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Born to Rule



PLUS Can I Really Do All Things? / Stephen's Indictment of Israel / Living in the "TOC" of the Lord / Is Evangelizing Children Daunting? / Confession / Q&A **AND MORE**

CONTENTS

- 3 From the Editor**
- 4 Can I Really Do All Things Through Christ Who Strengthens Me? (Philippians 4:10-23)**
BY BOB WILKIN
- 9 Stephen's Indictment of Israel (Acts 7:1-29)**
BY ZANE C. HODGES
- 16 Is Evangelizing Children Daunting?**
BY BILL LEE
- 20 Living in the "TOC" of the Lord**
BY KEN YATES
- 25 The Bookstore**
- 31 The Mailbag**
- 32 Born to Rule**
BY SHAWN LAZAR
- 39 Confession**
BY LEILANI MATLACK
- 43 Employee Spotlight**
BY BETHANY TAYLOR
- 44 Q&A**
BY STAFF

BORN TO RULE, p. 32



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FROM THE EDITOR

My Mom and Dad led me to believe that I could do anything, whether in sports, academics, vocation, hobbies, or whatever. As I got older I came to realize that while there were many things I might be able to accomplish, there were many other things which were outside my grasp.

Then I came to believe in Jesus for the free gift of everlasting life. It was the start of my senior year in college. Very soon I was being told that I can do anything through Christ who strengthens me. I memorized Phil 4:13.

But somehow I had a hard time believing that Phil 4:13 meant that I could do *anything* as long as I relied on Christ to strengthen me.

In this issue I discuss what I later came to understand about Phil 4:13. In many ways the true meaning of “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” is even more motivational than the way many look at it.

Zane Hodges, though with the Lord since the end of 2008, still speaks as we continue to publish his class notes and other as-yet unpublished materials. In this issue Zane tells us about Stephen’s indictment of unbelieving Israel in Acts 7:1-29.

Bill Lee discusses a beloved topic, the evangelizing of our children. Some say that it is a daunting task to figure out how to reach our kids. Bill say “Hooey!”

Having served for over twenty years as an Army chaplain, retired Lt. Col. Ken Yates talks about living in the “TOC” of the Lord. I thought Ken was talking about submitting to the Lord’s timing. You know, Tic, Toc. But no, TOC is a military term. But the illustration is brilliant. Ken really brings Bible truth to life.

Government service is no longer viewed today as a desirable profession. Many young people wouldn’t even think of going into government work. This reticence has carried over into Christian thought. Many if not most believers today do not desire to rule with Christ in the life to come. Shawn Lazar asks us to think again. We were born to rule with the Lord Jesus. Or, we might say, we were born-again that we might rule with Him forever in the life to come.



Called to be Content

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

Newcomer Leilani Matlack has an excellent article on the role of confession in the Christian life. She discusses both our call to confess the Lord Jesus Christ and to confess our sins.

Bethany Taylor has been working here at GES for over three years. She gives a moving spotlight on her life and her ministry here.

Finally, you have questions and we have answers. Check out the Q & A section.

~Peace like a river,



**Can I *Really* Do All
Things Through
Christ Who
Strengthens Me?
(Philippians 4:10-23)**

“Philippians 4:13 does not mean that all Christians can be rocket scientists.”

By Bob Wilkin

Introduction

Philippians 4:13 is a favorite verse for many people: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Tim Tebow put Phil 4:13 under his eye before football games. Jon Jones, the former UFC light heavyweight champion, has it tattooed on his chest.

While many people love this verse, most love it for the wrong reason.

When understood in context, the actual meaning and application is far different than most think.

Thanks for Their Generous Support (Phil 4:10)

Philippians 4:13 is part of Paul’s thank you note at the end of his letter to the Philippians. As we shall see, recognizing that is important.

Here Paul thanks the church at Philippi for their financial support of his ministry: “I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but lacked the opportunity.”

We tend to think of Christian ministry as prayer and Bible teaching and evangelism and spiritual stuff. It is all that. But it is also financial support. In the first century it took money to do ministry for the Lord. The same is true today as well.


Contentment in Fullness or in Want (Phil 4:11-13)

The Bible does not work if we take words out of context and make them say things they were not intended to say.

Philippians 4:13 does not mean that all Christians can be rocket scientists. It doesn’t mean that all Christians can play in the NFL. It does not mean that if you are a Christian and you try hard enough, you can become anything you want to be.

The meaning of Phil 4:13 is clear if we read it in its context, which means reading the verses before and after it.

Verses 11-12 show that in Phil 4:13 the “all things” which Paul could do concerned coping with poverty (and with material needs) and also with handling riches (and prosperity).



When Paul says, “I can do all things...” he means, “I can handle bad circumstances and good circumstances through Christ who strengthens me.”

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The Apostle Paul “learned in whatever state I am, to be content” (Phil 4:11). Whether he had a lot (abounding, full) or very little (abased, hungry, in need), Paul was content. With good health or bad, Paul was content. Whether he was free, or whether he was in prison (which he was at this time), he was content.

Gordon Fee makes this terrific point:

But Paul is neither reveling in the one [prosperity] nor complaining of the other [lack]...In contrast to some of the Cynics, he did not choose “want” as a way of life, so as to demonstrate himself to be content; rather he had learned to accept whatever came his way, knowing that his life was not conditioned by either. His relationship to Christ made them both essentially irrelevant (*Philippians*, p. 186).

Thus when Paul says, “I can do all things...,” he means, “I can handle bad circumstances and good circumstances through Christ who strengthens me.” Paul’s point is actually antithetical to the prosperity gospel message.

Remember, Paul is still in prison in Rome as he writes. His basic needs are being met. He even says in v 18 that he is doing well due to their support. But he is not living in a four star hotel and he is not living in luxury. He is under house arrest until he goes before

Caesar to be judged. At that judgment he might be freed or sentenced to execution.

Philippians 4:13 doesn’t mean that you or I can become President of the United States. It doesn’t mean that at age 64 I can play in the NBA. It doesn’t mean that Shawn Lazar can run a mile in under 4 minutes.¹ It doesn’t mean that Mark Gray can be a successful singer and have multiple gold records. It doesn’t mean that Bethany Taylor can be a champion UFC fighter.

What it means is better than that. Far better. It means whether you ever reach your dreams or not, you can handle it. You can handle the good and the bad because Christ strengthens you. It means you can handle prosperity and you can handle being in need. Whatever your circumstances, the Lord Jesus gives you the strength to handle them in a way that honors God.

Their Gifts as Partnership in the Gospel (Phil 2:14-17)

Note how v 14 supports that. While Paul can handle either want or abundance, “Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.”

The point is that we should not think, “Well, brother so and so who is really in financial need right now will do well whether I help him or not, so I won’t give

anything even though I could. No, we do well if we help brothers and sisters in need. Whether what they need is a tire or a meal or a coat or support for clear-gospel ministry, we do well if we share in the distress of other believers. Compare Jas 2:15-16.

Verse 14 speaks of *sharing* in Paul's gospel ministry: "you have done well that you shared [*sunkoinoneō*] in my distress."

Verse 15 continues the theme of his thankfulness for the support of the Philippian church. In the beginning of Paul's gospel ministry, no other church "shared [*koinoneō*] in the matter [lit. in the account] of giving and receiving except you only."

Marvin Vincent in his commentary says,

"[No other church]...entered into partnership with [Paul] as to an account of giving and receiving." This matter is expressed in a mercantile metaphor... The Philippians, by their contributions, had "opened an account" with [Paul] (*Philippians*, p. 148).

The word *sharing* in vv 14-15 is a fellowship word. Compare Phil 1:5, "I thank my God...for your fellowship [*koinonia*] in the gospel from the first day until now."

There is a country called Macedonia today. Ancient Macedonia is now part of six Balkan countries: Greece, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania, Serbia (my people), and Kosovo. Philippi was a city in eastern Macedonia.

Paul first preached in Europe when he went to Philippi after the Macedonian vision of Acts 16:9. In v 15 he speaks of the time when he left Macedonia. Only their church financially helped him.

Acts tells us that he next went to Thessalonica (which still exists). In v 16 Paul says, "For even in Thessalonica you send aid once and again for my necessities."

In v 17 Paul makes his philosophy of seeking support. He does not say that he doesn't seek support. Instead, he says that while he appreciates support, what he really wants for those who give is "the fruit that abounds to your account."

The word translated "account" is *logos*. While it often means *word*, here it refers to some sort of heavenly *account*. It reminds us of Matt 6:19-21. If we lay up treasure in heaven, it is going into this "account"

of which Paul speaks. In other words, their support of his ministry would result in eternal rewards for the believers in Philippi.

The same word was used in v 15: "they shared in the account [*logos*], in the matter, of giving and receiving." In other words, when they gave money to help him in his ministry, they were sharing in his rewards too.

Gordon Fee comments:

They themselves will be Paul's eschatological "reward" (2:16; 4:1); their gift to him has the effect of accumulating "interest" toward *their* eschatological reward. Their gift, which serves his physical health, serves more significantly as evidence of their spiritual health (*Philippians*, p. 190, emphasis his).

If you have ever invested money, you know that nearly any investment can go down as well as up. Stocks generally go up. But they sometimes go down 33% or more in one year (e.g., 2008). Land and houses generally go up in value. But sometimes they drop. Gold and silver did well for years. But last year they were down a lot. Some investments are wiser than others.

The same is true in spiritual investments. Some are wiser than others.

If we pick well, we are guaranteed to do well at the Judgment Seat of Christ for our support of churches and ministries that accurately proclaim God's Word. That's the key. Paul was a faithful preacher. Hence to support him is a great investment.

Vincent says, "Every act of Christian ministry develops and enriches him who performs it" (*Philippians*, p. 149).

Ralph Martin says, "At the last day such generous and unstinted service which expressed itself in practical monetary support would not go unrecognized or unrewarded (cf. 1:11)" (*Philippians*, p. 183).

Be warned, however. We can choose to invest poorly. Giving to a ministry that does not accurately proclaim God's Word is not a good investment. For example, a famous TV preacher recently got in some hot water for seeking to raise \$70 million so he could have his own Gulfstream jet. And years ago the PTL club got in trouble for using donor money for extravagant and even sinful living, including an air

**"Whatever your
circumstances, the
Lord Jesus gives you
the strength to handle
them in a way that
honors God."**

conditioned dog house and a mistress. Giving to ministries like that will not give you praise at the Bema, thereby reducing the praise you could have had, if you had invested wisely.²

God Supplies the Needs of the Givers Too (Phil 4:18-20)

In v 17 Paul had spoken of future rewards at the Bema that believers will receive for the generosity in supporting clear gospel ministry. In v 18 Paul linked those future rewards with the fact that their actions were well pleasing to God.

In v 18 Paul goes back to a point he started in v 12. Right now he is full since he received the gift they sent with Epaphroditus. Note that he doesn't just say it pleased *him*. He says that gift was "well pleasing to God."

This leads Paul to focus on God in the rest of the passage.

