



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## BIRDS DURING A DEEP FREEZE

In South Bend, Indiana the weather can frequently get down to 20\* or 30\* below zero in the wintertime and yet on these extremely cold winter mornings, I can look out my front door and see a host of birds around my bird feeder. It is always amazing to look at the wisdom and the design that has been built into living things to enable them to survive in an incredibly cold climate like one here in South Bend. In **Romans 1:19ff** we are told that we can know that there is a God through the things He has made. The more we study the way in which birds are able to survive in the very cold climate of the earth, the more wisdom and design we see. Birds, first of all, produce 25-30 percent more feathers in the winter than they have in the summer to provide more insulation. Like human beings, birds shiver to generate heat and every day birds found in northern climate waterproof their feathers with body oils so that the inside feathers stay dry effectively insulating the body. Birds fluff their plumage in the wintertime providing air spaces that have an R-value in excess of anything man has been able to produce.

One of the most interesting, recent discoveries of how birds survive the winter has been a study done showing that almost all birds that winter are able to put themselves into a state of hypothermia. In this condition, the heartbeat of the bird is slowed and body temperatures drop nearly 20\*. The birds are put into a state where they are subconscious and actually are able to weather the extremely cold temperatures because of the ability to conserve their energy. It has also shown that birds like bobwhites and bluebirds will form circles of as many as 13 birds in which they put their tails in and their heads out by pressing up against each other each bird's loss of body heat is reduced by up to 38%.

Another recent discovery has shown that finches, grosbeaks, pheasants, and grouse pack seeds into their well-developed crops just before dark and slowly digest them as energy is required through the night. This is basically the same as putting a log on the fire that burns throughout the evening providing heat to sustain the bird through the long winter evening. God has truly designed birds with the capacity to survive under a wide range of conditions, and the wisdom that is seen is an eloquent demonstration of power of the Creator. (Source: Sports Afield, December 1990)

## A Forgotten Word: Duty

- by Mark Roberts

*"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).*

We need to think about the word "duty." A more important word (for Christians) can scarcely be thought of, yet rarely does one hear it spoken. Do you ever ask yourself "What is my duty here?" Is anybody doing his or her duty anymore, or is this just an outmoded, forgotten word?

The Oxford American Dictionary tells us that duty is, "a moral or legal obligation, a task that must be done, action required from a particular person" (p. 200). Can I shorten that down some? Duty is "doing despite." Doing what you are supposed to do (that "moral or legal obligation") despite hardship, despite fear, despite opposition, despite anything or anyone. Duty is doing despite it all.

Duty is the recognition that the obligation is more important than anything else and so the obligation must be fulfilled.

Noah serves as a fine example of this idea. He was tasked to build an ark. He did this duty, despite opposition and despite a lack of perfect understanding on his part. He performed this duty despite its inconvenience. Over and over the text emphasizes that Noah obeyed God exactly (see Gen. 6:22; 7:5). He did his duty.

What does any of this have to do with our walk with God? Simply put, God has given His people certain "moral obligations" and "tasks that must be done." Those tasks must now be accomplished despite the times and environment we live in. We must do our duty.

Christians are obliged to be morally pure, to read their Bibles, to worship, to teach others the Gospel and more. Do you take those obligations seriously? Do you stop to consider "What does God want me to do? What is my duty to Him?"

Duty is oft forgotten in our me-first society. Rarely do we see people who bravely struggle on doing their "moral and legal obligations" despite so many other factors. Dare we allow such to be said of our spiritual lives? Remember, Solomon came to understand that serving God was the "whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13). Are you doing your duty to God? Are you doing what God commands you despite every reason not to? Let's remember our duty!

## Walk by Faith and Shine

by Don Wright

Jesus said, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Our responsibility as Christians is to stand out in society, not because of our greatness, but because of our unique distinction. It must be a distinction that draws attention to our Father rather than us. Jesus not only tells us to let our light shine, but He tells us why we should. The purpose of our distinctness is for man to see our good work and glorify God.

Everyone is different in some way. What should be unique about our distinction as Christian? One distinguishable thing that makes us shine in society, is how we walk. We walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).

This is a unique way of living. The statistician puts his confidence in numbers. The scientist puts his confidence in testable explanations. The teacher puts its confidence in books. The man of God, however, puts his confidence in the invisible attributes of God. This is what faith is—the assurance of things hoped for, and the convictions of things not seen. True faith is a rare commodity in this world of skepticism and doubt, and when one demonstrates it and lives by it, he is going to stand out in the crowd.

Do you know who Shammua was? Have you ever heard of Shaphat or Igal, Palti, Gaddiel or Gaddi? You probably aren't sure who these men are. What if I told you they were Bible characters? That narrows it down some, but you still don't know who they are, do you? Let me give you the names of a couple other Bible characters and see if you know them. Their names are Joshua and Caleb. Do you know them? Of course you do. When 12 Israelite men were sent into the land of Canaan to spy out the land, they were the only two who came back and told the rest of the Israelites that they could overcome the inhabitants of the land and take possession of it, even though they were outnumbered and overmatched. They knew they could do it because they walked by faith. To Bible students these two men are immediately recognizable because their faith caused them to shine.

By now you probable have figured out that the other men I mentioned are five of the ten spies who brought back an evil report. Do you know why you didn't know who they were? It is because they walked by sight, and people who walk by sight are a dime a dozen. You can't pick them out of a crowd because they are the crowd. Their light doesn't shine because they live in darkness. Joshua and Caleb separated themselves, not just in the mind of the people, but in the eyes of God, because they walked by faith and shined. That doesn't mean they were popular at the time, in fact, the people actually picked up stones to kill them. In the end, however, they were the only two out of thousands of people to enter the land of promise. Let's be like Joshua and Caleb. Walk by faith and shine.