

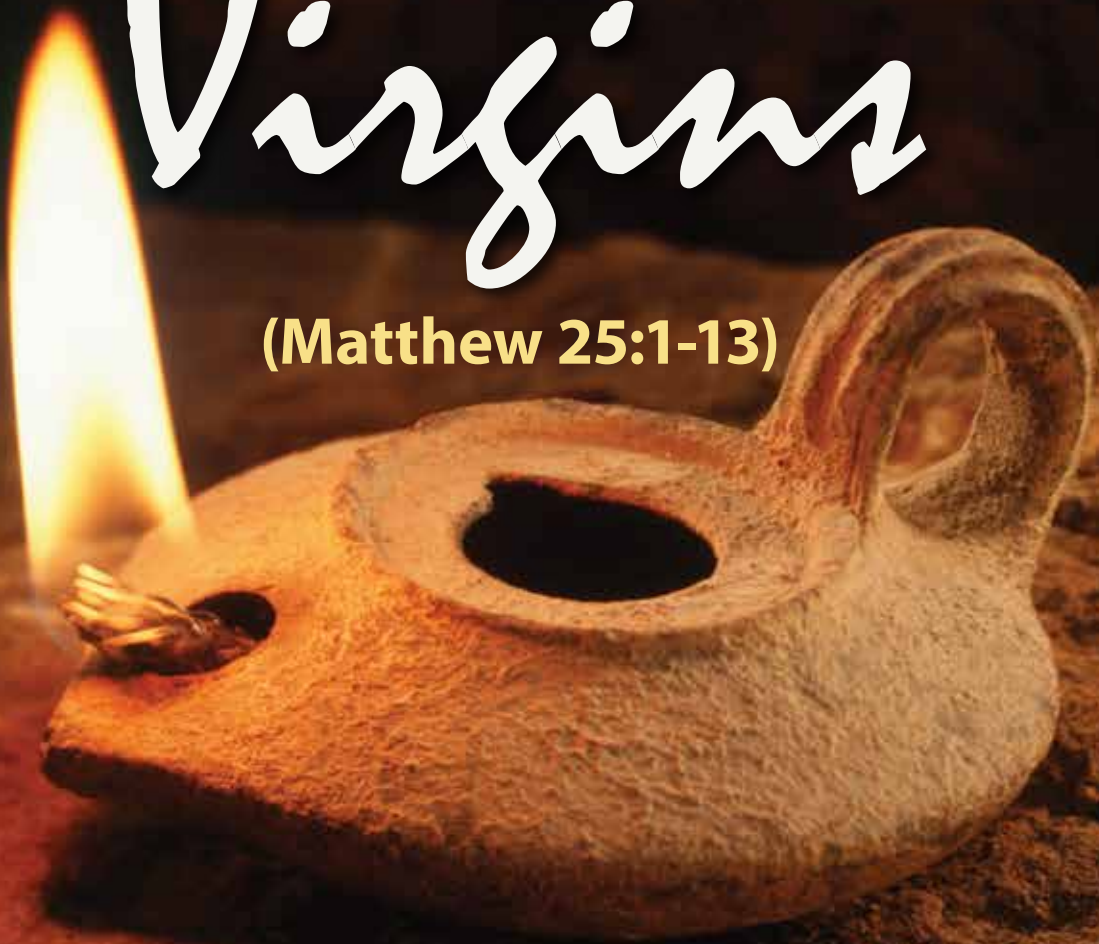
# GRACE FOCUS

WWW.FAITHALONE.ORG

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2017

## The Ten Virgins

(Matthew 25:1-13)



**PLUS** Hang In There and Wiggle / The Lord's Supper and Rewards / Assurance  
Made Simple / I Preached a Gospel of Doubt / The Will of the Father / Love **AND MORE**

## CONTENTS

**3 From the Editor**

**4 The Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)**

BY BOB WILKIN

**8 Worship: False and True  
(Acts 7:44-60)**

BY ZANE C. HODGES

**15 I Preached a Gospel of Doubt**

BY ALLEN MICHAEL REA

**16 Hang in There and Wiggle**

BY PHIL CONGDON

**19 The Lord's Supper and Rewards  
(Joshua 5:10-15)**

BY KEN YATES

**23 The Bookstore**

**31 The Mailbag**

**32 Love**

BY JOE LOMBARDI

**39 The Will of the Father Is That Believers  
Will Not Perish**

BY BILL FIESS

**40 Is Repentance Required for Eternal  
Life?**

BY LEILANI MATLACK

**44 Assurance Made Simple**

BY SHAWN LAZAR



## THE TEN VIRGINS, p. 4

## GRACE IN FOCUS

Volume 32, Number 1

© 2017 by Grace  
Evangelical Society

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Robert N. Wilkin, Ph.D.

**EDITOR AND DESIGN**

Shawn C. Lazar

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

Brad Bell

**OFFICE MANAGER**

Bethany Taylor

**CIRCULATION**

Mark "Double 5" Gray

**GRACE IN FOCUS** is a free, bimonthly magazine about the gospel, assurance, and related issues. For your free U.S. subscription sign up on our website or send your name and address to **P.O. Box 1308, Denton, TX 76202**. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to offset the costs of printing and postage, it would be greatly appreciated.



Address changes? Comments? Prayer requests? Testimonies?

Send them to [ges@faithalone.org](mailto:ges@faithalone.org). Theological questions? Send them to [questions@faithalone.org](mailto:questions@faithalone.org). Or write to *Grace in Focus*, P.O. Box 1308, Denton, TX 76202.

## FROM THE EDITOR

When I was a little boy the phones worked a lot differently than they do today. A mobile phone was a phone with a 30 foot extension cord. You did not have to dial the area code to anyone in your same local area. You just dialed their seven numbers. And back then people would remember their phone number by the three letter prefix and the four number ending. So if your number was 555-1975 you would remember it as Jeckel (JKL) 1975. Everyone in your same city has the same prefix. So if you were calling someone in your city and got a wrong number you'd say, "Is this 2648?" or whatever the four numbers were.

My Dad always had fun on January 1<sup>st</sup>. Let's say it was Jan 1, 1968. He'd call people and ask, "Is this 1968?" The knee-jerk reaction on the other end, even if it was a relative or friend, was to correct him: "No, Bob, you know this is 2468." Then Dad would laugh and say, "Funny, I thought this was the year nineteen sixty-eight."

I find it hard to believe that this is already 2017. Every year is a new opportunity to serve the Lord, and to lay up treasure in heaven (Matt 6:20). As we begin this new year, we hit the ground running with some very encouraging and spiritually profitable articles for you.

And be sure to join us on Facebook and at our website, [faithalone.org](http://faithalone.org), where you can access our latest blog posts, videos, and audio sermons.

Jesus is coming again soon to set up His kingdom. We will hear His "Well done, good servant" (Luke 19:17) *if we remain faithful to Him*. Our eternal destiny as believers is set. It is secure. But our eternal rewards,



## Resolved

Bob Wilkin, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

and our future rulership with Christ, is not yet secure. Be resolved to serve Him this year.

The gift of everlasting life is fantastic. The reward of Christ's approval will be brilliant. May we keep our eyes on the prize as time marches on and the return of our Lord, Savior, and Judge becomes nearer still. **GH**



# The Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)





## By Bob Wilkin

A few years ago I was one of four authors, including Tom Schreiner, James D. G. Dunn, and Michael Barber, for a book called *Four Views on the Role of Works at the Final Judgment*. In my portion of the book one of the things I discussed was this parable (pp. 36-37). A reader brought up three points for me to answer:

1. You have hung your hat on the fact that any “saving” that is going on in these passages is merely physical salvation.
2. The midnight cry is the mid-point of the Tribulation and not the Rapture.
3. Also, that Christ saying, “I never knew you” is analogous to missing out on a virginal torch dance. Is it just me, or does this try and de-fang the real bite of the passage? To me, if my Lord and Savior barred the door on me and said He did not recognize me...I would be sweating bullets, not bummed that I didn’t get to “party.”

I will address those three comments about the Parable of the Ten Virgins in order:

1. Neither *sōzō* (save) or *sōtēria* (salvation) occur in the Parable of the Ten Virgins or in Matthew 25 (or 24:45-51). I suppose when you speak of “saving” (in quotes) you are referring to Matt 25:11-12 where the five foolish virgins say, “Lord, lord, open to us!” and He responds, “I do not know you.” I do not see that as salvation of any kind, but if I did, I would not see it as *physical salvation*. The issue here is not physical survival (compare Matt 24:22) or escaping a temporal difficulty. The issue is related to the kingdom. In my view the issue is not *entering the kingdom*, but *being chosen for a position of honor in the kingdom*.

2. I do take it that the midnight cry refers to the abomination of desolation which will occur at the mid-point of the Tribulation. However, my interpretation does not depend on that. This could be some event which occurs before the end of the age, that is, before the Second Coming. (If the midnight cry is the Rapture, as you seem to suggest, then all ten virgins would be gone in the Rapture and the parable would not make any sense.)
3. Clearly the five foolish virgins had been slated to take part in the torch dance. So if your view is correct and participation in that dance signifies getting into the kingdom, then these five virgins lost everlasting life. They had been chosen to take part. They each had been given a torch. They each had enough oil for their torches to burn for a short time. I do not know if you are an Arminian or a Calvinist. If you are an Arminian, then the interpretation you suggest works well with your theology (though not with John 3:16 and many other texts). They lost everlasting life. But if you do not believe that everlasting life can be lost (John 3:16; 6:35; 11:26), then your view is puzzling. What did the five foolish virgins have before the midnight cry? What do the torches represent? What is the issue with the fact that they did not have enough oil to keep their torches burning? Why are they to *buy* more oil? I would be sweating bullets if my Lord and Savior barred me from special service. See 2 Cor 5:9-11 and “the fear of the Lord.” See 1 Cor 9:27 and “lest I myself be disqualified [better = disapproved].” If Paul feared disapproval before his Lord and Savior, surely we should too. But disapproval is not the same as being barred from the kingdom and sent to the lake of fire.

---

“If Paul feared  
disapproval  
before his Lord  
and Savior,  
surely we  
should too.”

