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The Quarterly

(Vol. 6, No. 4)

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Volume 1

BY
A. CRIHFIELD.

VOL. I.

NUMBER I.

FOR JANUARY, FEBRUARY AND MARCH,
1837.

"Is Christ Divided?"—PAUL.

MIDDLEBURGH, O. :

ARTHUR CRIHFIELD, PRINTER.

Edited by

ARTHUR CRIHFIELD

The (in)famous Restoration Movement Journal is now available in a new, enlarged and reformatted edition.

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Published Quarterly:
January, April, July, October

Cobb Publishing
704 E. Main St.
Charleston, AR 72933
(479) 747-8372
CobbPublishing.com
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Subscription Rates:
Annual Print: \$19.99
Bundles of 10 or more receive
a 20% discount!
Digital Subscription: FREE!

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The Quarterly

VOLUME 6 – NUMBER 4 – OCTOBER 2022

HAVE WE FOUND THE ANSWER?

In our previous issue, we asked, after the passing of two dedicated Christian preachers, “Who’s Gonna Fill Their Shoes?” I am quite pleased that we have some young men who have stepped up and prepared articles for this issue, showing there are some willing to take up the banner of Christ and proclaim it. I am proud of each one of them.

Brooks Richardson (age 15) writes about taking on giants in our lives. Daniel Cozort (age 16) gives us lessons learned when Dagon faced God. Caleb Lehman (age 20) shares some reflections from his visit to the beaches of Normandy.

In addition, we are proud to have Roy Knight on board as a new writer for us. He is a great friend, and I highly recommend his latest devotional book, *There is a River (Volume 2)*. Blane Anderson (also a new writer) shares an evangelistic opportunity for those who are more comfortable talking with people online instead of in-person. Kevin Micuch (also a new contributor) writes on the importance of unity.

Space forbids me from going into much detail here on the new series about *Restoration Reprobates*, or Gerald Cowan’s encouragement to become a grave robber, or Charles Rose’s excellent treatment on why we worship on Sunday instead of the Sabbath, or any of the other great articles that you can see listed by simply turning the page...

With this issue, we close our sixth year of publication. It seems like only a short while since we produced the “Preview Edition” back in 2016. Since then, the size has increased, the layout has improved (at least, that’s what the readers who commented on it said), and we continue to get more brethren involved in writing to encourage, educate, and edify (and bring enjoyment to) Christians across the world.

We have more great things planned for 2023, so make sure to stay subscribed (the digital edition is free CobbPublishing.com/Quarterly).

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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DON'T MISS THE MUST (AGAIN)

An Editorial by Bradley S. Cobb

In a previous editorial,¹ we discussed the importance of the word “must” in the Bible, and showed some examples of its use. When God inspires his writers to use the word “must,” He is pointing out something that is an absolute requirement.

- Anyone who claimed to be a part of the covenant God made with Abraham, and wasn’t circumcised, was lying.
- Anyone who claimed to be celebrating the feast of the Passover and of Unleavened Bread, without eating unleavened bread for seven days, was lying.
- If Jesus, claiming to be the Messiah, didn’t go to Jerusalem, suffer, die, and rise from the dead, He was lying, and wasn’t really the Messiah.
- If someone claims to be saved without having been born again through baptism, that person is misled at best, and lying at worst.
- In short, you can *claim* something all you want, but if you don’t meet the “must” that God has given, then your claim is false.

Before we get into some other places where God inspired the writers or speakers to use the word “must,” I want to give you a definition of the word. The Greek word is *dei*, and according to Thayer, it means:

- 1) it is necessary, there is need of...
 - 1a) necessity lying in the nature of the case
 - 1b) necessity brought on by circumstances or by the conduct of others toward us.
 - 1c) necessity in reference to what is required to attain some end
 - 1d) a necessity of law and command, of duty, equity
 - 1e) necessity established by the counsel and decree of God, especially by that purpose of his which relates to the salvation of men by the intervention of Christ and which is disclosed in the Old Testament prophecies

With this acknowledged expert’s definition in front of us, let us continue to look at the “musts” that God sets forth in His word.

Signs Before Jerusalem’s Destruction

When discussing the impending destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, and trying to help His disciples understand when it would happen, Jesus used the word “must.” Take a look at what He said in Matthew 24:4-8:

Take heed that no man deceive you, because many shall come in my name, saying “I am Christ,” and shall deceive many. And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled,

¹ *The Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 2, April 2022.

*because all these things **must come to pass**, but the end is not yet. Because nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

He said that these things would happen, but that **the end is not yet**. That is, these things would take place *before* the end of Jerusalem. Jesus gave other signs which would take place in the verses following, but I want you to realize that Jesus said the false Messiahs, the deceivers, the wars and rumors of wars **must** take place before Jerusalem was destroyed. If any of these things did not take place, then Jesus was a false prophet. He didn't say they **might** take place, but that they **must** take place. Looking at it from a slightly different angle, Jesus is also saying that until those things took place, it was **impossible** for Jerusalem to fall.

I want you to put this chapter in context, and look over at what Jesus said in verse 34 – “Verily [truly] I say to you, this generation shall not pass until **all these things** be fulfilled.” There are those in the denominational world who try to use the “wars and rumors of wars” statement of Jesus and make false claims that it somehow is speaking about things today (ala Russia and Ukraine), and that the return of Christ is imminent. In doing this, they ignore the context and words of Jesus. The “wars and rumors of wars” Jesus referenced would take place before Jerusalem was destroyed—and it would take place within a single generation—40 years. And Jesus said that it **must** take place.

And according to all the true historians who have written about Jerusalem's destruction, these things did indeed take place just as Jesus said they would. Jesus said it **must** happen, and it did! That's what happens when God uses the word **must**.

The Spread of the Gospel

In this same discussion, Jesus used the word “must” again. If we look at Mark's account, we can see it. Mark 13:5-10.

*Take heed lest any man deceive you, because many will come in my name, saying “I am Christ,” and shall deceive many. And when you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled, for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in various places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows. But take heed to yourselves, for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues you shall be beaten: and you shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel **must first be published [literally, preached] among all nations.***

Remember the context in which this is stated: Jesus is giving an answer to the question about when the temple would be destroyed (Mark 9:1-4), and said “this generation shall not pass until all these things be done” (Mark 9:30). So when Jesus says that the gospel **must first be preached among all nations**, he is placing it prior to Jerusalem's destruction—within 40 years. If this did not take place, then Jesus was a false prophet, and we cannot be saved through Him. Our religious neighbors have been known to deny that this ever took place. Some writers even use this statement of Jesus as supposed “proof” that this *isn't* talking about the destruction of Jerusalem at all—they say that the gospel wasn't preached in all nations in the first century. But what does the Bible say?

*And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of **every nation under heaven**. Now when this [the apostles speaking in tongues] was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed, and marveled, saying to one another, “Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how do*

we hear, every man, in our own tongue, wherein we were born? ... [W]e do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.” (Acts 2:5-8, 11).

This is where Jesus’ prophecy of what **must** happen began to be fulfilled. It was published (proclaimed) in Jerusalem, and it was proclaimed to men from every nation under heaven. But is there more evidence from the Bible? Yes there is. Turn to Colossians 1:5-6.

*For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof you heard before in the word of the **truth of the gospel; which is come to you, as it is in all the world**, and brings forth fruit, as it does also in you, since they day you heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.*

The apostle Paul said that the truth of the gospel had spread to “all the world,” and was bringing forth fruit. But he adds in verse 23:

*If you continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which you have heard, **and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven**; whereof I Paul am made a minister.*

This was within about 30-33 years of Jesus’ statement. Jesus said that within a generation, the gospel **must** be published (preached) among all the nations; and it happened, just as Jesus said it would. When God says **must**, He means **must**—this is something that our denominational friends would do well to remember.

Jesus’ Business is the Father’s Business

When Jesus was just a boy of twelve, His family went to Jerusalem for the Passover. As you probably remember, after the feast was over, they headed back towards Galilee, and after traveling for a day, they realized Jesus wasn’t with them anymore. So they went back to Jerusalem (probably rather frantic), and searched for Him for three days. When they finally found Him, He was in the temple, sitting in the middle of the teachers of the Law, listening to them and asking them questions. Amazed, Mary said to Him, “Son, why have you dealt this way with us? Behold, your father and I have sought you, sorrowing.” Jesus’ response to her is what I want you to focus on for a few moments:

*How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I **must be about my Father’s business**? (Luke 2:49)*

Jesus seems quite surprised that they were looking all over the place for Him. He asked His mother, “Didn’t you know...?” She and Joseph knew better than perhaps anyone else then on earth who Jesus was and the importance He had in God’s plan. Jesus told her “I **must** be about my Father’s business.” Jesus knew He had a mission, and that mission was to do the Father’s will. As such, He was learning more about the will of the Father, asking questions about the Law, and being about His Father’s business. If Jesus wasn’t about His Father’s business, then He wouldn’t have been preparing Himself and fulfilling His mission.

Jesus expected that it would be obvious what He would be doing, because He put the Father’s will first. If we are to be Christ-like (which is what “Christian” means), we should be able to say the same kind of thing. Obviously, our mission is not the same as Jesus’ mission (we aren’t to perform miracles, fulfill prophecy, and die on the cross), but we have been given a mission from God to live right, worship right, and spread the gospel to others. When the church gathers together, it should be obvious to all who know us where we will be—we must be about our Father’s business (or as some translations say, “in My Father’s house”). Each day that goes by, we must be about our Father’s business. We must be reading His word, learning from it what He expects of us and what our responsibilities are. We must be praying to Him, seeking His forgiveness for our sins while building our relationship with our loving Father in heaven. We must be looking for opportunities to serve Him and to serve others.

Connected with being about the Father's business, consider what Jesus said in Luke 4:42-44:

*And when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the people sought Him, and came to Him, and stayed Him that He should not depart from them. And He said to them, "I **must** preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent." And He preached in the synagogues of Galilee.*

One of the missions Jesus was given, when He was sent to this earth by the Father, was to preach the kingdom—and not just to one city! He was to spread this gospel message far and wide. If Jesus didn't do this preaching, He would have been—by His own admission—violating the will of God. It was **required** of Him that He preach, and preach it to more than just that one group of people.

Brethren, if we are to be Christians, those who are like Jesus Christ, then we need to take seriously our responsibility to take the gospel to other people. We can do that through one-on-one Bible studies, through handing out tracts, through email, through social media, through correspondence courses, or several other avenues. But we still have the responsibility to do it! If no one is ever converted by our efforts, then that is sad, but it is on them for rejecting the gospel (see the example of Noah). If no one is ever converted by you because you don't bother trying, then that is on you, and you will have to answer for that in judgment.

Conclusion

As we discussed in a previous editorial, Jesus said quite plainly, "Ye **must** be born again" (John 3:7). There is no other way to salvation outside of Jesus Christ and His plan of salvation (Acts 4:12). Since you know this to be true, why have you not obeyed it? Why do you wait?

WOULD YOU LIKE TO WRITE FOR THE QUARTERLY?

Our guidelines are as follows:

1. You must be a member of the church of Christ. The only exception is if you are writing to debate a matter of doctrine or biblical interpretation. In these cases, and at our discretion, a response from one of our regular writers will appear with it.
2. Articles must deal with topics of the Bible, Christianity, Christian living, doctrine, church history, or anything that is connected to those topics.
3. The article should be between 1.5 and 6 pages, 12-pt font, single-spaced.
4. Footnotes are welcome, if you quote someone or want to add additional information.
5. Bible translation is up to you, just try to note which version you're using at the end of the first quote.
6. Deadline for the next issue is December 30th, 2022.
7. You must include a brief, one-paragraph biography for inclusion in the "about the authors" section. Otherwise, the editor reserves the right to make something up. (Now everyone is wondering which, if any, of the bios are real...)

If you have any questions, feel free to email the Editor at Editor@CobbPublishing.com



Manifold Wisdom of God

Andy Robison

The comprehension of Ephesians 3:10 ushers the Bible student into the realm of the sublime. That “the manifold (much-varied) wisdom of God” is “made known by the church” is a sweeping claim that stimulates much study.¹ To whom it is made known—“the principalities and powers in the heavenly places” is a subject leaving the learner in awe.

Aiming to determine the meaning of “principalities and powers” from its various contexts is instructive. In Romans 8:38-39, it follows a mention of angels. Ephesians 6:12 has it in conjunction with the unseen realm against which Christians “wrestle,” that is, “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Colossians 1:16 places the descriptive phrase alongside other creations of Deity, “visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.” It seems there to have some connection with the governments God authored. Indeed,

¹ All Bible quotations in this article are from the New King James Version.

when Christ took the old law out of the way, doing away with Mosaic Judaism, He “disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” (Colossians 2:14-15). One wonders about scenes in Daniel’s apocalyptic figures wherein a heavenly being was withstood by “the prince of the kingdom of Persia,” only to be rescued by “Michael, one of the chief princes,” who stood watch over the sons of Daniel’s people (Daniel 10:12-13, 20-21; 12:1). Was there an unseen war behind the visible, physical confrontations on earth, as God adjusted empires’ power to suit His controlling wishes (Daniel 4:17)? And do “principalities and powers” still operate behind the scenes in the spiritual warfare of Christians against “hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12)?

The phrase “heavenly places” augments the understanding of principalities and powers. Its contextual use mitigates against viewing it as the dwelling place of God, even though it is said to be the place to which Christ was raised and seated, obtaining a triumphant position “far above all principality and

power and might and dominion” (Eph. 1:21). Those obedient to the gospel, saved by grace, were “made...alive together with Christ...and raised...up together...to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:5-6). Indeed, this is the place of all spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:3). If “heavenly places” designates only the realm wherein God dwells on His throne with Christ at His right hand, then how are Christians presently in the same location? These “heavenly places,” therefore, seem to indicate some unseen realm in which the “spiritual hosts of wickedness” (Eph. 6:12), along with any evil principalities and powers, are overcome by the victory that is Christ’s.

Wonder is even more inspired with these backgrounds in mind. If the many facets of God’s wisdom are made known to the unseen forces battling for the hearts of men in this world, how is this manifested in the realm in which men can see? And how is all this accomplished by the church? Many books, much less a brief article, could not exhaust the studied speculations on this subject. Nevertheless, here are some considerations from context.

How is the manifold wisdom of God made known by the church?

Through the Impartiality of It

The consummate Jew of apostolic times would have harbored a great animosity toward Gentiles—those of a foreign race. They were viewed as inferior in that they were not specifically chosen to be God’s people. Yet, the zealous Israelite of Tarsus, the persecutor of Christians, became a preacher of the Gospel who counted it a given grace that he could “preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8; cf. Gal. 2:8). Racial barriers were broken down through the Christ, who came as a blessing to all nations (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8). He “has broken down the middle wall of partition” (Eph. 2:14). From the two (Jew and Gentile), Christ provided reconciliation into one body, the church (Eph. 2:15-16; 1:22-23). In this body, there was to be no partiality (Rom. 2:11; Acts 10:34-35), but peace (Eph. 2:17-18). There was no longer a

race of God’s people and a race of “others” (Gal. 3:28). The prophecies of “all nations” flowing into the house of God (Isaiah 2:1-4; Micah 4:1ff.) had been fulfilled. Open access to God was provided to anyone from anywhere, through the gospel, in the church.

At least that is the design of God in the church. The charge that men in the church have corrupted this design serves as tragic testimony to the strength of racial division throughout the timeline of all humanity. Somewhere in the world, every generation faces those powerful, self-deemed superiors who aim at some sort of “ethnic cleansing.” Legislation provides some civil rights, but hearts of men still harbor hateful animosity. Even churches of Christ in the United States were often slow to learn the necessity of integration to counter their culture’s views, rather than mirror them. But in design the church that God purposed is the perfect means of uniting the races. He planned it to be for all nations and carried it out that way. Where brethren respect God’s plan, amazed observers marvel at the manifold wisdom of God. Jesus taught that dedication to Him supersedes allegiance to even one’s own immediate family (Mark 3:31-35). How much more, then, must it surpass distant bloodlines, genealogies, and national ties.

Through the Transforming Power of It

Some will counter that such a transformation of ideologies is out of the reach of the common preacher of righteousness, and they will be correct, for the real transforming power lies in the word of God by which the church is made known (Ephesians outlines how the Father planned the church, Christ carried out the plan, and the Holy Spirit made it known [Eph. 3:1-11]). The word of God, the gospel that makes Christians, bears the real power (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12). It made Saul, the Christian-hater, into a defender of Christianity (Acts 9:26-28; 26:9-11; 1 Cor. 15:9-10). It made Peter, the Jew wishing no contact with Gentiles (who even fell back into that error later, Gal. 2:11-14), into one who preached the gospel message to them (Acts 10-11).

It turns people from darkness to light (Col. 1:13; Eph. 1:18; Matt. 5:14; 1 Thess. 5:1-8). The church gives purpose to the previously wandering, abject soul (Eph. 2:1-5). The church provides confidence for the hopeless (Eph. 2:11-13).

May the present day-church never forget the power of the Lord in washing, sanctifying, and justifying those who previously were wretches almost beyond description (1 Cor. 6:9-11). For all once so walked in the depravity of sin (Eph. 2:1-3).

Through the Eternal Nature of It.

The most immediate meaning of the expression of the manifold wisdom of God in the church, in the framework of Ephesians, is the eternal nature of it. In the two verses preceding this article's text, Paul rejoiced in the grace of preaching "among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ," which he described as making "all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:8-9). That mystery, Scripture shows, is the ultimate plan of God throughout all history to save His people from their sins.

Just consider, that mystery was "hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory" (1 Cor. 2:7). He planned this plan of salvation "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). Just read the history of God's dealings with mankind from Genesis on. Marvel at the genealogical accuracy, recording, every step of the way, the progression to the Christ, to prove His entrance into humanity's realm was no accident, but perfectly wrought, and that, according to the abundant prophetic predictions of the Messiah. Note the divine interventions that preserved God's people from crises that might have meant their premature destruction. If they had been destroyed, as, for instance, Haman planned in Esther's time, there would have been no blessing for all nations through Abraham's seed. But the providence of God acted. On other occasions, the miraculous was employed (Exodus 1-12). God worked everything so that by the time Christ trod the earth,

"in the dispensation of the fullness of times" (i.e., at just the right time) (Eph. 1:10; Gal. 4:4), He could "utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13:34-35) and fulfill His foreordained mission as the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8; cf. 1 Peter 1:20). This was God's purpose from all eternity (Eph. 3:11). So much for the misguided theories that purport Christ didn't mean to die and the church was an after-thought in God's mind.

The Godhead's work in the establishment of the church of Christ is beautifully summarized in Paul's conclusion to the Romans (16:25-27):

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

When God planned this church from before time, carried out its establishment in the gospel of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and revealed it through the predicting Scriptures of the Old Testament and the fulfilling record of the New, He laid a devastating blow to all the forces of the devil (cf. Gen. 3:15), and taught, impeccably and undeniably, the many facets of His wisdom to all the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. Praise be for the manifold wisdom of God made known by the church.

To hear the song, *Manifold Wisdom of God*, to print a copy, or to access the PowerPoint slides (all for free), use this link:

<https://www.churchofchristsongs.com/content/manifold-wisdom-god-andy-robison>

Manifold Wisdom of God

Andy Robison

A.R.; Based on Eph. 3:10

Man - i - fold wis - dom of God.

Man - i - fold wis - dom of God.

Man - i - fold wis - dom of God.

Man - i - fold wis - dom of God.

The Lord has made known by His

God.

Man - i - fold wis - dom of God.

The

church the wis - dom of God. He has made known by the

won - der - ful wis - dom of God.

church to all of the world - ly pow - ers He has made

known by the church, the pur - pose He's worked through His

Son. He has made known through the Spir - it His

plan from be - fore the a - ges And through the

church all men shall know the wis - dom of God.

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FAITH A Giant Killer

Brooks Richardson



Recently I was studying David and Goliath from a different perspective for a lesson I gave at an annual homeschool retreat. This article was born out of that lesson. We will be looking at the faith of David and how he used it to slay a giant, then compare that with our faith and how we can slay the giants in our lives.¹

The Faith of David

Let's begin by reading 1 Samuel 17:36-37.

"Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God." Moreover David said, "The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

Here we see the great faith David has in God, and we see this through his words, and later on through his actions. Now let's read verses 46-47.

"This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for

the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands."

Here David's faith in God is shown in front of the entire armies of Israel and Philistia. Now we'll read verses 48-50.

So it was, when the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, that David hurried and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. Then David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone; and he slung it and struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the earth. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. But there was no sword in the hand of David.

David's faith is truly confirmed here. David might have feared the giant but he had faith God would deliver him; but why did David have this great faith? Why did he have the courage to fight Goliath? One thing to think about was how he was raised. Was he taught growing up about the faithfulness of God to the people who followed him? In 1 Samuel 16, we learn that David was well-educated, a skillful musician, and that the Lord was with him. We know his father would have had a lot of trust in him to leave him alone with their flock. This kind of trust doesn't just happen on its own; it takes dedication and hard work from their parents when it comes to discipline and educating, and we know from evidence that David's family lived a God-filled life.

We can also look at the times in David's life

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version.

when God had already delivered him from danger. In 1 Samuel 17:34-36, David tells Saul he has killed a lion and a bear, and that Goliath will become as one of them. In verse 37, David says,

“The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.”

David knew that he would be delivered because God had already done it before.

How to Conquer the Giants of Our Lives

First, we have to understand we can't do it by ourselves—we need God's help. Now I know we've already read this verse, but I'd like to note it again. Chapter 17:45 says,

Then David said to the Philistine, “you come to me with a spear and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.”

Here we see David coming to meet Goliath, but notice what he says: “I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts.” This is yet another example that to defeat our giants we must have faith in the Lord. Philippians 4:13 says:

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Now unlike when David fought Goliath, we must use the mighty weapons of the Lord. Second Corinthians 10:4-5 says:

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

We must use the whole armor of God to conquer the spiritual giants in our lives (Ephesians 6:13-17). Of course we must trust in the Lord; Psalm 5:11 states:

But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever shout for joy, because

You defend them; let those also who love Your name rejoice in You.

Finally, point number three,

The Rewards of Conquering Our Giants

In verse 25 we see David asking around about the rewards one will receive if he defeats the giant Philistine. Those things were great riches, the king's daughter in marriage, and tax exemption for his father's house. While these may not be the rewards today for defeating our giants, there are other rewards, better rewards, and I would like to point out some to you.

We will get a new name. Revelation 2:17 says:

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.

We will get authority (Revelation 2:26).

And he who overcomes, and keeps my word until the end, to him I will give power over the nations.

Robes of Righteousness (Revelation 3:5).

He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and His angels.

Enthronement (Revelation 3:21).

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Finally, we will get an eternal inheritance (Revelation 21:7).

He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

In conclusion, I'd like to leave you with these words: David didn't need to know *Goliath's* strength because he already knew *God's* strength. Nothing you are facing today is stronger than God.

GOD

VS. DAGON



Daniel Cozort

Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. When the Philistines took the ark, they brought it into the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon. And when the people of Ashdod arose early in the morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and set it in its place again. And when they arose early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. The head of Dagon and both of the palms of its hands were broken off on the threshold; only Dagon's torso was left of it. Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor any who come into Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

(Samuel 5:1-5)

What was Dagon?

Our study is God vs Dagon, and I want to start by giving some background to the text.

In chapter 4 the Israelites go out to fight the Philistines, and on this particular occasion they get defeated. They don't understand why God let them lose. So, instead of asking God what they should do, they decide to go get the Ark of the Covenant, bring it with them to battle so they can, in their minds,

bring God with them. As if they could decide where God would be anyway. But they do this and they go out to fight against the Philistines again—but instead of winning like they expect, even though they have the Ark, they get defeated again. This time, because they brought the Ark, the Philistines captured it as well. They took it and put it in the house, or temple, of Dagon.

Who or what was Dagon? Dagon was one of the main idols of the Philistines, he was their god of the fish. The idol they had built as Dagon had the torso and head of a man, and the tail of a fish. Yes, they basically worshiped a merman.

What God says about Pride

They put the Ark beside the idol. Now this was a very prideful and triumphant thing to do. They probably put it in such a way that Dagon would have towered over the Ark, in a position of power. Because of this, the first thing I want to look at is what the Bible says about our pride. There are multiple verses from both the Old and New Testament that speak about this.

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

(Proverbs 16:18)

When Paul is talking about the qualifications for elders, he says,

Not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.

(1 Tim. 3:6)

And the one I really want to bring emphasis to is Mark 7:21-23.

“...For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”

Here we see pride listed with sins like murder, thievery, and blasphemy. The warning about pride isn't simply a guideline to keep us from sinning, it is something God obviously takes very seriously.

Persistence against God is Futile

The second point I want to talk about comes from 1 Sam. 5:3-4.

They come in that first morning and the idol has fallen over, bowing down before the Ark, and what do they do? They put it right back how it was and do absolutely nothing else about it as far as we know. The next morning what's happened? It has fallen on its face again, except this time it's even worse for them. The statue's head and hands have broken off, as well.

As we just saw with the Philistines, persistence against God is futile. An excellent example of this is King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:4-37. The chapter starts out with Nebuchadnezzar having a rather elaborate dream, and as he did earlier in the book when he had a dream, he calls in his wise men to tell him what it means.

UNLIKE last time, fortunately, it doesn't say he threatens their lives, but nevertheless none of them can tell him the interpretation until Daniel is brought before him. Daniel interprets it and, long story short, he tells Nebuchadnezzar he will be cast out from his kingdom and live like an animal for a certain amount of time until, as verse 25 says,

“...You know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and give it to whomever He chooses.” And then he would be reinstated once he had learned that lesson.

After he gives the interpretation, Daniel advises the king to turn to doing what is right, so that “perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity” (Vs. 27).

Nebuchadnezzar's been given a warning, he's been given advice on how to try to avoid it, and it was given to him by someone he trusts a lot, and yet,

“At the end of the twelve months he [the king] was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. The king spoke, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?” While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you...”

(Vs. 29-31).

Although it's possible he changed for a time after hearing Daniel's words, His overall persistence against God, even in the face of knowing what had been said, ended up getting him in a place that could have been avoided, if he had changed his ways.

God Always Wins

Going along with that, my last point is really simple, and really short, but important nevertheless. It is that God always wins. By the end of this account, not only has God returned the Ark to the Israelites, but he's ravaged three different Philistine cities, broken the idol that they tried to put above Him, and short term has put fear in even the Philistine cities that hadn't been ravaged.

And we know this isn't anywhere near the only time there's an example of God winning. David and Goliath, Ruth, Ehud, even Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection are only a very few examples.

We cannot beat God.

HOW THE TEN COMMANDMENTS Relate to *TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY* CHRISTIANS WHY DO WE WORSHIP ON SUNDAY INSTEAD OF THE SABBATH?

Charles R. Rose

In the discussion of commandment number four I stated there was a fifth related question concerning the Sabbath: “Why do we meet on the first day of the week rather than the Sabbath?” We will answer that question in this lesson.

To refresh our minds, we will again read Deuteronomy 5:1-6; and Nehemiah 9:9-14

And Moses called all Israel, and said to them, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments when I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. The Lord did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive. The Lord talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire. I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the Lord; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up the mountain. He said, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”

Now Nehemiah 9:9-14.

“You saw the affliction of our people in Egypt, and heard their cry by the Red Sea. You showed signs and wonders against Pharaoh. Against all his servants, and against all the people of his land. For you knew that they act-

ed proudly against them. So You made a name for Yourself as it is this day. And You divided the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors You threw into the deep, as a stone into the mighty waters. Moreover You led them by day with a cloudy pillar, and by night with a pillar of fire, to give them light on the road which they should travel. You came down also on Mount Sinai, and spoke with them from heaven, and gave them just ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments. You made known to them Your holy Sabbath, and commanded them precepts, statutes and laws, by the hand of Moses Your servant.”

