

# GRACE IN FOCUS

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SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2014

## WHAT IS FREE GRACE THEOLOGY?

### Election for Baptists

Why Election Is to  
Service and Privilege,  
Not to Eternal Life

.....

### Proclaiming the Gospel

Is There Room for  
Diversity?

.....

### Shall We Pray?

1 Timothy 2:1-4



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## GRACE IN FOCUS

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

**T**he Free Grace message is one that impacts every area of life and every minute of every day we live. Far from inspiring sinfulness, the grace of God inspires holiness. Those truths are evident in this issue.

There are two wonderful articles in this issue which we first published over twenty years ago, by Zane Hodges (on prayer) and by Phil Congdon (on diversity and the gospel). If you read them before, you will surely delight as I did to read them again. If you've not read them, you are in for a real treat.

Shawn's article "Election for Baptists" isn't about President Jimmy Carter, a Southern Baptist elected to the White House. But it is about being chosen to perform a task, whether President, doctor (chosen for medical school), lawyer (law school), pilot, Navy Seal, Pastor, etc. Shawn clears up much confusion about the Biblical teaching on election.

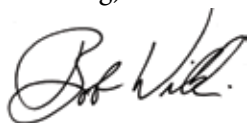
It is common today for Pastors and theologians to speak of true and false believers and true and false servants of God. Bill Fiess bucks that trend. He makes a strong case that every use of the words *servant(s)* or *fellow servant(s)* in Matthew's Gospel refers to born-again people if servants of *Christ* are in view.

Jerry and Beth Pattillo give moving reports of their short-term missions trips to Zambia. They have each been able to evangelize a small group of orphans one-on-one and have seen nearly all in their groups come to faith in Christ for everlasting life.

A subject dear to my heart is the Free Grace message. But what is the heart of that message? Can you concisely explain what that message is? I believe I've uncovered three essential elements of Free Grace Theology.

The Q & A section is becoming a reader favorite. What does it mean to love God *with your mind*? Did the Lord Jesus actually command Christians to pursue eternal rewards?

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# Making an Impact

Bob Wilkin, **EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**



# *Election* for **Baptists**

Why Biblical election is to  
service and privilege,  
not to eternal life.

by Shawn Lazar

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*“There isn’t a single verse in the Bible that says God elects individuals for eternal life or for eternal death.”*

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Few debates among Baptists are livelier than the ones over divine election. Interestingly, despite their other disagreements, Calvinistic Baptists and Arminian Baptists both assume that Biblical election is about God choosing individuals for eternal life or death. But is that assumption Biblical? Free Grace Baptists increasingly deny it. To “elect” something, simply means to “choose” it, and *there isn’t a single verse in the Bible that says God elects individuals for eternal life or for eternal death*. When you look up the passages dealing with God’s elections or choices, you find they are to *service and privilege*, not to *eternal life*. In sum, Biblical election is *vocational*: God chooses people, places, and things to serve Him in a task or mission.

## The Old Testament Evidence

There are dozens of examples of election in the OT. All of them involve down-to-earth choices, not eternal destiny. For example, wives are said to be *chosen* by their husbands (Gen 6:2). Pieces of land and city plots are *chosen* to live in (Gen 13:11; Deut 23:16). And bulls are carefully *chosen* to be sacrificed (1 Kgs 18:23). There are also numerous examples of God *choosing* places to serve Him, such as Jerusalem (1 Kgs 8:44) and the Temple (2 Chron 7:16). Clearly, none of those elections were to eternal life. People, places, and things are chosen because they are best suited for the task at hand.

Being “elect” or “chosen” can also have a *qualitative* meaning in the OT. In English, we speak about “choice” seats at a concert, or “select” cuts of meat. In the same way, the OT often describes certain soldiers as being “select men” who are ideally suited for a mission. For example: “Among all these people were seven hundred *select men* who were left-handed; every one could sling a

stone at a hair’s breadth and not miss” (Jgs 20:16, emphasis added; cf. Exod 14:7; 1 Sam 24:3; 2 Chron 13:3).

## The Individual/Corporate Pattern

There are numerous OT examples of God choosing *individuals* to serve Him, elections that were often implicitly *corporate*.

For example, God chose Abraham. His election was vocational because he was chosen to be the father of a people, the Jews (Gen 12:1-3). Through Abraham, the Jews were elect (Deut 7:6; Ps 33:12, etc.). Their election was also vocational because they were meant to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod 19:6) and the progenitors of the Messiah. But individual Jews were not elect in and of themselves. Instead, they were elect because they belonged to Israel.

We find the same pattern in the case of Aaron. God chose Aaron as an individual. His election was vocational because he was chosen to be a High Priest (Num 17:5). Aaron’s individual election was also implicitly corporate because God chose his descendants to serve as a line of priests after him and chose Aaron’s tribe (Levi) to be helpers to the priests (Num 18:2-4). But individual membership in the priesthood was conditional. Disobedient priests like Nadab and Abihu could be cut off from their vocation via death (Lev 10:1-3).

Lastly, consider king David. God chose David. His election was vocational because he was chosen to be king (2 Sam 6:21; 1 Kgs 8:16). David’s election was also implicitly corporate. God chose his house (Judah) to be the royal line (2 Sam 7:12-16; 1 Chron 28:4). But whether or not any particular descendant became and remained king was entirely conditional. Of all of David’s sons, only Solomon was chosen to be king over the individual nation. And when he disobeyed God by being unfaithful in his vocation, God tore away most of the kingdom from his son Rehoboam (1 Kgs 11:9-13).

Abraham, Aaron, and David were all elected by God, but not to eternal life. *They were chosen to serve.* Whether or not they were regenerate was a separate issue.

## The Apostles Were Chosen to Serve

The worldview of the Apostles was shaped by the OT. Their thought about election is no exception. Throughout the NT, we find that election is vocational. People are chosen for service and privilege, not for eternal life.

For example, Jesus *chose* twelve men to be His Apostles (Luke 6:13). The fact that this was not an election to eternal life is clear from the fact that Judas was one of the twelve and he was not regenerate (John 13:10). In all probability, the eleven Apostles were already regenerate before they were chosen to be one of the twelve, as was certainly the case with Matthias.

The Apostles had a vocational election. They were chosen to preach (Mark 3:13-14). We also know that their election was conditional. After Judas failed in his apostolic vocation, he was replaced by Matthias (Acts 1:24).

Jesus declared that Paul was “a chosen vessel of Mine” to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15-16). Silas, in turn, was chosen by Paul to be his travelling partner (Acts 15:40).

Peter was also *chosen* for a mission: “God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe” (Acts 15:7-8).

The Apostles were all chosen to serve, not to have eternal life.

## Jesus Is the Chosen One

The OT proclaimed that the Messiah was chosen by God to be a Suffering Servant (Isa 49:7), to preserve

a remnant in Israel (Isa 49:6), to be a light to the Gentiles (Isa 49:6), and to suffer for man’s salvation (Isa 52:13–53:12). The Messiah was chosen for a mission.

The NT reveals that Jesus is the Messiah, the Chosen One. He was not chosen to *receive* eternal salvation, but to *give* it to others. Even Jesus’ enemies knew the Messiah was chosen to save others (Luke 23:35). In sum, He was chosen to be a Servant (Matt 12:18).

When God elected Jesus, He had a corporate people in mind. Just as God chose the Jews in Abraham, the

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“Just as an OT priest participated in Aaron’s own election to the priesthood, we participate in Christ’s election through faith, when we become members of His Body, the Church.”

---

priests in Aaron, and the kings in David, God chose the Church to be in Christ.

In Ephesians 1 and 2, Paul revealed all the blessings that believers have when they are united to Christ in faith. One of those blessings is that we become *elect in Him* (Eph 1:4). This means that we share in Christ’s own election, not that we are individually elect ourselves. As William Klein explained, “Christ is the principally elected one and God has chosen a corporate body to be included in him” (*The New Chosen People*, 182).

And what were we chosen in Christ to do? Paul told the Ephesians that we were “created in Christ Jesus *for good works*” (Eph 2:10). Our election is vocational. We are called to love our neighbors and do good to them.

