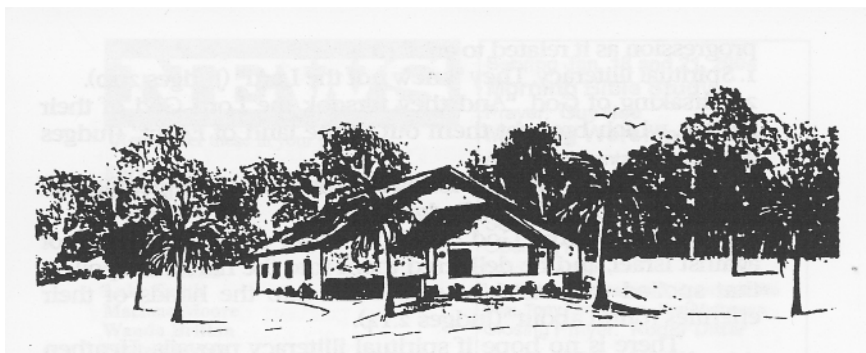




Cape Coral Church of Christ

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<http://www.thelordsway.com/capecoralfl>

Schedule of Services

Sunday: Bible Study: 9:30 A.M.

Worship: 10:30 A.M. and 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday: Bible Study: 6:00 P.M.

Vol. 39, No. 43

November 2, 2025

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

The story is told of a missionary who once visited a very primitive tribe of people. These people had very little contact with the outside world, and they were totally unfamiliar with many things we take for granted. One of the things they had never before seen was a mirror. The only way they knew what they looked like was the very poor reflection one can sometimes see in the water. One day, the missionary hung a mirror on a tree. The tribe's chief happened to walk past the mirror, so he stopped, stood there, and looked at it for quite some time. Then he walked directly to the missionary and asked him to explain.

The missionary explained what a mirror was and that it was a reflection of what he looked like. The chief promptly walked back to the mirror, took it off the tree, and smashed it on the ground. The missionary asked him why he broke the mirror to which the chief replied, "Because the face that was being reflected was ugly."

When I heard that story, I couldn't help but think that in spite of all our sophistication, we still behave quite primitively at times. God's word functions as a mirror to our soul. We can look at it and learn exactly what we look like to God and others. Sometimes, the reflection is not very flattering. So we're left with a choice. Do we try to destroy the

mirror? Do we refuse to look in the mirror again? Or do we do what we can to improve the way we look?

I know what the tribal chief did, but what do you do? Give it some thought.

"For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:23-25).

What Have You Got to Smile About?

Smiling is a natural reaction to having a happy heart. I'm not talking about a smirk, leer or a sneer but a genuine, radiant, beaming smile.

Actually, there is a lot about "smiling" in the Bible although the actual word isn't used much in most English translations. For instance, Proverbs 15:13 in the old King James Version talks about "a cheerful countenance." An easier version makes the translation clearer. "A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit." And, Psalms 34:5 uses the phrase "radiant faces."

Cheerful countenance, happy heart, radiant face ... what great descriptions of someone who is genuinely happy!

Did you know that God smiles? That is what is meant by Numbers 6:25: "The Lord make His face shine on you. And be gracious to you." Numbers 6 is talking about God smiling on (or because of) you!

Happy hearts produce smiling – a reaction we get from the God who made us in His Image. What have you got to smile about? Start counting your blessings and you will find that you have a lot of reasons!

Translation of God's Words

To translate the words spoken or written in one language into another language is difficult. It may be because there are no specific words in the second language which fully represent the precise meaning of the words in the first text. Or it may be because the number of tenses in the first language is different from the number in the second. Or it may be because the precise meaning of a phrase, especially in figurative language, if literally brought into the second language, would confuse the person reading the translation.

Let me illustrate using information readily available on the internet.