---

## Further Comments

Here are ten additional comments:

1. Whatever view you take of the ten virgins, the five foolish virgins are foolish and they miss out on something very important. But to say that what they miss out on is the kingdom is a stretch in my opinion. If that is what the Lord

- meant why did He not simply say—as He did, by the way, in Matt 7:21-23—that *they shall not enter the kingdom of heaven*? We don’t find that here. And why doesn’t He say, “I never knew you” as He did in Matt 7:23? In Matt 25:12 He says, “I do not know you.” Why the difference?
2. How do we harmonize Matt 7:21-23 and Matt 25:1-13? In Matt 7:21-23, the problem is that those excluded from the kingdom are pointing to their works, rather than to their faith in Christ, as the reason why they should get in (v 22). But in Matt 25:1-13, the works of the five wise virgins are allegedly the reason they get into the kingdom and the lack of works for the five foolish virgins is the reason they don’t get in. Why are works not enough in the first parable, but enough in the second? Wouldn’t these two parables contradict one another if that view of Matt 25:1-13 is correct?
  3. All ten of these young women are called *virgins*. It would be odd to call unbelievers *virgins*.
  4. All ten virgins are given a torch and a task to do. Do unbelievers receive spiritual gifts and get tasks to do?
  5. All ten virgins believe in the Lord and believe He is coming again soon. Do unbelievers believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and believe that He is coming again soon?
  6. If this is an evangelistic parable, then what lesson do we learn? Would it not be that we need to develop sufficient spiritual reserves (e.g., the extra oil needed) so that we are able to be worthy to get into the kingdom on the basis of our works?
  7. If this is an evangelistic parable, where is faith in Christ mentioned or alluded to? Where is the gift of salvation mentioned? Where is everlasting life mentioned? Where is unbelief mentioned? Where is eternal condemnation mentioned? Where is the lake of fire?
  8. What would this parable mean in terms of assurance of everlasting life if it is teaching that we must persevere in faith and good works until death in order to get into the kingdom? Would it not make assurance impossible? Wouldn’t we all, to use your expression “be sweating



bullets” *each and every day of our lives*? If kingdom entrance is based on our perseverance in good works, then assurance is impossible since the Apostle Paul himself said in inspired Scripture that he was not sure he would persevere (1 Cor 9:27).

9. How do we harmonize Matt 25:1-13 with John 3:16; 4:10; 5:24, 39-40; 6:28-29; 11:25-27; Rom 4:4-5; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; and Rev 22:17? If the condition of everlasting life is merely believing in Jesus, then Matt 25:1-13 can’t contradict that. If the consequence of believing is everlasting life that can never be lost, then Matt 25:1-13 can’t contradict that.
10. If you are not yet comfortable seeing Matt 25:1-13 as a sanctification passage, as a call to believers to persevere in faith and good works for eternal rewards, then why not simply say, “I know from John 3:16 and Eph 2:8-9 that the sole condition of everlasting life is believing in Jesus and that my works have nothing to do with my eternal destiny. I don’t know what Matt 25:1-13 means. But I know it does not contradict John 3:16 and Eph 2:8-9”?

## Start With the Clear Verses

What drives me in Biblical interpretation is harmonizing unclear passages with clear passages (i.e., the analogy of faith). If John 20:28 clearly establishes the deity of Christ, for example, then John 1:1 cannot be saying that Jesus is merely “a god.” If John 6:35 and 11:25-26 prove eternal security, then no other text can say that everlasting life can be lost. If John 3:16 says that “whoever believes in Him...has everlasting life,” then no other text can be saying that *some* of those who believe in Him will be eternally condemned due to insufficient good works.

If God’s Word is without error—and it is—then it does not contradict itself on any point of doctrine, including eternal security for whoever believes in Jesus for everlasting life. **END**



*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 Inerrancy for Dummies.*







# Worship: False and True (Acts 7:44-60)

By Zane C. Hodges

## God's True Tabernacle

**W**hat is the difference between true and false religion? On the surface they may have some similarities. But God approves of one and abhors the other, because God has commanded one and has not commanded the other, no matter how similar they may be. The difference between true and false religion is seen in Stephen's contrast between two tabernacles.

**7:43-44.** There is the tabernacle of Moloch (“**You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch**”) and there is the tent of the Lord (“**Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness**”). The contrast, as suggested by v 44, is basically threefold.

First, the Lord's tabernacle was a “**tabernacle of witness.**” It was a witness to God's presence with His people, and of His gracious willingness to forgive as expressed in the sacrificial system connected with it. It was also a witness for a day to come, foreshadowing the heavenly realities of Christianity (cf. Hebrews). It was a type of Christ in His incarnation (cf. John

1:14). Thus it was rich in the divine truths to which it bore witness.

By contrast, the tent of Moloch witnessed to nothing except to a lie and to an abomination.

In the same way, divine worship is ever distinguished from human and satanic religion by its witness to God's truth. The Christian Church is a pillar—hence a witness—to the very truth which the OT tabernacle typified God manifest in the flesh (cf. 1 Tim 3:14-16).

Second, the Lord's tabernacle was a divine appointment

(“**as He appointed**”). By contrast, Moloch’s tabernacle was divinely reprobated (cf. Leviticus 20). The man who says he can worship better at home or out of doors ignores the divine appointment of the church. Divine worship is distinguished from human by its being based on God’s command. As no one would seek audience with a President without appointment, so man’s approach to God in worship must be by divine appointment. When human commandments pervade worship, that worship is in vain (cf. Mark 7:7).

Third, the Lord’s tabernacle was based on a pattern (“**make it according to the pattern that he had seen**”). God did not simply appoint the tabernacle to be made and left the details to Moses. Neither does He divinely appoint the local assembly and leave it to men to organize and arrange it as best they can. The local assembly is to gather according to the pattern revealed in God’s Word.

Nor could Moses have been criticized for not using more ornate materials in that tabernacle, whatever the mind of man might have deemed suitable for God’s tent. Neither can the accoutrements of human religion (e.g., ornate buildings, stained glass windows, soft music from an organ, etc.) be insisted upon by men, as they are no part of the revealed pattern of true worship for today. God delights in obedience to the revealed pattern of His Word. Men must worship in Spirit and in truth.

The three points of contrast just noted are significant especially because it was not the worship of Yahweh alone that involved a tent. So did the idolatrous worship of

Moloch. The worship of Moloch (as well as of Remphan) also involved patterns of human making (“**images which you made**,” v 43). Indeed, portable shrines employing practically the same construction techniques as the tabernacle are now known to have been in use before the time of Moses in Egypt. It is thus possible that over the ancient world numerous “tent shrines” were in use for pagan deities.

Externally there might appear to be a resemblance between the true

---

**“God may ‘give up’ a nation or generation, yet He may also thereafter, and before judgment strikes, display a more marvelous light of witness and grace than before.”**

---

worship of Yahweh and the false worship of Moloch and others. Likewise, in the ecumenical movement, men seek to stress external, superficial similarities in order to achieve union. But true and false religion are, like these two tents, separated by a vast distance by the very three facts that emerge from v 44. To suggest combining Moloch’s tent with the Lord’s would be utterly unthinkable—in that day or in this!

## **History Repeating**

**7:44-50.** The nation has already been viewed by Stephen as set aside (“gave them up,” v 42) and,

under the leading of the Spirit, this is connected with the Babylonian captivity (v 43). Thus, in essence, the history of Israel has been fully traced from Abraham (v 2) to the exile (v 43). The few verses that remain serve to shed light on the privileges which continued to be theirs till the judgment fell. From these, three facts emerge.

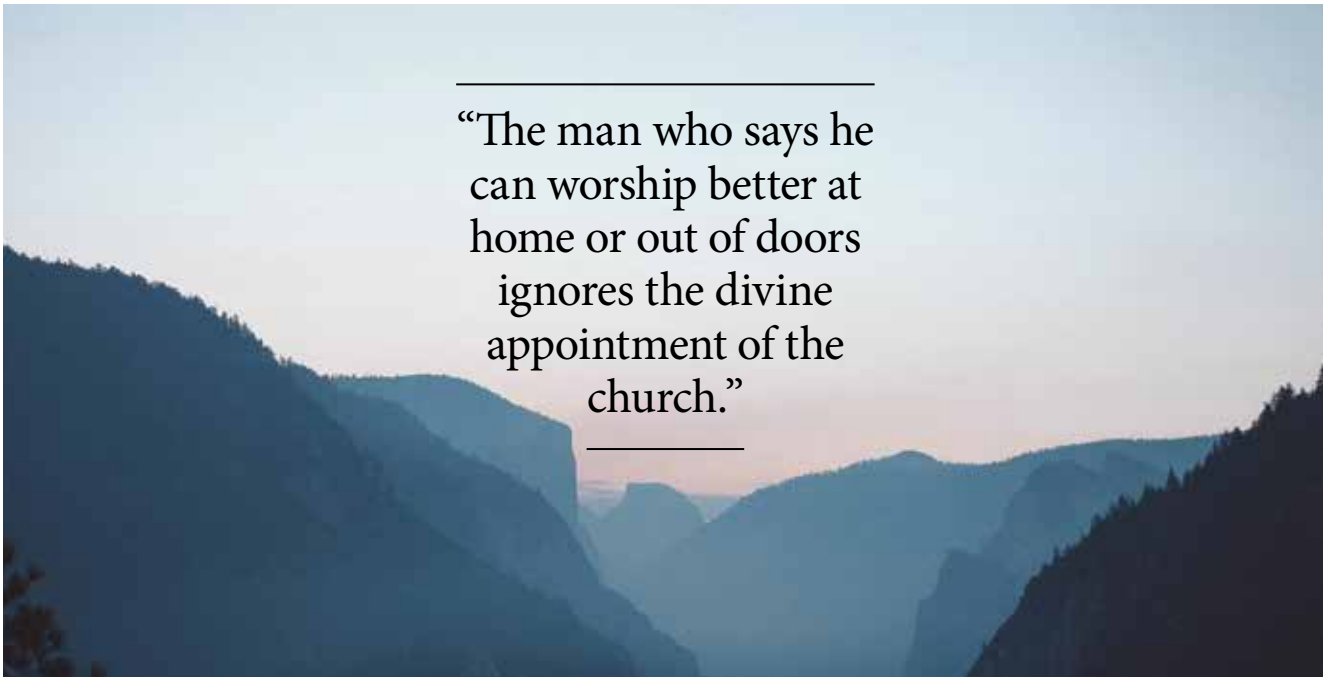
First, they had the presence of divine witness (“**the tabernacle of witness**”).