In our lesson on the Sabbath Law, we determined from the Holy Scriptures that God first observed the Sabbath (Genesis 2:2-3), but we also know from Scripture that He did *not* command Adam and Eve to keep the Sabbath. The facts is the Scriptures show it was not until His holy Sabbaths were made known to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai [also called Horeb] that man was commanded to keep the Sabbath day. (Deuteronomy 5:1-6; Nehemiah 9:11-14). Also, in our study of the Sabbath, We learned from Ezekiel 20:10-12 and Deuteronomy 5:15 the purpose of the Sabbath law was to be a sign between God and the Israelite nation; showing that He had delivered them from Egyptian bondage when

Moses led them out through the Red Sea and into the wilderness. Then, considering Biblical facts about Jesus, our great High Priest, (Hebrews 4:14), we conclude that before He, coming from the tribe of Judah, could become a priest, the law and priesthood must be changed (Hebrews 7:11-19). The law was fulfilled in the life of Christ (Matthew 5:17), and ended as He was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14-17).

Now, to answer the question: Why do we meet for worship on the first day of the week instead of the seventh (Sabbath)?

Let us never assume that anything we do or say in religion (Colossians 3:17) is approved of God without first searching the Scriptures for the truth. May each of us be as the people of Berea who *"were more fair-minded ("more noble," KJV) than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so"* (Acts 17:11).

We will begin answering our question by reading Mark 16:1-9:

"Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices, that they might anoint Him. Very early in the morning, ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples – and Peter – that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. Now when HE ROSE EARLY ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK,

He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.

Notice carefully from that reading upon which day our Lord was resurrected from the dead. Following His resurrection, Jesus remained with His disciples for forty days, during which time He gave them the Great Commission to *"go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15). As we begin reading the book of Acts we find Jesus instructing *"the apostles whom He had chosen "* (Acts 1:2) as to their responsibility to carry out that commission *"in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"* (Acts 1:8). Then, in verse 9 we read, *"Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. "* Thus the Lord Jesus Christ ascended back to heaven where He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father, on David's throne (Acts 2:24-36). It was about ten days following the Lord's ascension that the Holy Spirit was sent to the apostles as promised.

Let us now read Acts 2:1-4.

When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

You will notice this event happened on the day of the Jewish Pentecost. To learn upon which day of the week *"the day of Pentecost had fully come"* we must turn back to the Old Testament law regarding this important Jewish Holy Day. God's instructions to the Jews concerning Pentecost are found in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus. Leviticus 23:11 says of the priest, *"He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf. ON THE DAY AFTER THE SABBATH the priest shall wave it."* Then, in Leviticus 23:15 God instructed the

Jews to *"count for yourselves from THE DAY AFTER THE SEVENTH SABBATH, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days TO THE DAY AFTER THE SEVENTH SABBATH; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord"*

Notice, in this reading of the Holy Scripture, that the day of Pentecost, the day on which the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles in Acts chapter two, came on the day following the Sabbath. The Sabbath being the last day of the week, thus *"when the day of Pentecost had fully come"* (Acts 2:1) speaks of the first day of the week, Sunday.

Promised To The Apostles

It would be good right here to remind ourselves of the significance of the promise of the Holy Spirit given to the apostles. In John 14:26 Jesus promised the apostles *"the Helper, the Holy Spirit; whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."* In this the Lord promised a miraculous memory for the apostles by which the Holy Spirit would cause them to recall every word Jesus had spoken to them during His earthly ministry. However, He had not given them everything He wanted them to know because to that point in time they were not ready to receive it all. This is stated in John 16:12-14:

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you."

In this the Holy Spirit would both provide them with the miraculous remembrance of what Jesus had already spoken to them, and further inspire them to receive, and record all that God would reveal in the future. Then, in Acts 1:8 the apostles are told, *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in*

Jerusalem, and in Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 2:1-4 records the beginning of the fulfillment of that promise; as the apostles began *"to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance"* (Acts 2:4).

From this point onward, the Holy Spirit is guiding the inspired apostles into all truth (John 16:13). From the time that Peter, *"standing up with the eleven [apostles], raised his voice"* and spoke to the multitude gathered on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14), the words spoken, and written, by the apostles were the very word of God given through His Son Jesus, *"as the Spirit gave them utterance"* (Acts 2:4. Take time to read 1 Corinthians 2:7-13 & 2 Peter 1:21 concerning this inspiration).

Acts 2:14-38 records the first message telling the world of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Many of those who heard that sermon believed and responded by asking what they should do to remove this great sin (Acts 2:37). *"Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:38). Acts 2:41 informs us that *"those who gladly received his word were baptized,"* and were then added to the church of our Lord. Acts 2:47 says *"the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."*

Thus we see the promise given the apostles, the fulfillment of that promise, and the establishment of the church Christ promised to build in Matthew 16:18 all being fulfilled on the first day of Pentecost following His death, burial, and resurrection.

Every reference to the church or kingdom found in the Bible before Acts chapter two speaks of it being in the future (cf. Isaiah 2:2-3; Micah 4:1-2; Matthew 16:18; Mark 9:1 etc.). Every reference from Acts chapter two on through the end of Revelation it is mentioned as being in existence (cf. Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:13 etc.). Thus, common reasoning tells us it was at this point in time [the day of Pentecost, the day after the Sabbath, the first day of the week, what we call Sunday] that the church which the Lord *"purchased with His*

own blood' (Acts 20:28) came into existence.

It is important for us to notice the things done by the first Christians as they were guided by the Holy-Spirit-inspired apostles of Christ. It is true we find the apostles going into the Jewish synagogues on the Sabbath (Acts 17:2; 18:4). However, they did not go there in order to worship God in accordance with Christian services. Rather, this is where they would find a gathering of people (hopefully) receptive to the message of the cross. Those who were converted to Christianity and became disciples of Christ met on the first day of the week to worship God as shown in Acts 20:7. We read of the inspired apostle Paul and his companions coming to the city of Troas and remaining there for seven days (Acts 20:6). The reason for this stay is given in Acts 20:7:

"Now ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight."

The breaking of bread in this passage has reference to the communion, also called the Lord's Supper. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 shows that they were also ordered to lay by in store on the first day of the week.

Some will argue, "It doesn't say *every* first day of the week!" Go back and study the Ten Commandments and their related laws as we have done in these lessons, neither did God tell the Jews that they must keep *every* Sabbath day! However, they had no problem understanding His meaning. In like manner, we should not willfully misunderstand God's desire for His church to meet *every* first day of the week to partake of the communion wherein the sacrifice of Christ is remembered (1 Corinthians 11:23-30). We will not "*forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some.*" On the contrary, we will be "*exhorting one another, and so much the more as we see the day [of assembling] approaching*" (Hebrews 10:25).

What Have We Learned?

We have learned from the Holy Scriptures that: (1) Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the

week. Sunday! (2) The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles on the first day of the week. Sunday! This was in fulfillment of God's promise to the apostles of a Helper to miraculously guide them in this great work of spreading the gospel message to all the world. (3) The church promised by Jesus (Matthew 16:18) was established on the first day of the week. Sunday! (4) Members of that church met on the first day of the week (Sunday) to eat the Lord's Supper, give of their means, and do the other acts of worship authorized by our heavenly Father under the New Testament.

These are valid reasons for meeting on the first day rather than the last day of the week. And do not get the idea that Sunday is "the Christian's Sabbath." It is not! It is the Lord's Day, Sunday, and has absolutely nothing to do with the seventh day of the week.

There is, however, another day mentioned in Scripture pertaining to this day, other than the first day of the week. John 20:26 speaks of the eighth day, which, in Apocalyptic writing is known as "The Day of Resurrection." "*And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them; then Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in their midst, and said, Peace, to you.*" There are seven days in a week. Counting from the Sunday on which Jesus arose and appeared to the ten (John 20:19), the seventh day would be Saturday, the Sabbath, thus making the eighth day again the first day of the following week, Sunday!

Other questions come to my mind. If Christians guided and led by the Holy-Spirit-inspired apostles met for worship on the first day of the week in the first century, who instructed them to do so? It was non-other than those "*holy men of God (who) spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Peter 1:20-21). Did they just decide for themselves this was the thing to do, as so many have done in the twenty-first century? Or did those same Holy-Spirit-inspired apostles who established these congregations instruct them "*as the Spirit gave them utterance*" (Acts 2:4)? To ask the question is to answer it. If they were indeed guided by divine inspiration,

(and they were), where do men today find authorization to change those God-given ordinances?

Since God has promised a curse upon any who would add to or delete from His inspired instructions found in the Bible (Deuteronomy 4:2, Proverbs 30:6, Galatians 1:8-9, Revelation 22:18-19), what is going to happen to all these denominations who refuse to follow the Bible in their religious teachings and services when Jesus returns? The answer to that is found in Matthew 25:31-46, and no one should have to question as to who God calls righteous.

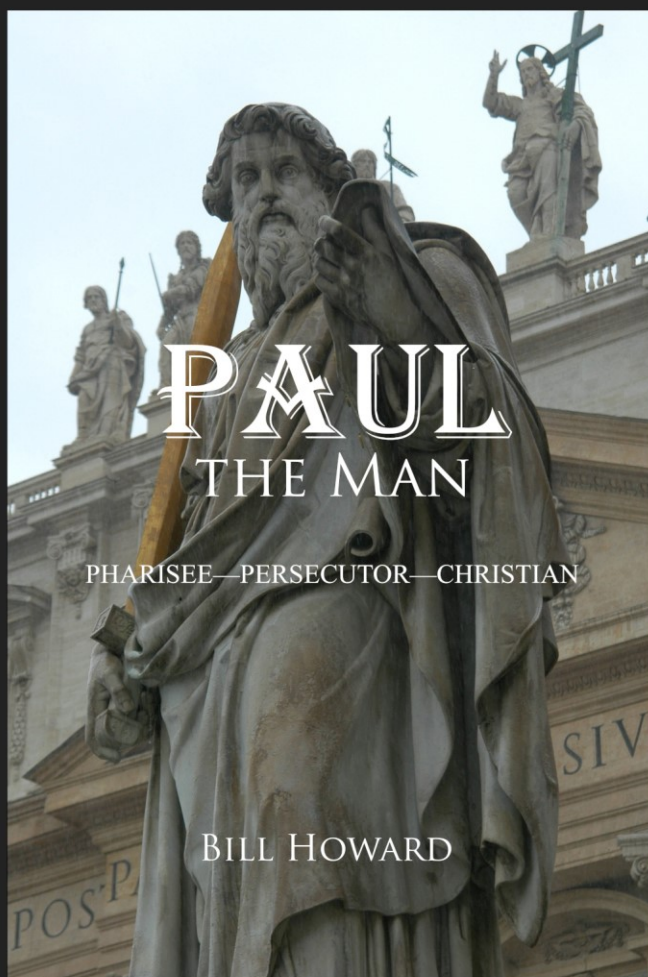
One last point as we bring our study to a close. Did you know that it was on Sunday that the apostle John received the Revelation? Yes! The first day of the week became so well known as the day on which the disciples of Christ gathered for worship that it became known as "The Lord's Day." John

said, *"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day"* (Revelation 1:10) when he was inspired to write the book of Revelation.

It is my sincere prayer that you will determine to *"study to show thyself approved unto God, (and become) a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"* (2 Timothy 2:15 KJV). Realizing that it is in the knowledge of that truth that one may be set free from sin (John 8:32).

HAVE YOU BEEN SET FREE FROM SIN THROUGH OBEDIENCE TO THAT TRUTH? BELIEVING Jesus to be the divine Son of God, have you REPENTED of every sin, CONFESSED His precious name and been BAPTIZED to wash away your sins?

If you have obeyed Christ in this way, have you remained faithful to Him?



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Some Things Never Change

Roy Knight

Believe it or not but when I started preaching school back in 1994, I typed my papers on a real typewriter. Not an electric one but a real typewriter with ribbon and a bottle of correction ink. It was old school but that was all I could afford. I was broke and I needed something quick so I picked one up at a yard sale for twenty bucks. My roommates said when I typed it shook the house. I still have it in a closet somewhere.

When I was hired as the full-time minister at the St. George Church of Christ it was 1996. I brought with me a typewriter/computer hybrid with a 3½ inch disk that went in the side. It probably weighed about 20 pounds. I still have it in a closet somewhere. In 1997, we purchased our first desktop

computer. I found it in an advertisement on the back page of the Wall Street Journal. It looked cool and had everything I needed to move me into the twentieth century. Yes, it was dial up and slow. The thing I remember about it was that when the planes struck the World Trade Center on 9/11, it was the day that I bought airline tickets online for the West Coast to visit my wife's parents.

It was a good computer for the time, but it gave way to my first Dell laptop which was great. I loved the fact that I could take it home with me and finish my work in the evenings and the weekends. I was no longer bound to the office. Over the years, I have upgraded from time to time when the old ones became obsolete. Now I have a HP i-5 which is the

best one yet, especially if it is hooked up to broadband. Then, I'm ready to rock and roll. Things have changed a lot and I am sure glad they have. Maybe one day I will actually get a touch screen. Who knows?

On a spiritual level, the interesting thing about the teachings of Christ is that God designed them NOT to change. Many folks will say that Christianity should change with the times and that we should adapt Christianity to the culture. I do not agree. I believe the opposite is true. I believe culture needs to adapt to Christianity. After all, God in the flesh, Jesus, came to give us light to direct us towards salvation and reconciliation with the Father. His path is found in the Bible, and as He said, it is straight and narrow (Matthew 7:13-14). I'm not saying we need to sit on the floor and wear tunics, but concerning the doctrines, the teachings of our Lord, they are not to change.

Jesus said in John 12:48, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." Jesus' words are found in the Bible, and the Bible has not changed in two thousand years. Jesus also said in John 14:15, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Who do we love most? Culture? Ourselves? Other people? Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Jesus does not change His commandments over the years. Yet, sadly, we pick and choose how we will serve and worship Him. That does not sound right. Does it to you?

The Apostle Paul begged his fellow Christians who were going their own way by saying in 1 Corinthians 1:10, "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together

in the same mind and in the same judgment." Paul urged Timothy to, "remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine (1 Timothy 1:3). "No other doctrine" than whose? Christ's doctrine. He has a doctrine that is able to save one's soul. Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation..." The teachings of Christ save. Man-made teachings that spring up over the years do not save. Yet, I fear that we often confuse the teachings of Jesus with the teachings of men. Paul said in Galatians 1:6-8, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,

which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than

what we have preached to you, let him be accursed." The word, "pervert" means to twist or to change from its original form.

James said that the gospel, the teachings of Christ, are "the perfect law of liberty" (1:25). When we begin to change the "perfect law of liberty," we change our Lord's words and rob them of their saving power. We need to ask ourselves seriously whether we are following the true words of God or not. A lot of things change over time. Cars change. Fashions change. Even computers change. But God's word was never designed to change.

Just a thought.

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*the doctrines,
the teachings of our Lord...
are not to change.*

THOUGHTS FROM THE BEACHES OF NORMANDY

Caleb Lehman

Earlier this year, I was blessed with the opportunity to study abroad with Milligan University. We visited three countries: England, France, and Italy. My favorite location, by far, was Normandy, France. The history, monuments, and emotional thoughts were humbling, yet staggering. I remember seeing the shores of Utah, where the Americans stormed the beach to free Western Europe alongside the British, French, Canadians, and others on separate beaches. I remember seeing the bomb marks on Point Du Hoc, and the monument dedicated to the 2nd and 5th Rangers that climbed the cliff. Yet, maybe the most moving place I visited was the Normandy American Cemetery.

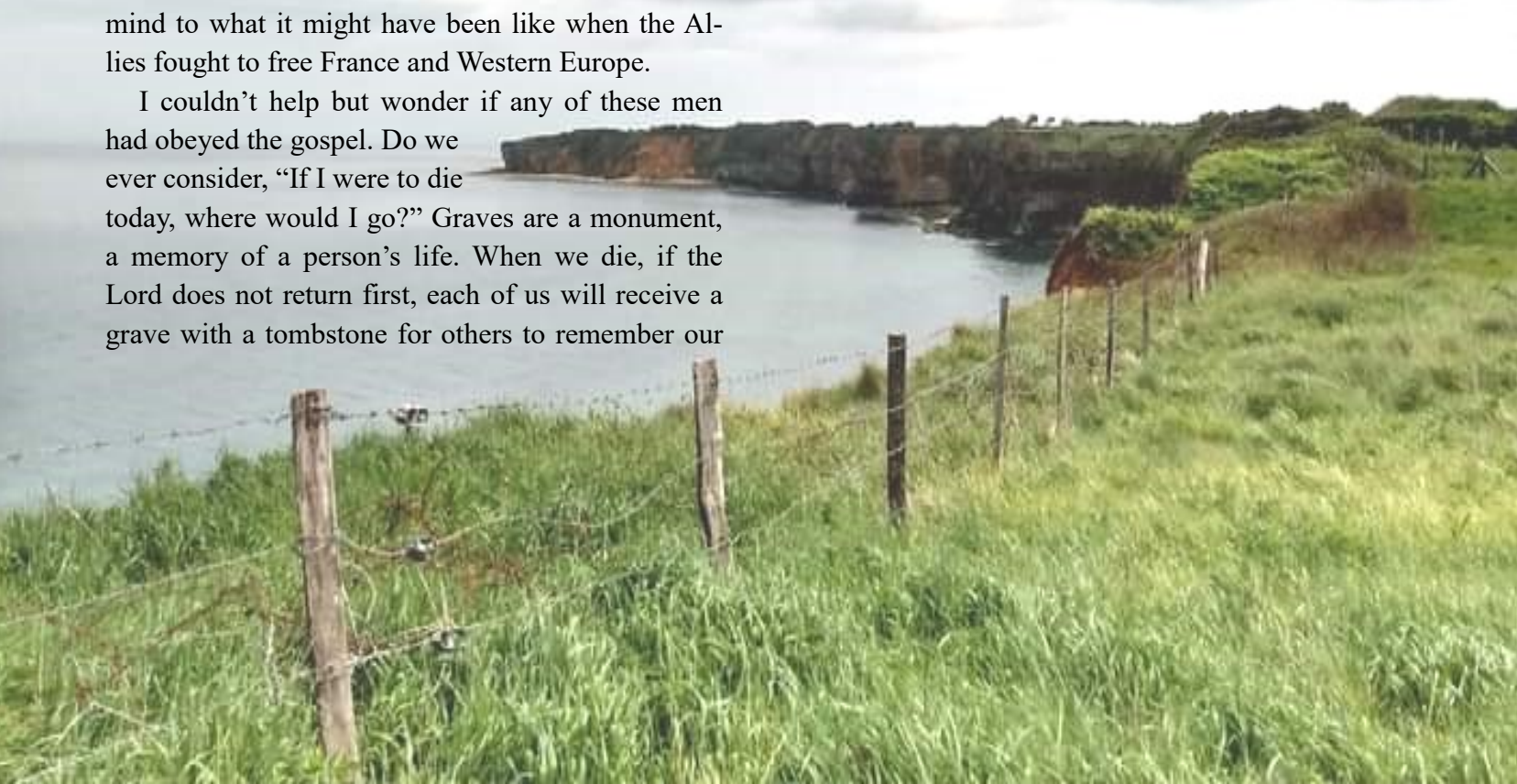
When we came to the cemetery, the staff welcomed us and allowed us to place a fresh bouquet of flowers at the base of the statue guarding the main entrance. They also played “Taps” and the American anthem. Our tour guide allowed us to roam the cemetery for an hour before needing to return. I walked those stone pathways with hundreds and hundreds of graves on either side of me. Over two thousand men who gave their lives were buried there. I thought of all the history I had learned, taking my mind to what it might have been like when the Allies fought to free France and Western Europe.

I couldn’t help but wonder if any of these men had obeyed the gospel. Do we ever consider, “If I were to die today, where would I go?” Graves are a monument, a memory of a person’s life. When we die, if the Lord does not return first, each of us will receive a grave with a tombstone for others to remember our

life. So many men fought and died for the freedom and safety of others. Are their souls safe with God? I mourn those who died physically, but I doubly mourn those who died both physically and spiritually.

One day, the Lord will return, and each of us will be resurrected. Our graves, our physical representation of the life we lived, will die. There will be no need for them anymore. The graves that are left in our place when our souls leave, will one day have no purpose. Death can be a scary thing, but it can also be a comfort. Psalms 116:15 says, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” When we die, if we have obeyed the gospel and lived according to God’s word, our death is not a defeat, but a victory. Does death scare you? One day, unless the Lord returns first, death will come for us all. What kind of grave will you leave behind? Because I can guarantee you one thing: Your grave will mean nothing if your family doesn’t see you in Heaven.

[Note: this photo was taken by Mr. Lehman during his visit to Normandy.]



Teaching God's Word Around the World by Teaching the English Language

Blane Anderson

World English Institute (WEI) has one mission with one purpose. WEI works to lead as many people as possible from every nation under heaven to Christ by using God's Word as the text to teach English grammar.

The English language is universal. Billions want to learn it. WEI teaches English free of charge to help them communicate effectively and read the Bible in English, many for the first time.

Students need most of all salvation and a relationship with Jesus Christ. WEI has designed this unique teaching tool to reach as easily into dark places of the world as it does the non-English-speaking communities of America.

Every day, hundreds of precious souls log into WEI to study one lesson in English grammar and one lesson in the Bible. They thrill at being able to learn English, but they are amazed when they learn about God and his plan of redemption.

As God used Koine Greek to spread the Gospel in New Testament times, he is using English in the modern world.

Hundreds of thousands of people in 208 nations are now studying the Word through WEI. Thousands of WEI students have been baptized into Christ, and dozens of congregations have been established in Albania, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Czech Republic, Estonia, India, Indonesia, Latvia, Lithuania, Mongolia, Nigeria, Romania, Russia, Sierra Leone, Slovak Republic, and other nations as WEI materials have been used to lead people to Christ.

These things are mentioned, not to boast, but to stress the unlimited possibilities of using WEI to reach the lost all over the world. God is using

WEI to teach people about Christ in 208 nations—every major nation except North Korea.

These 208 nations represent all of the world's population. But more teachers are needed. In fact, recruiting and training more teachers is the greatest need of the ministry.

Methodology

WEI is designed to attract students who are studying English as a second language and to teach them by using the Bible as an English textbook. While the students are learning English, they are also learning the Scriptures. **Some seed falls in good and honest hearts and brings forth fruit** (Luke 8:15). **God gives the increase** (1 Corinthians 3:7).

Many students enroll in WEI in order to learn English, but as they study the Word, their interest gradually shifts from English to the Bible.

Just before he was baptized in the Adriatic Sea, Daut Bezati, a citizen of Albania, said, "When you first came to Albania, we thought English was more important than the Bible. But little by little, the Bible caught up. Now we know that the Bible is more important than English."

The name "World English Institute" is a blessing. It is a blessing in that it opens doors to countries where the Bible has been outlawed. The name "World English Institute" was chosen in order to get the gospel into countries where we cannot go as missionaries. Any attempt to advertise Bible correspondence courses in certain countries would be rebuffed. But the political leaders in most of these nations are eager for their people to study English. Consequently, we are teaching thousands of WEI students in every

country in the world except North Korea.

God Is Using WEI to get individuals and churches throughout America involved in missions. Mission-minded people are urged to go abroad on WEI follow up campaigns. Christians are urged to be missionaries from their own home, teaching WEI students through the internet and putting their students in touch with missionaries when they request baptism or simply wish to visit local congregation of Christians.

Rationale

English has become the language of the Twenty-First Century. Three-fourths of the world's high school students are studying English today. Prior to World War II, only 200 million people spoke English. Now, billions of people speak English and the number is growing rapidly. More people are studying English in China today than in the United States.

English is the language of commerce. Business people engaging in international trade study English to compete on the world market. English is the language of communication. Airline pilots communicate with control towers in English throughout the free world. Ship to shore messages are sent in English. English is the language of politics. It has replaced French as the preferred language at international political meetings.

English is the language of science and technology. Brain surgeons, computer programmers, microbiologists, and rocket engineers must read English in order to keep up with developments in their fields. Approximately 95% of the world's technical papers are written in English. Many third-world countries are pushing their people to learn English, believing that English is a key to economic growth and development.

WEI's Teaching Website Makes it Easy

Using your computer/tablet/cell phone, your Internet connection, and WEI's teaching website, you can teach the Good News to people in all of

the world's 208 nations...right from your own home.

Approximately 10,000 people visit the WEI teaching website each month to study the English language because it is free. Each month about a third of these people register and return the introductory lesson and need to be claimed by a teacher. WEI uses lessons from the Bible to illustrate the accompanying lesson on English grammar.

The website provides recordings of the Bible lesson so students learn to hear and speak English as they read. While they learn to hear and speak, the Word is being planted deeply into their hearts.

You do not need to be an English major to teach WEI's lessons. All grammar questions are true or false and multiple-choice. Each lesson is automatically graded. In addition to grading the students' answers, the website quotes the section of the lesson that contains the correct answer to explain incorrect answers.

The job of a WEI teacher is to respond to their answers in the "Thought Questions" found in the Reading Assignments. First, if they have an incorrect view of the Bible lesson, we help them understand what the Bible actually says. Second, we help them write their answers correctly using proper English grammar, but not too heavily corrected. We try to keep in mind that English is their second language.

There are no records for you to keep. The website keeps all student records automatically.

Students appreciate teachers who treat them as friends, not numbers. We encourage our teachers to develop a friendly relationship with their students. If they desire to become a Christian, we do our best to connect them with the nearest church of Christ missionary in their region of the world.

Ready to teach?

Simply go to www.worldenglishinstitute.net

At the webpage you will find more information about the WEI ministry including how to sign up to become a teacher.



An Internet Teaching Ministry of
the churches of Christ
www.worldenglishinstitute.net

Using your computer, Internet connection, and WEI's teaching website, you can teach the Good News to people in **ALL** of the world's nations.

Approximately 6,000 people visit the WEI teaching website each month to study the English language because it is **FREE**. Each month over 1,500 of these people register, return the introductory lesson and need to be assigned a teacher. WEI uses lessons from the Bible to illustrate the accompanying lesson on English grammar.

WEI's teaching website makes it easy

1. No records for you to keep. The website keeps all student records automatically. Students do not have your email address; all communication is done via the WEI server.
2. You do not need to be an English major to teach WEI's lessons. All questions are true/false and multiple choice and are graded by the website. In addition to grading the students' answers, the website quotes the section of the lesson that contains the correct answer to explain incorrect answers.
3. Your job is to respond to their answers to the Thought Questions. First, if they have an incorrect view of the Bible lesson, help them understand what the Bible actually says. Second, help them write their answers in understandable English sentences.
4. Students appreciate teachers who treat them as friends, not numbers. We encourage our teachers to develop a friendly relationship with their students. If they desire to become a Christian, we will do our best to connect them with the nearest church of Christ missionary in their region of the world.
5. For more information on all WEI's activities and accomplishments, visit **www.worldenglishinstitute.net**. This site has links to WEI's quarterly newsletter, other newsletters related to mission sites all over the world, teacher tips, and other WEI related links.

We Need Teachers—How to become a WEI Internet Teacher

1. Fill out a teacher application located at: **www.worldenglishinstitute.net**
2. You will receive additional information after you register to become a teacher.
3. Active teachers must go to the Student Board link on the web site. There you will find a list of students waiting to be claimed by a teacher. The list gives student name and number, age, marital status, religion, occupation, and country of residence. Pick any students who interest you.
4. In the beginning, we recommend picking at least 5 students. About half drop out so this gives you a better chance of having at least one active student.
5. After you learn how to operate the website's controls, it takes about 10 minutes to teach both the Bible and English lessons to one student.
6. Help is available via email: **support@worldenglishinstitute.org**

Jesus Told Us to Go...Will You?

You can make a difference in the heart of a soul looking for an opportunity to better their life. You can change their life by helping them to know our amazing, loving Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It only takes a few minutes of your day from the comfort of your home to help someone come to know the Lord, love Him, and obey Him.

Jesus' last command for us before leaving the earth needs to become our first priority.

Matt 28:19-20 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

A photograph of a man with dark skin and short hair, looking directly at the camera while holding an open Bible. The Bible has a dark cover with a gold cross on the front. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

Qualifications OF A GOOD MINISTER

Marricus Ellis

In any work, there are qualifications and standards one must meet to be a good fit for the job. To be a doctor, one must obtain a four-year bachelor's degree, four years of medical school, a one-year hospital internship and three to seven years of residency training. To be a lawyer, one must obtain a four-year bachelor's degree, a three-year Juris Doctor degree, and pass the Uniform Bar Examination. With every other occupation having specific qualifications, shouldn't a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ have the same? What are the qualifications of a good minister? The good thing about this question is, we don't have to search far for the answer, we don't have to search books all over the world, and we don't have to obtain a doctoral degree to get the

answer—rather the answer is found in the Bible. The Bible is the #1 book that a minister must study and know if he wants to be effective. For there are no other words, in any book in the world, that equip a minister to be pleasing and acceptable to God than that which is written in the Bible.