Now in v 19 Paul reminds them of present rewards, "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches and glory in Christ Jesus."

That did not mean that they, or we, would be rich. It doesn't talk about houses or horses, or in today's language, cars. What it meant is that God would meet their basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter.

Verse 20 is a doxology. Glory be to God.

Gordon Fee comments,

True theology is expressed in doxology, and doxology is always the proper response to God, even—and especially?—in response to God's prompting friends to minister to friends (*Philippians*, p. 193).

Paul's Grace Greetings (Phil 4:21-23)

First, Paul greets all the believers there.

Second, he sends the greetings of all the believers with him in Rome in prison.

Third, Paul extends greetings even from "those [saints] who are of Caesar's household." Evidently Paul had led some of his guards and maybe others in Caesar's household to faith in Christ! And they greet the Philippians too.

Vincent says that the word *household* "does not signify members of the imperial family, but the whole *ménage* of the imperial residence—slaves, freedmen,

household servants, and other dependents, possibly some of high rank" (p. 153).


Gordon Fee comments on the impact this greeting would have on the Philippians,

The "word of life" to which the Philippians hold firm (Phil 2:15-16) has already penetrated the heart of the Empire. They have brothers and sisters in Caesar's own household, who are on their side and now send them greetings; and therefore the Savior whom they await (3:20) will gather some from Caesar's household as well as from Caesar's Philippi when he comes (Philippians, p. 196, emphasis added).

The final verse (v 23) is Paul's extension of God's favor to them.

Applications

Five legitimate applications of Phil 4:13 and its context are as follows:

1. Be content with what you have, whether it is a lot or a little, whether it is what you had hoped for or not.
2. Thank God for those who aid you in your life and ministry.
3. Realize that you are not guaranteed to be prosperous, healthy, and "successful" in this life.
4. Don't make your priority in life either poverty or riches, but to please God in every circumstance.
5. Always remember to invest in your eternal account, but remember, you must do so wisely. 



Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He lives in Highland Village, TX with his wife of 40 years, Sharon. His latest book is *What Is the Outer Darkness?* (co-authored with Zane Hodges).

1. Ed. note: Who says I can't?
2. You might even lose some rewards for sharing in evil deeds (cf. 2 John 10-11).



Stephen's Indictment of Israel (Acts 7:1-29)

By Zane C. Hodges

Typology in Stephen's Speech

Stephen the table waiter of chapter 6 now becomes an angel of God (cf. 6:15), that is, a messenger of the Lord. The theme of Stephen's sermon is Israel's resistance to the Holy Spirit throughout its history (see Acts 7:51-53, especially v 51). But behind this theme is the typological lesson that the OT prefigures the rejection of Christ. It is wrong to study Stephen's speech without reference to this deeper, divinely intended symbolism.

Of course, not everyone will agree with every typological application made here. But keep in mind that Stephen himself was conscious that Israel's history was a foreshadowing of her treatment of Christ, especially in reference to Joseph and Moses. As Richard Rackham observed years ago, "Though the name of Christ is not once mentioned, Stephen is all the time 'preaching Jesus.' He preaches him in his types..." (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 93).

Moreover, Stephen's speech is—at least as recorded here—inspired. Thus its potential significances and applications are greater than the conscious intent of Stephen himself. It is a basic postulate of inspiration that its ultimate meanings are to be found in the intentions of its divine Author, as these are perceived from revelation as a whole.

Israel's History of Resistance to God

7:1-4. "Brethren and fathers, listen." The resistance of their fathers to the Holy Spirit is traced back to the very beginning of their history, to the very first man of that history ("**our father Abraham**"), and to the very first recorded words of that history ("**Get out of your country and from your relatives**").

Stephen makes explicit what can only be inferred from the OT, namely, that the call of Genesis 12 came *before* Abraham "**dwelt in Haran**." Abraham thus obeyed the first part of the command, but failed to go into the land God was going to show him. Partial obedience is actually disobedience (e.g., Saul and the Amalekites, 1 Sam 15:1-35).

Stephen also makes explicit another fact that could only be inferred from the OT, namely, Abraham did not leave Haran "**until his father was dead**." Thus Abraham did not obey God until his link with his father was broken. Likewise, the Jews to whom

Stephen spoke were too closely linked with their fathers (cf., "As your fathers did, so do you," v 51).

A Time of Delay

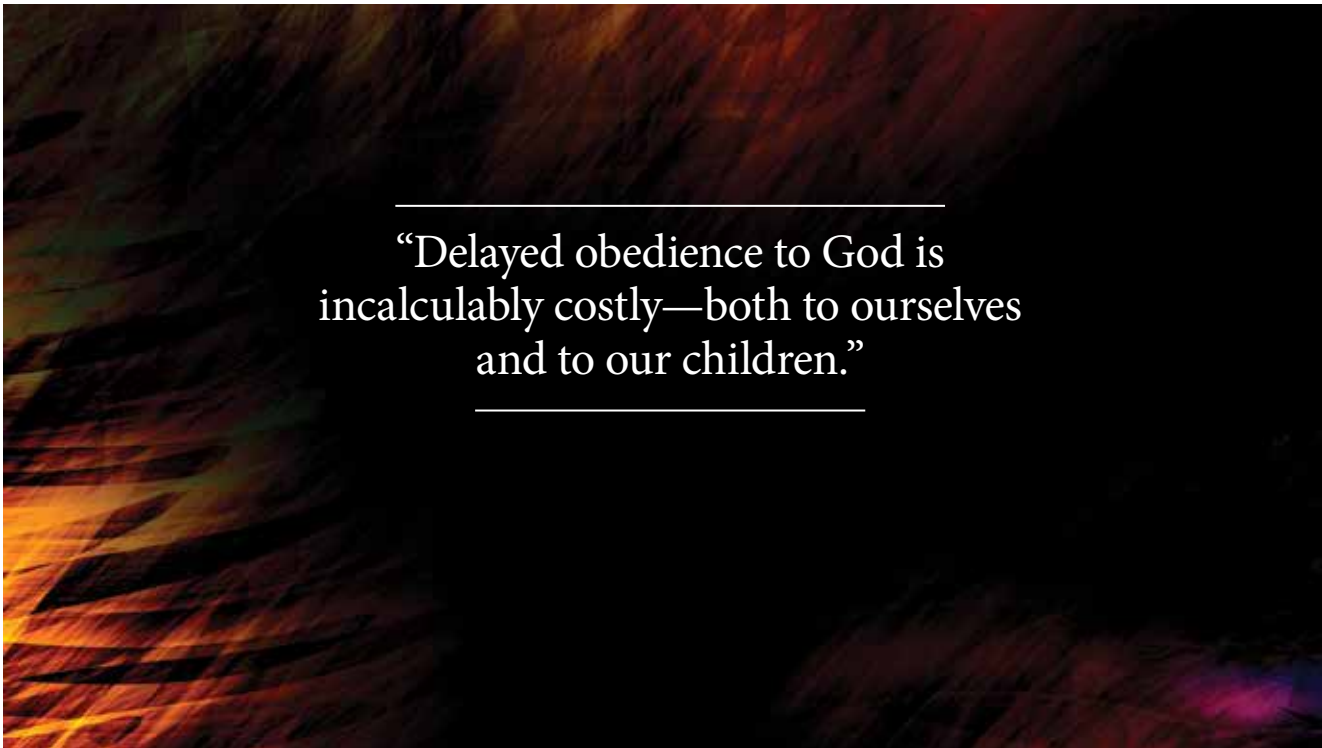
7:5-7. "And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on." These verses emphasize *delay*. God does not yet give Abraham an inheritance in the land, only a promise. Even the son must be waited for since "**as yet he had no child**." There was even delay for Abraham's *descendants*—"four hundred years"—as well as "**bondage and oppression**." Only then would God judge the nation that afflicted them and bring Abraham's seed into the land again. Thus we see that the man who keeps God waiting (v 4) must learn to wait himself.

Was there a cause and effect relation between the delay in Haran and the delay in the inheriting of the land?

Note Gen 15:16, which ascribes the delay here quoted as due to the fact that "the iniquity of the Amorites [was] not yet full." The Amorite invasions up to BC 2000 depopulated Canaan, after which there was a repopulation in part by the Amorites themselves. Surely the depopulation was a work of God, using the Amorites to prepare Canaan for Abraham. As all of God's works are perfectly timed, it is not unlikely that the sojourn in Haran was just long enough to see the Amorites and others settle in the depopulated area. Thus when Abraham reached Canaan, the Amorites had beaten him to its possession. God was effectively saying Abraham must wait until their course is run.

At any rate, the juxtaposition of these two principles in Stephen's message—delayed obedience and delayed promise—presents a potent lesson to the rulers to whom he spoke. The Jews had delayed obedience to God's call to repentance through John the Baptist, Christ, and the Apostles. Their time was running out. The kingdom, though still near (cf., Acts 3), was about to be withdrawn. And the nation, like Abraham's seed, was to be removed from the land "wherein you now dwell" (v 4) and was about to become a sojourner among the nations of the world. They were to be afflicted, and only after long delay would they return and "**serve**" (v 7) God.

Note that the word *serve* (*latreusousin*) is an interpretation, not a quotation. It does not occur in Genesis 15 of God's intention in bringing Israel into the



“Delayed obedience to God is
incalculably costly—both to ourselves
and to our children.”

land. Yet Stephen’s interpretation was true to God’s intention.

The religiously charged word *serve* is also relevant to the charges laid against Stephen concerning the temple (6:13-14). Only after a great delay—during which the temple will be desolate—will Israel return to *serve* God in their land.

The lesson here is that delayed obedience to God is incalculably costly—both to ourselves and to our children. Note its effect on Abraham’s seed, as upon the seed of those to whom Stephen spoke.

The Danger of Envy

7:8. “Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision.” These rulers, are proud of circumcision in the flesh, but are uncircumcised in heart and ears (v 51). So Stephen traces the history of circumcision.

“So Abraham begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day.” Stephen traces the history of circumcision and arrives at a dreadful example of uncircumcision of heart among the twelve patriarchs.

7:9-10. “But God was with him and delivered him out of all his troubles.” The hatred and envy for Joseph, mentioned here, actually arose from his father’s love for him (Gen 37:4), as well as from his

dreams (Gen 37:5-11). No doubt the patriarchs, like men of their times, put great stock in dreams, and so must have felt Joseph’s dreams to be a revelation of God’s Spirit. In which case, in envying Joseph, they were resisting the Holy Ghost (v 51).

No doubt Stephen was thinking of the Lord Jesus who was also envied by His brethren and delivered to the Gentiles (cf. Matt 27:18). The religious authorities envied Him for His miracles, which were a token of the Father’s love (John 5:19-20). And while they knew the miracles were of God (John 3:2), they still blasphemed the Holy Spirit in their resistance to Him (cf. Mark 3:22-30). They also envied Him for the lofty claims of His Person and, like Joseph’s brethren, hated the thought of bowing down to Him. Thus the cross stands as a terrible monument to man’s envy of God.