Second, they had the display of divine power (“**God drove out...**”).

Third, they had the exercise of divine grace (“**who found favor**”). David’s request was, in reality, an expression of that grace. God gave grace both for the asking of such a request *and* in answering it, for He was greater than the temple (vv 47-50). It was God’s work in David’s heart that prompted the prayer, His work in Solomon’s life to answer it, and His condescension in Israel’s history to link Himself with that temple. All was grace.

In Stephen’s own generation this history had repeated itself. Although judgment seemed certain to come to that generation as early as John the Baptist’s ministry (cf. Matt 3:7-12), yet God’s operation among them paralleled the picture Stephen paints from history. The ministry of John and of our Lord, ending with the death of both, showed plainly the true state of affairs. Yet the Apostolic Church follows with its display of divine witness, power, and grace.

It would seem, both from the history recounted by Stephen, and from its corollary in his own day, that though God may “give up” a nation or generation, yet He may also thereafter, and before judgment strikes, display a more



---

“The man who says he  
can worship better at  
home or out of doors  
ignores the divine  
appointment of the  
church.”

---

marvelous light of witness and grace than before. Thus, from the tabernacle to the temple there is a progression from what is less obvious to that which is more obviously glorious.

These two buildings find their anti-types in Stephen’s day—the tabernacle in Christ in humiliation, and the Temple in the Church (Eph 2:20-21) wherein Christ is glorified and which is a witness to His glory. Hence the out-flashing of God’s glory—in His personal presence, and in His miraculous works, in His matchless grace—seems, both in Stephen’s OT account and in his own day, to blaze forth more brightly just before the night falls, like the sun blazing mere brilliantly red in the midst of gathering shadows just before it sinks beneath the horizon. Judgment may come to a nation (like our own) or to an individual just after some unusually brilliant display of divine witness and grace.

In the midst of a nation “given up,” one man, David, found “grace”

to make a right request. Unselfishly he seeks a habitation for God (cf. 2 Sam 7:2). It takes grace to ask a right request, for selfish asking is so easy (cf. Jas 4:3). We too, in an age of impending judgment upon our nation and the world, as also upon a lukewarm church sure to be spewed out (Rev 3:16, “I will spew thee out . . .”), we too may have the privilege of asking (and getting an answer) to “find a tabernacle”—i.e., find an abode for—the Lord. Indeed, according to John 14:23, He makes His abode in every obedient life (cf. also Rev 3:20-21 against the backdrop of Laodicea).

Thus, in the tabernacle of our body, the earthly house of this tabernacle (2 Cor 5:1)—this wish may be fulfilled by grace. We, like David, find a place for God to dwell.

The word *skēnōma* of Acts 7:46 may also suggest the impermanence of the “house” (*oikon*) which Solomon built. By application, our fellowship with Christ here on

earth is in this our transient home of flesh (cf. also Acts 6:14).

## Role Reversal

**7:51-53. “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears!”**

The trial of Stephen is remarkable in that the judges become the defendants, the accused becomes the prosecutor. The nation is on trial before God through His *angelou*, Stephen (cf. 6:15). The indictment, based on the incontrovertible witness of Scripture, is now summed up by Stephen in these verses.

**“Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?”** having traced the past history of the nation, the culmination of that history in the crucifixion of Christ is stressed (v 52). Proud as they were of their law, which Stephen was accused of blaspheming (Acts 6:13), yet by betrayal and murder of a righteous One they had actually broken it (v 53).

Note that in the scheme of Stephen’s message, vv 48-50, there





**Got 5 minutes?**

**THEN CHECK OUT OUR  
FREE GRACE VIDEO LIBRARY.**

**NEW VIDEOS ADDED EVERY WEEK!**

**[FAITHALONE.ORG/CATEGORY/VIDEO](https://faithalone.org/category/video)**

is a tacit reminder that God did not need Solomon's temple. The Babylonian captivity (cf. Acts 7:43), as all knew, had destroyed it. The charge against Stephen (Acts 6:14) might then be presumed to have a possibility of truth in regard to the present temple. No more did such a God need Herod's temple.

This trial of the nation was the turning point for Israel. In the next chapter (Acts 8), the gospel oversteps the confines of Judaism. And after that, the great Apostle to the Gentiles is saved (Acts 9). Sentence was passed on Judaism, Jerusalem, and the nation. Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth now come to view.

Indeed all who stand exposed to the convicting work of the Word are, so to speak, on trial before God (cf. Heb 4:12-13). God may, as with Israel, at any such moment pass sentence and chasten or judge. (Note that this same two-edged sword was here in Stephen's hand, Acts 7:54.)

## Diagnosis

But Stephen was not only a prosecutor, he was also a diagnosing physician. For the nation of Israel was not only guilty, but sick. Note its symptoms:

First, they had neck trouble (**"stiff-necked"**). As a physical stiff neck may be caused by holding the head in a fixed position, so spiritual stiff-neckedness is fixity of mind upon self-will. The stiff-necked soul refuses to bow his head in submissiveness or turn it in the direction of God's leading. In the body a stiff neck may be of slight concern, not so for the soul (1 Sam 15:23).

Second, heart and ear trouble (**"uncircumcised in heart and**

**ears"**). Stubbornness permits the thoughts and attitudes of the flesh to prevail upon the heart and, prevailing in the heart, to shut the ear. Note the order. If the soul cannot discerningly and obediently hear God's voice, it is a symptom of heart trouble.

Third, balance trouble (**"resist,"** i.e., "to fall against"). As in the body the inner ear controls the balance, so the "inner ear" of the soul controls the balance of the life. An uncircumcised ear leads to "falling against"—i.e., resisting—the Holy Spirit. One can either "walk by means of the Spirit" or fall against

---

**"Judgment may  
come to a nation  
(like our own) or to  
an individual just  
after some unusually  
brilliant display of  
divine witness and  
grace."**

---

Him (cf. Gal 5:16). Balance, stability, and evenness of life are only achieved by Him as the inner ear of our souls is attuned to Him.

Fourth, their disease was hereditary (**"as your fathers did, so do you"**)—and it was getting worse. Note progression in v 52:

- *Persecuted* the prophets.
- *Killed* the prophets.
- *Murdered* the Just One.

Sin, a hereditary disease beginning in Adam, always worsens from generation to generation unless checked by repentance and submission to God. Ultimately it

becomes fatal, and—as with this generation of Israelites—issues in judgment.

## The Twofold Ministry

**7:54-55. When they heard these things they were cut to the heart.**

The twofold ministry of the Holy Spirit in this world is seen in this chapter.

His convicting work (John 16:8-11) is seen in v 54. This is toward the world.

His work in the believer finds illustration in v 55, **But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven** (cf. John 16:13-14). The Spirit desires to fill us, fix our gaze steadfastly on heaven, and to reveal to us the glory of God and Jesus at His right hand (cf. Col 3:1-4).

The effect of such a vision will be, for one thing, testimony (cf. Acts 4:20). Note v 56: **and said**. We too can testify to men that we see **the heavens opened** (the veil rent) and **the Son of Man** in glory in heaven. Our message to the world is just this: an opened heaven, an exalted Man.

## The Effect of the Vision

**7:56-60.** Stephen is oblivious to the gnashing of teeth around him. His eye is on heaven. Human prudence might have dictated silence now, but a heavenly vision makes him speak. When we have a real heart vision of Christ, we will speak regardless of man's hostility.

Another effect of this vision upon the believer will be his transformation in life, heart, and experience into the likeness of Christ (2 Cor 3:18). Note three likenesses of Stephen to his Lord in vv 57-60 which are principles of Christ-likeness in the believer:



First, suffering: **they cast him out...and stoned him** (vv 57-58; cf. 2 Tim 3:12; Luke 23:24).

Second, confidence and repose in God: **“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”** Note there was no crying to men for mercy (cf. Luke 23:46).

Third, forgiving love: **Lord do not charge them with this sin** (cf. Luke 23:24).

From a human standpoint, Stephen’s death must have seemed a tragedy to the early Church. If, as is probable, he was a young man, it was seemingly the cutting off of a fruitful, flowering career. He is the first, besides the Apostles, to be recorded by Luke as performing miracles (6:8) and he had risen from waiting tables to effectual public witness for the Lord Jesus (6:9-10). The loss of such a man must have seemed great indeed. Yet, like Samson, he accomplished more in death than in life and his dying prayer had stupendous fruit.

The phrase, **“do not hold against,”** is not to be taken as an appeal to God to ignore this sin. The cross proves God cannot ignore sin. But this is an appeal to God not “to fix” this sin upon them, not to make it a final one in His dealings with them. God is ever at liberty to say that His Spirit will not always strive with man, and when such striving ceases, judgment alone is left. Yet, through

Stephen’s prayer, the Spirit continues—indeed intensifies—His striving with the young man Saul (v 58) until He had made him the great Apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:5). The multitudes saved and edified in Paul’s lifetime and in the 1900 years following defies computation. All this as the result of a single sentence prayed! This shows the staggering potential of prayer (cf. Eph 3:20).

It is not a coincidence that this prayer is preceded by the vision of v 56. For the man of prayer, in this age, is one who catches a vision which is twofold:


First, **“The heavens opened”** (Heb 10:19-20).

Second, **“The Son of Man... on the right hand of God”** (Heb 10:21).

Note it is here “Son of Man” and not “Son of God.” For the high priesthood of Christ and His mediatorial work depend on His manhood (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 2:17-18).

Stephen thus sees *within* the veil in v 56, and in v 60 He is *there*. **Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.”** When we kneel before God it is our privilege to be within the veil. The Spirit’s ministry with us—as with Stephen—is both to give us this vision and this experience. Then Stephen’s spirit went there

permanently. The request of v 59 is in process of being answered in v 60. For Stephen’s **“spirit”** and that of **“the Lord Jesus”** are united in this prayer for the possibility of forgiveness of sinners. As the soul unites with its Lord in prayer it is ever more ready to unite with Him in presence.

