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The Quarterly

Vol. 5, No. 4

Don't Be **PHARAOH**



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The Quarterly

Volume 5 – Number 4 – October 2021

EXCITING THINGS PLANNED FOR 2022

Welcome to the final issue of *The Quarterly* for the year. There's lots of great stuff in this issue, including articles by some new authors. But we will get to that in a few moments. First, let me tell you about some things planned for 2022. In addition to our current stable of writers, we have several others who have agreed to join in the new year. We haven't made a big deal about the diversity of our authors, but they include brethren from congregations that use one-cup, as well as multiple cups; brethren who identify as "non-institutional" and those who don't; brethren with darker skin, and brethren with lighter skin. While there is certainly disagreement on certain issues between some of the authors, every one of them has submitted to Jesus Christ in humble obedience to the precious gospel, and is seeking to "walk in the light as He is in the light" to the best of their ability. I am proud to call each one of them my brother in Christ.

As for new authors, make sure to check out *Don't Be Pharaoh* by Paul Cobb (who may or may not be the son of the editor), *How to Use Bible Translations* by Matthew Shaffer, *Characteristics of False Teachers* by Johnny O. Trail, *Elders and Money* by Edwin Walker, *Justification by Faith as Found in the Book of Acts* by Raymond Elliot, and *My Process to Preaching Without Notes* by Shane Robinson.

In addition to these, you will want to check out *What would it Take for You to be On Fire for the Lord?*, an article by Danny E. Davis; *Lock Them Up!*, an article by John Krivak about taking our thoughts captive; *Tools for the Work: Podcasts* all about encouraging and edifying podcasts by brethren; *Behold, I Thought...* by Bill Howard, about Naaman and the impact of that attitude on people today; and ... well, I really could type out every article, but then that would make the Table of Contents (see the next page) rather pointless.

I would humbly ask that you consider part two of *Does God Approve of Women Leading in Worship?* as well as *What on Earth is Revelation Talking About?* –both by the editor.

Thank you for all your support, and we pray each of you has a great rest of the year, and an even better 2022!

The articles contained in each issue represent the research and conclusions of the authors, and may not reflect the views of the other authors (or even the editor).

But they are presented for contemplation by Christians who are dedicated to living for the one true God of heaven.

WHAT TO FIND AND WHERE TO FIND IT

(AKA: The Contents of the Quarterly)

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NOT WRITTEN IN THIS BOOK...

*An Editorial by
Bradley S. Cobb*

A miraculous birth, an escape to Egypt, and then nothing until 12-year-old Jesus is sitting in the temple, amazing professional Torah Teachers with his questions and answers. Then another 18 years of silence before He shows up (like hundreds or thousands of others) in the wilderness to be baptized by John. From that point onward, Jesus' life is a 3-year highlight reel.

Miracles that boggle the mind. Teachings that challenge the soul. Confrontations that silenced and frustrated His foes. Interactions that gave hope to the hopeless. And all that *before* His momentous soul-saving act of mercy, grace, and love on the cross.

Four biographies exist, written by friends, witnesses, and a first-century research historian with an eye for detail. But the closing words of one biography are, "Jesus did many other things which are not written in this book, and were they written in detail, I suppose the world itself would not contain the books" (John 21:25).¹

Unfortunately, many focus and speculate far too much on those things which were not written. They want "lost sayings" of Jesus, or extra "gospels." They ignore that what God has preserved is what He decided we need for "life and godliness."

Outside of His death on the cross (which cannot in any way be over-emphasized), His actions as He walked this earth are (to me) the most informative parts of the gospel. He taught people, but more than teaching theological facts, Jesus *lived* in such a way that points the way heavenward. If you don't understand His teaching on "eat my body" (John 6), or "the abomination of desolation" (Matthew 24), you can still examine His life and know the way to the Father.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Jesus is the way—not just the road to the Father (the Greek word for "way" is *rhodos*, from which we get the word "road"), but the example of how to get there. Paul addresses this in Philippians 2.

- Jesus' life shows us how to deal with temptation: recognize the temptation, know the Scriptures, submit to God's will (Matthew 4).

¹ The rendering of this verse is the writer's own translation.

- Jesus' life shows us how to deal with stress: share it with good friends, and pray (Matthew 26:36-39).
- Jesus' life shows us how to prepare for important decisions: take time to pray alone (Luke 6:12-13).
- Jesus' life shows us various ways of teaching: proclaiming plain doctrinal truth, dealing with practical life issues, exposing false teachers, exposition of texts, teaching through stories, showing the love of God through actions (this throughout the gospel accounts).
- Jesus' life shows what submission to the Father looks like: following Him, even when you don't want to (Luke 22:42); trusting Him when temptation seems overwhelming (Matthew 4:2-4); keeping on, even when people don't care (John 6:66); willing to endure humiliation, because the reward is worth it (Hebrews 12:2).

Perhaps, given the political climate of the past decade, one aspect that needs to be stressed even more is that Jesus' life exemplifies how *not* to show favoritism. He was close friends with government workers and anti-government activists (Matthew the tax collector and Simon the Zealot). He took compassion on those whose contagious disease meant they were supposed to be quarantined (the lepers). He was willing to publicly point out problems with both political parties (Pharisees and Sadducees). He called out those in sexual sin, but urged them to repent—when the culture said to simply condemn them (John 4:16-18; 8:1-11). He submitted to the actions and rulings of the government, even when they were unjust (see His crucifixion), but also had no issue calling out political leaders for who they were (Luke 13:31-32). He interacted with His own people (the Jews), as well as those despised groups, such as the Samaritans (basically red-headed step-Jews) and full-fledged Gentiles (often called “the heathen”).

Jesus wanted *everyone* to see the love of God in action. Jesus expressed that love in different ways. For some, He shed tears of compassion (John 11:35-36). For others, He exposed the part of their life that kept them from true communion with God (Mark 10:21). For still others, He showed the radical meaning of forgiveness (Luke 23:34). And to the whole world (yet spoken to His closest friends), he called them “friends” (John 15:13).

And though the Father is called the “God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3) and the Holy Spirit is called the “Comforter” (John 14:16, KJV), Jesus' life shows that He too is a comforter. When His message stresses out His disciples, He says, “take courage” (John 16:16-33, NASB). When John is so frightened that he falls down as though he was dead, Jesus puts His hand on him and says, “Don't be afraid” (Revelation 1:17). After hearing Satan wants to sift him like wheat, Peter is comforted by Jesus with the words, “but I have prayed for you” (Luke 22:31-32).

With each of these things, we have an example to follow. We should comfort others through encouragement, compassion, and prayer (and letting them know you've prayed for them). We should show the love of God through compassion, through correction, through forgiveness. We should show the world that *everyone* is important to God, and thus to us, by refusing to neglect or write people off because of their social, racial, political, cultural, or sexual backgrounds. Like Jesus, we must never back away from calling out sin (even if it isn't culturally popular), but do it because we desperately want people to repent and find the forgiveness that comes through Jesus Christ.

It is no wonder that Jesus frequently said, “Follow me.”

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Paul Logan Cobb

So be honest with me, how many of you have ever had to deal with a messy room (whether yours or one of your children)? Next question: were there any consequences for the mess?

A while back, my room was in that state. And because I view it as useless to have a fridge in my room and not use it, there were some food items up there (mostly sodas and Little Debbie products). Oh, and the house is nearly 90 years old. Perhaps you can see where this is going... but if not, let me just say, I had a Jerry in my room, with no Tom to take care of it.

So immediately, I did what I should have done in the first place: tidy up the mess. And mouse traps. LOTS of mouse traps.

Pharaoh had something much worse than a single mouse happen to him. He had frogs. LOTS of frogs.

Pharaoh had persecuted the Israelites, and opposed God by refusing to let them go into the wilderness to worship Him. The frogs were just one of the Ten Plagues that Pharaoh had brought upon himself, but his actions also affected the whole nation.

These frogs could have been as big as a CD, and they were All. Over. Them. Everywhere. Exodus 8:3 says these frogs “shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedroom, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneading

troughs.”

So you can’t sleep, because your bed is covered in frogs. You can’t run to someone else’s house for sleep, because the frogs are there too. You try to make bread, but instead of the nice *squishing* sound that comes when you knead the dough, you hear RIBBIT. That is not a sound you want to hear when you’re making bread. Even if somehow you’re able to get the dough ready, you can’t put it in the oven (if you can even get to it in the first place) because it is filled with...you guessed it: frogs.

This was BAD. (And as a side note, why did Pharaoh have his magicians duplicate the issue and bring even more frogs? Seriously, that doesn’t scream “wise leader” to me...)

So Moses and Aaron, at Pharaoh’s request, come back. Pharaoh asks them to take away the frogs. Moses gladly grants Pharaoh’s wish, and asks when he wants it done. Then Pharaoh says, “Tomorrow” (Exodus 8:10).

Tomorrow?!?!?

Why did he do that? Why did he make his people suffer another day? Why didn’t he just say, “Today, Moses, right now?”

Maybe it is political. Sure, there may be more to it than that, but hear me out. Pharaoh, by asking it to be done “tomorrow,” could be buying time to give his magicians a chance to get rid of them—so he could brag that it was *his* gods and *his* magicians

that got rid of it, and not Jehovah.

It could also be that that he was used to the pagan worship system of Egypt, which begged their gods to do something (like send rain), and when it rained *eventually*, they would claim it was due to their prayers. So perhaps he thought that by giving Jehovah just a single day to accomplish this task of removing the massive frog infestation, he could prove the God of the Israelites was powerless—after all, what god could *possibly* do that in a single day? If this is the case, it would go well with what Moses answered: “...that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the LORD our God!”

Without raising up Pharaoh from the dead and asking him, we will probably never know his real reason. He couldn’t just been lazy. But it seems quite clear that he didn’t really believe. He was just paying lip service.

Are you ever like Pharaoh?

Do you ever do something stupid that just makes your problem worse?

Pharaoh had his magicians bring *more* frogs. That didn’t help the problem.

There have been times when I got in trouble (whether justified or not is none of your business), and then I decided it would be a good idea to mouth off. Or one time my dad was working on a project and smashed his thumb with a hammer—then he decided throwing the hammer was a good idea... and it hit a bunch of breakable stuff. Or Judas, who had betrayed Christ, decided the way to fix it was killing himself.

Do we ever ask something of God, but don’t really believe He will answer it?

Pharaoh certainly didn’t believe in the power of the God of Israel—at least, not at that point. He had his own things he trusted in—his gods, his own power, his authority, and so when he told Moses “tomorrow,” he wasn’t *really* showing any trust and belief in God.

Do we do the same? Do we pray for someone to be cured, and soon as we say “amen,” we think there’s no way the person will recover? Or maybe

we put our trust in everything *except* God to fix our problems?

Do we ever give credit for blessings to someone or something other than God?

Pharaoh likely believed the removal of the frog plague was due to the power of his gods or his magicians. He wouldn’t praise or glorify or even thank God for salvation from the plague of ribbits.

How many times have you said something was “good luck”? “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights...” (James 1). And yet Christians still wish each other “good luck,” or credit “luck” for good things that happened to them.

Or maybe you took all the credit for something good that happened in your life. *I* worked hard and earned this

all by myself. Look at what *I* did.

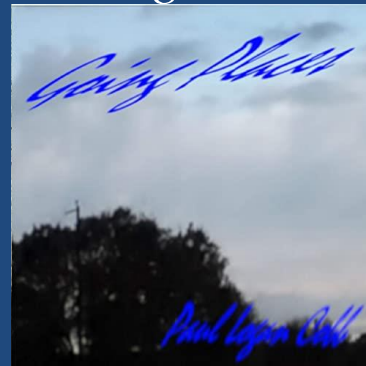
What do you think?

Unfortunately, we often act like Pharaoh, don’t we. And things didn’t go well for him. If we continue to act like him, it won’t go well for us either.

So here we are at the end of this lesson, and if you don’t remember anything else, remember these two things: Clean your room, or you might get mice. And don’t be like Pharaoh.

*Why did he do that?
Why did Pharaoh make
his people suffer
another day?
Why didn’t he just say,
“Today, Moses, right
now”?*

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WILTED PETALS

*Exposing the Fallacies of Calvinism,
One Petal at a Time*

Jim Mitchell

Introduction

This is our second look into the teachings of John Calvin which continues to be a system of doctrine embraced by a large number of religious groups. As previously noted, the teachings have historically been grouped into five areas and are filled with assumptions which are read into Scripture rather than being derived from Scripture. This misuse of God's Word was very evident in the first of these articles dealing with "Total Depravity" (typically referred to as 'Original Sin'). This article will deal with the second of these "Five Points" of Calvinism. The approach will be the same as that in the first article, namely to mention what is offered as "proof texts" for Calvinism with several questions in mind. (1) Are proponents of Calvinism assuming what, in fact, they need to prove? (2) Are their conclusions warranted by the context of the scriptures cited? (3) Are they reading things "into" passages which are not present or "removing" things which are? (4) Are they using terms in consistent fashion? And (5) Are they placing meanings upon words in the following texts which are less than accurate? Calvinistic contentions throughout the article are from the book ***The Five Points of Calvinism Defined, Defended, and Documented***, by David Steele, Curtis Thomas, and Lance Quinn (Phillipsburg, NJ P&R Publishing, Second Ed. 2004). The "Five Points of Calvinism" and brief statements from the above authors are provided as a summary of these positions held by Calvinists.

T – Total Depravity (i.e. "Original Sin") – "*Be-*

cause of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel . . . His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature. Therefore, he will not – indeed cannot – choose good over evil in the spiritual realm." (p. 5)

U – Unconditional Election (i.e. "Predestination") – "*God's choice of certain individuals for salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause of God's choice.*" (p. 6)

L – Limited Atonement (i.e. "Particular Redemption") – "*Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners.*" (pp. 6, 7)

I – Irresistible Grace (i.e. "The Efficacious Call of the Spirit") – "*In addition to the outward general call to salvation, which is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be, and often is, rejected. However, the internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion.*" (pp. 6, 7)

P – Perseverance of the Saints (i.e. "Once Saved Always Saved") – "*All who are chosen by God,*

redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of almighty God and thus persevere to the end.” (pp. 7, 8)

An ACKNOWLEDGMENT from the above mentioned Authors

“The question of supreme importance is not how the system under consideration came to be formulated into five points, or why it was named Calvinism, but rather is it supported by Scripture? The final court of appeal for determining the validity of any theological system is the inspired, authoritative Word of God. If Calvinism can be verified by clear and explicit declarations of Scripture, then it must be received by Christians; if not, it must be rejected” (p.17) [emphasis is mine, JPM].

While the second topic (Unconditional Election / Predestination) is the only one this article will address, the authors state that these five doctrines “are so inseparably connected that no one of them can be fully appreciated unless it is properly related to, and viewed in light of, the other four; for they mutually explain and support one another” (p. 18). From the authors admission, the five points of Calvinism stand or fall together.

Within their defense of Calvinism, they use “approximately 250 passages (consisting of well over 400 verses),” stating that these are the “more important” passages supporting these five doctrines (p. xxii). So, how do the “proof texts” from these authors and their statements about these passages stack up against the “clear and explicit declarations of Scripture”? Are their conclusions actually found in the “proof-texts” offered, or are the authors in fact assuming what they must prove. [Italicized words throughout this article are the words of Steele, Thomas, and Quinn.]

“Proof-Texts” on what the Authors Propose as “UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION”

The premise of this point in Calvinism as described by these authors is – “*The doctrine of election declares that God, before the foundation of the world, chose certain individuals from among the fallen members of Adams race to be the objects of His undeserved favor. These, and these only, He purposed to save. ... His eternal choice of particular sinners unto salvation was not based upon any foreseen act or response on the part of those selected, but was based solely on His own good pleasure*

and sovereign will. Thus election was not determined by, or conditioned upon, anything that men would do, but resulted entirely from God’s self-determined purpose.” (p. 27)

Before we take a look at the “proof texts” offered on this point, please be aware of the assumptive conclusion made by their above statement. Their statement assumes that God did not to use “fore-sight” in the choice, but that raises the question of whether or not God actually knows enough to declare “the end from the beginning” (note Isaiah 46:8-10), or just uses His power to force things to happen (i.e. there really is NO freedom of choice). [Actually, before we conclude our study of the “proof texts” offered by Calvinists, we will find that their position actually opts for the latter point – that God merely uses His power to force things to happen (JM).]

Under the heading: A CHOSEN PEOPLE (pp. 29-31)

The following verses are characterized by the authors as “general statements in Scripture that God has an elect people, and that He predestined them to salvation, and thus to eternal life” (p. 29). Unfortunately, this statement avoids the issue. The question is not concerning election or predestination, but whether or not it is unconditional. Note the following passages offered by the authors as proof of the above statement and see if any of these verses support their statement.

[Deuteronomy 10:14, 15] “...the Lord has set his heart in love upon your fathers and chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as at this day.” [The italicized words in the following verses appear that way in the book by Steele, Thomas, and Quinn (JM)]

To begin with such a passage in “support” of the above statement is indeed a continuing glimpse of what is to follow. These verses state nothing about salvation and they do not include the topic of eternal life. The very act of using this passage about the corporate election of the children of Israel to temporal privilege and blessings does not, in any legitimate way, touch either the idea or the subject these authors assign to this passage.

The same point can be made about the following list of verses (‘proof texts’) which use the words: *chosen, choose, chooses, elect, and called* without any account taken of the context of these verses. It is as if the authors were convinced that by searching

a concordance for such terms they would be able to prove the conclusions they have already reached. Please note that not only do none of the following “proof texts” from the Old Testament say anything about salvation or eternal life, they also do not discuss anything related to whether God’s choice of “*the elect*” is unconditional.

[Psalm 33:12] “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has *chosen* as his heritage!”

[Psalm 65:4] “Blessed is the one you *choose* and bring near; to dwell in your courts! ...”

[Psalm 106:5] “. . . that I may look upon the prosperity of your *chosen ones*, that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation, and I may glory with your inheritance.”

[Haggai 2:23] “On that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a signet ring, for I have *chosen* you, declares the Lord of hosts.”

None of these Old Testament passages come close to validating the point Steele, Thomas and Quinn are seeking to prove, since none of the above deal with “*salvation, and . . . eternal life.*”

What about NEW TESTAMENT passages dealing with choice, chosen, and election?

[Matthew 11:27] “No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son *chooses* to reveal him.”

This verse says nothing about being predestined “*to salvation, and thus to eternal life.*” Interestingly, in the verses following this one Jesus makes a statement which contradicts what these authors are stating. In verse 28, Jesus said “Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The tenets of Calvinism are at odds with Jesus and would declare that only those selected by God can come to Jesus, while Jesus stated “all who labor.” In John 5, Jesus made an interesting statement to Jews who persecuted Him and tried to kill Him (5:16-18). In 5:40 He told them “But you are not willing to come to Me that you might have life.” If Calvinism were correct, that statement would not exist because Calvinism states that they would have been incapable of coming to Jesus.

[Matthew 22:14] “For many are called but few are *chosen.*”

This is the concluding statement to the parable of the wedding feast (22:2-14), and deals with the neg-

ative response of many to the invitation given to a great number of people, including those culture would have deemed unworthy (22:2-10). Among the “chosen” are the outcasts of society, and one of those “chosen” to be at the feast was later cast out (22:11-14). One would think that given the point these authors are making to justify their teaching; this would be a chapter and a passage they would avoid.

[Matthew 24:22, 24, 31] “and if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the *elect* those days will be cut short... For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even *the elect*... And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

One of the most misused passages in our day is the larger context of what is here quoted. The disciples have asked Jesus about His statement concerning the destruction of the temple (24:1-3). Jesus is answering their questions in the rest of Matthew 24. Other than using the word “elect,” this passage has no bearing on the discussion at hand and definitely does not do anything to support the Calvinistic doctrine of Unconditional Election.

[Luke 18:7] “And will not God give justice to his *elect*, who cry to him day and night?”

That there are those who are “His elect” is not in question – the question is whether God’s choice of the “elect” is unconditional and this is yet another passage which does not deal with that question.

[Romans 8:28-30] “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are *called according to his purpose.* For those whom he foreknew he also *predestined* to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he *predestined* he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

The word translated “predestined” means “to appoint beforehand” and is connected with being “conformed to the image of His Son.” That being said, this passage does NOT say that God MADE these individuals to conform to the image of His Son, but that it was appointed beforehand that such

conformity was what you would find in those who truly followed Christ. Once again, the passage does not validate the point these authors are trying to make as it does not deal with the topic of “election” being “unconditional.”

[Romans 8:33] “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect?”

Great question, but does not say anything about one’s “election” being “unconditional.”

[Romans 11:28] “As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.”

The context of yet another passage used to justify a teaching of Calvinism actually does nothing of the kind. Please note within the context of this passage verse 22 – “...consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise, you will also be cut off.” According to Calvinism, the elect have no choice but to continue in His goodness, thus making this verse nonsensical regarding the point Calvinists attempt to prove.

In this section, the authors also quote: **Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1, 2; 1 Peter 2:8-9; and Revelation 17:14.** While endeavoring to defend the idea that human beings do not and cannot make the choice to follow God, but that He arbitrarily chooses who will be allowed to follow Him and be saved and who will not, the authors again read into each of these verses something which none of these passages state. The idea that this is an “Unconditional Election” (arbitrary predestination) is not dealt with in any of these verses – but is always assumed by these Calvinistic authors. No verse in this section supports this teaching of Calvinism.

Their “Proof Texts” that “Election is Not Based on Foreseen Responses” (pp. 31-35)

Prefacing the verses offered in this section as “proof” of Unconditional Election, the authors state: “Before the foundation of the world, God chose particular individuals for salvation. His selection was *not based upon any foreseen response or act* performed by those chosen. Faith and good works are the *result*, not the *cause*, of God’s choice” (p. 31).

The authors divide their “proof” of the above statement into 7 categories. Look closely at the following verses to see if they prove the above conten-

tion and/or the categories into which these verses are placed. [Please note: The italics are theirs not mine (JM).]

Point 1: **“God did the choosing”** [Note that even the statement being made does not deal with whether or not God’s choice was “*based upon any foreseen response or act...*” which is the point they are attempting to prove.]

[Mark 13:20] “And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days.”

Unfortunately, the authors did not take time to read the context of the passage. Peter, James, John, and Andrew have asked Jesus about the timing of the destruction of Jerusalem (13:1-4). The statement of “salvation” (v. 20) deals with salvation from that destruction and not, as these Calvinists would have you believe, eternal salvation. This is another case of misapplication of the text. See also comments on Matthew 24 above.

Point 2: **“God’s choice was made before the foundation of the world”** [Once again, this statement does not deal with the doctrine they are attempting to validate concerning HOW God’s choice was/is made.]

[Ephesians 1:4] “. . . even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”

As was mentioned earlier in this article, the problem is not with God making a choice before the foundation of the world, but whether or not that choice was or is unconditional. Nothing in this verse deals with that issue.

Point 3: **“God chose particular individuals for salvation – their names were written in the book of life before the foundation of the world.”** [The bracketed comments after points 1 and 2 also fit this one.]

[Revelation 13:8 and 17:8] The problem remains of Calvinism assuming what it needs to prove. Once again, as is the case with each of these passages thus far, nothing in these verses indicates that God’s choice of “*particular individuals for salvation*” was or is unconditional.

Point 4: **“God’s choice was not based upon any foreseen merit residing in those whom He chose, nor was it based on any foreseen good works performed by them.”**

[Romans 9:11-13] “Though they were not yet

born and had done nothing either good or bad – in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, . . . she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger.’ As it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’

[Romans 9:16] “So then it depends *not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.*”

The use of these passages in Romans 9 shows the same misapplication and ignoring of the context as every other verse they have used. As stated in verse 13, the choice concerns the descendants of Jacob (the younger son of Isaac and father of the twelve tribes of Israel) over the descendants of Esau (the older). To use this as a “proof text” regarding eternal life and salvation is inexcusable.

[Romans 10:20] “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.”

As has been the case with every passage used, this one also assumes what it needs to prove. Romans 10:20, 21 quotes from Isaiah 65:1, 2. Why not use Isaiah here instead of Romans? The context of Isaiah 65 more easily exposes the misuse of what they are assuming is the point here in Romans. For example, the Pulpit commentary on Isaiah makes this observation about Isaiah 65:1-7. “God’s mercy is such that it even overflows upon those who are outside the covenant (Isa. 65:1). It has been offered to Israel, but Israel has rejected it. Their rebellion, their idolatries, and their pride have caused, and must continue to cause, their punishment (Isa. 65:1-7).” The question to ask is whether or not Paul’s point in Romans 10:20 is eternal life as they are assuming.

[1 Corinthians 1:27-29] “But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.”

This passage is supposed to support the idea that “God’s choice was not based upon any foreseen merit residing in those whom He chose,” yet the passage says just the opposite. Paul wrote that God actually chose what was foolish, weak, low and despised.

[2 Timothy 1:9] “. . . who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of *our works* but because of *his own purpose and grace, which he*

***gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.*”**

The assumption made from this passage is that God’s purpose and His grace are not tied to his foreknowledge, and yet His foreknowledge is connected to and included in His purpose and grace “*in Christ Jesus before the ages began,*” that is, unless Calvinists are suggesting that neither God’s purpose nor grace has any knowledge or forethought connected to it.

Point 5: “Good works are the result, not the ground, of predestination.” (p. 33)

[Ephesians 2:10] “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Once again, the usage of this verse to support “Unconditional Election” is to entirely miss what is stated. In fact, the very fact that God prepared beforehand that we should walk in “good works” is a declaration that the foreknowledge of God decreed what “good works” He intended for us to do. That is a far cry from alleging that God was void of foresight (or simply refused to use it in this case).

[John 15:16] “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”

In verse 10 of John 15, Jesus said “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” If good works are the “result” of predestination then the statement of Jesus in 15:10 becomes nonsensical, since God requires that they cannot do anything else but comply. [Once again, the necessary conclusion of Calvinism that free will does not exist will be dealt with in time.]

[Point 6] “God’s choice was not based upon foreseen faith. Faith is the result and therefore the evidence of God’s election, not the cause or ground of His choice.” (pp. 33, 34)

[Acts 13:48] “And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.”

In regard to this verse, I would like to share a comment written by John Wesley.

“As many as were ordained to eternal life – St. Luke does not say fore-ordained. He is not speaking of what was done from eternity, but

of what was then done, through the preaching of the Gospel. He is describing that ordination, and that only, which was at the very time of hearing it. During this sermon those believed, says the apostle, to whom God then gave power to believe. It is as if he had said, "They believed, whose hearts the Lord opened;" as he expresses it in a clearly parallel place, speaking of the same kind of ordination, Act 16:14, &c. It is observable, the original word is not once used in Scripture to express eternal predestination of any kind. The sum is, all those and those only, who were now ordained, now believed. Not that God rejected the rest: it was his will that they also should have been saved: but they thrust salvation from them. Nor were they who then believed constrained to believe. But grace was then first copiously offered them. And they did not thrust it away, so that a great multitude even of Gentiles were converted."

[Acts 18:27] "He greatly helped those who through grace had believed."

The focus of Acts 18:24-28 is that of Apollos. That being the case, the grammar of this verse has been a topic of discussion among New Testament scholars for generations. Marvin Vincent, in his Word Studies of the New Testament, describes it this way – "Expositors differ as to the connection; some joining *through grace* with *them which had believed*, insisting on the Greek order of the words; and others with *helped*, referring to grace conferred on Apollos. I prefer the latter, principally for the reason urged by Meyer, that "the design of the text is to characterize Apollos and his work, and not those who believed." Consideration of the context of this passage should have even raised questions in the mind of Calvinists about the way they have used this verse.

[Philippians 1:29] "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake."

The term translated "granted" in the ESV is defined as "to grant as a favor, that is, gratuitously, in kindness, pardon or rescue; – deliver, (frankly) forgive, (freely) give, grant." Once again, the conclusion Steele, Thomas, and Quinn read into the verse is suspect at best and hardly a "proof text" for either the teaching that belief is something which God gives to people or that "election" is unconditional.

[Philippians 2:12-13] "Therefore, my beloved,

as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

As has repeatedly been the case in the misconnect between these 6 Calvinistic points and the verses which are given as examples of each, the only way to include such a verse is to show that God's good pleasure has nothing at all to do with His foreknowledge of anything human beings may do. This verse does not do that, unless one concludes that God's good pleasure has nothing at all to do with His foreknowledge.

[1 Thessalonians 1:4-5] "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction."

Remember, point 6 stated that "God's choice was not based upon foreseen faith. . ." This "proof text" does not deal in the least with the point being made.

[2 Thessalonians 2:13-14] "God chose you as the first fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This passage actually states the opposite of what the authors have been proposing. God could not have chosen them through belief in the truth if belief (faith) had nothing to do with God's choice but was merely the result of a choice already made.

Point 7: **"It is by faith and good works that one confirms his calling and election."**

Here the authors quote **2 Peter 1:5-11** highlighting the phrase **"make your calling and election sure."** Once again, the question under consideration is whether "Election" is based upon any God-given criteria (i.e. Conditions) or whether it is indeed "Unconditional" Election (i.e. Predestination). Neither point 7 nor the passage they quote has any bearing on that question.

The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, and Documented

This article has only dealt with passages offered by Calvinists as "proof texts" of "Unconditional Election" (Predestination) as found in the aforementioned book. Please remember, in the mind of these authors these are many of the "more important" passages which they believe support this teaching.

As was the case in our look of their verses on “Total Depravity” the verses they use to support “Unconditional Election” neither warrant nor validate this

doctrine. Therefore, like the first of these five doctrines, the U in TULIP has withered and fallen from the “flower” of Calvinism.

SUNDAY SICKNESS

Author Unknown

This remarkable disease has not yet been treated in books of pathology.

1. This disease is of the intermitting kind, attacking the patient by violent paroxysms,¹ which return every seventh day. These paroxysms return only on the Lord’s day, and hence it is called “Sunday sickness,” but by the faculty it is technically known by no other name than *Dei Domini Morbus* [disease of God the Lord].
2. It partakes somewhat of the nature of ague, especially as it is attended with a great degree of coldness. This coldness is first apparent early in the morning of the Lord’s day, and in many cases seizing the patient before he has left his bed. But it begins in the region of the heart, and it is attended with dullness of the head, followed by yawning and lethargy.
3. The patient is sometimes deprived of the use of his limbs, especially the legs and feet, so that he is indisposed to walk to the house of God.
4. In some cases this attack has come upon them after they have gone to the house of God and has been attended with yawning and slumber.
5. In other cases there has been uneasiness in the house of God, and a disposition to complain of the length of the sermon, though they have been known to sit very contentedly in a play-house several hours at a time, or stand on the street in the cold several hours to listen to a political harangue.
6. Persons affected with this disease never mourn on account of their confinement from public worship.
7. These persons often surprise their neighbors with great activity and health the day following, however unfavorable the weather may be.
8. Most of the faculty agree that there is a low, feverish heat, technically called *febris mundi* or fever of the world, which may be detected in these patients during the intervening days of the week.
9. There also seems to be a loss of appetite for savory food, and a lack of relish for *Panis Vitor*—bread of life—which in this case is the indispensable remedy for this disease.
10. Persons affected with this disease generally have a dis-relish for private religious exercises of the closet, and reading of the Scriptures.
11. It is also contagious—neighbors take it from neighbors and children from parents.

¹ Convulsions, fits.—*Editor*.



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WHAT KIND OF CHURCH DO PEOPLE WANT?

Tommy Thornhill

People sometimes shop around for a certain kind of church or congregation that makes them feel comfortable and satisfied. Their requirements are usually pretty shallow and materialistic in nature. They don't really give much thought as to whether or not that church pleases God.

Some want to be in a church with a large, beautiful building. They think that being in such a building will impress their friends as they brag about its beauty. But when I turn to the New Testament and study about the early Christians, I learn they didn't have any building in which to meet. Some were able to meet in the temple or some synagogue until the authorities cast them out because they didn't like their teaching. But most of the time the early Christians met in the homes of Christians or in the catacombs. Yet they grew in number even though they had no fancy building in which to meet.