Human envy of God began in Eden when the woman was lured into envying God’s knowledge of good and evil. And the fall of Satan himself was prompted by his envy of God’s superiority, and the worship given to Him. Envy is, in a sense, the fountainhead of all the wickedness in the universe. It is a terrible sin of which all are guilty. How can any sinner expect access to heaven while being guilty of the sin of Satan, of Eden, and of those who crucified our Lord?

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“And delivered him out of all his troubles.”

Joseph’s triumph parallels our Lord’s.¹ God delivered the Lord Jesus from all possibility of affliction, of suffering, or of death through resurrection (cf. Rom 6:9).

Joseph found **“favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh,”** just as our Lord in ascension found in the sight of the Father infinite personal favor and wisdom. For the counsel of our Lord, who has been through all the experiences of earth, is always hearkened to by the Father.

Moreover, Joseph was a representative and forerunner for his brethren in their time of need. This was why God placed him in this position before Pharaoh. Likewise, our Lord’s ascension is on behalf of His brethren (John 20:17). And He is our forerunner (Heb 6:19-20).

The ideal personal representative to a ruler would be one in whom the ruler might be personally delighted and whom the ruler respected for discernment. In other words, the ideal representative must find favor and wisdom in the sight of the ruler. Our perfect representative, the Lord Jesus, possesses these very qualities in infinite measure in the sight of God.

As Joseph was made governor over Egypt and over Pharaoh’s house, so our Lord has all authority over God’s creation (Matt 28:18-20), and over God’s house, the Holiest of all (Heb 10:21-22). His

authority over the world gives us courage to go out (in witness), and His authority over God’s house gives us courage to come in (in prayer). Given how they had betrayed him, Joseph might have been ashamed to own his brethren after his exaltation, but was not (cf. Heb 2:11).

Note the typological parallels to Christ in this verse: “delivered him” = resurrection; “gave Him favor and wisdom” = ascension; “made him governor” = seated at God’s right hand.

Spiritual Famine

7:11. “Now a famine and great trouble came over all the land.” Resistance to the Holy Spirit issues in spiritual famine and affliction. This is equally true of believers when they are unyielding to God. There is

no “food” to be found for the soul out of touch with Christ, the greater Joseph.

Note the **“great trouble”** (*thlipsis megalē*) of this verse. Like v 6, it anticipates the judgment upon Israel in their resistance to the Holy Spirit, both in 70 AD and in the future Great Tribulation.

7:12-13. Famine and affliction are designed by God to drive His people into the presence of, and dependence upon, the greater Joseph (i.e., the Lord Jesus).

The family was sustained by Joseph the first time without them knowing it. But the second time (*en tō deuterō*) Joseph is revealed to them. Likewise, Israel has been sustained by an exalted Christ over the centuries, since being driven from their land in 70

AD. But like Joseph’s family, they do not acknowledge His help. But when *great trouble* strikes them again according to prophecy, and when they are dispersed, Christ will be made known to them and they will be again acknowledged by God (cf. **“and Joseph’s family was made known to the Pharaoh”**).

Note that Jacob heard simply that **“there was grain in Egypt.”** He did not hear that Joseph was there. However, if Joseph had not been there, there would have been no grain. Hungry souls are often driven to seek the “grain” of religion without being aware of their need of a permanent relationship with a Person. Like the patriarchs,

they may find a temporary satisfaction, but complete satisfaction can come only as Christ is “made known” to them.

7:14. Once Joseph is revealed, he invites the patriarchs to a place of nearness to himself in his glory and provision. Likewise, a Risen Lord invites those to whom He has been made known in salvation to a life of nearness to His glory and of provision by His grace.

Joseph’s invitation involves the welfare of the whole family. So those who live near our Lord so often find His blessing extended to their family and household. What an error it would have been for Jacob to refuse Joseph’s invitation (as some Christians do Christ’s)—an error for himself and for his family.

“As Joseph was made governor over Egypt and over Pharaoh’s house, so our Lord has all authority over God’s creation (Matt 28:18-20), and over God’s house, the Holiest of all (Heb 10:21-22).”

7:15-16. Those to whom Joseph was revealed found a blessedness in life (v 14), and a blessedness in death (v 15). So do those to whom Christ is made known.

“And laid in the tomb that Abraham bought.” In death the patriarchs are removed to Abrahamic property. The OT tells us that Jacob bought this property and that Joseph was buried there (Gen 33:18-20; Josh 24:32). The Spirit, through Stephen, informs us that Abraham had also bought it, meaning Jacob’s transaction was a repurchase.

The phrases **“they were carried”** and **“were placed”** refer to **“our fathers”** and not to Jacob. He was buried in the cave of Machpelah (cf. Gen 50:13). Symbolically the death of Jacob and the twelve patriarchs suggests the future setting aside of Israel’s fleshly nature, so that the nation may enter upon its Abrahamic possessions.

While the Christian lives, he is a stranger in the world (he is in “Egypt”), even though living near an exalted Savior. But at death he is **“carried back”** into heaven. Like Jacob and the patriarchs, the sphere of his true possession and inheritance must await the resurrection for the full possession of that inheritance.

Pharaoh and Satan

7:17-19. Pharaoh typifies Satan who has ever **“dealt treacherously”** with the Jewish race in an effort to destroy it, and to prevent Christ’s birth. Moses was born just as Abrahamic promises drew near (v 17), and as Satanic hatred periled his own life. Likewise, Christ was born just as the time for the blessings of Abraham on the Gentiles, as well as the Abrahamic covenant about the land, were drawing near, and when Satanic hatred endangered His life through Herod.

7:20-21. **“Moses...was exceeding fair...But when he was cast out...”** These verses may be viewed in two ways, always remembering that it is ultimately the mind of the inspiring Holy Spirit, not Stephen’s mind, which is the key that unlocks the fullest meaning of this speech.

First, Christ too is **“exceeding fair,”** and was, as it were, **“cast out”** of His Father’s eternal house by the divine love and redemptive purpose. He then became

a woman’s son, as did Moses, for He was **“made of a woman”** (Gal 4:4).

Second, Christ, though **“exceeding fair,”** after His birth into the Jewish house is **“cast out”** by the nation’s rejection. It is the Church which **“took Him up”** (symbolized here by Pharaoh’s daughter, taking up Moses), and made Him her own.

Note that Moses is received by one related to Pharaoh, his enemy. Likewise, the Church is composed of those whose previous moral connection was with the prince of this world, but who have now **“taken up,”** i.e., received (cf., John 1:11-12) the One cast out of the

Abrahamic, Davidic house (cf. **“his father’s house”**). Just as Pharaoh’s daughter has a son, so too the Church—and each member of it—has the Son (1 John 5:12).

7:22. After becoming the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, **“Moses was learned in all the wisdom of Egypt.”** Likewise, Christ grew in wisdom (Luke 2:52). No doubt we ought to think, in our Lord’s case, of the Jewish wisdom (of the OT) on which he was nurtured up, as well as the wisdom of practical experience (but even that is cap-

tured in the book of Proverbs). And as a result, like Moses, Jesus also became **“mighty in words and in deeds.”**

By way of application to us, only as we apply our hearts to wisdom will we ever become, to any degree, mighty in words and in deeds. Today’s powerlessness is not a little due to lack of wisdom.

Visiting Israel

7:23-24. **“Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.”** Our Lord’s gracious heart also went out toward His brethren, and it also came into His heart to visit Israel.

Moses **“struck down”** the Egyptian oppressor, just as the Lord struck the oppressor of His brethren on the Cross, thereby annulling Satan (Heb 2:14). This He did both for His brethren after the flesh (the Jews) and for us whom He calls brethren (Heb 7:11).

Note that one oppressed individual was the object of Moses’ delivering action. So the Cross may be viewed from an individual standpoint, i.e., “the Son of God

“Only as we apply our hearts to wisdom will we ever become, to any degree, mighty in words and in deeds. Today’s powerlessness is not a little due to lack of wisdom.”

who... gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:20, emphasis added).

7:25. "He supposed that his brethren would have understood." Moses' brethren did not understand **"that God would deliver them by his hand."** Likewise, though the prophets spoke of the deliverance to be wrought by Christ in His death (e.g., Isaiah 53), yet **"they understood not."** Hence, the blindness of Israel towards Christ is symbolized in the experience of her blindness towards Moses.

Moses Rejected

7:26. "And the next day he appeared to two of them." Two appearances of Moses to **"brethren"** are here cited: vv 24-25 in connection with smiting the Egyptian, and vv 26ff, the day following.

So also our Lord, having smitten Satan at the cross, appeared again after the resurrection to His Jewish brethren (cf. John 17:23 and Eph 2:17).² The deep unity of that early band of Christians was also a manifestation of the risen Lord to Israel.

"...as they were fighting, and tried to reconcile them..." Acts 4 marks the beginning of the intense strife between Israelite brethren, reaching its high-point in Stephen's martyrdom and the first persecution. The Lord Jesus, appearing in the Church and in His servants (Peter, John, and Stephen), would have set Israel at one again.

Often the "appearance" of the Lord Jesus—in a home, for example—is at a time of strife or even arouses it, though He seeks the oneness of that home in faith.

7:27. "But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away." It was the guilty segment of Israel—the unbelieving segment—which now thrusts the Lord Jesus away, refusing to acknowledge Him as a Ruler and a Judge over them. In the strife aroused by Christian witness, it is ever the guilty party who rejects Christ's authority and thrusts Him away.

Note that v 25 speaks of ignorance ("they did not understand") and v 27 speaks of rebellion ("**pushed him away**"). Rejection of our Lord's rightful authority, even over our life, is ever due to the fact that we "understood not," i.e., we are blind.

The rejection in Moses' day cost Israel 40 more years of misery and servitude. And so the rebellious heart, in thrusting Christ away, only succeeds in losing its blessing and prolonging its sorrows.

7:28. "Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?" They taunt Moses with the very act he had performed to deliver his brethren. So too our Lord was mocked for the very act by which Satan was smitten for the sake of saving His people from their sins (cf. Matt 27:39-44). The cross was ever a stumbling block to the Jews, and an excuse for rejection and unbelief.

7:29. As with Moses, so our Lord has become a **"stranger [paroikos] in the land of Midian"**—i.e., Gentile land. However, Jesus is only a sojourner temporarily dwelling there till the day of His return to Israel.

"Moses fled." Because He is One with the Church in its experiences (cf. Acts 9:4), Christ flees in the Church's flight (cf. Acts 8:1). However, though Israel lost its blessing, Christ, like Moses, is fruitful in the land of His sojourn **"where he had two sons"** (cf. Isa 8:18 with Heb 2:13). Believers are the children God has given the Lord during His rejection. The salvation of Gentiles are signs and wonders to provoke Israel to jealousy (cf. Rom 11:11).

If any soul thrusts away the Lord Jesus, He will go elsewhere to bear fruit and to bless. ■



Zane Hodges taught New Testament Greek and Exegesis at Dallas Theological Seminary. His book, Acts of the Risen Christ is forthcoming.

a type of Christ.