We are first introduced to the term *minister* in the O.T. canon, and it is used as an adjective to describe the work and office of Joshua, Moses' servant. "And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God" (Exod. 24:13 KJV). The Hebrew term "*sharath*" means to serve, to contribute or attend to. In the Old Testament a minister was an attendee to the Priest, he served in whatever capaci-

ty he needed to in the Holy Temple. Today, Christ is our great high priest (Heb. 4:14-15), and any minister is an attendant to the work and mission of Christ. Moreover, in the New Testament a minister is a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Bible says, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14).

The Greek term for preacher, is “*kerusso*.” It means a herald, a public crier, someone who proclaims a message from a higher authority. A Bibli-

cal minister is a preacher of good news from the King (Jesus). The Bible then says, “And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:15). A Biblical minister, therefore, has no other message than that which has been handed down from the King. Paul would say, “For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” (1 Cor. 2:2). A minister has one message and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ, that He died, He was buried, and He rose again on the third day according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-4). When we sum it all up, a minister, biblically speaking, is a servant of God who preaches the word of God.

Who Should be a Minister?

Now that we understand what a minister is, we should ask who should be one. One of my foundational passages for preaching and doing ministry is found in Ezra 7:10, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.”

In Ezra, we see three standards that anyone seeking to be a minister should measure up to.

Ezra “prepared his heart.”

In other words he established, made ready, set up his mind to wholly commit himself to the mission.

He sought the law of the Lord.

He who wants to be a minister of the gospel, must have a sincere desire for the milk of the word and meditate upon it day and night if he wants to be an effective minister (1 Pet. 2:2; Ps. 1:2).

He lived it out.

Before Ezra went and taught the law, he wanted to be sure he was living according to it. A minister must hold himself accountable, unless while he preaches to others, he finds himself unfit (1 Cor. 9:27). There is a quote by Jack Evans Sr., former president of the largest historical black Christian college affiliated with the Churches of Christ, *Southwestern Christian College*—he said to a group of preachers, “live the life, then preach the gospel.” This quote has been part of the foundation of my ministry, because it does no one any good to have a hypocrite preacher. Not only is it a disservice to those he ministers to, but also to himself, and most of all to God.

He ministered to others

Lastly, after Ezra prepared his heart, sought the law of the Lord, and lived it out, he was now ready to minister it to others. Isaiah had a similar experience before the start of his ministry (Isa. 6:1ff). A good minister seeks to “live the word, then preach the word.”

*A Biblical minister is a
preacher of good news
from the King (Jesus).*

A Desire to Preach the Word

Moreover, a minister should have a burning desire to preach the word. When Jeremiah the prophet set his heart to stop preaching, he was met with a burning desire where he couldn't help but to preach the word. (Jer.20:9).

Lastly, a minister should be one who has a desire to save souls through the gospel of Christ. If this is not his purpose, he may find himself *performing* every Sunday instead of *preaching*. Being a minister of the gospel is founded upon a message that is centered on Christ—not the minister himself. This calls for a minister to humble himself under the mighty hand of God and know that he is in service to Christ. (Jam 4:10).

Ministry is a rewarding yet arduous task. It takes faith, hope, love, endurance, longsuffering, and fortitude. With all of this in mind, one may ask, how does he do it? What's his motivation? What gets him out of bed each morning to face such a laborious work? One thing is, he knows whom he is servicing. Paul told Timothy, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless, I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). The reason Paul could face the hatred of men, defamation of character, being beat almost unto death is because he knew whom he had believed. Paul knew the God who called him into ministry would bring him through it and keep that which He promised to him.

The Minister's Motivation

One way a minister is motivated is by the sure promises of a faithful God who cannot lie. Moreover, a proper motivation for ministry is that of saving souls, fulfilling the great commission (Matt. 28:19-20). This should be the minister's *modus operandi*. His motive for preaching the gospel simply is to save those who are lost. Paul told the church at Corinth, "To the weak became I

as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some, and this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you." (1 Cor. 9:22-23).

A minister's motivation should rest upon this fact, "woe unto me if I preach not the gospel..." (1 Cor. 9:16 KJV). If the gospel is not preached, then men can't be saved.

Lastly, a minister's motivation should be in the fact that he is a laborer with God. Paul said, "For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." (1 Cor. 3:9).

What a privilege to know that God has chosen the foolishness of preaching to save souls, and he has chosen men to be stewards and ministers with Him to save men. This calling is not based on one's academics, socio-economic class, race, or anything else of man, rather it is simply by the grace of God. Paul said, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 1:12-14). A proper motivation for ministry is in the fact that we are all unworthy servants and our source for service is found in God's grace.

Five Qualifications of a Good Minister

First, a **good minister preaches the Word of God**. Peter says "If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Pet. 4:11). This minister's job is to preach "thus saith the Lord," and not what man wants. Paul says, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the

servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10). To be a good minister we must preach the Word. As Paul concluded his last letter to the young preacher Timothy, he charged him to “Preach the word, be instant in season and out of season...” (2 Tim. 4:2ff).

Secondly, **a good minister stands up for the truth.** In a world full of preachers being performers, motivational speakers, tickling the ears of people, we need minister who will stand up for truth and preach God’s word when people like it and when they don’t. Paul instructed Timothy in his first letter, “As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine...” (2 Tim. 1:3). There is only one gospel (Gal. 1:6-7ff), and a good minister must stand up for the one gospel despite the odds that may be against him. For we are called to endure hardness as a good soldier (2 Tim. 2:2), and to not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, but rather be a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel (2 Tim. 1:8). Thirdly, to be a good minister

one must practice what he preaches. God does not take pleasure in a religious façade, for he looks at the heart (Isa. 58:1-6; Matt. 23:1ff).

A good minister holds himself accountable and puts his own body in subjection, for Paul says, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27). In other words, a preacher who is not practicing what he preaches can come short of the promise he has proclaimed to others.

A good minister is to be an example to the flock by his lifestyle, and helps them become

complete in Christ. Paul tells the church at Ephesus the reason God gave gifts to the church: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...” (Eph. 4:11-12).

Lastly, **a good minister Loves God and loves people.** For God in his ultimate wisdom has designed ministry to this effect: “to love Him is to love them.” In other words, we can’t love God without loving people, and we can’t love people without loving God. Jesus said, “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like unto it, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other

commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30-31). For pure and undefiled religion to God has always been to do justly by your neighbor (Mic. 6:8; Jas. 1:27). Ministry is already an arduous

*[P]repare your heart,
seek the law of the Lord,
live it,
then go preach it!*

task, and if a minister doesn’t have a love for people, he will eventually find himself unfit for the service.

In conclusion, being a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ is an honor and a privilege. Although it is a laborious work, it is also the most rewarding. After being called a child of God, there is no greater title than that of a servant/minister of Christ. I encourage all men who desire to be a minister of the gospel to prepare their heart, seek the law of the Lord, live it, then go preach it! (Ezra 7:10).

FOOLS, CONTRARIANS, AND TROLLS



John Krivak

If two able players compete at the game of tic-tack-toe, neither will ever win. Every game will end with neither player getting three in a row. Some arguments are unwinnable because one opponent is not honorable enough to lose. An honorable opponent will admit when evidence and logic have exposed his argument as a failure: *“Well, you’ve got me there! I concede: you win this argument.”* When both of the opponents are honorable, neither really loses. The loser gains access to the higher ground, now that he can admit he had been in the wrong. He is stronger for having lost.

An argument, by the way, is the way we talk out differences or disagreements.

I love a story told by Jim McGuiggan. Once a fool thought he was dead, and family and friends could not convince him otherwise. Finally, a doctor had him read an authoritative book, where it said, *“Dead men don’t bleed.”* When asked, he said he believed that. The doctor took out a needle and

jabbed his thumb, and bright red blood appeared. Do you know what the fool said? *“Dead men DO bleed!”* If you meet someone like that, it’s not worth your time to get into an argument!

One of the greatest paradoxes in the Bible is found squarely between Proverbs 26:4 and 26:5 (NASB). One proverb directs the reader NOT to answer a fool; the other has the opposite advice!

*“Do not answer a fool according to his folly,
Or you will also be like him.”*

*“Answer a fool as his folly deserves,
That he not be wise in his own eyes.”*

To answer? Or, not to answer? That is the question! This calls for wisdom. Two kinds of fools must be recognized. One kind has simply never acquired knowledge and wisdom. His problem is simple ignorance. But he is teachable and will benefit from hearing. Go ahead and answer this fool. The other fool is a different animal (and the Bible often com-

pare fools to various animals and brute beasts). This fool has refused knowledge and wisdom when it is offered to him. His problem is attitude, and so he is unable to benefit from anything he might hear. Don't answer this fool!

As people interact on social platforms on the internet, there emerged a species of fool that we call *trolls*. The troll does not care a whit about discovering truth. Pshah! The troll is only there to do battle, to criticize, to demean. Trolls do not even know what they stand for; they know only what they are against: *"But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. Woe to them!"* (Jude 10–13). The troll is not a deep thinker, just a simple-minded contrarian.

There is in the heart of righteous people a desire to rescue—even fools, even trolls. These good-hearted souls always hope for the best and give the benefit of the doubt. They put themselves out there, and at risk. Sometimes we all need to do a risk assessment, asking what is realistic and possible. Sometimes there is just nothing to be gained: *"A man of great anger will bear the penalty, for if you*

rescue him, you will only have to do it again" (Proverbs 19:19). Likewise, Jesus warned: *"Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces"* (Matthew 7:6). Before you begin to help, ask: Are they interested in finding the truth, or just wanting to start a fight (which truly is unwinnable)?

So—to answer, or not to answer? Seek wisdom; pray for wisdom. Insight can be found all over the Bible, but some Scriptures are especially rich in resources. Read Proverbs, and pay special attention to what is said about fools. Read the four

Gospels, and take notes on the ways Jesus does—or does not—engage people who demand answers from Him. Finally, read Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus—when to engage conflict, or rather, when to avoid foolish arguments (1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 2:16, 21; 3:5; Titus 3:2, 9).

We all know you want to help. We know you know some stuff that would really be helpful, if the [fool, contrarian, or troll] would simply listen. But they won't. It's not in their nature. Wisdom will tell you that. Listen to wisdom.

The troll is not a deep thinker, just a simple-minded contrarian.



*Have you ever wished you could glue
your broken crackers together?
NOW YOU CAN, with all new*

CHEESE TAPE™
FROM THE MIND OF NOAH FLOYD

This advertisement is for entertainment purposes only.
Using cheese as tape, while tasty and fashionable, does not guarantee food-binding success,
and has been known to cause other types of binding when used excessively.
Noah Floyd Industries encourages you to eat cheese responsibly.



Spheres of Influence

Johnny O. Trail

A sphere of influence is partially defined as “the domain... in which one can effectively exert influence.” People tend to exert an effect upon those they spend time with, and most individuals spend time with those who are likeminded. This idea is cliché in much of the popular writing and literature. More importantly, this idea is biblical in nature.

The Apostle Paul understood this concept when he wrote in Ephesians 2:1-3:

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were

by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

These Ephesians who were once dead in their sins conducted themselves among others who were of the same mind—the children of wrath. The idea is that wicked people tend to flock together just as the righteous do.

This is not to say that Christians should not endeavor to convert those who are lost. Clearly, Paul and others were able to convert some of the people who were at Ephesus and other places who “once walked according to the course of this world.” The brethren at Ephesus had changed their lives and were quickened or made alive in Christ.

As a matter of fact, Paul says he is a “debtor” to such people. Romans 1:14-15 says:

"I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also."

Paul was a "debtor" since he was under obligation to teach the gospel to the lost. Christians are under the same obligation today (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-16).

Jesus did not congregate with wicked people to endorse their wickedness. Sadly, this appears to be the way many in our age attempt to justify sinful behaviors. Several memes have popped up in social media settings that seem to indicate this very tendency. Endorsing wickedness was implied in some of the charges that were leveled at Him. Matthew 9:10-11 says,

"Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, 'Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?'"

Theoretically, the ones who needed the greatest amount of attention from the Messiah were the ones who were the most egregious of sinners.

Furthermore, Matthew 9:10-13 is an indictment upon the religious people in Jesus' age. In their self-righteous view of things, the Pharisees could not see that all people, including themselves, needed the life-giving message of Christ. To their objections Jesus replied, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: *'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.'* For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Matthew 9:12-13). In the Pharisaical sphere of influence, many of them could not see the need for their own forgiveness. The self-righteous cannot understand or comply with the message of Christ because of their arrogance and ignorance of their own sins (cf. Luke 13:3).

The righteous will not be liked by the wicked because of who they profess. Christ was not very well liked among many of His age. For this reason, His disciples would be hated, beaten, mistreated, and

murdered. He opines, in John 17:14, "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."

These concepts have interesting implications for fellowship among the righteous and the ungodly. The idea is that people of the same mind tend to congregate with one another. The child of God is precluded from having "fellowship" with the ungodly. Ephesians 5:11-13 says:

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light."

There is a difference between fellowshiping a person and attempting to convert them to Christ.

These things being so, we may influence the godly and the wicked by our words and actions. 1 Peter 2:11-12 says:

"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation."

Even evil people can be impressed by the good things God's people do. Ultimately, our example might help convert them to Christ.

Finally, these passages have implications for attendance and interactions with other Christians. While some attempt to dispel the importance of being in church and at church functions, godly brethren can influence our continued faithfulness. Our brethren "stir" one another up to the accomplishing of great things in the name of Christ. Hebrews 10:24 says, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works." We should never take for granted the influence that we have upon Christians and the ungodly as well.

RESTORATION REPROBATES

(Part One)

THE RISE AND FALL

of

JESSE B FERGUSON

Bradley S. Cobb

He was the most famous person in Nashville, TN, let alone the most well-known preacher there. Hundreds of people signed a letter of support for him—most weren't even members of the church—including the governor! He was on the board of trustees of Franklin College, had been given the editorship of the *Christian Review*, and preached in a newly-built church house that (in 1852) cost \$30,000 to build (approx. \$1.14 million today).

And in just five short years, he lost the confidence of the brethren, his role as preacher, his influence in the church and community, his faith, and his soul. Oh, and he wouldn't debate Alexander Campbell because a ghost told him not to...¹

¹ Buescher, John, "Jesse Babcock Ferguson" in *Dictionary of Unitarian & Universalist Biography*.

This is the story of Jesse B. Ferguson.

His Early Years

Raised in Virginia, Jesse B. Ferguson excelled in school. In fact, at age 11, after just three months of schooling, he became the assistant to the principal of the school—and very soon thereafter began teaching subjects.² At age 13, according to one

<https://uudb.org/articles/jesseferguson.html>, accessed 10/8/2022.

² Nichols, T.L. (MD.), *Supramundane Facts in the Life of Rev. Jesse Babcock Ferguson, A.M., LL.D.* (London: F. Pittman, 1865), p. 26. The book lists T.L. Nichols as the "editor," but it seems most likely that Jesse B. Ferguson was the actual author. The glowing praise heaped upon him in the biographical sketch seems over-the-top, and fits with Ferguson's own view of himself. In the obituary of Ferguson in *The*

source, he was asked to become the teacher of a brand-new school built by a Presbyterian mission.³

Jesse Ferguson was raised in the church. His father, Robert Ferguson, was an early Restoration preacher, and his brother John followed in his footsteps.⁴ So he knew the truth from a young age.

He expected to attend William and Mary College, like his brothers, but his father's financial situation had changed, and 14-year old Jesse was apprenticed to a local newspaper publisher. The newspaper went out of business around a year later, and the owner released him of his obligations, saying he had learned the trade. However, Robert Ferguson insisted his son finish as an apprentice with a book-printing establishment run by one of his friends.⁵ It was not very long, though, before a disease in his leg ended that apprenticeship. After a long disease and eventual recovery, he began working for his brother R.F. Ferguson, a lawyer who was editor of the *Woodstock Sentinel*.⁶ These experiences with publishing would be both a boon and a bane for Ferguson in later years.



His Early Work in the Church

After a few years, he left Virginia and moved to Ohio, where he discovered he didn't like the people there. He was determined to move back home when he met the "congenial" Arthur Criehtfield,⁷ a preacher for the church of Christ, who convinced him to open a school. It was not long afterwards that Ferguson began leading in worship and preaching.

Unlike most Restoration preachers whose biographies (or autobiographies) have been written, there is no record of when or where Jesse B. Ferguson became a Christian—in fact, outside of a necessary inference from a biographical sketch of his brother John, there is no record of his religious beliefs or actions prior to his entry into preaching.⁸

He soon began writing for the *Heretic Detector* (published by Criehtfield), handling answers to questions sent by readers, and later (1841) became co-editor—all of this by the time he was 22 years old.

He began doing missionary work, preaching and planting congregations throughout Kentucky and

Spiritual Magazine (Volume 5, p. 526), the writer (who is from England, where also Ferguson's biography was published) attributes this writing to Jesse B. Ferguson.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴ "Robert Ferguson, [Jesse Ferguson's father]... was a native of Scotland, who early in the last century came to America and lived in Massachusetts and Virginia and finally in Kentucky, where he died. He was a minister of the Christian church, and his family have furnished several valued servants to that denomination. One of his sons, Jesse B. Ferguson, gained a reputation throughout the south for his power as a preacher. John D. Ferguson, [Jesse's brother]... was also a minister of the Christian church." (Hale, Will T., and Merritt, Dixon L., *A History of Tennessee and Tennesseans: The Leaders and Representative Men in Commerce, Industry and Modern Activities*, Volume V. [Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1913] p. 1366).

⁵ Nichols, *Supramundane Facts*... pp. 27-28.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29. Arthur Criehtfield is the only member of the church mentioned in Ferguson's biography/autobiography. One is surprised to see something good said by Ferguson about any of his former brethren. Arthur Criehtfield edited and published the *Heretic Detector* for five years, but eventually left the church to join the Protestant Episcopal Church—all this before Ferguson's fall. Criehtfield did return to the church of Christ in repentance at some point prior to his death in 1852, the same year Ferguson made his universalist views public.

⁸ It is perhaps notable that in *Supramundane Facts* (a biography of Ferguson which was at the very least written with information provided by Ferguson himself, but more likely written by him in third person and published during his lifetime), no mention is made of his religious upbringing. In fact, it never mentions the church of Christ or Christian Church, never names the *Heretic Detector* or the *Christian Review* (both of which he had been co-editor for a time), and only names one person in the church with which he had been associated (Criehtfield)—and even there, simply calls him a "clergyman." It is as though he wanted to do everything possible *not* to show a connection to the church.

Tennessee. In 1843 he debated a Methodist preacher named J.J. Harrison, who after much study was reported 18 months later to have obeyed the gospel.⁹ During these preaching tours, he received requests to return and become the full-time preacher at congregations in Harrodsburg, KY, and Nashville, TN. He refused these invitations until finally moving to Nashville and the congregation of over 500 members in 1846.¹⁰

His Work in Nashville

While the congregation's attendance grew, trouble was not far away.

When Ferguson moved there, he worked as one of two preachers for the congregation, the other being W.H. Wharton, a medical doctor. Wharton soon turned over the preaching duties to Ferguson completely, and served as an elder while returning to his medical practice.

H. Leo Boles says this of Ferguson's time with the church there:

The Church of Christ in Nashville with Jesse B. Ferguson as its preacher enjoyed a greater prominence and popularity than any of the denominational churches. During this time Brother Ferguson was looked upon as the greatest pulpit orator that ever visited Nashville, and he enjoyed the fame of being the greatest and most eloquent pulpit orator in the South.¹¹

In 1847, having been a regular contributor to its pages since its inception in 1844, Ferguson took over the editing duties for Tolbert Fanning's *Christian Review*. The next year, he changed the name to the *Christian Magazine*, and charted a new direction

for it. In his introductory article to the first issue, he said he wanted it to be "free from sectarian bias and party bickering,"¹² which was likely a veiled swipe at other brotherhood papers of the time. He then said "we... shall seek to make every sacrifice to obtain [union.]"¹³

Ferguson did what many other brotherhood publishers of the time was unable to do—publish a journal that turned a profit. By the second year of publication, the *Christian Magazine* was making money.¹⁴

Ferguson worked tirelessly in his work. Tucker says:

He prepared three to five regular sermons each week, carried on his editorial duties, was on the Board of Trustees of Franklin College (appointed in 1848), visited each family in the church once each three months, spoke for numerous social and cultural events, and carried on other works which are normally associated with a local church.¹⁵

Even those who later withdrew from him over his false doctrine admitted things "*seemed* to prosper in the church, at least, so far as attendance on preaching on Sunday was concerned."¹⁶

¹² Ferguson, J.B. "Introduction," *Christian Magazine*, Jan. 1848, pp. 1-4, quoted in Tucker, *Like a Meteor...*, p.13.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Tucker, *Like a Meteor...*, pp. 14-15. Barton W. Stone's *Christian Messenger* (especially the last several volumes) was filled with pleas for brethren to pay their subscription fees because he was losing money. Even today, most brotherhood papers/magazines (including this one) do not bring in much (if any) profit. They are usually published because the publisher/editor/congregation(s) behind them believe they are important and are willing to shoulder the costs associated with spreading them to others.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16, quoting Fanning, *History and True Position of the Church of Christ in Nashville*, a document which is included in the 2020 edition.

⁹ *Christian Review* Volume 1, 1844 (Charleston, AR: Cobb Publishing, 2021) p. 192.

¹⁰ Tucker, Johnny, *Like a Meteor Across the Horizon: The Jesse B. Ferguson Story* (Henderson, TN: Hester Publications, 2020—a republished and expanded/reformatted edition of the original: Fayetteville, TN: Tucker Publications, 1978), p. 8.

¹¹ Boles, H. Leo, *Biographical Sketches of Gospel Preachers* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1932) pp. 188.

While *attendance* grew, the number of actual members remained rather stagnant.¹⁷ His preaching style appealed to the “idle, frolicsome, theatrical, sensual, and profane part of the community,”¹⁸ but there was a noticeable lack of conversions in these people who attended his preaching. Jesse Ferguson was well-known in the community, but it seems *that* was his main interest—being well-known. The church of Christ in Nashville became a place for people to go because it was fashionable to go where the famous Ferguson preached. This included future President Andrew Johnson,¹⁹ who historians seem to agree was “the least religious, and the president who was least affiliated with any religious group or identifiable religious philosophy.”²⁰ Ferguson himself (writing in third person) claimed President Johnson was “one of his most ardent admirers.”²¹

This attitude of seeking popularity over seeking to bring people to Christ caused his preaching to be entertaining, but shallow. When hundreds of lost people can listen to your sermons and leave happy without making any changes, something is dreadfully wrong.

His Stance on Slavery

In 1850, Ferguson gave a speech (though it would be better called a sermon) in the First Presbyterian Church of Nashville on the topic of slavery. The Civil War was still a decade off, but the issue was a hotly debated one. His speech was so pleasing to the audience that it was requested that it be put

into print. *Address on the History, Authority, and Influence of Slavery* was published within a month.

In this document, Ferguson seeks to defend slavery by appealing to Abraham,²² among other Old Testament examples—examples which had nothing to do with the practice of kidnapping and selling humans that defined American slavery. He also attempts to claim slavery was a good thing for the slaves.

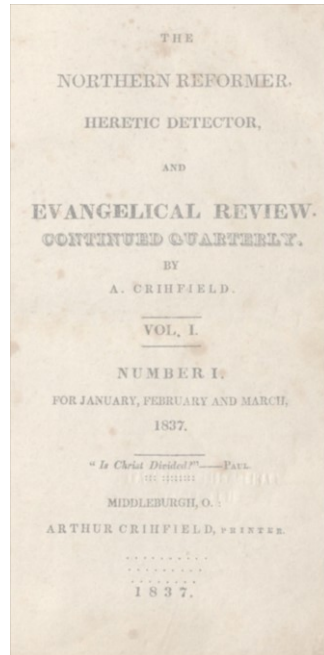
A generation has grown up under the influence of a one-sided view of the subject, and many excellent men have tacitly yielded to the assumption that Slavery is a crime for which there is neither justification or apology. It is time this state of things were changed.²³

He then goes on to say:

...the *natural* and *unavoidable* relations of different races occupying different positions in the *scale of intellectual advancement* and political civilization. [Emphasis mine, BSC]²⁴

[Slavery is] such a condition of servitude as that wherein one comparatively civilized people, may hold another of *absolutely inferior civic attainments*, in hereditary bondage, or a bondage that shall descend from generation to generation, until at least the inferior shall become, in some degree, capable of the sustained efforts and persevering toil of a free government. [Emphasis mine]²⁵

His stance was that slavery was good for black slaves, who were naturally less intelligent than white people. This won him great applause among the slave-holders in the South, because this preacher, this “great orator,” had just told them American-style slavery was not only acceptable, it was ex-



¹⁷ Tolbert Fanning, et. al., *History and True Position of the Church of Christ in Nashville*, p. 12

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ “Obituary: The Late Dr. Jesse B. Ferguson,” *The Spiritual Magazine* (Volume 5, 1870), pp. 525-526.

²⁰ Archived version of http://www.adherents.com/people/pj/Andrew_Johnson.html.

²¹ *Supramundane Facts*... p. 42.

²² *Address on the History, Authority, and Influence of Slavery*, pp. 11-12.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 3 (“Correspondence”)

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

pected and approved by God.²⁶

He first tried to unite the South to avoid war, then when war started, he worked to unite all his hearers to fight for the Confederacy.²⁷ The Union soldiers eventually took Nashville and set up military headquarters there, and Ferguson tried to calm the populace. But prominent southerners were targeted for arrest, and Ferguson was definitely prominent, having been a candidate for the legislature in 1861. So he did what any brave person would do—he ran to Canada.

From there, he went to England, where he tried to rally support for the Confederacy. He failed, and upon returning was banished from Union territory.

He went to Richmond, the capitol of the Confederacy, where he called for both sides in the Civil War to stop fighting because of the evils of war, and for both governments to work together to create an international congress to mediate between them. He published his thoughts in a pamphlet, in which he describes himself as a “white republican” (note: this isn’t referring to the political party, but a *white* supporter of “the republic”).²⁸

²⁶ It should be noted that American-style slavery is *not* the same kind of slavery as seen in Scriptures. “Menstealers” are expressly condemned by God as “lawless and disobedient...ungodly...sinners” (1 Timothy 1:9-10). Most slaves in the time of the Bible were either indentured servants (in slavery due to indebtedness), conquered enemies (in slavery as a result of war), or people who were so poor that selling themselves into slavery was actually a step up for them (guaranteed food and shelter). Kidnapping to make slaves was never approved in Scriptures.

²⁷ *Supramundane Facts*, p. 37.

²⁸ Ferguson, Jesse B. *The Times! Or The Flag of Truce; Dedicated to the Cabinets at Washington and Richmond, by a White Republican* (Richmond, VA: Ritchie and Dunnagan, 1863).

The Controversy that Killed His Influence

It wasn’t slavery that caused Ferguson to resign from preaching and to leave the church. After all, he was in the south, preaching what they wanted to hear. It wasn’t hard preaching that got people upset, because he was preaching what people wanted to

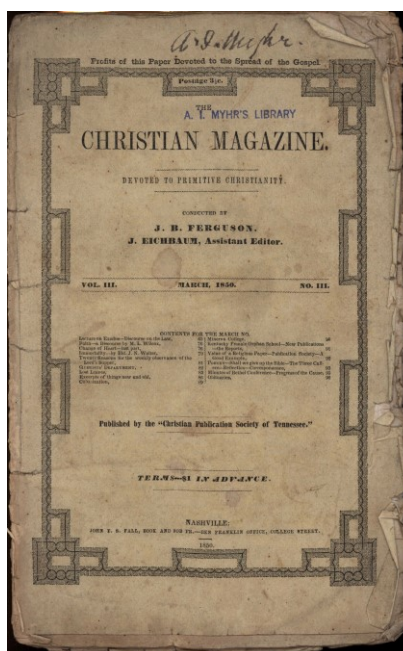
hear. And honestly, if he had confined his beliefs on this topic to just his preaching, instead of publishing them and sending them to brethren across the country, there might not have been much of a controversy.