Others shop for a "mega church" with a large membership. They believe that being in a popular church is where they ought to be, regardless of what is taught and practiced. Large numbers are fine if the members are walking in the truth—but what if the majority are worldly minded? Numbers don't impress God if the people are not living the proper life (Matt.7:13-14).

Many shop for a church that will accept them as

they are, allowing them to continue living the sinful lifestyle they are unwilling to give up. They may be an unmarried couple living together, or living in an adulterous relationship, or practicing homosexuals or drunkards or other such sins. They want the congregation to ignore their sinfulness and simply accept them without reservation. While they may find a human church willing to accept them living in sin, God won't. To please God they must be willing to change and put all these sins in the past. When Paul wrote the Corinthians, he recognized that while they had been guilty of such sins in the past they changed when they became Christians. "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived ..." [he lists a number of sins -t.t.] "such were some of you [in the past- t.t], But you were [have been – t.t.] washed ... sanctified ... justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

The things just mentioned (and other things that might be named) may describe the kind of church people want, but is "their" church the kind of church God wants? If you notice, the people who entertain such desires have given no consideration to what God wants.

What people ought to do is be concerned about what kind of church is pleasing to God. After all, He

designed the church to please Him and not the whims of men. He planned the church to be established and make known to the world His divine, manifold wisdom, to save man through His Son Jesus Christ (Eph.3:10-11). So, He is the One to be glorified in the church. “To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end” (Eph. 3:21).

So, rather than place undue emphasis on material things like a building or crowds we need to notice what God wants in a church. To do this, one needs to open God’s book, the Bible, and with an open mind diligently search the scriptures to find the kind of church that will please God. Let the Bible be the guide to teach and show us what God wants.

In searching for a church to be a part of, there are some very important things to look for. Ask the preacher and the members what they teach and practice. Do they use God’s word for their authority, or

do they follow the teachings of men? (Col. 3:17). Are they striving to please God and “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet.4:11) or do they say “smooth words” that will please the audience and make them “feel good”? Do they seek to worship as they did in New Testament days (Acts 2:42; 20:7), or do they add things not found in the word of God? Do they teach the same plan of salvation as taught in the first century, that one had to believe, repent of sins, and be baptized in order to be saved (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12-13 on through the book of Acts), or do they teach some system of salvation not found in the New Testament? If it cannot be found in the New Testament it is to be rejected.

Always look for a church that strives to be what God wants and not man. Want what God wants and not the silly worldly things that mean nothing to God.

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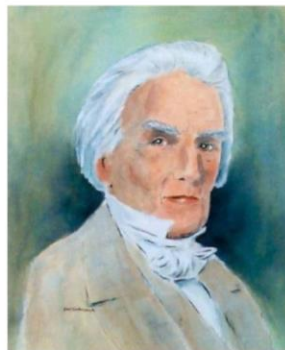


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What would it take for YOU to be **ON FIRE** for the Lord?

Danny E. Davis

“...I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore His name.’ But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not.¹”

Have you ever seen someone so passionate, so “on fire” for God that you were amazed? If so, what went through your mind? Perhaps, as is human nature, a slight bit of envy because you want to be on fire too? Envy aside, is it wrong to want a deeper, closer, more fulfilling relationship with the true and living God?

So, what would it take for you to be on fire for Him? How does one become this way?

Let us turn to the Scriptures to see what we can glean. When you think about Biblical characters who had a tremendous passion for the LORD, about whom do you think? I think about Noah, Moses, Jeremiah, Daniel, David, Hannah, and Mary. I think about these men and women because of what the scriptures tell us about their unique relationship with God. You may be thinking that is not a fair question because characters of the Bible had experiences and access to God that we do not have today,

so it was easier for them to be on fire for God. Admittedly, the Holy Spirit told us, “Jesus said to him, ‘Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.²’” But other than not seeing Jesus or hearing directly from God, is it any more difficult for us to be passionate about God than it was for Biblical characters?

Consider this: We do have a couple of gifts that the men and women of the Bible did not have. Namely, we have their examples (righteous and unrighteous), the full words of God, and the gift of knowing the impact of Jesus’s sacrifice. I believe these are gifts from God that give us an advantage to being passionate about God. So, the excuse that it would have been easier to have been on fire for God during Biblical times does not really hold that much weight when one considers the advantages and blessings we have today.

Now, back to my original question: What would it take for you to be on fire for God?

Instead of making excuses about the difference between us and people in the Bible, let us consider what we have in common to bring us closer to God. What we have in common is a command to love our

¹ Jeremiah 20:9

² John 20:29

God.

God told us that we are to love Him with all our hearts, souls, and strength (technically Noah would not have received this command, but he understood it).

I have come to understand the secret to being on fire for God is no secret at all. We just need to work on loving God with all our hearts, souls, and strength. Do we? If we do, it will be amazingly easy for people to see how much we love God. Even if we are quiet and reserved, people can see we are on fire for God by our actions and not merely by our words alone. But here is something else to consider: How can we tell people about Jesus if we do not speak because we are quiet and reserved? How can we be on fire for God and not tell anyone? Jeremiah could not keep his mouth closed about God's Word, and it may have been because of the impact that God's Word had on him—not just the Holy Spirit working within him. God told Isaiah that His Word would go forth and accomplish that which He intended and that it would not return to Him void.³

If we are not on fire for God, we need to consider, *do we really love Him* with all our hearts, souls, and strength? I did not write that previous statement to offend anyone, I wrote it so we can take an honest assessment of our lives to make sure we are serving God with our all. Besides, you would much rather hear that question from me than from Jesus when He returns. He was not happy with most of the seven churches of Asia, and the one that comes to mind is the church of Laodicea. Remember what He warned them?

*"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—"*⁴

Jesus told them to "be zealous and repent."⁵ The implication is clear: We need to be on fire for God by loving Him with all our hearts, souls, and strength.

Do we love God with every fiber of our being?

Maybe you have never been asked that question. Most people have not, because while they may *know a lot about* God, they do not *know* God. The biggest problem is that most people do not know how. They do not know what it takes to develop a relationship with God like He intended for us to have. God knows us.⁶ He wants us to know Him.⁷

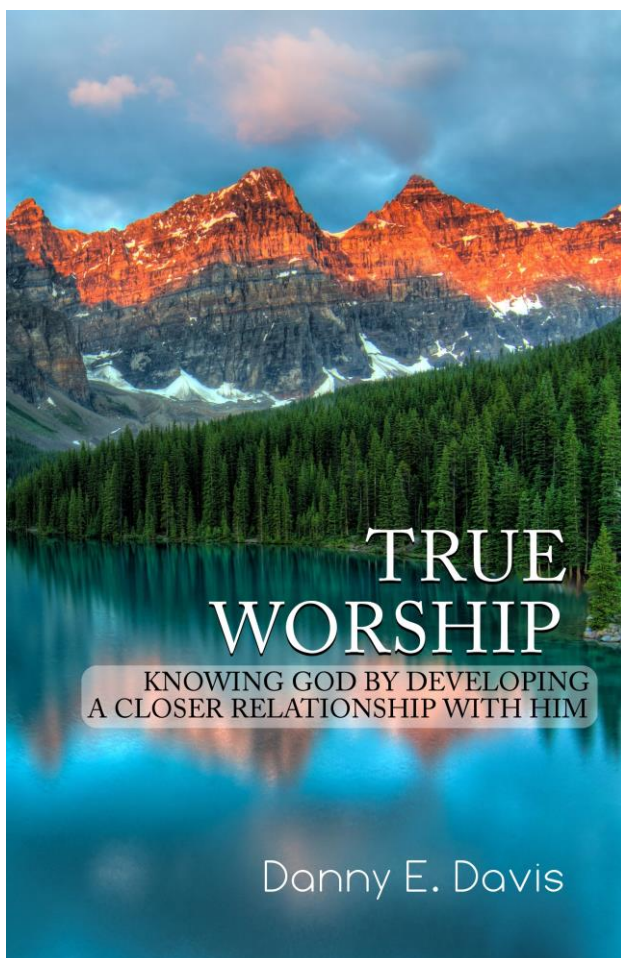
If you want to love God the way He desires (with our heart, soul, and strength) so you can be on fire for Him, but do not know where to start or how to study, feel free to contact me if I can encourage you.

Pray and consider these things, but only if you want to be more passionate about God than you are about anything else.

Does He deserve, or will He accept anything less than our best?

⁶ Psalm 139:1-4

⁷ Hosea 6:6 and Jeremiah 9:23-24



³ Isaiah 55:11

⁴ Revelation 3:15-17

⁵ Revelation 3:19

THE REAL PHARISEES

(PART 2 – REJECTION OF GOD’S PURPOSES)

Andy Sochor

Everyone seeks to live their lives with a *purpose*. The book of Ecclesiastes chronicles the attempts of the wise man to find purpose in the things of this life. In the end, he was left with the conclusion: “*Fear God and keep His commandments*” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). The Pharisees, as students of the law, should have learned this lesson. Their purpose in life should have been in harmony with God’s will. Yet they rejected it.

The Pharisees Rejected God’s Purpose for Themselves

But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God’s purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John (Luke 7:30).

People often wonder if they have some special purpose in life. Of course, we all have the same *general* purpose – to “*fear God and keep His commandments*” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). But there are few in history that have had a *specific* purpose from God.

One individual with this type of *specific* purpose was John the Baptist. Jesus mentioned him in the context of His discussion of the Pharisees rejecting God’s purpose for themselves. Jesus said, “*This is the one about whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way before You’*” (Luke 7:27; cf. Malachi 3:1). When John came, he had a *specific* purpose – to prepare the way for Christ.

However, when Jesus talked about the purpose for the Pharisees, He was speaking of the Pharisees (and others) in *general* terms. What was the purpose to which Jesus referred? God’s purpose for them was to save them.

The Pharisees “*rejected God’s purpose for themselves*” by not being “*baptized by John*” (Luke 7:30). This baptism was tied to forgiveness: “*John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a*

baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4). When Zacharias prophesied of John’s mission, he said, “*And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; to give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins*” (Luke 1:76-77). John’s baptism was for forgiveness which led to salvation. This was God’s plan. The Pharisees rejected this.

John’s baptism was later replaced by the baptism of Christ. This was made clear in Paul’s visit to Ephesus. When he found some disciples who had been baptized “*into John’s baptism*,” he instructed them to be “*baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*” (Acts 19:3-5). This baptism began at Pentecost when Peter declared, “*Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins*” (Acts 2:38). Yet many of the same ones who rejected John’s baptism also rejected the baptism of Christ.

God’s purpose for all people is salvation. Jesus said, “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him*” (John 3:16-17). He wants all to be saved and has given the plan by which we can be saved. Jesus told His apostles, “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned*” (Mark 16:15-16). Many people spend time wondering if God has some *specific* purpose for their lives while rejecting God’s purpose for them that He has revealed – to save them from their sins. Let us not reject God’s purpose for us the way that the Pharisees did.

So who are the *real Pharisees* today? They are not the ones who seek to obey the Lord to receive

the forgiveness of sins. Instead, they are those who reject God's plan of salvation.

The Pharisees Took Advantage of Others

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses...therefore you will receive greater condemnation (Matthew 23:14).

When Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for devouring "widow's houses," He was condemning them for taking advantage of others. However, the Pharisees did not take advantage of just anyone. Jesus used widows in His example for a reason. These were ones who typically were in need of assistance from others. Yet the Pharisees not only failed to help these ones in need, they also took advantage of them for their own benefit.

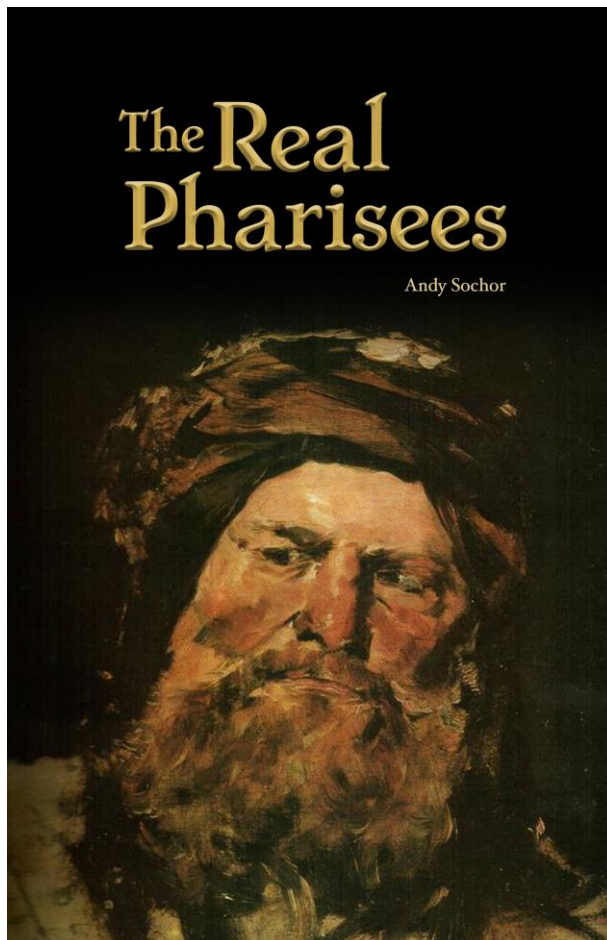
The Law of Moses specified that the widows were to be helped (Deuteronomy 14:28-29) and that His people were to be generous to all those who were poor among them (Deuteronomy 15:7-11). Not only that, they were specifically commanded not to do harm to the widows: "*You shall not afflict any widow or orphan*" (Exodus 22:22). The Pharisees should have been ones to defend and help these poor widows. Instead, they rejected God's purpose in this regard.

This demonstrated a total disregard for the needs and circumstances of others. If we are not careful, we can do the same thing. Paul explained the attitude that we should have: "*Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 2:3-5). Like Jesus did when He sacrificed His life for us (Philippians 2:5-8; 1 John

3:16), we are to put others ahead of ourselves. Furthermore, when we see others in need, we are to help as we can. Paul wrote, "*So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith*" (Galatians 6:10). James said, "*Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world*" (James 1:27). To visit does not just mean to go see someone but to provide assistance to the one who is in need. We are to be mindful of these needs and do what we can to help.

The Pharisees were condemned because they looked at others only for what they could get from them, rather than what they could do for them. Paul told the brethren in Galatia, "*Through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'*" (Galatians 5:13). The Pharisees failed to show love for others in this way. Yet this type of love and service for others ought to be our goal.

So who are the *real Pharisees* today? They are the ones who use others for their selfish interests rather than providing help for those who need it.



The Pharisees Shut Off the Kingdom of Heaven from Others

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in (Matthew 23:13).

We have already discussed the fact that the Pharisees had "rejected God's purpose for themselves" (Luke 7:30) by refusing to obey Him and be saved. Therefore, they would be left out of the Lord's

kingdom. However, in addition to this, they were also preventing others from entering the kingdom.

One way the Pharisees would “*shut off the kingdom of heaven from people*” (Matthew 23:13) was by consistently opposing Jesus. They were regularly testing Him (Matthew 16:1; 19:3), questioning Him (Matthew 15:1-2), and falsely accusing Him (John 9:24). In the end, they would plot to put Jesus to death (John 11:47-53). Jesus was “*the way, and the truth, and the life*” (John 14:6); and the Pharisees were doing all that they could to shut down that way. Of course, killing Jesus would not mean victory for them. After all, His death was part of God’s plan (Acts 2:23). However, they did not recognize this. Instead, they did all that they could think to do to stop people from following Jesus.

Another way the Pharisees “*shut off the kingdom of heaven from people*” (Matthew 23:13) was by trying to lead others to themselves instead of leading them to the Lord. In a later lesson we will notice the Pharisees’ overemphasis on making converts (Matthew 23:15), so we will discuss this idea more in that lesson. But the basic point was that the Pharisees were zealous to convert others to their way of thinking (commands, traditions, etc.). The problem with converting someone to the Pharisees’ way of thinking was that the convert would not be saved. Jesus said elsewhere, “*For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:20). In making proselytes, the Pharisees

would lead the converts to think they were doing what was right. This would give them a false sense of security; therefore, they would not think they needed to change anything to be right with God. Yet since they were following the Pharisees and not God, they were not secure.

Unlike what the Pharisees did, we are to lead others to the Lord. Paul wrote, “*For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus’ sake*” (2 Corinthians 4:5). We need to remember we are nothing important when it comes to the salvation of others. In the first letter to Corinth, Paul wrote, “*I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth*” (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). We must simply teach the word of God so that others can follow it and be saved. If we are teaching something else, we are not leading people to the Lord. Like the Pharisees, we would not be helping people *spiritually*; and this is most important.

So who are the *real Pharisees* today? They are not the ones who are eager to convert people to the Lord. Instead, they are those who stand in the way of others obeying Christ lest they should be saved.

[Note: Andy Sochor’s book, *The Real Pharisees*, is available from www.GospelArmory.com]

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How to Use Bible Translations

Matthew Shaffer

Unless we have learned to read Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic, we must access the word of God through Bible translations. There are several trustworthy, high-quality English translations available to us today, but we need to be aware they are just translations. Each one represents the work of human scholars who, despite their sincerity, are not infallible in their work. For this reason, there are differences between translations. Even without knowing the original languages, comparing multiple English translations when we study can help us understand and appreciate the decisions the translators made. Further, seeing the possible range of meaning in the original language through the different English translations can help us to produce a more robust interpretation of our own.

Why Do Translations Differ?

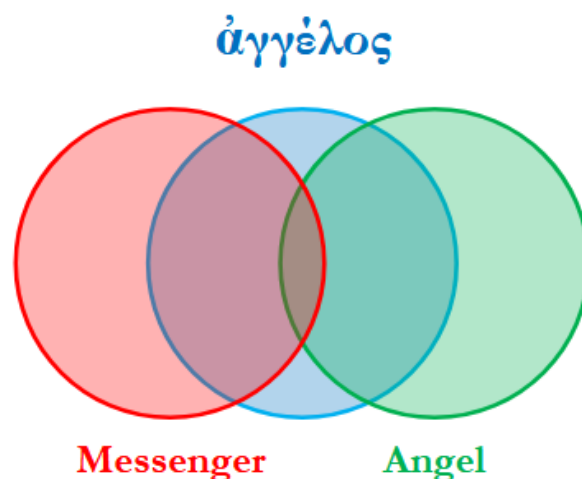
Some differences are a matter of style; for example, certain translations prefer to use simpler language to appeal to a younger audience. However, most differences affecting the meaning of a passage stem from differences between the original languages and English.

Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek all have different grammar and vocabulary from English. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find a perfect one-for-one equivalent that will always work across any two languages. Every word has a range of possible meanings that must be refined based on context. The appropriate English translation of a Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic word will often depend on the particular use of that word in a given passage. Take the word “angel” in Revelation 2:1 as an example:

“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write...” (Revelation 2:1, NKJV)

The word here is ἄγγελος (angelos), which is usually translated “angel” or “messenger.” In most passages, it is clear the word either refers to a heavenly angel (e.g. Matthew 24:36) or to a human messenger (e.g. Matthew 11:10). Broadly speaking, then, there are two suitable English words that can accurately translate parts of the range of meaning

for ἄγγελος. In some passages, ἄγγελος may be translated by either word (i.e. God’s angels may be sent by Him as messengers), but, in general, the translator must select one or the other to accurately convey the meaning of the original word in each passage. The overlap in meaning – as well as the distinctions between each word – may be illustrated by the graph below.



When it comes to a passage like Revelation 2:1, every translator must decide how the original author intended this word to be understood. The word ἄγγελος here may either describe an angel of heaven who is somehow assigned to watch over and communicate with each of the seven churches of Asia, or it may refer to a human messenger from each congregation. If the translator believes John wrote about a heavenly being, then “angel” is the best choice. However, “angel” is an unsuitable translation if John meant to address a human messenger. Almost all major English translations prefer the translation “angel,” but the footnotes in many of these translations indicate that “messenger” is a possible interpretation.¹

All translations of the New and Old Testaments are filled with interpretive decisions like this, since

¹ See, for example, the footnote in this place in the NKJV and NIV, as well as the note in the NET Bible on the same word in Revelation 1:20.

that is the nature of language. In the majority of cases, like the references to human messengers and heavenly beings mentioned above, the intended meaning of the original text is clear. In other cases, like Revelation 2:1, the intended meaning may be a little bit more ambiguous, which means the meaning expressed in the English translation has been left up to the judgment of each committee or individual translator.

How Can Comparing Translations Help Our Study?

Since each translation must make interpretive decisions about the meaning of certain passages in order to transfer that meaning into English, we can identify which words and phrases we need to study more closely by noting the places where translations differ. Simply observing the differences between translations will not necessarily tell us which one is correct – remember that the original language has priority over any English translation – but this observation can inform us about the interpretive decisions we need to make when we read each passage. We'll take 1 Peter 3:21 as an example.

Below is the verse in six major translations:

There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (NKJV)

Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (ESV)

Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (NASB 1995)

and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (NIV)

And this prefigured baptism, which now saves you—not the washing off of physical dirt but the pledge of a good conscience to God—

through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (NET Bible).

And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (NLT)

All of these translations interpret the verse the same way except for one word (underlined in each translation), the interpretation of which may alter the meaning of the passage. All of them agree completely that (1) the presence of water in baptism corresponds to Noah's flood (see verse 20); (2) the effectivity of baptism doesn't come from its ability to remove dirt from the physical body; and (3) it is the resurrection of Christ that gives baptism its power.

However, these six translations fall into three interpretive groups when it comes to the relationship between baptism and a Christian's good conscience:

1. The NKJV and NLT both present baptism as an *answer* or *response* toward God after a good conscience has been obtained. This interpretation can be read two ways – either freedom from sin is obtained sometime before baptism, or a “good conscience” denotes repentance, which must precede baptism, not salvation.

2. The ESV and NASB 1995 both place the arrival of a good conscience after baptism, so that baptism is presented as an appeal to God to give a Christian a good conscience.

3. The NIV and the NET Bible offer a little more ambiguity by presenting baptism as a pledge to God related to a clean conscience. This may be read either as pledge coming from a conscience that has already been made clean, or a pledge to keep a clean conscience in the future.

What this observation has revealed to us is that each of these translations has made an interpretive decision about the meaning of this passage and its bearing on the meaning of baptism. The differences in their interpretations center around the translation of a single word, ἐπερώτημα (eperōtēma), variously translated as “answer,” “appeal,” “pledge,” and “response.” We will discuss word studies and the tools available to help with them in a later study, but our comparison of six translations has helped know how to identify which words and phrases may require more careful study, and which are unambiguous both in the original and in their English translations.

BEHOLD, I THOUGHT...

Bill Howard

These were the questioning words of Naaman, a notable man from Syria, who was dumbfounded because an event did not unfold as he had anticipated. Perhaps Naaman was not a great deal different than many of us in the present who are assured in advance of how things are to unfold, and stunned when it does not happen in that manner.

We read about Naaman and this incident in the fifth chapter of 2nd Kings, beginning with the first verse. Naaman was, as we stated previously, a famous man, highly respected in Syria and held in high esteem in the eyes of the King. He was the distinguished commander of the armies of Syria. Ben-Hadad III was the King of Syria at this time, and he looked upon Naaman as a great man. He was a valiant soldier noted for bravery and success in war. Because of his status, Naaman was likely wealthy by material or worldly standards, quite likely possessing large quantities of gold and silver, property and fine homes, servants and all the trappings of affluence. We do not know this for certain, but men of his standing in those days were usually very wealthy.

In spite of all the positive accolades that can describe Naaman, an extremely unfortunate circumstance blighted his life. Naaman had leprosy. This was a painful and disgusting disease, dreaded by people of that day because it was looked upon as a disgrace to have it and could lead to death. More than all this, leprosy caused a good deal of change in the life of one afflicted. The leper's clothing was

to be destroyed, their head was to be bare, their upper lip was to be covered, and they were obligated to warn others by proclaiming themselves to be unclean, unclean. They were required to live alone, away from the camp or other gathering places and to eat alone. Read Leviticus chapters thirteen and fourteen for full details concerning leprosy.

Fortunately for Naaman, help was forthcoming. A young Jewish captive who waited on Naaman's wife told her mistress there was a Samaritan prophet that could help him recover from this dreaded disease. Word of this made its way to the King of Syria who had great concern for Naaman, so he set out to obtain healing for him. King Ben-Hadad would not consider a lowly prophet of Samaria to be of help; he went directly to the top. He sent a letter to the King of Israel, along with ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment, informing the King that he had sent Naaman to him to be healed. This King was so perturbed, believing Ben-Hadad was attempting to create a problem, that he rent his clothing. He stated: "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me." This was not the case, but it was what he believed, and it troubled him deeply.

We have not been told how word of the King tearing his clothing came to be known to the Prophet Elisha (probably the castle grapevine), but Elisha sent to the King stating: "Wherefore hast thou rent

thy clothes? Let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.” So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot and stood at the door of the house of Elisha, and Elisha sent a message to him telling him to “go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come clean again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.”

At this point, human tendency comes into play. Pompous Naaman was frustrated, what a letdown this was; he was indignant. He was accustomed to deference, respect; after all, he was a favorite of the King, the Commander of all the armies of Syria, and this Prophet did not even come to the gate and talk to him. *This Prophet is inferior to me; where is the esteem, the admiration?* He sent a servant and told him to wash seven times in the River Jordan, and he would be cleansed.

“Behold I thought he will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord, his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.”

This was not going the way he imagined things would take place. “Why should I go the River Jordan? Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, far better than all the waters of Israel?” He questioned the instructions from the man of God. “Why can I not wash in them?” After all, he was wealthy, he was famous and respected. This was an affront to his worldly status. He turned away in a rage. Naaman supposed all his riches, acclaim, grandeur, worldly splendor and finery would count for something. It didn’t. All of this was nothing in comparison to the power of God, and Naaman was in a rage, and he still had leprosy.

Luckily, some of Naaman’s servants were more thoughtful. They came to reason with him. “My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then when he saith to thee, ‘Wash and be clean’?” How much simpler could it be? Naaman had expected some grand ceremony, but that was not the instruction which God sent. His servants essentially said, “Forget your own thinking and comply with God’s way, make the trip to River Jordan, wash seven times and be healed.” He relented and did as instructed. He was cleansed from leprosy. Had he not done this, he still would have been a leper.

There are many lessons to be gained from this account. The first being that if we are to achieve

desired results for our needs, it will be because we realize our ways are not God’s ways, and if we refuse God’s ways, there is no victory. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 55:9), and “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). God’s words and God’s ways are all that count, regardless of what man chooses to believe. There is meaning in every word uttered by God. In the beginning, He said “Let there be” and instantly there was: all of creation came to be by just His words. The word of God through Elisha offered Naaman healing, but he was a proud man, and as long as he clung to that pride, he still had leprosy. “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18); also “A man’s pride shall bring him low” (Proverbs 29:23). Naaman wanted to be the boss, to call the shots, do things his way, but as long as he clung to this attitude he still had leprosy. Only when he came to his senses, swallowed his pride, and did as instructed did he gain that which God had set out for him; he was healed.

Now, we fast-forward nearly three thousand years for a view of circumstances in the world today and realize things have changed very little if any at all. If we were to put Naaman’s words into today’s vernacular, it might go as follows: “This is unbelievable, I know for certain...” Right, far too often we feel we are in control when we are sadly mistaken. When God’s words come through whatever instrument he chooses, be it slave girl, Prophet or King, we had best not debate their validity. It is not unusual for God to use humble instruments to convey His message.

“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are” (1 Corinthians 1:27-28).

If God says it, that is the way it is: our beliefs to the contrary have no standing. Naaman said: “Behold I thought”; his thinking was contrary to God’s thinking. What was its value? Absolutely no value whatsoever.

Throughout history, we see time and time again that God's blessings have been delayed or prevented because of pride and/or failure to obey. The history of the Israelites is sufficient to prove this. The attitudes toward God and His word which we witness in the present time indicate how little so many view its importance or even believe it at all. The writer of the Hebrew letter says that unbelief comes from an evil heart. For every individual who says "there is no God" or those who believe there is a God but refuse to heed His word because it doesn't agree with their thinking, we can only have concern and pray that they might come to realize how wrong they are.

At one time in history, God was so discouraged with mankind because of the immorality and wickedness that He decided to destroy His creation. One man and his family were to build an ark and escape the destruction. The ark was one hundred twenty years in preparation, and Noah warned the people of the coming devastation and preached repentance to those who would hear. We know this as a fact because Peter said Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). It is evident the people did not believe what Noah was telling them because as the waters began to rise and the rains came, they were not in the ark. They did not heed the words of the man of God; they did not repent of their wickedness and were lost. Behold I thought...?

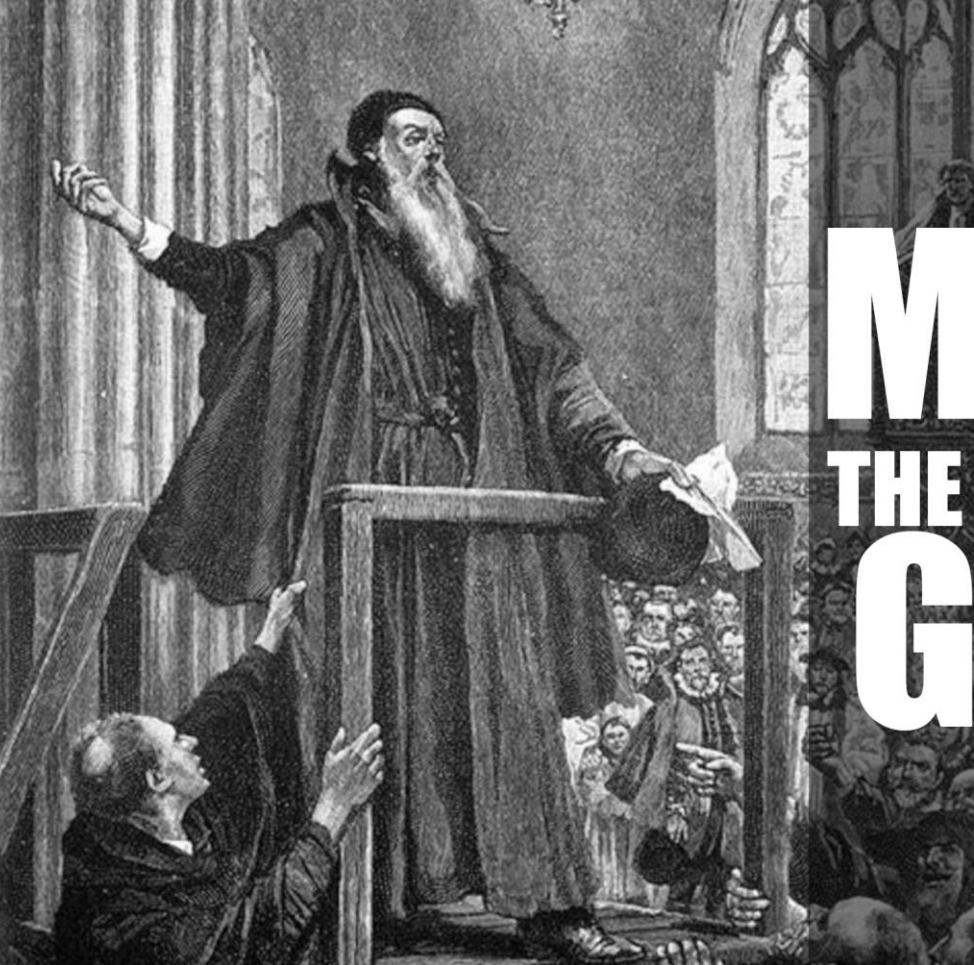
In due time as God has planned, the world will be totally destroyed; this time with finality. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). All mankind will be required to give an account of their life: what it has or has not been, whether we believed and obeyed God or not. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). This will be the time of judgment; it will determine the final abode of each of us: eternal peace and comfort or unending misery, heaven or hell. We choose which we desire while we live; Christ will make the determination then. Obedient believers will dwell in God's presence forever. Non-believers and the disobedient will suffer eternal

condemnation.