1. Hodges sees in Joseph a type of Christ. See the last paragraph in his discussion of Acts 7:10 where he says so explicitly.

2. Moses is also viewed by the author as

Is Evangelizing Children Daunting?

By Bill Lee

The Next Generation

According to John MacArthur's Grace Community Church, evangelizing children can be a daunting task.

But the truth is, it should not be any more difficult a task than it is for any other age group. In fact, we should expect it to be easier. Jesus Christ even suggested children are the model for how everyone should hear the gospel message.

"Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of

God as a little child will by no means enter it" (Luke 18:17).

Children are what I call binary thinkers. Things are either right or wrong, good or bad, liked or disliked. They can grasp simple propositions and the gospel as explained by Jesus Christ is easy to understand. However, when conditions other than faith are added to the message it is no longer the gospel and it is no longer easy to understand. That is illustrated by a publication available from Grace Community Church.



How Not to Explain the Gospel to Children

Drawing heavily from John MacArthur's sermons and books, Grace Community Church has published a paper ("Evangelizing Children"¹) advising parents on how to handle the "daunting task" of explaining the gospel to their kids.

After reading the document "Evangelizing Children" it becomes clear why the task is seen as difficult.

The document starts with warning parents of the dangers associated with reaching children with the gospel. Parents risk leading their children into thinking they are saved when they are not or possibly discouraging them when they have a "genuine desire to follow Christ."

The main concern of the paper seems to be that parents not over-simplify the gospel by leaving out key aspects of

the message, specifically, the following details:

Like adults, children must be able to understand the gospel clearly before they can be saved. This involves grasping concepts such as good and evil, sin and punishment, repentance and faith, God's holiness and wrath against sin, the deity of Christ and His atonement for sin, and the resurrection and Lordship of Christ.

These are important points of doctrine, and a clear understanding of each is certainly desirable. But since many of those doctrines are still debated by evangelical Christians, I have serious doubts that most adult Christians share a common understanding of any single one of them.





LIGHTSTOCK

“God presents the sinner with a very simple proposition: *believe what I say.* Faith is nothing more than that.”

One Simple Requirement

Throughout the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles maintain one simple requirement to be fulfilled in order to be saved: *believe in Jesus Christ for everlasting life* (John 3:16; 4:39-42; 5:24; 6:47; 11:25-26). It is by faith in Jesus Christ that we are saved, apart from works (John 6:28-29; Eph 2:8-9). “Evangelizing Children” gets off track because the authors do not understand the meaning of faith.

The article treats faith as if it is a process that includes behavioral changes as well as belief. There are references to “full-fledged saving faith” and “mature faith.” The phrasing implies there is a faith that does not save (i.e., the less than mature faith). However, the nature of mature faith is never explained.

Can Faith Be Trusted?

The publication subtly suggests that faith (what you believe) cannot be trusted.

For example, parents are encouraged to not “deride a profession of faith as false, for it may be the seed from which a mature faith will later emerge.”

However, rather than trust what a child says he believes to be genuine, parents are instructed to watch for behavioral evidence that their child has “genuinely repented of his sin and believed in Christ.”

In other words, what the child *believes* is less important than how he *behaves*.

While not providing a definition for a “mature faith,” the paper does provide a list of those behaviors for which a parent should watch:

true believers follow Christ (John 10:27), confess their sins (1 John 1:9), love their brothers (1 John 3:14), obey God’s commandments (1 John 2:3; John 15:14), do the will of God (Matt. 12:50), abide in God’s word (John 8:31), keep God’s Word (John 17:6), and do good works (Eph. 2:10).

“Follow.” “Confess.” “Obey.” “Do.” It seems pretty clear that Grace Community Church’s paper is teaching salvation comes from a combination of faith and works with the emphasis on works.

To my knowledge the Bible never speaks of a faith or belief in Jesus Christ that does not save. Jesus’ illustration of faith as small as a mustard seed (Matt 13:13) dismisses any suggestion of a progressive or mature

faith. The Scriptures do state very plainly that works (good and proper behavior) have nothing to do with the gift of everlasting life.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast (Eph 2:8-9).

God presents the sinner with a very simple proposition: *believe what I say*. Faith is nothing more than that. It means the same thing in both the original language and in English.

Remember faith and belief are synonyms. They are the noun forms of the verb *to believe*. That means we could substitute the word *belief* for *faith* in Eph 2:8 without changing the meaning. Then it would read as “for by grace you have been saved through belief.”


The power of faith/belief is found in its content, not the strength by which a belief is held. It is the object of our faith that matters to God.

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26)

Some Agreement

There are some things in the Grace Community Church publication on evangelizing children with which I do agree. The paper does warn that soliciting “some kind of active response” to the gospel message is not a good idea. Things like “a show of hand in a group setting,” or repeating “the sinner’s prayer” are things I agree

should be avoided. The object of a child’s faith should be Jesus Christ, not the memory of something he did years ago.

The Apostle Paul explains the gospel message in 1 Cor 15:3-4. It really is easy to understand. Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead. The resurrection proved Jesus Christ is God incarnate and has the power to give life to anyone He chooses. And He said He would give it to anyone who believed in Him (John 3:16). Those facts are easy to understand and parents should not be discouraged from sharing the gospel message with their kids! 

Bill Lee is pastor of Trego Community Church in Trego, WI.

1. See <http://www.gty.org/resources/distinctives/DD05/evangelizing-children>



“Only 14 percent of all parents say they feel they are very familiar with what the Bible has to say about parenting, even though 77 percent identify themselves as Christians. Among those who attend religious services weekly, that number rises to 36 percent.”

See <https://baptistcourier.com/2009/03/lifeway-poll-examines-role-of-faith-in-parenting/>

LIVING IN THE "TOC" OF THE LORD

BY KEN YATES





Recently I spent some time looking at a beautiful Psalm written by David. This Psalm, Psalm 15, reminded me of certain events during my career in the army. I also realized that this short Psalm has a direct application for Christians today.

The Lord's Tent

Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? (Ps 15:1).

In the first verse, David asks a question. He wants to know who can “abide” in the tabernacle of the Lord and “dwell” in His holy hill.

In the time of David, there was no temple. The presence of God was symbolically located in the tabernacle. The tabernacle was a tent-like structure that was located on a hill in Jerusalem. This hill was holy because God had decided to “reside” there.

The verbs “abide” and “dwell” in this verse indicate the ability to worship God. David wants to know who can approach God in worship and have fellowship with Him. Who can do these things in the tent of the Lord?

It is a great question. The One in that tent had created the universe. He was perfectly holy. He had redeemed the Jewish people through His power from slavery in Egypt. He had made them victorious in battle. How could any Jew hope to commune with Someone that great and holy?

This reminded me of my time in the military. Whenever we would train, we would go to what is called the “field.” That is another way of saying the woods. In the woods there was always a tent known as the TOC, which stood for the Tactical Operation Center. Most soldiers did not like to be near the TOC because that is where the boss spent his time. You were in danger of saying or doing something that did not meet his approval. Perhaps your uniform was not what it should be. As a result, the usual practice was to stay as far away from the TOC as possible.

Imagine a Jew in David’s day who looked at the tent where God Himself resided. He is certainly greater than any military leader. It would be easy to adopt the attitude that such a location was to be avoided. However, the fellowship one could have with Him would certainly be great.

The Psalm ends by saying such communion was well worth the cost. The person who abides in God’s tent would experience a life that could “never be moved.” David certainly means that such a life would be well grounded. It would be a life wisely lived.

But what were the requirements? David lists ten of them.

Ten Impossible Requirements

The first three requirements are found in v 2.

First, David says that the one who wanted to have fellowship with God must have a blameless character. He must “walk” or live his life in an “upright” manner. The word “upright” means without defect. This is done by doing, second, “works” of righteousness.

This refers to keeping the Law of Moses.

But it was not enough to simply do the actions. One’s heart was involved. The heart reveals the character of the worshipper. The actions and even words of the worshipper must come from, third, a heart that is “true.” David drives home the fact that the one who is worthy to abide with God in His tent must be holy in his speech.

“The sacrifices were performed with the understanding that the worshipper fell short. Through them, the Jew could experience a forgiveness which made communion with God possible.”

In v 3 David gives the fourth requirement. It is that he does not sin with his “tongue.” He does not gossip or slander others.

The fifth requirement tells us that this slander must not be directed at our “neighbor.” Such use of the tongue causes “evil” or harm to those around us. We must not do anything in word or deed that hurts others. Instead, we must desire what is good for them.

The sixth requirement also involves our use of language. The one who wants to have fellowship with God must not “take up a reproach” against his friends. The word *reproach* carries with it the idea of a taunt, or to scornfully

treat someone. Words must not tear down but build up.

In v 4 David says the seventh requirement is that we must have the proper view of reality and spiritual things. We must see that an unrighteous, or “vile,” person engages in “despised” things that are of no value. The person who fears the Lord is one that should be honored. Of course, this is the exact opposite of how the world sees things. Often times, people who live unrighteous lives are held up in high esteem in the eyes of the world.

The eighth requirement says that the righteous person must keep his word. When he says he will do something he does not “change” his mind even if keeping that word will result in “his own hurt,” that is, it will be costly to do so.

The last two requirements are found in v 5 and address how the righteous person interacts with the less fortunate around him. He does not lend money to the poor in order to get back interest. He does not take money or a bribe from those in high positions in order to harm the “innocent,” those who perhaps do not have money. He refuses to place the interests of those with power and influence over those who do not possess these things.

In summary, those who want to “abide” in the tent with the Lord must meet a number of difficult requirements. They must live righteously, keep God’s commandments, have a pure heart, control their tongue, build up instead of tear down others, value spiritual things and not the things of the world, always keep their word, help those who are less fortunate, and show no favoritism. My guess



is that the worshipping Jew in David's time would have felt these requirements were impossible to meet.

That Is the Point

A person simply could not meet these demands. David himself did not. But that did not mean that one could not worship the Lord in the OT. The OT person was saved by believing in the coming Messiah. The Law and the sacrifices played no part in eternal salvation.

However, the Law and sacrifices did play a part in the worship of the Lord. A Jew who looked at the Law would see that he did not meet the 10 requirements of Psalm 15. This, in turn, produced a heart of humility. God wanted the believer to approach Him with that attitude. The sacrifices were performed with the understanding that the worshipper fell short. Through them, the Jew could experience a forgiveness which made communion with God possible.

The Same Thing Applies Today

Today, a person also receives eternal life as a free gift. But what about those who desire fellowship with God? The death of Christ makes that communion possible, but our actions fall way short. For example, James tells us that none of us can control our tongue. The Lord told us that sin is not just found in our actions, but also in the thoughts of our hearts. Which one of us can say that we do not show favoritism or that we love

our neighbor as much as we love ourselves?

The book of 1 John is a book that tells us how we, as Christians, can “abide” with God and have fellowship with Him (1 John 1:1-4). The sacrifice of Christ not only makes the gift of eternal life possible, it also makes that fellowship possible (1 John 1:7-9). Like the reader of Psalm 15, we recognize that we fall short of what God requires in our daily lives. When we do, we confess our sins and God gives us a daily cleansing that makes communion with our holy heavenly Father possible.