In prayer we accomplish what is far beyond our talents and skills. Stephen could not reach these hardened hearts. His sermon only moved them to violence. Saul was a superlative example of this hardness. Yet Saul was *not* too hard for God. All our gifts, or all of Stephen’s here, cannot do what prayer can do. Here is an illustration of John 14:12-14. The miracle of Saul’s conversion and its fruits fully vindicates John 14:12. Yet actually it was the Lord personally Who did it (John 14:13 “I will do it,” cf. Acts 9:4-6). In prayer we do what we cannot do, for we ask that He will do it. 



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



# I Preached a Gospel of Doubt

By Allen Michael Rea

Up until a year or so ago I was an avid Lordship Salvation pastor. In fact, I was a card-carrying MacArthurite.

I studied theology at a small Baptist college where my OT professor was an Open Theist, my NT professor was a typical Baptist, and my theology professor was a five-point Calvinist.

I considered myself a Calvinist for a while, but I did not truly understand the issues. During my time in Calvinism I expressed no concern for the lost and had no assurance of salvation. Once I understood what Calvinism really was, I disavowed it entirely. Still, I did not realize that Lordship Salvation was such a strong part of Calvinism, and its effects lingered with me much longer.

I started my MDiv at one seminary but was very uncomfortable with the Reformed theology there, so I transferred to Luther Rice Seminary. I first encountered Free Grace Theology (FGT) in my hermeneutics class under J. B. Hixson. I also had a few conversations with our librarian, Hal Haller, who wrote the commentary on Matthew in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*. And, of course, I greedily consumed all the writings of Lewis Sperry Chafer. But I still held to Lordship Salvation.

I finished seminary and pastored my first full-time church. Those three years are a testimony that Lordship Salvation is a spiritually bankrupt theology.

I was miserable enough to share my lack of assurance with my church members.

I taught and preached from *The MacArthur Study Bible*.

When Bob Wilkin's book *A Gospel of Doubt* was first published, I bought a copy to read alongside my




well-worn copy of *The Gospel According to Jesus*. My primary motivation for getting Wilkin's book was to defeat it. I pridefully sought to dismantle FGT. But I had developed a straw man that I wanted to burn in my own search for assurance. Hence, I expected that Wilkin's book would be easy to refute. Instead I found myself at a theological crossroads.

I stayed up late, cried, and prayed.

I came to realize that I was adhering to, advocating, and propagating a gospel of doubt.

And then my life changed for the better.

Free Grace Theology has positively affected my marriage, my parenting skills, and the way that I pastor.

I've since read much more from GES, especially the writings of Zane Hodges. And I spent some time on the phone with Ken Yates (GES's East Coast speaker). I am very grateful for GES's ministry and hope to be more involved in the future. 



Allen Michael Rea is pastor of Higgston Baptist Church in Ailey, GA. He will be speaking at the Feb 10-11 Atlanta Regional Conference, along with Tony Mirabella, Donnie Preslar, Jeff Rutledge, and Bob Wilkin. See [faithalone.org/events](http://faithalone.org/events) for more details.

# *Hang In There and Wiggle*

**By Phil Congdon**





**T**his morning I put in a few hours of activity which should earn me some points in the father-of-the-year contest: I drove my son and some of his classmates on a school field trip to go fishing.

Fishing with over twenty fourth graders is not really fishing: It is baiting hooks, helping them cast, pulling snagged lines out of bushes and trees (thankfully, none got snagged in students!), and starting all over again. It's something of an exercise in futility.

The fish weren't biting, but thankfully, the crawfish went for bacon, which made for happy kids.

I've been thinking of another type of fishing this week, what Jesus called fishing for men (Matt 4:19).

## Fishing for Men

I recently was blessed by Adam's Road, a ministry entirely made up of redeemed ex-Mormons, who shared their testimonies and music at our church. In the lead-up to their coming, I read *Unveiling Grace*, written by Lynn Wilder (mother of two of the Adam's Road band members), telling the story of how she and her family found their way out of the Mormon cult.<sup>1</sup> After listening to the

testimonies of the band members, and reading the book, some thoughts on how we 'fish for men' have surfaced in my thinking.

First, unless our witness for Jesus Christ is motivated by love and gratitude for what we have freely received by grace, our impact will be blunted. We may have the truth, but we will not have the "heart" that makes that truth attractive. It is possible to accurately expose the errors of Mormonism, but do so in a way which only hardens the resolve of those who are blinded by the teachings of that religion to hold to their beliefs. Expressing the love of Christ, who saved us, not because of anything we did, but by His mercy (Titus 3:3-6), is attractive!

Second, we must never water down the truth of the gospel in order to gain a response. The saving transaction, which is always and only by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, is too often replaced by some nebulous words about "having a relationship with Christ" and an invitation to repeat a prayer, or raise a hand. Justification is "caught" when a person is persuaded of the truth of the gospel. Whatever other experiences or feelings they may have, they come to the point where they say, "It's true!" They don't understand



all the nuances of the doctrine of salvation (who does?!), but they recognize in Jesus the answer to their sin problem, and they believe in Him.

Third, we must never complicate, or add to, the simple gospel message. Are there a thousand things God wants to cleanse, change, improve, and utilize in each of our lives? Yes! Life with Christ is a process of progressively submitting to His truth, as it exposes areas of our lives where we are taking a wrong path. But listen: Those things are not the gospel of God's grace.

The good news is that the way to eternal life and a forever relationship with God is available to every person, by believing in Jesus. Period. Mormons add their reams of rules and works in order for a person to reach exaltation. It's all of men. Other cults do the same. Sadly, many Christians inadvertently fall into the same trap.

Keep the gospel clear: *Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved* (Acts 16:31).

## Let the Worm Wiggle

"OK," you say. "I got the message: Love those you want to reach, don't water down the truth, and don't complicate it. Great! But...how can we get folks to see the truth, and respond to it?"

Scripture—and fishing—provide the answer.

The reason most fourth graders (especially all together on a field trip) don't catch many fish is that *they have no patience*. They throw in the line, and—if it *doesn't* get caught on the nearest tree or bush—start reeling it in immediately. "I threw it in twice, and didn't catch anything!" What they don't realize is that unless you're

at a fish farm and it's feeding time, you don't usually throw in the line and pull out a fish immediately. (Here I must scold those TV fishing shows which edit out the hours of sitting and waiting, giving the impression the fish are just waiting below the surface to grab your bait.) In fact, a fish would have to chase after their bait if it wanted to be caught.

What must you do if you want to catch a fish?

Be patient, and let the worm do its thing.

---

**"We must never  
complicate, or add  
to, the simple gospel  
message."**

---

As it moves, ever-so-slightly, on the hook, it attracts the attention of passing fish. At first glance, they might be suspicious. But after two or three passes, their pea-brains start to think, "Hey, that looks like food!" And you've got your fish.

## How You Fit In

How does this apply to fishing for men?

Well, remember how you fit into this little metaphor.

The Lord is the real "fisherman"—seeking to save those who are lost.


The "fishing line" in my thinking is Jesus, who has brought a way for mankind to escape the depths of sin and death.

And what am I? I am the worm. My job is to "hang in there and wiggle"—so fish will be attracted

to the truth of the gospel and "take the bait."

Don't press the metaphor too far—but let it reflect the truth of Scripture, where we read,

Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence (1 Pet 3:15).

Let God fill your heart with love for those who don't know Christ as Savior, and then "hang in there and wiggle." And when a "fish" floats by, and sees the joyful "wiggle" in your life, and asks you for a reason, give 'em a taste of truth. 



*Phil Congdon  
is Senior Pastor  
at New Braunfels  
(TX) Bible  
Church.*

1. The term "cult" is avoided by some today, since it carries such pejorative connotations. But the doctrine of Mormonism (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or LDS) is both so insidious, so bizarre, and so targeted at Christians (who are weak and uninformed), that the term is both fitting and needed.

# **THE LORD'S SUPPER AND REWARDS**

**(JOSHUA 5:10-15)**

BY KEN YATES



All Christians are familiar with the Lord's Supper, also known as communion. When we participate in it, we remember our Lord's death. He died in order to pay the price for all our sins. As a result, when a person believes in Him for eternal life, He is able to give life everlasting to that person. The person who believes in Jesus at the same time also receives many other benefits. For example, the new believer has been set free from slavery to sin and no longer has to serve it. In addition he or she becomes a member of the Church, the body of Christ.

In the OT, there is a meal that foreshadows the Lord's Supper. It is the Passover. The Passover was instituted when the blood of a lamb saved the Jewish people from the destroying angel who killed the first-born in Egypt. Through the Passover, the Jews were released from slavery in Egypt. They were set free to worship God and they became the nation of Israel. They were to celebrate the Passover meal every year. When they did so, they would remember what God had done for them.

With the parallels between the two meals, it is not surprising that Jesus used the Passover meal when He instituted the Lord's Supper. Jesus' death would "save" us just like the blood of the Passover lamb saved the Jews. Paul makes this connection clear when he tells the believers at Corinth that, "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Cor 5:7).

In Joshua 5 we see a time when the Jewish people celebrated the Passover meal. At this occurrence, they certainly remembered what God had done for them. However, in the context, it also pointed to something else. God desired to reward them. This suggests that when we take communion we should reflect on these things as well.

## The Background of Joshua 5

The Jews celebrate the Passover meal in Joshua 5, but it is significant that it had been many years since they had done so. After God had delivered them from slavery in Egypt and made them His people, the nation fell into disobedience. As God was about to bring them into the land He had promised, the people rebelled against Him and refused to go into the land

out of fear of their enemies. As a result, God disciplined His people. For forty years they wandered in the wilderness until that unfaithful generation died.

In other words, the Jewish people had a history of disobedience. But by the time we get to Joshua 5, the new generation of Jews is on the scene. They have obeyed God by crossing the Jordan River into the Promised Land. They are ready to fight their enemies. God had promised them that if they would have faith in Him He would defeat their enemies and they would be blessed by inheriting the cities of their enemies.

It is a promising start for this new generation. Not only did they obey the Lord by crossing into the Promised Land, they also obeyed God by going through the rite of circumcision (Josh 5:1-9). Then, they celebrated the Passover meal (Josh 5:10-11). This is significant because the people had not eaten this

meal in 40 years. They were now doing what God had commanded them to do. It needs to be noted, however, that not only were they being obedient to God, but celebrating the Passover was also a great encouragement for them.