God does not wish for anyone to perish (2 Peter 3:9). He made salvation available for all by the sacrifice of his Son Jesus, and as the Apostle Peter said: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Paul wrote to the Romans: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [Gentile]" (Romans 1:16). Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). These are the facts, we will receive salvation through Jesus and Him alone, there is no other way. It matters not what we think, what we wish or how we think things should be. Jesus also said: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). It is certain, only the obedient believers in Christ will be saved in heaven; those who through obedience are in the kingdom of Christ, his church, his body of which he will be the savior (Ephesians 5:23).

Man can say that all roads lead to Christ; Jesus says there is one way only. Man can create thousands of doctrines and denominations; God's word says "there is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:4-6). Which will we choose to believe, the word of God or the doctrines of man? We are warned repeatedly about falling away, false teachers, and false doctrines, and at judgement, we can beat on our chest and scream: "Behold I thought" and still not be right. Naaman was not healed until he obeyed; neither will we be. God's way and that alone will bring salvation.

When Joshua was nearing the end of life and after leading the Israelites for more than twenty years, he wanted them to know that God was the only way. He said "Choose ye this day whom you will serve." It's your call; you make the decision. He also said "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The same call rings true today; choose God's way or follow man's teaching.



Milking THE Goats

Alexander Campbell

[Note: This sarcastic article strikes at the heart of the money-hungry preachers and denominational structures so prevalent in Campbell's day. They would continually demand money of their members and of non-members in the community for "good works," which often were just ways of enriching themselves and their friends. This first appeared in Campbell's *The Christian Baptist*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1823.]

"And thou shalt have goat's milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance of thy maidens" (Proverbs 27:27).

From the days of Origen (2nd century) to the present, it has been fashionable to spiritualize the scriptures, and to teach men they have a meaning besides what is expressed. Many to this day think the scriptures have a double sense—what is said and what is meant. A man who could find spiritual meanings to Samson's bee-hive, jaw-bone, and the tails of his three hundred foxes connected with firebrands, could doubtless find a spiritual meaning to our text. What could it be? We will suppose it to be this: —

1st. The person addressed must mean a minister of modern times, to whom it is said, "And *thou* shalt have goat's milk enough," &c.

2nd. His household and maidens must signify, in the spiritual sense, his family and domestics.

3rd. The goats must mean the non-elect, who are in the end to be eternally miserable, after feeding

the minister and his family for life; according to Matthew 25.

4th. The goats' milk, in the spiritual sense of the text, which is represented as abundant, must mean the generous and constant support which these ministers, their children, and servants have received from the non-elect, or such as are declared to be of that number, who do so well for their owners here, and who are to be treated so cruelly hereafter.

We will allow that the three first propositions are so plain that they need no illustration, and proceed to prove the truth of the fourth particular—"Thou shalt have goat's milk enough." It is a fact, beyond all dispute, that the unconverted, or non-elect, are generally depended on for the support of those who have for years been considered ministers of the gospel. The meeting houses are chiefly built with the money which belonged to such as are denominated goats; and were it not for this part of the people, what a poor condition the sheep would be in!

It is a curiosity, the manner in which the goat's milk is obtained.

Money is wanted to make the parson life-member of the Bible Society. The goats must be milked—and soon the ladies produce the money. A pious young man presents himself as one called to the ministry, but is not able to obtain an honorable education at *Princeton*, *Providence*, or *Cambridge*. Milk the goats is the next step. Men, women, and children are called, and the help is *stripped* from them, and the pious young men have "*goats' milk enough*."

Missionaries are needed among the heathen in *Vermont*, *Maine*, and *Rhode Island*. The goats are milked again, and the missionaries spread their fame in all directions. A brother clergyman is dismissed "because no man has hired him;" the goats are milked, and he is on a mission at twenty or fifty dollars per month.

A mission is agreed on to Asia, and the goats are resorted to, who support the friends for twenty-four years. At last this fails, and what next? Mr. *Ward* appears, and tells the owners of the goats that nothing can be done unless a college is built in Asia, and some of the natives made ministers. The goats are called up, and ten thousand dollars are collected.

The goats are left to feed on the high hills until another milking time returns, when empty pails are again presented, to be replenished from the same source.

These milking vessels are placed wherever the goats are likely to resort—as in the *bureau*, on the merchant's *counter*, in the *museum*—for the purpose of milking out the abundance of these milch kine. They have drawn from the goats, money, hats, shoes, stockings, shirts, and gowns; sweetmeats and other luxuries; with *missionary fields*, corn, potatoes, cabbages, pumpkins, &c.

All these things have been done, in addition to *stripping* the estates of old bachelors and maids when death shall put an end to their wants.

According to the modern pulpit doctrine, these poor goats are to be rewarded for all their milk, (so good for the elect,) with a portion with the devils and damned souls in eternal misery, where they shall see the "*very elect*," who are fed upon their milk, and by it nourished and prepared for glory everlasting.

Death, Taxes, and Critics

Tom Baxley

They say there are two things in life that can be counted on: death and taxes. One thing that can most definitely be added to the list is critics. There will never be a shortage of those who are willing to voice their discontent and displeasure about anything and everything. In life we will be criticized for what we do, don't do, say, or don't say; usually it's the same people who are doing the criticizing, regardless of the situation. So what can we do about it? First of all, don't take criticism from someone you would never go to for advice: everyone has an opinion, most are not very informed. Not all criticism is bad, learn to sift through the critics for those who have your best interests at heart and have plenty of experience. Number two, remember that your critics have critics; there will never be a shortage of critics, unfortunately. Finally, remember that even Jesus had critics, but He consistently persevered because He never lost focus on the mission. Keep moving forward, keep growing, keep serving.

LOCK THEM UP!

John Krivak

In Second Corinthians 10ff., Paul was preparing for spiritual warfare. Satan had infiltrated another holy fellowship and there was conflict in the Corinth church. The first battle, reasoned the apostle, must be fought inside each of us—the fight for God’s right to control our minds and thinking: *“We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ”* (2 Corinthians 10:5, NASB). Christians who win the inner battle for Christ—untwisting the corrupt thinking inspired by the devil—are able to join themselves with God, to then work together to rid the church of unholy forces. We might wish that church would never become a battleground, but the ancient serpent slithers into every paradise that God so far has created.

It is crucial to get inside your mind and ruthlessly take bad thoughts captive! Lock them up! This is part of the renewal discussed in Romans by Paul: *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect”* (Romans 12:2). Think differently, or you will never be spiritual in conflict situations. Purify your mind and be done with *stinkin’ thinkin’*! There are two thought patterns—each very common—that every Christian needs to overpower and lock up. They are chosen here because of their potential to impact spiritual warfare.

First, consider our thoughts about the faults of others. We tend to treat others more harshly, judging them by their actions, while we give ourselves a pass for good intentions! It is said that faults are like headlights—those of others are annoying. But we don’t notice when we leave the high beams on. The quills of a porcupine jab others; never himself! The Bible has much to offer when such thoughts play in our minds.

We love to talk about the faults of others. It is

nearly impossible not to talk! We should know that this is wrong, and so we justify ourselves: *“I know I shouldn’t say anything, but I am really concerned for Jack!”* Poor Jack. He has no idea that his bad deed has been gossiped around the church, across half the town, through a major thread on social media. And all this by people full of concern! *“Love covers a multitude of sins”* (1 Peter 4:8). If it is love that covers these sins, then what is it that exposes and spreads them? Worse, the gossip also has faults. Mark Twain observed that whoever points a condemning finger at someone else has three more pointing back at self! In the Sermon on the Mount, the righteous humor of Jesus bites us all: *“Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?”* (Matthew 7:3).

Paul contrasts battling according to the flesh against warfare by the Spirit, each driven by a different spiritual mindset and employing different weaponry. There is a time for meekness and a time for boldness. A time to boast, and a time to humbly refrain. There is nothing spiritual about allowing yourself, even in meekness, to be dominated by evil (2 Cor. 11:3-4). Navigating these matters is ultimately not so simple, and guidelines may even sound contradictory. Yes, there is a time and place for exposing and confronting the sins of others—sometimes publicly and sometimes harshly (Gal. 2:11ff.). Jesus did so and so did Paul—and both are held up as exemplars that we should imitate (1 Corinthians 11:1). Yet Paul also wrote: *“Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted”* (Galatians 6:1). That is sound advice usually. But leave room for those situations where Paul is anything but gentle (even in the same book, Galatians 1:8-9; 2:11-14; 5:12). Try to be gentle in those situations where Paul and Jesus would be gentle, and to be appropriately harsh where they

offer a clear example to us. Engage warfare by the Spirit.

We began drawing lines of battle inside each Christian's mind in order to tackle a larger conflict within a church. Only after dealing with our own bad thoughts does Paul anticipate that larger battle, in which God's people confront the intruders and usurpers: "*we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete*" (2 Corinthians 10:6). The goal, ultimately, is not simply to ignore the faults of others, leaving them uncorrected. The goal is to purify our minds to make these corrective efforts helpful, under the control of God rather than the devil: "*by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left*" (2 Corinthians 6:7). And, "*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses*" (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).

Faultfinding is the first of the two faulty thought patterns that we should arrest. Just as it is almost impossible not to talk about the moral failings of others, we also cannot bite our tongues hard enough to avoid talking about our own good deeds! We all are prone to "virtue signaling." This is the second of the two. Lock them up!

"Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 6:1). Yes, yes, Jesus! We hear you! But how very, very few of the good deeds we do, are NEVER brought to the attention of anyone else! Somebody always gets told—right? For a moment, give ear to two words from Jesus: "no reward." Tell others what you have done, and you might as well have left the good thing undone—the reward is gone!

I once knew of a church that I called the First Church of the Chamber of Commerce. The theology was inspired by popular culture, rather than by the Bible. It was flush with wealth that had been poured into very opulent facilities. On Sunday, every prominent business person in that town was present, dressed in their finest. And they were there to make God look good, right? Or, was God there to make them look good? "*Look at me, will you. I'm a good person—really I am, as you can plainly see by the fact that I go to church! I hope that you will credit this to me when we meet to discuss business on*

Monday morning." In common parlance, we call this "virtue signaling."

The righteousness that God notices has a sort of secrecy about it.

"So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you" (Matthew 6:2-6).

Just you and God—the two of you alone, sharing a secret. The moment we virtue-signal to another human being, we get: "no reward"! Listen again to Jesus for a clever warning against self-consciousness: "*do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.*" When you honor God in your own secrecy, like nothing else that signals how important God is to you. By the way, Paul's antics border on hilarity in 2 Corinthians as we watch him "not boast" even while plainly boasting. He always was sure to keep every boast "in Christ". The finest moment of this charade comes in Chapters 11-12. We must keep in mind: signal to others, and it shows God where He really ranks on your list. The rule of thumb for virtue-signaling is this: *More virtue; less signal!*

Notice that both of these thought patterns are so common because they come into play when stacking myself up against others—the essence of a conflict situation. Between another person and me—one of us will get the honor; the other will get the shame. It's much easier to think about their faults and my virtues—and doubly so, when conflict turns up the heat! These thought patterns are very natural. But we are supernatural, empowered by the Spirit and submitted to the Lord Jesus. To Him, we take these felons captive and strap on weapons which are supernatural in force. We have a church to clean up.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

BLESSINGS OF FELLOWSHIP

Jamie Beller

The subject of church discipline involves not only the “negative connotations” such as correction and the withdrawal of fellowship, but it also involves a “sense of partnership or shared participation.” When church discipline reaches to point of having to withdrawing fellowship, what is withdrawn is that sense of partnership or shared participation. Essentially, the one from whom fellowship must be withdrawn—the unrepentant brother or sister in Christ (1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6-10)—forfeits the blessing of fellowship that is enjoyed and shared by those in Christ, who “walk in the light as He is in the light” (1 John 1:7). What are the blessings of fellowship sadly surrendered by those from whom fellowship must be withdrawn?

SHARED SALVATION

Have you ever contemplated what great salvation is shared by those who are in fellowship with one another by virtue of being in fellowship with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit? The Hebrews writer warned, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who Him” (Heb. 2:3). That great salvation came by the grace of God.

Strengthening the point about the salvation shared by those who are in Christ, Paul declared to Titus, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11-12). Notice that the grace of God that brings salvation is

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who Him” (Heb. 2:3).

instructive in how we ought to live so as to maintain the salvation shared with those who are in Christ.

SHARED SONSHIP

One of the results of being obedient to God is that we become the sons of God. The apostle Paul declared, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:27-28). This declaration speaks, not to the role and responsibilities that exist in Christ, but rather, the relationship we have because of being in Christ. It expresses a shared relationship by those who are in Christ. A relationship in which we, by virtue of being in Christ, are fellow-heirs. Notice what Paul declares further in the text; “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29).

Reminding the Romans of their relationship in

Christ, Paul declares, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the chil-

dren of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” Among the things Paul emphasizes in this text concerning the blessings of fellowship in

Christ, are:

1. The contrast in the “spirit (attitude) of sonship” and the “spirit (attitude) of slavery.”
2. The comfort that, as children of God, we can call God “Father.”
3. The confidence that the Holy Spirit gives testimony WITH our spirit (not TO our spirit), that we are the children of God.
4. The certainty of the glory that awaits the children of God who “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1), and who suffer with Christ because we belong to Christ.

Perhaps one of the greatest declarations made concerning the blessing of shared sonship as a result of fellowship in Christ is that made by John, who declared, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1).

SHARED STEWARDSHIP

While being in Christ affords us the relationships and rewards of fellowship, there is also the responsibility of maintaining fellowship. To this thought, brother Jerry Martin notes:

Fellowship is a responsibility to be maintained and a privilege to practice. As participants in fellowship we become sharers and partners. We are in partnership with the divine Godhead. We have a common mission. We follow common instructions. We share a desire to accomplish the greatest work on the face of the earth, teaching all nations and every creature the saving message of the Gospel to all the world and every creature (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16).

Throughout the New Testament we read of the responsibility and resource of enjoying shared stewardship as a result of fellowship in Christ. Perhaps the earliest example of such is found in Acts 2. Luke declares:

And all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Praising God and having favor with all the people. And

the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:44-47).

The shared stewardship present among those who obeyed the Gospel on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41), was not only evident, it was also edifying and effective in converting others to Christ. Similarly, the shared stewardship was evident, edifying, and effective in converting others to Christ at Samaria (Acts 8:4-12).

Another right and responsibility of having a shared stewardship is that of working together with God and one another in “endeavoring to keep the unity of Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1). This shared stewardship must be a unified effort to not only maintain unity in the body, but also so that the body be edified. Further, by means of this shared stewardship, we also work together for the purpose of equipping the saints for the ministry (Eph. 4:12). Thus, the shared stewardship that exists in Christ, exists for the purpose of:

1. Exalting the Lord (Phil. 1:20-32; Matt. 5:16; 1 Peter 4:11).
2. Exemplifying Christ (Phil. 2:5ff).
3. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:1-7).
4. Edifying the church (Eph. 4:11-12).
5. Equipping the church (Eph. 4:12).
6. Exhorting the church (Heb. 10:19-25).
7. Entreating the erring (Gal. 6:1-2; James 5:19-20).
8. Evangelizing the lost (Matt. 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 3:6-11).

Who is magnified when this shared stewardship is neglected? May the endeavor of our shared stewardship be that the Lord is magnified.

Conclusion

Truly there are many blessings we enjoy as a result of having fellowship in Christ. We would do well to recognize the blessings of fellowship, along with the rights, relationships, and responsibilities that accompany those blessings. While the withdrawal of fellowship is often to be practiced toward those who no longer enjoy, or desire to engage in the rights, relationships, and responsibilities that accompany the blessings of fellowship, our prayer is that we will have a greater appreciation for the blessings of fellowship we enjoy in Christ.

ALL IT TOOK WAS: A PRAYER, A HYMN, AND AN EARTHQUAKE

*The Night Salvation Came
Knocking in a Philippian Jail*

Chris Gardner

Ever have a conversation with someone about Christ and His gospel where it did really seem to go anywhere? I'm sure we have all had one of those conversations, no matter what you said; it wasn't going to change their stance. Short of a miracle or the earth moving, there was no bringing that person to Christ.

In the sixteenth chapter of the book of Acts we come across the account of a time when the apostle Paul and his co-worker (Silas) brought a weary soul to Christ while in jail of all places. I recommend that you turn there and read this section before proceeding.

At first the jailor didn't seem to pay a whole lot of attention to who Paul and Silas were, besides the fact that they were his prisoners, given to him by the magistrates of the city of Philippi, and he had been charged to "keep them securely" locked up.

The Bible doesn't give us a whole lot of information about the Philippian jailor. We have no idea where he was in his life, what things were swimming in his head, what tragedies or turmoils he was dealing with at that moment, or even if he even

cared about his eternal soul or not. All we know is that on that particular night, salvation came knocking. From the text he doesn't appear to be interested in what Paul and Silas were doing (worshiping God), just doing his duty of making sure they stay right where the magistrates wanted them—locked up, fastened to the stocks.

The text reveals to us that Paul and Silas were imprisoned wrongfully for Paul casting out a demon from a slave girl who was making profit for her masters (Acts 16:18); and in retaliation the owners of the possessed girl drug the two men to the magistrates of the city, who beat them and threw them into prison (16:19-24). Despite this miscarriage of justice, Paul and Silas were making

the best of the situation and offered worship up to God in hopes, I'm sure, that they might save someone in that prison while they were there.

Most of us, if put in a similar situation, would probably not be doing as Paul and Silas, but, rather, we would be crying and complaining about being unfairly treated, demanding justice while offering a

*Keep kneeling, praying
from the heart, and
praising God in hymns
and you too just might
shake this world.*

live feed from our phones, putting up a Go Fund Me page in order to raise bail. But we can learn a lot from the devotion of these two men, for it was their devotion to God that brought about the next events.

In verses 26-27 we read:

“Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.”

In those days a guard or jailor was responsible for their prisoners. So much so that if the prisoners escaped, the guard would be charged with the same crimes as the prisoner. So an open jail for the main guard was a death sentence. And in that culture it was regarded more honorable to take your own life than to allow it to be taken. But as the text reveals to us beginning in verse 28, none of the prisoners had gone anywhere. How Paul knew this and how none of the prisoners fled had to be due to divine intervention, for it was midnight and dark. Verse 29 states the guard called for a light and then ran into the inner prison where Paul and Silas had been attached to the stocks. But just as amazing as the earthquake was all the prisoners being accounted for. This “keeper of the prison,” when he ran to Paul and Silas, came to them trembling, asking what he needed to do to be saved. I am sure he was aware of how close he came to dying twice that night: once from the earthquake and once from his own hand.

As great a preacher as Paul was, I’m willing to guess he didn’t have a lot of people just fall down before him and ask about the gospel. If only more

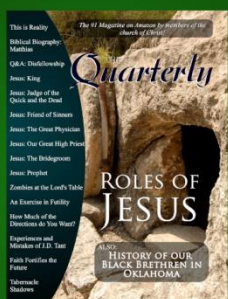
people would be moved to take action with their eternal souls when they have close encounters with death as did the jailor, our congregations would be full and we would be a better nation for it.

This man, despite initially showing no interest in Paul and Silas beyond how they were his responsibility, was able to put together that the events of that night were not just random—these things all occurred by and through God. It was no accident that none of the prisoners escaped, but remained where they were. It was not an accident that an earthquake happened at that location at that point in time and no one was injured. It was also no accident that Paul and Silas were imprisoned at this location when these events took place. All of this happened due to God, through both providence and direct interaction.

In verse 31, Paul declares to this man that he needs to “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” in order to be saved, along with his whole household. Paul and Silas preached the gospel that very night to the jailor and his family (verse 32) and they all were baptized (verse 33).

Like I mentioned earlier, we do not know a lot about this individual prior to this event or even following. We can only speculate on the difference he and his family made in that region long after that night. But what we do know about the jailor is that all it took was a hymn, a prayer, and an act of God for him to hear, believe, and obey the gospel of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. We never know who we might come in contact with or what impact our devotion to God might have: Keep kneeling, praying from the heart, and praising God in hymns and you too just might shake this world.

DIGITAL BACK ISSUES—FREE!



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Characteristics *of* **FALSE TEACHERS**

Johnny O. Trail

In the book of 1 Thessalonians, Paul deals with some false teachings that had permeated the congregation. In the first chapter, the Apostle gives a list of various characteristics exhibited by those who teach false doctrine. He says, in 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6:

“For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.”

False teachers proclaim error in uncleanness (1 Thes. 2.3).

Paul’s proclamation of the gospel was not offered as a fraudulent impurity. The words proclaimed by Paul were unadulterated and designed to convert people to Jesus. His message was simple and understandable. 1 Corinthians 2:1-2 says, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know

anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” By the same token, heralds of God’s word in our age need to preach a pure, unadulterated message to their audience.

False teachers are deceitful (1 Thes. 2.3).

This seems to be a characteristic of false teachers bar none. A false teacher takes advantage of the unformed by deceiving them into believing a falsehood. Notice the language Paul uses regarding the false teachers at Galatia. Galatians 2:4-5 says, “And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.” Peter shares this same quality of a false teacher. He says, in 2 Peter 2:3, “By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.” A false teacher wants to misinform one into believing the doctrine they are proclaiming, and the truth dispels their efforts.

False teachers seek to please men more than God (1 Thes. 2.4).

If our desire was to please men, we should have never obeyed the gospel or endeavored to teach others about Jesus. Galatians 1:9-10 says, “As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.” A message that does nothing to challenge its listeners to change for Christ in humble obedience to His word is one that is aimed at pleasing men. Feeding the congregation on a spiritual diet of fluff results in weak Christians who cannot offer a reason for the hope that is residing within them.

False teachers use flattering words to allure disciples (1 Thes. 2.5).

Certain charismatic speakers have deceived people throughout the ages with their smooth-talking abilities. In fact, it is one source of division that has split entire congregations. Paul says, in Romans 16:17-18, “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.” The proclamation of the gospel was done according to the wisdom of God. 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 says, “And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” Flattery is not a proper method of converting people to Christ. The word of God in its simplicity has the power to convert alien sinners (Romans 1.16).

False teachers use their doctrines to cover their true motives—greed (1 Thes. 2.5).

Jude makes this apparent when he says, in Jude 11, “Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah” (cf. 2 Peter 2.15). When people see a profit in misery or

the promotion of error, they will become angry when their livelihood is challenged (cf. Acts 16.16ff; Acts 19.24-28). Our motive for proclaiming the gospel should never become so debased as to be dictated by monetary gain. Some in the religious world have done this very thing and give sound proclaimers of the word an undeserved, bad reputation as money grubbers. To this end, a faithful proclaim-er of God’s word will never make their motive in declaring the gospel greed.

If our desire was to please men, we should have never obeyed the gospel or endeavored to teach others about Jesus.

False teachers seek the glory of men above the approval of God (1 Thes. 2.6).

Those who glorify themselves by gaining the approval of men should be ashamed. They are “enemies of the cross of Christ” who have focused upon carnal things and not the spiritual. Philippians 3:18-19 says, “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.” A message that pleases God does not always have the same effect upon those who are auditors of the message. Nonetheless, God is the One whose approval should be sought in our message.

False teachers make unreasonable, unapproved demands of their disciples (1 Thes. 2.6).

Jesus says, of the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:3-4, “Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.” Since all sound proclaimers of the word are under the control of Jesus (Matthew 28.18; Colossians 1.18; Colossians 3.17), the requirements of the unadulterated gospel are reasonable and doable for those who would be followers of Him.

Hopefully, these characteristics will help the student of God’s word to identify those who would teach false doctrines. Simply stated, they will be known by their fruits.

The God of All Comfort

Zachary Hall

When Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus, he said Christians are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. One of these spiritual blessings is the comfort that comes from God. In 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 Paul talks about the God of all comfort. In this passage the word comfort can be found ten times. In the KJV “comfort” is used three times, “comforted” twice, “comforteth” once, and the word “consolation” is used four times. What is very interesting to me is that all of these words come from the same Greek word παράκλησις (paraklésis). This word means to call to one’s aid or to encourage. Let us consider a few things from the text.

Consider the following passage:

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:3).

The first thing to take away from this is that God is the God of all comfort. In other words, all true comfort ultimately comes from God. So, when something bad happens, where do people turn to find comfort? If they do not turn to something godly, it is not true comfort. Often when something tragic happens man will turn to drugs and alcohol, and what they find out is once the initial numbness is gone, they are still in distress. When one receives comfort from God it brings true relief. At funerals, people will often read Psalm 23. Why? It is read because of the comfort it can provide during a sad time.

Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. (2 Cor. 1:4)

Note our comfort comes from God. We can know what comfort is, and it is our responsibility to comfort others when they are in time of need. This aspect of the Christian life can be a great help in other areas of life. Just writing someone a card to let them know that you care can make a huge difference in life. It might be the case that someone you reach out

to might become interested in spiritual matters all because you cared and comforted them.

Followers of Christ are going to suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). However, even though one may suffer for Christ, they can find comfort.

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. (2 Cor. 1:5-6).

The idea of the sufferings of Christ abounding in us is the fact that one becomes a fellow sufferer with Christ. Consider what was said of the apostles in Acts 5:41: they rejoiced because they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ. James 1 says to count it all joy when you fall into various trials. How can one find joy in trials? How can one find joy in suffering? This joy can be found in the fact that God is the God of all comfort. It is in this comfort that one can overcome any and all suffering.

Knowing then that God brings comfort in all things, one has all the motivation to remain faithful no matter what. Note what Paul said:

And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. (2 Cor. 1:7).

The hope of Paul was that the Corinthians would remain faithful during persecution. Hope is the idea of expectation and desire; Paul expects and desires them to be faithful because of the comfort of God. This should be the same hope Christians have for one another today, because God is still the God of all comfort. When one enjoys the comfort God offers, the cares, suffering, and trials of this world seem small. One of the most comforting things is God offers a faithful Christian eternal life in heaven where there are no cares, suffering, or trials.

God is the God of all comfort. Will you enjoy His comfort today?

ANOTHER HUMAN WEAKNESS

John Krivak

Mention human weakness, and we usually think of a collapse before sin and temptation. This article is about another weakness that comes with being human, and it can play havoc with our relationship with God. We all—every one of us—interpret God’s heart through the upturns and (especially) the downturns of life experience¹. So, how are you and God getting along today? What kind of signals is He sending you? Are you happy with God? Is God happy with you? That relationship that you share together, does it tend toward success or failure?

As children, trying to interpret feelings toward us, we would “daisy” the heart of others—remember? *“She loves me; she loves me not!”* It could easily go either way—depends on that last petal. Silly? Subjective? Childish? Surely, yet do we not “feel” God’s love in a lively way when blessings flow and life is good? We feel the wind of God under our wings—*“He loves me!”* However, we read the intentions of that same Divine Heart quite differently when life experience deals us a hard hand—suffering, failure, loss, injustice, disease, depression, shame, treachery, and death. *“He loves me, not!”* The naïve in the church may think that salvation from God always prevents such downturns. Every old saint, with sadness in the eye, knows better. When the arrows of leading indicators point down, what should we interpret of God’s heart? Some unsatisfactory possibilities offer themselves for consideration:

1. Though these issues are huge to me, they are nothing among the really big issues that God is busy with. I am probably not even on His radar.

¹ There is a personality trait of our psychology that tends either toward subjectivity or objectivity, especially when seeking to understand how others feel about us. A subjective interpretation overly personalizes matters: *“She never did like me. That would explain her abrupt remark.”* An objective interpretation of the same event might simply think she was abrupt, perhaps because she was late for a meeting.

2. God sees what I’m going through, but my struggles aren’t part of His agenda. God tends to the Heavenly and spiritual matters, but earthly troubles like the collapse of my business or career don’t concern God.
3. God expects me to deal with this alone. He just watches from up there and will grade me on how well or how poorly I do.
4. God must be offended by something I’ve done and He is determined to punish me and make me suffer. I felt His love before, but now He treats me like an enemy.

Because God is relationally stable and builds us on the accomplishments of Jesus, security is achievable between us. So, if things go wobbly, we humans have to own that, right? Truth is, the quality of your relationship with God always varies, and we have to be sensitive and responsive, working through love and faith toward success. God is also aware of success and failure between us. The process is deliberately lively and dynamic, intending our growth and maturing. None of us can be perfect, but any of us can be responsible towards a relationship with God—even after we sin. I am not in that camp that pushes all responsibility for success onto God. Neither do I expect my relationship with God to always be sheer delight. My downturns in life experience actually may be intentional, disciplinary moves used by God to work relationships toward good. All of this said, how do we interpret His heart?

This is where our weakness under pressure easily misreads God. We experience the rough edge of life, and view God with suspicion. The more I consider, the more I think it an inescapable feature of being human. Jesus sometimes does not get full credit for being human. We accept His divinity, but that somehow prevents Jesus from descending fully enough to really touch the earth, to get low enough to really be human as we are human. But Jesus displays the same weakness that we are discussing. He

shows himself to be human: *“Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACH-THANI?’ that is, ‘MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?’”* (Matthew 27:45-46). Jesus was using life experience—in very human fashion—to interpret the heart of God. It pointed to abandonment!² Jesus became weak simply because He was human: *“In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation”* (Hebrews 5:7-9). In our more lucid moments of clear thinking, both we (and Jesus) know that abandonment is not in God’s heart! But—for any made of human stuff (Jesus included)—it sure feels like that, when suspended by nails through hand and feet. Jesus’ despairing cry while dying has, I think, been overanalyzed for meaning. That cry communicates nothing but weakness in a struggle to understand God.

Now consider Job. In the flash of an instance, the pointers of leading indicators—which had been aiming way up—are suddenly wrenched downward. He lost family, wealth, honor, health—and was left to interpret from this the heart of God. The reader of Job’s story is given secret insight into the spiritual realm, where God and Satan have very opposite designs on Job’s suffering. Job is God’s prized hero! If only he were aware of it! Blind to this, Job thinks the absolute worst about God’s relational intentions. The narrator (Job 1:22) claims Job stopped short of blas-

Truth is, the quality of your relationship with God always varies, and we have to be sensitive and responsive, working through love and faith toward success.

² This is famously termed the “cry of dereliction.” Either God was—or was not—derelict toward His Son at the Crucifixion. Plainly, however one judges this, Jesus felt abandoned and said so. Thus, when considerations are approached this simply, either the Father was derelict or Jesus was mistaken about this. Jesus rightly trusted the Father’s love as guarantee against abandonment (John 16:32). Neither Father nor Son was at fault in any way.

phemy (but I’m not so sure...). Jumping from hard life experience to distrust against God is very human, isn’t it? Recall the failure in the Parable of the Talents: *“And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours’”* (Matthew 25:24-25).

Next consider Naomi in the Book of Ruth. Her name means “pleasant.” She and family leave Bethlehem (translation: “house of bread”) because of famine, to find food in Moab! Her husband dies; so do her two sons. But daughter-in-law Ruth accepts Naomi’s God and follows her back to Bethlehem: *“So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city*

was stirred because of them, and the women said, ‘Is this Naomi?’ She said to them, ‘Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara [translation: “bitter”], for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me’” (Ruth 1:19-20). She also attempts to use life experience to interpret the heart of the Almighty, and misses. God has a place in His loving,

faithful heart for Naomi.

Time would fail us to chase the same theme through the wilderness wanderings from Egypt to Canaan, as Israel struggles to understand her new God. What about you and me? Can we find something better—than the twists in the path through life—to find what God has in heart for us (by considering the Cross, perhaps)? I confess my own failure, when I want to truly know God. I am shamefully embarrassed at my pessimism (for me, a deep rooted personality trait), at my lack of faith, at how quickly and easily I misread God. Maybe I can learn to face the downturns better, but I suspect that when God redeems our hurts and shows us His true heart, I will be found holding a very foolish interpretation. I’m in for a real surprise from His heart. This weakness is very human.

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Man was not Made for EMPTINESS

Gerald Cowan

In chapter 3 of his letter to the faithful saints in Christ in the church in Ephesus, apostle Paul recounts the privilege and grace of God that allowed him to preach the *unsearchable riches of Christ* (3:8). What a joy it is to make others see what God has for us and will give us in Christ (3:9-13). Paul's desire and ours should be that we will be filled with all the fullness of God (3:19) – to be filled as full as God can fill us. Nature, if we are allowed to personify it, abhors a vacuum. It does not like emptiness. It tries to fill everything with something.