In April 1852, Ferguson wrote an article giving his interpretation of the “spirits in prison” from 1 Peter 3:18-20. In it, he claimed that all who have died will have a second chance after death, and that ultimately all will be saved—in other words, *universalism*.

This, understandably, caused a firestorm. The most popular preacher in the South, with one of the most-read papers in the brotherhood (perhaps second only to Campbell’s *Millennial Harbinger* at this point), was in essence contradicting Jesus’ teaching on judgment, rejecting the importance of preaching, erasing the need of repentance, and promising a false hope to everyone.

The response was swift. The *Millennial Harbinger* reprinted the article the following month, followed by Campbell’s response, which included a plea for Ferguson to repent. The next month’s issue included letters from such men as John Rogers and Samuel Church, the latter of which said:

I am truly sorry to see that Bro. Ferguson has got a maggot in his brain. This will destroy his usefulness and influence, and probably end in his becoming a wandering star, like Mr. Thom-



as.²⁹

Over the following months, Campbell, Samuel Church, John T. Johnson, Isaac Errett, John R. Howard, Benjamin Franklin and others wrote in the *Harbinger* and other papers against Ferguson's false teaching. All the while, the pages of the *Christian Magazine* expanded and reiterated Ferguson's doctrine of universalism—except now he blasted those who brought Scripture arguments against him as uncaring and unintelligent.³⁰

Ferguson, seemingly in an attempt to bolster his universalist teachings, then published a book called *Spirit Communion* in which he details many supposed conversations he had with the spirits of the dead. And as should be expected, faithful brethren exposed his false teachings there as well.

Ultimately, this controversy tore apart the church in Nashville (which had recently moved into its massive new building), and resulted in the faithful brethren publishing a booklet giving the history of the church in Nashville, including their doctrinal stances from the beginning, showing that Ferguson's views were not the views of the church or her members.³¹

A lawsuit ensued, wherein the faithful members sought ownership of the building (the booklet mentioned above may have been created in part because of this suit). It failed, but the pressure was mounting on Ferguson. A vote was taken, and less than 20% of the members stood with their wayward preacher.

²⁹ *Millennial Harbinger*, July 1852, p. 414. The "Mr. Thomas" of whom he speaks was Dr. John Thomas, a member of the church who later founded the Christadelphian Church.

³⁰ Tucker, *Like a Meteor...*, pp. 29-30.

³¹ Fanning, Tolbert, et. al. *History and True Position of the Church of Christ in Nashville*

And of course in true Jesse B. Ferguson fashion, he published his resignation sermon, with the "stick-it-to them" title: *Moral Freedom: The Emblem of God in Divinity and Life—A Discourse delivered in voluntarily surrendering the house of worship built for his use, to its doctrinal claimants, when their claim could not be legally sustained, and when not authoritatively demanded.*

Later Years

After this fallout, he still tried to keep his name in the news by giving speeches, writing more and more books and tracts on talking to dead people,

encouraging southerners to fight against the North, running for office (and losing), and running for his life. Sometime after Lincoln's murder, Ferguson went to Washington to take a message to President Johnson—actually several messages, all of which he

claimed to have received from ghosts.

He later went to England to travel with and manage the Davenport brothers, who were also involved in necromancy. It was while here that his autobiography (written in third person as a biography) was published. After returning home, he died in 1870.

Why Did He Fall?

The history is fascinating, the twists are crazy. But the question remains: *Why did he do this?* What caused him to embrace universalism and spiritualism? The only one who knows for sure is God Himself. But I think we can offer an educated guess.

He had a massive ego.

At 11, you are promoted to teaching your classmates. At 13, you're offered a teaching position at a brand-new school. At 22, you're put in charge of part of a prominent brotherhood periodical. For the next six years, as you're preaching from place to

[Alexander] Campbell, Samuel Church, John T. Johnson, Isaac Errett, John R. Howard, Benjamin Franklin and others wrote ... against Ferguson's false teaching.

place, big congregations are practically begging you to move there and be their preacher. One of the most well-known and trusted brethren in Tennessee (and perhaps the country) turns over his paper to you. You're preaching in front of 800 people each Sunday, and the community loves you. You put all these things together, and you can see how Jesse B. Ferguson might think he was smarter than everyone else, better than everyone else. Humility wasn't one of his virtues by this point.

So, if he gets an odd idea in his head about something, he is certain he is right. And if someone questions him on it, he plays the victim and just screams it louder. Everything must now be viewed through the lens of this interpretation. He can't ever admit he might be wrong.

He liked the fame and wanted the popularity.

When you want to be popular, you often do things just to please people. When he was with Arthur Criehtfield, and his time was spent with the faithful brethren in Ohio, he acted like them, standing firm for the truth—because that is what they did. When he moved to Nashville and preached to a crowd that was nearly 40% lost people, he tailored his message as to not offend the lost ones whose praise he wanted—thus while attendance grew, the church did not. When in the South, he defended slavery and encouraged rebellion. When in England, and when close to Washington D.C., he sought to encourage peace.

Universalism is a very comforting doctrine to anyone who is lost, or whose family members died outside of Christ—the problem is *it is a lie!* It is no surprise Ferguson might promote this doctrine when he seems most concerned about making people happy and increasing his own popularity with the masses. He truly became all things to all people—but it wasn't to win them to Christ, it was to increase his popularity.

He liked the spotlight.

In introducing the topic of the spirits in prison, he admitted his interpretation was unique among his

brethren. And he knew it would grab him a lot of attention. And through the pages of the *Christian Magazine*, he played it for all it was worth.

If these guesses are accurate, perhaps at some point he realized it had gone further than he intended, but he couldn't back down from it (see point 1: ego). So in an effort to keep the attention, he pushed it even further and claimed he talked with departed souls—*proving* (so the claim would go) his doctrine of universal salvation was true.

He did not have a love of the truth.

Ferguson clearly was an eloquent preacher who could preach the truth on some subjects. Arthur Criehtfield wouldn't have trusted him otherwise. Ferguson wrote some fantastic articles in support of the truth, which is why Tolbert Fanning trusted him to take over the *Christian Review*.

But Jesse B. Ferguson didn't have a love of the truth.

This is clear as you see his responses to the brethren trying to bring him back to the truth. In many instances, he ignored what they said, and instead played a “woe is me, they're attacking me” card. He ignored the New Testament's clear teaching on judgment for all (Acts 17:31), and instead clung to his interpretation of a somewhat obscure passage even though it contradicted clear passages.³²

Had he loved the truth, he would have never gone into universalism and spiritualism in the first place—and if he had, would have repented.

Check Yourself

Please let the case of Jesse B. Ferguson serve as a cautionary tale. Love God more than popularity. Be willing to speak the truth even if you might lose friends. Remember that we are supposed to bring glory to God, not to ourselves. And finally, be humble.

³² I am not saying the passage cannot be understood—it can. But that the “spirits in prison” passage has been a difficult passage to explain for many Christians for many years.

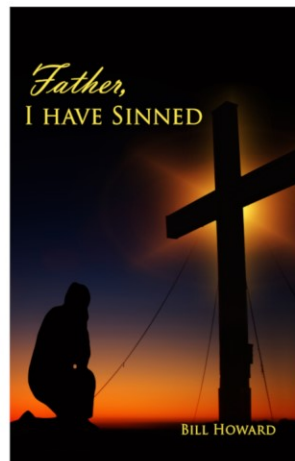
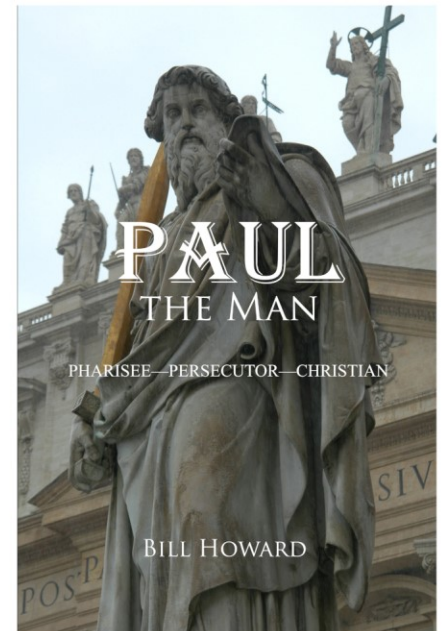
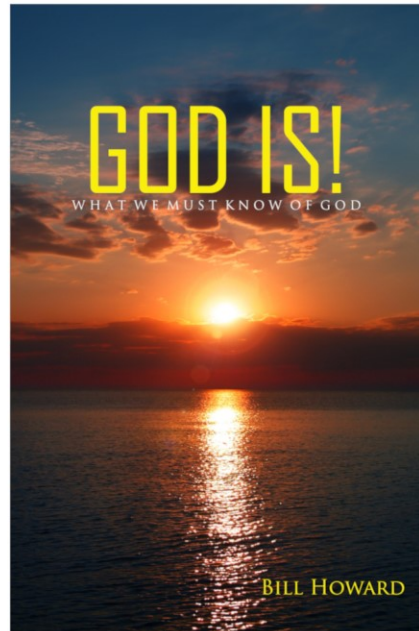
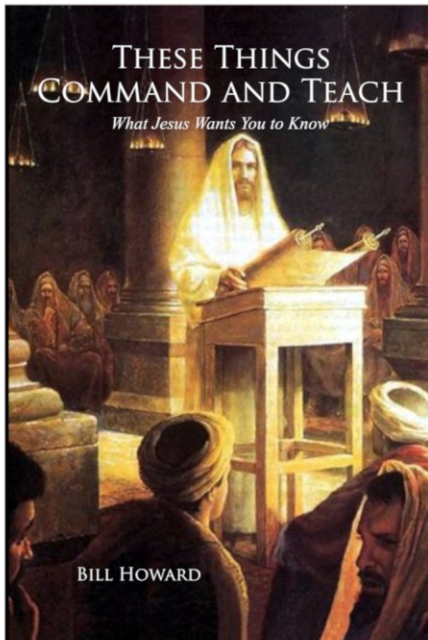
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WILTED PETALS

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

Jim Mitchell

This is the last installment of our examination of *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, and Documented* by David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, and S. Lance Quinn (P & R Publishing – Phillipsburg, New Jersey) 2004. What has been consistently noted and documented throughout the five previous articles is the way the authors:

- avoid the context of the passages they cite,
- argue from presupposition and opinion, and
- conclude what they need to prove.

Such fallacious reasoning exists on every page of their book and in misapplication of each text they include in an effort to support such presuppositions.

Previously we have noted their misuse of scripture in trying to support the doctrines of: Total Depravity (Original Sin), Unconditional Election (Predestination), Limited Atonement (Jesus did not die for humanity, but for a select few), Irresistible Grace (no one can understand the Bible without a special working of the Spirit which “is not made to all sinners, but is issued to the elect only” [p. 53]), and Perseverance of the Saints (Once Saved Always Saved).

This article (number six in this series) discusses the second half of what the authors offer as proof of the last tenet of Calvinism (Once Saved Always Saved). Previously we noted their assumptions regarding Isaiah 54:10; Jeremiah 32:40; Matthew 18:12-14; John 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:35-40, 47; 10:27-30; and 17:11-12, 15. In each of these passages they assume what they need to prove as they have done consistently with every passage discussed throughout their book. This article begins where the previ-

ous one left off.

The authors believe the verses which follow “show that God’s people are given *eternal life* the moment they believe. They are *kept by God’s power* through faith and *nothing can separate them from His love*. They have been *sealed* with the Holy Spirit, who has been given as the *guarantee* of their salvation, and they are thus assured of an eternal inheritance.” (p. 65). [The italics are theirs, not mine.] Note carefully their use of the following Scriptures, keeping the above statement in mind. Do the following verses teach what the above statement says they teach?

Romans 5:8-10

“But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been *justified by his blood*, much more *shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God*. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be *saved by his life*.”

Interesting, is it not, that this passage in Romans is used in connection with the above quote from page 65, since the passage not only says nothing about faith (refer back to their statement prior to the quote from Romans 5), but also nothing about: salvation at the moment of belief; how one comes to be justified by the blood of Christ; or any details about the process of reconciliation. Since they state these verses support each of those things, should it not be the case that at least ONE of the elements of their statement should be addressed in a passage purport-

ed to defend those ideas? The same can (and should) be asked regarding the rest of the verses quoted from Romans as “supportive texts” to this aspect of Calvinism.

With regard to Romans 5, after providing an extensive contrast between Adam and Jesus and sin and salvation, Paul ends chapter 5 by stating:

“the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (5:20, 21).

This closing verse of Romans 5 provokes an interesting question regarding this tenet of Calvinism. Does Romans state that “righteousness” is something which is GIVEN to an individual (i.e. the individual is totally passive regarding righteousness – i.e. “Irresistible Grace”) or have they assumed it to be in this passage? Is righteousness something an individual needs to be ACTIVELY ENGAGED in, or is it a robotic response over which he/she has no control? It seems that when one continues reading past Romans 5, Paul actually provides an answer to such an inquiry.

“But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness” (Rom. 6:17, 18).

Indeed, the assumptions and presuppositions of Calvinism become more and more obvious when Scripture is viewed in its context rather than stripping isolated verses from the extended passages. **[Romans 5:8-10 does NOT support the teaching of “once saved always saved.”]**

Romans 8:1:

“There is therefore not no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

[note: Some manuscripts continue the verse with – “who walk not after the flesh but according to the Spirit” and it is so translated in other English trans-

lations. Even if it is argued that verse one should conclude with the name “Jesus,” the same longer phrase is repeated in verse four. (JM)]

The usage of this opening verse of Romans 8 (even in its shortened form) to the exclusion of what immediately follows it is no oversight. If Steele, Thomas, and Quinn continued their quote to the point being made in verse 4, they would lose their assumptive application in the way they use verse 1. The ESV translates Romans 8:3b–4 this way:

“By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

The word translated “walk” in Romans 8:4 (περιπατοῦσιν) is used 7 times in the New Testament (Matt. 11:5; Mk. 7:5; 16:12; Lk. 7:22; Rom. 8:1, 4; and Phil. 3:18). In each case, it shows the ACTIVE involvement and nature of the subject. The question to be asked, in the context of what Paul here writes, is What happens if someone ceases (stops) walking “according to the Spirit”? Please keep this question in mind as it will be addressed in connection with other verses the authors quote from Romans 8. In the theology of Calvinism, it is impossible for one to cease walking in the Spirit since Calvinism teaches that humanity does not actually have “free will,” but that God makes the chosen ones respond without allowing them either the opportunity or the will to do otherwise. **[Romans 8:1 does NOT support the doctrine of “once saved always saved.”]**

Romans 8:29-30:

“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.”

This is another problematic passage for Calvin-

ism for a variety of reasons. First, the passage deals with what God does without mentioning what role the individual plays in that process. This passage does not state that “God’s people are given *eternal life* the moment they believe.” This passage does not deal with the statement or concept that “they are *kept by God’s power* through faith and *nothing can separate them from His love*.” If one is looking for a passage stating that Christians “have been *sealed with the Holy Spirit*,” this is not it, since this passage does not deal with it at all. If one is looking for a text which states that “the Holy Spirit has been given as the *guarantee* of their salvation,” this passage isn’t it—it doesn’t even mention the Holy Spirit. If the authors are searching for a Scripture which states Christians “are thus assured of an eternal inheritance,” Romans 8:29-30 is not the passage to use as it also does not mention that part of the authors’ position.

Second, the doctrine of Unconditional Election (i.e. Predestination – which was dealt with several issues ago) states that God’s “*eternal choice of particular sinners for 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. This, election was not determined by, or conditioned upon, anything that men would do, but resulted entirely from God’s self-determined purpose. Those who were not chosen for salvation were passed by and left to their own evil devices and choices.*” (p. 27). The above passage states that those whom God “foreknew” He “predestined.” Calvinism teaches the opposite. It is interesting to ask one steeped in Calvinistic doctrine how God can/could know everything if His choice of salvation was/is not based upon any “*foreseen act or response on the part of those selected.*” If the response is – ‘well, God can choose not to know something,’ then upon what does God make His choice? One would expect Calvinists to avoid, at all cost, any verse such as this which deals with the foreknowledge of God. **[Romans 8:29-30 does NOT support the position taken by the authors on page 65 of their “defense” of this tenet of Cal-**

vinism.]

Romans 8:35-39

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are *more than conquerors through him* who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth; *nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

Wayne Jackson points out:

“Calvinists misuse this section in their vain attempt to prove that no child of God can ever apostatize and be lost. No external force can separate us from Christ’s love for us. But one can fall away from the faith, thus rejecting that love, and be lost (Gal. 5:4). Paul lists seven things that cannot disrupt Christ’s love; none of these has to do with a person’s choice to abandon the Savior.”¹

In reality, the authors of this “defense” of Calvinism have Paul arguing with Paul. In his first letter to him, Paul encouraged Timothy to “**wage the good warfare, holding faith and good conscience**” (1 Tim. 1:18-19) warning him that some “**have made shipwreck of their faith**” (1:19). It is impossible to wreck something which does not truly exist. While Paul, in Romans 8, indeed deals with outside pressures and problems, he does not address what can create issues within the heart, mind, and soul of the believer which can make “shipwreck of their faith.” Context is once again avoided and, as a result, **[Romans 8:35-39 does NOT support the Calvinistic point the authors endeavor to make.]**

¹Wayne Jackson, A New Testament Commentary (Christian Courier Publications, 2019) p. 285.

Before leaving Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome, connect the above passage with what Paul wrote in Rom. 10:3, 4.

"Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness."

While Romans 8:35-39 focuses on forces beyond the control of humanity, Romans 10 does not. Paul's statement that these individuals "did not submit to God's righteousness" would contradict what he wrote in Romans 8 if the Calvinist assumption on the meaning of Romans 8:35-39 were correct. In the case of Calvinism, "submission" to God's righteousness is not something one can do on their own.

1 Corinthians 1:7-9:

"...so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

Is there a reason why these authors start with verse 7 instead of at least going back to verse 4 to catch the context and subsequently the meaning of verses 7-9? I believe the answer is YES. Here is what precedes the above quote.

"I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given to you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you" (1:4-6).

For those who continue to be "enriched" in their speech and knowledge "in" Christ, it is indeed true that they will be sustained to the end. The question

which Steele, Thomas, and Quinn do not address is whether or not believers can turn away and cease to be enriched in Christ. Once again, the authors have assumed what they must prove and hold on to assumptive conclusions to defend the doctrine they

espouse. Refer back to the point they are endeavoring to "defend" and note that, just as previously, this passage does not support their opening statement quoted from page 65. **[1 Corinthians 1:7-9 does NOT defend the stated**

position of these authors.]

1 Corinthians 10:13:

"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."

First of all, please note the wording of the phrase "that you MAY BE ABLE to endure it" (emphasis mine, JM). The authors are suggesting that the verse really says "you will always endure it." Once again, why would the verses surrounding the above verse not be mentioned? Simply put, the context shows yet again the futility of the assumptive way the authors use this passage in support of "once saved always saved." Note some of the statements Paul makes prior to verse 13 as well as after it.

"We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come." (10:9-11).

"Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry" (10:14).

Does such instruction from Paul make sense if they cannot possibly ever be in a position where they could have "fallen away from grace" as Paul states is possible in Galatians 5:4? **[1 Corinthians 10:13**

does NOT support or “defend” the point of Calvinism under discussion.]

2 Corinthians 4:14, 17:

“...knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus *will raise us* also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. . . . For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”

In commenting on the author’s use of the above verse, may I first call your attention to an interesting statement Paul made earlier in 2 Corinthians 4.

“And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (4:3, 4).

Calvinists would disagree with Paul as they have assumed that it is not the god of this world who has “blinded the minds of the unbelievers,” but God the Father, since they believe God has predestined those unbelievers to be unable to understand the gospel of Christ and therefore be lost. Indeed, Calvinism has assumed that God has made it impossible for those people to see the light of the gospel while Paul states otherwise.

Second, to use 2 Cor. 4:14, 17 in support of “once saved always saved” is to continue to assume what must be proven. Paul is making these statements to **“the church of God that is in Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia”** (2 Cor. 1:1). Toward the end of this letter, Paul wrote to these same people **“Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you fail to meet the test!”** (13:5) [emphasis here is mine (JM)]. If “us with you” is all inclusive in 4:14 (as these Calvinists have assumed), how inclusive is “yourselves” and “you” in 13:5? **[2 Corinthians 4:14, 17 do NOT support the author’s “defense” of this fifth point of Calvinism.]**

Ephesians 1:5, 13-14:

“He predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will. . . . In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were *sealed* with the promised Holy Spirit, who is *the guarantee of our inheritance* until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

The phrase in the ESV **“the guarantee of our inheritance”** is translated **“deposit”** in the NIV, and **“pledge”** in the NASV, NRSV, and Greek-English lexicons. While there is no doubt that God will honor His word, that is not the question Steele, Thomas, Quinn, and other Calvinists need to address. The question is whether or not Christians can turn away from the truth of God’s word. It is as though they do not even acknowledge the significance of verse 14 – **“until we acquire possession of it,...”** which exposes the flaw in what they assume about the verse. It continues to consistently be the case that these authors invariably assume what they need to prove to “defend” Calvinism, and so far they have failed to do so from the very beginning of their book. **[Ephesians 1:5, 13-14 does NOT support the position of these Calvinistic authors stated on page 65 of their book.]**

Ephesians 4:30:

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were *sealed* for the day of redemption.”

The similarity that exists between the phrasing of Ephesians 1:13, 14 and the wording of 4:30 should be duly noted, including the similarity between **“until we acquire possession of it”** (1:14) and **“for the day of redemption”** (4:30). While both address something taking place in the future, what is true about 1:5, 13-14 is also true about 4:30. For “once saved always saved” to be “defended” from Ephesians, it must be shown (not assumed) that Christians are incapable of having a free will with which they could/can turn away from God’s word and be lost. Note the continued admonitions for the Ephe-

sian Christians to stay away from a ‘darkened understanding’ (4:17- 31). Paul’s instructions in 4:17-31 make no sense if it is impossible for “the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus” to be lost (1:1). **[Ephesians 4:30 does NOT support the position on Calvinism stated in the book by Steele, Thomas, and Quinn.]**

Colossians 3:3-4:

“For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then *you also will appear with him in glory.*”

Oh the significance of context, context, context! Throughout the majority of chapter 3, Paul instructs them to **“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming.”** Similar instructions continue through at least 3:16. Once again, what is assumed has yet to be proven. Paul is writing **“To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae”** (1:1). If it is the case that “faithful brothers in Christ” cannot fall away from the truth and be lost, then Paul wrote some useless statements to these “faithful brothers.”

“See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to the elemental spirits of the world and not according to Christ” (2:8).

“Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind...” (2:17, 18).

[Colossians 3:3-4 does NOT support what these authors have stated on page 65 that it supports. Another “proof text” fails just as each one which has preceded it.]

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24:

“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be *kept blameless* at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is *faithful; he will surely do it.*”

The very fact that there is what amounts to a prayer from Paul that the Christians in Thessalonica “be kept blameless” necessitates the possibility that they could live in a way where that would NOT be the case—otherwise such a prayer makes no sense. The very fact that Paul states **“MAY** your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless” further devastates this erroneous teaching of Calvinism [emphasis mine (JM)]. This is another verse which one would think these authors would avoid. **[1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 does NOT support “once saved always saved.”]**

2 Timothy 4:18:

“The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and *bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.* To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

The context in which this statement is found is yet another instance where the authors seem to be totally ignorant of what Paul has written and why. Why would the above statement in 4:18 be the case? Paul tells us why.

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on the Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing” (4:7, 8).

In his first letter to Timothy, he stated:

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,...” (1 Tim. 4:1).

The term “depart” is defined as “withdraw, revolt, abandon,” etc., and argues against the Calvinistic teaching of “once saved always saved.” **[2 Timothy 4:18 does NOT support the fifth tenet of Calvinism.]**

Hebrews 9:12, 15:

“He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves

but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. . . . Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.”

Here is yet another passage which has no bearing on the question of “eternal security of the believer” since it still states it as a possibility – “**MAY receive.**” The passage deals with the significance of the death of Christ as a one-time sacrifice rather than repetitious sacrifices of animals which were required under the Old covenant. The authors of this book should know that. Once again, it almost seems that they have used a concordance to look up “eternal,” “redemption,” and other terms but, in any case, they have definitely done a disservice to any objective look at the doctrine they espouse. [Hebrews 9:12, 15 does NOT support the final point of Calvinism.]

Hebrews 10:14:

“For by a single offering he has *perfected* for all time those who are being *sanctified*.”

Instead of actually dealing with the topic they have vainly attempted to “defend,” the authors make the same error with this passage they made with their reference in Hebrews 9. Focusing on the sacrifice of Jesus rather than on the responsibility of the believer (and actually ignoring the further context of Hebrews 10) is inexcusable. Consider some of the remaining statements found in Hebrews 10.

“[19] *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, [20] by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, . . . [22] Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, . . . [23] Let us hold fast the confession of our faith without wavering, . . . [24] And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, . . . [26] For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice*

for sins, [27] but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.” [Bold font mine (JM)]

Does that sound like “once saved always saved”?

Remember, the statement they made which they suggested all of these verses support this final point of Calvinism?

“The following verses show that God’s people are given eternal life the moment they believe. They are kept by God’s power through faith and nothing can separate them from His love. They have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, who has been given as the guarantee of their salvation, and they are thus assured of an eternal inheritance” (p. 65).

So far NONE of the verses they quote support that statement! They have assumed that “faith” is not something for which anyone is responsible, but merely something which God gives to people He has chosen to be saved. Calvin was notorious for assuming and concluding what he needed to prove, and these authors have consistently done the same. The last reference they use from Hebrews to “defend” the teaching of “once saved always saved” fares no better than any other of the “Approximately 250 passages (consisting of well over 400 verses)” to which the authors, in their preface, state “Great care has been exercised to avoid quoting verses out of their context.” From beginning to end of this “defense” of Calvinism, context has been avoided like a plague. [Hebrews 10:14 does NOT support “once saved always saved”]

Hebrews 12:28:

“Therefore let us be grateful for *receiving* a kingdom that *cannot be shaken*, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.”

To state that the kingdom of God “cannot be shaken” does not address either the responsibility or what is expected of those who believe, but deals with the enduring nature of the kingdom to which those individuals desire to be a part. Once again, the passage quoted in no way addresses the point they

are endeavoring to “defend.” The authors have only five references left to make their case for Perseverance of the Saints: (once saved always saved). **[NONE of the passages they have offered up to this point have “defended” that doctrine, including Hebrews 12:28]**

1 Peter 1:3-5:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, *he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*”

Does this passage “defend” their statement from page 65? Does the passage mention salvation at the point of belief? While the “inheritance” is “imperishable, undefiled, and unfading,” to support their point, the passage needs to say that it is GOD who needs to keep the faith of His children “imperishable, undefiled, and unfading,” but that is not what the passage states. The ancient Eastern text of Scripture (the Aramaic of the Peshitta) translates into English of verse 3 this way:

*“Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who by his abundant mercy has again renewed us spiritually to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*²

The unspoken contention (i.e. assumption) once again on the part of the authors is that the individual is totally passive in the salvation process while Peter states the opposite in the very chapter from which they quote. Toward the end of this first chapter he stated that these Christians **“purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brother-**

ly love” (1:22). Such a statement would only be valid if the individual was capable of accomplishing such a task. In Calvinism, 1 Peter 1:22 makes no sense.

In the above passage, the authors additionally highlight *“kept in heaven for you”* which deals with the nature of the inheritance and in no way addresses the endurance (or lack thereof) of the faith of the child of God. Additionally highlighting **“being guarded”** in the phrase **“being guarded through faith”** doesn’t serve the author’s purpose any better as it does not address whether or not the child of God can lose his/her faith. The apostle Paul stated that the loss of faith not only CAN but DOES occur when he admonished Timothy to **“wage the good warfare, holding faith and good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith”** (1 Tim. 1:18b, 19) – yet another point where Calvinism does not believe God’s Word. **[1 Peter 1:3-5 does NOT support the Calvinistic doctrine of the authors, but they continue to assume what they must prove.]**

Toward the end of first Peter, we find statements of encouragement which make no sense at all if it is impossible for the child of God to turn his/her back on God and be lost.

“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour; Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world” (1 Pet. 5:8, 9).

1 John 2:19, 25:

“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have *continued with us*. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. . . . And this is *the promise* that he made to us – *eternal life*.”