## “Appointed” to Eternal Life? (Acts 13:48)

In Acts 13:48, we read: “Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been *appointed to eternal life* believed.” The word often translated as “appointed” or “ordained” is *tetagmenoi*. Most translations thereby imply that these Gentiles were divinely appointed to believe the gospel. But the context strongly suggests a better interpretation.

Acts 13 is a study in contrasts in how different people *prepare themselves* to hear the gospel. At the beginning of the chapter, Luke contrasted the different attitudes of a false prophet named Bar-Jesus and a proconsul named Sergius Paulus. Luke tells us that Bar-Jesus was “full of all deceit and all fraud” and “an enemy of all righteousness” who kept “perverting the straight ways of the Lord” (Acts 13:10), while the proconsul was “an intelligent man” who “sought to hear the word of God” (Acts 13:7). Clearly, one man was open to the truth, and the other was not. Consequently, Bar-Jesus was cursed with blindness while the proconsul believed the gospel (Acts 13:12).

Later, when Paul and his party travelled down to Pisidian Antioch, they encountered another study in contrasts. Some of the Jews there “opposed the things spoken by Paul,” and didn’t believe his message. Paul rebuked them, saying you “judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life” (Acts 13:46).



By contrast, there were others who “begged” to hear more of the gospel. Unlike the Jews who judged themselves unworthy, these other people were open to the truth and actively seeking eternal life.

The positive response of the Gentiles seems to be antithetically parallel with the self-condemnation of the unbelieving Jews. That’s why commentators like Henry Alford and J. Vernon Bartlet argued that *tetagmenoi* should be translated: “as many as were *disposed* to eternal life believed.”<sup>1</sup> It is not that a divine power appointed them to eternal life. It is that, unlike the unbelieving Jews, these people had prepared themselves for eternal life, by seeking out the truth about the gospel.

## The Thessalonians and the Day of the Lord

People sometimes mistakenly read 2 Thess 2:3-4 as a reference to individual election to eternal life. Paul told them, “God from the beginning *chose you for salvation* through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.” But once again, context is key.

The Thessalonians were deeply concerned about the end times. In 2 Thessalonians, the believers feared they had entered into the Tribulation period, the Day of the Lord. But Paul assured them that they hadn’t. He explained that, if they were in the Tribulation, certain events would already have happened, such as the son of perdition exalting himself above God and sitting in the Temple (2 Thess 2:3-4). That hadn’t happened yet.

And besides, Paul wrote, “from the beginning” the Thessalonians were “chosen for salvation.” What salvation is he talking about? The subject wasn’t eternal salvation. Rather, Paul was talking about *deliverance* from the terrible events being discussed (2 Thess 2:1-12). The Thessalonians

were chosen to be delivered from the Tribulation via the Rapture the moment they first believed the gospel (2 Thess 2:13-14).

## The Potter and the Clay

Romans 9 is a perennial favorite among those who believe in individual election to eternal life and death. But all of Paul’s examples in that chapter show that God has the prerogative in choosing which nations to serve His purposes. The chapter is about corporate election to service, not individual election to eternal life.

In Romans 9, Paul explained how it could be that the Gentiles seemed to have been blessed above the Jews. He appealed to OT examples which showed that God was free to choose whichever nations He desired to serve Him.

For example, Paul said, God chose Jacob over Esau. But according to Gen 25:23 and Mal 1:1-5, Jacob and Esau represented two *nations*. The point was that God was free to choose the Jews over the Edomites to serve as the progenitors of the Messiah. This was a vocational choice of one nation over another, not an individual choice about their eternal destinies.

Paul also used Pharaoh to show that God could use Egypt to fulfill His purposes for Israel. In that case, God used Pharaoh to bring the Jews into the Promised Land. Whether or not Pharaoh was individually regenerate was not at issue.

This corporate and vocational emphasis was also evident in Paul’s use of the image of the potter and the clay. Jeremiah used that illustration to argue that God could justly punish those nations who failed in their vocations and reward those who fulfilled them (Jer 18:1-13). And Isaiah used the same image to show that God was just in using a Gentile like Cyrus to help rebuild Jerusalem (Isaiah 45).

# CAN YOUR CHURCH HOST A REGIONAL GRACE CONFERENCE?

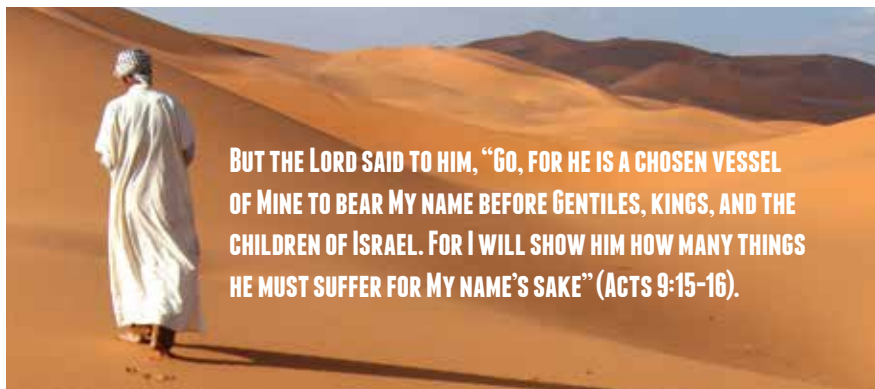
**IN A CULTURE dominated by the message of salvation by works, people are hungry for God’s Free Grace. They want to learn about the promise of eternal life and eternal rewards.**

**Other Free Grace believers feel burned out. Many people don’t have a grace church near them. They need the encouragement of meeting like-minded believers.**

**Many people find encouragement by attending GES’s national conference. But not everyone can afford to go. What can be done?**

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Both uses are vocational in nature. And that is Paul's point too.

In sum, Romans 9 is not about individual predestination to eternal life. It is about God's prerogative in using nations—even Gentile nations—to serve His purposes, sometimes at Israel's expense, but more often to her benefit.

## A Chosen Remnant

In Rom 11:5, Paul assured his readers that just as there was a remnant in Elijah's day, so too in their day there was a "remnant chosen by grace."

Many interpret that to mean there was a remnant of *individuals predestined to have eternal life*. However, that interpretation doesn't fit the context.

In Elijah's day, God reserved for Himself "seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal" (Rom 11:1-4). These men were reserved for a reason: they refused to bow to idols. Likewise, in Paul's day, God had reserved for Himself "a remnant chosen by grace." And why were they chosen?

As Paul explained, unlike the rest of Israel, which sought for righteousness by works of the law, the remnant had sought and received righteousness by faith (Rom 9:30-32). And as Paul says elsewhere, "it is of faith that it might be according to grace" (Rom 4:6). To say the remnant were "chosen by grace" is Paul's

way of saying they were chosen because they had been justified by faith, apart from works.

## Application

As members of the Body of Christ, we are elect in Christ, and share in the general vocation to do good works (Eph 2:10). Hence, this vocational doctrine of election makes a difference to several areas of Christian thought and practice.


First, it does not cast doubt on God's loving character the way other theories of election do. God's election is an expression of His love for all. For example, the Jews were chosen to produce the Messiah so that all people could be saved. And the Apostles were chosen to proclaim the gospel so that many would believe in Jesus and have eternal life. Election to service actually magnifies God's love for all mankind.

Second, election to service does not destroy people's assurance of eternal life. It brings out the fact that election and eternal life are two different issues. Eternal life is given to us freely on the basis of faith in Christ (John 3:16). But being faithful in the service to which we are all chosen takes prayer, effort, faithfulness, diligence, and work.

Third, election to service clarifies the importance of both God's sovereignty and human free-will. From the divine side of things, God sovereignly sends His Son to atone

for the sins of the world, chooses servants to preach the good news to all mankind, and chooses to save whoever will believe in Jesus for eternal life. And from the human side of things, people are free to seek the truth in response to God's drawing, to believe in Jesus' promise of eternal life, and to be faithful or unfaithful in the mission God has sovereignly given them as members of the Church (Eph 2:10). God sovereignly allows for human freedom in both eternal life and in our election to service.

## Conclusion

There is much more work to be done on the doctrine of election. We have only reviewed some of the evidence here. But Free Grace Baptists and others are reading the Bible with genuine excitement. They see that Biblical election is not a "dread decree" that only philosophers can understand, but a practical and down-to-earth choice that meaningfully underscores the importance of faithfulness in the Christian life. After receiving the free gift of everlasting life, we are called to serve God and our neighbors. Will you be faithful in your mission? 