---

**"If God delivered us when we were His enemies, He will certainly do so now that we are His people."**

---

## The Meaning of the Passover Meal in Joshua 5

When the Jews ate the Passover meal in Joshua 5, they were preparing for battle. They were about to attack the city of Jericho. It was a daunting task. Jericho was surrounded by thick walls. This was the kind of city that their ancestors said they would never be able to conquer. The Jews did not have the weapons to knock down the walls. They had never attacked a walled city. Their army was inexperienced. How could they hope to be victorious?

When they ate the Passover meal they were reminded of their history in Egypt. In fact, some of the people alive at the time of Joshua 5 had also been alive during the time the people were saved out of Egypt. They remembered how God had defeated their enemy, the Egyptians, in the Red Sea. As they ate this meal and remembered these events, they were encouraged that God could defeat their enemies in the Promised Land as well. Jericho was no match for the power of God. God would be able to give them this land as an inheritance.





But it is not enough to say that God was able to bless them that way. He would be actively involved in bringing it about. He lets Joshua know that.

## God's Message to Joshua

Of all the Jews that were preparing to attack Jericho, the one who felt the heaviest weight of responsibility was Joshua. He was now the leader to the nation and the commander of the army. This burden was acutely felt by him as he looked at Jericho and wondered how the battle would go.

While thinking on these things, a Person appeared to him (Josh 5:13-15). This Person identified Himself as the captain of the Lord's army. He had a sword in His hand and had drawn it out, signifying that He was ready to use it.

The fact that He was the leader of the Lord's army means that He was the commander of an army of angels. One is reminded on the night Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane He told His disciples that He had more than twelve legions of angels at His disposal (Matt 26:53).

It is evident that this Person was the pre-incarnate Christ. Joshua bows down to worship Him and He does not stop Joshua from doing so. He accepted Joshua's worship because He was God. In addition, this Person tells Joshua to remove his shoes because the ground he was standing on was holy. This is a clear parallel to the time God spoke to Moses at the burning bush. This Person was God, who was now speaking to the new leader of Israel.

Here was God Himself appearing to Joshua with a drawn sword. Just as He had defeated the mighty Egyptians He would defeat the enemies of the Jews in the Promised Land. When they took the Passover meal they were reminded of these things. Now God was showing that the battle would, in its final analysis, not be between the Jews and the enemies in the land. It would be won by the power of God.

Not only had God promised the Jews the inheritance of the cities of their enemies, He now shows that if they obeyed Him He would bring it about. God had defeated their enemies when they were slaves and were not a people separated to Him as a nation. Certainly

He would do what He promised now that His people were following Him in obedience.

If the Passover meal brought these truths to the mind of the Jews in Joshua 5, and the Passover points to the Lord's Supper, it seems that when we take communion we can be similarly encouraged.

## Parallels with the Lord's Supper


The Lord promised the Jews a reward if they would go into battle trusting Him. In the Passover meal the Jews were reminded how God had been faithful in the past and they could believe in Him to do it now. He did it when they were slaves, He would certainly do it for His people. He would bring these promised rewards about through His power.

There is a parallel here when we as Christians take communion. We certainly remember the past and what Christ did for us at Calvary. When we believed in Jesus for eternal life, we received that gift. In addition, God set us free from the slavery to sin in the sense that we no longer have to obey it (Romans 6). We became part of the Church, the people of God.

But as believers, we are also in a battle. We are in a struggle with the flesh, the world, and Satan (Eph 6:12). The NT is full of passages that teach us that if the believer is successful in this battle, he or she will be rewarded both in this life and in the world to

come. Through His power, we can be victorious in the spiritual battles we are involved in. If God delivered us when we were His enemies, He will certainly do so now that we are His people (Rom 5:9-10).

## Conclusion

It is certainly correct to remember what Christ has done for us when we take the Lord's Supper. But when we do so, we should also remember what God has promised us concerning the future. He desires that we are obedient to Him. He will give us the strength to do so. He wants to reward His children with spiritual victory and eternal rewards. In Joshua 5 the Bible gives us a foreshadowing of these realities. As the Jews ate the Passover Meal, they were not only being obedient, but they were reminded that God had delivered them in the past. Through His power, He would do it again. 



*Ken Yates is Editor of the Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society and GES's East Coast speaker. He lives in Columbia, SC.*

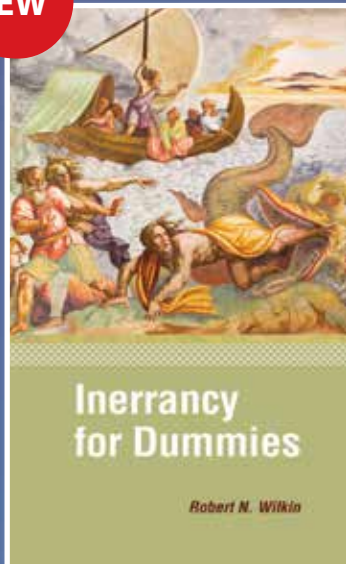
“If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus, however weak you are, however worldly or carnal you may be, however feeble your Christian faith is, I tell you that, in the sight of God, you are on redemption ground in Jesus Christ. That is our position.

“But the question of where we spend our Christian experience, and on what level we live our Christian life, is left for us to choose.”

~Alan Redpath

# The Bookstore

NEW



## Inerrancy for Dummies

Robert N. Wilkin

In very simple language, Bob Wilkin warns about the broad view of inerrancy being taught by many so-called conservative Bible scholars today. He explains “true inerrancy,” and how to resolve alleged discrepancies in the Bible.

USD \$7.95

Softcover • 75 pages

Code: ifd

NEW



## Six Secrets of the Christian Life (Second Edition)

Zane C. Hodges

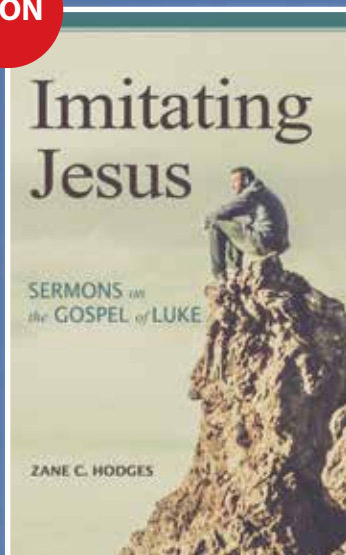
How do you live the Christian life? By working hard at it? By firmly making up your mind to do it? In this short book, Hodges sets forth some basic principles for growing in Christ. *Now with study questions.*

USD \$12.00

Softcover • 100 pages

Code: sscl2

SOON



## Imitating Jesus: Sermons on the Gospel of Luke

Zane C. Hodges

A one-volume reprint of Luke Vols 1 & 2. Learn how to imitate Jesus.

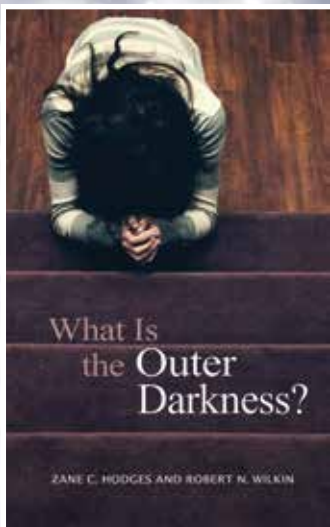
USD \$15.00

Softcover • 212 pages

Code: ijl

[www.faithalone.org](http://www.faithalone.org)





## What Is the Outer Darkness?

Zane C. Hodges with  
Robert N. Wilkin

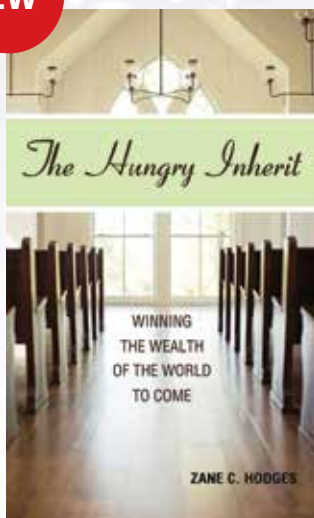
Zane Hodges and Robert Wilkin discuss all three occurrences of the phrase “the outer darkness” in Matthew. They show it does not refer to hell, but to grief at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

USD \$14.00

Softcover • 112 pages

Code: wod

NEW



## The Hungry Inherit

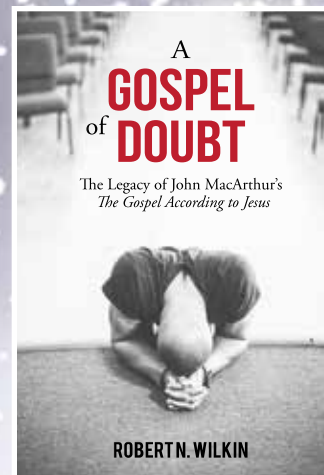
Zane C. Hodges

The burden of this work is to clearly distinguish between salvation and discipleship. No distinction is more vital to theology, more basic to a correct understanding of the NT, or more relevant to every believer’s life and witness.

USD \$15.00

Softcover • 160 pages

Code: thi



## A Gospel of Doubt: The Legacy of John MacArthur's *The Gospel According to Jesus*

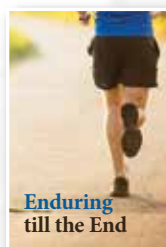
Robert N. Wilkin

Do you have doubts about your salvation? John MacArthur’s bestselling *The Gospel According to Jesus* has introduced a generation to Lordship Salvation. Wilkin shows how to move from a gospel of doubt, to a gospel of assurance.