Flagrant misuse of Scripture by these authors has continued from the beginning of their “defense” of each point of Calvinism and their use of these verses from 1st John proves to be the same. By starting

²George M. Lamsa’s translation from the Aramaic of the Peshitta, *HOLY BIBLE from the Ancient Eastern Text* (Harper One, originally published by A. J. Holman company, 1957), p. 1211.

with verse 19, it seems they are trying to make the point that perhaps those who leave “the faith” were never IN “the faith,” but this shows itself as one of the most blatant examples yet of stripping the verse out of its context. Who are those who “were not of us”? John gave the answer to that question in verse 18 – the verse immediately prior to what these authors quote!

“Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us;” (1:18, 19a).

Who were the ones “not of us” and who have not “continued with us”? John’s answer – “antichrists.” For these authors to do such disservice to Scripture is inexcusable! Additionally, it may be asked why they did not include **1 John 2:24** in the above quotation (but when that verse is read, the answer is obvious).

“Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.”

The wording of this verse necessitates that the opposite would also be true – i.e. if what you heard from the beginning ceases to abide in you, you will cease to abide in the Son and in the Father. The truthfulness of that contrast has already been addressed in previous contexts of passages these authors attempt to use which, in reality, teach the opposite. The reason these authors did not quote the above verse even though they quoted the next verse in that passage is obvious. It states something diametrically opposed to Calvinism, which these authors don’t believe. **[1 John 2:19, 25 does NOT support the position of Steele, Thomas, and Quinn.]**

1 John 5:4, 11-13, 20:

“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. . . . And this is the testimony, that God gave us

eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life, I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. . . . And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.”

Assuming what they need to prove, the authors continue to confuse verses which deals with what God provides with the erroneous belief that these verses deal with what individuals need to do and are admonished and/or commanded to do. Concerning this verse, Alexander Ross notes:

“Whatsoever is begotten of God overcomes. The negative participle emphasizes the power that is at work in the child of God and diverts attention from the child of God himself.”

Such an observation shows why the usage of this verse in connection with the statement attempting to “defend” Calvinism on page 65 is illegitimate. Ross continues:

“It is not the child of God himself, but the new life that is in him, that conquers. And, it is not the mere fact of the new birth from God that is emphasized, but the abiding results of that birth – whatsoever is begotten of God and abides as the soul’s permanent possession. At the same time, man’s faith must be in lively exercise, laying hold on the power of God.”³

It is this last sentence which Calvinists would find most distasteful.

Acknowledging and understanding the context of 1st John would assist greatly in a proper usage of John’s epistle, but a complete understanding of the phrasing used and why these inspired words were chosen seems beyond the scope of *The FIVE POINTS of CALVINISM: DEFINED, DEFENDED,*

³Alexander Ross, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistles of James and John* (Eerdmans Pub. co.; Grand Rapids. 1967) 210, 211.

AND DOCUMENTED. In **1 John 3:9**, John wrote –

“No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, but God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.”

In his commentary on 1st John, B. F. Westcott noted

“The exact form is important. The perfect (ὁ γεγεννημένος) marks not only the single act (aor. Ἐγεννήθησαν John I. 13; v. 18) but the continuous presence of its efficacy. ‘He that hath been born and still remains a child of God.’”⁴

Such a comment about the meaning of the Greek text brings a devastating blow to the authors usage of 1 John and the teaching of Calvinism. [**1 John 5:4, 11-13, 20 does NOT support the position of John Calvin or Steele, Thomas, Quinn.**]

We are down to the final two “proof texts” the authors offer in their “defense” of the teaching of Perseverance of the Saints (i.e. once saved always saved), and thus far no passage they have used supports this teaching.

Jude 1:

“. . . To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and *kept* for Jesus Christ. . .”

Once again, when context is ignored and assumptions rule the day all sorts of false doctrines arise. How are those who are “called” kept? Does Jude mention anything which might answer that question? The answer is yes. In **verse 3**, Jude stated – **“I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”** For Calvinists, such a statement from Jude is not only unnecessary, but absurd. Why have them contend for the faith since, according to Calvinism, the saved cannot possibly do anything which would cause them to be lost and the lost cannot possibly comprehend anything in God’s Word which could ever bring them to faith in Christ? Jude

later admonishes:

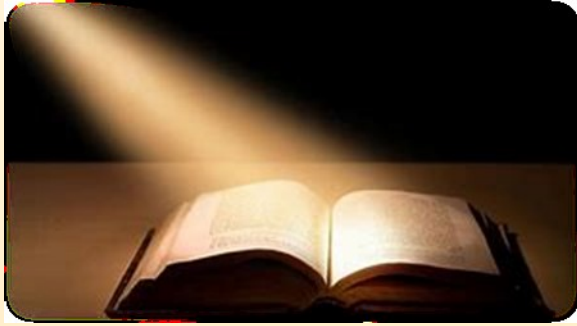
*“But you, beloved, **building yourselves up** on your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, **keep yourselves** in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh” (20-23) [bold emphasis mine (JM)].*

To Calvinism, the idea of building yourselves up and keeping yourself in the love of God makes no sense since, to John Calvin and his followers, God keeps you in the love of God or God keeps you lost. You have no say in the matter. **[Jude 1 does NOT support this teaching of Calvinism.]**

Over the course of several months, we have discussed each point of Calvinism through a fairly extensive look into the book: *The FIVE POINTS of CALVINISM: Defined, Defended, and Documented*. The authors, David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, and S. Lance Quinn, stated at the beginning that the part of their book with which we have been engaged was “devoted to a *biblical defense* of the five points of Calvinism. After each point has been introduced and related to the overall system, some of the more important verses in which it is taught are given. The various passages appealed to in the support of each point are classified under appropriate headings. Approximately 250 passages ‘consisting of well over 400 verses’ are quoted in full.” [Through this series of articles, we have looked at EACH of the passages they quote (JM)] Then they state – “Great care has been exercised to avoid quoting verses out of their context.” (page xxi, xxii).

I contend that these authors greatly failed in their task due to God’s Word’s opposition to Calvinism. It remains and forever will remain a system of assumptions read into biblical texts and presumptive conclusions reached from those assumptions. I leave it to the reader to see whether these authors kept these many passages in context and whether they made their case in any form or fashion whatsoever.

⁴Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John* (MacMillan and Co. 1883) 104.



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SANCTIFIED LEADERSHIP

Michael Mazzalongo

Shortly after the Jews left Egypt, God directed Moses to select certain men to go ahead and spy out the land of Canaan in order to prepare for their arrival and settlement. Moses did not just pick volunteers, he carefully selected twelve men who were already leaders among the people.

“So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran at the command of the LORD, all of them men who were heads of the sons of Israel.

(Numbers 13:3)

We read in the following chapters about their mission and its results: They spied out the land and found it lush, productive, well-populated and guarded. When they returned, ten of the leaders tried to convince the people not to go forward because they were afraid of the military strength of the inhabitants. Two of the leaders (Joshua and Caleb) encouraged the people to rely on the Lord for victory in taking the land. Because of this dispute and fear of some leaders, the people revolted against Moses and tried to head back to Egypt. As a result, God punished them by declaring they would not go into the promised land but instead would wander in the de-

sert for 40 years (one year for each day the spies were in the land).

“Your sons shall be shepherds for forty years in the wilderness, and they will suffer for your unfaithfulness, until your corpses lie in the wilderness. According to the number of days which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day you shall bear your guilt a year, even forty years, and you will know My opposition.”

(Numbers 14:33-34)

In the end, the entire generation over twenty years of age at the time of the revolt, died in the desert—only their children entered (because they used the “safety” of their children as an excuse not to go forward when they had the chance). When the moment finally came to cross into the promised land four decades later, only Joshua and Caleb were left of that generation who entered their new home. This was a gift from God for their faithful leadership.

Even though this episode occurred nearly 3500 years ago, it still has some challenging lessons to teach us about leadership today.

LESSONS FROM THE SPIES

In the same way that Moses selected the leaders among the people to carry out important tasks, the church today selects people to leadership positions in order to do God's work among the brethren; this includes elders, deacons, teachers, and preachers. These men are selected to provide leadership of one kind or another over the spiritual and physical welfare of the church.

Those who lead need to pay careful attention to the lessons taught by former leaders we read about in the Word. These twelve spies, for example, teach us the three basic lessons that all God's leaders must know if they are to succeed in the task and position that God has given to them.

LEADERS LEAD

These men were not asked to stay home at the camp and boss everyone around. To use a famous line from a popular TV series – they were asked to go *where no one had gone before*.

That is the point of leadership, it is what makes the leader a leader, he goes ahead to explore, to find out, to chart, to experience what is ahead. In practical terms it means that those who lead in education, for example, need to be examining what the church will and should be learning in the future. Those who lead in maintenance should be preventing breakdowns, not just fixing them. I mention these simply to name a few obvious examples.

People look to leaders for direction; and leaders cannot give direction from the back of the pack – they have to be ahead in order to lead. When leaders don't lead, when they are not at least a step ahead spiritually and organizationally – the church stands still, takes a wrong turn, or begins to divide.

LEADERS MOTIVATE

In the story of the spies, it was the argument of the ten cowardly leaders that convinced the people not to go, and eventually revolt. Like it or not, people reflect the attitude of their leaders. If the leaders are lazy, the people will not accomplish much. If the leaders are not committed, the people will not feel

the need to commit themselves either. The people will show in themselves the relative strengths and weaknesses of their leaders. The result will be inconsistency (i.e. The church will be strong in the areas where the leaders are strong, weak in the areas where leaders are weak). Leaders need to understand how powerful their influence is for good or evil.

Satan's best scheme is to convince leaders that they really have no influence, so if they slack off or cut corners, no one will notice. Of course, this is a lie, like all of his other lies. Believe me, the church notices the neglect of its leaders, fellow leaders notice the extra burden they must carry, and the Lord notices the poor stewardship. This brings me to the third lesson:

LEADERS PAY

God has always held leaders accountable for their leadership. The ten unfaithful and cowardly spies died in dishonor in the desert. The two faithful ones made it to the promised land. The names of these twelve spies were listed in the book of Numbers when they were chosen for the mission – but today, people name their sons after only two of these men (Joshua and Caleb), because only these two distinguished themselves as leaders. It is nice to be chosen, to have the elders pray and introduce you to the church, to have your name and ministry listed in the bulletin as a church leader. However, there will come a time of accountability for this role, one day you will have to pay the price for leadership, God will require you to answer how well you served as one of His chosen leaders.

HOW LEADERS BECOME LEADERS

Although the information is not included in the story of the spies, the Bible does support the idea that leaders are *made* and *not born*. One does not simply become a leader: able to lead, motivate, and be responsible on the day of appointment. Becoming a leader requires that an individual practice and develop certain leadership techniques. If you are in a leadership role or if you aspire to one, here are

some basic things you absolutely have to do in order to succeed:

MASTER YOURSELF

You cannot lead others if you cannot lead yourself. What separates leaders from followers is that leaders are usually better able to control themselves. Listen to two Christian leaders and what they said about this issue:

Paul:

“...but I buffet (beat back) my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.”

(1 Corinthians 9:27)

Paul, the leading missionary, understood the necessity of mastering his desires and weaknesses so that after all his good work he would not be swept away by personal temptation to sin. He knew that even leaders could fall, and they needed to control themselves.

James:

“Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.”

(James 3:1-2)

James, a leader in the Jerusalem church, warns leaders (especially teachers) that leadership requires mastery over what one says and does. People need to see an example of what spiritual maturity and Christian conduct is like. Christian leaders provide this by demonstrating a greater measure of self-mastery than the ones they lead. Leaders are not perfect, but they have gained mastery over their tongues and conduct to a point where it is obvious to others. True Christian leaders motivate others to copy them, to point to them as examples of what they themselves want to become in Christ.

Another thing you, as a leader, need to do to develop leadership skills is...

DEVOTE YOURSELF

I remember a lesson by the late Robert George. He told the story of a boy who loved riding his bike – it was his favorite thing to do. Sadly, one day while on the bike he was hit by a car and died of his injuries. His parents decided to bury the bicycle with him in his grave because he so loved riding it. Then, as he closed out his lesson, Robert asked the church to imagine what would eventually be buried next to them in their graves: their car, soccer schedule, phone, TV, bow, gun, rod, animal, music, tools, computer games, etc.? In other words, when people gather to remember us, what will they remember that was most important to us in our lives? As he put it – our magnificent obsessions?

Let's face it, you know what you are known for. For leaders in the church, it can be a number of things: The list of people we visited or taught or served; The Bible we preached and defended; The projects we worked on in the congregation. One thing is for certain, the single most identifying characteristic of leaders in the church is the devotion they have to the Lord's body. Some may be more skilled as teachers, others may be better “people persons.” But no one is more devoted to the overall well-being, success, and growth of the church than its leaders. You cannot fake devotion: Christ died for the church; Paul was tortured for it; Peter was martyred as one of its leaders. This was not simply a question of circumstances or bad timing on their part – this happened to them as an example to other leaders who would come after. Their lives demonstrated the extent of suffering or service God could require of His leaders in the church.

If the leaders cannot devote themselves to regular attendance or extra giving of time and money, they will fall dreadfully short on that day when the Lord asks them to do something really dynamic – like suffer for the faith or even perhaps die for it. If leaders are not devoted to the church and their ministries, how can the members be expected to commit themselves?

Devotion is a learned thing – leaders learn it from

Christ, followers learn it at first from their leaders. The church cannot rise above the level of leadership that it has.

In order to become a good leader, you must master yourself, devote yourself, and then...

REPRODUCE YOURSELF

An important goal of leadership, as I have explained, is to provide direction and motivation to the church through example, teaching, and service. Another, equally important, goal of leadership is to train others to be leaders.

“...teaching others to obey what I have commanded you.”

(Matthew 28:20)

“...and the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”

(2 Timothy 2:2)

Leaders need to know their jobs well, demonstrate that they can *do* their jobs well, and then find others to train and develop as leaders (i.e. Barnabas was an early church leader who mentored Paul, and Paul then trained Timothy). This multiplication process is how the church grows and how new churches get planted. Churches that fail to develop new leaders, fail to develop. If we have no new elders or deacons, if we do not plant any new churches or send out any new missionaries – we will not be operating according to the New Testament. Leaders fulfill their roles when they are reproducing themselves and hopefully, reproducing better models for leadership.

SUMMARY

When I measure church growth, I do not only look at baptisms, attendance, and contribution. I also observe personal spiritual growth. I wait for potential leaders to give up their immature conduct, spotty attendance and grow up in the Lord. I ask myself, “Has so and so given up their bad habit yet? Who is teaching this year for the first time? Which couple decided to stay together because it was the

right thing to do? What member has begun to attend Bible class in addition to worship?” The list goes on and on in the search for maturing Christians who aspire to lead in the name of Christ.

Both numerical and personal spiritual growth are impossible without growth in leadership. And there is no growth in leadership unless: There is an obvious effort being made at self-mastery; There are obvious signs of superior devotion to the Lord’s church and its work (It is embarrassing when a newly baptized member is more faithful than those in leadership); There is a strategic plan to reproduce the existing leadership instead of hanging on to the status quo because we don’t like change.

The natural temptation at this point is to get mad and quit. I mean, if leadership is this demanding – who needs it? It is a thankless job in many instances and, yes, it is very demanding, almost impossible at times. But God calls on His leaders not to be afraid or faithless. He calls them to lean on Him, trust Him and follow Him. All will be possible with faith. All will be rewarded in due time. The bitter lesson brought home to the Jews while they wandered in the desert for forty long years was that the land was theirs for the taking if they would have followed the leadership of Caleb and Joshua!

So, examine yourselves to see what one step needs to be taken to demonstrate Christian leadership in your home, your workplace, your school, and in your circle of friends. God needs His people to be leaders in the saying and doing of good in this world. What do you need to do to become His leader in your circle today?

I also ask leaders in the church (elders, teachers, ministers, deacons, staff, ministry leaders) to examine themselves also, and see if your leadership is all it needs to be in order to effectively lead God’s people. In these tumultuous times, know that the church needs someone to step forward and declare the words that throughout history have begun every resurgence of God’s Kingdom here on earth, “Here I am
Lord...”

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STRAIVE FOR UNITY

Kevin Micuch

Have you ever seen the movie *Space Jam*? The one where Michael Jordan has to help The Looney Tunes gang defeat a group of aliens in a basketball game? If you haven't by now, I'll assume you just don't want to, so I can speak about it without giving away any spoilers. There's a scene near the end when the aliens realize their boss was simply using them for his own interests, and while they still had the powers of the basketball players, it suddenly dawned on them they were now bigger and stronger than their leader—as opposed to earlier when he was the more dominant one. The five of them then band together and ousted the cruel superior to send him packing.

There's an old Bondei proverb that says, “sticks in a bundle are unbreakable.” Obviously, we can break one stick, but it's a lot harder to do a bunch of sticks. The idea is that you may be able to break down one person, but not ones that are together. As the cliché goes, “there is strength in numbers.”

As we can see from *Space Jam*, and many other movies, when many people band together, there's not much they can't accomplish. If you've ever been in the military or played sports, you know a big part of what you're taught is how to get along and be a team. A group of individuals who share a common goal can achieve great things.

When you're on a team, your ego is supposed to be checked at the door. It's not about *you* anymore. You ought to do everything in your power to help your team out. It's that sense of togetherness and unity that helps each other get through the challenges you'll face. The unit needs to be team-oriented, which will show in good times and bad.

You can tell who the bad teams are in sports

when there is divisiveness throughout the organization. It's fairly obvious. Players talking bad about the coaches, coaches having to squash quarreling and maybe even physical fights between players, owners having to answer about drama, and the list goes on. They seem to just attract all of the bad publicity.

I always have to shake my head too when someone requests to be paid more money, on top of maybe the millions they already are being given. Doesn't that sound selfish? Someone who only thinks about themselves and feels they are better than everyone else is not a team player.

Then there are the good teams. They are the ones having fun and building each other up. Possibly even winning it all. The ‘big game.’ And each player is always attributing the win to a “team effort.” See the contrast?

Everyone wants to be part of a team. We all want to feel included in something. It's human nature. We need a strong support system to get through this game we call ‘life.’ And this is exactly how Christians ought to be. God has given us His church because He knew couldn't get through this life alone.

The church must be that for not only the family of God, but those outside of Christ. In fact, that's exactly what the deciding factor is to the world to show we belong to Christ (John 13:35). This should be what naturally draws unbelievers to disciples of Christ and get them thinking that they should want to be a part of this “team.” It's what the church is all about.

Sadly, this just isn't the reality of it. Many Christians today get sucked right back into their old ways. Peter describes it as “a dog returns to his own

vomit” (2 Peter 2:22). Once one does that, they go back into the chaos of the world and their seed never grows.

Or maybe they get caught up in some church drama and see the divisiveness that can cause all sorts of problems. Leaving a bad taste in their mouths, this has caused many to leave churches behind. Unfortunately, this abandons souls in peril.

What if we focused on how the church can be unified, though? How much better would we be if we had the mind of God when it comes to our unity? Do you believe that more disciples of Christ would remain in Him (John 15:4)? I’m sure more would mature into fine fruit-bearers and stay more connected with the church.

In this study, I want to take a look at how the Bible talks about unity; because it does a lot. I pray you can develop more of an understanding of why unity is important, just like I did, not only to God, but each other.

The Oneness of God

The opening lines of the Bible state:

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters”

(Genesis 1:1-2).

It then goes on to explain how God spoke everything we know into existence. Many believe this to be the first mention of the Godhead in the Scriptures. You have God’s word and His Spirit all working together in tandem to create the vast universe we see today. In fact, many in the Jewish tradition believe ‘7’ to be the number of completeness as it took Him seven days to create everything and then rest.

Now, there are many believers today that don’t believe God is unified this way. That there are three personalities of the Godhead as the New Testament lays out. I admit, it’s difficult to explain sometimes with our limited knowledge, however, it actually has its roots back in the Old Testament.

In Genesis 19:24, we read “*Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens.*” This in regards to the destruction of the evil cities Lot and his family had to flee. Read that verse again. You might ask, what does it mean that there are two “Lords”? Another verse you can read is Psalm 110:1. “*The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.*” Again, how can there be two “Lords”?

You can even see it in stories like Genesis 32. The second half of that chapter talks about Jacob wrestling with a man for a little while. After the scuffle, Jacob says, “*For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.*” (v. 30) How is it that Jacob had seen God? No one has seen God, right? (John 1:18; 1 John 4:12)

Well, what we have is basically two manifestations of God, for lack of better terminology. There’s the invisible God which is in Heaven. We are veiled from Him because of our sin and the curse He’s placed on the universe. But, there also seems to be a part of God that we *can* see, to the best of our ability. Unlike the Deist position, which basically says God left us all alone after He saw us rebelling against Him, the Bible teaches He still interacts with His creation, *even though* we have been separated from Him (cf. Isaiah 59:2).

Just doing a simple study on “the angel of the Lord” will show that this angel speaks on behalf of God. He speaks as though He is God sometimes (ex. Judges 2:1). Another verse to look at is Joshua 5:15. This commander tells Joshua to remove his sandals because he is standing on holy ground. This sounds quite similar to God telling Moses this very thing back in Exodus 3. The question is; who are these messengers that can speak with such authority? The most obvious answer is that it’s God Himself doing the talking. He alone has all authority, being the creator of everything.

Now, I don’t want this be a lesson on a defense of the Godhead. I simply wanted to show you that those who oppose this doctrine probably haven’t read the Old Testament much. This used to a basic

Jewish doctrine. But why did they stop? Because they became hardened in their hearts and had to distance themselves from the new religion emerging at the time. They didn't want to look too "Christian." Those who did notice though, believed in Jesus' message.

We then fast-forward to New Testament times and Jesus uses this same authority when talking with the people of His day (cf. Matthew 21:23). He also speaks on behalf of God and said "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18) just before His ascension. The apostle John even gives Him the title of *logos* or the 'Word' of God (John 1:1). Could Jesus have been that angel of the Lord all the way back in the Old Testament? They both share very similar traits, so it's very possible. Too, Paul says all things were created by Him (Colossians 1:16) like John says in John 1:3. He was the very *words* of God we read back in Genesis 1:1.

So, when Christians claim that "God is one," as the Scriptures say, it's not so much a numerical value, but a description of *unity and togetherness*. The Godhead is unified in all they say and do. That's exactly the reason the Jews wanted to stone Jesus, for saying that He and the Father "are one" (John 10:30-33). They were unified in their mission. Their essence is one in the same. That's why He tells us to be unified with Him also (John 17:20-23).

United with Christ

If you're a home owner, you know one of the chores that must be done is pulling weeds that grow in your yard. I don't know about you, but I don't like pulling weeds. It's so tedious. The worst ones are the really long vines that seem to stretch the whole length of the house. How do they get so long?

There is a lesson, though, as Jesus says He is the "true vine" (John 15:1ff). In verse 5, He says His disciples are the branches of that vine. So, if we want to bear good fruit, we are to be in that vine, united with Him.

Just as a vine is all one, His body is all one as well. Jesus is described as the "head" of His body (Colossians 1:18). Much like our physical bodies, it's configured of many moving parts, but they all need to work together in order for it to function properly. But, that only works if Jesus is the head of the body you're in.

This is what it means to be united in Him. Are we all united in Christ? Sadly, no. The Bible tells us only certain people are united with Christ. Who are these people? It's those in His body. Look back at that verse in Colossians. Paul says Christ's body is also His church. These two terms are used synonymously. The *ekklesia*, or church, are the ones called out by God. It's the assembly of believers who have acknowledged Christ as the Lord.

So, how do we get into this one body? How can

we become a part of this one church? Well, we have to be *in* Christ. Ephesians 1:3 says every spiritual blessing is *in* Christ. The same author says in 1 Timothy 2:10 that salvation is also *in* Christ. That means when we're in Christ, we are saved. So how do we get into Christ? By being bap-

tized.

Once we realize Jesus is who He says He is, the next step is to be united with Him and become His disciple. How we do that is being immersed into the waters of baptism. Galatians 3:26-27 says, "*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*" We must put on Christ in order to be one with Him. 1 Corinthians 12:13a also says, "*For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one*

...when Christians claim "God is one," as the Scriptures say, it's not so much a numerical value, but a description of unity and togetherness.

body...” Whose body? Christ’s body; the church. It’s the door that leads us to salvation and receiving the forgiveness of sins.

There are a few other parallels we can look at also. First, Christ’s church is also known as His bride (cf. Revelation 21:9). They share the same unity as a husband and wife would once they become “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24; Mark 10:8). They are united together, loving and serving one another as all marriages should.

Lastly, there’s Romans 6:3-4 which reads:

“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.”

Not only does baptism unite us into Christ and His body, it also unites us in His death. Baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. We die to our former self, are buried in the water, and are raised to walk in a new life with Him. What a great way to start this new life unified with Christ!

Be Unified Among the Brethren

As I stated earlier, no one can enjoy any spiritual blessings outside of Christ. They are only found in Him. One of those is being a part of His body, the church of God, and there are many commands about being united amongst the brothers and sisters.

In addition to being united in Jesus, we also are to be united with each other. God’s children are described in the Bible as His family. Even Jesus said, *“For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother”* (Matthew 12:50). We can picture most families coming together but God’s family transcends that of just our relatives. All people of every tribe and culture can become a disciple of Christ (Galatians 3:28). That’s the beauty of His church. All of us coming together and sharing that one goal of becoming like our Lord in the resurrection.

There was a lot of bitterness though back during New Testament times. The Jews and Gentiles really didn’t know how to get along. They had their different cultures and traditions, much like we do today. The New Testament writers had to remind them constantly to stay united amongst themselves and share in the love of Christ.

The first epistle to the church in Corinth is a great example of this. The saints there were divided on a number of things. As soon as Paul gets done greeting them in the first couple of verses, he gets right into the lesson. The brethren in Corinth were divided over which teacher they liked the best (vs 10-17). Paul needed to remind them to focus on Christ and not the men that teach about Him. Only Christ should get the glory.

Chapter 12 also deals with this issue. Not only were the Corinthians divided over which disciple they liked, they were also divided on which spiritual gift they thought was most important. They were quarreling over whose gift was better. Trying to relate, I feel I may have gotten caught up with this as well.

In the first eleven verses, Paul reminds them they are all in Christ and that all of their gifts came from the same Holy Spirit. Sure, there were different gifts but they all came from the same place. Then, starting in verse twelve, he goes back to the body analogy. A body has many different moving parts but they are all a part of *one* body. We all may have different gifts and talents, but fighting over who has the better ones is futile. Why not work together to achieve something greater for Christ? What I lack, you may be great in, and vice versa. We ought to be building each other up instead of tearing each other down.

This is what the New Testament writers mean when they say to “be of one mind” (Romans 15:6; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 2:2; 1 Peter 3:8). They were teaching us to be unified in our thinking, to be spiritual minded and walk according to the Spirit (Romans 8:1), and focus on things above (Colossians 3:1-2). Only then can we get more work done. When spiritual things are our priority, there’s nothing we can’t achieve.

It does not mean that we all need to act alike, think alike, dress alike, and have the same hairstyle. That is not what it means to be united and have one mind. It doesn't mean we all have to agree on everything in our lives. Being united means that *in spite of* our difference of opinions and backgrounds, we can still love one another and work together to build better communities and grow the kingdom of God. This is what the church needs to be. We strive for something greater and show the world the love we have for one another (John 13:35).

Ephesians 4 is another good example of this. Paul tells the church at Ephesus to walk and live together, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (v. 3). He then lists what many call ‘The Seven Ones.’ Verses 4-6 say:

*“There is **one** body and **one** Spirit, just as you were 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” (emphasis added).*

Remember, back in those days, they believed ‘seven’ was the perfect number.

We have already established that this can stand for the numerical value, as in there is only one church; but the context here is talking about unity. If we are going to belong to the **one body**, we are going to be unified with it. We are united with the **one Lord** upon our **one baptism** and received the **one Spirit**. We now share in **one faith** and **one hope** in serving the **one God** who is able to show us what this world truly can be now and what the world to come will be like after the resurrection. God’s family working in perfect harmony. What an amazing thought!