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*Shawn Lazar is Director of Publications at Grace Evangelical Society.*

1. Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament, Vol. II: The Acts of the Apostles, The Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians*, Fifth Edition (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1865), 153. J. Vernon Bartlett, *The New Century Bible: The Acts*, quoted in Robert Shank, *Elect in the Son: A Study of the Doctrine of Election* (Springfield, MO: Westcott Publishers, 1970), 87.



A photograph of three young adults (two men and one woman) sitting at a wooden table in a library, surrounded by tall bookshelves filled with books. They are engaged in a study session, with one person holding a book and another writing in a notebook. The scene is brightly lit by a large window in the background.

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# Proclaiming the Gospel

## Is There Room for Diversity?<sup>1</sup>

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by Phil Congdon

**I**n 1978, John Paul Young was crooning: “Love is in the air...” Today, this seems to be the refrain in theological circles. Rather than focusing on distinctives, the emphasis is on loving reconciliation at any cost.

Some Evangelicals are now pushing for unity with Roman Catholics. The concern of these leaders is laudable; they want Christians to have maximum impact in the world, and see this happening only if we cooperate in the mission together.

In this context, many will certainly wonder why an organization like the Grace Evangelical Society even exists. You can almost hear them say, “Must be a bunch of raving fundamentalists!” So the question must be addressed: Would the mission of the church be better served if we stopped debating the content of the gospel and just started preaching it?

Obviously, the question answers itself. In order to preach the gospel, one must *know* what it is. A study by the Barna Research Group in 1993 indicated that there is widespread confusion about the content of the gospel among *churchgoers*. Incredibly, almost

half (48%) of the respondents accepted as the gospel this statement: “If people are generally good, or do enough good things for others... they will earn places in heaven.” As George Barna said in response,

“There is plenty of reason for churches to worry if nearly one-half of their people who believe in evangelism also believe in salvation by works... The central message of Protestantism is in salvation by faith alone in Christ, yet [many] Protestant evangelizers seem to be preaching a different message” (*Moody*, Oct 93, p. 67).

When it comes to an issue as critical as the gospel, there cannot be—indeed, there must not be—any equivocation for the sake of a perception of harmony. Who can argue with the fact that if we have peace, but only at the expense of proclaiming a false gospel, that we have lost the game?

The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed important debates on crucial theological issues—the deity of Christ and the inerrancy of Scripture, to name just two. Bizarre theories about Jesus’ life and person continue to arise, and many scholars still make sport of criticizing the authority of the Bible. But because these

**“When it comes to an issue as critical as the gospel, there cannot be—indeed, there must not be—any equivocation for the sake of a perception of harmony.”**

positions were challenged in their day, many Christians today have avoided being derailed by such errors.

Now, as this new century begins, it is the most basic issue—the one we always “took for granted”—which has come to the fore. After centuries lying largely in dormant tension, the issue of the gospel message itself has reached our doorstep. If we do not respond, future generations will pay the price.

There is a maxim in theological matters: “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, diversity.” That means that while we may allow for differences in areas of doctrine which (while important) are secondary (not integral to the faith), we must take firm stands in areas of doctrine which are foundational. While the question of what is essential is sometimes debated, it certainly is not here. All agree, the gospel issue is critical.

Do we seek peace? Certainly. Do we value unity and cooperation? Absolutely! But not at the expense of truth. For this we must be vigilant. It is Martin Luther who said, “Peace if possible, but truth at any rate.”

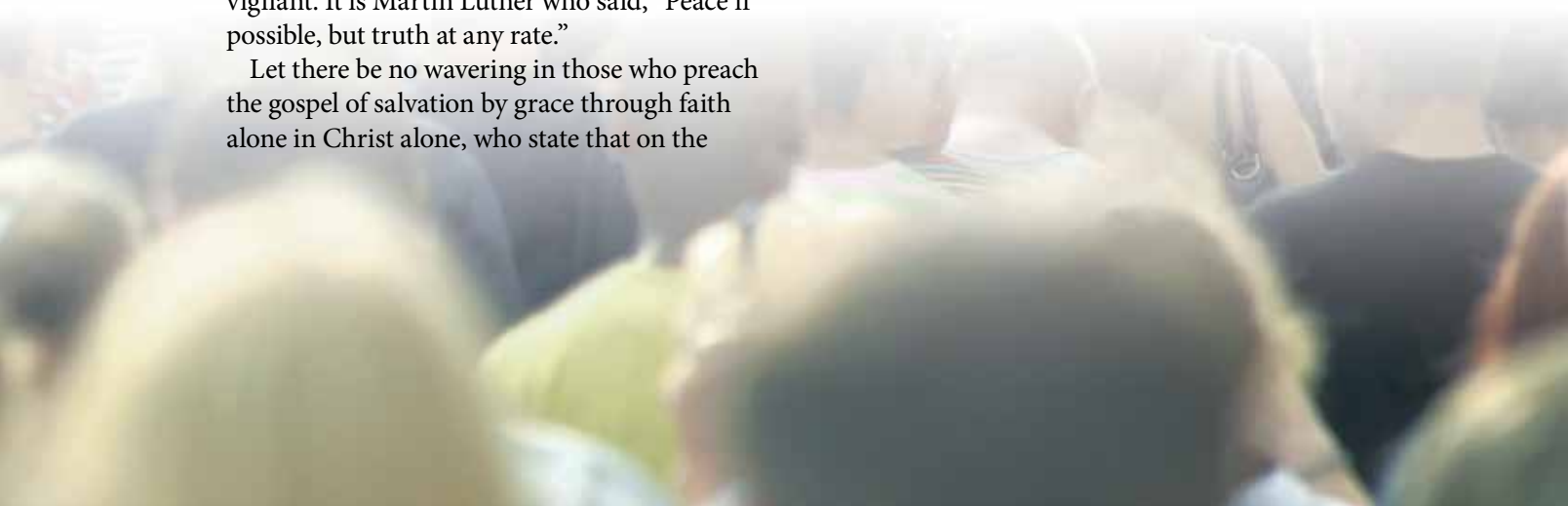
Let there be no wavering in those who preach the gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone in Christ alone, who state that on the

basis of Christ’s death and resurrection the new believer can know from the moment of faith on that he is a child of God. Confusion over the gospel is rampant in churches today. As is evident from the results of the study noted above, the gospel of salvation through faith alone in Christ alone has been lost to many in the church. Let us clearly proclaim the gospel of God’s grace, and, on the basis of His free gift of eternal life, motivate believers to live lives dedicated to Jesus Christ. ■

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*Phil Congdon is pastor of New Braunfels Bible Church in New Braunfels, TX.*

1. This article originally appeared in the January/February (1996) issue of *Grace in Focus*.





# Remembering Dale Boring

by Bob Wilkin

**D**ale was born two days before the United States entered into World War II. He went to be with the Lord on June 7<sup>th</sup> of this year. He was 72.

Dale and his wife Diane first came to the GES annual conference in 1997 with their daughter Nancy. They came almost every year after that until this year when Dale's health would no longer allow him to come.

Everyone at the conference loves Dale and Diane. They are so encouraging, so positive, and so committed to the Lord, His Word, and the message of life.

For four years Dale suffered under the effects of Parkinson's disease. The first two years he came to the conference even though his health was not good.

The Boring's have three daughters, Cathy, Linda, and Nancy. At Dale's memorial service a letter from Nancy was read. In part she said,

"Here are a few reasons why I loved Dad so much: because of his love for the Lord, because of his desire to share the good news with people until the day he died, and because of his genuine interest in others... He shared the good news of salvation up until the end. Anytime he was being cared for by a nurse or caregiver, he would share Christ."

Many times during his hospice care Dale would sing songs like Amazing Grace and the Doxology. As his thoughts became more jumbled, he would still say some amazing things, revealing where his heart is. One night



Diane heard him say, "Great experience to trust You, to know your eternal circumstance is all taken care of... Faith alone in Christ alone. That's all there is to it."

Amen. 