Conclusion

When I was in the army, the TOC was not an inviting place. In fact, it was somewhat scary.

Imagine in David’s day what the TOC of the Lord, the tabernacle, must have seemed like to the Jew who desired to commune with God. The NT tells us that the tent in David’s day was a copy of the real thing in the heavens (Heb 8:2). We, as believers, can enter into the real tent of the Lord and have communion with Him through Jesus Christ (Heb 4:14-16). We can boldly do that with no fear.

We do that with the desire to live righteous lives through the power of the Spirit of God that lives within us. But we also do that with the humble recognition that we will still sin as long as we are in these mortal bodies.

That is the kind of attitude and life that “shall not be moved.” Jesus said the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount. Those who listen

to His words and do them will be like those who build their lives upon the solid foundation of a rock (Matt 7:24). It is a wise Christian who spends time in the TOC of the Lord. 



Ken Yates is Editor of the Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society and GES's East Coast speaker. He is also the pastor of Little River

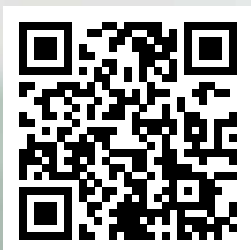
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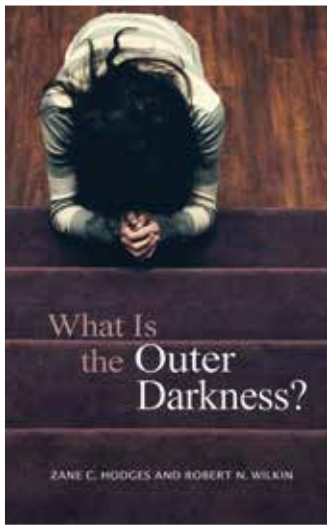
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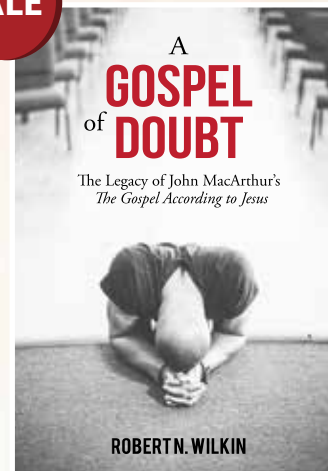
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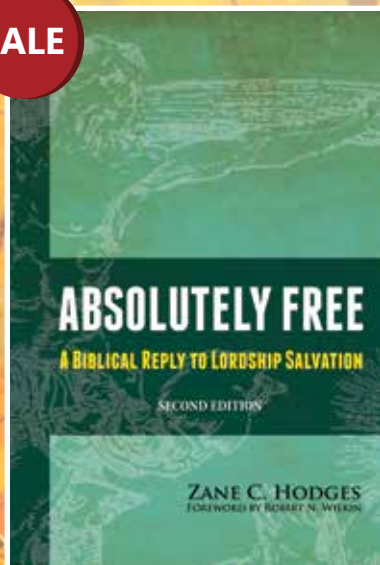
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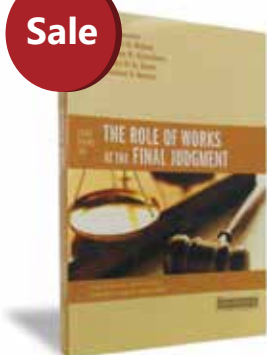
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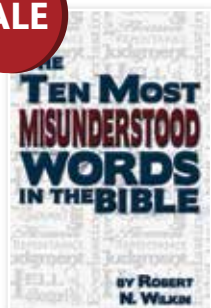
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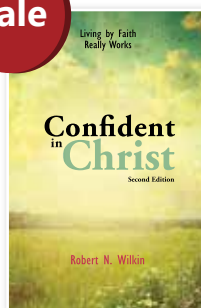
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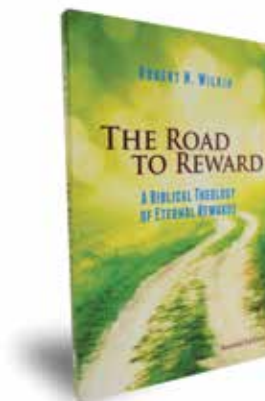
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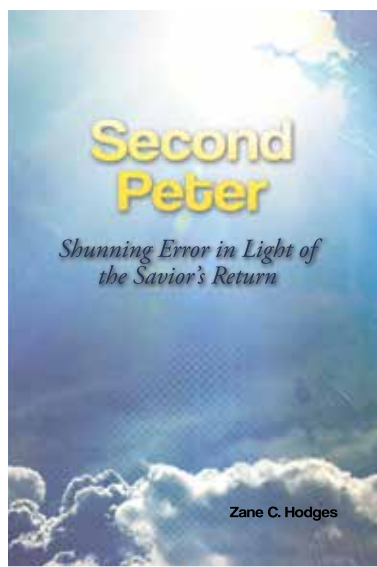
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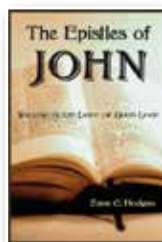
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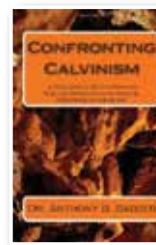
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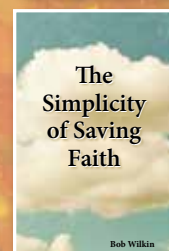
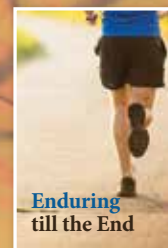
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The Mailbag

By You

Stay in touch by sending us your letters. Did you like the last magazine? Did you learn something new? Read something you strongly disagreed with? Whatever it is, keep those letters coming.

Thank y'all for your mission. *Secure and Sure* was a total blessing. Thank y'all for fighting for the truth. The devil attacks the message and y'all defend it. Some of us know the truth but we need help expressing it. Those against the message are smart, but y'all are smarter.

~C.C., Dekalb, MS

Dr. Wilkin, I hope you are well. We continue the free grace fight in St. Pete.

~J.S., St. Petersburg, FL

Thank you very much for your ministry and encouragement in these terrible times. We shall simply trust God!

~ C.W., Lake Stevens, WA

Thank you for the work you do and for being such a blessing to me and my family.

~N.H., Maroa, IL.

Thank you so much for this great ministry. I have been truly blessed. I want to support you all in getting the message of eternal life in Jesus to as many people as possible. If you only knew how much I have benefited. God bless you all!

~C.S., San Antonio, TX

Thank you for strengthening our faith in Christ. He has done all the work for salvation. Amen!

~S.P., Commack, NY



I have greatly enjoyed the upgraded edition of *Grace in Focus* magazine with the increased number of articles and their informative, superbly written content. I have been personally enriched and edified both in ministry and in personal walk in fellowship with Him.

~G.T., Home, PA

A friend recently sent me your *Grace New Testament Commentary*. Wow, what a blessing! I have been “saved” for years, but have lived with a spirit of doubt and fear due to poor teaching and improper understanding.

Roughly a month ago, I found a magazine entitled *Grace in Focus*. In it was an article titled “Assurance by Works: My Road to Ruin” by Paul Carpenter. Awesome article, Paul!

For the first time in my Christian walk I feel free! Not only do I *feel* free, I *am* free!

~J.K. Dayton, TX 

Send your letters to ges@faithalone.org or P.O. Box 1308, Denton, TX 76202.

BORN_{TO}RULE

BY SHAWN LAZAR

EVERYONE WANTS TO BE KING

King Arthur. Raised by a man who was not his father, he pulls a sword out of a stone, and discovers he is actually the lost son of Uther Pendragon and heir to the throne of England. Clark Kent. Raised by simple Kansas farmers, he discovers he is actually Kal-El, an orphaned Son of Krypton, and becomes Superman.

Luke Skywalker. Raised by his aunt and uncle, he discovers he is the orphaned son of Queen Amidala (ok, she was just a senator at the time), and Darth Vader.

Harry Potter, Peter Parker, Bambi, Bruce Wayne, Simba, Conan, Aladdin, Anna, Elsa, Cinderella, and Snow White. All orphans. All overcome great odds, and great suffering, to finally ascend to positions of great power and authority.

Do you see a pattern?

Do you see a common story?

It's a story that keeps getting repeated (and keeps making money), because for some reason it appeals to

us. No matter how many times we hear it, we don't get bored. Something about it rings true. Why is that?

Is it because we all have the basic desire to live lives of significance? Is it because we all have the sense that we were destined for something important?

If so, why?

Where does that desire come from?

Why does it seem implanted in each of us?

MYTH AND FACT

When people say, "Christianity is just a myth!" I think most of us would respond defensively by objecting, "No, it's not!"

But not C. S. Lewis.

Lewis would have answered enthusiastically, "Yes it is a myth! And it's *also* a fact."

While we would define the word "myth" as a story *that isn't true*, for Lewis, whose profession was teaching this type of literature, a myth is a story that tells us *what is most true*.



Not every story is meant to teach us truth. Some have no deeper point other than to elicit a quick chuckle, or to scare us, or just to pass the time for us.

But myths are different.

According to Lewis, myths are the stories a culture tells its people in order to teach them their most important standards, values, and aspirations. And so, Lewis would say the Christian story is both a *myth*—because it tells us what is most true about ourselves and about reality—and it is *fact*, because the events it describes actually happened.

I want to suggest to you that the story of the high-born orphan who overcomes great odds to take their rightful place in positions of power and authority is a myth in that second sense. It resonates with us, because it communicates something deeply true about our God-given purpose and destiny. That story echoes the truth that God created you to be kings and queens. He created you to rule.

But where, exactly, does the Bible teach that?

TO REIGN WITH HIM

Let's start with a curious phrase in Paul's second letter to Timothy, where he told his young protégé that a goal of the Christian life was to rule with Christ:

This saying is trustworthy: For if we have died with Him, we will also live with Him; if we endure, *we will also reign with Him*; if we deny Him, He will also deny us (2 Tim 2:11-12, emphasis added).

If you *endure*, you will *reign*.

That's your goal, or should be—to rule with Jesus.

Admittedly, it's not a goal you will hear very much about in most churches, or read about in most commentaries. In fact, most churches and most commentaries skip over this verse because their faith traditions don't have a theological context that would make sense of this passage.

You see, in order to make sense of "ruling with Christ," you need to believe that Jesus is going to rule. But unfortunately, most churches and commentaries deny that. In fact, many of them even think it is positively *heretical* to believe Jesus will return to establish and rule in a literal, earthly kingdom. So when Paul mentions ruling with Christ, they don't understand what he could be talking about. So they skip that verse.

But Paul didn't skip it. It was a crucial point for Timothy to understand. There's more to life than just getting born-again. We are called to be disciples and discipleship has a purpose and a goal in mind—it is training to rule with Christ.