Let us pattern ourselves after the church at Jerusalem. When it first began, “all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need” (Acts 2:44-45). They truly were a family. Skip ahead a couple of chapters and we read still, “the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; nei-

ther did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common” (Acts 4:32). This is what the church of God is supposed to look like. This is what it’s meant for. When we’re united, we’ll love one another (John 13:34; Romans 12:10), encourage one another (Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11), pray for each other (James 5:16), serve one another (Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 5:5), and forgive one another (Colossians 3:13; Galatians 6:2) just as Jesus did for us. You begin to see something beautiful when we focus on what we have in common rather than our differences. That’s what makes us different from the world and pleasing to God (Psalm 133:1).

Now, with all of that being said, there remains one more question.

Is Disunity Ever Justified?

It sounds harsh, I know, but is it ever OK to not have fellowship with a member of the Lord’s church? What would you say? What does the Bible say? Let’s take a look.

Scripture does give a few examples that we can learn from. The first one is in 1 Corinthians 5. In the first verse, Paul addresses some sexual immorality one brother is engaged in as he’s dating (and then some) “his father’s wife.” What did Paul instruct the church to do with this brother? “*Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?*” (vs. 5-6).

In order to keep the unity and peace of the church, when someone is actively engaging in a lifestyle not in line with the will of God, and they aren’t maturing out of it, they must be called out on it—and if they don’t take care of it, they need to be put out so they will hopefully see the error of their ways. Fortunately, in this case, this man did, as we see in 2 Corinthians 6.

Another instance would be false teachers, and there are quite a few warnings about them in the Bible, most notably in 2 Peter 2. We are told not to have company with them. Paul alludes to this as

well in 1 Corinthians 15. There were those who were denying the resurrection, and he instructs the church, “*Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits.*” (v. 33)

Now, this term gets thrown around a lot so I want to try and clear it up a little. A “false teacher” is not someone who just might have a different belief than you. Anyone can be taught one-on-one the correct way as we see with Aquila and Priscilla in Acts 18:26. Go and see what they did. We are to still strive for unity and love one another.

The Bible describes false teachers as someone who intentionally tries to cause division with doctrine contrary to Christianity. Many of them are in it for power or fame¹ and seek to purposefully divide the household of faith. We must not let that happen.

How can we combat these wolves in sheep’s clothing? Staying united. Remember there is power in numbers and if our bond is strong enough, it cannot be broken. Also, anchoring our faith in the word of God so we can teach those weaker in the faith who might be led astray by incorrect doctrine. We cannot correct these teachers unless we know what God’s word says to begin with.

Christianity is unique. Different from every other religion in the world. I can list a few reasons why, but judging from what we’ve already been talking about here, one of the most distinct characteristics is the bond we have with each other. We know we can’t make it through this life alone, so God has given us a way through it—together. We weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice (Romans 12:15) and like I said earlier, it’s what sets us apart from the world.

See, the world loves darkness (cf. John 3:19). So, when they witness a group of people, from all different cultures and walks of life, coming together in unison, this causes them to scratch their heads because that’s not what they’re used to seeing. There

¹ Note: an example of this is found described in “Restoration Rebroadcasts (Part 1): Jesse B. Ferguson” elsewhere in this issue.—*Editor*.

are even some who are so deep in darkness, it’s hard for them to even fathom what light is like. That’s what believers in Christ are supposed to do; shine the light of Jesus into the world and show them a new way of looking at the world.

Sounds easier said than done though, right? I get it. Just like anything in this life, it takes time to adjust. As they say, practice makes perfect. Seeking unity may be hard at first but the more we grow, the easier it becomes.

The best example we have is probably Romans 14. Here, Paul is instructing the church at Rome how to interact with one another. This particular congregation was comprised of both Jews and Gentiles, and like I stated earlier, they were still trying to come to terms of how they could both worship the same God. For centuries, they despised one another, but now through Christ, they are united.

In this chapter though, Paul uses an illustration of two brethren; one stronger in their faith and one weaker. No matter where you are in your journey, keep in mind there will always be ones stronger than you and, of course, weaker in knowledge than you. Paul tells the stronger brother to not judge the weaker one based on the days they observe or food they eat. Verse 13 sums it up pretty good:

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.

The church is made up of many different people who will have all sorts of different perspectives on a variety of things. When we come together, let’s focus on the things we have in common rather than the things we don’t see eye to eye on. Then, if you have to do any judging, save it for further down the road until you are more comfortable with each other to actually listen and understand more about each other. Only then will we have a better understanding of one another, and the difficult discussions become a lot easier.

Let this be a challenge for you. Strive for unity amongst God’s people and show the world the love



1 CORINTHIANS 1

A new translation and commentary

Matthew Shaffer

My home congregation is presently going through a study of the book of 1 Corinthians. As part of my preparation for each sermon, I determined to produce my own translation of the book. I have no presumptions that my translation will equal the others available in quality or scholarship – my inexperience and limited qualifications certify my inability – but I have found it to be a helpful tool to look at Paul’s letter again with a fresh perspective. I will present my translation in appropriately sized segments in each issue. The translation will be followed by a comparison between my translation and several major versions,¹ where I will discuss any

¹ In general, I plan to compare the NASB 1995, the NKJV, the ESV, the NIV, the NRSV, and the translation published by

meaningful differences between them.

1 Corinthians 1:1-31

“Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother—to the assembly of God that is in Corinth, to those who have been made holy in Christ Jesus, called to be holy, with all who appeal to the name of our

Alexander Campbell in the 19th century, which is popularly referred to as *The Living Oracles*. When it seems helpful, I may make reference to Martin Luther’s German translation, as well as the *Elberfelder Bibel* and the *Schlachter 2000* translations in the same language. The fact that I have used these translations for research does not indicate any preference on my part. In fact, I have made an effort to include translations from a variety of backgrounds.

Lord, Jesus Christ, in every place – both their Lord and ours. Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God always regarding you because of the grace of God that was given to you in Christ Jesus, for you were made rich in all things through Him – in every word and every knowledge, just as the witness of Christ was confirmed among you so that you do not fall short in any gift as you eagerly await the revelation of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who will also strengthen us toward a blameless end in the day of our Lord, Jesus Christ. God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

But I urge you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you may speak the same thing—all of you—and let there be no schism in you. Rather, let yourselves be joined together in the same mind and in the same purpose. For it has been made clear to me regarding you, my brethren, by Chloe's family, that there is strife among you. I say this, that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," "I belong to Apollos," "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Is Christ divided into shares? Paul was not crucified on your behalf, was he? Nor were you baptized into the name of Paul, were you? I thank God that I did not baptize even one of you—excepting Crispus and Gaius, so that no one may say that you were baptized into my name. I did also baptize the household of Stephanus, otherwise I do not know if I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach, not in wisdom of word, so that the cross of Christ may not be nullified.

For the logic of the cross seems foolish to those who are perishing, but toward those who are being saved—us—it is the power of God. For it is written:

*'I will destroy the wisdom of wise men
And I will refuse the understanding of those
who understand'*

Where is a wise man? Where is a scholar? Where is a debater of this age? Did God not cause the wisdom of the world to become foolish? For since, in

God's wisdom, the world did not know God through wisdom, God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of preaching. For the Jews ask for a miracle and the Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ as crucified—a point of revulsion for the Jews and a point of foolishness for the nations. But for the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is God's power and God's wisdom, because God's foolishness is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

See your calling, brethren; there are not many wise (by the world's judgment), not many strong, not many of noble birth, rather, God chose the foolish things of the world, so that He may put the wise to shame; and God chose the weak things of the world, so that He may put the strong things to shame; and God chose the insignificant things of the world and the things that are despised—the things that are not—so that the things that are may be abolished. This is so that no flesh may boast in the presence of God. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who was made to be wisdom from God for us, as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, so that it may be just as it is written:

Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.

Notes on the Translation

The first chapter of 1 Corinthians is not a difficult passage to translate, so the differences that exist between translations are primarily a matter of style. The following comments will be organized by verse number, with the quote from my translation given, since I have not included verse numbers in the text above.

2: *"To the assembly of God that is in Corinth"*—The word *ekklesia* is particularly difficult to translate into English. In the Greco-Roman world, this word most often referred to a "regularly summoned legislative body,"² such as the democratic assembly

² Walter Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. (Chicago and

in classical Athens. This would imply English words like *Senate* or *Congress*. However, since the congregations of the New Testament were not given the authority to legislate, these translations are unsatisfactory. Thus, the term seems to retain the official nature of the Greek legislative assemblies, without the legal force.

Most English translations (NASB, NKJV, ESV, NIV, and NRSV) translate the word with *church*, which is a good translation in its normal significance. However, this word's range of meaning may include a cathedral or building, as well as an organization, such as the Catholic church, to the exclusion of its members. Thus, I opted to use a more neutral word, *assembly*, to emphasize that the letter is addressed to the Christians in Corinth as a whole. In this translation, I follow the sense favored by the German translations of the Bible, which use either *Gemeinde* ("community") or *Versammlung* ("assembly").

12: "*I belong to Paul...*" Literally, the Greek says, "I am of Paul," etc. I have changed the expression slightly in English to clarify the kind of relationship Paul is describing. The divisions in Corinth were based on a problem of identity, going beyond simple association. Thus, the stronger language of saying "*I belong to this preacher and his faction*" better communicates the problem. This is how the NRSV, *Schlachter 2000*, and Luther's translation expresses it, while the NIV uses a similar expression, "I follow Paul," etc.

13: "*Nor were you baptized into the name of Paul.*" I have retained the transliteration of the Greek word (baptizo) instead of translating it with *immersed* (as Campbell does in *The Living Oracles*). This is because both words in English require more specification. The Greek word specifies a ceremonial washing through immersion, usually with a

religious significance.³

In English, the word *baptize* retains the religious significance of the ceremony, but, in many cases, the action of *immersion* has been replaced with sprinkling or pouring. Thus, the word *baptize* communicates the religious aspect of the action, but not the form that it took in the New Testament.

By contrast, the word *immersed* gives us the clear picture that Christians were plunged under water during baptism, but the English word does not carry any religious significance. Thus, it becomes necessary to explain what immersion means and what role it plays in the scheme of redemption.

Since Paul's argument in this passage relies on the religious significance of baptism—i.e., "you have no religious bond with Paul through baptism"—it seemed best to choose the translation that clearly communicated that aspect of baptism.

18: "*The logic of the cross...*" The Greek word *logos* means, most often, *word*, but it may also mean *logic* or *reason*.⁴ Both would work and carry, effectively, the same meaning in this context—i.e., the message of the cross seems foolish because the logic or reasoning behind it does not make sense to the human mind. The preceding context would imply that the *message* itself is in view—Paul has just emphasized his role as a preacher, but the following context is based more on the logic behind the message, since Paul discusses the foolishness and wisdom of what is preached. Thus, either translation may be accurate.

23: "*A point of revulsion for the Jews...*" The Greek word *skandalon* is translated as a *stumbling block* in each of the English translations under consideration, which encapsulates its meaning of a *cause of sin* or *point of offense* or *revulsion*.⁵ I have translated it with the latter term to emphasize the reason why the Jews could not accept Jesus as their Christ; crucifixion was such a shameful and revolt-

London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000). In loco. Logos.

³ Ibid., in loco.

⁴ Ibid., in loco.

⁵ Ibid., in loco.

ing thing for the Jews that they could not accept a crucified Savior, no matter what evidence supported Him. This was the very thing that they could not accept.

The Source of Christian Unity: Comments on 1 Corinthians 1:10-31

Introduction

The apostle Paul opens his letter to the Corinthians with a plea that will form the backbone of the letter – unity within the congregation. The whole book will cover several different subjects, but that pervading theme will appear time and time again. Tragically, the church at Corinth was characterized by its divisions. There were several disagreements that had been reported to Paul, each of which was driving a wedge between members of the same congregation. Paul uses this letter to address each of these issues, and as he does so, he continually points his readers to the importance of the unity that they had together in Christ.

The first section of the letter, which spans chapters 1-4, deals with the foundation of the church's unity. Paul's readers did not share the same focal point, and so their lives were tracing different trajectories. They had all been bound together in a moment of time by their experiences with Paul and the formation of the congregation, but their different trajectories would tear the church apart if they did not all individually reorient and commit themselves to the same goal and purpose as a congregation. In fact, the church had already fractured. Thus, it was necessary for them to abandon their own conceit and desires and unite in a trusting obedience to God alone.

10-11

Paul begins with an appeal to the Lord Jesus Christ, whose name unites us all in fellowship (v. 9). This is a simple appeal to the source of Christian unity. Except for families, most Christians would not know one another, and certainly wouldn't have a meaningful bond if it were not for Christ. When each one of us is baptized, we are firmly pledging

our faith in Christ and committing to pursue Him relentlessly for the remainder of our lives. This gives us something in common, much deeper than a shared experience; we share one goal and purpose. No matter what divides us or threatens to tear our fellowship apart, we should be able to make peace in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Paul had evidently received a letter from certain members of the congregation in Corinth, who appealed for his help to heal the strife among them. Here, he simply refers to the fact that there were contentions among them. Most likely, these arguments centered around the issues that Paul will address throughout the letter—church discipline, marriage and divorce, things offered to idols, the communion, spiritual gifts, organization in the assembly, etc. Evidently, the church had been split into different groups with different feelings on each of these issues, so that the assembly was pulled in different directions by these competing factions.

Paul's solution begins with a conviction. His plea is that all Christians should speak the same thing, be without divisions, and that they should share one mind and one judgment. Practically speaking, this is a goal, not a simple reality that can be accomplished in a moment. When we come together to form a congregation, we bring with us as many different minds and judgments as there are people present. We should not enter an assembly with the determination to prove ourselves right and justify ourselves above the group—rather, our desire needs to be for a sincere unity where every one of us shares in a full knowledge and understanding of God's will. This contrasts with the picture in Corinth, which Paul describes in the next verses.

12-13

The situation as it had been described to Paul involved sects or factions within the congregation which centered around different preachers or teachers. Paul names four—Paul, Apollos (who traveled to Corinth after his own conversion and evidently did much teaching there (Acts 19:1)), Cephas (or Peter, see John 1:42), and Christ. All four names

mentioned were faithful preachers of the gospel, Christ Himself being the center point, but it is possible that other names were involved. Later in the letter, Paul mentions that he spoke using his name and Apollos' name to spare the reputation of those who were being divisive, for it was easier to talk about the principle with neutral names, so that he would not seem to be attacking any particular person in the congregation (1 Corinthians 4:6-7). Thus, by using these four names, he may not be describing the sects that actually existed. Rather, he was setting up an imaginary parallel to the real situation so that the Corinthians could think about what was happening with an unbiased eye.

It is interesting that sincere followers of any of the four teachers Paul named would find unity, since all four preached the same gospel. The fact of the problem lay not in the doctrines or personalities at the center of the sects, but in the existence of sects in the first place. It is possible, even easy to become divisive and destructive to the church while focusing on a doctrine or set of doctrines that is correct. The immediate problem is not in who is correct and who is not, it is in the creation of an "us and them" relationship. As long as one group identifies as a distinct sect separate from the other, there is no hope for unification. The triumph of truth and unity in the church cannot come from a war between sects until all are submissive to the most correct one. Rather, it must come from a dissolution of all sects and sect-based thinking with all conceit toward others, to be replaced with a mutual commitment to follow Christ alone.

Paul appeals to this in his reply and rebuke toward the divisive groups in Corinth—what basis do we have for unity in any other than Christ? It is meaningless to speak of multiple factions within the body of Christ, for He is a unifier, not a divider. Likewise, there is no benefit to faith in Paul or any other human, for Paul cannot offer forgiveness through crucifixion, nor have we made a covenant with Paul through baptism. Only in Christ can we find our common ground.

14-17

Paul's comments in this passage do not lessen the importance of baptism. His concern, based on the factions that had formed at Corinth, was that something as good and important as baptism could be twisted into a reason for elevating certain Christians as better than others. It was no special distinction for one to be baptized by an apostle or by any other, for baptism does not create a covenant between the baptizer and the baptized. Instead, every baptism creates a relationship between the baptized individual and God through Christ. Paul feared that principle might be misunderstood if he had been the one to baptize all who heard him preach in Corinth. Instead, it seems they were baptized by local members or some of Paul's traveling companions. His failure to insist on being the one who baptized those converted while there protected him from false accusations and protected the congregation from one possible division.

Thus, when Paul says that "Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel," he means what he says. His self-worth and his measure of success did not depend on how many he baptized personally. It did matter to him that those who obeyed the gospel were baptized (see, for example, Romans 6), but he did not feel any compulsion to be the one who personally baptized those who believed what he preached. Why? Because his emphasis was on the gospel. He had no personal stake in performing each baptism. He only rejoiced that they were baptized.

Further, he did not even want his preaching to draw attention to him and his personality. He forewent "wisdom of word," because he was afraid Jesus' sacrifice would be made negligible in the gospel that he preached if his emphasis rested on his own ability to speak well, or reason well, and if he did not rely on the power and wisdom of God. In other words, Paul's own conduct among the Corinthians reflected his determination to pursue unity in peace through Christ. He did nothing that could set himself up as a worthy leader who was the proper

target of the Corinthians' faith and respect. To this end, he avoided baptizing people himself, to ensure that the Christians' obedience to the faith was not bound up with his reputation, and he preached in humility so that no one could accuse him of success based on his own ability, apart from the power of the gospel.

18-21

How could Paul preach in a way that demoted his own abilities and wisdom? It is simple—the gospel that he preached is not the logical product of any human philosophy. Paul could never sincerely be credited with inventing the gospel, because it does not make sense to the human mind. The message of the cross is foolish; it is counter-intuitive to trust in a dead man to save our souls. When Paul preached this gospel to the philosophers at Athens, many of them mocked him because his claims were nonsensical (Acts 17:32). There was a man who was killed, but He became alive again, and He will save you from death if you believe and obey Him.

It was important for God to use something so foolish to save men because of pride and conceit. He foresaw this in Isaiah 29:14 (which Paul quotes), when He saw the people of Israel had no desire to learn from Him. They paid homage to Him in their worship, but they did not understand the things that they did, nor did they want to find out. They were interested in their own knowledge and wisdom but would not learn from God. Therefore, in verse 14, God declared He would work through miracles and signs that would not make sense to their wise and discerning men, to prove that He is not subject to their thoughts and their ideas. Men had forgotten God in their wisdom, so He would reject their wisdom in salvation. Thus, wherever the message of the gospel is preached, so is the failure of human wisdom. We must rely on a power and a grace outside of ourselves.

22-25

How was the crucifixion of Christ received in the first century? It is easy to forget just how foolish the

gospel can sound if we have been raised with it all around us. Our precise knowledge may vary, but the simple fact that Jesus died to save us from our sins is widely known. Because of this, the actual significance of the message can sometimes be lost. Paul explains it from two points of view: the Jews, and the Greeks.

The Jews, who had been God's chosen people under the Law of Moses, expected always to be His people. They were looking for a sign, a show of God's power—one that would promise victory over Rome and accomplish God's political domination of the world. Thus, it did not make sense to them when Jesus came as the Lord's Messiah and preached peaceful submission to Rome. It did not make sense to them when He refused to take a stand against the foreign powers who had dominion over the Promised Land, and it certainly did not seem to them like Jesus wielded the power of God when He was nailed to a Roman cross and died. This was a point of revulsion for them because they simply could not accept that this was the power of God at work. How could God be so weak? Paul's answer: even if God seemed weaker than He had been in days past, His might still far outweighed all that humanity can muster. In fact, His power was shown in a much greater way through Jesus' resurrection and victory over death—the most fearsome weapon that Rome or any earthly adversary could wield. God would not show His power the way they expected. He would not rearrange the nations of the world. He would reveal Himself in a much more significant way, through a moment of apparent weakness.

Greek culture was preeminent in the ancient world. A few hundred years before Jesus lived, Alexander the Great conquered much of the known world and installed Greek cities and cultural features throughout his domain. Rome continued that legacy, for although Rome had a distinct culture of its own, they had such reverence for the achievements of classical Greece that they encouraged the spread of that culture even as they themselves tried to be more Greek. The heights of Greek culture were marked by much philosophical speculation,

from which no religion could be held as sacred.

As we noticed in Acts 17, the idea of the resurrection from the dead did not pass this kind of speculation. Those Greeks who rejected the gospel of Christ did so on the basis that it did not make any sense. How could a dead man save us, and how can we believe that the dead rise if we have not seen it happen? However, those who believed found the seemingly foolish premise of the gospel betrayed a wisdom greater than man has ever known.

26-29

Because of the apparent foolishness and weakness of the gospel, Paul was able to point out that the majority of those who believed were, by the world's standards, foolish and weak. It is more difficult for someone who has power to submit himself to the authority of another—but one who has spent his whole life serving another will recognize a wise and gentle master and eagerly enter his service. Likewise, one who is wise has a hard time admitting his inability to reason through a problem, but one who knows his intellectual limitations will have an easy time relying on someone else to provide the answer. Thus, God put to shame those who seem to be powerful or wise, because they have been unable to solve the problems of human sin and suffering.

Why has God so worked through foolishness and weakness, rather than building a mighty nation of warriors and scholars? The answer is simple—everyone who will be saved must come to terms with their total reliance on God. If we could reason our own salvation or manage to be saved by force of strength or will, we would be able to glory in His presence. We would be able to walk up to Him and honestly say, “I found a way that was just as good or better than the one you made.” Then, we would have a reason to set ourselves on a pedestal above those who are weak and foolish, because we were able to figure it out or make it work when they couldn't. Then, we would have a sincere basis for division among God's people.

This is important when we remember the context. The creation of sects or factions requires a certain

level of conceit. If we form into a sect, we will always end up looking down on anyone outside our group. Why? Because we have achieved something that you have failed at. We have worked out the truth, and you poor, foolish, and weak brethren have failed.

If we think ourselves wise or strong in anyway, we cause the cross of Christ to be of no effect. It is no longer a question of reliance on God, but a matter of achievement. Who has this knowledge or that truth? If you do not know it, you are lesser in the service of God. Paul tells us in no uncertain terms that all that we have in the gospel has been given to us. We should not become conceited regarding what has been given, because we would not have it if God had not been patient with us. We must all recognize our weakness and foolishness in the presence of God to sincerely accept the gospel. If any ego based on wisdom or strength remains, then division is all but certain.

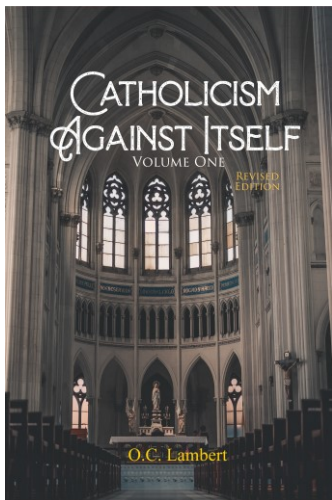
30-31

This is not to say that we do not have access to wisdom, nor that we cannot overcome sin by the strength that is given to us, only that our wisdom and strength comes to us from God through Christ. It is something external to us, and only when we accept that can we have real unity in the church. It is not wrong to be thankful and glad that we have achieved as much as we have, or that we understand as much as we do, but our glory must be found in the fact that God has given it to us. We find that our unity as Christians is based on Him who gives us all things. An old man who is wise in the Scriptures can rejoice in the first steps taken by a spiritual child, for all of the old man's wisdom comes from God. He knows that, if God had not intervened, he would be no farther in wisdom or strength than the new convert. The differences between them are an accident of time and circumstance; they are bound together in the strength and wisdom of Christ, who will lead both to the same destination at the end of the road.

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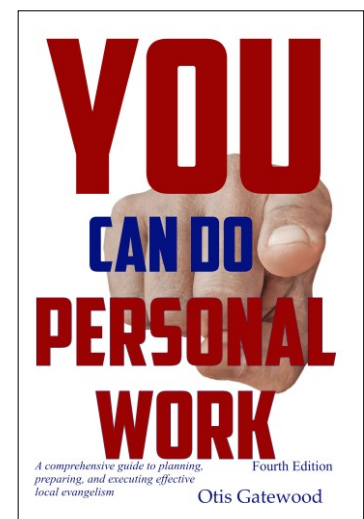
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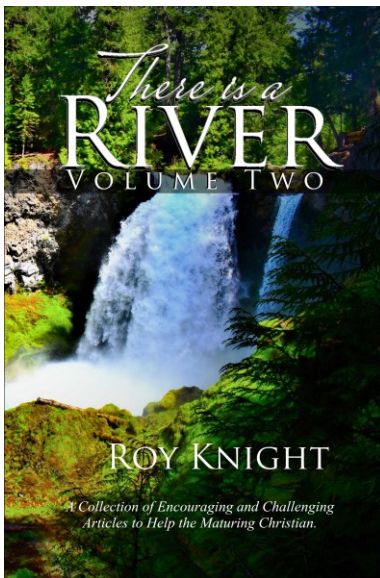
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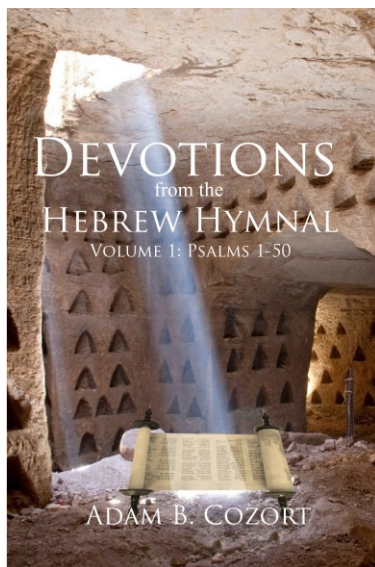
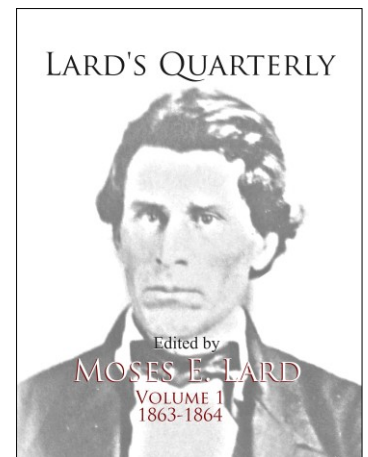
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Luther's Long Shadow

John Krivak

Our pro-life group had members from various denominations. We agreed that unborn humans should not be killed by abortion; we disagreed on Bible theology. Seeing our baptistery, and hearing that we believe that baptism is for salvation, she began to mock by singing: *“There is power in the WATER, power in the WATER!”* I did not bite on the provocation, didn’t want to argue. Works salvation, legalism, merit theology, self-righteousness—I had heard all the slander before, *ad nauseum*. And I could hold my own in that argument, just as Restorationists had done in debate in that hundred year stretch between 1850 (Alexander Campbell vs. Rice) and 1950 (Thomas B. Warren vs. Ballard). But even after winning the arguments, we had not won over their hearts—*“people convinced against their will, are of the same opinion still.”*

It was so confusing at first. I would affirm baptism as the culminating obedience for gaining salvation, and they would deny it. Why? Because baptism is a “work,” and the Bible teaches that one cannot be saved by works! This was a strange co-

nundrum. The Bible did argue against works salvation—but it also plainly tied baptism to remission of sins. Logically, then, baptism—if it really was a “work”—had to be different than the works that Paul warned against. Some tried to call it a “work of grace” to distinguish baptism from legalistic efforts to earn one’s salvation. However, no one was won over by this fine distinction. Finally I traced the problem to its root—Martin Luther! He spoke of “works” in a particular way, and it took 500 years to realize that a huge mistake had been made.

What Paul meant by “works”

For Paul, the issue was “works of the Law.” The problem was obeying the wrong covenant! Christians were baptized into a New Covenant relationship with God through Christ Jesus. However, up to that point in history, the people of God (the Jews) were bound to God by the Old Covenant. At any time previous, forsaking the Old Covenant would have meant apostasy. A good Jew would rather meet death, and many of them did. Greek culture tried hard, in the few centuries before the advent of

Christianity, to Hellenize all the Mediterranean sub-cultures. Israel refused to conform, because Yahweh had insisted His people should distinguish themselves from the other nations/Gentiles. Read the history of the Maccabees. By the time Jesus arrived, there was a system by which Jewish patriots could be distinguished from apostates—the “works of the Law”! Just a few highly visible conformities to the Covenant—circumcision, kosher diet restrictions, and keeping Sabbath.