More than any other of God's creatures, man was not designed to be empty. He must be filled with something. You should try to fill him with something, but not with just anything. There are some things that do not belong and should not be allowed in a person. Man has special capacities and special needs, which must be met in special ways with special things. Man is body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The soul is the mental, emotional, and social aspect – one's essential personality or personhood.

Remember: man was not designed by God to be empty. Man requires filling in every aspect of his being.

MAN NEEDS TO BE FILLED PHYSICALLY, SO THERE IS FOOD AND WATER AND AIR TO NOURISH HIS BODY.

As is the case with every living organism, food must be appropriate for man. He *does not live by bread (food) alone* (Matthew 4:4), but without proper food he will soon die. Water is an absolute essential for life in the body. Measurements vary but the general estimate is that our bodies are between 60% and 75% water. "Ugly bags of mostly water," as a robot in some science-fiction movie said. Someone has said, whimsically, that one can live his whole life without water, but his life will not be long. You can survive for about three weeks without food, three days without water, three minutes without air.

Of course one can eat the wrong things, fill his stomach with wrong foods and wrong fluids – even fill his lungs with improper gases and polluted air. One can fill his belly with stones, or with dirt and many other things but they have no food value for man. Man cannot eat grass – his stomach is not designed to digest cellulose. His system cannot assimilate certain minerals, except in trace amounts. True story: A party of explorers was lost in a wilderness. Food ran out. They found some attractive and tasty berries. Then, having experimented and found they

were not poisonous, they ate their fill. They stayed in that spot where there was an abundance of berries until they could be rescued. But many of them died of malnutrition – they starved to death with their stomachs full of berries that had no food value for them.

Lesson: If man is to live physically, he must have appropriate food, food that he can digest and that his body can use in building itself up and sustaining its life.

MAN NEEDS TO BE FILLED MENTALLY, SO THERE IS INSTRUCTION, INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH.

The proper food for man's mind is truth, especially the word of God, every word that proceeds from God (Matthew 4:4). Nothing but truth comes from God. Truth is inexhaustible. There are new truths waiting to be discovered, and there are old truths that must not be forgotten. God's word is truth (John 17:17), part of the universal truth upon which we feed. All truth is ultimately from God, whether in the Bible or not. Truth is truth.

Of course man can fill his mind with things other than the truth. Lies, theories, suppositions, dreams, myths, false hopes. Man is a master at deriving faulty assumptions and conclusions from what he claims to find in the penumbra of stated truths. Our Supreme Court has used this dodge to burden us with several "rights" which they imagined are incipient in peripheral shadowy hints and inferences in the amended "rights" stipulated in our federal Constitution. Here's how that works: If *this* is true then *this* may also be true – and if it could be true we must treat it as if it were true. This may be how we got the "right" of unnatural sexual relationships including homosexual marriage, and the "right" to kill babies in the womb. One may convince himself that things are true because he wants them to be true – he believes what he wants to believe. One may reject and refuse to believe some things that are true, because he does not want them to be true (Romans 1:19-25). But no amount of believing or wishing will ever change error to truth or truth to error. What man needs for mental nourishment is the word of God. Anything that contradicts the word of God cannot be true – it may be *science falsely so-called* (1 Timothy 6:20, KJV). Nobody can be properly educated without knowledge and understanding of God's word. Study it diligently and use it properly (2 Timothy 2:15, 3:16-17).

Meditate upon it and learn to love and appreciate it (Psalm 119:97-100). Keep it in memory, hide it in your heart to avoid sinning against God (Psalm 119:11).

MAN NEEDS TO BE FILLED EMOTIONALLY, SO THERE IS LOVE.

We are not talking about the cheap thrills that are often called love. Not the "chemistry," the passion and excitement or the feverish rush of blood that tumbles us head over heels that passes for "love" in today's world. That kind of love is usually selfish. It thrives on receiving, and is only slightly concerned about giving. Nothing cheapens love more than reducing it to a physical act connecting two bodies. Sexual contact is often called "making love." Some have asked, "Is that all there is?" A man being prosecuted for rape and murder said he had not intended to hurt or kill the woman, but while he was "making love to her" she resisted and struggled against him and he ended up killing her. (Heard on NPR's "All Things Considered," about August 28, 2000).

Every person needs the kind of love that reaches out to others and delights in the good it can do for others (Galatians 5:13). It is able to be concerned without becoming irrational, able to recognize and approve the good without being blinded by the bad. It can recognize the value of things and persons it may personally dislike. It seeks what is good and beneficial for everybody.

Nobody ever loved us as God loves us. Nobody ever showed greater love for us than Jesus Christ did (John 3:16, Galatians 2:20, John 15:13). Every person needs to know and experience the love of God in Christ – and in His people – the love of Christ "that surpasses human understanding" (Ephesians 3:19). Whether every person knows it, appreciates it, gets it, applies it or deserves it is not the question. The fact is, we all need it.

MAN NEEDS TO BE FILLED SOCIALLY, SO THERE IS FELLOWSHIP AND FRIENDSHIP.

Fellowship is more than association with other people. Most of us are around other people all the time: in the work place, at school, in crowds at sporting or entertainment events, even in the home, and yet some are always lonely, feeling isolated and "left out" or even "shut out." God said it was not good for a human to be alone (Adam is typical of all men), so he made male and female complementary

to each other. As Mosie Lister says in one of his songs, “There’s not a thing in the whole wide world that’s worse than being alone.”

True fellowship is togetherness, a feeling that one is loved, accepted, appreciated – a feeling that one belongs. True fellowship is the association of people who share the same values, hopes, and desires; it is people who are alike in some significant way, who have in common something acknowledged by all as important, or as relevant to their identity. Fellowship is people bound together by ties which are stronger and nobler than mere flesh and blood relationships. Neighbors, acquaintances, and companions can never take the place of real friends. “*There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother*” (Proverbs 18:24). The same reference also teaches that one who wants to have friends must be a friend to others, showing himself to be friendly.

God has designed two institutions that can supply our needs for fellowship and friendship. The first of these is the home. I remember the first time a man introduced a woman to me by saying, “This is my wife and best friend.” It struck me as odd at first, but on a moment’s reflection I knew it certainly should be true. If both are Christian, then it is not possible for either to have a better friend on earth than the marriage partner – assuming both are the kind of Christian they should be. (The fact that sometimes married partners are enemies and not friends means at least one and perhaps both are not the kind of Christian they should be.) I remember seeing an announcement in a church bulletin: “B__ and M__ were married...thus ending a long and happy friendship.” Freudian slip? Friends got married and so ended their friendship? Sibling rivalry is really inappropriate. “Blood is (at least should be) thicker than water.” Family members should promote the welfare and develop the potential of every member, rather than compete with each other. Which is more often the case: mutuality or competition? You know the answer. If all the family members are Christian there is a double blood tie: the blood of the family, and the blood of Christ. Family members who are Christian have the best possible human relations.

The second institution designed to provide fellowship and friendship is the church. A man once said to me, “Most of my real friends, and certainly my best friends, are outside the church. They are not Christians – or at least not of *this* church” (not of

the church of Christ, or not of this congregation of it). He betrayed his belief, admitted at other times, that “there are true and proper Christians in all churches.” A Christian cannot find a truer or better friend than another Christian, if both are what they should be. Like you, I have many friends in the church who are closer to me than blood brothers and sisters. The blood of Christ is a stronger tie than flesh and blood relatives. Friendship and fellowship in society outside the home and the church must be very selective. Improper companions and associations can corrupt the best intentions and morals (1 Corinthians 15:33).

ABOVE ALL, MAN NEEDS TO BE FILLED SPIRITUALLY, SO THERE IS GOD.

Every man is designed to accommodate the indwelling of God. It has been said by someone and often repeated that there is a kind of God-shaped space in each of us that remains empty and void until we allow God to fill it. Or, as Augustine suggested, God has made us for himself and we remain restless until we find rest in Him.

Man cannot be properly filled without God. Our lives and hearts are empty until they are filled by the Lord with the Lord himself. He gives us Himself and His Son and His Spirit (Galatians 4:6, 1 John 4:13). God is the source of all things that are good and needful for body, soul, and spirit. He gives us all things that lead us to life and godliness, goodness and perfection (2 Peter 1:3, James 1:17). God is the source of daily bread, food for the body (Matthew 6:11). He will not give stones when we ask for bread (Matthew 7:9-11). God gave us Jesus, **the bread from heaven and the water of life** (John 6:35, 48 and 4:14).

In the Lord we find ultimate eternal truth, proper food for the mind. He is **the way, the truth, and the life** – the way we ought to walk all the days of our lives (John 14:6). The Lord himself has taught us **the fullest meaning of love**, and only He is able to fill our hearts with an intense and fervent love. He did it by loving us fully and perfectly (John 15:13). We know how to love by the model of love he left us (1 John 4:19). He is the friend who sticks closer to us than our own brothers (Proverbs 18:24). While we walk with Him in the light of His word, we have **perfect fellowship with God, with Christ, with the Holy Spirit of God, and with the people of God** (1 John 1:1-2:11).

IS GOD ABLE TO FILL US IN ALL THE WAYS WE NEED AND HAVE A RIGHT EXPECT?

Yes. The answer is given in Ephesians 3:20-21. *“Now to Him (that is, to God) who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen”* (NKJV). This does not mean God can and will do all we ask or all we can imagine. Though many choose not to believe it, there are some things that are impossible for God to do – His nature and integrity would be compromised if, for example, He lied and said or did something contrary to truth. So, neither God nor His Christ can lie and still claim to be the Truth (John 3:33, 14:6). We may ask God for something He should not do, as well as something He cannot do. We often ask with the wrong motives (James 4:3), perhaps testing or tempting God (Matthew 4:7). We can expect God to do for us or give to us all that we truly need, all that we have the right to ask and expect, but not everything that passes through our selfish mind. If all our wishes were granted we would no doubt fill ourselves with temporary and often harmful pleasures while ignoring our true needs.

CONCLUSION:

The physical body is temporary. Its needs seem to be most urgent, most demanding of our attention, and we try to supply what is needed. But physical needs are not the most important.

The soul's mental, emotional, and social needs are not so urgent or pressing, do not demand our attention the way physical needs do, so they are too often neglected. The damage done may not be life-threatening, but we must not minimize the impact of neglect in these matters.

The spirit is eternal. The bread and water of life for the spirit are provided in abundance. But only those who are spiritually hungry will eat and drink. And only those who eat and drink will be filled (Matthew 5:6).

Read again Ephesians 3:20 and 19b. Let us address ourselves to Him who is able to do abundantly more than we rightfully ask or think, according to our true needs — to be filled as full as God is able to fill us.

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IN THE PROCESS OF TIME

Part Two: Measuring Eternity

William Howard

What is eternity? It is time without end and the backdrop of reality. Everything exists in it: heaven, hell, hades, and earth. We move and exist in eternity but will never escape. Nothing makes it through eternity because there is no end to make it through. This whole material realm (all we see) is temporal. It is short-term and was never created to last beyond a set of years. Earth can sustain humanity generation after generation, but compared to eternity the thousands of years of earth are tiny things. The earth will not last forever since its purpose was not meant to be indefinite. Hades is also temporary (Revelation 20:14). God made the earth as a testing ground for humanity. When the tests are over, God brings it to an end and the earth is removed from humanity. There will be no need for the material realm anymore. Peter describes this in 2 Peter 3:10: *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

God is from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 106:48) with no beginning and no end. The earth exists with finite boundaries of time (it begins and ends) suspended in eternity. At a certain point in the everlasting, God created this world. How could He create anything outside the limitless expanse of everlasting to everlasting? What else is there? Logically there can be no place outside of everlasting. An eternity of time stands before and after this world.

Time passed in eternity to the instant when God said, "Let there be light." Thus, the creation week with its seven literal days is a place inside the everlasting. Judgment day is the set time in eternity when the earth will come to its end to be destroyed by God. The existence of the earth with its history and happenings plays out in a chronology inside the eternity of time. What we cannot possibly know is how far from the start or the finish of everlasting the events of the earth transpired. Everlasting does not start or finish.

Can we measure the extent of eternity? It is measureless. The best we can do is know all the things it is bigger than. The endless will be infinitely larger than anything with an end. A galaxy is huge but finite. Seeing it from earth across the vastness of space a remote galaxy is hardly noticeable. It is a dim speck of light in the night sky. An expansive galaxy becomes miniscule when compared to space.

Imagine any number of years and know eternity is larger still. An expanse of 100 trillion years is long to us because our existence is beginning. We have not been around long enough to experience such an amount of time. But 100 trillion years is a finite period. Eventually it ends. If God told us heaven would last 100 trillion years, it might sound great until we realized 100 trillion years has a final hour and it is over. What then? Souls having experienced that length of time would know vast epochs are nothing in eternity. We can double the 100 tril-

lion years, double it again and then multiply by 900 quadrillion years and eternity is not scratched. Nor can it be. Eternity can hold all the number of years you can imagine even when you have an eternity to work on it. Eternity is infinite time and cannot end.

Can you measure an hour or a year in eternity? The answer is simple. We do it already. The physical universe was created and exists on the line of eternity. We are not isolated from it. The universe stands and functions in eternity but is made for a moment in it.

Let us change the question a bit. If we were to take a clock into heaven would the clock work? Or can we know when an hour has passed in heaven? The previous paragraphs have assumed we can. I believe we could measure time in heaven though time does not carry the same effect on the immortal as it does on matter and the mortal. Time can crush mountains but is harmless to things created for eternity. Past, present, and future are a fact or output of time and this is also true for things not made temporal.

Eternity is an endless supply of time. Time can be spent but eternity cannot. Each moment (however we want to define it) can be measured inside eternity, but something must have a beginning and end to measure it. Moments have both beginning and end while eternity has neither. Let us analogize. Suppose we came across a running faucet supplied by an infinite ocean. We cannot know how much water has passed through the faucet before we got there. Nor can we know how much water will pass through in the end since it will not end. Though there is a constant supply of water we can know what is currently going through. We can start measurements, but we will never exhaust the supply as it would be ever flowing. It is preposterous to suggest a never-ending water supply renders a gallon meaningless, or we cannot know one gallon from the next in order of inflow. A continual flow of water does not mean you cannot measure it. It means you can never get a final number of gallons. Now we change the analogy.

We can see the night sky and view the immense distances going beyond the stars. But we can still measure things around us. The existence of infinite time and space does not preclude the ability to measure time and space. If there is time, then it can be measured. Eternity must be an endless collection of moments otherwise it is an endless supply of

nothing. That would be like describing a waterless void as a boundless ocean. As the word “ocean” means water so too “eternity” means time. Eternity is not timeless but a constant stream of time.

Time is a significant property of existence. Something existing does so in an amount of time however brief or prolonged. Time is a measurement of existence and proof of it, the gauge confirming the reality of something. To say something occupies no time is to say it was never part of reality. If it never existed in time, it never existed. Time conveys the moments when something occupies reality. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel From everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, “Amen!” Praise the Lord! (Psalm 106:48).* The words “from everlasting to everlasting” is an expression of time. It is also a way of expressing the existence of God by placing Him in time. He dwells in all time – everlasting to everlasting.

In Proverbs 8:23 wisdom is personified and speaks to us of its realness. *I have been established from everlasting, From the beginning, before there was ever an earth.* In this verse is an expression of time by use of verbs combined with the words: everlasting, beginning, before, and ever. The proof of wisdom’s existence is found in the time expressed. Even though wisdom is physically intangible it existed in time, continues to exist in time, therefore wisdom exists. Nothing can exist and not occupy time. This includes abstractions like wisdom, love, truth, and righteousness. Also, anything occupying time must exist while it inhabits time. This includes lies. A lie exists as it is manufactured. The facts claimed by the lie, however, do not exist. The purposeful misrepresentation of reality makes it a lie.

All this may seem academic, or pointless to ponder. But in considering subjects such as God, heaven, hell, and your own soul, if time is omitted or not thought important, then these subjects are not adequately considered at all. None of these subjects can be covered if time is left out because they all exist in eternity. Odd notions concerning time form odd notions about Deity. He inhabits eternity. He inhabits time.

Isaiah 57:15: *For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.’”*

DOES GOD APPROVE OF WOMEN LEADING IN WORSHIP? (PART TWO)

Bradley S. Cobb

Easily one of the most confusing passages in the New Testament regarding the role of women in worship is found in 1 Corinthians 11. Some avoid it like the plague. Others, flock to it to try to make it prove their side of the argument. The funny part about it is those at one extreme (women preachers) as well as those on the other (women can't speak, and they also have to have their heads covered) both hold this passage up as evidence. What are we to make of this?

Turn to 1 Corinthians 11, and we will look to see what this passage has to say for us today, as well as how it fits into the question about the role of women in worship.

I Praise You...But (1 Corinthians 11:2-3)

Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and [that you] keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you. But, I desire you to know that the head of every male is Christ; and the head of the female is the male; and the head of Christ is God.

Ordinances

The word "ordinances" is also translated "traditions," and while it usually refers to the traditions of

men, Paul uses the word to refer to things taught by the apostles. But in every case, it describes an act done for a religious purpose.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have been taught, either by word or by epistle (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

We command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly, and not after the traditions which he received from us (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

Though it probably didn't need to be said, we'll say it anyway: Paul is speaking to Christians in 1 Corinthians 11, describing things he taught them to observe in religious service to God. So, the context has to do with obeying that which is taught by God through the apostles *in religious service to God*. This is why it is generally agreed the context has something to do with worship assemblies.

But...

Even though the Christians in Corinth (for the most part) were keeping the ordinances, there were some things they didn't understand. The biggest

problem with the Corinthian Christians was not lack of knowledge about the actions they were supposed to engage in, but the attitude behind it (see their treatment of the Lord's Supper, and their desire to brag because of certain spiritual gifts).

The head of every man is Christ

Paul here immediately puts all the men (literally, males) in their place by saying that it is not up to them how things are to be done in worship to God. All Christian males are under the authority of Jesus Christ, and must answer to Him. Just because a man may lead in an aspect of worship does not mean he has the authority to change God's divine pattern.

Paul is appealing to a higher authority than man—He is appealing to Jesus Christ.

The head of the woman is the man

One person told me this is a universal law to be applied everywhere. The logical conclusion to that interpretation is that, men, the most depraved man in the penitentiary is the head of your wife and daughters. Not only does that violate the context, it also violates common sense.

It has been argued that this phrase should be translated "the head of the wife is the husband." And while that expresses a truth, it doesn't fit the context. And in addition to that, the same word "man" (Greek *aner*) is used twice in this verse. If we are supposed to translate it as "husband" in one part, by what logic does the exact same word get translated differently in the exact same verse? Look at the verse. If we insert "husband," then we would have to make the verse say, "The head of every **husband** is Christ..." which means that Christ isn't the head of unmarried Christian men. This cannot be the right interpretation either. And if we make this say "wife," then we are forced into the conclusion that nothing in verses 3-16 applies to an unmarried woman or a widow—and by extension, nothing in this passage that speaks to an unmarried man or a widower.

Remember the context in which this is spoken: keeping the "ordinances" (religious directions) delivered to them. Thus, this is in the context of the church, where religious directions were being observed. In other words, this is during the worship assembly. The Christian woman, in the worship assembly of the church, is to be in submission to the Christian males who are leading (1 Corinthians 14:34, 1 Timothy 2:11-12).

The head of Christ is God

Just in case there were those in Corinth who wanted to question Jesus' authority to make commands regarding the worship of His people, Paul informs them that the authority which comes from Christ originates with the Father. In other words, these points are not up for debate or discussion—they come from the ultimate Judge and Lawgiver, God.

***Praying and Prophesying* (1 Corinthians 11:4-5)**

Most sermons and studies on this passage focus on the head "covering," and often the writers and speakers gloss over (or completely ignore, in some cases) the idea of "praying and prophesying." But it must be addressed, for this is one of the passages that those who promote women preachers cling to. Are they right in saying this passage authorizes women to lead in public worship?

Every man praying or prophesying with his head covered dishonors his head.

Literally, Paul says "having down (from) head," but it is not specified whether it is his hair or if it is a veil. The purpose, though, for Paul mentioning this is that if he has his head covered (in whichever form it may be) in worship, it is a sign that he has a different spiritual head (authority) than Christ.

I believe there is enough evidence to conclude that the head covering was something cultural for the Christians in Corinth, and since the focus of this lesson is on the "praying and prophesying" part of the verse, we will not deal with the head covering.

The word "praying" is the same word found in 1 Timothy 2:8—"I desire that males pray everywhere..."

The word "prophesying" is the same one used in chapter 14, and is a reference to miraculous speaking *for* God, or speaking words *from* God.

But every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaved.

Before we get into this, it needs to be said upfront that the exact same words for "prays" and "prophesies" are used for both males and females in this passage. In fact, this verse should be translated, "But every woman, praying or prophesying..." There's nothing in the original language that makes a distinction between the actions of the male and female Christians.

But note that Paul tells the Christian women in Corinth that they are required to have their head covered so that they do not dishonor her head (the man/men leading in the worship). This is a symbol of submission, of being under the authority of someone else.¹

So, how exactly is the Christian woman to engage in “praying and prophesying” while yet being in submission to the one leading in worship? Let’s make some specific points very clear:

1. The Bible does not contradict itself, for it is inspired by God.
2. If an interpretation of a difficult passage of Scripture clearly violates the teaching found in an easy-to-understand passage of Scripture (in the same covenant), then that interpretation is false.
3. This is even more clearly true when it is the same writer dealing with the same issue—and even more abundantly true when it is written to the same people in the same letter.

Some point to this passage and say “women have the right to pray and preach in the public worship assembly, based on Paul’s words here.”

How does that match up with the three points above?

1. The Bible does not contradict itself—if this passage teaches women can lead in prayer and preaching in the worship assembly of the church, then we shouldn’t find *anywhere* in the New Testament that says otherwise.
2. The Bible teaches plainly that it is only *male* Christians who are to lead in prayer in the church (1 Timothy 2:8); and that Christian women are not permitted to teach (this would include preaching) or to exercise authority over a Christian men in the church (1 Timothy 2:11-12, 3:15). Therefore, the interpretation that “women have the right to pray and preach in the public worship assembly” is false, because both points are contradicted in easy-to-understand passages of the same covenant.
3. That passage (1 Timothy 2:8-12) is written by the same author, making it even clearer.

¹ I used to think this was talking about husbands and wives, and that a wedding ring was the same kind of thing, but I do not believe the context supports that conclusion.

But let’s make it *abundantly* clear by looking at not only the same author, but the same letter! 1 Corinthians 14:34, in the context of speaking miraculously (prayer and prophesying are both mentioned in this chapter), says: “Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted to them to speak; but to be under obedience, as also says the law.”²

Therefore, if our passage (1 Corinthians 11:5) permits women to pray and prophesy in the worship assembly, the Bible contains contradictions and cannot be trusted.

But suppose you don’t want to go that far; how about this: If this passage permits women to pray and prophesy in the worship assembly, then Paul was wrong (thus, uninspired) when he wrote 1 Timothy, as well as just a few chapters later in 1 Corinthians 14; thereby throwing everything Paul wrote into question and leaving us with the impossible task of determining which letters are inspired and which parts are not.

But suppose you aren’t willing to even go that far (though those are the logical conclusions to this doctrine). If this passage permits women to pray and prophesy in the worship assembly, then you can’t even know which parts of *even this one letter* are inspired—*especially* when Paul himself said that the command for women to keep silent was “the commandment of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:37).

To take that interpretation of the passage destroys the entire credibility of the Bible. But let’s, *for a moment*, pretend that such an interpretation is accurate. *Pretend* for a moment that it isn’t a contradiction of other Bible passages. Look at the verse again and see what would be required for the women to lead in prayer or to prophesy (preach) in the worship assembly.

Every woman, praying and prophesying with her head uncovered, dishonors her [spiritual] head: for that is even all one as if she were shaved.

If we pretended that their interpretation is correct, then the text requires the woman *only does it when her head is covered, showing her submission*

² This entire chapter was dealt with extensively in the previous article of this series, in *The Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 3.

to the Christian men who are leading in the “ordinances”...or else she is supposed to be shaved bald (a symbol of shame). No one who argues for women to be able to preach and lead prayer in the assembly would ever suggest that she is supposed to show a sign of submission to the Christian men leading in the worship—*How dare you even suggest such a thing!* You note the hypocrisy there, I hope. They want to take half of the verse and shove the other half as far away as possible.

I would love to see someone try to explain how one can be in submission to someone during the teaching, yet still be the authoritative teacher over that person. It cannot be done!

So what does this verse mean/permit?

There are different interpretations regarding these two verses that attempt to reconcile Paul’s wording (praying and prophesying) with the specific commands regarding Christian women keeping silence in the church (in regards to leading in worship).

The *first* interpretation is that Paul is speaking about women praying and prophesying, but not in a *mixed assembly*, that is, in a women’s-only gathering (ladies’ day, ladies’ class). Some might claim there is no historical precedent for these kind of assemblies, but turn your attention to Exodus 15:20-21:

And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dances. And Miriam answered them, “Sing out to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea!”

There, the prophetess went with the *women only* and spoke with them, leading them in worship to God. That was around 1500 years prior to Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, so there is indeed historical precedent for a women-only assembly worshipping God.

The problem with this interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11 is that the context shows men and women together (“the head of the woman is the man,” verse 3). And what is the purpose of describing submission to male Christians leading in worship if Paul’s describing a setting where no male Christians are

present?

The *second* interpretation is that Paul is using the phrase “praying and prophesying” as shorthand to describe the entire worship assembly. In other words, all Paul is saying is, “But a woman, participating in the worship service...” Most authors agree that “praying and prophesying” isn’t an exhaustive list, but includes everything done in the worship assembly—otherwise, you’d have the strange requirement that women in Corinth cover their heads only during certain parts of the worship (praying and proclaiming), but are free not to during others (like singing and the Lord’s Supper).

The idea, then, would be that Paul isn’t saying women *lead* in prayer or in prophesying (which would violate other passages), but that they participate in the worship by listening and assenting to the prayer and actively paying attention to the proclamation of God’s message.

David Lipscomb made a good point, which goes along with this idea (this is my paraphrase): Man cannot come to God without submitting to the authority of Jesus Christ (John 14:15). In the same way, The Christian woman during the assembly cannot offer acceptable worship without submitting to the authority of the male Christians leading the worship.

Obviously, if there are no men present, that no longer applies.

There may be other interpretations of which I am not aware, but this second one, I believe, is rational, logical, and in perfect agreement with what is said on the topic elsewhere in Scriptures.

Conclusion

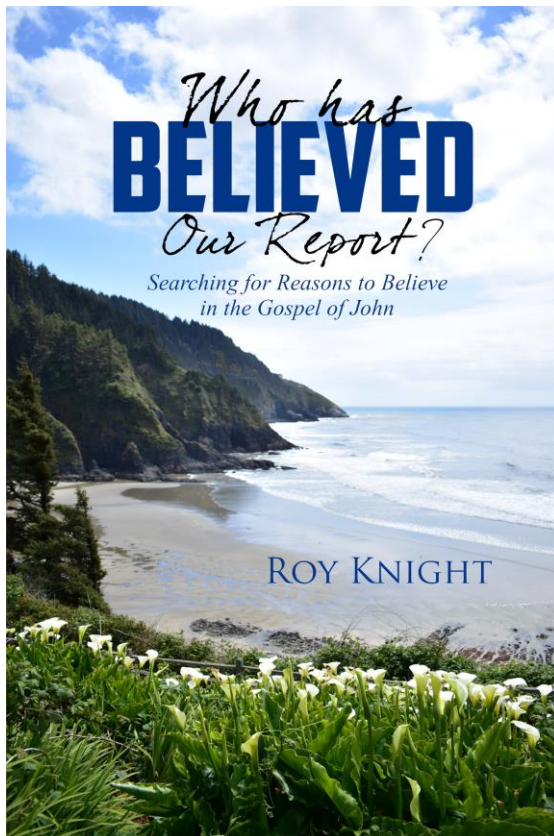
This is somewhat reminiscent of the issue of “baptism for the dead,” in that once we know what it *can’t* be (by process of elimination, Bible-style), we are left with what it must be.

God’s word does not contradict itself. God does not permit something in one part of the New Testament, only to forbid it in another. That would make God a liar—something which is impossible.

Instead, we must take the totality of what Scripture says, and interpret in a way that harmonizes all of the passages dealing with any given subject.

NEW

FROM COBB PUBLISHING



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Roy Knight, author of *There is a River*, and host of the popular *The Christian Gentleman* podcast, brings his common-sense approach to the book of John, making the book easy to understand and benefit from. Not a highfalutin "scholarly" tome, nor a shallow, fluff-filled book—*Who has Believed Our Report* is a commentary for the rest of us

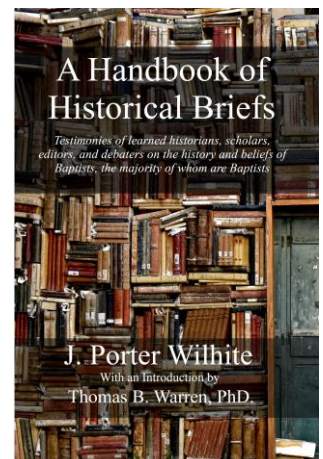
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SEEKING AND SAVING THE LOST: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO YOU

Gerald Cowan

A popular hymn by Frances Havergal (1872) begins with these words:

*Lord, speak to me that I may speak
in living echoes of Thy tone;
as Thou hast sought, so let me seek
Thine erring children, lost and lone.*

A popular soul-winner's prayer song by Will H. Houghton (1936) asks God to...

*Lead me to some soul today;
O teach me Lord just what to say.
Friends of mine are lost in sin
and cannot find their way.
Few there are who seem to care,
and few there are who pray.
Melt my heart and fill my life;
give me one soul today.*

Question: Who is the best “soul-winner” for Jesus, the best evangelist or missionary, the best worker, the person most likely to make others want to be Christian – the person *you* want to be? You might think in terms of some person you know or know about – you might say apostle Paul or Peter, or maybe some great personal evangelist among us (Ivan Stewart, Jule Miller) but that would miss the point. If a woman you might think of Mary – any one of the three: Mary the mother of Jesus (improperly called “mother of God” by some); Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus; or Mary Magdalene. On a lesser plane, Phoebe, on a special assignment from the church in Cenchrea (and by some called a deaconess, Romans 16:1-2). But again that would miss the point.

I will give you a hope and a way of taking your place among the effective soul-winners for Jesus – I hope you will take it and do it, and become an example for everyone. But there's a lot to say leading up to the answer. You may want to make some notes to judge where you are now. I'm going to help you

choose a role model you can safely and effectively follow — I may help you become a role model safe and effective for others to follow, and **that is the intent and purpose of this lesson.** I'm going to do the lesson with “three points and a poem” — and a practical application — so it could be preached in a half hour or so.

I. WHO YOU CANNOT BE.

Obviously you aren't Jesus, and can't be. There have been and may now be some who claim to be the returned (second coming of) Jesus Christ, but obviously they are frauds.

You can't be Peter, Paul, or any apostle directly commissioned and sent by Christ.

You can't be Mary – probably can't be a Phoebe.

You may not be an elder, deacon or preacher because of necessary qualifications or gender.

But surely you don't want to be, and you can avoid being, Judas the betrayer or any enemy of Christ and the apostles, any denier of the gospel. You wouldn't want to be an offender or a stumbling block to anyone (1 Corinthians 10:32).

II. WHOM YOU CAN AT LEAST BE LIKE:

You can be like Christ. Strive to emulate our truest example in everything, no matter how difficult or costly to us (1 Peter 2:21). We cannot duplicate his miracles or anything else that requires direct empowerment by God, but everything else is possible for us, else it would not be commanded of us.

Be like Andrew. He brought his brother Peter and others to Christ. He “played second fiddle” to Peter, and was not one of the inner circle or leading apostles. Nothing written by him survives.