---

*Bob Wilkin is the Editor of Grace in Focus Magazine and Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society.*

## *Grace on the Go*

### September

- 21 Bayside Community Church, Tampa, FL  
(Ken)
- 26-28 Emmanuel Baptist Church, Starkville, MS  
Men's Retreat and Sunday services (Bob)

### October

- 5 Upland Bible Church, Las Vegas, NV  
First morning meeting (Bob)

### November

- 1-2 West Side Baptist Church, Pittsburg, PA  
Conference on Eternal Rewards (Bob)
- 7-9 New Hope Bible Church, Wahoo, NE  
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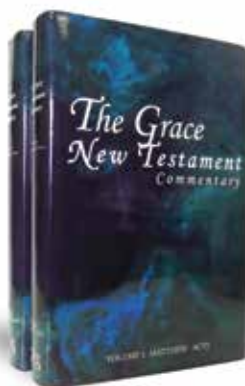
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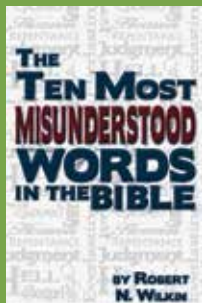
Through a discussion of Biblical texts, this book presents four perspectives on the role of works at the final judgment including: Robert N. Wilkin, works will determine rewards but not salvation, and Thomas R. Schreiner, works will provide evidence that one actually has been saved.

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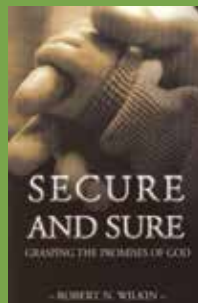
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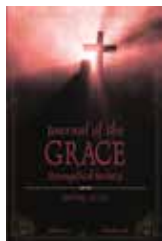
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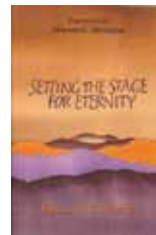


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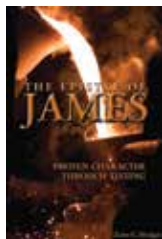


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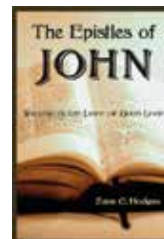


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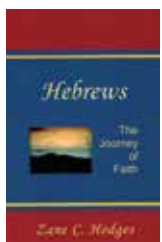


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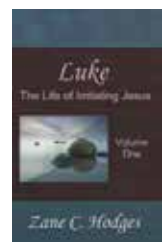


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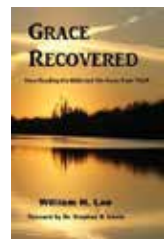


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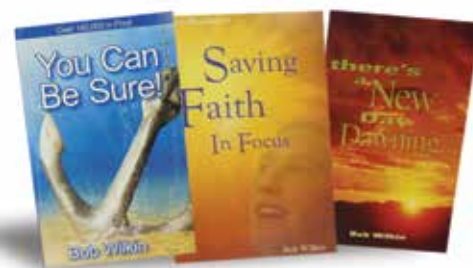
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## Observation

**H**ere is an observation I made while studying Jesus' Parable of the Unforgiving Servant in Matt 18:21-35. This is basically the first parable which Jesus told in Matthew involving a king and his servants (though Matt 13:24-30 might also be considered the first). But people are often troubled by statements the Lord makes to people He called *servants*. Consider the following statements He makes about servants in Matthew:

"Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him

into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth'" (Matt 22:13).

"...the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt 24:50-51).

"And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt 25:30).

Of course, all three of these deal with servants who will *weep and gnash their teeth*. Many commentators feel such people are unbelievers and going to hell. But Huber and Sapaugh have shown that the outer darkness is missing out on the joys associated with ruling with Christ.<sup>1</sup> They have also shown that *weeping and gnashing of teeth* is a Semitic expression for grief and that is not something only unbelievers will do. Unfaithful believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ will experience grief too.

But I noticed something else that bolsters their argument. Every use of





the word *servant* in Matthew, when referring to a servant of Jesus, refers to believers.

## Application

It is clear that the chastened servant of Matthew 18 is a brother, that is, a believer: “Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants” (Matt 18:23). The idea of *settling accounts* is a rewards concept: “Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds *to your account*” (cf. Phil 4:17, emphasis added); “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as *those who must give account*” (Heb 13:17, emphasis added).<sup>2</sup>

Matthew 18:21-22, the verses introducing the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, concerns Peter’s question about forgiving one’s *brother*. *Brother* here refers to a fellow believer. This is brought out in the application of the parable when the Lord says, “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive *his brother* his trespasses” (Matt 18:35, emphasis added).

Furthermore, Peter’s question was prompted by Jesus’ statement about *brethren* and *the assembly* in the previous section:

“Moreover if *your brother* sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he

hears you, you have gained *your brother*” (Matt 18:15, emphasis added).

“And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to *the church*. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector” (Matt 18:17, emphasis added).


## Conclusion

Clearly the Lord Jesus is discussing believers (*brethren*) in this parable in Matthew 18.

But I noticed this also: that the expression *fellow servant* (*sundoulos*) is used four times in this parable (Matt 18:28, 29, 31, 33) and they are called *brethren* in Matt 18:35 (quoted above).

I also noticed in the Parable of the Faithful and Wicked Servant in Matt 24:45-51 this reference to *fellow servants*: “and [he] begins to beat his *fellow servants*, and to eat and drink with the drunkards (Matt 24:49, emphasis added).

Matthew 24:45 clearly implies that this servant is a believer who for a time was faithful (Matt 24:45-47) and then, when he thought his Lord was delaying His promised soon return (v 48), he changes and becomes unfaithful (vv 49-51).

Every reference in Matthew to a servant of Jesus, or to the fellow servants of such servants, refers to believers. In addition to the verses cited in this article, see also Matt 13:28; 18:26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33; 21:34, 35, 36; 22:3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13; 24:45, 46, 48, 49; 25:14, 21, 23, 26. They all fit. 

---

*Bill Fiess is a mathematics professor.*

1. These articles are available at the GES website ([www.faithalone.org](http://www.faithalone.org)) under Free Resources/JOTGES (Sapaugh = Spring 1992; Huber = Autumn 1992). Last accessed 6/1/14.

2. In all three verses the word translated “accounts” is *logos*, which often means *word*, but in certain contexts refers to *an account*.



# Shall We Pray?

## 1 Timothy 2:1-4<sup>1</sup>

by Zane C. Hodges

**I**n his first letter to Timothy, Paul wrote these words about prayer:

“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for *all men*...For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires *all men* to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:1, 3-4, italics added).

One of the great truths of Christian revelation is the truth of God’s universal love for all mankind. The Cross of Christ is obviously the greatest expression of that love. In fact, in the verses immediately following the ones just quoted, Paul goes on to say that as the only Mediator between God and man, the Lord Jesus Christ, “gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:6).

Thus Paul reminds Timothy, his fellow worker (and through Timothy, the church at Ephesus—see 1:3), that *all men* are an appropriate subject for Christian prayer precisely because God desires all men to be saved. Moreover, this desire finds a decisive manifestation through Christ’s mediatorial role, since His death was a universal ransom.

Naturally, it is not Paul alone who affirms such truths. The Apostle John is emphatic that through His death Christ has become not only the propitiation (“satisfaction”) for the sins of Christians, but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). The Apostle Peter is equally emphatic that God does not want anyone to perish [die prematurely under the Tribulation judgments]<sup>2</sup>, but desires that all men should

return to harmony with Him through repentance (2 Pet 3:9).<sup>3</sup> Thus the witness of the NT is consistent in its affirmation that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever [in the whole world!] believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

It follows, in the light of Paul’s words to Timothy, that we are to take these marvelous facts into account in our prayer lives. Indeed, if Christians do not find a way to pray for all men, then they are not obeying the command of 1 Tim 2:1-2.

Are we to pray for the salvation of every individual in the world? No, because no one who believes the Bible could pray such a prayer with Scriptural integrity. The Bible clearly discloses that many will be lost despite God’s desire that all should be saved.

It is not my purpose here to try to enter into the mysteries of God’s decrees. It will be sufficient to say, with many theologians, that for His own wise purposes God has not always decreed what His heart desires.

But we must be careful not to lose contact with God’s heart. God’s heart is so full of love for every individual on earth that He was willing to allow His only-begotten Son to suffer and die for that individual. Knowing this truth can affect our prayer life.