As Dr. Earl Radmacher famously quipped, "This life is training time for reigning time."

So Paul told Timothy that if he endured—if he kept on believing and following despite the doubts, objections, and scorn that would come his way—if he endured, he would reign with Jesus.

If you endure, you will reign with Jesus too.

You will live the life of significance that God intended for you all along. But only if you endure.

That's what Paul clearly taught.



But where did he get that idea from?

Is ruling with Christ a revelation unique to Paul?

Was he the first to speak about it? Not quite.

JESUS TAUGHT HIS APOSTLES ABOUT RULING WITH HIM

Paul received the teaching of ruling with Christ from Jesus Himself. It was a subject the Lord addressed several times during His ministry.

For example, consider the Parable of the Minas, in Luke 19:11-21. "A certain nobleman went into a



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far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return,” Jesus explained. But before he left, this nobleman gave money to his servants and asked them to invest it for him. When he returned, he evaluated how the servants performed. Notice what the reward for faithful service is:

“Then came the first, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, *have authority over ten cities.*’ And the second came, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned five minas.’

Likewise he said to him, ‘*You also be over five cities*’” (Luke 19:16-19, emphasis added).

The nobleman who received the kingdom rewarded his faithful servants with positions of rulership within it. He would rule over the kingdom. They would rule over cities within it.

Obviously, in this parable, Jesus is the nobleman and the kingdom is the Messianic kingdom.

Jesus was teaching His disciples that if they remained faithful, their reward would be to rule with Him in the Messianic kingdom.

It was a theme Jesus returned to often. To take another example, He promised the apostles they would rule with Him over Israel:

So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt 19:28).

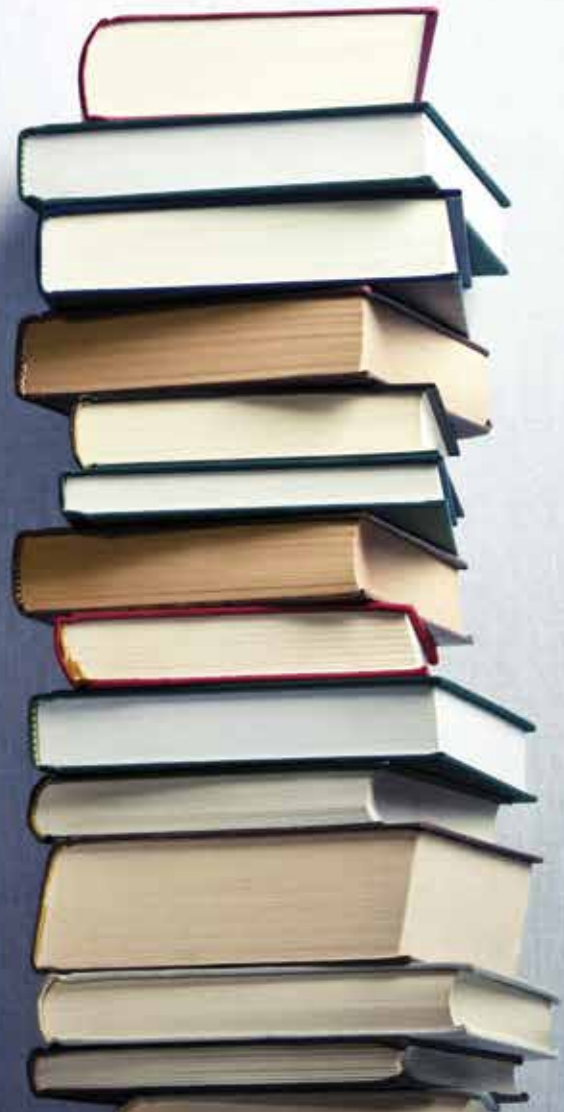
When Christ will sit on His throne, the apostles would rule from their respective thrones. That was the expectation Jesus had for them. It was also the ambition they

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had for themselves. Even the moms understood the importance of ruling with Messiah:

Then the mother of Zebedee's sons approached Him with her sons. She knelt down to ask Him for something. "What do you want?" He asked her.

"Promise," she said to Him, "that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and the other on Your left, in Your kingdom."

But Jesus answered, "You don't know what you're asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?"

"We are able," they said to Him.

He told them, "You will indeed drink My cup. But to sit at My right and left is not Mine to give; instead, it belongs to those for whom it has been prepared by My Father" (Matt 20:20-23).

When the moms recognize that ruling with Messiah is important, you know you aren't dealing with an esoteric piece of theology that only scholars and doctoral students can understand.

Ruling with the Messiah in His future kingdom is "bread and butter" theology.

It's part of what everyone should understand.

It's Christianity 101.

Unfortunately, it's not bread and butter theology in most churches today.

Most churches today reject the idea that Jesus is going to rule over anything real, and so they have no concept, let alone an expectation, of faithful believers ruling with Christ.

And yet, that teaching comes straight from the mouth of Jesus.

And notice, Jesus was telling the apostles—or rather, their mother—that if they wanted that kind of position, to rule at that level, *they would have to suffer*, they would have to drink the same cup that Jesus did (cf. Matt 26:36-46). And because of it, because ruling was conditioned on their faithfulness through trial, Jesus couldn't promise to give them positions of authority. They had to prove themselves first, by suffering. Or to use Paul's terminology, they would rule *if they endured*.

So Paul received the idea of ruling with Christ from Jesus Himself. But where did Jesus get it from? Did it originate with Him, during His earthly ministry, or was it an earlier teaching in the Bible?

THE DOMINION MANDATE

The importance of ruling goes all the way back to the very first chapter of the Bible, to Genesis 1.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. *They will rule* the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth."

...So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female.

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. *Rule* the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth" (Gen 1:26-28, emphasis added).

Do you know what a purpose statement is? It's a declarative sentence that summarizes your

goal for a company, club, church, mission, or whatever.

Genesis 1:26 is God's purpose statement for man.

God created man to rule.

God didn't create man to rule over God, but to rule *under* Him, over *creation*.

That's God's purpose for men and women.

That's God's purpose for you.

It was His plan from the very beginning.

A UNIFYING BIBLICAL THEME

It's no accident that one of the most important, recurring themes in the rest of the Bible is how ordinary believers come to positions of great power, rulership, and dominion.

Abraham started off as a nobody in ancient Sumeria (Gen 11:31), and despite numerous trials, became the wealthy patriarch of a growing, powerful tribe (Gen 13:2).

Ishmael went from being cast out of his father's house, to becoming the father of a nation (Gen 17:20; 25:12-18).

Joseph went from being orphaned by his brothers, to ruling over Potiphar's household, and then ruling over the whole of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh.

Moses went from slave to a prince of Egypt, and then to leader over Israel.

Esther went from orphan to queen of Babylon.

David went from being an expendable, neglected, shepherd boy to king over Israel.

Daniel went from royal orphan (Dan 1:3) to ruler in Persia, then Babylon.

Do you see a pattern?

Those stories aren't in there by accident. They aren't in there

“It’s not enough for God that you just make it into heaven. He didn’t create you to just get by. God created you to rule.”



LIGHTSTOCK

simply because God thought they were interesting. Rather, they illustrate God’s purpose statement for man in Gen 1:26-28. They illustrate how ordinary believers fulfill the original dominion mandate by obeying God and rising to power to become godly rulers.

THE NEW EDEN

The dominion mandate in Genesis 1 became more defined over the course of redemptive history. As we trace the scarlet thread of redemption from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22, we find that all of God’s purposes find their climax in Christ, and that holds true for the command to rule.

The first Adam was commanded to rule, but fell. As a result, God promised to send a second Adam, Jesus (1 Cor 15:47), who would do what the first Adam failed to do. He would have dominion over the whole of creation, and rule in a renewed Eden (cf. Rev 22:1-5).

But just as Adam was never meant to rule alone, neither will Jesus rule alone.

The Lord promised that faithful believers will sit with Him on His throne (Rev 3:21) and together “they shall reign forever and ever” (Rev 22:5).

PRIORITIES

If ruling with Christ is not your goal, your hope, or your ambition, then it is time to change your priorities and get them in line with Jesus.

The Biblical evidence about ruling with Messiah should not only spark your imagination, it should also enlarge your ambitions.


Sadly, I’ve spoken with many Christians who confess they aren’t interested in ruling with Christ. They’re content with just “getting into heaven.” That’s enough for them.

Please understand, that’s not enough for God.

He didn’t create you to just get by.

He created you to rule.

That’s the target He commands you to aim for.

If you’re content not to rule with Christ, that’s not a sign of your humility, but of your disobedience. It means your desires are wrong and they need to come into line with God’s desires. 



Shawn Lazar is Director of Publications for Grace Evangelical Society. He lives in Denton, TX with his wife, Abby, and their three children. Their youngest, a

girl, was born in July. Her name is Scout. Yes, Scout. What, you’ve never read To Kill a Mockingbird? No, YOU deal with it!

Confession

BY LEILANI MATLACK



In reading my Facebook feed I frequently come across various quotes that my friends have decided to share. Unfortunately, last week, I ran across this one:

A true Christian will be sensitive to the sin in their life and it will lead them to brokenness and genuine confession. But the person who says they are a Christian, and are not sensitive to sin, it does not lead them to confession. A person who is that way is not a Christian (Paul Washer).

Does failing to confess prove you are not a Christian?

This quote shows a failure to understand what it takes to have eternal life, or what we have our assurance in. If we do not understand those two things,

we are set up for failure and will not be able to clearly share the message of eternal life.

Why Should We Confess Jesus as Lord and Call on Him?

In Rom 10:9, Paul wrote, “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Does this mean that our eternal salvation depends on confessing Christ?

The purpose of Romans was to tell the believers in Rome how they could obtain deliverance from sin and the discipline that results from our sin. Thus, the salvation mentioned in Rom 10:9 is not from the lake

of fire, but rather deliverance from sin, and thus from its temporal consequences. How does Paul say we can be delivered from sin and avoid the necessary discipline that follows? By confessing Jesus as Lord. In other words, by submitting to His Lordship.

Paul laid out very clearly earlier in Romans,

knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be in bondage to sin...Also, do not present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God (Rom 6:6, 13).

When we are yielded to Christ, and abiding in Him, we are much more likely to see sin for what it is and use the power that God has given us as believers to overcome it.

Confessing Our Sins

When we sin, confession still has the same purposes it had in the OT:

if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land (2 Chron 7:14).

I acknowledged my sin to you. I didn't hide my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to Yahweh, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin (Ps 32:5).

He who conceals his sins doesn't prosper, but whoever

confesses and renounces them finds mercy (Prov 28:13).

In Psalm 80 we see Asaph calling upon the Lord so that they (the nation) might be saved.

These passages indicate that if we confess our sins we will be forgiven. In addition, if we repent, turn from our sins, or forsake them, God is merciful and—like the Israelites and the Ninevites—we may be able to avoid the tem-

“How does Paul say can we be delivered from sin and avoid the necessary discipline that follows? By confessing Jesus as Lord.”

poral judgment or discipline that necessarily follows sin.