Be like Barnabas. He was another second fiddle player who generally served in the shadow of Paul. But Saul of Tarsus, even after his confrontation by Jesus and his eventual baptism, might not have become the effective apostle Paul without the work of Barnabas to allay fears about him (Acts 9:26-31).

Be like Timothy. From among the notable men who accompanied Paul, he sent Timothy to the Philippian church – telling them he had no other who “really cared” for the condition and needs of others (Philippians 2:20). What a great compliment and recommendation. Do you wonder, as I do, what those other co-workers and companions of Paul felt about this?

Be willing to be sent to teach or serve. Paul explained in Romans 10:8-15 that one could not call upon Jesus as Lord for salvation if one had not heard about him and would not hear unless someone told and taught him. But who would teach if he did not consider himself to be sent by the Lord to do it – and of course if he was willing to be sent on such a mission.

Be like the woman who anointed Jesus with expensive perfumed ointment and was criticized for wasting it – can you imagine considering anything done for Jesus to be a waste? But Jesus defended her and gave her, again, a significant and quite remarkable compliment. “She has done what she could” (Mark 14:8). Would or could Jesus say that you have done what you could with what you had where you were – or that you are doing so now?

Be a godly man or woman, young or old (Titus 2:1-14).

Be an encourager, an exhorter – provoking others to love and good works (Hebrews. 10:24).

III. YOU ARE A “LIVING GOSPEL.”

WE ARE FINALLY “GETTING TO THE POINT” OF THIS LESSON.

Your words and example. These sobering words are attributed to Paul Gilbert:

*We write a living gospel,
adding to it every day
By everything we do
and by every word we say.*

He ends with: *What is the gospel according to you? What message are you delivering?*

Teachers grade their students – we expect it, though we aren’t always glad to get it. We spend our lives learning, consciously or subconsciously filter-

ing what is presented to us, keeping what is true and good and helpful and discarding what is not. We choose to follow those who help us find and stay in the way that leads to a good life; we avoid those who lead us off the path of happiness and success.

Did you know **students also grade their teachers?** Did you and do you have a favorite teacher, one who stands out among those to whom you have been a student? Good students have a goal in mind that they want to reach, a level they want to maintain, and they choose teachers who can and probably will help them achieve what they are reaching for in life. Good teachers should be concerned about the effect and results of their teaching in the lives of their students.

We are all teachers. Here’s another sobering thought, sparked by those words of Paul Gilbert: every one of us is a teacher, every one of us has an impact for good or bad upon anyone and everyone who hears us or sees our example. How many do we hinder? How many do we help? It should be important to us and should be a critical factor in choosing our own path. This is especially true of us who are Christians, who are trying to be “soul-winners,” leading others to God and Christ in the way that is best for the body, mind, heart, soul, and spirit of each person.

But we are not seeking rewards or awards for ourselves – not just enhancing our reputation, our right to say, “Look at me, see how good and great I am.” It ought to be for the benefit of the others, the right to say, “See how far you have come, what you have achieved, what more you can have if you continue on the path.” But the most important thing for the teacher – for the student too – is to please and glorify the Lord God and the Savior Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 10:31-32).

SUCCESS AS A SOUL-WINNER DEPENDS UPON FOUR KEY FACTORS

Apart from the work and action of God and Christ and the Holy Spirit, in addition to the veracity and adequacy of the Words of God in the Bible, success or failure may depend upon you as much as

*Do we not really know
that baptism is not
valid alone, but must be
preceded by, at a
minimum, faith,
repentance, and
commitment to the
Lordship of Jesus?*

upon truth and “mission.” Let us look at these four matters in which the outcome depends upon you.

**(1) YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD,
CHRIST, THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE BIBLE,
AND THE CHURCH.**

This may not be the first thing people notice about you, unless you are introduced as a preacher, or even as a member of a church. But anybody who considers himself to be a Christian will take notice and consider these things about you.

**(2) YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF SPIRITUAL
TRUTH – YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE
INSPIRED MESSAGE OF GOD’S WORD AND
COVENANT LAW.**

*I love Thy law (Psalm 119:97) . I have hidden
Thy words in my heart so I will not sin against Thee
(Psalm 119:11).*

Your knowledge of spiritual truth – from the Bible, from personal study, not from indoctrination or programming.

Know a formula, a set approach or study guide (your own or something composed by others and packaged for use – filmstrip, video, chart, printed booklet, etc.).

**(3) YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THOSE YOU
ARE LEADING.**

Your attitude toward the person you are studying with. Trophy complex? Personal victory? Bragging rights?

The first question asked of returning campaigners or of one returning from a Gospel Meeting is often: “How many did you baptize?” As if getting someone in the water is the all-important thing – baptism being viewed as the *sine qua non* of evangelism. (Mark 16:15-16, Hebrews 11:6, Luke 13:3-5, Acts 2:38). It is true of us as it was of apostle Paul. Christ does not send us to baptize, but to preach the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:17, 9:16). The response made to our preaching and teaching is not our responsibility and should not be our goal. If we can be sure we have faithfully set forth the gospel we can be content. Yes, of course we pray God’s leading and God’s help in doing that, and we rejoice whenever anyone is willing to go all the way with Jesus.

**(4) YOUR PERSONAL EXAMPLE,
LIFESTYLE, AND DEGREE OF
CONVICTION AND COMMITMENT.**

Not your conviviality. When in Rome ... do what the Romans do? NOT!

Your spirituality, your personal reflection of the character of Jesus.

***FOR THE POEM I HAVE BORROWED THE
THEME FROM PAUL GILBERT.***

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO YOU.

The gospel according to you
Is being written every day
In all your attitudes and acts
And in all the words that you say.

We write it in the eyes of those
Who see how we treat each other,
Who we think is worthy to be
Called a sister or a brother.

We write it in the hearts of those
Who hear us promise as we pray
Then close our eyes and hands and hearts
To those who struggle in the way.

Others estimate our wealth
By how we act and how we live.
They estimate our spirit’s health
By what to man and God we give.

Way of the world and way of God
They find it easy to compare.
They know what place we give the Lord
By what our daily lives declare.

You write a living gospel, and
It may be false, it may be true.
What does anybody read in
The gospel according to you?
- Gerald Cowan

CONCLUSION AND APPLICATION:

The best example of Christian: one who does what he can with what he has, where he is, always.

Go and do likewise. Be the best Christian you can and invite others to follow you – as Paul did, so you can do (1 Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 4:4-9).

Sing Elisha A. Hoffman’s song (1900) *To Christ Be Loyal and True*.

TOOLS FOR THE WORK PODCASTS

David Dean

Have you ever listened to a recording of yourself? Recently I started to livestream the services where I worship, and I had the *misfortune* to listen to myself. I promise you, I do not sound that way!

Amazing advancements have been made in our ability to spread the Gospel. One increasingly popular way is the podcast. Described as an “episodic series of spoken-word digital audio files,” podcasts have been around since October 2000, but only recently have they really become mainstream. Today the subjects of podcast are as varied as the platforms on which you can listen to them. As children of God, and in particular those who have chosen to proclaim His word publicly, podcasts serve as a great resource for growth as well as reach. Here are three podcasts I believe could benefit the reader:



Under the Juniper Tree

[Under the Juniper Tree - The Light Network](#)

The host of Under the Juniper Tree is a good friend and our brother in Christ, Andrew Crowe. The Podcast serves as a reminder of the harsh realities of the world. We face a broken world, and people struggle. Andrew helps tackle a variety of subjects, using his understanding of the Bible as well as his educational background in sociology. Ultimately,

the aim of this podcast is focused on providing a biblical approach to various mental health issues and societal woes. It is a great listen and can help the reader gain a better understanding of what others struggle with.



The Verified Christian

[The Verified Christian \(buzzsprout.com\)](#)

Matthew Okolichany and Jonathan Jenkins are co-hosts of this rather new podcast. The podcast title plays upon the checkmark approach of social media in which only verified (read: celebrities) can receive a special status proving they are who they claim to be. As of the time of this article, the focus of the podcast is similar in that it approaches how we can be verified as a Christian, or as Jonathan says, “the real deal.” Outside of the podcast’s scriptural value, this podcast is a good example of the everyday individual being able to create content. These brothers are not professional podcasters. They do not have the expensive equipment or a large network to push out their content. However, the work they do is beneficial and encouraging.



Preacher2Preacher

[The Preacher2Preacher Podcast \(podbean.com\)](https://podbean.com/?ref=affiliate&u=preacher2preacher)

Adam Miller does an excellent job of engaging with fellow ministers on a variety of topics. The stated goal of the podcast is to discuss the work and

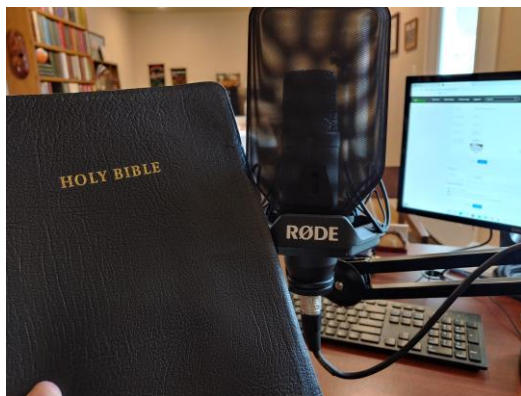
life of the preacher, which works well with his format. While Adam is the host, most episodes include a special guest allowing for the audience to hear a larger demographic of speakers, often on topics they were personally allowed to select. In addition, Adam provides short devotional-style episodes in which he covers a topic in roughly 10 minutes without a guest speaker.

While the three selected podcasts are produced by faithful Christians, as always, the reader is encouraged to be diligent in the manner of the Bereans and search the scriptures, Acts 17:11.

In the next Quarterly we will take the time to examine some books beneficial for the student of God's Word.

BONUS PODCASTS

(SUGGESTED BY YOUR FRIENDLY EDITOR)



Fulton County Gospel News (FCGN)

[Fulton County Gospel News \(podbean.com\)](https://podbean.com/?ref=affiliate&u=fulton-county-gospel-news)

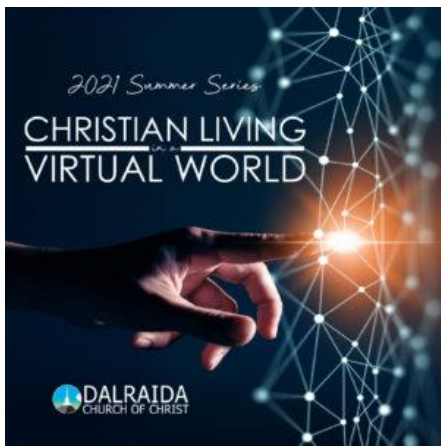
Barry O'Dell uploads new short (usually under 20 minutes) episodes multiple times a week. Some cover questions asked, and in others Barry expands on some articles in recent issues of the *Fulton County Gospel News*. In a few episodes from earlier this month (October 2021), he hand-picked articles from previous editors such as Harold Turner (who was a dear personal friend of the editor). Any time a new episode drops, it quickly gets moved to the top of my podcast listening feed.



The Christian Gentleman

[The Christian Gentleman \(BibleWayMedia\)](https://www.biblewaymedia.com/podcast/the-christian-gentleman)

Roy Knight, author of *There is a River* and the brand-new *Who has Believed Our Report? (a commentary on John)* hosts this weekly podcast. Each week, Roy takes something he has seen or experienced, and uses it to illustrate life lessons from the word of God. Each episode is under ten minutes, which means you can't claim, "I have no time to listen to this podcast."



Just about anything from the Dalraida church of Christ

The Dalraida church of Christ (Dalraida.org) has done us a favor, making dozens of different podcasts available. Each summer series (*Christian Living in a Virtual World* [2021], *New Testament Characters* [2020], etc.), each gospel meeting, each sermon series, each adult Bible class series—each is its own podcast. I personally am subscribed to nine of them. Their series *Building Solid Marriages upon the Rock of Ages*, and Willie Franklin’s *Super Sunday* (including why he left the NFL) are must-listens. These can be found at Dalraida.org, or search for “Dalraida” in your podcast player of choice.



The Plain Bible Teaching Podcast ***[Plain Bible Teaching](#)***

Andy Sochor (a *Quarterly* contributor) takes a news story you might have missed, and looks at the spiritual implications. Recent episodes cover weekly attendance by non-church members, support for polyamory from Harvard, and the drop in American’s confidence in church. Using Scripture, Andy shows what the Christian’s response should be, and how we can shine the light of Christ in the midst of moral breakdown in our country.



Verse by Verse with Clinton De France ***[Verse by Verse \(captivate.fm\)](#)***

Clinton De France has been going through—in some detail—the book of Acts since February of 2020. The episodes are always interesting, frequently enlightening, and full of the fruits of brother De France’s deep study and vast reading on the issues and doctrines covered in Acts. He frequently takes side trips to cover special topics in detail to aid in the understanding of issues of controversy in the religious world (“justification by faith” was one recent such excursion). This is another one that I listen to as soon as I see it in my feed.

Do you have any suggestions to add to this list?

We want to promote good brotherhood material, so please let us know about any good podcasts by members of the church, and we will try to include them in a future article.

Be sure to try out and support the good podcasts by your brethren!

ELDERS AND MONEY

Edwin Walker

The text under consideration:

1 Timothy 3:1-3: *It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. (NASB)¹*

1 Timothy 3:3: *Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; (KJV)*

There is also the parallel passage in Paul's letter to Titus to be considered.

Titus 1:7: *For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain. (NASB)*

Titus 1:7: *For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; (KJV)*

A prospective Elder/Overseer/Shepherd must be free of the love of money, not covetous, not fond of sordid gain nor given to filthy lucre. *The same applies to one who is already in the position!*

We will consider three aspects of the subject;

1. What is it that the prospective Elder/Overseer/Shepherd is to be free of or not be?
2. Why should this particular sin disqualify one from becoming an Elder?
3. How does being free from the love of money assist the man once he becomes an Elder?

The prospective Overseer is to be free from the love of money, not covetous, not fond of sordid gain or greedy of filthy lucre.

A variety of words are used in the original to describe this attribute. The word used in 1 Timothy 1:3

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotes are from the NASB.

is *philarguros* which is defined as loving money or avarice. Others are *aischrokerdēs* = sordid or shameful gain (Titus 1:7); *pleonexia* = a greedy desire to have more or covetousness (Luke 12:15); *epithumia* = craving, longing, desire for what is forbidden, lust (Matthew 5:28, Romans 7:7); and *epithumētēs* = one who longs for, a craver, one eager for (1 Corinthians 10:6). The concept we are considering is essentially whether the man is able to control his desires.

We find Jesus warning all of us of covetousness.

Luke 12:15: *Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."*

This was not an original concept with Jesus, He simply warned us about a sin that was a major element in the Law of Moses, being one of the first ten commands of that law.

Exodus 20:17: *"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."*

That command is number ten on the list and is one of only two commands that are internal (focused on a person's heart) as opposed to external (focused on a person's actions). The first, **Exodus 20:3:** *"You shall have no other gods before Me,* was also aimed at the individual's heart. The other eight are external in nature as they refer to actions done by the body rather than being attitudes of the heart. Thus, the Ten Commandments are bookended by the two commands dealing with the inner man. It is a grave mistake to characterize the Law of Moses as strictly dealing with the external. The inner man is of primary importance as he determines the actions taken by the outer man:

Proverbs 4:23: *Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.*

The Hebrew word used in Exodus 20:17 is *chamad*, which means to desire or take pleasure in. Interestingly, the same word is used early in Genesis.

Genesis 2:9: *Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing (chamad) to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

The word translated here as “pleasing” is the same word translated “covet” in Exodus. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not the only “pleasing” or desirable tree, but it was one of them as we find a little later.

Genesis 3:6: *When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable (chamad) to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.*

Satan had planted the idea that this tree was “desirable” by telling her it would make her be like God (Genesis 3:5). She desired this wisdom so much that she was willing to disobey God in order to get it. In this, we see the first sin was Eve’s coveting God’s wisdom which led to the overt act of taking and eating the forbidden fruit.

Eve was the first, but certainly not the only, person to fall prey to the temptations of greed. Lot chose the best land and left his uncle, Abraham, with the poorest (Genesis 13). Achan coveted the clothing, silver, and gold in Jericho (Joshua 7). David desired Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). Ahab was greedy for Naboth’s vineyard (1 Kings 21). Gehazi coveted clothing (2 Kings 5). Ananias and Sapphira wanted the praise of men and prominence (Acts 5). Simon, who had been a magician/sorcerer, coveted the ability to pass on miraculous gifts (Acts 8). It was the inner desire of covetousness, greed, and avarice that led each of these into actions that brought their downfall. Satan does his job as our adversary quite well by whispering in our ear about how much we “need.”

Covetousness, the love of money, greed, or avarice is the desire for things which belong to others or which have been forbidden and that desire leads one to take them anyway. The prospective Elder/Overseer/Shepherd must be free of this kind of desire.

The New Testament abounds with instructions for God’s people to avoid covetousness.

Hebrews 13:5: *Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,”*

Colossians 3:5: *Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.*

Ephesians 5:3: *But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints;*

1 John 2:15-17: *Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.*

As we think about covetousness, we must be careful not to go overboard and think that any ambitious, successful person must be a greedy person. To be wealthy is not evidence of covetousness either in the past or present. Some of God’s favorite people were very rich.

Abraham was “rich in livestock, in silver and in gold” (Genesis 13:2). He had enough trained men (318) to attack and defeat the four kings who had beaten the five kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Bela and rescue his nephew, Lot, and recover all the possessions and prisoners that had been taken (Genesis 14). James describes Abraham as the “friend of God” (James 2:23).

Job was also a very rich man and one to whom God showed much approval. According to the text, God called Job His servant and “there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.” (Job 1:8) Verse 3 details his wealth, saying he was the “greatest of all the men of the east.” Who else do we have recorded that God bragged on?

Having wealth cannot be sinful as God is said to have blessed a number of people with riches (Genesis 24:35; 26:12-13; 1 Kings 3:13; 10:23). David and Solomon credit God with providing riches:

1 Chronicles 29:12: *Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone.*

Proverbs 10:22: *It is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich, And He adds no sorrow to it.*

Solomon tells us that Wisdom brings with it riches:

Proverbs 3:1: *Long life is in her (Wisdom's) right hand; In her left hand are riches and honor.*

It is the attitude of the individual, the methods used to obtain wealth and the ways the wealth is utilized that determine whether riches are a blessing or a curse. Paul describes the mature Christian as one who is godly and content with whatever circumstances the Lord has blessed him.

1 Timothy 6:6-8: *But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.*

Paul, himself, had learned that lesson, sometimes the hard way, by having plenty at times and other times being without (Philippians 4:11-13). It may be as difficult to learn contentment when we have plenty as when we have little.

A rich man may be content and godly, having obtained his riches lawfully and legitimately and using them unselfishly. Likewise a poor person can be quite greedy and covetous, but having been unsuccessful in carrying out his desires and using what he does have in a stingy way. It is all in how our hearts have learned to deal with the things of the world.

M. M. Davis states it well:

He must be 'diligent in business, and fervent in spirit,' but there must be no dirty dollars in his coffers. He must not be overly eager to possess, or carried away with avarice. Not a lover of money, but a lover of men; not absorbed in laying up treasures on earth, but striving to become rich toward God. Idolatry was the besetting sin of the Old Testament, and covetousness in the New is called idolatry (Colossians

3:5).²

Why does the sin of covetousness disqualify a man from consideration to be an Elder in the Lord's church?

The prospective shepherd of the Lord's church must be a mature Christian, as indicated by all of the qualities Paul gives, particularly that he not be a new convert or novice. This is only reasonable. It would be as unreasonable to place a new convert into the oversight position in the church as it would be to place a newly hired delivery person in charge of Wal-Mart, General Motors, or Amazon.com. The person selected as the shepherd of God's flock of Christians should possess all the qualities toward which every new Christian is instructed to grow.

G. C. Brewer recognized this concept:

If these requirements appear to be rigid, just take time to consider them and see which one any Christian should not possess. Aside from the fact that an elder is not to be a novice—new convert—there is not a thing required in his character that is not also required of every Christian to some degree. The elder is supposed to have these things, developed in his life to a greater degree than the average Christian, because he is older as a Christian than many (not a novice) and because he has (should have) "desired," stretched forward to, or prepared himself for the office of a bishop. Every Christian is to be a teacher (Hebrews 5:12; Titus 2:3-4; Matthew 28:18-20); but a bishop is to be apt to teach, gifted as a teacher, capable to teach, qualified to give instruction, and so familiar with the Scriptures that he can convict the gainsayers and put them to silence. He must by sound teaching be able both to exhort and convince. (Titus 1:9-11.)³

Having a covetous person in a position of guidance over new Christians would provide opportunity for all kinds of problems. Consider that just after Paul said the mature Christian was one who had learned to be content in life's circumstances, he gave one of his most famous statements:

² M.M. DAVIS, A.M.; *The Eldership*, Standard Publishing Company, Cincinnati, 1912; p. 7

³ G.C. Brewer, *The Model Church*, Cobb Publishing, Charleston, AR, 2016; chapter 2

1 Timothy 6:9-10: *But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

To put one in a leadership position who is susceptible to greed places both him and those Christians he influences in the path of temptation and eventual ruin.

The problems could appear in his personal finances as he pursues wealth without regard for God's instructions and would prove an embarrassment to the church. They could also arise in relation to church finances as he might be tempted to utilize them for his own personal gain. The tendency to greed might be projected onto the church treasury in the form of hoarding the funds instead of using them for the purposes they are intended.

The covetous person tends to trust riches rather than God.

1 Timothy 6:17-19: *Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.*

How could a covetous elder instruct or counsel a member of the congregation with these words?

A greedy elder has his priorities in the wrong place. Greed puts money and "things" in first place whereas Jesus said our priority is to be the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). A man cannot appropriately focus on the sheep when he is overly concerned with other things.

The focus on money and the things of this world put a man's relationships with others at risk. The relationship between an elder and the members of the congregation are crucial to the success of the congregation and the individuals. Consider what James wrote:

James 4:1-2: *What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit*

murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to maintain proper relationships when your focus is on money and material things. This dichotomy of purposes easily causes conflicts and quarrels. This is not what a Shepherd of the flock should be causing. He should be able to deal with the Christians who are having trouble with covetousness instead of trying to solve his own!

One specific reason a covetous man should not be considered for the eldership is that Christians are instructed not to associate with one who is covetous:

1 Corinthians 5:11: *But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.*

A covetous man is not qualified for the eldership as he has yet to reach maturity as a Christian. This lack of maturity and proper priority in his life is almost sure to cause all kinds of problems in his personal relationship with the members of the congregation and probably in the handling of the finances of the church.

Being free from the love of money is of great benefit to the man once he becomes an Elder!

Freedom from covetousness gives a person a great deal of peace of mind. Paul writes:

Romans 8:5-6: *For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.*

Philippians 4:6-7: *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

When we love money, there is never any real satisfaction:

Ecclesiastes 5:10: *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity.*

Not being overly concerned about his own desires for money and “stuff” allows a man to be satisfied with his own condition and more concerned with the needs of his congregation and his community.

Freedom from greed and selfishness allows a person to have his eyes open to reality. The commercial world around us is built on advertising, and advertising has adopted as its main goal the producing of desire for things we do not have and generally do not need. Contentment with our situation in life lets us see advertising for what it is and gives us insight to assist us as we help others who have not grown into contentment.

Freedom from coveting allows us to open our eyes and see what is of real value in this world (see Luke 12:15). We can see what is better.

Psalms 37:16: *Better is the little of the righteous than the abundance of many wicked.*

Proverbs 15:16: *Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and turmoil with it.*

Proverbs 16:16: *How much better it is to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen above silver.*

Ecclesiastes 4:6: *One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind.*

Freedom from avarice opens the door to true generosity. It is much easier to share with others when you are satisfied with your own condition.

Luke 6:30: *Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.*

Luke 12:33-34: *Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Acts 20:35: *In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*

Hebrews 13:16: *And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

A man can follow these instructions when he has learned contentment, but a greedy man cannot.

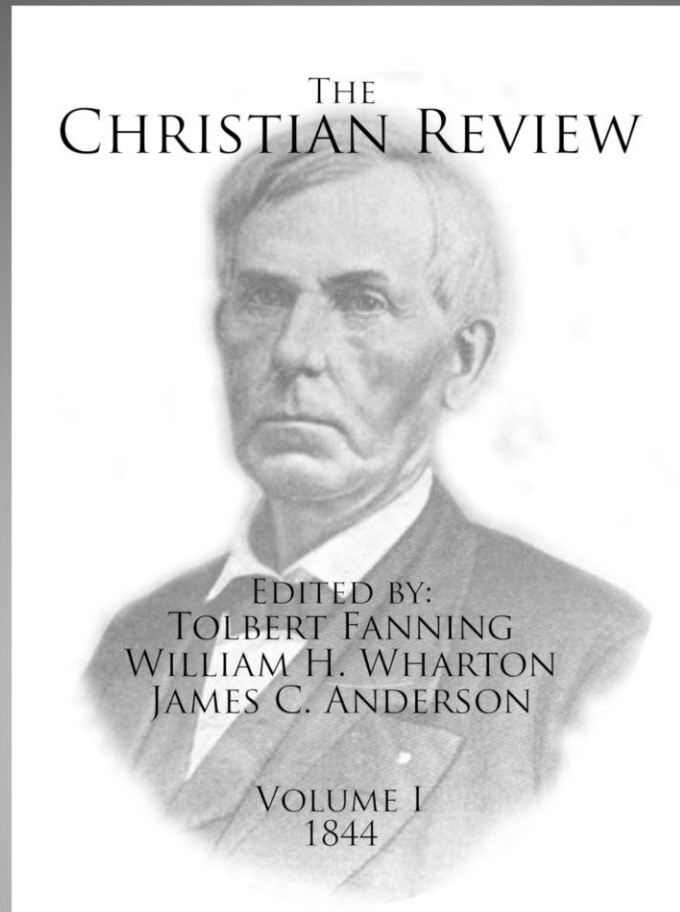
Freedom from covetousness allows a man to deal realistically with the finances of the members of the congregation and with the funds that are contributed for the work of the church. It allows him to properly oversee the collection and use of the money. It keeps his own financial desires from interfering with being appropriately generous with the church treasury.

Jesus has the answer to covetousness, as He always does for every other problem in this world.

Matthew 6:24-33: *No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

A man chosen to be an Elder/Overseer/Shepherd of God's people, the church purchased by the precious blood of Christ, must be of such quality of character that covetousness is never charged against him.

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JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

As Found in the Book of Acts

Raymond Elliot

During the years I worked with one congregation of the Lord, a group of brothers and sisters sang for a local nursing home once a month. The residents enjoyed singing with us some of the old favorite songs found in the book we used that was published by our brethren. One of the most requested hymns was Amazing Grace. One of the stanzas of this song is as follows:

*“Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.”*

However, the publishers of this particular song book took the liberty to change the last phrase of that stanza to “The hour I first obeyed.” Now I understand perfectly the reason for this change, and I do not doubt the motive of these brethren. We have heard so much from our denominational friends that we are saved by “faith only”; however, we must not avoid scriptural terms simply because of misunderstandings regarding the biblical theme of justification by faith.

There is a vast difference between the doctrine of “faith only” and the Bible-based doctrine of salvation by faith. In fact, the expression that these brethren wanted to avoid is actually found in Romans 13:11:

“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our

salvation is nearer than when we first believed” (Emphasis mine, re).¹

The apostle Paul asked the disciples of John, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit **when you believed?**” (Acts 19:2). Of course Paul had much to say about being justified by faith in Jesus Christ. In Romans 5:1-2, we read:

*“Therefore, **having been justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”*

Thus it is scriptural and right to say that we are saved by faith—but we must understand all that is included in that statement.

Now I want us to go to the book of Acts and investigate whether or not the doctrine of justification of faith is found in the writings of Luke (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-3). When speaking of the number of conversions listed in Acts, preachers and teachers usually state that there are nine examples. For most of my preaching experience, I have used a chart showing the conversions of the people on Pentecost (Acts 2); the Samaritans (Acts 8:5-12); the nobleman from Ethiopia (Acts 8:26-40); Saul (Acts 9; 22; 26); the household of Cornelius (Acts 10 & 11); Lydia and her household (Acts 16:13-15); the Phi-

¹ All scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted. All **bold** font is added by this author.

lippian jailer (Acts 16:25-34); the Corinthians (Acts 18:8); and the twelve men in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7). Sometimes the statement has been made that these are the only examples of conversion mentioned in Acts. Also I have taught that while faith, repentance, and confession of our faith have not always appeared in each case, the fact is, baptism is mentioned in all of them. As students of the Bible we have emphasized the importance of baptism in the plan of salvation that Jesus Christ has given (Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38). And this is as it should be, because our religious neighbors have taught for so long that baptism has nothing to do with our salvation.

We can rest assured the Holy Spirit had every reason to have Luke record these nine examples in the way he did, and that should be sufficient for us. The Holy Spirit wanted to make it very clear we are saved by a faith that obeys all the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ. However we must understand there are other individuals and groups of individuals in Acts being saved from their sins by God's grace and the blood of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8; 1:7). But the phraseology that Luke used was different—he often used a part to represent a whole. There is a figure of speech that is called a synecdoche, which is, “a term denoting a part of something is used to refer to the whole thing...” (Wikipedia Dictionary). In this specific case, Luke would simply say that individuals believed and that meant, by faith, they submitted themselves to the Lord's every command in order to be saved.

The author of Acts recorded words by different men inspired by the Holy Spirit, to show beyond a doubt that sinners are justified by faith. It was the apostle Peter at the house of Cornelius who said:

*“To Him all the prophets witness, through His name, **whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins**” (Acts 10:43).*

The apostle Paul declared:

*“Therefore let it be known to you brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; **and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses**” (Acts 13:38).*

It was at the council in Jerusalem where we read the words of Peter:

*“And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: “Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, **purifying their hearts by faith**” (Acts 15:7-9).*

These passages clearly teach that when a person believes in Jesus Christ he receives remission of sins, is justified and his heart is purified by faith.

Let us now observe the following passages that refer to cases of conversion mentioned in the book of Acts that we normally do not use and that do not specifically mention baptism.

1. Acts 4:4: “However, many of those who **heard the word believed**; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.
2. Acts 5:14: “**And believers were increasingly added to the Lord**, multitude of men and women...”
3. Acts 6:1: “Now in those days, when **the number of the disciples was multiplying...**”
4. Acts 6:7: “Then the word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, **and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.**”
5. Acts 9:31: “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, **they were multiplied.**”
6. Acts 9:35: “So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him **and turned to the Lord.**”
7. Acts 9:42: “And it became known throughout all Joppa, **and many believed on the Lord.**”
8. Acts 11:21: “And the hand of the Lord was with them, **and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.**”
9. Acts 11:24: “For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. **And a great many people were added to the Lord.**”
10. Acts 11:31: “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit,

they were multiplied.”

11. Acts 12:24: **“But the word of God grew and multiplied.”**
12. Acts 13:12: **“Then the proconsul believed,** when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.”
13. Acts 13:48-49: **“Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.** And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout the region.”
14. Acts 14:1: **“Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed.”**
15. Acts 14:21: **“And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples,** they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.”
16. Acts 16:5: **“So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.”**
17. Acts 17:1-4: **“...And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.”**
18. Acts 17:11-12: **“...Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.”**
19. Acts 17:34: **“However, some men joined him and believed...”**
20. Acts 18:28: **“...And when he (Apollos) arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace.”**
21. Acts 19:18-19: **“And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds...”**

Please note in these passages, Acts 4:4; 5:14; 9:42; 11:21; 13:12; 13:48, 49; 14:1; 17:11-12; 17:34; 18:28; and 19:18, Luke simply says these individuals believed. Are we not to understand that they were saved just like the approximately three thousand were saved on the Day of Pentecost when

they were instructed to “repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...”? If not, why not.

But let us examine more closely what is involved in the statement that various ones “believed” and were saved from their sins. It was Peter who said in his lesson to the household of Cornelius,

“To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).

In verses 47 & 48 of this same chapter, the apostle asked, “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.” We must conclude that the faith that saves includes the command to be immersed in the name of the Lord.