However, Christian preachers (like the apostles) proclaimed a New Covenant founded upon the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. This Covenant superseded the Old one. The requirement for entrance was obeying the gospel—not only for Jewish converts, but even for Gentiles. And they would be accepted without circumcision, with no regard for kosher food,¹ without attending synagogue or Temple! In common speaking, both Jewish and Gentile Christians could be saved apart from “works of the Law.”

Can you imagine the way the Law-free gospel scorched Law-abiding Jews (even those who were Christians)! Some refused to let go, insisting Gentile converts must be circumcised. The Jews who were New Covenant Christians, yet insisted upon Old Covenant “works,” are commonly referred to as “Judaizers.” The Judaizers were troublemakers of Paul, just as the Pharisees had been troublemakers of Jesus—and for many of the same reasons.

What Martin Luther meant by “works”

Nothing we have said pertains to the situation of Martin Luther. His conflict was against a system of religiosity then part of Catholicism. It began with a troubled conscience in search of relief. The prevailing theology recommended working your way to

¹ The food restriction imposed by the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:29) seems intended to create a fellowship environment that would not be overly offensive to those accustomed to kosher refinement. Jesus had ended kosher rules (Mark 7:19), but it was a requirement of love to avoid offending others (Romans 14:20).

win God’s favor—become a monk, perform religious rituals, take a pilgrimage to a holy place. These “works” could be accumulated to your account to reverse the balance of God’s judgment. In fact, the Church claimed to possess a “treasury of merits” earned and accumulated through the “works” of Jesus and all the saints. This merit could be purchased with money in the form of an “indulgence.” It could even cancel future sins, or help deceased loved ones suspended in Purgatory!

This system of “works” actually is legalism, or merit theology, or self-righteousness. You apply effort toward earning your own salvation. It made the Cross-work of Jesus obsolete. However, Luther discovered it never brought relief. Legalism was an endless treadmill that never frees the conscience. And to this day, when we advocate a salvific role for baptism, Protestants recoil because even this is seen as legalism! Salvation becomes a tug-o-war between God and the convert; it’s either His effort or ours. If we are anything but purely passive, then we are implicated in legalism.

Watch the switcheroo!

Now, watch closely! When it was first missed, it took 500 years to find the mistake. For Paul, the issue with works meant imposing Old Covenant works on New Covenant Christians:

“...nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified” (Galatians 2:16, NASB).

Luther’s legalism also accentuated the word “works.” Imagine the poor monk, spiritually exhausted from trying to save himself, yet finding no relief for a guilty conscience. He reaches at last for the Bible and the words of Paul explode with relevance—salvation comes by grace through faith, and not by works! Put yourself in Luther’s shoes while reading Pauline texts like Romans 3:21-28, or Ephesians 2:8-9. They sound tailor-made to at last relieve

the ache deep in his soul. So compelling is this Lutheran reading, that *Paul's original meaning fell from view*.

Restorationism and the "new perspective on Paul"

Martin Luther cast a long shadow. His influence fell over Protestantism (including churches of Christ). The Restoration Movement took the first steps out from under the Lutheran shadow (it is rightly called the "old perspective on Paul"). We begin in 1816 with Alexander Campbell's famous Sermon on the Law.² In that day (and into the present), Protestant preaching conflated the Old and New Covenants into a sort of uni-covenant. Campbell strongly denied this, insisting that the Old and New are separate, distinct, even incompatible religious systems. Christians are under obligation only to the New, and are free in regards to the Old. This was a huge recovery of Bible truth that had been lost. And, in our present discussion, distinguishing the two covenants returns us to the same concerns that occupied Paul regarding "works of the Law."

The second step was recovering the NT place for baptism. The Protestant world remains terribly confused. The reason is clear: Protestants follow Luther; Restorationists follow Paul. Or, they take the "old perspective on Paul"; we take the "new perspective"!

Now, the problem stems from Luther,³ but his followers developed the error. It came as a shock to me, while researching what Luther and Calvin wrote about baptism, to find that the great Reformers sound like Campbellites! And Protestants downstream in history cannot hide their embarrassment. Listen to Luther:

In the second place, since we know now what

Baptism is, and how it is to be regarded, we must also learn why and for what purpose it is instituted; that is, what it profits, gives and works. And this also we cannot discern better than from the words of Christ above quoted: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Therefore state it most simply thus, that the power, work, profit, fruit, and end of Baptism is this, namely, to save. For no one is baptized in order that he may become a prince, but, as the words declare, that he be saved. But to be saved, we know, is nothing else than to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil, and to enter into the kingdom of Christ, and to live with Him forever.

Calvin said much the same! Mind you, they wrote 300 years before Campbell! What they believed was stock Biblical theology since the NT era. And yet, three centuries later, Restorationists—like Campbell—were vilified and pilloried for declaring the same views as Luther and Calvin! What changed over that time? Apparently, it took Protestant theology time to develop. What is clear is that—by the time of Campbell, and ever since—the demand for a totally passive convert emerged to ward off legalism. The driver for this was Luther, not Paul.

History must settle this debate. Without this towering perspective, both sides are left to argue proof-texts from the Scriptures against each other. These texts lodge in unassailable presuppositions that neither side will ever abandon. The argument is simply unwinnable at this level. Everett Ferguson's massive *Baptism in the Early Church* is 860 pages of pure history. Original source material that sheds light on Christian baptism is carefully assembled, century by century, for the first five centuries of church history. Listen to two excerpts⁴ from the concluding summary:

Although in developing the doctrine of baptism different authors had their particular fa-

² This can be found in *Alexander Campbell: A Collection (Volume 2)*.

³ Even though Luther unwittingly facilitated an incorrect theology of works, his opposition to actual Catholic legalism was justified and admirable.

⁴ Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), p. 854.

vorite descriptions, there is remarkable agreement on the benefits received in baptism. And these are present already in the New Testament texts. Two fundamental blessings are often repeated: the person baptized received forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

The New Testament and early Christian literature are virtually unanimous in ascribing a saving significance to baptism. If anything, the early church exaggerated this aspect of baptism's significance...Only a few (fringe) heretics of the ancient church tried to dehydrate the new birth.

I would suppose that accepting a saving role for baptism continued through 15 centuries. Baptism was never regarded as a legalistic “work” until historical developments traced to the early 1500's—the time of Luther! Now, we have two alternative views for “works”—one Lutheran and the other Pauline; one concerned with legalism and the other with covenant. Is there a test to determine which is exegetically valid? Could both be valid?

The New Perspective on Paul (NPP)

E.P. Sanders is the pioneer for the “new perspective on Paul” (James D.G. Dunn coined the term). If Luther had been right about works in Paul, then the Jewish opponents of Paul and the Catholic opponents of Luther should share a common spiritual defect: legalism. Sanders began a search for evidence of Jews who sought to earn their way to God by accumulating works of merit. He searched the ancient literature of Second Temple Judaism for legalism, and came up empty! At the time of Jesus and Paul, Judaism was not a legalistic religion.⁵ Works in the Lutheran sense were simply not a 1st century issue.

⁵ A few texts that seem to reflect “merit theology” or “works salvation” have been found, although interpretation is sometimes disputed. Even so, it is clear that the essential character of Judaism was not legalistic. Sanders described the common theology as “covenantal nomism” that looked to God for saving grace.

Still, the assumption of such legalism was broad-brushed onto Judaism by Protestants. Sanders declared this characterization to be slander when he published his research in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* in 1977. But the damage to Jewish people had already been done. They were stereotyped as self-righteous legalists because Protestants had read Paul through a Lutheran lens. The tragic result was centuries of antisemitism based on a 500 year old mistake.

It is not only the Jews who have been slandered by “old perspective” Protestants. In 2011, I concluded a post on The Paul Page website with these remarks:

Baptism, a test case for the NPP? A new day has dawned. With Luther now centuries behind, and with the NPP allowing us at last to slip his shadow, theological walls erected centuries ago can be dismantled and fellowship can be restored. Debate, with its polemical rancor, failed the achievement. The NPP is truly a back-to-the-Bible movement, and I anticipate eagerly finding fellowship among Protestant circles from those who have also slipped Luther's shadow.

It seems to me that baptism, ever the sticking point between us until now, offers a real test case for the NPP. The redefinition of “works” from a Lutheran perspective to an authentically Pauline perspective obviates this. If we need no longer fear that our relational activity with God presents an affront to His sovereignty, is there any more hindrance to allowing the meanings for baptism that are presented even in a surface reading of the texts? Along with the leading Reformers of centuries ago, more than a few evangelical scholars have advocated a salvific role for baptism. The grounds for the primary objection have been removed.

From a Restorationist perspective, we have for long stretches of time endured charges against us, charges of legalism, self-righteousness, and merit-theology simply for insisting that converts be active in the salvation process. Harkening to the NPP, I now simply ask for those charges to be dropped.

DOES THIS PASSAGE REFER TO THE SPLENDOR OF HEAVEN?

Raymond Elliot

“But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

We cannot find this complete sentence in the Old Testament but the expression, “But as it is written” means the thought is to be found in the Holy Scriptures. In Isaiah 64:4 we read the following:

“For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen any God besides You, who acts for the one who waits for Him ”(NKJV).

The apostle Paul took this prophetic passage in Isaiah for the basis of his inspired message in 1 Corinthians 2:9. To understand this verse, we must read carefully the context in which it is found. When the apostle Paul came to Corinth, he found members of the church were following the wisdom of the Greek philosophers. He wanted the Corinthians to know he was “determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” Paul’s preaching was with the “demonstration of the Spirit and power” and not the wisdom of men (1 Cor.2:4). Notice carefully verses 7-8:

“But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

So, the “secret and hidden wisdom of God” that He “decreed (predetermined) before the ages” referred to the time when Jesus Christ had been crucified by the rulers in ignorance, not believing He was God in the flesh! Paul described the “secret and hidden wisdom of God” in verse 9,

“But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (v. 9).

But that which eye had not seen, ear had not known and had not “entered the heart of man” was made known by the Holy Spirit to certain inspired men because verse 10 states, **“But God revealed them to us** (“apostles and prophets”) through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes the deep things of God” (Emphasis mine, RE). “A manifest proof that the apostle speaks here of the glories of the Gospel, and not of the glories of the future world.” However, we do not know “How Beautiful Heaven Must Be”! It was the Spirit who communicated to men a description of the Gospel age found in verse 10 that included the incarnation of the promised Messiah, the redemption by the blood of Jesus Christ, the establishment of the church of our Lord, and the peace, joy, hope, and the inclusion of all people in His body. That which has been revealed is no longer a mystery or a secret in the plans of God.

One passage among others that helps us to understand that Paul was referring to the new age of Jesus Christ and His kingdom is Ephesians 3:8-12:

*“To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the **mystery hidden for ages** in God, who created all things, so that through the church the **manifold wisdom of God** might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to **the eternal purpose** that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.”* (Emphasis mine, RE).

Gill, in his comments summarizes verse 9 in this manner:

“The things which God hath prepared for them that love him; in the original text it is, “for him that waiteth for him”; the sense is the same, for such as hope in the Lord and wait for him, are lovers of him; and the meaning is, that God has prepared and laid up in his own breast, in his counsels and covenant, in the types, shadows, and sacrifices of the old law, in the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament, such doctrines and mysteries of grace as were not so seen, heard, known, and understood by the Old Testament prophets and saints; and has reserved for his people under the Gospel dispensation, the times of the Messiah” (Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible).

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The Rise and Fall of King Saul

Travis L. Quertermous

The historic *Hardeman-Bogard Debate* took place in Little Rock, AR, on April 19-22, 1938. The disputants were brother N. B. Hardeman (representing churches of Christ) and Dr. Ben M. Bogard (representing the Missionary Baptist Church). Bogard was the champion Baptist debater of his day and Hardeman was also a nationally known gospel preacher, educator, and debater. It was truly a clash of titans!

The two men debated on four subjects, the last of which was “the impossibility of apostasy,” aka “once saved, always saved.” Hardeman denied the doctrine was biblical while Bogard attempted to defend it. In his first speech, which was absolutely brilliant, Hardeman appealed to King Saul as an example of a once faithful child of God who fell from grace, died in a state of sin, and was lost forever as a result. We reproduce his argument here:

“I call attention now to the story of King Saul, 1 Sam. 10, in which we have this statement: ‘Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen.’ First, the Lord chose him; second (1 Sam. 10:1), the records say this: ‘Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed

thee?’ Well, note again in the tenth verse, ‘And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a band of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came mightily upon him, and he prophesied among them.’ ...Not only that, but in verse nine, the Bible says that God took away from him his heart and gave him another heart, and that God was with him; and thus the story continues until, by and by, with the passing of years, Saul said unto Samuel (1 Sam. 15:24), ‘I have sinned!’ Well, what’s the result of it? Twenty-eighth chapter, sixteenth verse [of 1 Samuel], ‘Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee and is become thy enemy?’ Now look at it. There is the man upon whom God’s Spirit came...and then the man sinned, and what’s the result? God departed from him. So, 1 Chron. 28:9 again, ‘If thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever’” (pgs. 242-243).

The rise and fall of King Saul is a complete refutation of the false “once saved, always saved” dogma. Let us ever stand for the truth (Jude 3) as brother Hardeman did over 80 years ago!



GRAVE ROBBERS NEEDED

Gerald Cowan

John 5:28-29

We have nothing morbid or grisly – nothing physical or literal – in mind by speaking of the need for grave robbers. We are not thinking of Burke and Hare, the notorious grave robbers in England some centuries ago, who dug up and sold human bodies for medical research. Nor do we have in mind those who dig up coffins and caskets to steal any valuable items that might be in them. We have in mind a perfectly honorable activity we *should* practice – that God *wants* us to practice assiduously.

For as long as humans have been recording their thoughts, death has been considered the greatest enemy of the living (Hebrews 2:14-15). Death has been given nicknames such as: the Grim Reaper, the

Great Scourge, the Final Enemy, and many more. Observation shows us death is certainly no respecter of persons. The truth of Hebrews 9:27, “It is appointed to all men once to die,” is self-evident: everyone will eventually die. Although Christians are taught not to fear death, they dread it just as others do. The mystery of death and what comes after it is what frightens us and makes us uneasy.

I like to think that Christians do not fear the **fact of death** as much **the act of dying**. For some, no matter what the station in life or the condition and quality of life, just being alive is better than being dead. For the living there is hope; a living dog is better than a dead lion (Ecclesiastes 9:4-5). It is certainly difficult to say, as Paul did, that to die and be

with Christ is gain, better than being alive in the body (Philippians 1:21-23). The **grave** is the symbol of all that is included in death and dying. John 5:28-29

Two Kinds of Death

Physical death. Separation of body, soul, and spirit. Man is composed of these three parts or aspects of his being (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Distinction must be made between **soul** and **spirit**. Even though the words are often used interchangeably, soul and spirit are not the same. God discerns the difference (Hebrews 4:12). Soul is the **life principle** (Latin **anima**) and may include particular attributes shared by all creatures with the **breath of life** – all animate creatures (Genesis 7:21 -23). At death the soul is separated from the body (Genesis 35:18 her soul was departing, for she died) and the physical body returns to the earth from which it was taken. Spirit is the **eternal something** which is in man alone, and which is often understood as the **image of God** (Genesis 1:26-27) which He himself places in the body (Zechariah 12:1). At death the physical body returns to the elements of earth from which it was originally taken and the spirit returns to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7). The body is not in the image of God; the spirit does not remain in the dead body. Soul and spirit do not remain in a dead body, contrary to the common superstitions of some. There is no further need for the body ever again. The **grave** is a metaphor and symbol of physical death, the end of the body, even when it is not literally buried in the ground. Physical death is the thing we are able to observe – the end of all living things. It is the thing universally feared.

Spiritual death has nothing to do with the body. It is a **relationship**, or perhaps better said, **the lack of a proper and vital relationship** with God. It is not universally feared, because it is not universally understood – perhaps because it is not a visible

thing, like physical death. It is separation of the spirit and soul from God (Isaiah 59:1-2, Ezekiel 8:10). The soul/spirit is the whole person, the complete history of a person's growth and development. Separation from the body does not mean the soul/spirit ceases to exist. It is eternal. It will not be destroyed or annihilated or cease to exist. Separation from God, being dead to God, means being rejected, disapproved, and disowned by God if and because one is not like God, not pleasing to God, and therefore not acceptable to God. This is what Paul means by such statements as "dead in sins... because of (nature) one's customary way of living" (Ephesians 2:1-2), and "one who lives for pleasure is dead while (s)he lives" (1 Timothy 5:6). Spiritual death is far more serious than physical death. It is difficult to

make a person who is physically healthy, happy, and "alive" understand that he can be dead to God. By faith we understand one can be alive to God (accepted, acknowledged,

and approved, – God-like, and pleasing to God) even when the body is dead (1 Peter 4:6). If one is dead spiritually and does not change his situation/relationship to God before physical death then the **grave** (sheol) becomes a **symbol of hell**, eternal spiritual death and separation from God.

In Jesus Christ There Is Victory Over The Grave, Both Physical And Spiritual.

By his own resurrection from the grave – his victory over the death of the body – Jesus gives us hope for a similar victory. He gave graphic proof of his victory: "He is not here (in the grave) but is risen. Remember he said... he would be crucified and rise again on the third day" (Luke 24:6-7). He broke the power of death. He will eventually destroy death itself, and also him who has the power of death, the devil (1 Corinthians 15:26, Hebrews 2:14-15). We still have to die physically – we cannot avoid it. But,

*[W]e have ability
through Christ
to rob the grave of its power...*

by his resurrection we can know death was not the end for him; death is not the end of all things for us either. Whether we are good or bad our spirit will outlive the body (John 5:28-29). For Christians the grave leads us on to eternal victory (Romans 8:11). For all others it leads to eternal defeat. Christ himself is our guarantee, our hope of eternal life (1 Corinthians 15:22, Hebrews 6:18). Whispering hope, a song by Alice Hawthorne, based upon Hebrews 6:18, has these words:

**Hope as an anchor so steadfast
rends the dark veil for the soul;
whither the Master has entered,
robbing the grave of its goal.**

That line of the song is the source of our title, for the present essay. Because of Christ we should not experience the terror and sorrow that is so common among non-Christians. They have no hope. We have sure and certain hope in Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13). We have victory in Jesus.

*"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ... But thanks be to God who gives **us** the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:55, 57).*

So then, we have ability through Christ to rob the grave of its power and terror in the matter of physical death. This does not mean we can somehow avoid dying, or that we can restore life to those who have died. We have said that spiritual death is more serious than physical death. Can we hope to rob the grave spiritually too?

We can rob the grave (Sheol, hell) through Jesus Christ. The scripture speaks of saving souls from death by having sins forgiven. We can save ourselves (Acts 2:40, Philippians 23:12-13). We save others by getting them to obey the Lord (James 5:19-20). It is like "pulling one from the fire. (Jude 23). We sing:

**Rescue the perishing,
care for the dying;
Snatch them in pity
from sin and the grave.
Weep o'er the erring one,**

**lift up the fallen;
Tell them of Jesus,
the mighty to save.**

(Fanny Crosby).

Jesus came to save souls, not bodies – and we must share his concern. The Son of man came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Another song, more popular among those engaged in evangelism says:

**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.**

Emphasis must be placed on **"lost in sin, and cannot find their way"** (Will H. Houghton). We should pray earnestly that God will lead us to souls that we can help, and then **"teach (us)...just what to say."**

How We Can Save Souls From Spiritual Death – And Why We Should Try To Do It.

The only way to save a soul from the death of hell is to convert a sinner from the error of his way (James 5:16-20). This requires teaching the will and word (pattern/gospel/doctrine) of God just as it is revealed in scripture (Rom. 10:12-15). The obligation to teach in this manner is specified in Matthew 28:18-20. There is no example of conversion or salvation in the New Testament which is not preceded by teaching. Sometimes the teacher must be prepared to defend the gospel against the efforts of the unconverted to disprove it (Jude 3, Philippians 1:16-17). It is also necessary to get one to evaluate one's life and activities properly by the gospel standard, and to accept the results of the evaluation (2 Corinthians 13:5). It is sometimes necessary for us to point out to others any areas in their lives that need correction, etc. Some will call this judging and resent it. But, whether pointing out one's own errors or those of others, we simply intend to hold up a mirror. We point to the standard, then to the individual life. And we are content to let the Word of God do the judging (Galatians 6:1-2 Corinthians 12:5, and all of Matthew 7). The intention is always just

to get the person to determine whether he has done and is doing the will of God, from the heart (Rom. 6:17-18). Our intent must be to save them from fear and failure that leads to an unwanted condition at death and beyond.

“Grave robber” is the same as what we mean by “soul-winner.” Why should anyone bother to be a grave-robbing soul-winner?

- We could suggest that it is the command of God, and that we ourselves will be lost if we do not try to save others. But that is too negative. Fear of punishment may be the lowest motive for doing anything but it may also be the most effective if used properly.
- We should be soul-winners because we love the souls of others, and we love our God who desires to save all.
- Above any and all personal considerations, think of what it will mean to the soul you save. The person escapes from spiritual death (separation from God) and from hell – of course, the assumption is that the person remains faithful. The multitude of his past sins are covered up, washed away, etc (James 5:19-20).
- The person can enjoy life, the abundant life in Jesus Christ (John 10:10). Above all, he can go to heaven.

It is not improper to think of what soul-winning will do for you, the soul-winner.

- It will help to keep you humble. In teaching others the plan of salvation, one is reminded repeatedly of the **cost to God** for anyone’s salvation.
- It will warm your heart and drive out selfishness. In seeking the lost one **must** put Christ first, and then put others in some sense above oneself (Matthew.6:33, Philippians 2:1-4).

- It will add real purpose to your own life as a Christian, give you a greater sense of accomplishment (Philippians 1:2-5).
- Knowing how important your personal example of righteousness is to the one you are teaching will strengthen your resolve to maintain righteousness (1 Corinthians. 11:1, Philippians 3:12-17).
- It will give you a special kind of joy. We rejoice in the **people** we help, the God we serve and the Christ we honor, not just in the work itself.
- Our efforts will inspire others to greater efforts themselves, to apply their own selves to soul-winning too..

- Let us not forget that the greatest possible motive is that God will be glorified and the sacrifice of Christ will be vindicated, validated, and made effective (Galatians 2:20-21).

*It is necessary to evaluate one’s
life and activities properly
by the gospel standard,
and accept the results
of the evaluation*

Conclusion

We can rob the grave by **living the life of faith** to which we are called

and **sharing the hope** which is in Jesus Christ (Philippians. 1:27, Ephesians. 4:1, Romans 8:24, 1 John 3:30.). If you are not among the saved, you can rob the grave (death and hell) of your own soul by obeying the gospel of Christ. We can help each other be positive grave robbers.

We can close this with a song by Lewis E. Jones, often used as an invitation to win your own victory through Jesus Christ.

**“Would you be free from your burden of sin?
There’s power in the blood...
Would you o’er evil a victory win?
There’s wonderful power in the [Grave Rob-
ber’s] blood.”**

DOES THAT COMPLETE YOUR ORDER?

David Dean

It was a fine September morning. My daughter was at school, and I had recently dropped off my wife at her job. So, I decided it was a good time to get some coffee. I drove the few minutes down the road to the local Starbucks and went through the drive-thru line. This location had recently started sending workers outside to take orders. I was greeted by a friendly face as she walked up to my car with a cheery, “Hi David!” as I rolled down my window. “The usual?” she asked. I smiled and gave my affirmative before driving to the pickup window. Again, I was greeted by name and then asked how the baby was doing. More small talk continued as they asked about my family. I paid for my coffee and drove off, not thinking anything more about the occasion. That is until recently when I happened to look at my wife’s phone and noticed that I had left my Starbucks account logged in. I jokingly mentioned to her how she can see every time I go to Starbucks, and she quickly responded, “Oh yeah, and I am judging you!” One could possibly argue that I have a problem. But you know what I learned in all of this? Customer loyalty is a real and powerful thing. I do not go to other coffee shops; I really don’t even like going to other Starbucks in my area. Why? Because I am loyal to those kind workers who have taken the time to know me, my order, and my family. What’s more is that I believe we in the Body of Christ have much we can learn from the humble barista.

Christ took the time to make a connection. Have you ever considered how often we see Christ just having conversations with people? He listened to his disciples as they worked out various theological questions. He listened to their parents on occasion. He listened to women and men, Jews and Gentiles, civilians and soldiers. The simple reality is that Jesus was a minister to the people. He took the time to

get to know them. One instance of this is found in the Gospel of Matthew shortly following the calling of Matthew. In the twelfth verse of chapter nine we read, “Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him.” Jesus’ actions naturally do not sit well with the Pharisees—to the point that Jesus must remind them of the purpose of the Messiah. That purpose? To be a physician to those who are sick. It could logically be assumed that one does not need to be familiar with someone to instruct them in the ways of righteousness. Jesus could have easily just told these sinners to get their lives in order and then left the area. And to be fair, we do see on several occasions that Christ and the apostles enter a new area and immediately start to proclaim truth and righteousness. However, we would be missing a significant point of the text if we neglected to see the friendships that are formed. Paul, like Christ, is seen making connections with people as he mentions a variety of people that have become close to him in his ministry.

It would be reasonable to ask what motivated Christ and others to make these connections. And the answer is quite simple: Jesus cared about people. It never ceases to amaze me how often Jesus is moved with compassion concerning people. For example, consider the text of Matthew 9:35-36:

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

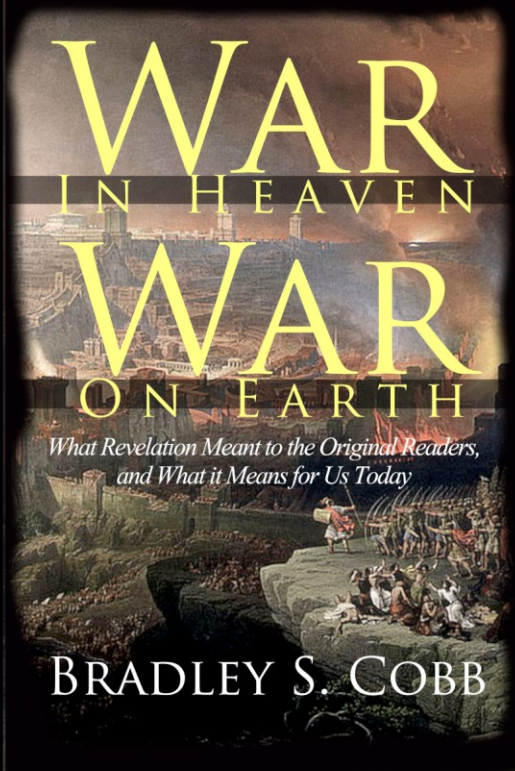
In this example we see His compassion for the spiritual state of Israel, while other passages show

Jesus being concerned about the physical welfare of individuals (Matt. 14:13-17; 15:32-34; John 11). The Jesus of the Bible is not a man unmoved by the infirmities of the those he encountered. Instead, we see the statement “moved with compassion” repeated in the scriptures, as in Mark 1:41 when Christ shows compassion by healing the man with leprosy. This behavior should show all of us who profess Christ that we should approach the Great Commission with compassion and feeling. It is not just another task to cross off our spiritual to-do list, but instead it is the path that adds to the family of God, (Galatians 4:4-7).

The approach Christ took resulted in the church being focused on the welfare of people. This really should not come as much of a surprise to any student of basic biblical history. God’s people have always concerned themselves with others. At least, that has always been God’s plan. A quick breakdown of the Ten Commandments would show that half of God’s central tenants are focused on obedi-

ence toward Him, while the other half focuses on our interactions with our fellow man. Jesus when questioned about the greatest of commands simply responds with, “love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,” but then quickly follows up with “and the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39). This greatest of commands is also made apparent in the Christian Age. A quick scan of the early church history recorded in the book of Acts shows that once the spiritual welfare of the Jewish people is addressed, the physical needs are quickly considered (Acts 2:44-45). Why? Because we are family. More to the point, we are *God’s* family.

Let us all take a lesson from a humble barista and strive to create meaningful connections in our lives. Through these connections we can advance the cause of Christ. Let us show the world that truly we care about one another, and that love is gladly extended to them.



When the only negative review for a book still praises the writing and content (but disagrees with the possibility of falling away), it's gotta be good!

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THE FOOL HAS SAID IN HIS HEART THERE IS NO GOD

Bill Howard

"How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow she is, who was great among the nations! The princess among the provinces has become a slave! She weeps bitterly in the night, her tears are on her cheeks; among all her lovers, she has none to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; They have become her enemies."