However, as we see from David, repentance doesn't always remove the consequences of our choices (e.g., 2 Samuel 22).

In conclusion, all people sin, both believers and unbelievers. Yet they may be able to avoid the temporal consequences and/or discipline that results from that sin if they repent. Whether those consequences are avoided or not, we know that if “we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us the sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Finally, confession of our sins also plays an important role in our spiritual growth, and failure to do so hinders our walk with God.

Another Purpose for Confession

So what about Matt 10:32? “Everyone therefore who confesses me before men, him I will also confess before my Father who is in heaven.” Again, context is key.

Both here and in the passage below, Jesus is talking to his disciples. Jesus goes on to say that “He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me isn't worthy of me” (Matt 10:37). *Worthy* can also be translated as *one who has merited anything worthy*. In other words, this passage isn't speaking of eternal life because there is nothing we can do to merit eternal life. So what is this passage talking about?

The answer appears in v 42, “... most certainly I tell you he will in no way lose his reward.”

Confessing Christ is related to *eternal rewards*.

A similar passage is Luke 12:8-9,

“I tell you, everyone who confesses me before men, him will the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God; but he who denies me in the presence of men will be denied in the presence of the angels of God.”

It is unclear whether the person here shall be denied because of his actions or whether Jesus is actually denying them.

This passage is also followed by the discussion of rewards and the contrast of temporal comfort as opposed to eternal comfort. Later in the chapter Jesus states, “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:21), and “Sell that which you have, and give gifts to the needy. Make for yourselves purses which



don't grow old, a treasure in the heavens that doesn't fail, where no thief approaches, neither moth destroys" (Luke 12:33).

These passages are addressing believers and their call to put their faith into practice. All believers are called to live lives worthy of God.

In Luke 12:8-9, Jesus is not denying them in the sense of casting them into the lake of fire. Rather, He's refusing to recommend them to the Father for eternal rewards. They are being denied Jesus' commendation and the "well done, good and faithful servant."

If this passage is speaking of a literal denial resulting in spending eternity in the lake of fire, the end result would be inconsistent with the rest of Scripture. We know that Peter believed that Jesus was the Messiah (Matt 16:16; Mark 8:29; John 6:69), yet he denied Jesus 3 times (Matt 26:34-75; Mark 14:30-72; Luke 22:34-71). And Peter will not be going to the lake of fire.

If a denial of Christ determined our eternal destiny, that would either add a condition to have eternal life, or it would mean that eternal life is not eternal.

Confession Is Not Required for Salvation

Grace in Focus readers are well aware of the importance of the Gospel of John for evangelism. It is

the only self-described evangelistic book in the Bible, and gives us a model for doing evangelism. If anything is a condition for everlasting life, it would be mentioned in the Gospel of John.

The word translated *confess* (*homologeō*) is used only four times in the Gospel of John.

The first is in John 1:20 where John the Baptist confesses that he is not the Christ. The second is in John 9:22, which states that "the Jews had already agreed that if any man would confess him as Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue." The last instance is in John 12:42, which states, "Nevertheless even many of the rulers believed in him, but because of the Pharisees they didn't confess it, so that they wouldn't be put out of the synagogue."

The point is, John never includes confessing Christ as a condition for obtaining eternal life. If confession were necessary to have eternal life, it would be a huge error on John's part to leave it out when the purpose of his book is that its readers may believe and obtain eternal life.

Furthermore, not only does John not mention it in the context of having eternal life, but in John 12:42, he explicitly states that among the chief rulers many believed, but did not confess Christ.

In addition, John quotes Jesus,

"But there are some of you who don't believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who didn't believe, and who it was who would betray him" (John 6:64).

There are only two categories of people in John: those who believe and those who do not. "He who believes in him is not judged. He who doesn't believe has been judged already" (John 3:18).

Since all Scripture is inspired, it is reasonable to assume that if the passage says they believed we can take it at face value.

Since one who believes has eternal life, and there were some who believed but did not confess, it logically follows that confession is not necessary for obtaining eternal life.

Since Rom 10:9 is about temporal salvation, using it to present the message of eternal life is a misuse of the passage.

Everlasting Life Is Just What It Says—Everlasting

We have eternal life the moment we believe. "Most certainly I tell you, he who hears my word, and believes him who sent me, *has* eternal life, and doesn't come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24, emphasis added). John doesn't state that *we will* pass from death into life,

rather it is past tense, *it has happened* the moment we believe.

In addition, John 10:28-29 says,

“I give eternal life to them.

They will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of my Father’s hand.”

Not only is there nothing we can do to obtain eternal life outside of believing, but there is nothing we can do to lose eternal life. If we believe in Jesus as Messiah we are eternally secure.

Where Does Our Assurance Come From?

As a believer, we are going to be tempted, and our faith is going to be tested (Jas 1:2-8). However, because we are eternally secure, when times of failure or doubt arise we can rest on God’s Word and His unchangeable character.

In 1 Cor 9:27 Paul wrote, “but I beat my body and bring it into submission, lest by any means, after I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected [or disqualified, disapproved].” He also confessed he did not do what he wanted, but he did what he hated (Rom 7:15). In addition, he refers to himself as the “chief of sinners” (1 Tim 1:15). In other words, Paul struggled with

doing what he knew he should be doing and he was concerned about being rejected. Am I any better than Paul?

The point is, if we look to ourselves, our lives, or our works to be sure of our eternal destiny we will always fall short. If that is the case, if we shouldn’t look to our works for assurance, what should we look to?


We can look to God’s Word. We can look to the Father and Son’s promise of eternal life to all who believe on the name of the Son. What Jesus promised is true. If you believe in Him for eternal life, you have it, present tense (John 3:16). You have passed from death to life and will not come into judgment (John 5:24). By finding our assurance in God’s Word, it frees us from any doubts so that we may continue to believe on the name of the Son of God.

Why Does This All Matter?

I have a very close family member who went through a long period in which they were convinced that they could not be a believer because they had no desire to grow in the Lord or do what they ought to be doing.

When we look at ourselves we will only see our shortcomings. However, if we know the truth about eternal life and its security,

we can be free from any doubts that arise from our failures. When we understand our security in Christ and who we are, it frees us to serve Him (Gal 2:20-21). We are no longer faced with the struggle Paul describes (Romans 7). When we fail, instead of doubting our salvation in Christ, we know what to do to restore our fellowship with God. When our sins are forgiven it allows us to love Him much (Luke 7:47). Instead of focusing on keeping God’s commands we can focus on loving Him, which in turn frees us to keep them (John 14:25).

Jesus came not only that we might have eternal life, but that we might have life more abundantly (John 10:10). If we fail to understand how these things fit together, it will keep us from living the abundant life. 



Leilani Matlack lives in Benbrook, TX with her husband Rob and homeschools their four children. She is a graduate of Oak Brook College of Law.

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Employee Spotlight

I have worked for Grace Evangelical Society for over three years. I take phone calls, handle accounts payable and the accounting of orders and donations, organize conferences, do lots of proof-reading, and occasionally some typesetting, among other things.

My part-time status allows me to care for my two-and-a-half-year-old, Madeleine, as well.

I am very thankful for this job and the opportunities for growth it has brought. It has also allowed me some free time to go on a mission trip to Lyon, France in 2013, and take time off in 2014 as my husband, Dave, and I went through the process of adopting our sweet baby girl.


God brought me to this ministry at just the right time. I was burned out at my job as a chef in a local university's café and ready to find a job where I felt like I was serving God and making a difference. With a background in Baking & Pastry Arts, Hospitality Management, and French, I thought a career change may be in order.

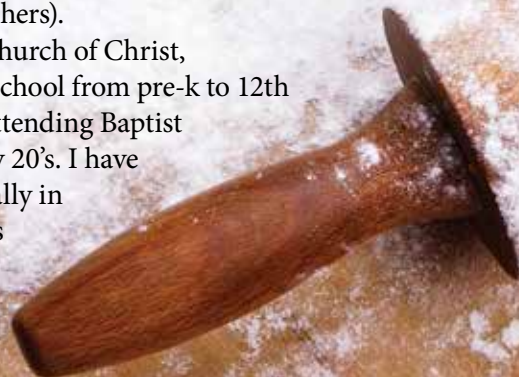
The job was posted on Craig's List and it sounded perfect for me: Christian ministry needs someone for part-time office work, only requirements—general agreement with GES' beliefs, common sense, and a sense of humor (and with Bob's jokes, someday I need it more than others).

I grew up in the Church of Christ, attended Christian school from pre-k to 12th grade, and started attending Baptist churches in my early 20's. I have grown more spiritually in these last three years than probably all the other years



combined, though parenthood may have something to do with that too!

Every day I'm thankful to work here. Sure, it's not what I spent five years studying in college to do, but I suppose the attention to detail it takes to get the buttercream just right on a wedding cake translates to help me catch that errant comma...most of the time! 



Q&A

By Staff

People Who Believe in More Than One Condition

Q Hi there. Can you tell me what happens to the Christians who believe various “extras”? I mean people who think there is more than one condition of salvation, such as faith plus *being sorry for sins*, or faith plus *believing we deserve hell*, or faith plus believing *Jesus died and literally rose again from the dead*, etc.

What happens to these people?

And if you believe they go to hell, can you please provide Scripture to show that?

I’m just confused as to the fate of those type of Christians.

~Brian, email

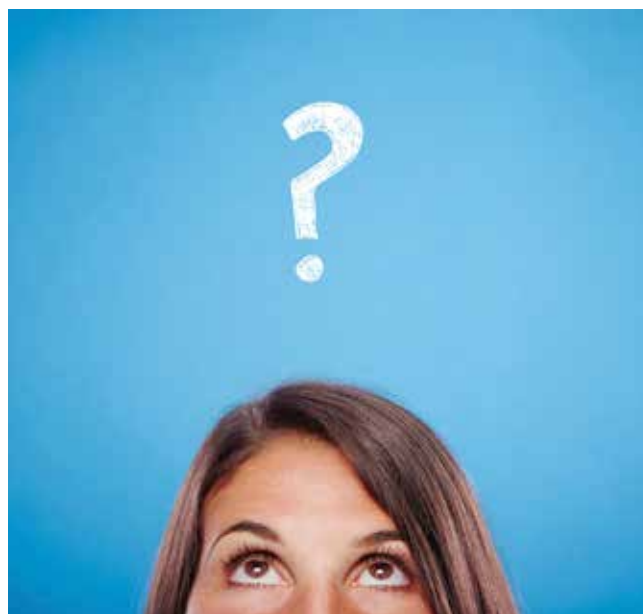
A Brian, thanks so much for your question. The Free Grace position is that none of these other things are required to have eternal life. There are many things that a believer can believe, and there are many things that a believer can feel, when they come to faith. They may feel sorry for their sins. And certainly almost all know about the death and resurrection of Christ. Again, perhaps most who come to faith understand they deserve hell.

People who believe these things believe and understand more than they need to be saved. But they are saved.