To begin with, we can pray for all men by praying for God’s worldwide work of evangelism. We can pray that God’s servants who truly preach the gospel of His grace may find an abundant harvest for the seed they sow. We can pray that in our own day when the world’s



## WHAT IS GRACE EVANGELICAL SOCIETY?

**THE GOSPEL PROMISE** was under assault in Paul's time and still is today. How many "Christians" have followed the ancient Galatians in believing they can be saved by a mixture of faith and works?

Grace Evangelical Society (GES) was founded in 1986 to promote the soul-winning truth that God offers man the free gift of everlasting life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, apart from works done before or after the new birth (John 3:16; 5:24; 6:35, 47; 11:26).

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population is increasing exponentially, that the number of the saved might likewise increase. Thus, through prayer, we can become partners in the spread of the marvelous message that eternal life is absolutely free.

But also we can pray for particular individuals about whose salvation we are concerned. And we can know, as we do so, that God is concerned, too, and that He has already given His Son to die for them. As we appeal to these truths in prayer, they can strengthen our faith on behalf of the individual for whom we are praying. And, as the Scriptures make plain, when we pray believingly God delights to work.

That does not violate God's mysterious eternal decree. It simply shows that our believing prayer has a role to play in the outworking of His sovereign purposes in the world of men. Let us be careful not to miss such a role.

Shall we pray...for the lost? You bet! 

---

*Zane C. Hodges taught NT Greek and Exegesis at Dallas Seminary for 27 years, and was a founding Board member of Grace Evangelical Society.*

1. This article originally appeared in the April 1990 issue of *Grace in Focus*.
2. The material in brackets was added for clarification. It should be noted that what was put in parenthesis was probably not Hodges's understanding of perishing in 2 Pet 3:9 in 1990 when he wrote this article. However, by 2001, it was his view, as is shown in his later book *Harmony with God*. See next note.
3. For further discussion see Zane C. Hodges, *Harmony with God: A Fresh Look at Repentance* (Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 2001), 57-64.

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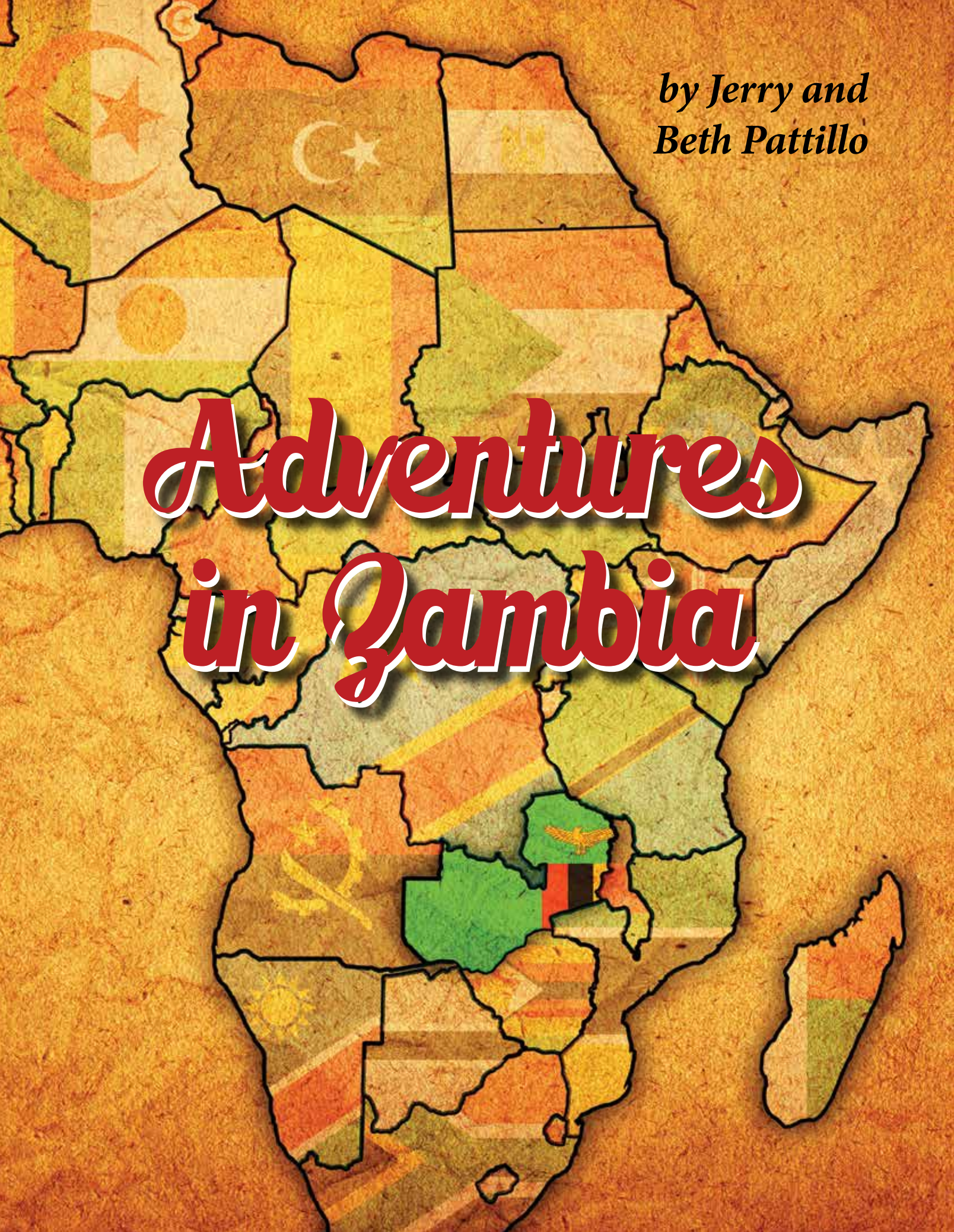


## Invite a Speaker!



*by Jerry and  
Beth Pattillo*

# *Adventures in Zambia*





# Jerry's Boys

**I**magine people so hungry for spiritual truth, and so spiritually ripe, that all you have to do is show up and pick them. Such is the case with the impoverished people of Zambia. I was privileged to go for a fourth trip to Zambia this summer, and each year it has been amazing to see God working time and time again. We simply show up and give what we have emotionally and spiritually to the people there, then step back and watch God work.

There is so much that we could share about, and I will highlight just a couple of experiences in this letter.

## Review of the Ministry

It is my privilege to work directly with 10 boys ages 14-17, most of whom I have had in my group the past two summers. All of these boys live very impoverished lives in the Ngombe community of Lusaka, Zambia. They live in small one-room cinder block homes with no running water, only a small portion of *nshima* to eat twice a day (if that), usually with a grandparent or distant relative (because their parents are dead or have rejected them). Yet they are incredibly content and well-behaved kids who really come alive when loved.

We minister to them in a day camp setting, but it is not a typical day camp with lots of activities, crafts, etc. There are 3 things we do: large group time, small group time, and one-on-one blessing time. It is a



Jerry Pattillo and his boys

ministry of giving love, giving hugs, sharing God's truth, singing and worshipping together, praying for them and having your heart broken for them!

## Context for Biblical Understanding

The small group time is not normally intended to be a lengthy time of teaching, but the boys I have at their particular stage of life are so hungry for knowledge and understanding of the world and the Bible that we inevitably get into longer discussions of a "teaching" nature. This year, they were in the process of learning Heb 11:1, but could not understand why different English versions of the text used different words. This led to a lengthy discussion of the fact that the Bible was not originally written in English (when I asked what language they thought it was written in, one of the boys said "Nyanja," their language), and led to drawing out a time-line from 2000 BC to 2000 AD, placing the key figures of the Bible and history on that time line, and explaining that Alexander the Great conquered the world and brought the Greek

language everywhere, so the Bible was written in Greek. They "ate it up" with much interest and excitement as they began to understand the processes which caused things to occur up to the present day. We had similar discussions about Paul and his writings and his being in jail in Rome, etc. They have just been given so little instruction that they come alive with the chance to learn.