USD \$22.00

Softcover • 305 pages

Code: agd



## Booklets

- *Enduring till the End* / Code: ete
- *His Promise Is Certain* / Code: hpc
- *Saving Faith in Focus* / Code: focus1
- *The Simplicity of Saving Faith* / Code: ssf
- *There's a New Day Dawning* / Code: nnd
- *What Is Free Grace Theology?* / Code: fgt
- *You Can Be Eternally Secure* / Code: ycbes

Quantity:	Price Each
1-24	\$ .25
Pack of 25	\$5.00



## The Journey of Faith: Sermons on Hebrews

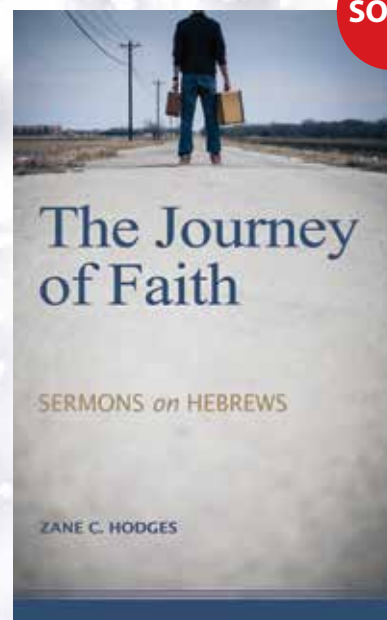
Zane C. Hodges

The Epistle to the Hebrews is about the incredible journey of faith. That journey is not easy. It can even be discouraging. In this series of sermons, Zane Hodges shares how a discouraged Christian can be encouraged.

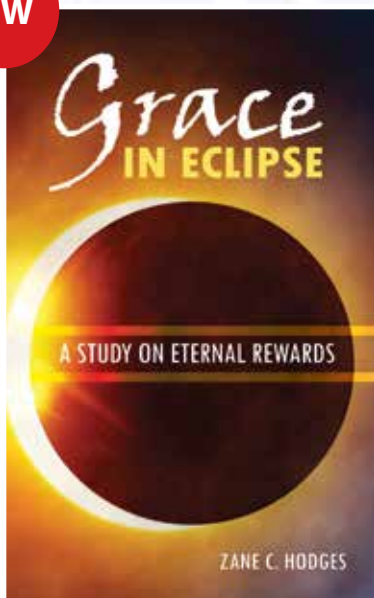
USD \$15.00

Softcover • 116 pages

Code: jof



NEW



## Grace in Eclipse: A Study on Eternal Rewards

Zane C. Hodges

In this timely work, Hodges presents an exegetically oriented treatise on the doctrine of rewards and their relationship to the gospel. Through a careful analysis of the pertinent passages of Scripture, he argues conclusively that the believer's faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the cause of Christ in this life will result in both rewards and regrets in the life hereafter.

USD \$15.00

Softcover • 168 pages

Code: gie2

## Power to Stand: An Exposition of Jude

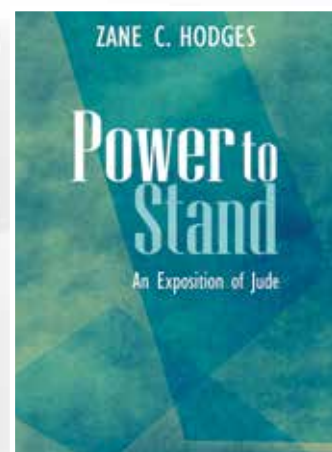
Zane C. Hodges

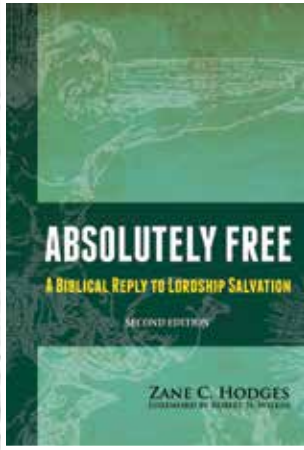
What is to be done about apostates in the church? Zane Hodges shows that God gives every believer the power to stand, so as not to fall away themselves.

USD \$9.00

Softcover • 76 pages

Code: pts





## Absolutely Free: A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation (Second Edition)

Zane C. Hodges

This book clearly explains the gospel of God's free grace, and how popular theologies tend to confuse faith and works, salvation and discipleship, eternal life and eternal rewards.

USD \$20.00

Softcover • 272 pages

Code: af2

## The Atonement and Other Writings

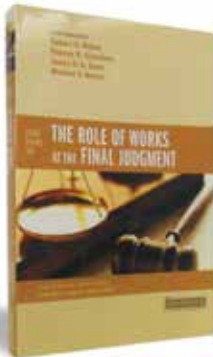
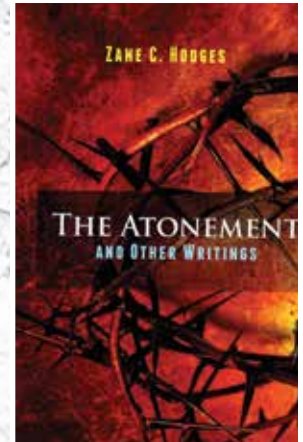
Zane C. Hodges

This book collects three hard-to-find shorter works by Hodges: *The Atonement*; *Jesus, God's Prophet*; and *Did Paul Preach Eternal Life?* Every student of the Bible will have their understanding enriched by these studies.

USD \$15.95

Softcover • 116 pages

Code: atm



### The Role of Works at the Final Judgment

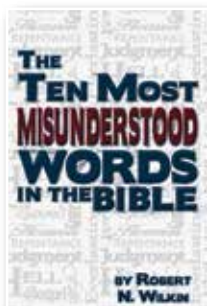
Robert N. Wilkin, Thomas R. Schreiner, James D. G. Dunn, Michael P. Barber

Through a discussion of Biblical texts, this book presents four perspectives on the role of works at the final judgment including: Robert N. Wilkin, works will determine rewards but not salvation, and Thomas R. Schreiner, works will provide evidence that one actually has been saved.

USD \$17.00

Softcover • 240 pages

Code: fj



### The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible

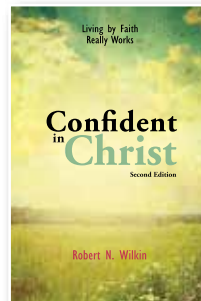
Robert N. Wilkin

An exploration of Biblical terms everyone knows, and yet few understand.

USD \$9.95

Softcover • 221 pages

Code: ten



### Confident in Christ (Second Edition)

Robert N. Wilkin

This book examines sixteen "tough texts" from the NT that are often used to teach salvation by works.

USD \$22.00

Softcover • 278 pages

Code: cic2



## The Grace New Testament Commentary

Authors include: Zane C. Hodges, Robert N. Wilkin, Hal M. Haller, Dwight L. Hunt, René A. López, J. B. Bond, and J. Paul Tanner.

Written from a conservative, Dispensational, Free Grace perspective. These two volumes explain all the difficult verses that seem to deny eternal security, eternal rewards, justification by faith alone, and that make perseverance a condition of kingdom entrance.

USD \$29.95

Hardcover • Two Volumes • 1,334 pages

Code: ntc



## The Road to Reward (Second Edition)

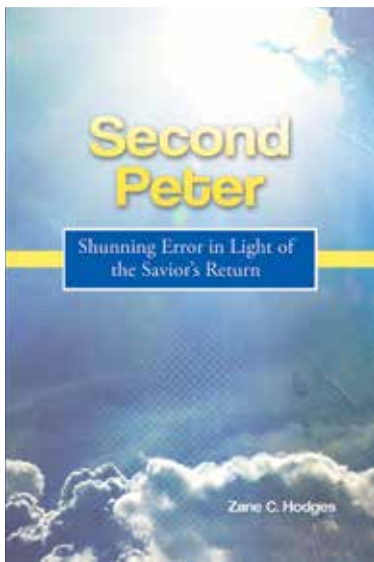
Robert N. Wilkin

25% new material! If everlasting life is a free gift, and believers are eternally secure at the moment of faith, what is our motivation to live for Christ? Robert N. Wilkin takes us through the Biblical doctrine of eternal rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

USD \$20.00

Softcover • 200 pages

Code: rr2



## Second Peter: Shunning Error in Light of the Savior's Return

Zane C. Hodges

Second Peter is about growing in holiness in light of the Second Coming. Hodges shows that believers ought to take our Lord's prophetic teaching seriously and should draw from them a sense of deep moral obligation to persevere in the midst of a dying world. As you read through this commentary, you will long for the Savior's soon return!

USD \$15.00

Softcover • 142 pages

Code: 2pet

## Faith in His Name: Listening to the Gospel of John

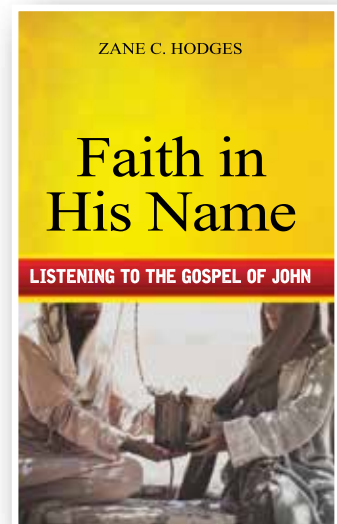
Zane C. Hodges

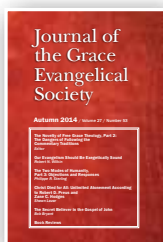
In this practical and pastoral commentary on John 1:1–6:21, you will be led into a deeper understanding of the purpose of John's Gospel, with its emphasis on the meaning of Jesus' signs and the power of His Word.

USD \$15.00

Softcover • 180 pages

Code: fhn

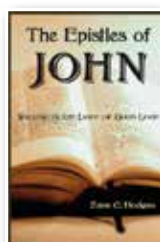




## Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

100+ pages. Two issues each year. Scholarly yet practical articles and reviews.

USD \$18.50 / \$9.25 for new or gift subscriptions.  
Code: jotges  
View website for other special deals.



## The Epistles of John

Zane C. Hodges

First John is all about fellowship with God, not tests of life. Second and Third John are also explained in this valuable commentary.

USD \$8.95  
Softcover • 312 pages  
Code: 1-3john



## Best of Zane Hodges DVD

Over 10 hours of Zane Hodges's messages on two DVDs utilizing a combination of video, when available, or audio with transcription.

USD \$40.00  
2 DVDs  
Code: bozhddvd



## The Epistle of James

Zane C. Hodges

This is the best commentary available on James. The section on James 2:14-26 has helped thousands understand this pivotal passage.

USD \$15.00  
Softcover • 128 pages  
Code: jas



## Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism

C. Gordon Olson

Defends a middle view of salvation between Calvin and Arminius.

USD \$20.00  
Softcover • 467 pages  
Code: bca

SALE



## Secure and Sure

Robert N. Wilkin

Assurance of eternal life is one of the most important, and for many, elusive truths. You can be secure and sure.