The problem would be if they thought they must turn from their sins, be baptized, or join a church, etc., in order to be saved. That would be adding works to the gospel and is thus believing a different gospel (cf. Matt 7:21-23; John 5:39-40; 6:28-29; Acts 15:1; Gal 1:6-9; 5:4; Eph 2:8-9).

If a person believes in Jesus Christ alone for eternal life but also realizes the gravity of their sins and what Christ has done to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29; 1 John 2:2), he has believed the gospel and has eternal life.

~Ken



BIGSTOCK

Were the Galatian Judaizers Saved?

Q I read Dr. Wilkin’s helpful article identifying the Judaizers in Acts 15. In it you suggest that those mentioned in Acts 15:1 were not truly saved, whereas, those in Acts 15:5 were. I found this a very convincing way of looking at the problem—thank you!

Now, could you please identify the Judaizers in the book of Galatians? Do you think these were saved believers or not?

~MD, email

A Years ago I was teaching through Galatians at my home church, a small Plymouth Brethren assembly. It was at a Lord’s Supper meeting where men could ask questions or make comments. I found it a bit intimidating to teach there since Zane Hodges was one of the listeners.

I came to Gal 2:4-5 and Paul’s mention of

false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission for even an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

I remember suggesting that these were born-again people who had become duped by false teachers and

hence were *false brethren* in the sense that they were no longer acting like true brethren.

At this point Zane Hodges made a comment. He pointed out that the expression *false brethren* is only used one other time in the NT, also in one of Paul's letters, in 2 Cor 11:26. He pointed out that also in 2 Corinthians 11 Paul spoke earlier of *false apostles* (v 13), which he said could not refer to true apostles acting badly.

In addition, he said that *false brethren* in 2 Cor 11:26 had to refer to unbelievers.

Hence, Zane said that there was no evidence in Galatians that these false brethren were anything other than unbelievers. His view was that they were like those in Acts 15:1 who said that one had to be circumcised in order to be saved.

I found his argument compelling. His point wasn't that born again people were not capable of failing to be straightforward in the truth of the gospel. Peter and Barnabas are examples of that later in Galatians 2 (vv 11-21, esp. v 14). His point is that Paul would not and did not call born-again people *false brethren*.

When I compared Gal 1:6-9 and 5:4 with Acts 15:1, it made a lot of sense to me that the Judaizers who were troubling the Galatians were unregenerate men like those of Acts 15:1.

I hope that helps.

~Bob

Is It Wrong to Seek Rewards?

Q I've been studying the Bema Seat of Christ. Fervent Christians will receive rewards and rule with Christ in His millennial reign.

But what happens to the believer who is lukewarm and has lead a life serving himself? What are the negative consequences for that believer? And isn't the seeking of rewards for ourselves akin to idolatry?

~Kevin, email

A Jesus tells His disciples to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven (Matt 6:20). If Jesus commands us to do something, then it cannot be a bad thing to do (or way to think). In a word, we should desire

"If she is a believer but is not living a godly life she still has eternal life. But she is living her life foolishly."

rewards because it is His will. God in His grace has chosen to give rewards to those who glorify Him.

Those who do not please the Lord lose out on those rewards, including not being able to rule with Christ (2 Tim 2:12). They will also experience severe remorse at the Bema (Luke 19:20-26; 1 John 2:28). The remorse will be because they did not serve the Lord as they should have, and the lost opportunity to do so in this life—a life wasted. There will be no jealousy of others who do rule because we will no longer have a sin nature—jealousy will not exist. Those who do not rule will have other positions in the Kingdom and will be perfectly content in those roles, kind of like I am a citizen of the US but am not in any position of

authority in the government. Even with my sin nature, I am content in that role.

~Ken

When Is It Temporal Judgment?

Q Hello, My name is Isaiah and I am 23 years old and I am a double organ transplant patient. I received my heart when I was only 6 weeks old and my kidney when I was 16 years old. In my health struggles I have often wondered if I will die young.

My question concerns the belief and scriptural evidence of God taking a Christian home due to their constant sin. How much sin dictates a premature death? How can you tell the difference between someone who has died prematurely because of sin, and those who have died early for other reasons?

~Isaiah, email

A Isaiah, thanks so much for your question. It is a difficult one because it deals with the mind of God which we cannot know. Included in this is God's preordination of all things, such as the date when somebody dies. It seems obvious to me that God deals with people differently depending upon the circumstances.

For example Ananias and Sapphira die prematurely in Acts 5 for lying and being proud. How many thousands of Christians have been guilty of those sins and God allowed them to live?

Why God deals with some believers in what seems to be a more strict way than others, or why He allows some unbelievers to live

long lives and others not, I don't know. I don't think we can.

In Rom 6:23, Paul says that the wages of sin is death. I take that in a very general way—every sin is an experience of death because in that act it takes us out of fellowship with the One who is life. It is an experience of walking in darkness and death. It *can* lead to physical death, and we could probably say that sin *invites* such a result, but God in His grace may and often does withhold that particular penalty (and thank God He does—I am glad He has not dealt with me as He did with Ananias).

Another example is the false teachers (who are believers) who are turned over to Satan to be disciplined (1 Tim 1:18-20). This could result in death, I assume, but we see many false teachers in the church today (and some are believers). Just like in the analogy of Ananias, why are these people allowed to continue for years in many cases doing the same thing with no visible punishment?

It is also the same thing with the guy committing sexual sin in 1 Corinthians 5. He is turned over to Satan for the “destruction of his flesh” (I don't think that means “death,” but many do). How many Christians today live in sexual sins for decades?

The only thing that I can see is that God in His infinite wisdom allows more time and appears to be more lenient with some than others. Only He knows if the possibility of repentance is still there with some—even if they never actually repent. Only He knows all the other consequences the death of a believer (or unbeliever) can have on others.

In the case of Ananias I assume the punishment was so quick and dramatic because the Church was growing and doing what God wanted and there had to be a dramatic example of what leaven in the Church could do.

Regarding people who are born with disabilities—such as your need for a heart transplant at just six weeks of age, the Lord indicated that illnesses are sometimes not at all due to one's sin (or the sins of his parents), but that they may be to the glory of God (John 9:1-5).

A good rule of thumb is that if I experience some illness or injury in my life, I take a moment and do personal inventory. Am I in rebellion in some area of my life? If so, God has my attention and I should repent. If not, I ask God for the grace to handle this suffering to His glory.

I like black and white answers too. However, it seems that when it comes to the will of God in individual lives we will not always have that on this side of eternity.

~Ken

Did They Really Believe?

Q I was reading Wes Spradley's article, “Did They Really Believe” and I disagree that the people in John 2:23-24 were believers. The Bible commentaries I read say they were not. There are many false teachers today who say they believe but do not. And I've witnessed to many people who say they are Christians but it turns out they are not. I don't think those people really believed at all. Isn't that why Jesus didn't entrust Himself to them—because they were phony?

~SW, email

A You raise an important issue. As you point out, there are many commentators who do not think this group of people “really” believed, even though John says they did. As I see it, there are two options.

When John tells us that someone believed in Jesus, we *can* trust him.

Or

When John tells us that someone believed in Jesus, we *can't* trust him.

Many commentators imply we *can't* trust John.

I think we *can*.

There is a very simple reason why we can trust John when he tells us someone believed in Jesus. *He was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.*

There's good reason why John's Gospel is often called “The Gospel of Belief.” Think of John as the world's leading expert on “belief.” When John tells us someone “believed,” that is his expert (and inspired!) diagnosis. When John tells us someone “believed in His name” (compare John 1:12), he knows that for a fact *because God told him so*. It's a settled issue! When John says that someone believed, he doesn't intend for us to ask, “Hmm...does John really mean it?”

In my opinion, any commentator who begins his exegesis of John 2:23-24 by doubting John's claim these people believed in Jesus, is starting from a false premise and will necessarily reach a false conclusion.

So what does “didn't entrust Himself” (John 2:24) mean?

As it turns out, this isn't a complicated issue. It's not supposed to

be hard to understand. All it means is that Jesus didn't trust these brand-spanking new believers with the kind of in-depth teaching—about Himself and His mission—that He reserved for His disciples.

Think of it this way.

If an unbeliever walked into your church this Sunday and came to faith in the Lord, would you make him the pastor on Monday? Of course not. You don't "entrust" that kind of responsibility to a new believer.

Or imagine if you led an unbeliever to faith in Christ, would you immediately begin teaching them about the gap between Daniel's 69th and 70th weeks? Of course not.

You meet people where they're at. You give people the information and responsibility they're ready for at that time.

That's what Jesus is refusing to do in John 2:23-24.

Jesus is not denying the people believed. He's just being realistic about their spiritual maturity at that moment and refusing to entrust deeper teaching or responsibilities to them.

~Shawn

Is My Sister Saved?

Q My sister says she believes in Jesus and all that, but doesn't act like she does. Is she saved?

~Robert

A You cannot tell if a person is a believer by looking at their works. Sometimes our works do not match what we believe—not only in religious matters but in many other things as well. We are saved from hell only by believing in Jesus Christ for the free gift of eternal life.

For example, some people think living out the Sermon on the Mount is a necessary proof of salvation. But the Sermon on the Mount was given to Jesus' *disciples*. He is telling them that if they want to live a wise life—to build the house of their lives wisely—they must act upon His words. His words are the foundation of a life that will have eternal value—that will be rewarded in the Kingdom of God.

In your sister's case, if she is a believer but is not living a godly life she still has eternal life. But she is living her life foolishly.

~Ken

Receiving the Holy Spirit

Q Do Christians receive the gift of the Holy Spirit when we believe and trust in Christ as the Savior or after we repent (cf. Acts 2:38)?

~Jeremy, email

A Thanks so much for your question.

To understand Acts 2:38, one must understand the context of Acts.

In Acts, the only people who receive the Holy Spirit *after believing* (as opposed to receiving the Spirit at the moment of faith) are Jews (e.g., Acts 2:38; those in Samaria in Acts 8; the disciples of John in Acts 19; Paul, Acts 9:17).

The situation in Acts 2:38 is that folks believed ("they were cut to the heart,") before they asked, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

We must remember that receiving eternal life and receiving the Holy Spirit are two separate things.

For the Jews in that generation God required that once they were

born-again by faith in Christ, they needed to be baptized and turn from their sins in order to receive the Holy Spirit and fellowship forgiveness. That was *not* the case with Gentiles. The pattern for Gentiles is found in Acts 10:43-48 with Cornelius. He and *all* the Gentiles in the house with him received the Holy Spirit without baptism, without anything. They never said a word.

Today, as 1 Cor 12:13 and Eph 1:13 say, everyone receives the Holy Spirit and eternal life when they believe. But with that generation of Jews, because they had crucified the Lord, before they could have fellowship with God (and receive the Holy Spirit), they had to repent of their sins and be baptized in the name of the One they had rejected. But that was a very unique time and a very unique group.

I hope this helps!

~Ken

Send your questions to questions@faithalone.org or to kenwyates@gmail.com.



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