## Sharing the Salvation Message in Their Community

By far the highlight of the week was seeing them share the salvation message in their community. We visited their community on Thursday. This year I was able to bring over 200 Gospel of John booklets, and we taught them how to share the salvation message simply using John 3:16. I explained that they were not simply to give the booklets out, but only give them to people with whom they shared about eternal life using John 3:16 and afterward wanted to read more. In that culture, however, almost everyone wants to hear about eternal life. As we traveled down one of the dirt roads in their community,

we would ask a person if we could tell them about eternal life, and one of the boys would share John 3:16. While he was sharing, another boy would go up to another house or group of people and start sharing. Pretty soon, all 10 boys were just going out in different directions, sharing with different people and coming back to get more Gospel of John booklets from me. It was incredible to see them doing this with such boldness and confidence!



Evans, Jerry Pattillo, and Harrison

On the following Friday, one of the boys came up to me and said “Uncle Jerry, sharing John 3:16 yesterday was awesome!” It was awesome!

I was able to take part in some interesting discussions as well. We had one man who claimed the Bible said there were many ways to God. We showed and read John 14:6 to him. Another man said he could lose eternal life. We showed and read John 10:27-28 to him. Still another said that he could not have eternal life because he drank beer. We shared Eph 2:8-9 as well as John 3:16 with him, and explained that if getting eternal life was based on him stopping from drinking beer, then he would be able to boast. With all three of these men, you could see the power of the Word of God as we read it. There was a visible change in their

response and grateful understanding of being shown God’s truth.

Our group shared the salvation message with over 200 people that day. Pray for those who believed to grow in their faith and for all the rest who heard to come to faith.

## Impact on the Zambian Partners

Each year I have gone to Zambia, I feel that I have had a huge impact on my Zambian partner. He is with me as I share with each boy during “blessing time,” and thus he hears the salvation message and related Biblical truths many times, and they begin to sink deeper into him as well. This year was no different. My Zambian partner Evans (in the red

shirt) is a pastor in the community. Evans told me that he went to a school where they taught you could lose eternal life; but Evans was very excited because I showed him from John 10 that a person could not lose eternal life. Again wow! I consider that very significant because Evans will take this new understanding and impact his congregation with it.

## One More Thing


Of all the boys that I began with in 2012, every boy except one seemed to express at some point an understanding that they had eternal life simply because they believed in Jesus. (A couple of them this year seemed to have wavered in their assurance of that.) That one boy, Gift Phiri, just did not seem to understand the salvation message clearly

in past years. This year, however, I am excited to share that Gift has a very clear understanding and belief that he has eternal life because of his belief in Jesus for it.

This is super exciting because it appears that all 10 boys have now come to faith in Jesus. But please continue to pray for them. Their culture is so full of works salvation and loss of eternal life teaching, that it is easy to get confused.

We discussed together how to stay strong in the faith through God’s word and prayer. Pray that they will indeed stay strong.

## Conclusion

What a privilege it was to go to Zambia. It really is a matter of simply showing up and seeing God work. It is Beth’s and my prayer that many of you reading our reports this year will likewise choose to go to Zambia in the future. God will use you to impact people that are close to His heart, and you will be incredibly blessed as well. 

---

*Jerry Pattillo is Minister of Administration at Northwest Bible Church in Dallas, TX, and a member of the GES Board.*



# Beth's Girls

What an incredible blessing to spend a week with the same 10 girls I have had for the last 2 years in Zambia. It is so wonderful that I already know them so we can pick up right where we left off.

God has answered so many prayers this year. Judith is back home instead of with her aunt so she is able to attend school every day; Violet's dad did not die as expected, and she is now living with her grandmother (which is a better situation); Memory not only got to see her long-lost brother, but he is now living with her and their aunt; and Martha's aunt who practiced witchcraft on the family is no longer living with them. However, many of the girls are getting beaten regularly; many are not getting enough to eat; and there is much conflict and violence in their homes.



Beth and her girls

twice a day if their caretaker has the money. When asked about specific prayer requests, it is always that their sponsors would continue to sponsor them so that they can stay in school. They absolutely love school—it is the only hope they have to ever rise above their current circumstances. Each one is extremely grateful to

He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.” The five sentences in this verse include not only salvation, but they also express how precious we are to God. Can’t you picture what this verse says? In their society, orphans are worthless. In Ps 68:5, God defines Himself as “a Father to the fatherless and a protector of

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“These girls live in poverty that is unimaginable in our society. They have no electricity, no running water; they sleep on the floor in small cinderblock houses...They are lucky to get a cup of tea for breakfast.”

---

These girls live in poverty that is unimaginable in our society. They have no electricity, no running water; they sleep on the floor in small cinderblock houses that usually consist of just one small room and a piece of fabric for a door. They are lucky to get a cup of tea for breakfast, and the only other food they eat is *nshima* (sort of like thick grits) once a day or occasionally

God and to their sponsors. I am now confident that each girl truly understands and has received salvation by grace.

God led me to focus on Zeph 3:17 during Camp this week, and each one of my girls memorized it. “The Lord your God is living among you. He is a mighty Savior. He will delight in you with gladness. With His love He will calm all your fears.

widows.” He places great value in these precious orphaned children. My girls loved the message of this verse.

This year I brought river rocks painted with “God is good” on one side and “I believe in Jesus for eternal life” on the other side. I explained what an Ebenezer stone means (a stone of remembrance), and on Friday I had them each spend

time with God confirming that they would always remember those two truths about God. I had in mind that they would place them on the hillside where we meet, but they asked to take them home so that they could always see them and always remember. This time was followed by a moving communion time. My heart was overflowing.

One of the really fun things at Camp this year is that the kids got to play on a playground for the first time in their entire lives. The only playgrounds in Lusaka are for the rich, and they require an expensive paid membership fee to use. They got to swing and slide for the first time. At first they were very nervous—they had no idea what it was going to feel like, but as they got brave and tried it, they absolutely loved it. They could not scramble back to the top of the slide fast enough. What fun!



First timers at the playground

On Thursday we went into their compound of Ngombe to share the gospel. They were all eager and confident as they took turns sharing using the Evangecube and the Gospel of John. We saw several people believe in Jesus for eternal life.

It was such a joy on the Saturday after Camp to go to Lusaka West to see our boys there and have a party. They are doing great—it was fun finding out how well they are doing in school and to hear their excellent English. They are also

growing stronger in their walk with Christ. God moved a huge mountain to allow me to also see my Michael. Michael is a double orphan that we have sponsored since 2007. We have gotten to see him the last two summers. He is now in a government boarding school (very rustic and primitive) three hours from Lusaka. The people he was previously living with had asked him to leave because they didn't have enough food to feed him. Family Legacy Missions International (the group we work with) asked if we could support him at the boarding school so that he could finish his high school education. Of course we were happy to—he is our 5th son. I love that he calls me Mom. It was


so awesome to see him and tell him that God had provided some money towards his university education as well.

I recently retired from Prestonwood Christian Academy in June, and the school let the parents know that it would be a huge honor and blessing to me for people to donate towards a scholarship for Michael for college. Sharing this good news with Michael blew him away—he was beyond thrilled that God had provided for him. He is acutely aware of how alone he is in this world, so when God provides in a miraculous way, Michael stands in awe and wonder. He was already working very hard on his studies, but now he says he is going to work extra, extra hard.

I am privileged beyond measure to have been able to go to Camp Life this year. Some have said that



Michael and Beth

we go to be a blessing to these kids, but I am blessed far more than they are. I get to see God's hand working directly in their lives. I get to see them come alive as they learn about God and His love for them. I get to know that we will spend eternal life together. It is the highlight of my year. 

---

*Beth Pattillo retired from Prestonwood Christian Academy in Plano, TX and is the wife of GES Board member, Jerry Pattillo.*



# WHAT IS FREE GRACE THEOLOGY?

BY BOB WILKIN



## Free Grace Theology Has Emerged over the Last 35 Years

**A**lthough Free Grace theology goes back to the Lord Jesus and to His Apostles—and it was certainly evident in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries as well (e.g., Glas, Sandeman, Darby, Mackintosh, Lange, Govett)—it has really taken shape in the last 35 years. *The Gospel Under Siege* by Zane Hodges came out in 1981 and it helped to define some of the major issues. But even today, there is still more work to be done to nail down all of the particulars of Free Grace theology.