In Acts 18:8 we read, “Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, **believed on the Lord with all his household.** And many of the Corinthians, hearing,

believed and were baptized.” We understand that many of the Corinthians did just as the Lord had commanded and were saved from their sins. But what of Crispus, since it is written that he and his household simply “believed on the Lord.” Were they saved from their sins like the Corinthians? The apostle Paul,

*We must conclude
beyond a shadow of
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of the Lord.*

in First Corinthians spoke of Crispus in chapter 1:14: **“I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius.”** We must come to the inevitable conclusion that when the expression is used that the people “believed,” it was all-inclusive; that is, this active faith embodied all the commands the Lord required in order to be saved from past sins, namely the commands to repent and be baptized.

The example of the conversion of the Philippian jailer and his household in Acts 16 is one of the most abused and misused passages that so many religionists use to claim that a sinner is saved by ‘faith only.’ But when closely examined, we can readily see this was not the case. Beginning in verse 23, we learn that Paul and Silas were beaten and placed in prison with their feet in the stocks. An earthquake caused the doors of the prison to be

opened and the chains of all the prisoners were loosed. The jailer, awaking from his sleep, thought the prisoners had escaped was about to take his life when Paul told him not to harm himself for all were still present.

It was then the jailer called for light and fell down before Paul and Silas and asked them, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (v. 30). He was instructed to “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” It is at this point that most religious leaders will teach the only requirement of a sinner to obtain salvation is to believe in Jesus Christ. But verse 31 does not teach that the jailer believed, it simply states what he was to do in order to be saved. There is no evidence that the jailer had any knowledge of Jesus as being the divine Son of God and that He had been crucified for the sins of the world. In order for the jailer to obtain faith in Jesus, he had to be taught of Him. That is why Paul and Silas “spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.” The apostle Paul later wrote in Romans 10:17, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” In Acts 16:33, we learn the jailer and his household were baptized. It was then, and not until then, that Luke recorded the jailer and his family “rejoiced, **having believed in God...**” It is at this point of time that the Jailer and his household believed on the Lord and rejoiced because they were saved from their sins. We must conclude beyond a shadow of doubt that the faith that saves is the faith that obeys all the commands of the Lord.

This characteristic of faith has always been true. Take for example the patriarch Abraham. Paul wrote in Romans 4:3, “For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Now what kind of faith did Abraham possess that pleased God? In Hebrews 11:8-10, we learn:

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

The writer James in chapter 2:21-24 also contributes to our understanding of the kind of faith that saves

when he wrote:

*“Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ And he was called the friend of God. **You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only**”*

We must not separate acceptable faith from scriptural works. Faith without works ordained of God cannot save; and works not founded on biblical faith are unacceptable to God. For many years I used the illustration of a man in a boat with two oars that represented faith and works. When the man used only one oar (whether it be faith or works), the boat simply would go in a circle; but, when he used both oars (faith and works), he would be able to proceed toward his desired destination. But in using this illustration, I was separating scriptural and acceptable faith and works in a manner that did not portray the oneness of the two found in the word of God

It was not until our daughter married a gentleman who enjoyed riding in his kayak that I noticed he used only one paddle in maneuvering his boat. It was then that I learned the illustration best used in revealing scriptural faith and works is found in one paddle and not two oars. Acceptable faith and works should not be separated. As Paul would say in Galatians 5:6: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, **but faith working through love.**”

Biblical faith is foundational. All that we do to please God and to experience salvation is based upon and motivated by faith, otherwise, our actions will profit us nothing. And it is this kind of obedient faith that saves us by the grace of God (Romans 5:1, 2; Ephesians 2:8).

*...And many of the
Corinthians, hearing
the word, believed and
were baptized.
Acts 18:8*

The Rod of the Wicked

Bill Howard

“They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people henceforth even for ever.”

The 125th Psalm is one of comfort, prayer, protection and promise, but also one of warning. The psalmist gives us much to think about in this writing, especially when we consider some of the situations with which we are faced at the present time.

We can take comfort in the promises and protection which God has given His Family. The psalmist stated that those who trust in the Lord “shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed but abideth forever.” Satan is a powerful adversary whose every intention is to disrupt godliness and deter Christians from maintaining their relationship with God. Zion cannot be moved. The likeness here is that as the mountains protect Jerusalem so God stands guard and protects His children. It is a word picture of the church as a whole, or the church as each individual member is concerned with God’s guardianship. We are protected by the Father. Jesus said that upon the solid rock foundation of his being the Son of God, He would build His church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). He proved this in his life, his death, burial and resurrection. Satan is a treacherous foe of all that is Holy, but he will never have the power to vanquish God and the church. Paul said to the Romans: “if God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

The Apostle Peter wrote:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you; who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3-5).

Jesus himself said:

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand” (John 10:28-29).

The next words of the psalmist are comforting to those struggling to live the faith and stay close to God in the face of the additional challenges placed in our pathway.

“For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous.”

Jesus endured many hardships, treachery, hazardous traveling and living conditions, faithless followers, deceit, dishonesty, and temptations; wickedness was all around him, but he never shirked his responsibility to do as his Father requested. He knew, like those of us today know, that whatever we encounter along the way that God has charted the course; He is our shepherd, our refuge and has promised to “never leave nor forsake us. So that we

may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Hebrews 13:5b-6). Worldly powers that are against anything pertaining to God or religion may strike some blows, make attempts to thwart our efforts to serve God, but they will never be successful. The rod of the wicked will not rest on the righteous more than we are able to bear. This God has promised, and we know He does not make promises He doesn’t intend to keep.

This is our assurance of victory; however, the psalmist reminds us that this protection, this guidance will be for those who do not “put forth their hands unto iniquity.” When we lose our way, deviate from God’s wishes for us, when we leave the pathway of righteousness and go after the iniquitous and the worldly idols we make a part of our lives, God will no longer provide the protection from the rod of the wicked. Jesus said:

“No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:13).

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

“The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Timothy 2:19).

It is a given then, we must make the decision to either serve God or step aside and make no claims about righteousness. We cannot straddle a fence or be undecided; it is our call, but a call we must make. It would go without further comment then to comprehend that this rules out the half-hearted obedience which seems to be so prevalent, the part-time worshipper giving time to God only when nothing else is beckoning. This is not being judgmental, just putting it out for consideration. However, the psalmist said:

“As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.”

The writer of the Hebrew letter warned:

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be

hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:12-13).

Again in Hebrews,

“For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (10:25-26).

This brings us to the final thought of the psalm which we have yet to discuss. The thought we find in verse four is concerning prayer.

“Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.”

He beseechs God to do good, to be good, to care for those who are upright, those who are righteous. We follow this pattern in our personal conversations with God when we pray. Paul to the Philippians:

“Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Philippians 4:6).

To the Thessalonians, Paul urged prayer without ceasing. It would be difficult to pray constantly, but it is quite possible to be in a prayerful spirit at all times. James writes:

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

Prayer is one of the major lifelines which give us access to God. We may at times not be certain of how we wish to pray. Again the words of the Apostle Paul:

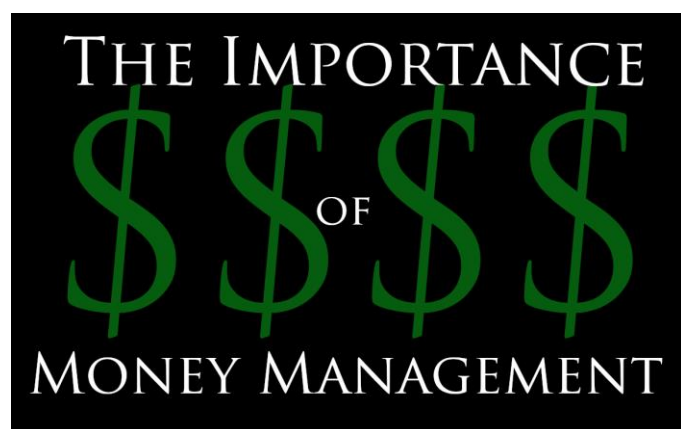
“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26).

Where we are lacking or uncertain, the Spirit is there to help. The need for prayer for the righteous cannot be stressed enough; if we fail to take advantage of this privilege, we are missing a very important facet of our fellowship with God.

Jesus, in his revelation to John, promised the righteous; “be thou faithful unto death and I will

give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). That crown of life means life without end in the realm we know as eternity. Jesus said he was going to prepare a place for us (John 14), and it will be in that place that we will dwell with God in His Heaven where there are no markers of time. The finite mind cannot fully comprehend the meaning of eternity, but we know it is, it always has been, it always will be. Likewise, we are not able to visualize all that Heaven will be; Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).



Tom Baxley

Money, wealth, and possessions are one of the most discussed subjects in the Bible, especially in the New Testament. On average, 15% of verses in the New Testament address these things. The Bible says more about these than grace, prayer, or worship, but you would never guess it based off of the majority of preaching. I, myself, am guilty of not addressing the topics enough; this is not to say that 15% of preaching has to be dedicated to these areas, but as preachers we should definitely have more to say than just 1 lesson per year on the importance of giving (which is usually preached from the standpoint as an act of worship). As it stands, if we do not manage our money than we run the danger of our money managing us (becomes our master [Luke 16:13]). If we don't take time to know where our money goes can we really say that we are being faithful stewards (Mt 25:14-30)? If we can manage our money well, we are much less likely to go the way of Achan or Judas; if we are faithful in our stewardship we are much more likely to be blessed by the King.

Let us not allow Satan to deter us from the pathway of righteousness. His greatest victory celebration is when he has taken a child of God, and through his wiles and devious means, initiated that one into worldliness and sin. Paul to the Romans:

“I beseech ye therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1-2).

Do this, and we will not fail.

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FOR
ALL HAVE SINNED
AND
FALL SHORT

Mitch Robison

The most difficult task facing preachers or anyone trying to win souls for Christ is to convict people of sin. It is readily agreed by all that sin blights the human race, but there is still not often enough the personal consciousness and remorse demanded for conversion. It is neither pleasing nor flattering to awaken to the seriousness of personal iniquity. Therefore, most of us just refuse to face the reality of sin in our own lives. It is significant that only nine times in the entire Bible do we find people who freely admitted, "I have sinned." That is the hardest confession on earth to make. The reason for that is simple: A full realization of one's sinfulness requires obedience in order to be made free.

It is not necessary for one to be a gifted seer, or prophet, to discern certain signs on the horizon that bode ill for civilization. The raging fires of uncon-

trolled passion and lust burn brightly on the front pages of our newspapers and are emblazoned across our television screens with lurid tales of adultery, fornication, murder, drunkenness, drug use, hatred, strife, greed, revelings and war. It is a mad, mad world, gone even more mad because of the throwing off of the one great restraint given to mankind—the consciousness of the reality and the fatality of sin. "Some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:1-2). When folk's consciences are dulled, there is no effective restraint from sin.

The Consequence of Sin

The wise man wrote many centuries ago, "Fools mock at sin" (Prov. 14:9). And we see that constant-

ly throughout our society today. Yet, only a fool would mock such serious realities as “The soul who sins shall die,” “The wages of sin is death” “Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23; Isa. 59:1-2). All of the words of anguish, horror, pain, hurt, disappointment and despair could never portray the ravages of sin. It would take the moan of all the dying, the wail of all the bereaved, the cry of all the orphans, the lament of all the widowed, the terrorized screams of all the lost, and all the shrieks that emanate from the pits of hell to depict the ravages of sin. And that would still only be a partial picture!

It was sin that drove Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and closed that garden forever to mankind. Sin banished Cain from his family and into a foreign land. Sin necessitated the flood that destroyed the world in the time of Noah. Sin brought the children of Israel into Egyptian bondage. And it was sin that caused them to wander forty years in the wilderness, after God had delivered them. It was sin that kept Moses from entering into the land of Canaan. Sin brought the defeat of Israel at Ai, sin that led them time and again into captivity and bondage. Sin persecuted the prophets, killed the holy men of God, and finally sin had a field day when the Son of God was crucified! Thus the whole panoramic view of man's behavior is marred and scarred by the inroads of sin. But we need to keep in memory that the stain of sin was placed on the canvas of the historical picture by man. God is not at fault for it.

Facing Up to Personal Guilt

Surely we should realize the reality of sin, and that means facing up to the sin in our own lives. We must also recognize the terrible consequences of sin. Why, then, is there this hesitation we have in recognizing our own guilt? Are we so much more righteous than others that we have entirely escaped the pollution of sin in our lives? Think of how insidiously the devil has wormed his way into our minds to destroy the personal recognition, and the acknowledgment, of sin. But the guilt remains, whether or not we acknowledge it! King David aptly said:

*The fact that all others
have sinned against
God does not minimize
our own guilt*

The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one (Psa. 14:2-3).

The fact that all others have sinned against God does not minimize our own guilt, for we are not excluded. Solomon placed upon all a personal, as well as a blanket, indictment, when he declared: “There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin” (Ecc. 7:20). It was because of man's departure from God that a Savior was sent to redeem us: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the

Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). The need for a Savior is stated so simply, “For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

God's Punishment for Sin

“Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels... These will go away into everlasting punishment,” “This is the second death, even the lake of fire” (Matt. 25:41, 46; Rev. 20:14). The horrible anguish and torment of those that are lost becomes revolting to some who would impeach the justice of God. But can we say that God is unjust? The terrible price to be paid for sin only accentuates the awfulness of sin! If sin were not so terrible, the consequences would not be so great.

When I think of the punishment that God has reserved for the wicked, I am not about to criticize Him, because He has not forced us to sin with impunity. Rather, I am to learn that sin is such defilement that God cannot admit it into His presence. If we try to minimize the guilt of sin, or the punishment prescribed for it, we only belittle God and His word. It is also another step in belittling the work done by Jesus Christ in saving us from sin. We will have a proper appreciation for Christ and His sacrifice only when we realize the effect of sin—the effect on us and on God.

The Savior for Sin

The preaching of the cross of Jesus Christ falls on deaf ears only because folks do not keenly feel

the need for a Savior. There is not the awakened sense of guilt, and need for relief, that will lead one to seek salvation from sin. Every sermon that depicts the sinfulness of the world is made to apply in a general sense, but only a few are willing to apply it personally. Good moral men are epitomized as examples; and the world asks, “Am I not as good as he?” But one passage still condemns that kind of thinking:

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us... If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:8, 10).

Should we not, then, be anxious to confess our sin before the Father, and happily accept the redemption that is found in Christ Jesus because of the cleansing power of His blood?

We need strong and forceful proclamation of the saving gospel of Christ that will produce a consciousness of sin on the part of them that hear. Jesus declared, “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). And when the gospel was first preached publicly after the death of Jesus Christ, people were told, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). We must learn to distinguish between right and wrong—as God defines it! We must distinguish between truth and error, and between the church that Jesus built and the counterfeits built by men. Sin must be so condemned that souls will recognize the final result of sinfulness is eternal separation from God.

Obeying the “Form of Doctrine”

God said, in the Scripture written by the apostle Paul:

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin,

you became slaves of righteousness (Rom 6:16-18).

Notice that The doctrine is declared by Paul to be, “That Christ died for our sins... that he was buried... that he was raised” (1 Cor. 15:3-4). But how do we obey the “form” of that doctrine?

The Scriptures answer:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin (Rom. 6:1-7).

One must believe that he is a sinner and that only Christ can save him, thus he is led to die to sin (repentance). Having died, he then is “buried with Christ in baptism” and then is “raised” to new life in Christ. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis of our salvation. Our death, burial, and resurrection—in the obedience of baptism—is the response that becomes the means of our salvation. That is the “obedience to the form of

*...it is our obedience
to “that form of
doctrine” that makes
us free from sin.*

doctrine” that makes us free from sin (Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18).

If you have never been baptized into Christ, your choice is simple. You can continue to grovel in sin, reveling in iniquity, and drinking deep from worldly pleasures—even trying to deny or excuse it. Or you can accept the salvation which God offers you in His Son, Jesus Christ. The choice is yours, but you cannot escape the consequences of that choice! Because of the love of God and Christ, you can rise above the sinfulness that binds you by “obeying from the heart the form of doctrine” that sets you free.

THE RISE OF LIBERALISM IN THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

PART 1 – THE ORIGIN OF LIBERALISM

Earl Kimbrough

The key thought in liberalism, as the word is used here, is the state or quality of being liberal, or “not strict,” in religion. Specifically, it is being loose, careless, or otherwise disrespectful of divine authority. The Restoration Movement began with the premise that the Bible is authentic, authoritative, and absolute. The restorers were committed to speaking where the Bible speaks and being silent where the Bible is silent. This principle, strictly applied, necessarily precludes all liberalism. There are, of course, various ways of being liberal with God’s word. Disregard for its silence is a form of liberalism. The neglect of its teaching is another form. Going beyond its express instructions is still another. Each of these may be practiced, theoretically, while professing to believe the Bible to be inspired, inerrant, and complete.

In addition to these forms of liberalism, there are also degrees of “theological liberalism,” or “liberal Protestantism,” a “somewhat loose designation for a wide range of religious thought unified less by specific doctrines than by a temper of mind and certain common motifs.” Its emergence in Biblical criticism “challenged the belief in the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures.” This became “a center of controversy, particularly in the late 19th century ... aggravated by the fact that the work of the first Biblical critics inevitably involved many negative judgments about traditional beliefs.”¹ Thus, it was concluded that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, Isaiah was not one book but at least two, Matthew and Luke copied from Mark, and Paul did not write all the books attributed to him. “Liberal-

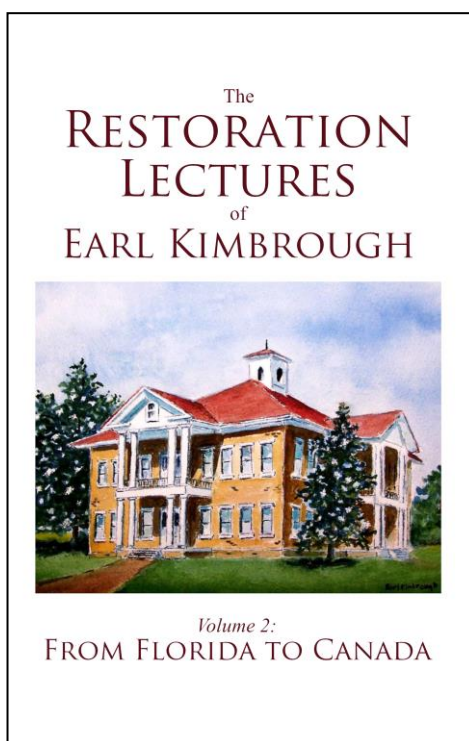
ism,” in this sense, is defined as a Protestant movement advocating a broad interpretation of the Bible, freedom from its rigid doctrine, and denial of its authority.

In the development of liberalism in the Restoration Movement, various groups have been affected, at times, by its different phases. These range from a disregard for the silence of the Scriptures to a denial of the Scriptures themselves. The object of this study is to give a brief history of the rise of liberalism among a people claiming, originally, to be simply New Testament Christians, who proposed exclusively, to respect both the express teaching and the profound silence of God’s word.

During the first and second generations, the restorers generally were of one mind in promoting unity among believers based on a restoration of the apostolic order of teaching, faith, and practice. Other than forming some extra-congregational associations, there is little evidence, during this time, of any major deviation from the aim to follow the Bible alone. Most of those who favored association meetings for consultation, fellowship, and evangelism, believed they fell within the limits of

divine authority. It was not until after the Civil War that anything akin to “theological liberalism” became apparent among New Testament Christians, and it made little headway among them until near the end of the nineteenth century.

“Dr. [L.L.] Pinkerton in 1869 emerged as the first true ‘liberal’ among the reformers, arguing not only for the admission of the unimmersed but also against the prevailing doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible. One evidence of the reaction to these



views by the churches is the brief existence of the *Independent Monthly*, a ‘breezy magazine’ which Pinkerton and John Shackleford edited.”² The journal survived only about two years. It is not surprising, in view of his attitude toward the Bible, that Pinkerton, a medical doctor who served as a Union surgeon during the Civil War, should become an early advocate of theological liberalism. His attitude is summarized in one sentence: “The New Testament is not a code of cast-iron laws for trembling slaves, but a rule of life for loving children.”

Concerning Pinkerton’s remark, Leroy Garrett says: “For a man to have this view of the New Testament in the early decades of the nineteenth century was enough for him to be tagged a liberal, a label not altogether undeserved. Not only was he the first preacher in the Movement to espouse open membership, but he went so far as to question the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy, views that caused him to be seen as ‘worse than a drunkard,’ as he puts it. It was also controversial when he became the first settled pastor, in Lexington in 1841. We may presume, therefore, that it was no momentous thing for him to introduce a humble melodeon into his church in Midway, Kentucky in 1859. Nor was his reason for doing so all that momentous: the singing was so deplorable that it scared the rats away.”³

These early traces of theological liberalism in the Restoration arose in part as a reaction to what some considered, as Shackleford expressed it, “the fierce sectarianism and intolerant dogmatism which had grown up among the Disciples.”⁴ However, such liberalism did not become a major problem among the brethren until the 1890s. In the meantime, a few “prophets of liberalism,” such as Pinkerton and Shackleford, kept it smoldering in the years following the demise of the *Independent Monthly*. Naturally, in view of the role that religious journals and educational institutions played in the movement, papers and schools were in the vanguard of liberalism when it later resurfaced among New Testament Christians.

Isaac Errett, editor of the *Christian Standard*, through the progressive influence of that journal during his twenty-two years at the helm, possibly did more to prepare the way for theological liberalism among Restoration churches than any other individual. When the *Standard* began in 1866, it stood alone as a major voice favoring missionary societies, instrumental music, and the preacher-

pastor ministry. The leading contemporary papers were the conservative *American Christian Review* under Benjamin Franklin and *Gospel Advocate* under David Lipscomb and E.G. Sewell. The *Standard* barely survived its initial year, but by the time of Errett’s death, it was the leading publication among the Restoration brethren.

Lin D. Cartwright, former editor of the *Christian-Evangelist*, says: “Errett, in the early period, faced the opposition practically alone and bore the brunt of the entire attack upon the missionary organization. The contribution of Errett through the columns of the *Christian Standard* ... cannot be overestimated. His biographer [J.S.] Lamar, writes: ‘When we think of the thousands ... of Disciples who have been brought to occupy the ground then advocated by this lone and weekly journal, we realize the immensity of its influence for good, and the wonderful foresight, wisdom and power of its accomplished editor.’”⁵

While Errett was liberal concerning innovations, he was no theological liberal, and the aid his loose interpretation of the Scriptures gave to that cause was evidentially unintentional. However, it helped open the door for a more broadminded attitude toward the Scriptures. Furthermore, Errett’s persistent promotion of the missionary society helped to make that institution a powerful body, which, when later taken over by theological liberals, advanced their cause in the Christian Church-Disciples of Christ branch of the Restoration Movement. Before his death in 1888, Errett and J.H. Garrison “were warm personal friends and were in substantial agreement on most doctrinal and practical issues involving the life of the brotherhood.”⁶ Garrison was already becoming a way maker for theological liberalism among his brethren. He took up Errett’s mantle and further smoothed the path of liberalism through the *Christian-Evangelist*.

Notes

¹Harvey, Van A., *A Handbook of Theological Terms*.

²Garrison, W.E., and A.T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ—A History*.

³Garrett, Leroy, *The Stone-Campbell Movement*.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Cartwright, Lin D., *The Influence of the Religious Journals upon the Life and Development of the Disciples of Christ*, Unpublished Manuscript.

⁶Murch, James D., *Christians Only*.



WHAT ON EARTH IS REVELATION TALKING ABOUT?

BRADLEY S. COBB

If you're like me, you aren't likely to go see a movie without at least first knowing something about it. Is it a comedy? Action? Drama? Chick-flick? Is it animated? Live action? What is it rated? Why is it rated that way? What is it about? Perhaps tops on the list of whether or not I want to see it is if my sister recommends it—If she does, I probably won't like it.

When you want to study a book of the Bible, doesn't it make sense that you'd kind of want to know what it's about before you get into reading it? Sure, you could just read through a book, but it makes much more sense if you first have an idea what the book is talking about ahead of time.

For example: read through 1 Thessalonians, and you will be able to gain some helpful knowledge. But if you read through 1 Thessalonians with the understanding that it was a congregation Paul planted, and that within three weeks the Jews had gathered a mob of thugs which persecuted the Christians mercilessly, to the point where the disciples sent Paul out of the city—and thus the Christians there had only received **THREE WEEKS TOTAL** of teaching about the New Testament—then it makes the book much more meaningful, especially when you read about how worried Paul was that they would give in to the pressure from the Jews.

Knowing something about the book and its meaning is much more important when you read a book like Revelation.

In this lesson, we are going to go through parts of the book in order to show what Revelation is all about. Don't worry, we will actually start digging into the text starting in the next lesson.

Before we begin, I wish to read a quotation from Arthur Ogden, a Christian who wrote a commentary on Revelation entitled *The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets*.

"The book of Revelation is the greatest piece of literature ever penned. It is a masterpiece presentation. It challenges our...power to reason, judge, comprehend and understand. It challenges our imagination... It challenges our observation... It challenges our overall knowledge of the Bible and our will to learn, because so much study must go into learning, even generally, what is revealed in this book. It tries our patience...to keep on studying when we have just learned that we were wrong about previous conclusions, and it challenges our endurance... It is indeed a masterpiece in literature. It brings together Old Testament prophecies, both of victory and desolation, and shows their impending fulfillment as things 'shortly come to pass...'"

Revelation is a Revealing!

First, it *must* be understood that the book of Revelation is exactly what it claims to be: a book which **reveals** (1:1). The word translated "revelation" is

apokalupsis (from which we get our word *Apocalypse*), and it means an unveiling, an uncovering, or a revealing. So, according to the very first verse, this book was written to *reveal* something, not to *conceal* it. But what was it supposed to reveal?

It was the revelation of Jesus Christ. It was given by Jesus (through His messenger), concerning Jesus, about something Jesus was going to do.

This revealing was “of things which MUST shortly come to pass.” This gives us our first big clue to what the book of Revelation is all about. In the last lesson, we saw *from Scripture* that all books of the Bible were completed prior to the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70). The book of Revelation was written sometime in the early to mid-60’s.

Because of John’s statement at the beginning of the book, we can know that the things in the book were fulfilled ***shortly*** after the book was written. John was told the events were “at hand” (1:3). John the Baptist said the kingdom was “at hand” about 3 ½ years before the kingdom came into existence on Pentecost.

Let’s be generous and stretch “at hand” to mean 10 years. No, let us stretch it even more, and be liberal, saying “at hand” can mean 20 years. Even with this liberal use of the phrase, the latest the events in Revelation would take place is by 85 AD. We will be narrowing this down considerably in a moment.

Coming with Clouds

Revelation describes a “coming with clouds” (1:7). This isn’t the first time in the Bible that this imagery is used. Isaiah 19:1-4 describes God coming, *riding on a cloud*, and it is a scene of judgment against the nation of Egypt, whom God will overthrow.

Since most of the imagery in Revelation comes from the Old Testament, we need to look there to help us understand what different symbols mean. If *coming with clouds* in the Old Testament described a coming in judgment, then we should assume (and if we read through the book, it becomes clear) that when it is used in Revelation, it means the same thing. Jesus used this phrase the same way, describing His coming in judgment on Jerusalem as a “coming in the clouds” (Matthew 24:30).

So, using the information that we already know from the Bible, we can know *for certain* that the Book of Revelation describes a coming in judgment which took place between AD 64 and 85.

The Tribes of the Earth shall Mourn

Revelation 1:7 says: “All kindreds of the earth shall wail” (KJV). This exact wording (in Greek) is used by Jesus in Matthew 24:30, but there (in the KJV) it is translated, “all tribes of the earth shall mourn.” Jesus stated this in context of the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:1-34). The tribes under consideration in Matthew were the literal tribes of Israel—after all, the Jews were the only ones who mourned or wailed over Jerusalem’s destruction; the Romans sure didn’t mourn, they celebrated! Since Revelation 1:7 uses the exact same words in Greek, it seems logical to suggest the same people are under consideration.

Therefore, the Book of Revelation describes a coming in judgment which took place between AD 64 and 85, which would cause the physical Israelites to mourn.

The Harlot is Identified

The book of Revelation describes a judgment that would cause the Israelites to mourn, but in Revelation 17, we see that this judgment is upon a *city*. Revelation 17:1 – the judgment is upon the great harlot who is called Babylon. But God doesn’t leave the identity of this harlot to the imagination. In verse 18, the harlot is called “the great city” which rules over the kings of the earth. We’re introduced to “the great city” back in 11:8 – “the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.”

- Jesus was only crucified in one city: Jerusalem.
- Jerusalem was called “Sodom” in the Old Testament (Isaiah 1:9, Jeremiah 23:14, Ezekiel 16:46-56).
- Jerusalem was called the faithful city which had become a harlot (Isaiah 1:20).
- Jerusalem is frequently viewed as a harlot in the Old Testament.

“BUT,” the argument comes, “Jerusalem didn’t rule over the kings of the earth!” Is that a valid argument? The word “earth,” in Greek, is *ge* (as in *geology*), and is often translated “land” (as in the Promised Land). The early church specifically said who the “kings of the earth [*ge*]” were in Acts 4:26-27: Herod and Pontius Pilate. These men were only in one land: the land of Israel. And the capital city

of Israel was...?

Therefore, the Book of Revelation was written describing a coming in judgment *against a city*, which took place between AD 64 and 85, which would cause the physical Israelites to mourn. By now, perhaps you have an idea of which city is under consideration, but let us continue.

The Cause of the Judgment

Revelation 18:20-19:2 describes the reasons this judgment was coming. The judgment upon the city called Babylon was so that God could avenge the blood of the apostles and prophets (18:20). Because of this, the judgment upon the city called Babylon would be violent (18:21). This city was guilty of the blood of prophets, of saints, and of ALL that were slain on the earth [*ge*] (18:24).

Now, let us compare this with something that Jesus said while He was here on earth (Matthew 23:34-39). To the city of Jerusalem, Jesus says:

*“I send to you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them you shall kill and crucify, and some of them you shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city, that **upon you** may come **all the righteous blood shed upon the earth**, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you slew between the temple and the altar. Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation. **O Jerusalem, Jerusalem**, you that kills the prophets and stones them which are sent [*Gr. Apostles*] unto thee...”*

The judgment upon the city called Babylon was **to avenge the blood of the apostles and prophets** (Revelation 18:20). Jesus said that the blood of the apostles and prophets were going to be avenged **on Jerusalem**.

The judgment upon the city called Babylon was **because they were guilty of the blood of the saints** (Revelation 18:24). Jesus said that the blood of **ALL the righteous** (in other words, saints) would be avenged **on Jerusalem**.

According to Jesus, God would avenge the blood of the apostles, prophets, and all the righteous upon the city of Jerusalem. According to Revelation, God destroyed the city called Babylon in order to avenge the blood of the apostles, prophets and all the righteous.

Only two options exist at this point:

- Babylon is Jerusalem, and Matthew 23:34-39 is describing the same events as Revelation 18:20-19:2.
- Or God somehow messed up and didn't actually avenge the blood of the apostles, prophets, and saints when He destroyed Jerusalem and had to find another city to destroy to finish the avenging.

God is not a failure, so we can eliminate the second option.

Taking what we've shown straight from the Bible, we can know that the Book of Revelation describes a coming of Jesus Christ in judgment upon the city of Jerusalem in AD 70, which caused the physical Israelites to mourn and wail.

Why This?

What purpose does it serve to have a book about this event? Considering now that we understand the book of Revelation was written about the destruction of Jerusalem, the once faithful city that had turned (spiritually) into a harlot, and was guilty of the blood of Jesus, the apostles, the prophets, and all the other righteous, the question still remains: why would God give us a book about it?

First, it shows the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (the destruction of Jerusalem was mentioned in Zechariah 14:1-2, Isaiah 2:1-4, Micah 3:12-4:2, Joel 2:28-32; also throughout Deuteronomy).