(Lamentations 1:1-2)

"In the days of her affliction and roaming, Jerusalem remembers all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old. When her people fell into the hand of the enemy, with no one to help her, the adversaries saw her and mocked at her downfall."

(Lamentations 1:7)

These are words of Jeremiah lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem: the epitome of misery, a grim and somber elegy expressing the devastation of that city. One of the world's famous cities lays in wreckage; its inhabitants in captivity or scattered, the leadership gone and the desolation of a once bustling city that sits high in the hills of Judah is abandoned and in ruins. It once was a beacon of Judah, a capital city for the Jews. Those few remaining who are in a stupor observe the remains of the once beautiful Temple which has been plundered and destroyed; fine buildings have been razed, and beautiful statuary has been pulled down, valuable artifacts hauled away; Jerusalem is desolate, her people are gone. The Chaldeans and Babylonians sieged her, delivering monstrous devastation. Little can be seen or heard in the ruins other than a mind-

rending cacophony of silence amid the tears of agony. An occasional wisp of smoke from a smoldering fragment and wind-borne debris is the remnant of Jerusalem. Everything is lost.

The Israelites weren't dedicated strongly enough and were not diligent in their adherence to God's commands; they were spasmodic in obedience. Nearly six hundred years before this destruction, they were chastened for their sins when God sent fiery serpents among them, and many lost their lives (Numbers 21:6). Moses had warned them about this same time:

"Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I command thee this day."

(Deuteronomy 8:11)

He continued by reminding them of their transgression when they demanded Aaron make them a golden calf to worship, and God was very angry and determined to destroy them. Moses pled with God, and He chose to extend to them forgiveness. Yet, they continued to be disobedient.

"And at Taberah, and Massah, and at Kibrothhattavah ye provoked the Lord to wrath. Likewise when the Lord sent you from Kadeshbarnea saying, go up and possess the land which I have given you; then ye rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God, and ye believed Him not, nor hearkened to His voice. Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you."

(Deuteronomy 9:22-24.)

This on-again-off-again attitude toward the commandments of the Lord was not satisfactory; partial obedience is the same as no obedience at all.

“Yet the Lord testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God.”

(2 Kings: 17:13-14.)

God had no intention of allowing such as this to be satisfactory: there would be repercussions. God had blessed them and protected them so many times in so many ways, and he expected them to honor His commands.

“But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day: that all these curses will come upon thee, and overtake thee.”

(Deuteronomy 28:15)

Simply put, God was admonishing them: honor me by following my commandments or pay the price. The price was devastation.

“Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out.”

(Deuteronomy 28:16-19)

These are a few of many warnings to the Jews about disobedience. The history of the Jewish peo-

ple is replete with their negligence and disobedience, for which they suffered.

The destruction of which we write at this time is one of several. Even in Jesus' time on earth, he warned of another destruction to come (Luke 13:34-35). This took place in 70 CE. Less than a century later (132-136 CE) Rome crushed an uprising of the Jews and over 100,000 were killed in the Bar Kochbah uprising. During the time of the crusades in the Middle Ages thousands lost their lives. In 1290 CE the Jews were expelled from England; then the worst came in the late 1930's when the Nazis began the invasion of Europe, and more than six million Jews lost their lives.

From the beginning, God has provided to mankind magnanimous blessings for man's wellbeing and grand promises to the Jews and the entire world. Therefore, we are amazed at the outcome we read of in biblical history and world history. So, writer guy; why go into this history again? We use these occurrences as a reminder for us who live in this present time. The Lord God from the beginning has

required man to recognize Him as the one and only God and to honor and respect Him for all that He does and has done and for that which lies ahead for His creation: those willing to follow His direction.

Throughout all of biblical and world history, God's love and concern for mankind has been unmistakably obvious to all who choose to see. Since the time of His blessing Adam and Eve with the beautiful Garden, to the saving of Lot and his family, to the covenants with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the promises and care of the Israelites, His love and concern for man has shone as an unblinking beacon to guide us to the safety of His eternal promises. Yet, what did we witness as we reviewed some of Jewish history? We see a lack of concern: from half-hearted obedience to turning away from God in

*[W]hen we fail to obey God,
when we think spasmodic
and half-hearted service is
sufficient, we are dead
wrong.*

total disobedience, and the penalties which were extracted, from losing the close relationship with God to total abandonment by Him and losing everything: the result of failure.

We quoted Psalm 53:1 in the title. The fool hath said in his heart there is no God. We likely do not want to admit it, but when we fail to obey God, when we think spasmodic and half-hearted service is sufficient, we are dead wrong. Less than our all amounts to nothing at all. Half-hearted faith is totally devoid of true faith. If we ignore God, to us there is no God. Israel was without God because they refused to follow His teaching, and we see the result. That brings us to the reason for this writing. Does any of this sound familiar? Are we witnessing such as this today?

The greatest, most meaningful blessing that God has proffered to man is the Savior that came from heaven, Jesus Christ. Every action of God, everything He has created has been for the benefit of mankind. Because He wants all to be saved and enjoy eternity in heaven, He created the way for man, a way that requires an absolute commitment: one which allows no leeway, no fence straddling, and no half-hearted compliance. These were totally unacceptable under the old law and can certainly only be less so in this new way.

God's love and desire for the lost was such that it necessitated the activation of another part of His overall plan for the salvation of man. That which He knew even before He created the Universe.

"[God] hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

(2 Timothy 1:9)

"In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began."

(Titus 1:2)

Under the old covenant there was no means of forgiveness of sin. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins"

(Hebrews 10:4). Because of that the next part of God's plan would be set into motion or be activated.

"Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second. By the which we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all."

(Hebrews 10:9-10)

The angel of the Lord said to Joseph: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Now there will be forgiveness of sin.

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

(1 John 4:9-10)

Now, even the people under the old law who kept their covenant relationship with God would receive forgiveness for sin.

"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances (old law) that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross."

(Colossians 2:14)

"And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

(Hebrews 9:15)

What the blood of animal sacrifice could not accomplish is now accomplished by the blood of Jesus Christ.

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

(Romans 5:8-9)

As the Apostle Paul told the Ephesians speaking of Christ: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7). The ultimate sacrifice was made. Jesus willingly allowed himself to be sacrificed on the cross, his blood shed and salvation is available to all. He was willing to suffer the brutal crucifixion because it would initiate a means of the saving of souls, and also because when his work on earth was completed, He would return to heaven at the right hand of God (Hebrews 12:2). He paid the price in His death, and His reward was to be home again. It is extremely difficult to comprehend how a father could deliberately sacrifice his only son to make a way for sinners to be saved, and the only answer is love. He so loved the world that he gave His only son (John 3:16). Do we believe this? We had better, it is our only hope.

We alluded in the beginning to the total and absolute desolation of Jerusalem and her few remaining inhabitants when the devastating ravage by the enemy was finished. Why did this happen? Because they had no God? No, No, God was alive as ever at that time as He is now; they simply turned their backs on God, denying Him the loyalty, honor, praise, and recognition due Him. In action, they had said there is no God—so to them they were correct. God did not protect them, and their enemy was triumphant; Satan won that battle.

Today, the battle continues; Satan and his converts never cease their struggle for your soul and mine. We live in a depraved and failing society to a great extent; depravity is rampant as morals are set aside and the slide into a swamp, a morass of perversion and wickedness because people are failing to believe there is a God continues. The latest polls have shown that less than fifty percent of the American people believe in God and/or have no concern about Heaven and hell because they do not believe they exist. To them there is no God, and without God there is no hope for them whatever their beliefs may be. Then when those are consigned to their eternal home what will be seen will be far worse than the forlorn condition of Jerusalem, and the new

habitation assigned will be forever.

We have allowed to be created an hierarchy (by their own thinking) of elitist leaders, teachers and professors in our educational facilities, colleges, universities, private and public schools who choose to deny the existence of God and teach the same; anything spiritual is disallowed, and those who do believe are put down as ignorant and totally out of touch with reality and often ostracized. They are gaining in the success rate; if Christians continue to stand and observe instead of being involved in the controversy, it will only get worse.

Are we totally dedicated to following God? If not, we have no God, He is dead to us. Are we actually taking up our cross and following to the fullest extent of our capabilities? If not, we are doing nothing, and that is the way God sees it. Do we gather as often as possible to worship, praise, and honor our God and give thanks? If not, we are failing, and God knows it; we are denying Him so He has left us. When we consider the very generous temporal blessings we have received, will we return unto Him according as we have been blessed? Are we being honest? We may deceive ourselves, but we cannot fool God. If we cheat, we only cheat ourselves. If our giving is not sufficient, then what we do give is displeasing. God went all the way; one hundred percent when He made the brutal sacrifice on the cross, less than the same from us is unacceptable. Have we been failing God? Be honest and act while there is still time, God’s love, and His mercy beckons. There will come a time when changes cannot be made. Read in the gospel of Luke chapter fifteen, verse eleven to the end of the chapter, and then pray about the words you have read and act accordingly; do what needs to be done without delay.

Are you prepared to
meet the Lord?



Esau

Exemplar of Contemporary Problems

Johnny O. Trail

The Old Testament is filled with examples (Romans 15:4) of people who made silly mistakes and acted in foolish sorts of ways. Esau, the son of Isaac and Rebekah, is one such example. The story of conflict between parents and sons and between the sons themselves almost reads like a modern drama. At the very least, it underscores the dysfunctionality of this patriarchal family. Genesis 25:28: “And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.”

Isaac and Rebekah are divided over the love they had for their children. Isaac had an affinity for Esau and Rebekah was partial to Jacob. These things alone show how much conflict there was between the two sons. If scripture pointed this out, it seems certain the two sons realized it as well.

The law of primogeniture provided that Esau was entitled to a double portion of all Isaac had. The Firstborn had a distinctive place in the family and inheritance laws. Genesis 49:3 underscores this fact. “Reuben, you are my firstborn, My might and the beginning of my strength, The excellency of dignity and the excellency of power.”

This distinctive blessing connected to birthright extended beyond the immediate family. The blessings that were promised to Abraham and Isaac would be given to the one who inherited the birth-

right. That is, all the blessings ever given to any patriarch prior to Esau/Jacob would be theirs to enjoy. When one considers how wealthy Abraham was—in material and spiritual ways—the one who inherited the birthright would have been extremely affluent.

One might ask, “What were some of the birthright blessings reserved for the firstborn?” The firstborn son would become the head of the family, and would have charge of the family, including the family property. The firstborn son would be charged with the welfare of the younger sons, the widow, and any unmarried daughters. This son would have considerable authority over the other members of the family.

Thus, the birthright had extreme value and Esau was due a double portion. In modern terms, Esau stood to inherit a fortune after his father’s passing. In light of these things, what reasonable person would give away a double portion of his inheritance for a small meal?! Could you imagine the foolishness of a man who would become a millionaire at his parents’ passing giving up his birthright for the equivalent of a Happy Meal? This is what Esau did.

These accolades and inheritance laws were all blessings Esau had access to, yet he would casually cast them away for trinkets. Genesis 25:29-34 says,

"Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary. And Esau said to Jacob, 'Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary.' Therefore, his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, 'Sell me your birthright as of this day.' And Esau said, 'Look, I am about to die; so, what is this birthright to me?' Then Jacob said, 'Swear to me as of this day.' So, he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus, Esau despised his birthright."

It's disturbing to think Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of soup. Nonetheless, Esau's vice is the same problem that many in our age struggle with—the desire for instant gratification at any cost! People in our age do not consider what the cost might be for an instant moment of pleasure. People have no patience, and a lack of patience coupled with certain hedonistic tendencies leads to spiritual disaster.

The extreme hunger that Esau felt caused him to make this rash and foolish decision. Genesis 25:32: "And Esau said, 'Look, I am about to die; so, what is this birthright to me?'" This was most likely an exaggeration. Maybe he was "hangry," but his decision was childish in nature. Children sometimes say, "I am starving," and it is a misrepresentation of how things truly are. A hyperbole perhaps.

Like Esau, many people have the philosophy of "living for the moment." Sadly, they are selling something more valuable than a birthright. They are selling their souls to live in the moment. The popular sayings of our day emphasize this point. "If it feels good, do it!" "You only live once" (often shortened to YOLO). "Seize the moment." These are all phrases we have heard uttered at one time or another. Very rarely does one make a good spiritual decision in the heat of the moment.

Scripture teaches that Moses and the great champions of faith did not live for the moment. Hebrews 11:24-26 says:

"By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction

with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward."

Moses could have lived an opulent life of wealth and royalty, but he decided that suffering with his people and seeking heavenly things was more important than the pleasures of sin.

How many decisions have been made "in the moment" that cost a person their immortal soul? Mark 8:36-37: "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Centuries later, the writer of Hebrews calls Esau a "profane" person. Hebrews 12:16 says, "Lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright." A "heathenish" or "wicked" person is a profane individual. In giving up his birthright, Esau was ultimately a "wicked" person.

His impetuosity needs to be a lesson for us today. Christians should be careful about making hasty decisions. Later, Esau was sorry about his hasty decision and sought to change it. Hebrews 12:17: "For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears."

This will not be news to most people, but one cannot have everything he wants. Esau could not have the pottage and the birthright too! One cannot have a sinful existence and expect to inherit eternal life.

A wise person is one who gives up everything for the Kingdom. Matthew 13:45-46 says: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

Instead of one giving all he has in fulfillment of the flesh, he should give all he has for the promise of eternal life.

QUOTES TO CONTEMPLATE

On Marriage

If you are not married, and you expect marriage to be 50/50, please don't get married.

-Roy Knight
There is a River Volume 2

On Cat-Throwing

July 19th, went to Salisbury Point, Massachusetts, and preached; and from thence to the Mills Village, where I had a cat thrown at me in the aisle at the close of a solemn meeting. I was treated roughly in language until I told them I would not leave the place for the Devil or his children.

Mark Fernald,
Autobiography of Elder Mark Fernald

On King Henry and the Popes

Catholic writers play up the idea that the Church of England, which was the beginning of Protestantism in England, was born of adultery. English historians seem always to have been ashamed of it. But the reader will recognize readily that Henry was only living like other Catholics in high places, including popes.

O.C. Lambert
Catholicism Against Itself (Vol. 1)

On Preaching

Dull, prosy preaching never was, and never will be, what our sinful world needs. God, heaven, time and eternity, with the destiny of man, are awfully earnest themes to dwell upon. Oh, for an able, earnest, and efficient ministry...

Every true preacher of the gospel, to be such, must be baptized into the truths of the gospel. He must feel the awful danger every impenitent sinner is incurring while living in open rebellion against God. He must feel that he is an ambassador for God, to pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. He must tell them that unless they turn and

repent of all their sins, and become reconciled to God, the dark doom of utter despair is before them. To be alive to his duty in this respect, let him keep in mind God's fearful charge, 'When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, the same man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand.' Preachers of the gospel have the most responsible station assigned them of any class under heaven. Deeply should they feel and realize this. What faithful minister can feel all this without deep emotions of heart?

David Millard
Biography and Selected Writings of David Millard

On Accusations of Campbellism

My dear sir, we are not consummate blockheads to leave the word of God for rules laid down by brother Campbell or any other man. I am really sorry you entertain so low an opinion of our intelligence and goodness.

Barton W. Stone,
Christian Messenger

On the Importance of Following Scripture

I do in the first place publicly declare, that the *Holy Scriptures* which contain a revelation of the will of God, are the only *sure, authentic and infallible Rule* of the faith and practice of every Christian, by which *all opinions* are to be *fairly and impartially examined*; and in consequence of this, I *protest* against setting up and allowing the *decrees* of any man, or body of men, as of *equal authority* and obligation with the word of God; whether they be *councils, synods, convocations, associations, missionary societies, or general assemblies*; whether *ancient or modern, Romish, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, or Methodist, Popes, Fathers, or Doctors of Divinity*.

Elias Smith.

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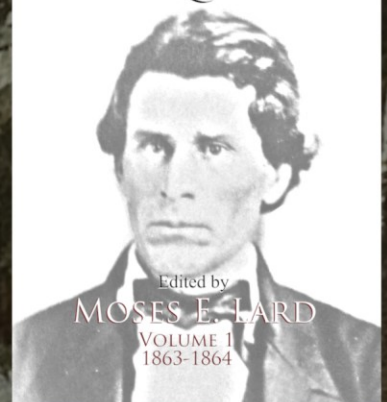
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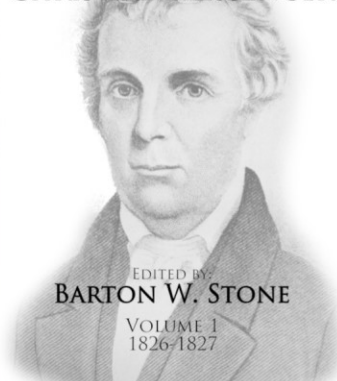
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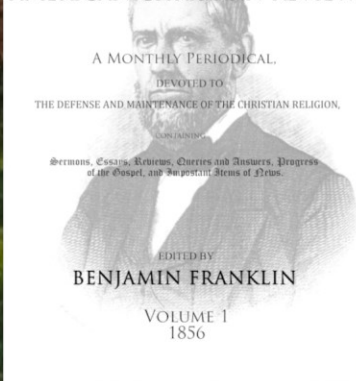
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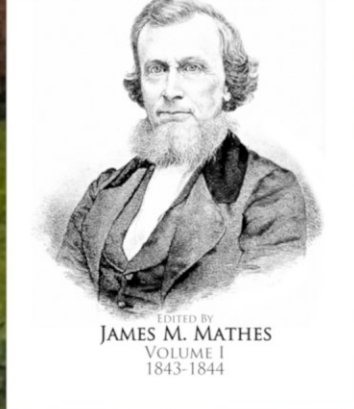
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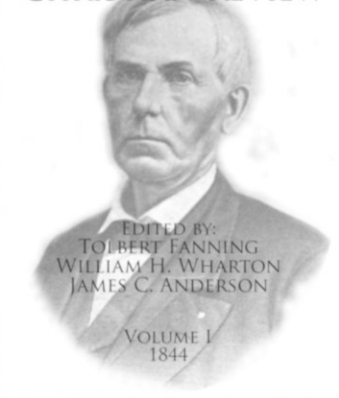
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Losing Your First Love

Jake Schotter

The Lord, through the Apostle John, wrote the church at Ephesus a short yet direct letter detailing their spiritual condition as a congregation. We find this letter in Revelation 2:1-7, and the typical pattern emerges through each letter: we see the destination of the letter, a description of Jesus Christ, the diagnosis of the church (with commendation and condemnation), and a demand for the church based on its health. The church at Ephesus was diagnosed with losing their original love for Christ.

The Ephesians read this letter and saw,

I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love... (Revelation 2:2-5).

There was a lot this church was commended for! Several great things could be said about the Ephesians:

- They were a **dynamic** church (*"I know your works"*),
- They were a **dedicated** church (*"I know your... labor"*),
- They were a **determined** church (*"you have persevered and have endured"*)
- They were a **disciplined** church (*"you cannot bear those who are evil"*)
- They were a **discerning** church (*"you have tested those who say... have found them..."*)

But, they were also a **declining** church (*"But I have this against you, that you have left your first*

love...").

The Christian life stresses the importance of love – not only in action, but in attitude. From Leviticus 19:18 to Psalm 119 to John 13:34-35 to 1 John 3 and Revelation 2:4, we find the constant theme of loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

The Ephesian church had a great beginning. From Acts 20:27 and 31, we know the Apostle Paul devoted three years of his ministry to teaching and working among them. They did things right. Certainly, their work was full of zeal, but they did not have love. Paul would elsewhere emphasize that if you do not have love, it is meaningless to do what you do (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

The church at Ephesus is a great reminder for all Christians that we can lose our flame for Christ. Let us not become so busy and lost in our zealous activities in the name of the Lord that we forget to love the One whom we seek to glorify and serve. We cannot neglect the necessity of maintaining our relationship with God. If we do not pay attention, we will lose our first love and become spiritually apathetic... just like the Ephesians. This is why we find their example in the Scriptures: to see what they did and to learn from their example.

Perhaps it is time to check your spiritual pulse. Do you truly love God or are you just here to check your name on the attendance sheet and be seen by people?

RESTORATION JOURNALS: THE HERETIC DETECTOR

Kyle D. Frank

The original name of this paper is: “**The Northern Reformer, Heretic Detector, and Evangelical Review**” but it is better known as just *The Heretic Detector*. This paper ran from 1837-1841 and was edited by a very able, if not quirky chap by the name of Arthur Criehtfield who resided in Ohio. As you can tell by the full title, Criehtfield tried to be like Paul, being all things to all men. His was a militant journal whose very existence was to strike hard at error. The paper was loaded with ongoing conflicts with those who he saw as teaching error.

The purpose of such an adventurous journal is stated in the preface to the first volume:

“1. The peculiarities of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. 2. The spirit of Christianity. 3. Remarks on the conduct of the professing community and comparisons of the character of the primitive and modern Christians. 4. Literary and theological reviews of the current periodical publications of all religious parties. 5. Inquiries into several of the noted prophecies that have been fulfilled, that are fulfilling, or that of the signs of the times, will shortly be fulfilled, in the world. 6. The charter, delineated in prophecy, of the better time to come. 7. Replies to queries, together with miscellaneous articles that shall be deemed useful. 8. The current religious news and remarevolutions, civil, political, and ecclesiastical.”

Unlike other Restoration Movement journals, such as the *Christian Baptist*, or *Christian Messenger* which have been republished multiple times, this one is basically unknown. It became basically lost to history and to anyone that wanted to read it.

Only a single issue was available for anyone to read (Google Books). It was at this juncture that both Bradley Cobb (editor of the *Quarterly*) and I

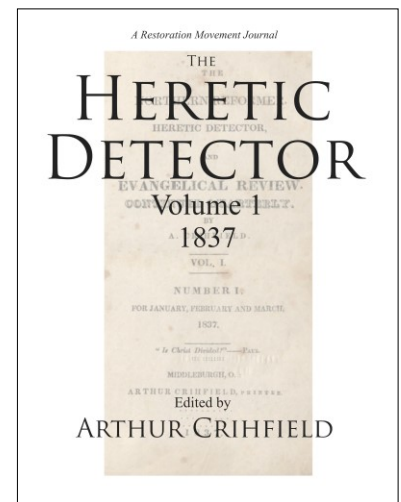
had a strong desire to see it in print again. I had been looking for several years to no avail.

I don’t know if he wants me telling you this, but both of us tend to get distracted from projects now and again and instead do research. In this instance Bradley scored by tracking down all the libraries that had *any* copies of the Heretic Detector, and wrote emails to each, trying to get access to them. And some of the libraries were happy to oblige, for the right fee (there’s always a cost involved...).

Well, the pieces are in and it is like assembling a giant jigsaw puzzle without a picture. A lot of the pages were faded or degraded, making necessary the manual typing of large pieces. The first volume will be in print again soon, for the first time since 1837.

The journal ran through multiple controversies by challenging the Universalist church. Universalism was the giant of that day and Arthur Criehtfield was up to his neck in dealing with false teachers from that church. It certainly was not the only combat that he faced. I am currently typing a debate between him and a ‘pastor’ from the Methodist Episcopal folks. It is great reading because of his style of combat. I at first thought him a bit of a crank, but as I type I am learning the method to his madness. He had a great way of dealing with false teachers. I plan to emulate it if I get the chance.

In closing, The Heretic Detector, volume one, ought to be available by about mid-autumn. I highly recommend it for any who are interested in this history of the restoration movement. There is a wide-open new area of research that will accompany this volume. There are new writers, new combatants and a lot of exciting reading.



About the AUTHORS

Blane Anderson is a member of the church of Christ in Roland, Oklahoma. He is actively involved in recruiting Christians to help spread the gospel through the World English Institute (which uses the Bible as its textbook to teach English). See his article for more details about that work.

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.

Daniel Cozort is the 16-year-old son of Adam Cozort. When not working to finish High School, he enjoys chess and other board games, reading, and magic tricks.

David Dean apparently likes coffee a lot. See his article for more details.

Marricus Ellis is a native of Murfreesboro, TN. He has been preaching the gospel for five years, and has been the Assistant Minister at the Green Meadow Church of Christ in Shelbyville, TN for the past two years. Marricus is a graduate of the historic Nashville School of Preaching and plans to further his education in Theology and Biblical Studies at Heritage Christian University. Through the Nashville School of Preaching, Marricus has had the privilege of speaking at lectureships, teaching classes, and preaching throughout the Tennessee area. He hopefully married his beloved fiancée, Jamila Pellum, in January 2022 [he didn't send an updated

bio...] and they plan to raise a family in Tennessee.

Kyle Frank spends his days reading, writing, texting, praying, singing, and helping others. In addition to being a Civil War expert, he offers digitization services at very reasonable prices. Contact him for more information (KyleDFrank@gmail.com).

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.

Roy Knight is a Christian Gentleman (and has a podcast with that very name), who has preached for the St. George (SC) church of Christ for 25 years. He is the author of a commentary on John, as well as two collections of fantastic devotionals, *There is a River* (Volumes 1 and 2).

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.

Caleb Lehman thinks red hair is a sign of wisdom. He is a student at Milligan University, and wants to create *quality* clean entertainment for a living. He is also addicted to emojis.

Michael Mazzalongo is in charge of Bibletalk.tv, a repository of Bible teaching, videos, and podcasts. Born and raised in Quebec, he and his wife became American citizens and he now preaches in Choctaw, Oklahoma. His relationship with the mob in Quebec is detailed in the April 2020 edition of the *Quarterly* (you can order it on Amazon pretty cheaply).

Kevin Micuch has written books on Calvinism,

misinterpretations of Christianity, positivity, maturing, how to be funny, and interplanetary evangelism.

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.

Travis L. Quertermous has been a gospel preacher for 30 years, all in the great state of Missouri. He currently works with the Thayer church of Christ. He and his wife Kelly have been married for 32 years and have two grown sons, Logan & Brandon. Travis is the author of one book, “The Hosts of Heaven: A Biblical Study of Angels” (Available from the Freed-Hardeman University bookstore).

Brooks Richardson is a young southern gentleman from Wetumpka, AL who speaks occasionally when given the opportunity. He has yet to decide on a vocation but he is only 14, maybe 15 when this is printed, so he has some time left. He is one of nine siblings and is homeschooled so he leads a fairly exciting life (life with nine kids around is never dull, even if you want it to be). His hobbies include Bible study, working out, reading, watching football, and managing his fantasy football teams. He is a little anxious for his 15th birthday this month so he can start driving.

Andy Robison preaches, and is the brains behind ChurchofChristSongs.com. He also an instructor with the West Virginia School of Preaching.

Charles R. Rose was born in a small farmhouse in the rural community of Red Oak, north of Marshall, Arkansas on September 21, 1942, and was educated in the public schools of Arkansas. He was baptized October 15, 1967 at Clinton, Arkansas by Brother Jimmy Duncan. Charles and his wife Lois have three grown children, and four grandchildren. He preached for small congregations in the hills of Arkansas, his first full-time work being at Saint Joe. He has served churches of Christ at Saint Joe, Western Grove, and Northfork, Arkansas, Mexico, Leesville and Lincoln, Missouri. He has worked with the Lincoln congregation 35 years. Although semi-retired, he still does their radio and media work. The present program airs on 97.1 FM from

Warsaw, Missouri and is in its 34th year of broadcasting. His writings have appeared in Four State Gospel News, World Evangelist, Voice of Truth International, and many church bulletins. He has preached numerous gospel meetings in Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Kansas. He may be reached at crrose@iland.net.

Jake Schotter, a resident of Henderson, Tennessee, has been preaching the Gospel since he was 9 years old and recently finished his first year of full-time work. He recently graduated from Freed-Hardeman University with a B.A. in Biblical Studies with an emphasis in preaching. He is the preacher for the Little Swan church of Christ in Howenwald, Tennessee. He can be contacted at jakeschotter@gmail.com.

Matthew Shaffer used to live in Brazil... Indiana. He has since left the country. 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.

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 has unofficially been inducted into the Dead Preacher’s Society. He has lost every game of Hand and Foot he’s played for over a month, much to Mrs. Cobb’s delight. He is also a confessed book hoarder—mostly religious and history, and especially religious history. He is in the midst of researching for a (potentially) multi-volume work on the Restoration Movement. His article in this issue is a taste of what is to come. And he really needs to go borrow a chainsaw...