The translation of the Bible into English in the original *King James Version* in 1611 contained 788,280 words. *The King James Bible* we use today has 783,137 words. *The New American Standard Version* has 782,815 words, while the *English Standard Version* has 757,439 words. This variation reflects the emphasis and techniques of translation used in bringing the Hebrew or Greek into the English. It is not a major concern to those who understand the difficulty of translating from one version to another.

The responsibility of accurate translation lies in the hands of those who make the translation. Their work is to place the reader of the translation in the precise place of those who read the words when they were first written. Some say that such cannot happen, but it happens every day at the United Nations. When one addresses an assembly in that place, his words are immediately delivered in multitudes of languages to those from around the world in their native language. The translator must avoid placing any personal ideas of his own as he translates. A world leader speaks and immediately, because of the accuracy of translation, his precise thoughts are delivered to many nations. The translator does not add to the original messages any personal reflection of what he thought the world leader meant to say. The importance of all of this is to urge those who want to do deep Bible study in English to use a Bible that by design is a word-for-word translation in every possible instance.

However, in recent years many of the modern translations published have taken the approach of giving a thought-for-thought translation instead of a word-for-word translation. This approach opens the door for subjectivity in translation and results in a paraphrase instead of a translation. This can be seen by looking at a very popular version of the Bible — the *New International Version* (the NIV). How many words does this version have? It has 727,969 words. That is a difference of over 50,000 words and makes deep Bible study of Bible words impossible. It is vital we know the words God gave, not what a translator thought God meant. We need God's words, not a translator's thoughts.

The Good Ole' Days?

Let's talk about the good ole' days. I'm sure you've heard about them. Perhaps from a sentence starting with, "back in my day..." And that's followed by all kinds of things. Back in my day, kids respected their parents. Back in my day, you didn't have to spend your whole

paycheck on gasoline. Back in my day, if you broke your leg, you walked it off. You guys are soft.

I know it's very tempting to see past times as better, and to dwell on them. But before you do, I want to tell you the Bible says that isn't wise. Ecclesiastes 7:10 says, "Do not say, 'Why were the old days better than these?'" For it is not wise to ask such questions." Remembering the lessons of the past is good, but let's not live there. God has something in store for us today. As the Word says, "I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation." When you're with God, today is a good day.

Why Calamities?

Webster's dictionary defines calamity as: "a disastrous event marked by great loss and lasting distress and suffering." Without a doubt 2020 could be deemed the year of calamities. When pandemics, hurricanes, or wildfires hit, the question is asked by some: "Why did God allow it to happen?" I don't claim to have all the answers, but this and all catastrophes can serve to remind us of several important biblical principles: God is an incredible God. He is all-powerful and not to be trifled with. He created the world and has control over it (Gen. 1; Psa. 148:1-5). When we observe the damage the powerful forces of the earth can do, we should stand in awe of a God whose powers are infinitely greater.

Man (not God) brought calamity and death into the world. After Adam and Eve sinned, disease, death, and destruction came into being (Gen. 3:16-19; 1 Cor. 15:21a). Without a doubt calamities wreak incredible damage, and that should remind us of how devastating sin is. Our faith will be tested from time to time. We are told in the Scriptures that the storms and quakes of life are meant to make us stronger (James 1:2-3; Heb. 12:5-11). How many Christians will God test through all this? How many will have their faith strengthened as a result?

Life is short. This can well remind us of the brevity, uncertainty, and frailty of our existence (James 4:14; 1 Peter 1:24). We are never guaranteed another day of earthly life. This is an incredible opportunity to spread the good news about Jesus Christ. Through relief efforts, and through reminders of things like this, we can and should spread the gospel (2 Cor. 5:11; Gal. 6:10). Unfortunate incidents are often an open door for us to evangelize.

The Judgment will be much worse than this for some. Yes, many have lost their lives, but come Judgment Day many more will lose their souls (Matt. 7:21-23; 25:41-46; Rom. 1:18). Viewing the earth's tragedies should motivate us to make our lives right before our Maker. Through times like these don't question God, but determine to find a greater quest in God and in working His will!