USD \$9.95 ~~\$4.00~~  
Softcover • 252 pages  
Code: sas



## A Free Grace Primer

Zane C. Hodges

Collects three of Hodges's books, *The Hungry Inherit*, *The Gospel Under Siege*, and *Grace in Eclipse*.

USD \$9.95  
Softcover • 524 pages  
Code: fgp

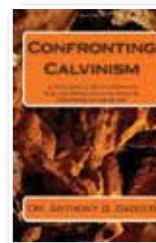


## Romans: Deliverance from Wrath

Zane C. Hodges

Romans teaches us about deliverance from temporal wrath and slavery to sin.

USD \$24.99  
Softcover • 488 pages  
Code: rom



## Confronting Calvinism

Anthony Badger

A detailed refutation of the Five Points of Calvinism from a Free Grace perspective.

USD \$24.95  
Softcover • 397 pages  
Code: cc

SALE



## Power to Make War

Zane C. Hodges

This book traces the career of the man, called in the Bible, the "Beast," who will establish a new world order.

USD \$8.95 ~~\$2.00~~  
Softcover • 135 pages  
Code: pow



## Harmony with God

Zane C. Hodges

Repentance is one of the most misunderstood doctrines in the church today. If you have questions about repentance, read this book.

USD \$9.95  
Softcover • 133 pages  
Code: hwg



## Six Secrets of the Christian Life

Zane C. Hodges

Hodges explains how to walk with God and grow in grace.

USD \$6.00  
Softcover • 80 pages  
Code: sscl



# The Master List\*

\* These are retail prices. For sale prices see previous pages or check online.

## **Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society**

- Code: **jotges** / \$18.50 (renewal) / \$9.25 (new or gift subscription) Other options available on website.

## **The Grace New Testament Commentary (2 Volumes)**

- Code: **ntc** / \$29.95

## **Anthony B. Badger**

- Confronting Calvinism*, Code: **cc** / \$24.95

## **Harlan Betz**

- Setting the Stage for Eternity*, Code: **sse** / \$14.00

## **Steve Elkins**

- The Roman Road Revisited: New Vistas on the Road to Resurrection Living*, Code: **rrr** / \$11.95
- Keys to Kingdom Greatness: An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*, Code: **kkg** / \$19.95

## **Zane Hodges**

- Absolutely Free (2nd ed.)*, Code: **af2** / \$20.00
- The Epistle of James*, Code: **jas** / \$15.00
- The Epistles of John*, Code: **1-3john** / \$8.95
- Faith in His Name: Listening to the Gospel of John*, Code: **fhn** / \$15.00
- A Free Grace Primer: The Hungry Inherit, The Gospel Under Siege, and Grace in Eclipse*, Code: **fgp** / \$9.95
- Grace in Eclipse*, Code: **gie2** / \$15.00
- Harmony with God*, Code: **hwg** / \$9.95
- Hebrews (Out of Print)*
- Here Walks My Enemy: The Story of Luis*, Code: **hwme** / \$5.00 (hardcover), \$3.00 (paperback)
- Imitating Jesus: Sermons on the Gospel of Luke*, Code: **ijl** / \$15.00
- Luke (Vol 2)*, Code: **luke-vol 2** / \$8.95
- Power to Make War*, Code: **pow** / \$8.95
- Power to Stand: An Exposition of Jude*, Code: **pts** / \$9.00
- Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*, Code: **rom** / \$24.99
- Second Peter: Shunning Error in Light of the Savior's Soon Return*, Code: **2pet** / \$15.00
- Six Secrets of the Christian Life*, Code: **sscl** / \$6.00

- Six Secrets of the Christian Life (Second Edition)*, Code: **sscl2** / \$12.00

- The Atonement and Other Writings*, Code: **atm** / \$15.95

- The Hungry Inherit*, Code: **thi** / \$15.00

- The Journey of Faith: Sermons on Hebrews*, Code: **jof** / \$15.00

- Zane Hodges JOTGES Memorial Issue*, Code: **zhmi** / \$7.50

- What Is the Outer Darkness?*, Code: **wod** / \$14.00

## **Bill Lee**

- Grace Recovered*, Code: **gr** / \$9.95

## **René López**

- Romans Unlocked*, Code: **ru** / \$14.99

## **Ken Neff**

- Choose to Live*, Code: **ctl** / \$9.95
- Free to Choose*, Code: **ftc** / \$9.95
- Hold Fast*, Code: **hfn** / \$9.95

## **C. Gordon Olson**

- Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism*, Code: **bca** / \$20.00

## **Lawrence Vance**

- The Other Side of Calvinism*, Code: **osc** / \$29.95

## **Bob Wilkin**

- A Gospel of Doubt: The Legacy of John MacArthur's The Gospel According to Jesus*, Code: **agd** / \$22.00
- Confident in Christ (2nd ed.)*, Code: **cic2** / \$22.00
- Four Views on the Role of Works at the Final Judgment*, Code: **fj** / \$17.00
- Inerrancy for Dummies*, Code: **ifd** / \$7.95
- The Road to Reward (2nd ed.)*, Code: **rr2** / \$20.00
- Secure and Sure*, Code: **sas** / \$9.95
- The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible*, Code: **ten** / \$9.95

For more titles and sales go to [www.faithalone.org](http://www.faithalone.org)

### 3 Ways to Order

- By phone (940-270-8827)
- Online at [faithalone.org/bookstore.html](http://faithalone.org/bookstore.html)
- Or complete the order form below



# ORDER FORM

Prices effective until March 15, 2017  
Refunds / Exchanges only within 60 days of purchase date.

## SHIPPING ADDRESS

(No PO Boxes if order is over \$30)

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

PHONE

EMAIL

Acct.# (if you know it)

## BILLING ADDRESS

(If different from Shipping Address)

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

PHONE

EMAIL

Acct.# (if you know it)

METHOD OF PAYMENT / Check ☐ Money Order ☐ Credit Card ☐

### Send Check or Money Order to:

Grace Evangelical Society  
P.O. Box 1308  
Denton, TX 76202

### Credit Card Information:

Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐

CREDIT CARD #

EXP. DATE

CSC #

NAME ON CARD

CODE	TITLE	QTY	PRICE	AMOUNT
------	-------	-----	-------	--------

### EXTRAS

Extra copies of this magazine are available for \$1/ea, while supplies last. Call for cost of shipping and handling. Foreign subscription prices are \$28 per year to Canada, and \$48 per year for all other countries.

### SHIPPING

All personal orders \$100 and over will receive free shipping. Bookstores and institutions will be charged regular UPS shipping rates.

### SHIPPING CHARGES

**Media Mail:**  
\$4.00 first item  
+\$2.50 for each additional item

**UPS:**  
\$0-\$20 \$10.00  
\$21-\$50 \$14.00  
\$51-\$99 25%  
\$100+ FREE

SUBTOTAL

SHIPPING

DONATION

**TOTAL**



# The Mailbag

## By You

**W**e pray God's richest blessings on you! I am praying for your continuous faithfulness to God's Word and the wonderful message of His free grace! ~C.C., Bartlesville, OK

Note, this is the final donation on behalf of Michael Joseph Harris. He was always giving God's word out and praised Bob Wilkin and staff for doing such faithful and truthful work. He got to attend this year's GES conference (2016) with Bob Vacendak and said "It was the best one ever." Continued blessings on your efforts. ~G. T., Mesquite, TX

I love your magazine. ~E. N., Fort Worth, TX

OK. Everybody needs y'all, so keep up the good work. Y'all and a few others have been a major help to me. God bless in Jesus' name. ~C. C., Dekalb, MS


I love listening to your audio messages. ~J.M., Santa Teresa, NM



Keep up the great work for the Free Grace gospel!  
~G. S., Coral Springs, FL

Thank you for your wonderful magazine. I look forward to each issue. ~C. L., Snellville, GA

God bless and have a Merry Christmas! ~F. W., Long Beach, WA

Great Bible-based articles. Thank you. ~S. G., Jenkinsville, SC 

---

*Send your letters to [ges@faithalone.org](mailto:ges@faithalone.org) or P.O. Box 1308, Denton, TX 76202.*

## Writers wanted.

Magazine articles. Bible study curriculum.  
Commentaries. Send your submissions to  
[shawn@faithalone.org](mailto:shawn@faithalone.org)



# Love

By Joe Lombardi

## Introduction

**I**t all began on a bleak and blustery midwinter night in early 1958. A young preacher in Philipsburg, PA was burning the midnight oil. During a study break he happened to pick up and browse through the current issue of *Life* magazine that had been buried under a stack of books piled high on his desk. As he turned a page his attention was immediately arrested by an artist's sketch of seven boys who were on trial for murder in New York City some 100 miles away.

They were members of a gang called the Dragons. Beneath their picture was the story of how they had gone into Highbridge Park, New York, and brutally attacked and killed a polio victim named Michael Farmer. The boys stabbed Michael in the back seven times with their knives, then beat him over the head with Garrison belts. They went away wiping blood through their hair saying, "We messed him good!" (*Life*, February 24, 1958).

The young preacher was revolted by what he read. It not only brought tears to his eyes; it made his stomach turn.

Perhaps that was why he was so bewildered by the thought that suddenly sprang into his head. He felt convicted that he should go to New York City and help those boys. And that is precisely what Dave Wilkerson did.

What was it that so motivated Dave Wilkerson to search the back streets and alleys of Spanish Harlem

LIGHTSTOCK







and Brooklyn in order to reach the youth of New York City for Christ.

I believe that the answer to that question can be found in a simple, four-letter word. At least, it is a word that is simple to articulate with one's *lips*, but not always so easy to demonstrate in one's *life*.

The four-letter word I am referring to is *love*.

Although it is mentioned *last* in the list found in 2 Pet 1:1-11, it is certainly not because it is the *least* significant of the seven character traits of the Christian life that are catalogued in those three verses. In fact, I suspect the reason it is mentioned last is that it just may be the most important trait of all.

## Love Delineated

There are three main words in the Greek language that could be translated by our English word, *love*.

First, there is *eros*, from which we derive our English word *erotic*. It refers to a physical or sensual type of love. And by the way, it is never used in the NT.

Secondly there is *philos*, which is an emotional and relational love. It is a kinship and friendship type of love.