Second, it shows the visible end of the Old Testament system. Jeremiah spoke of the New Covenant God would make with His people (Jeremiah 31:31). We know this new covenant was instituted on the Day of Pentecost after the death and resurrection of Christ (Acts 2). But the Old Testament system, the Law of Moses, was still being followed by the majority of the Jews. The fact that they could still *practice* the Old Law caused many Jews to think Christianity couldn't be the New Covenant. With the destruction of Jerusalem, of the temple, of the altar, and of the genealogical records, it became physically impossible to follow the Law of Moses properly—in fact, God made it completely, physically impossible for anyone to do the things required for forgiveness under the Old Testament.

- There has been no altar for sacrifices to be made since AD 70.

- There has been no temple in which the High Priest could enter with the Day of Atonement sacrifice for the people since AD 70.
- There have been no records of lineage proving descent from Aaron for someone to be a High Priest since AD 70 (there have been no high priests since that time).

Third, Physical Jerusalem was destroyed so that the New Jerusalem could shine forth. After the judgment scene in Revelation 20, the New Jerusalem descends out of heaven and is described as glorious. Before the destruction of Jerusalem, Christianity was generally viewed as a “sect” of Judaism (Acts 24:5, 28:22). It has been accurately stated that Christianity grew up under the umbrella of Judaism.

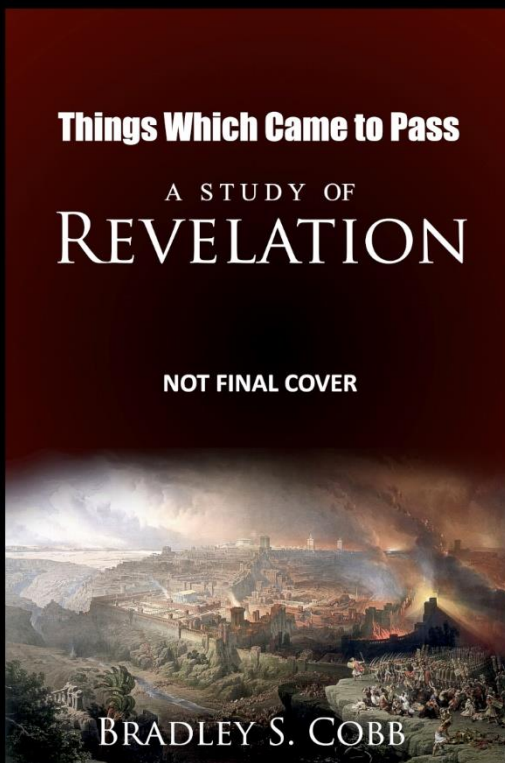
Some might (and some have) argue that the destruction was irrelevant to the church except that the persecutors (the Jews) were silenced. However, let me ask you a question: In the Old Testament, when did Israel become a nation? It was when they crossed the Red Sea and were freed from Egyptian bondage (God called them a “nation” shortly there-

after when He gave the Law to Moses). However, even though they were a nation with laws from God, there was a way in which they hadn’t fully arrived as a nation until they entered the Promised Land 40 years later.

The church was God’s new nation beginning from Pentecost, but there was a sense in which the church wasn’t completely revealed until the Old Jerusalem was done away with, 40 years later. After the destruction of Jerusalem, the church was seen clearly in its full glory as the New Jerusalem, the dwelling-place of God (see Revelation 21).

Conclusion:

Though many of the symbols in Revelation may seem confusing, we can know the overall picture of the book, and as such, we can have a better understanding of the details: The book of Revelation paints a vivid picture of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and all it stood for, the complete abolishment of the Old Testament system, the avenging of the blood of all of God’s servants, and the status of the church of Jesus Christ as the only way to have access to God.



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"If you want to understand Revelation, talk to Bradley Cobb" - Michael Shank

"Awesome. Just awesome" - An elder in Oklahoma

"Great job with the material" - Jim Mitchell

QUOTES TO CONTEMPLATE

On Discipleship

Discipleship is not a ‘merit badge’ that we earn at one point and then move on to other things. Discipleship is a lifestyle that involves following the Lord.

Andy Sochor

The Way: What it Means to be a Disciple of Jesus

On Delaying Baptism

This manifestation of justice to my mind was enough to remove every objection out of the way, as to being baptized; but still I shrunk back, and kept delaying a known duty, till in a few months, the beauty of the command disappeared, and by disobedience I lost, by little and little, the sweet enjoyment, which is the certain fruit of obedience, and in the course of about six months, was better pleased with my situation, than though I had been baptized. Neglecting this duty led me to neglect other things commanded; as these things were neglected, my evidence of being purged from my old sins lessened, until at last I concluded that the change experienced, was not such as made me an heir of God and joint heir with Christ.

Elias Smith

Autobiography (1816)

On Mourning over Sins

Every person will mourn over their sins. The righteous do so while upon this earth; the wicked will do so forever in hell.

John Chowning

Jesus’ Sermon on Righteousness (2021)

On Issues of Division

Dear Brethren; Let us examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith.—If we have erred, let us retrace our steps, and return into the King’s highway; from which we may have been decoyed by pursuing the fugitive opinions and speculations of men—Let us cease to speculate on the doctrine of Christ, and learn his simplicity. Let us confine ourselves to the language of the Bible as much as possible. Speculations are unprofitable, and injurious to the growth of vital piety, and stand in the way of Christian Union. Whenever we rejoice in the increase of our numbers, more than in their reformation from sin, and

their increase in holiness and piety, we ought immediately to take the conviction of being wrong, and not to rest till, by the grace of God, the evil be corrected.

Barton W. Stone

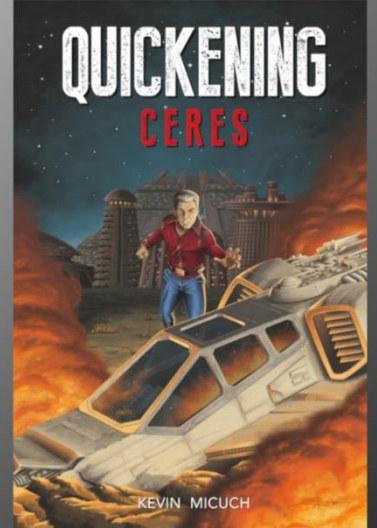
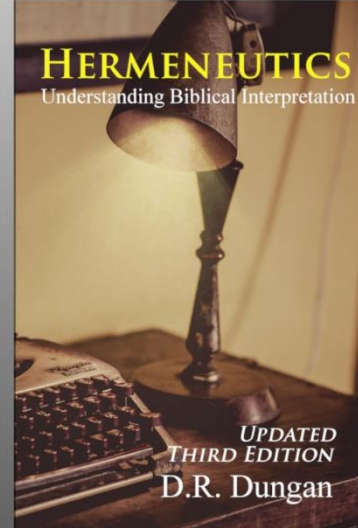
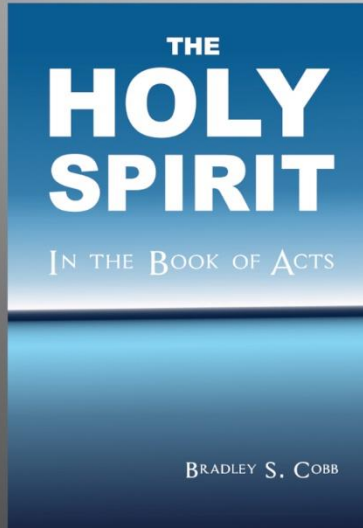
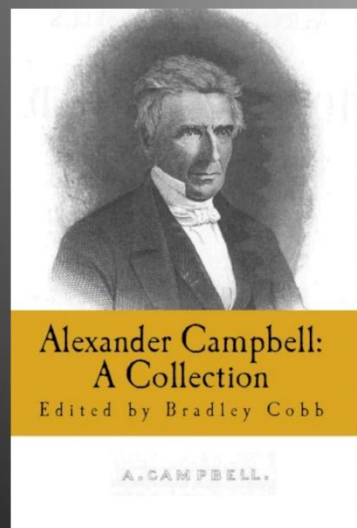
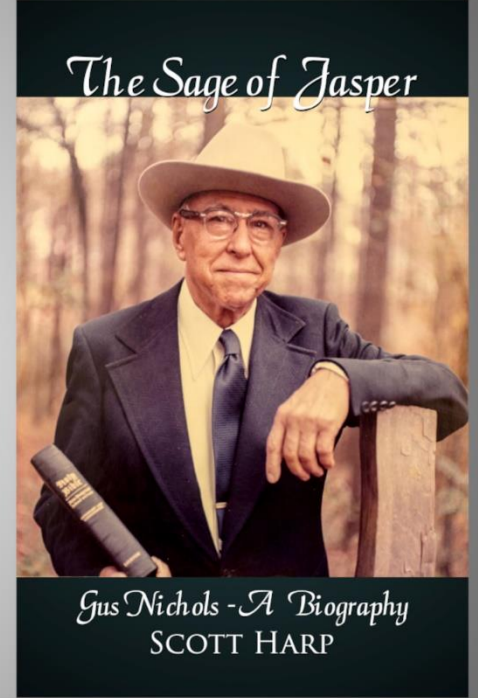
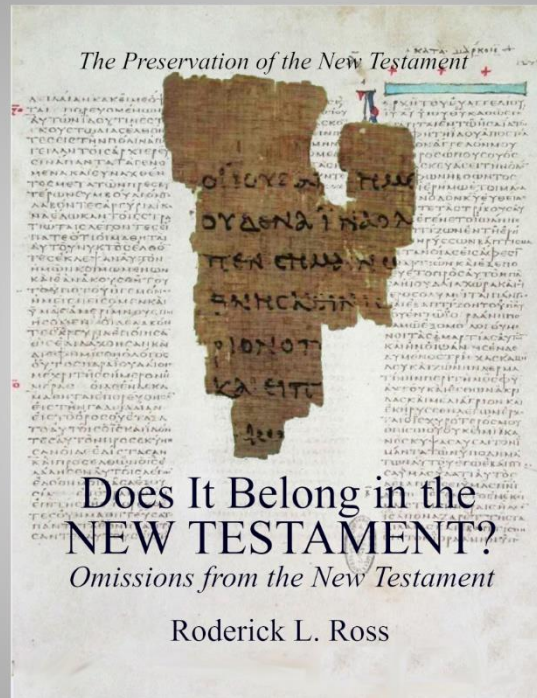
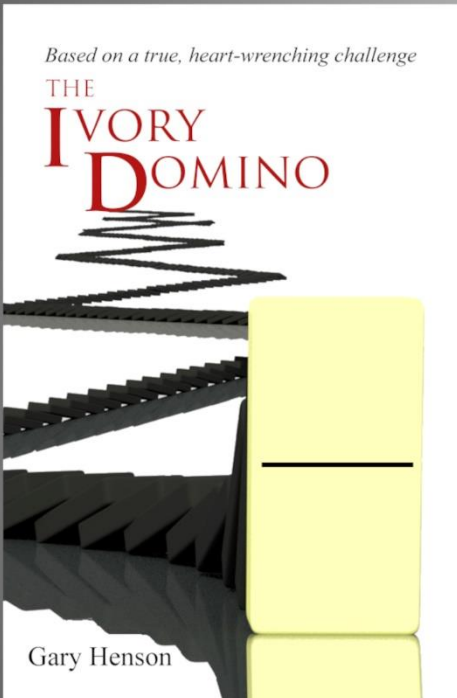
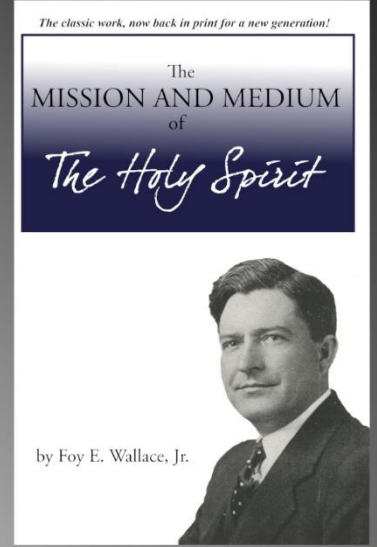
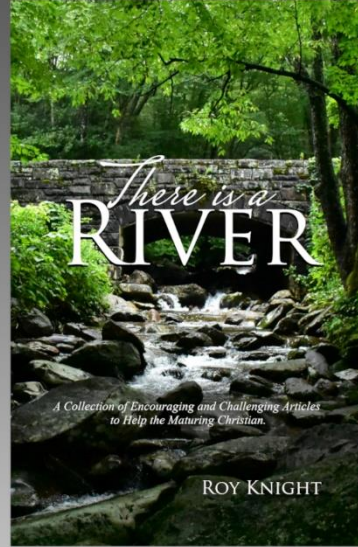
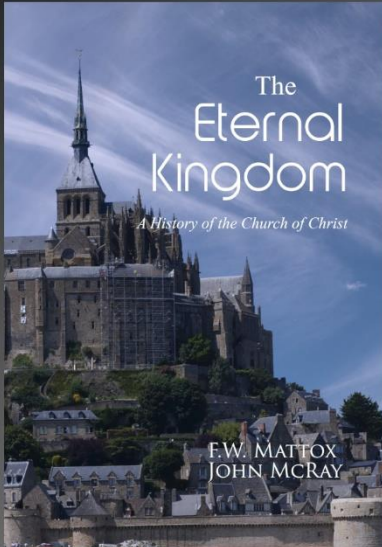
Christian Messenger, vol. 6

On Preaching Politics

The season for elections to fill important offices in our civil government is approaching. At such times much excitement is commonly witnessed, and much bad feeling manifested. I have long thought that public teachers of Christianity should have very little to do with noisy politics. To see such rise up in the multitude, and make an electioneering speech—with warmth reviling the rulers of the people—speaking reproachfully of prominent men—and extolling their favorites to the skies—to see them very zealous to promote their party—my soul sickens at the sight. See the same preacher in the pulpit—is he equally zealous for religion as for politics? With what face can he teach the people to speak evil of no man?—nor revile the rulers of the people? When just before he had been guilty of these things, and it is yet fresh in the recollection of his audience? Such a preacher must and will sink from that lofty station, which he ought ever to retain in order to be useful to his fellow creatures. He will incur the displeasure of many, and lose the friendship and respect of those who think politically different from him. In vain may he expect to do them good by his ministrations. A warm political preacher, or professor of religion, and a warm, devoted and useful preacher of the Gospel, are rarely ever found in the same person. My advice is, watch and pray lest you be led away from your duty and your God. In the present state of society, civil governments are indispensably necessary. But the time is approaching, when the government and laws of Jesus will universally prevail, and all the rest shall pass away, as the fogs of the morning. It is right to support the civil and free government, under which we live, till they exist no more. Till then act as free men—act as Christians under the inspection of our common father.

Barton W. Stone

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MY PROCESS TO PREACHING WITHOUT NOTES

Shane Robinson

My New Years Resolution for 2017 was to improve the delivery of my lessons. For about five years I preached and taught exclusively from my iPad. It was convenient being able to work on my computer, sync my notes in the cloud, and then pick up my iPad and preach. The problem was I found myself relying too heavily on my notes. Furthermore, it seemed as if my notes kept getting longer and longer. No matter how I structured, highlighted, or spaced my notes, I would still get lost from time to time when I looked down at my device.

A few events and books on communication helped me to make my resolution a reality. Now, looking back, I can honestly say it was much easier than I thought.

SOME EVENTS THAT MOVED ME AWAY FROM NOTES

Get Out From Behind The Pulpit

Early in the year, I met with a couple. One was a member of the church and the other was a member of another church. At one point in the meeting I asked about what I could do to get the visitor to become a regular. One of the things he said was he didn't like it that I just stood behind the podium to preach. I thought, "Well, I can work to accommodate this." From that point on, I got out from behind the pulpit.

This is a point of interest today. From the books I've read on communication, doing away with barriers is necessary for effective communication. This is especially true with younger generations. (In the example above, the person was in their 20's.) I understand a lot of money went into building beautiful podiums, but I also understand my job is to effectively communicate with people in the pews (or chairs). By getting out from behind the pulpit we are able to look people in the eye and speak to them directly without anything in between. For the most part, this means we have to leave our notes behind.

An Instrument of Peace

Fast-forward a few months and I was scheduled to preach during a special series at a local congregation down the road. They gave me the assignment, date, and time. It was a long day. I had a late after-

noon funeral to conduct before going to the office to look over my lesson. I wasn't as prepared as I wanted to be, but punctuality was important so I wrapped things up and stopped to get some fuel. As I pulled up to the station, my phone rang. I didn't notice the number but knew who it was when he said, "Hey, brother Shane. Just wondering if you were going to be here tonight?" I told him I was on my way and should be there in 20 minutes. He said, "Ok. We will be waiting on you." Long story short, instead of being 30 minutes early, I was actually 30 minutes late. (They started at 6PM and I just assumed it was 7PM.)

As I traveled across town to where the congregation met, it dawned on me that I would not be able to preach the lesson I'd prepared. By the time I got my presentation set up, my time would be gone. And so, I wrote down a few thoughts and passages on a sheet of paper. As I traveled, I asked God to simply use me despite my obvious failure to double-check what time service started.

Upon arrival, I walked straight through the door, walked down the aisle, and immediately started preaching. I preached for 20 minutes without using notes and with little preparation. How it turned out, I do not know. But, it was a turning point for me. Instead of seeing myself as a preacher, I saw myself as an instrument. I didn't have time to do much, but I wanted to at least help someone in the time I had.

Let Me See Your Outline

I heard great things about a book on communication by Andy Stanley entitled, *Communicating For A Change*. I purchased the book and consumed it rather quickly. The first part of the book is a parable about a failing preacher and how he met with another preacher who helped him get out of a slump. The second part of the book is the development of the principles of effective communication which were introduced in the parable.

I won't give any spoilers, but I will mention a few things that helped me do away with notes. First, in the parable section, the preacher who was struggling was with the preacher who was trying to help. The preacher who was trying to help asked the other to tell him about his family. He told about his life,

his hometown, his struggles, and along the way he threw some humor in the mix. After he finished, the other preacher asked him for a copy of his outline. Obviously, he did not have one. That was the point. He knew the material and was able to communicate it in a fun, open, and interesting way. He didn't need an outline to do this.

This illustration was very helpful for me. As a matter of fact, it helped me in the case where I developed a lesson on the fly (literally). I have to admit, ten years ago, fresh out of preaching school, I would not have been able to develop a lesson while driving down the road and preach it without notes. Thankfully, the topic was one dear to my heart, "the Church of Christ." And so, I spoke of what the church meant to me. (If I couldn't do that without notes, something is wrong.)

Information Overload

The second way the book helped me to do away with notes was the emphasis on "one point preaching." The reality is, much of what is heralded from pulpits today is simply "information overload." No wonder we struggle to preach without notes. Furthermore, if we can't remember what we plan to say, how will our hearers?

Throughout this process, I've noticed myself teaching less information in one sitting. Instead of preaching a lesson with three information-packed-points, now I preach three independent lessons. While I may not be able to unload as much information as I previously did, I'm able to get to the heart of preaching – communication. Instead of having three points that rhyme and flow, I'm able to present truth to grow. I'm able to just preach the word.

SOME TIPS TO NOTE-FREE PREACHING

Note-free preaching does not mean no-notes

I still preach from notes. I carry an outline with me every time I preach. Speaking to an audience for 30 minutes straight without preaching from notes is challenging. Very few people are able to do it without great preparation.

Generally speaking, every sermon I preach has five outlines. My first outline is written on paper (I prefer Moleskin notebooks). I do this for a couple of reasons. One, it helps me to remember because I'm

using visual as well as kinesthetic learning skills. Two, if I initially type my lesson out, I find myself erasing too much material. Three, if I'm on my computer, I find myself cutting and pasting other people's words. (If they're not my words it's tough to preach without notes.)

The second outline is typed out in a document (I use Pages). One of the keys for me to do away with notes this year has been to only type one page of notes. So, I take my written notes, condense them, edit them, and then type them out. I space out my point and sub-points in my lesson so I can write out additional info in the empty space (more on that later). This will be the outline I take with me into the pulpit.

The third outline is condensed again and edited to be placed into our bulletin (I use Adobe Indesign). The space provided is equivalent to a half-letter size sheet of paper. The fourth outline is developed into a visual presentation (I use Power-

Point). It's different from the others but includes much of the same material (just condensed and arranged differently).

The final outline I develop is the printed version of the one-page document. Sometimes I briefly write out my introduction and conclusion in the space provided below the title and below the last point. In every case, I go back and write out additional info in the empty space between my points and sub-points.

By the time I get up to deliver my lesson, I've worked and reworked it at least five times. I know the material. Even though it may not look as if I am preaching with notes because I'm not glancing at them during my lesson, technically, I'm still preaching with notes.

Go Back to the 20th Century

This may sound hypocritical coming from an Apple fanboy and self-proclaimed head of the Geek Club at my congregation, but we have to do away with the gadgets. I use gadgets every day and use them for every lesson. But, when it comes to preaching, I'm not distracting people with my shiny, polished, device. It's just me and my Bible; that's it.

It's Not About Memorizing As Much As It Is Mapping

Preaching textual lessons is a lot easier when it comes to preaching without notes than it is with

I spoke of what the church [of Christ] meant to me. (If I couldn't do that without notes, something is wrong.)

topical lessons. Textual lessons tend to focus on one text as opposed to jumping around and grabbing a bunch of passages. If I quoted or referenced 50 passages per lesson I would not be able to preach without notes (I know some who do but my mind isn't that sharp). As a result, I tend to preach from one main text and sprinkle illustrations and supplemental texts throughout the lesson (normally only a handful).

In times past, I made sure my main points went together and focused a lot on transitions. These were very important to me because that's all I knew. I tried to memorize main points but I found myself not being able to remember. Now, my lesson notes function more as a map than anything else. Instead of trying to remember point A, B, and C, I try to go from point A to point B to point C. To illustrate, I'm currently in a series on the "7 Sayings of Jesus on the Cross." Each lesson follows the same train of thought (The Setting, The Saying, and The Significance). In my mind, I map out the lesson to progress from background, immediate context, and then application.

Mentally, I know the gist of what each section includes. I may add more than I intended or I may leave out something I intended to say. That's ok; I just want to be true to the text and give people something to think about.

If You Can't Preach It Without Notes You Don't Know It

For years I struggled with note-free preaching. Sometimes it was a confidence issue. Sometimes it was a mental issue. Sometimes it was a structure issue. Whatever the case may be, my main issue was I didn't know what I was going to say.

I'm willing to bet you could tell me about your favorite sports team without notes. If sports is not your thing, take whatever is of interest to you and tell me about it. Now, let me see your notes!

Preaching should be important to us. The material we share should be meaningful to us. We should be excited about being able to share what we've learned with others.

We should be embarrassed when we tell our listeners to pay attention to what we are about to say and then have to look down at our notes to read it to them. If it is that important, you should know it by heart.

This is where preaching without notes is helpful. For years, I was a slave to my outline. If I spent so

much time developing an outline, I felt inclined to say EVERYTHING on the outline. Then, when I unintentionally skipped information on my outline, I got confused. Preaching without notes eliminates this for the most part. When you know the text, know the gist of what you want to say, you just say it. Sure, you will leave things out. Sure you will add things in. But, in the end, it is what it is.

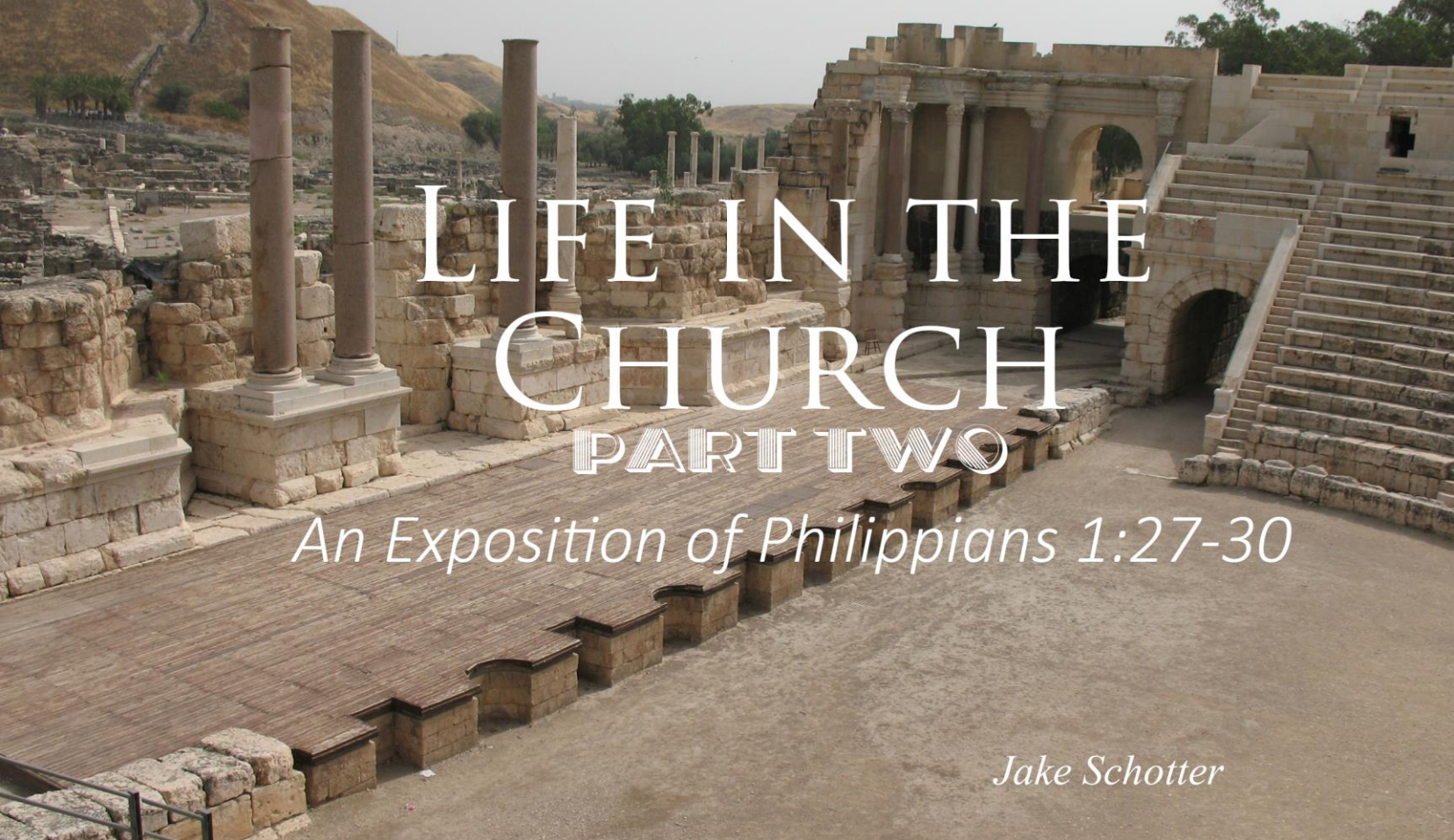
I'm Only an Instrument

If you've preached for any amount of time you recognize the providence of God at work within your preaching. Here it is: you feel as if you've preached the best sermon of your life and nobody says anything. Then, after preaching what you perceived to be a disaster, everybody and their brother come up to tell you how great of a lesson that was. (It is as if angels are singing the Hallelujah Chorus.)

Humility is very important. Starting out, I thought I was an excellent preacher. Looking back, I was a proud preacher. God resists the proud and uses the humble. Now, I do not see myself as an excellent preacher, rather, I see myself as an instrument for God. I am just a pawn in the grand scheme of things.

I'm not here to please the people, wow the people, or get amens from the people. I am here to please God. Yes, I want to do my best, but, I also have to realize God uses me the most when I try the least. That is, it's really not about me; it's about the gospel. The power is in the gospel and I'm only a messenger.

I realized this when I did a funeral a few years ago. The Matriarch of the family passed away. She endured great hardship in life. I wrote out her funeral service as I normally do. But, in this particular case, things were a little different. The sister had requested an open casket for the funeral service (not common in our area). Emotions were higher than normal. As I looked out at the audience, I observed several family members who were either erring or far from the kingdom. It wasn't time for me to preach, rather it was time for me to minister. And so, I prayed that God would use me; allow me to be an instrument of peace. I preached the funeral without notes. Sure, I had them, but as an instrument, I did not need them. Be an instrument.



Jake Schotter

INTRODUCTION

In the previous article, we examined Philippians 1:21-26 and saw that, for the church to have joy, we need to examine our mindsets. Paul showed that having a desire to live with the end in mind encouraged him to have joy in his life and ministry. Paul's mindset, with prayer and work, was *"to live is Christ and to die is gain"* (1:21). When we consider our circumstances, how do we feel? Do we desire to depart and be with the Lord? Do we desire to devote ourselves to the brethren and serve each other? Whatever the Lord's will is for us, we need to be willing to submit to it and live in such a way that there is a clear *"progress and joy in the faith"* (1:25).

Paul, in the pericope that encompasses 1:21-30, teaches that being a disciple of Jesus Christ comes at a high cost. It will cost a person everything to claim to be His disciple. It requires submission to the sovereignty and lordship of Christ (2:9-11). It means that we must be willing to be wronged, persecuted, and suffer for Christ from people who hate the Lord (John 15:18-25). It is a recognition that we borrow everything we have from the Lord, the giver of all good gifts (James 1:17). In this life, we must be willing to give up our popularity, pleasures, possessions, and our own pursuits and suffer on behalf

of the Gospel. We must also be careful to recognize that the cost of discipleship only increases over time instead of becoming easier and less intense. The Gospel is literally "good news," but it is not easy news. According to Matthew 10, we will, as Christ's students, suffer much because of who we follow and proclaim.

In this second section of Philippians 1:21-30, we see Paul reminding the Philippians of their manner of living: it is our duty to live with our fellow believers in unity. How is that possible, though? How do we achieve this kind of unity and what is expected of us? Paul's answer goes like this:

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and this too, from God. For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer on His behalf, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me (1:27-30)

OUR MANNER OF LIVING: A DUTY TO LIVE WITH EVERYONE IN UNITY (1:27-30)

Paul's Concern (1:27a)

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear about you that you are...

Paul's primary concern was how the Philippians conducted themselves. He had a vital interest in their beliefs matching with their behavior. He desired to know if their message was in line with their manner of life. He was concerned not only about them talking the talk but walking the walk. This was so serious to Paul that he put the word "only" in the emphatic position in the Greek – at the beginning of the sentence. He wanted their lives to reflect "the gospel of Christ." Either their conduct was living up to this standard or it was not. He would later encourage the Philippians to "prove... to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ, I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain" (2:15-16).

If you like simplicity, it cannot get any simpler than this. In fact, the Holman Christian Standard Bible translated this as, "Just one thing: Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." Here, Paul is making a point about how we are to live in light of the Gospel. The Gospel impacts our entire being, inside and out:

Paul is making one very important, serious, and comprehensive point, and we should pay attention to it. Believers are making a statement about the gospel not only with their lips but also with their lives. The gospel is about love; therefore, we should be known as loving people. The gospel is about justice; therefore, we should be justice-seeking people. The gospel is about life; therefore, we should display visible vitality and joy in our gatherings and in our relationships. The gospel is about liberty; therefore, we should not live as stuffy legalists. The gos-

pel is about humility; therefore, we should be a humble people, gladly serving others.¹

Paul mentions, therefore, that they need to watch their conduct because it reflects who they [and we] identify with and as. The word "conduct" carries this idea and is a powerful term that the Philippians would have readily responded to because of their status as a Roman colony.

[The word] comes from the root word polis (city), which in earlier times usually referred to the city-states to which inhabitants gave their primary allegiance. The verb carries the basic meaning of being a citizen. But, by implication, it means being a good citizen, one whose conduct brings honor to the political body to whom one belongs.²

Furthermore,

The Philippians [were] Roman [citizens], with privileges to enjoy – and responsibilities to [fulfill]! They must equally remember that as citizens of a heavenly realm (see 3:20; Eph. 2:19) they are called not only to accept the benefit of this gospel but also to model their lives according to the pattern laid down therein... [According to Dibelius, they were] 'a colony of foreigners whose organization reflects in miniature the politeia [citizenship] of the homeland.'³

Believers make a statement about the gospel not only with their lips but also with their lives.