### Free Grace Theology Summarized

Before we look at the particulars, here is a summary in one (long) sentence:

Free Grace theology is the view that 1) everlasting life is a free gift (which the Lord Jesus fully paid for by His death on the cross for our sins) which is received by faith alone in Christ alone, apart from works of any kind; 2) that assurance of one's eternal destiny is based solely on believing Jesus' promise to the believer and not at all on our works or on our feelings; and 3) that all people, believers and unbelievers, are accountable for their works, receive recompense for what they do in this life, and will be judged at the end of the age (in two separate judgments) to determine degrees of reward (believers) or degrees of torment (unbelievers) in the life to come, but not to determine their eternal destinies.

### First Essential: Faith Alone

*Everlasting life is a free gift (which the Lord Jesus fully paid for by His*

*death on the cross for our sins) which is received by faith alone in Christ alone, apart from works of any kind.*

Not faith *plus* works. That is the Arminian position.

Not faith *that* works. That is what many in the Reformed or 5-Point Calvinist camp say.

Both believe that perseverance in good works is required to make it to heaven. Arminians say if a believer fails to persevere in good works, then he loses eternal life and he goes to hell. Many (but not all) Calvinists say if a believer fails to persevere in good works, then he proves he wasn't a "true believer" in the first place and he goes to hell.

There isn't any *practical* difference in these views. They both end in doubt.

Arminians can never be sure of their salvation. Neither can Calvinists. Even though Calvinists say you can't lose eternal life, since failure to persevere proves one didn't have "true faith" in the first place, to the lapsed Calvinist it will seem that they had then lost their salvation.

The Free Grace position has as its first characteristic that simply by believing in Jesus a person has eternal life. It advocates for *faith alone, in Christ alone*, nothing added, and no strings attached.

***Faith in Christ is intellectual assent.*** Stripped of its pejorative connotation, "intellectual assent" is a good definition of what faith is.

For example, do you believe that George Washington was the first President of the United States? If you do, then you know what faith is from a Biblical perspective.

There is no commitment, no decision of the will, no turning from sins, and no works that are part of faith in Christ. If you are convinced or persuaded that what He promised

is true, then you believe in Him. Faith is passive. It is simply taking Jesus at His word.

But what specifically must we believe about Jesus to have eternal life?

***The specific object of saving faith is Jesus' promise of eternal life (cf. John 3:16; 6:47; 11:26).*** These passages all say that whoever believes in Jesus Christ has everlasting life. When we believe that, we believe in Jesus.

While Free Grace people believe in and proclaim the cross and the resurrection, we do not say that all who believe Jesus died for our sins and rose again have eternal life. Why not? Because someone can believe those things about Jesus *and also believe in salvation by works*. That is not a saving message.

In order to have saving faith, a person must believe that everlasting life (or equivalent ideas like justification, eternal relationship with God, guaranteed eternity with Jesus in His kingdom, or once saved, always saved) is by *faith alone in Christ alone, apart from works*. It is not enough to believe that faith in Jesus is one condition among many. One must believe that faith in Jesus is the *only* condition of eternal life.

***Thus turning from sins, commitment, obedience, and perseverance are not faith and thus aren't conditions of eternal life.*** Those are all types of *works*. Works have their proper place in the Christian life, but only *after* you have believed in Jesus.

The Free Grace position is very clear that turning from sins is *not* a synonym for faith *nor* a condition of eternal life. Note that well.

(Some in the Free Grace camp believe that repentance *is* a condition of everlasting life, but they define repentance as a *change of mind* about

Christ, not *turning from sins*. In essence that view sees repentance as a synonym for faith.)

***Perseverance in faith and good works is not a condition of eternal life.*** Most people say that only those who persevere in faith and good works will make it into the kingdom. That is not the Free Grace position.

It is possible to believe in Christ and yet sin. Indeed, all Christians sin daily (Rom 3:23; 1 John 1:8, 10). The Scriptures show that failure, even major failure, is possible in the Christian life. First Corinthians 3:3 shows that if you look at the works of some believers, you can't distinguish them from the works of unbelievers. First Corinthians 5:1-5 shows that the works of some believers are actually worse than the works of unbelievers. Luke 19:20-26, Jas 5:19-20, and 2 Tim 2:11-13 show that some believers do not persevere.

The point is, perseverance is not guaranteed. Commitment and obedience and perseverance are all necessary to *please God* and to have *fullness of life*, but they are not conditions of everlasting life. Belief in Jesus is the sole condition.

## Second Essential: Assurance

*Assurance of one's eternal destiny is found solely in believing Jesus' promise to the believer and not at all in our works or feelings.*

Believers should be assured of their eternal life (1 John 5:13). But most Evangelicals believe that good works are indispensable for assurance. That means a *brand-new Christian* can't be sure where he is going when he dies since he hasn't produced any good works yet. Indeed *no Christian* could be sure since there is no checklist in Scripture that indicates how many works are necessary to show that someone

is born again. No one could be sure that his works were good enough to prove he was born again. And even if one was highly confident in his works now (which by itself is a bad thing in terms of assurance, Matt 7:21-23), he could never be sure that he would persevere (1 Cor 9:27).

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able for assurance, they deny that certainty of one's eternal destiny is possible prior to death. After all, if only those who persevere will make it into the kingdom, and if we can't be sure until death that we will persevere, then we can't be sure if we are kingdom bound till we die.

Free Grace theology rejects that way of thinking. We deny that assurance is found inside of us, in a subjective judgment of our works. Rather, the only condition of assurance is found outside of us, by believing the promise that Jesus guarantees eternal life to all who simply believe in Him for it.

In John 11:26 Jesus asked Martha, “Do you believe this?” She said “Yes, Lord.” She didn't look to her works. She didn't wonder about her future works or whether she would persevere in the future or not. She knew

that didn't impact her belief or her eternal life.

Simply put, assurance *is of the essence of saving faith*. This means that whenever a person believes in Jesus, he knows for sure he has everlasting life.

Or, saying it the other way, if a person *has never been sure* that he has eternal life simply by faith in Jesus, he has not yet been born again.

However, that does not mean that someone who *currently* lacks assurance, or who *can't remember* if they ever had assurance, is not born again.

The question is whether they *ever had* assurance. For if someone has *never* had assurance of eternal life, that means they never believed Jesus' promise that believers *have* everlasting life as a present possession (John 3:16). And if someone has never believed *that*—i.e., if they have not believed in Jesus' promise of eternal life—then they are not born again! In fact, if you ask them why they believe eternal life can be lost, their answer will usually show that they actually believe in salvation by works.

Free Grace theology proclaims the truth that assurance is not found by looking to our works or feelings, but in believing Jesus' promise of life.

## Third Essential: Accountability

*All people—believers and unbelievers—are accountable for their works, receive recompense for what they do in this life, and will be judged at the end of the age to determine degrees of reward (believers) or degrees of torment (unbelievers) in the life to come, but not to determine their eternal destinies.*

A final vital element of Free Grace theology is *the doctrine of*

*accountability.* People who emphasize faith apart from works are sometimes accused of antinomianism. But the grace of God is not a license to sin. It is a call to holiness. The question for the believer is this: what will you do with the everlasting life that God has given you? Will you glorify Him with your life?

The Bible is clear: "Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal 6:7). Whether believer or unbeliever, we reap what we sow. There is no escaping that because God is our judge and He sees all. But the reason why all people will be judged according to their works is not so that God can determine who gets into the kingdom.

*Believers* will be judged according to our works, before the Millennium, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, in order to determine our degrees of rewards in the life to come. Will we rule with Christ? If so, how much authority will He grant us? Will we have the right to eat the twelve fruits of the tree of life? Will we get special clothes that mark us out as having been overcomers in this life? How abundant will our life be in the life to come? According to the Free Grace theology there is no "final judgment" of believers to determine our eternal destiny. Believers "shall not come into judgment" (John 5:24). Eternal destiny is a done deal the moment a person believes in Jesus for everlasting life. John 3:18, 5:24, and 11:26 are all clear on this.

*Unbelievers* will be judged according to their works, after the Millennium, to determine their degree of suffering in the Lake of Fire. Even the judgment of unbelievers at the Great White Throne Judgment is not strictly to determine their eternal destinies. It is more to "announce" their eternal destinies and to announce their degree of punishment based on their deeds.

According to Rev 20:15 the basis of being sent to the Lake of Fire is found in the Book of Life, not in the books of works: "Anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."

The doctrine of accountability explains one of the major motivations for a believer to live for Christ; namely, if we love Him, we want to please Him, and to have His blessings both now and in the life to come.

## Ramifications of Free Grace Theology

Free Grace theology is life transforming.

First, by believing the Lord's promise of life one gains everlasting life, which makes growth and fullness of life possible. There is no other way to be born again.

Second, as long as one believes the promise of life he remains sure of his eternal destiny. There is no other way to be certain of our eternal destiny.

Third, assurance produces love and gratitude, which are powerful motivators to live for God.

Fourth, knowing that our quality of life here and now depends on walking by faith is also highly motivating.


Fifth, knowing that one day the Lord will judge us and that the fullness of our eternal life forever will depend on the outcome of that judgment should move us daily to walk in the light of God's Word.

Far from being something which pushes people to *ungodliness*, Free Grace theology drives people to *holiness*. Free Grace theology really works.

## Conclusion: Eternal Life Is Truly Certain and Free for All Who Simply Believe in Jesus

Most people witness like this: "I don't know where I'm going when I die. If you have 5 minutes I can help you not know where you are going when you die." With a message like that, is it any wonder that most people find it hard to witness? That isn't good news, is it?

People who hold to Free Grace theology truly have good news that they can share with friends, loved ones, and strangers alike. We can say, "I know I have eternal life right now and that I will always have eternal life no matter what. I know I'll spend eternity in God's kingdom. If you have a few minutes I can show you how you can be sure you have eternal life now and forever."

Only the Free Grace position is truly good news. Only we actually believe in *sola fide*, by faith alone. Only we accurately proclaim the ramifications of the finished work of Christ on the cross. Let's share this good news far and wide! 

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*Bob Wilkin is the Editor of Grace in Focus Magazine and Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society.*



# Q&A

by Staff

## Love God with Your Mind

**Q** Do you have an opinion of what “Love the Lord your God with all your mind” means in view of so-called anti-intellectualism defined by guys like Noll and Guinness? Another aspect I’d like your opinion on is this: what does “love Him with your mind” look like pre-conversion, at conversion and post-conversion?

**A** As I understand them, Noll and Guinness were lamenting the general lack of Evangelicals in science and the academy. They wanted Evangelicals to contribute to “high culture.” That criticism may still apply today. But in my experience, many of the Evangelicals I know are very intellectual, maybe too much so.

However, I don’t believe that was the issue Jesus addressed in the command you cite. I’m not sure Jesus wanted us to pick out “mind” as distinct from heart, soul, and strength, as if He were thinking of three (Matt 22:37) or four (Luke 10:27) different aspects of the self. I think Jesus was saying, “Love God *with all that you are*.”

Having said that, Paul often spoke about the importance of developing a Christian mind. However, he wasn’t arguing for developing Christian contributions to disciplines like chemistry, art history, or macro-economics. That wasn’t his concern. Rather, Paul emphasized the mind’s role in *sanctification*.

That in itself suggests an answer to how Christians can love the Lord with their minds at *post-conversion*: we do it by pursuing *spiritual maturity*.

Paul hinges our spiritual transformation on the renewing of our minds: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the *renewing of your mind*, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom 12:2, emphasis added). It’s no accident that the necessity of being renewed in our minds is inserted between the commands to put off the old man and to put on the new (Eph 4:22-24). How that renewal actually takes place comes through greater (Biblical and doctrinal) knowledge (Col 3:10) and tearing down all the false knowledge that challenges it (2 Cor 10:5), especially

the legalistic mindset described in Romans 7.

And what does loving God with our minds look like *pre-conversion*? Remarkably the same. I believe it means unbelievers must seek God in His Word, like the Ethiopian eunuch reading Isaiah (Acts 8:30), or Cornelius seeking to hear “words” from Peter (Acts 10:22), or the proconsul seeking “the word of God” (Acts 13:7, 12), or the Pisidian Gentiles begging to hear “these words” (Acts 13:42). Our mind, God’s words.

I like this quote from Klemet Preus, in a book of evangelistic letters he wrote to his dying father-in-law:

“Why did you stop believing?”

“I prayed to God that He would strengthen my faith, and He just didn’t answer me,” was his instant reply.



“Lloyd, you went about it all wrong. You prayed for faith, but that is not where faith comes from. ‘Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ’ (Rom 10:17). If you wanted God to increase your faith, you should have listened to His Word.” I wasn’t so sure it was wise to correct Lloyd on his deathbed, but I felt I needed to point Lloyd to the promises of God, not his own prayerful strivings (Preus, *What They Need to Hear*, 8).

Preus’ advice is the same advice we should give to believers and unbelievers alike. Instead of looking for God in man-made spirituality, mysticism, and efforts at self-salvation, we should seek the Lord where He promised to be found—in His Word.  
~ Shawn

## Does Jesus Command Us to Pursue Rewards?

**Q** I am somewhat surprised that you would include Zane C. Hodges’ article “We Believe in Rewards” without editing it. When Hodges quotes Matt 6:19-23, and tries to apply it to Christians, he is making a huge mistake. That passage is a part of the Sermon on the Mount and has absolutely nothing to do with the Christian. It has to do with the coming Kingdom Age. This is so obvious and is the opinion of numerous of the greatest theologians throughout history. Nowhere in the Bible does Jesus “command” the Christian to pursue rewards. A number of the officers and faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary are personal friends of mine. A student of Hodges told me that when he came out with his “Overcomers” view, every professor at DTS disagreed with him.

**A** I agree that the Lord Jesus in the Gospels did not teach any Christians. The Church was born on Pentecost in AD 33, seven weeks after Jesus rose from the dead.

When you say that Jesus never commanded the Christian to pursue rewards, I’m not sure what you mean. Other than the Lord’s teaching on church discipline in Matthew 18, He gave no instruction specifically directed to Christians in the Gospels.

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“2 Tim 3:16-17 says that all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for Church-Age believers. Thus the teachings of Jesus even in the Gospels all have application to Christians.”

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Of course the Lord did instruct Christians about eternal rewards in Revelation 2-3 in the seven letters to the seven churches (cf. Rev 2:7, 10-11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 11-12, 21). He did so as well in Rev 22:7, 14.

In addition, 2 Tim 3:16-17 says that all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for Church-Age believers. Thus the teachings of Jesus even in the Gospels all have application to Christians. If the Lord commanded His disciples to strive for rewards, then we too should strive for rewards unless there is some teaching in Scripture that limits rewards to the twelve, which there is not.

I was at DTS from 1978 through 1985. During that time Hodges came out with his book on rewards, *The*

*Gospel Under Siege* (1981). I know quite a few faculty at that time that strongly agreed with him on the issue of eternal rewards including Drs. Charles Ryrie, Tom Constable, Elliott Johnson, Jack Deere, Craig Glickman, Howard Hendricks, Barry Leventhal, David Lowery, Floyd Elmore, Dale Wheeler, Aubrey Malphurs, John Best, Don Campbell, Roy Zuck, Tony Evans, Fred Howe, Duane Litfin, Mike McGuire, Larry Moyer, Calvin Pearson, Ramesh Richard, Rick Rood, Dick Seume, and John Witmer.

Of course, even if Hodges was indeed the only faculty member at DTS who believed in eternal rewards for Christians, he might still be right. The question is, what do the Scriptures teach?

The Apostle Paul repeatedly taught Christians to strive for eternal rewards (Rom 14:10-12; 1 Cor 3:10-15; 9:24-27; 2 Cor 5:9-10; 2 Tim 1:10; 2:12; 4:6-8). So did the Apostle John (1 John 2:28; 4:17-19; 2 John 8; Rev 2:7, 10-11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21; 22:7, 12, 14). So did the Apostle Peter (1 Pet 4:13; 5:1-4; 2 Pet 1:5-11).

The teachings of the Apostles are directed specifically to Christians. That the Apostles taught just as the Lord Jesus did about rewards should not surprise us. They continued His teaching and His ministry. **GH**

~ Bob

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*Snail-mail your questions to us, or email them to [bethany@faithalone.org](mailto:bethany@faithalone.org).*



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