William Barclay captured the essence of what Paul was saying,

So what Paul is saying is this, 'You and I know full well the privileges and responsibilities of being a Roman citizen. You know full well how even in Philippi, so many miles away from Rome, you must still live and act as a Roman does. Well then, remember that you have an even higher duty than that. Wherever

¹ Merida, Tony and Francis Chan. **Exalting Jesus in Philippians**. B&H Publishing Group, 2016: 75.

² MacArthur, John. **Philippians**. *MacArthur New Testament Commentary*. Moody Press, 2001: 84.

³ Martin, Ralph P. **The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians**. *Tyndale New Testament Commentary*. InterVarsity Press, 1987: 86-87.

you are you must live as befits a citizen of the Kingdom of God; you must never forget the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship, not this time of Rome, but of the Kingdom of God.⁴

Paul wanted the Philippians to use the dedication and pride they naturally had for Rome and direct that towards the kingdom of God. If the citizens of Philippi were devoted to honoring their Roman citizenship, how much more should believers be devoted to Christ's kingdom. Paul wanted them to recognize the monumental reality of being in God's kingdom. After all, their "citizenship is in heaven" (3:20) because "He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Colossians 1:13). The church, although consisting of members in a temporal kingdom, is the earthly manifestation of the perfect and eternal kingdom of God in this present age.

Christians need to live a life consistent with God's Word. When we do so, we live "in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." Christians who profess to follow the Bible will live a life directly correlated to the clear teaching of Scripture, otherwise their claim to be a disciple is doubtful. The church's greatest test and testimony before the world is spiritual integrity. This will inevitably produce fruit in our lives, according to Paul: we are to "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10).

The importance of Paul's test here is seen through a trio of outcomes that produce a natural progression. The immediate outcome of passing Paul's test is seen in the phrase, "so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you." There will be an assessment of the Philippians that Paul will receive, whether he is there in Philippi himself or by one of his associates. He will know of their conduct and they will be judged according to

the gospel. The intermediate outcome has to deal with how they are viewed by the world. Those who live in the world and are of the world will judge Christians by how we act. Will it be in accordance to God's word and bring Him glory, or will we bring reproach (1 Peter 3:14-17)? The ultimate outcome is the personal reality that we will be judged by the Lord.

Philippian Conduct (1:27b-30)

"I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and this too, from God. For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer on His behalf, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me"

In the remainder of this passage, the apostle gives five characteristics of believers who live worthy of

Christ: stand together, strive together, be saved, be sanctified, and suffer together.

We are expected to stand together (v. 27b)

"you are standing firm in one spirit"

The word for "standing firm" comes from a military term (steko) meaning to

hold one's ground regardless of danger or opposition. It is the picture of a soldier at his post, standing stationary and persevering; it is the soldier who defends his position at all costs, even sacrificing his life (4:1; 1 Corinthians 16:14; Galatians 5:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:15). This term also has a figurative side. This would be the person who holds "fast to a belief, conviction, or principle without compromise, regardless of personal cost. Being firmly fixed in matters of biblical truth and holy living."⁵

We are then told to stand firm "in one spirit." The context of this passage focuses on believers' attitudes, which seems to indicate that this is the

[We] cannot afford to be content where [we] started or even where [we are] at [this] moment. There must be progress!

⁴ Barclay, William. **The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians.** The Westminster Press, 1959: 37.

⁵ MacArthur, 86.

human spirit of a believer, rather than a reference to the Holy Spirit. What we see here is a unity, harmony, and interdependence with each other in the gospel. But, this does not mean that everyone in the Philippian church is included. It is important to realize that this kind of unity, where people stand together, is exclusionary and inclusionary by nature. Threats are facing the Philippians that must be dealt with and not welcomed into this unity. There are internal threats: fighting in-house (4:2), people giving into fleshly desires (3:3-4, 7), along with fear and other struggles of the mind (3:21; 4:4-9). Externally, they faced persecution (1:7, 13-14, 29-30), false teaching (3:2-3), and some followed teachers with impure motives (1:15-16; 3:17-18).

When the church is “*standing firm*,” we must exclude those in error (Romans 16:17-18) and those in sin (exercising church discipline according to Matthew 18; 1 Corinthians 5:6). When these things need to occur, we should be ready to confront to maintain the purity of the church and “*stand together in one spirit*.”

We are expected to strive together (vv. 27c-28)

“with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and this too, from God”

“*Striving*” comes from the word *sunathleo*, which is a compound word of *sun* (with) and *athleo* (to compete in a contest). The idea of athletics focuses on this exact idea – struggling with your fellow teammates to fight a common enemy and reach a common goal. With the church, we are doing the same thing for the gospel. We are on God’s team! We must be careful, though, to not let internal fighting get in the way of reaching our goal of fighting together “*for the faith of the gospel*.” The church is to be playing as a team to advance God’s truth to the world.

Genuine unity needs to have a specific purpose. It is rather pointless to have unity for unity’s sake. We need to have a motivation, a focus, a common cause, an objective. Paul identifies that for us as “*the faith of the gospel*.” This has been referred to in other places as: “*the gospel of Christ*” (Galatians

1:7), “*the glorious gospel of the blessed God*” (1 Timothy 1:11; 6:20), and “*the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints*” (Jude 3). When we strive together for the gospel, we are not only advancing the gospel, we are halting the opposition’s advances. Furthermore, there is doctrinal clarity, ability to correct, avoidance of confusion, and a general concern for protecting and preaching the gospel when this is done. The church must be faithful in this battle, standing

valiantly without flinching, being intimidated, never compromising, and not cowering to fear. We are to be “*in no way alarmed by [our] opponents*.”

Paul would write to the Thessalonians,

“we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering” (2 Thessalonians 1:4-5).

John MacArthur insightfully commented,

However serious their [and our] conflict might be, they were not to be alarmed, because the very fact that they were being attacked because of the gospel was proof that their opponents were headed for destruction. But it was also a sign of believers’ eternal salvation. Both signs are from God, the first to mark out His enemies, the second to mark out His children.⁶

This idea of suffering because one is a believer, implies some things about the Christian life.

We are expected to be saved (1:29a)

“For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him”

This section is the unifying factor of what has already been said, implied, and expected in this section. Namely, notice the intimate connection between salvation and sanctification because they are

*...for the Christian,
suffering is absolutely
necessary.*

⁶ MacArthur, 93.

closely related. However, they need to be distinguished because they are not the same.

The text implied these readers are already Christians, and it is obvious by the tone and topics we see throughout the book of Philippians. Faith is a gift from God (1:29a; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 1:12; Hebrews 12:2a; Acts 3:16; 2 Peter 1:1). Therefore, if anyone is saved, He is in the church because of God. He is in the church because God gave Him faith and added him to the body (Acts 2:41, 47). The gift of salvation, then, proceeds to a second gift that the Lord has “granted.”

We are expected to be sanctified

It is the clear teaching of Scripture that we are to continue growing spiritually after we have been saved by God. When we are saved, we do not need to know everything or even a lot, but that does not give us permission to stay where we were at. We do not need to neglect growth, to the detriment of experience and proper functioning (Hebrews 5:11-6:4).

The need for sanctification, becoming more holy and Christ-like, is evident when we consider what Paul is telling them to do! They cannot afford to be content where they started or even where they were at that moment. There must be progress! Paul answers the question about how that progress is made...

We are expected to suffer together (1:29b-30)

“For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake... also to suffer on His behalf, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me (1:27-30)”

Certainly, this gift is not as exciting as the first from the Lord, is it? But for the Christian, suffering is absolutely necessary. Much has been written on the place of suffering in the Christian life. Two brief points will be considered here.

First, there is the certainty of suffering. *“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”* (2 Timothy 3:12). A comforting promise, indeed (cf. Matthew 10:22, 24-25; Acts 9:15-16)! We are familiar with James’ statement about suffering that it was a matter of *when* instead of *if* (James 1:2-4). Suffering is certain for the Christian.

Second, we have comfort available to us while we are suffering. We follow our Lord Jesus Christ’s example (1 Peter 2:20). We are justified for suffering wrongly as Christians (1 Peter 4:12-19). We have a Savior who sympathizes with us (Hebrews

2:9-18). We are able to lay our burdens on Christ (Matthew 11:28-30). We have a guaranteed victory (Romans 5:1-5; 8:1-39).

Paul would write to the Philippians, later in the letter:

“But whatever things were gain to me, these things I have counted as loss because of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them mere rubbish, so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; if somehow I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (3:7-11).

This is the same exact attitude we need to have

CONCLUSION


This is what life in the church looks like. We need to be concerned about our mindset and our manner of living. These things contribute to a vibrant church filled with joy, as Paul constantly encouraged the Philippian Christians to be.

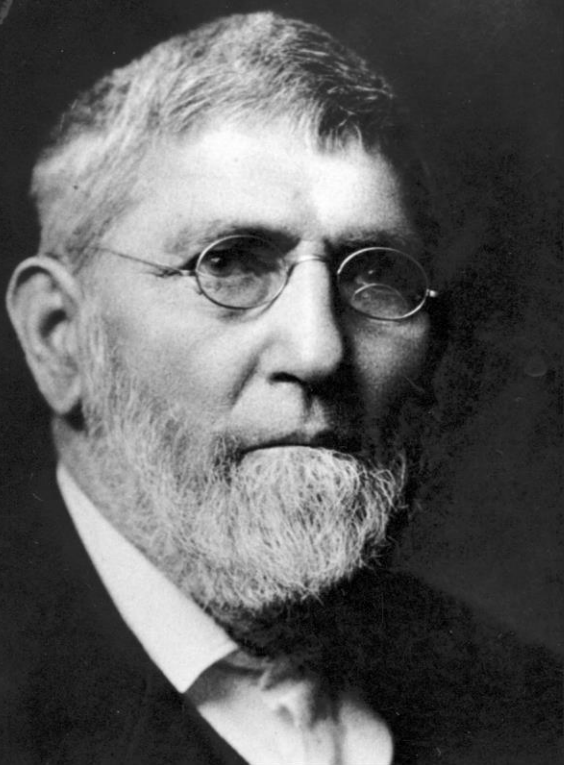
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RESTORATION MOVEMENT FIGURES:

David Lipscomb
DEFENDER OF THE FAITH

KYLE D. FRANK

David Lipscomb was an important leader of the second generation of the Restoration Movement. It was his steady hand and eye that were to guide the disciples and all who were seeking to do Bible things in Bible ways. When things got tough for southerners in post-civil-war Tennessee, it was his guidance which would see them through both political and spiritual storms.

Early Years

David Lipscomb was born on January 21, 1831, to Granville and Ann E. Lipscomb in Huntland, Tennessee. David's family line runs back to the Lipscomb family of Louisa County, Virginia. His ancestor, Thomas Lipscomb was a soldier of the Revolutionary War. He was given 2,666 acres of land when he was released from service on May 20, 1778. He had considerable legal troubles over this large acreage from various sources. He was blessed with many sons, through which Granville Lipscomb was to come forth.

The Lipscomb family, originally Baptist, were said to have converted to the Restoration Movement of Christianity in the mid-1820s while reading Alexander Campbell's periodical *The Christian Baptist*, copies of which had been sent to the Lipscomb family by an aunt. The Lipscombs were said to be charter members of the Old Salem Church which began in May 1834 with four white members (two males, two females), and five colored members. By Christmas that year, the number had grown to thirty-four whites and twelve blacks. The Lipscomb family moved to Illinois in 1834 for the purpose of free-

ing their slaves. David's mother Ann, along with three of his siblings, died of a fever in 1835 while they were still in Illinois. David's later belief that racial divisions in the church are inconsistent with Christianity was shaped by this experience. David Lipscomb's father, Granville, was slow of speech. Preaching was not in his future but he could do what he could do. He turned over copies of the *Christian Baptist* to John and Dabney, his favorite brothers. They read it and liked what they read. They turned over copies to other members of the Bean's Creek Baptist Church, where they had been attending. The idea of the Bible's all-sufficiency was a foreign concept that Bean's Creek was soon to dislike to the extent of expelling the Lipscomb family in total. So, in the year 1830, all three brothers and their families united with what was known as a "New Light" type congregation near to Owl Hollow in Franklin County.

William (Billy), David's older brother by seventeen months, was a quiet boy who suffered because of poor health. He suffered from asthma and bronchial troubles. Billy was fond of books, especially mathematics. It is said that by the time he was fifteen years old he could accurately survey any plot of ground in the community where the family resided. David, on the other hand, was of a very different character.

Opportunities for education were scarce. The simple rule was that boys would work in the fields and if the chance to attend classes in the local school happened, they happened. The boys worked in the fields with the colored servants.

Granville Lipscomb's was one of the few Christian families in the neighborhood. They viewed the Bible as the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice. Granville reasoned that if men could be taught the Bible, they would know the will of God. Following this line of thought, the world would be made better. His only ambition was that to see that his family knew the Bible and followed it in their daily lives.

Tolbert Fanning and Education

On January 21, 1844, David had his thirteenth birthday, and his father became concerned about his two sons' education. The schools in his area were inferior, so he looked afield for a good school. He sent his boys to Louisa County where his father was abiding. The grandfather's religious mindset was much deeper than his son, so the two boys returned home after a year's study with a greater understanding of the scriptures and their application to daily life. They had memorized much scripture and were far more familiar with the Bible than before their sojourn in their grandfather's home.

David Lipscomb had never met Tolbert Fanning before the school days began. Their father had deposited \$200 in the boy's account but made it very clear that it was each boy's responsibility to earn their education.

Franklin College (named after a great man of understanding and learning) was not a Bible College but the ethics of its proprietor, Tolbert Fanning, were known throughout the institution from top to bottom. On Sunday evenings Fanning rushed back from the day's preaching engagement. He always made appointments within riding distance of the school, so Sunday afternoons were a time of hurried travel. Wednesday evening's period of worship was entirely conducted by the students. Fanning felt if these young men were to be preachers, they must know how to conduct a worship service.

When Lipscomb arrived at Franklin College, he was just barely fifteen years of age and had not yet become a Christian. When he finally could ask for immersion, Fanning was quick to accomplish his safe translation from the thralldom of Satan to God's Holy Kingdom. Lipscomb was immersed in a horse's watering trough. He was just recovering from a case of severe typhoid fever and had learned enough of the truth to obey, no matter what the circumstances might be.

1846-1849 were four tough years of preparation for the trials and tribulations of a lifetime. Surely

had Lipscomb been able to see his future, he would have trained all the harder. In these four years, Lipscomb's life was deeply touched by the personality which was to impact his life further than anyone else: Tolbert Fanning.

The American Christian Missionary Society was created in Cincinnati. And the divisions within the United States were becoming too deep to heal by anything except war. When these broke upon Lipscomb, he was hardly prepared for them. But, the great lessons received by Lipscomb from Tolbert Fanning were to steer him right and he not only stood, but he was able to become a leader of southern Christians much the same as the great Benjamin Franklin in the states to the north of the Mason-Dixon Line.

What he was going to do to earn his keep, David was not quite sure. His brother William had gone into teaching at Franklin College. It was more William's disposition to settle down, but David was made of different stuff. He would wander a bit before he felt ready to settle down. He did feel ultimately he would follow in his father's tracks and find a piece of land to settle down and farm, but that was in the future. The six years after graduation were for David to vent his restless ways. Two were spent managing a large plantation in Georgia. He worked for the Nashville, Chattanooga, and St. Louis Railroad, cutting away the high ground so tracks could be laid. By the fall of 1851 he was a messenger from the Salem congregation to the Tennessee Cooperation Meeting held at Columbia.

During this time, David Lipscomb was experiencing his own serious trial. It had to do with placing his faith in another man. As things will go with relations between men, even brothers, bad things can happen. Such was the case of a man named Jesse B. Ferguson. Ferguson, through his adroit behavior, captured the hearts of brethren throughout Nashville. Included in this adoring throng was David Lipscomb. In spite of all that one can do, he will, if he is not careful, place too much faith in another man, whom he admires. It was a very difficult thing for the brethren of Nashville and especially Tolbert Fanning and David Lipscomb to experience when Ferguson went into spiritualism. Several whole churches had done so and the entire Nashville congregation was destroyed in his speculations. Lipscomb was disappointed and even off-balance. Had he become a member of the wrong

church? Was it all in vain? He did the right thing and dove into the Scriptures to find the right answer. This he did till he was thoroughly satisfied that he was in the right church but had erred by giving too much confidence in one man. He emerged from his study to find Tolbert Fanning in a similar condition to himself. Fanning bounced back and began discussions in which a new paper would emerge.

The Gospel Advocate

It was readily agreed among the brethren of Nashville that a new paper was needed. A primary goal of this was to offset any divergement ideas of spiritualism. It was important to get Fanning and William Lipscomb's views out to help brethren to see the gospel pattern as well as instances of cooperation meetings among the brotherhood. The Secondary goal was to discuss congregational cooperation and how should it be carried out among the churches.

The American Christian Missionary Society came into existence in 1849. Brethren opposed to ACMS rallied behind the *Advocate* to hold to the "old ways." These issues were discussed among the brethren up till the start of the Civil War. The paper was discontinued in 1861 during the heat of the War.

The Advocate Rises from the Ashes

The date on the top of the mast would read "The Gospel Advocate, January 1, 1866. Then Volume VIII and No. 1" The surprise was next "Editors, T. Fanning, and D. Lipscomb." Here is a "D" Lipscomb, and not "W." Lipscomb as it had been in the earlier incarnation of the journal. The south had been beaten and beaten badly. There was no order among the masses and even worse among the ones who followed Christ. This was a time for heroes. People were desperately in need of someone or something that they could rely upon. It is true that the church of Christ did not divide, but they were so close that it was basically in name only that they maintained unity. It was the same among the papers. The readers needed some reassurance that all would be well. It was at this particular junction of time that young David Lipscomb came on the scene. His tone of assurance calmed, even soothed those who only

saw death, darkness, and decay before them. In combination with the wonderful wisdom and guidance of Tolbert Fanning, much good was done. The two were a winning combination. Having read a good deal of the *Advocate* of '66, the calls for help and missing members were sought for. Aid was received from worried brethren from the north. Also, the financial condition of the paper was revealed to brethren and what they could do to carry on its work, like adding 1,000 new subscribers. That was in 1867. The paper appeared again in 1868, greatly enlarged, and changed in some details. Even though Lipscomb was not financially able to make this improvement, he went ahead upon the theory that brethren would support it if it were a better periodical. This year, Lipscomb assumed full responsibility for the editorship. The year before P.S. Fall had become a co-editor. Fanning also was a co-editor. A new feature of the paper was an "Alien's Department" edited by Dr. T.W. Brents, consisting of essays on fundamental Bible teaching, intending to instruct the non-Christian on how to become a Christian. These essays were later collected together into a tract called "*The Gospel Plan of Salvation*," which later became the book by the same title. The *Advocate* was to be found on the "conservative side" on most issues. Lipscomb's pen was very seldom silent when an issue was being discussed. When the missionary society issue was brewing, Lipscomb was deeply involved in dealing with those whom he felt were wrong and under the Lord's condemnation in the matter. There were some, like V.M. Metcalfe, who believed that Lipscomb was providentially the man provided for those critical days of the restoration movement when men were abandoning the appointments of God for human opinions. It took a courageous, intelligent man, and withal a charitable one to sweep back the tide of innovations then engulfing the church.

There was another controversy which were afflicting the people of God. This began in a small congregation in Midway, Kentucky in the year 1859. This controversy was the addition of instru-



Tolbert Fanning

mental music to the worship of the saints. Those who were “forward thinking,” or “progressive” looked around at what was happening in the denominations and felt that they were “behind the times.” Others that were involved on the conservative side were such men as J.W. McGarvey, Moses Lard and a host of others. These all felt that the battle line was very cut and dried. Actually, McGarvey was *in favor* of the societies but against the instrument. Go figure. Men such as J.D. Tant and fellow Texans fought against these additions like the men in Virginia and Missouri. The battle lines were stretched all over the young and growing nation. Lipscomb and others held the line of battle until death overtook them. Their faithfulness was easy to be seen and hard to be copied. Although the battle was to go on for many years, the fight culminated in the Otey-Briny debate that occurred in November of 1908. Both sides claimed victory but the forward motion of the progressives slowed to a stand-still. David Lipscomb would be among the leadership of that spiritual army.

As a Preacher

David Lipscomb struggled as a preacher in his early days. On one instance he completely forgot his sermon and had to ask someone else to do the preaching. He did not allow himself to be afraid and was soon preaching regularly though. Glimpses of his labors can be seen through the pages of the *Gospel Advocate*. On another occasion he was looking to find a preacher and it ended up being himself. Once he began preaching, no one could stop him. He began in 1857 around McMinnville, Tennessee. He later wrote “I have not been able to throw off a feeling of embarrassment when I get up to speak to an audience. It was distressing when I began to work, and I always suffered from apprehension and dread as the time to speak approached.” One time he was speaking at a meeting and only 3 women came. He preached to them and asked them to bring others back the next time and he would speak again. By such humble means the church grew up in Middle Tennessee over the years. By 1861 Lipscomb had “come on station”...and then came the war.



Young David Lipscomb

As a Writer

The thing which Lipscomb was known for and his greatest work was by far his ability to write. He was the editor of the *Gospel Advocate* from the time of its rebirth in 1866. There he was able to make known his thoughts and wishes. The time that he was at the greatest power was in the days of Reconstruction. This was when his forceful pen was of greatest help to the needy saints of Middle Tennessee. Also, his pen was a great call for the churches in those dark days. He worked tirelessly to raise funds for the needy. In those days nearly everyone was in desperate need and Lipscomb’s pen made the difference for some between starving and not.

Another use of his pen was in the Society and instrumental music conflict. The *Advocate* was always in the front of any confrontation. It also had a reliable corps of writers. In the early days of the conflict the *Advocate* was the only paper in the South land that could give reply to those who were troubling Israel through out the lands through other papers.

The Nashville Bible School

On June 17, 1891 an announcement was made regarding the start of a new work in the Nashville area: The Nashville Bible School was to be beginning shortly. One wrote “I hail with such joy the proposition to have in Nashville a Bible School for the purpose of teaching Christians.” The school opened on Monday October 5, 1891. This work was Lipscomb working with James A. Harding. Tuition was free. Help was given to students in finding a place to live. In the first year the school had thirty-two young men. There was also a storm of criticism from brethren about “yet another school” when there were so many already. The teachers were William and David Lipscomb and Harding. Classes were in English, Latin, Greek, mathematics, logic, metaphysics, and natural science “and whatever in general would make one useful in living an earnest, faithful life” The first year ended on May 26, 1892. Lipscomb taught a class on Old and New Testament history. This he would do each year for many years. At a slightly later date they would have guest teachers like Dr. T.W. Brents and others who would teach the same class each year. With such help the school

would prosper over the years. It would change to David Lipscomb College and is now called Lipscomb University.

Busy Days

The years passed and David Lipscomb was a very busy man. He was very busy in his daily activities and time passed like a blur. Early in 1873 he attended the debate between Elder T.W. Brents and Jacob Ditzler at Fayetteville and again at Franklin. The idea of congregational cooperation kept coming to the forefront, and the trouble associated with societies accompanied it. When the societies were struggling to come into existence, strife was so widespread that it affected the works of the various local congregations. The *Gospel Advocate* weathered the storms of the day and soon received the nickname of “Old Reliable.”

Tolbert Fanning had been grievously wounded and was not expected to survive. This occurred on May 3, 1874. Lipscomb’s mentor and partner was gone.

There was a good-sized cooperation that occurred on November 10, 1874. It was attended by around 80 brethren. Joseph Franklin, T.W. Brents and many others were there to discuss scripture, to worship and pray together. Though not mentioned, surely the instrumental music and society issues were discussed as well. Strangely, Lipscomb actually was in opposition to the brethren acting like delegates and not “messengers” reporting the labors, trials, and tribulations of each congregation. This surely was because of the “society” trouble. Lipscomb was accompanied by brethren like Brents, Metcalf and Moses E. Lard who had finished a local meeting and stopped on his way back through the area.

A part of that September had Lipscomb down with “ague and fever.” The last part of the year he was down, threatened by an attack of hemorrhage of the lungs. But despite his threatened health, he continued his work. This would prove to be a pattern for him. He would labor at gospel meetings as well as maintaining his presence through the pages of the *Gospel Advocate*.

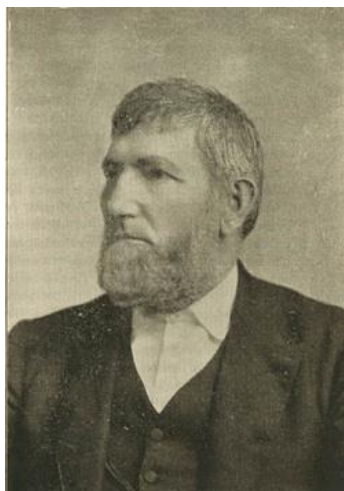
The New Century Dawns

On January 21, 1901 Lipscomb celebrated his

seventieth birthday. His desire was to close up all of his business affairs, recede from public life and allow others to take the lead. He sought to have a peaceful retirement but such was not to be the case. He had battled the societies and instrumental music for over 35 years and that battle would not go away easily. A part of the conflict would begin when the progressives sought to take possession of church buildings, kicking the conservatives out in the cold—literally. Often, a long and extended court battle occurred.

The Sun Sets

On January 21, 1906, Lipscomb celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday. His preaching activities were of necessity close to home. He still taught his two classes at The Nashville Bible School each school day and would head straight for home afterward. He also continued to write for the *Advocate*. It had been



restructured into the McQuiddy Printing Company and Lipscomb and Sewell maintained a financial interest in it, though he need not appear there every day to exercise control. In 1912 Lipscomb and Sewell sold their share of the company to other like-minded brethren. He attended functions at the school, though did not teach any longer.

Visitors often dropped by the Lipscombs at their comfy retirement home. David and “Aunt Mag” cared deeply for one another. Early in 1917 he continued his decline. On November 5, he suffered yet another stroke. On the following Sunday, at ten minutes till eleven his breathing promptly stopped. The Funeral services were conducted at the South College Street Church building the following day at 3:30. Brethren came from far and wide to attend this simple funeral service. His body was buried beside his brother William.

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About the AUTHORS

Tom Baxley lives in Centre, Alabama, attempts CrossFit, works at Wal-Mart, and preaches. He also really enjoys second breakfast!

Jamie Beller loves controversy. After all, Jesus is the most controversial figure in human history. He preaches in Oklahoma, and desires to make passive Christians very uncomfortable.

Alexander Campbell wrote a lot of articles in his day, most of them in defense of restoring biblical Christianity. He despised the use of denominational names and creeds, and would be scandalized at the so-called “scholars” who name the effort to restore biblical Christianity after him (“Stone-Campbell Movement”). He has been dead for over 150 years.

Gantt Carter in addition to preaching and writing, teaches people how to safely propel a piece of metal at a target.

Paul Logan Cobb is a wannabe electrician who tried a 9v lighter and failed. He enjoys trying to make 30-40 year old hardware do new things. He also uses mice as sermon illustrations. He loves encouraging his fellow Christian brethren and putting smiles on their faces.

Gerald Cowan. After more than six decades of

preaching, teaching, and random writing while still learning what it means to offer oneself in service to God in Christ, allowing the Lord himself to direct and provide and trying to avoid judging or envying the service and achievements of others – hoping there's a bit more time to do something worthy of the name of Christ and his gospel cause.

Danny E. Davis is a dedicated evangelist, even during lockdowns. He is the author of *True Worship: Knowing God by Developing a Closer Relationship with Him*. He lives outside of DC, and can be emailed at EarnestlyPursuingGod@gmail.com

Raymond Elliot and his precious wife, Virginia, are both 86 years old and have been married 66 years. He says: “We are thankful for God’s grace and providence in our lives. We attended Alabama Christian College in Montgomery, AL. I began ‘full-time’ work in 1958 with various churches of Christ, mainly in central and southeast Alabama with the exception of two years in Savannah, GA. We now live in Prattville, AL where I preached nearly seventeen years. I have been blessed by congregations since I left ‘full time’ work in 2004 by using me to preach part time and fill in work. I am semi-retired but I teach Bible classes in Guyana, SA over Skype and Zoom. I write articles that are sent to individuals

and congregations. Due to health, I no longer preach, do teach Bible class occasionally. I serve on the Board of Regents of Amridge University (formerly Southern Christian University) in Montgomery, AL. I must confess that I was an addict, that is, to deer and turkey hunting for 42 years! In closing, I leave you with this bit of philosophy: Remember that wherever you go, there you are.”

Kyle Frank spends his days reading, writing, texting, praying, singing, and helping others (especially the editor of this magazine). In addition to being a Civil War expert, he also offers digitization services at very reasonable prices. Contact him for more information (KyleDFrank@gmail.com).

Chris Gardner is a graduate of the Bible Institute of Missouri, a St. Louis Cardinals fan, a preacher in the colder part of the country, a husband to Melissa, and father to four little Gardners.

Zachary Hall was born and raised in Mid-Missouri. He was baptized into Christ in 1998. He married Sarah in 2017, and they have three kids. Vaneza, Kylie, and Leah. He is a 2018 graduate of the Bible Institute of Missouri. He is involved in the work of BibleWayMedia hosting the “What Does the Bible Say Podcast.” He also teaches with the Online Academy of Biblical Studies in both the fall and spring semesters. Zac labors with the Park Street church of Christ in Olathe, Ks.

Bill Howard is a former elder, preacher, and restaurateur who spends his “retired” time writing detective novels and study books for new Christians, as well as encouraging others.

William Howard is not related to Bill Howard (except through Christ). He rides motorcycles and excels at speaking with a Scottish accent. But his greatest joy is preaching the gospel.

Earl Kimbrough has preached for over 60 years, and has written several books on Restoration Movement personalities (including F.B. Srygley). He wrote for and helped edit *The Alabama Restoration Journal* for its 15-year existence.

John Krivak is a constant student of the Bible and church history, especially the Restoration Movement and Alexander Campbell. He studied Bible and Biblical Languages at Harding University. He can be contacted at jkrivak@zoominternet.net.

Jim Mitchell preaches in Oklahoma City, and

teaches Christians to evangelize using the Open Bible Study method, by Ivan Stewart. If you are interested in learning more about this training, contact him at JamesPMotiv8r@yahoo.com.

Mitch Robison preaches the gospel and does what he can to help those in need. He is the author of two books of sermons (*Every Man Needs Jesus Christ*, which came out last month, and *A God Who Rejoices*, from 2019) as well as a teaching study called *Genesis: Origin of God’s Chosen Nation*.

Jake Schotter loves studying the Bible, reading books, preaching (since 2009), and writing about the Truth. He feels fortunate to have a library of over 2,500 books (and loves getting them cheap). He is a Bible major at Freed-Hardeman University.

Matthew Shaffer lives in Brazil, Indiana. He has been married to Japonica for the last year and a half. He studied German and Classical Greek at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana.

Andy Sochor is the owner of Gospel Armory Publishing (GospelArmory.com), the host of the Plain Bible Teaching podcast, a Christian, husband, father, and a preacher.

Tommy Thornhill, by the time you read this, will have retired from full-time preaching work, and will be moving to work with his son-in-law at a congregation in the vicinity of Little Rock, AR.

Johnny O. Trail preaches for the Hillcrest church of Christ in Springfield, Tenn. He has preached the gospel for over 32 years. He and his wife, Jada, have been married for almost 25, and they have three sons Matthew (22), Nathan (20), and Noah (14). He has a B.S. in Political Science from MTSU, a Master of Ministry degree from Freed-Hardeman, and a Master of Divinity from Lipscomb. He completed his Doctorate in Marriage and Family Therapy from Amridge University in 2011. He is a state licensed marriage and family therapist with offices in Murfreesboro (at the Walter Hill church of Christ) and Springfield. He is an instructor at the Nashville School of Preaching and Biblical Studies.

Bradley S. Cobb is proud of his family of radio sponsor actors and jingle singers. He is perfecting his old-man hobble (several decades ahead of time), and is hurriedly trying to get this issue of *The Quarterly* finished before the month ends. And he just realized he is out of space for his bio...