Finally, there is the Greek word *agapē*. This love is a volitional and intentional type of love. When we speak of *agapē* we are not talking about some mushy-gushy emotion, or some warm and fuzzy feeling. This type of love has much more to do with *what you choose*, instead of, and even in spite of, *how you feel*.

William Barclay defined *agapē* as "unconquerable benevolence." If we love a person with *agapē* love, it means that nothing that person can or will ever do will make us

seek anything but his highest good. In other words, if I say that I love you with *agapē* love, then no matter how you feel about me and in spite of anything you may say about me or do to me, even if you ignore me or avoid me, misquote me or mistreat me, malign me or undermine me, the way I will choose to respond to you is to seek only God's greatest and highest good for you. That is *agapē* love.

---

“If we love a person  
with *agapē* love, it  
means that nothing  
that person can  
or will ever do  
will make us seek  
anything but his  
highest good.”

---

Furthermore, *agapē* love is often necessarily a sacrificial type of love. Occasionally there is a price you have to pay. Hence, many couples say in their wedding vows that they are committing themselves to loving one another, “for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health.” Someone once said, you can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving. That is most certainly true of *agapē* love.

That is probably why it is *the* word that is most often used to describe the love of God for the world of man. For example, in John 3:16, we read, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Jesus

knew from eternity past the price He would have to pay to redeem mankind. He loved the world of man with a wooden cross.

It was John who then added in 1 John 3:1, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” Then he concludes, “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16).

There is a sense in which *agapē* is like a precious, priceless, elegant and radiant jewel. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul painstakingly elaborates on some of its many lustrous and glorious facets.

## Love Elaborated

First Corinthians 13 is often referred to as the “love chapter.” In this passage Paul enables us to bask in the gleaming beauty and enduring quality of this remarkable and valuable gem called *agapē*.

The contextual setting of this verbal gem is both elaborate and exquisite. In vv 1-3 the apostle Paul illustrates the *preeminence* of love. In vv 8-13 he elaborates on the *permanence* of love. However, sandwiched in between those two sections, in vv 4-7, Paul elaborates on those *characteristics of agapē* that contribute to its preeminence and permanence. Fourteen facts are highlighted, half of them negatively, the remaining positively.

The first facet of this gem mentioned in v 4 is *patience*. “Love suffers long...” The word the apostle Paul used here is *makrothumeia*. It is a compound word that literally means “long-suffering” with respect to both people and problems. It was the term for a man who was wronged, and who had it easily in his power to avenge



himself, but refused to do it. Such patience, by the way, is not a sign of weakness, but of real strength.

The text goes on to say that “love is kind.” This is one of the words that we considered in our previous article: *chrēstos*. It literally means “serviceable.” In fact it originally denoted *usefulness*. It was used to refer to something that was suitable to meet a need. Therefore, to be kind is, literally, to make yourself useful. One could say that kindness is love in action.

Now, whereas patience is essentially passive, kindness is essentially active. It is the other side of the coin. In our previous article we said that it is to be...

- courteous and gracious in both word and deed,
- thoughtful and respectful,

- humble and gentle,
- sweet-tempered and mild-mannered.

Furthermore, the text goes on to say that love “does not envy.” In other words, it does not selfishly want or begrudgingly resent the possessions and/or position of others.

Also, “it does not boast.” Love is not a braggart. By the way, the Greek word that is translated “boast” is derived from a root that means “baseless chatter.” You see, love does not necessarily enjoy hearing itself speak. And it certainly does not need to have the loudest voice and/or the last word. It does not boast. It has been said that anyone all wrapped up in himself makes a very small package. Thus, the apostle Paul adds

that love is not proud. It is not puffed up. In other words, it does not have an inflated view of its own importance. It is humble and unassuming. In the words of Phil 2:3, this loving person “considers others better than (himself).” Love is not proud.

Verse 5 adds that love “is not rude.” Love is not brutally blunt, but properly polite. It is considerate of the feelings as well as the rights of others. When it speaks the truth, it does so in love, which means that it speaks in the right way, at the right time, and in the right tone. Love is not rude.

Furthermore, “it is not self-seeking.” Love is not concerned with advancing and/or enhancing its own agenda. It will not use and abuse people, and manipulate and exploit them for personal gain. It



# **“WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT FREE GRACE?”**

**Visit our redesigned website!**

- **New user-friendly format**
- **Hundreds of academic journal articles**
- **Hundreds of popular magazine articles**
- **Videos**
- **Audio messages**
- **Conference schedules**

**faithalone.org**





does not always insist on its own rights. It is selfless, not selfish.

Next, “it is not easily angered.” On the contrary, it is long-tempered. It does not have a short fuse. A truly loving person is not likely to “blow his stack” suddenly and “flip his lid” quickly. He is not touchy and irritable. He does not throw a temper tantrum at the slightest provocation. Because, you see, love is not easily angered.

Now listen to this: “it keeps no record of wrongs.” In other words, it is always willing to forgive. And there is a sense in which when it forgives, it also forgets because love will not repeat the matter again. It refuses to scratch at the scab and force the old wound to reopen. In the words of Prov 17:9 (TLB), “love forgets mistakes; nagging about them parts the best of friends”—including husbands and wives, as well as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Peter quotes Prov 10:12 loosely, when he writes “above all, love each other deeply, for love covers over a multitude of sins” (1 Pet 4:8). You see, love keeps no record of wrongs. Nor does it delight in and gloat over the misfortunes of others.

Verse 7 adds, “It always protects.” That, by the way, is a very interesting word in Greek. It literally means “to hide by covering.” In other words, this covering is an act of protecting. That is why, “love can bear any insults, any injury, any disappointment.” In fact, the verse goes on to say that love “always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

The apostle Paul concludes, in the first part of v 8, “love never fails.”

## Love Illustrated

Now, without a doubt, one need look no further than the cross of Jesus Christ to find the best illustration ever of this unfailing love. For it says in the Scripture,

“In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:9-10).

Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). And that is exactly what Jesus did. A better illustration of love you cannot find.

So, how are we to respond?

Well, by a similar demonstration of love in our lives. For Jesus said, in John 15:12, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” And, John went on to say,

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us” (1 John 4:11-12).

Paul said it like this,

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” (Eph 5:1-2).

## Love Demonstrated

How is this love to be demonstrated in our lives? First of all, it is to be demonstrated in both the

vertical and horizontal dimensions of life. In other words, it is to be fleshed out upwardly, as well as outwardly. It is to characterize not only our relationship with God, but also our relationship with others.

For it was our Lord Himself who said, in Mark 12:30-31,

“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

What does it mean to “love the Lord (our) God?” Jesus said in John 14:23, “if anyone loves me he will keep my word.” So it is no surprise to read in 1 John 5:3, “This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.” And again, in 2 John 6, “And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands.” That is how we demonstrate our love for the Lord: by obeying his Word. You show me a person that willfully, intentionally, and flagrantly disobeys His Word, and I will show you a person that does not love the Lord.

Now, when it comes to loving others on the horizontal plane of life, we are told to love our neighbors, generally, and to love certain other people, specifically.

For example, we are especially commanded to love our enemies in Matt 5:44.

We are also commanded to love the members of our families in passages like Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3.

We are frequently commanded to love the members of Christ’s body, our fellow members in God’s family. In fact, we are told to

“pursue...love...along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim 2:22).

You see, love does not happen in a vacuum. Love needs an object. And that object is often to be your brother and/or sister in Christ—other members of His body, the Church. For example:

Let no debt remain outstanding except the continuing debt to love one another (Rom 13:8).

Serve one another in love (Gal 5:13).

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love (Eph 4:2).

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Heb 10:24).

Love one another deeply, from the heart (1 Pet 2:22).

Above all, love each other deeply (1 Pet 4:8).

And he has given us this command: whoever loves God must also love his brother (1 John 4:21).

In fact, Paul prayed frequently and preached fervently that the Christians in those congregations he served would love one another.

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more (Phil 1:9).

May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love (2 Thess 3:4).

The goal of this command is love, which comes from the pure heart (1 Tim 1:7).

And it is John who went on to explain that this love on the

horizontal plane must be demonstrated not only in word but also in deed (1 John 3:16-18).

You see, the fact of the matter is that when all is said and done, with respect to this kind of love, more is usually said than done. The apostle John says, “Do it!”

Oh, by the way, there is one other thing you really need to know: there is usually some risk involved. I don't think anyone has explained it better than C. S. Lewis, when he wrote the following in his book, *The Four Loves*:

To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrong and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The only place outside heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers...of love, is hell.

## Conclusion

That is the place into which Dave Wilkerson must have felt he had just walked one day in early 1958. In fact, it was in the Fort Greene housing project in Brooklyn where he came face-to-face with one of the most feared of the Mau Mau war lords, a young man by the name of Nicky Cruz.

In his book *The Cross and the Switchblade*, Wilkerson explains that Nicky “was puffing away

at a cigarette, shooting nervous little jets of smoke out the side of his mouth.” That was when he told Dave Wilkerson, in so many words, to get lost.

But the skinny country preacher from Philipsburg, PA responded, “You don't think much of me, Nicky, but I feel different about you. I love you, Nicky.”

And as the preacher took one step closer, Nicky replied in a tortured voice, “You come near me, preacher, and I'll kill you!”

“You could do that,” Wilkerson agreed. But then he said, “You could cut me in a thousand pieces and lay them out in the street and every piece would love you.”

What was it that motivated Dave Wilkerson to make the choice, to risk his life, and to pay the price in order to search the back streets and alleys of Spanish Harlem and the housing projects in the ghettos of Brooklyn in order to preach Christ to the youth of New York City.

Well, the answer in a simple, four letter word, is love.

It is a choice one has to make.

It is a risk one has to take.

There is often a price one has to pay.

But make no mistake about it, dear friends: it will be worth it all!



*Joe Lombardi is a pastor without a charge in Tualatin, OR.*

Editor's note: David Wilkerson was not clear on the saving message, and held to Lordship

Salvation. Joe's point is that love moved him to go and reach these boys, not that his message was clear.

# The Will of the Father Is That Believers Will Not Perish


By Bill Fiess

I noticed something today in studying Matt 18:6-14. I completely agree with Bob Wilkin in his book *The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible* (p. 68) that this section is about believers. I was really struck with the similarity of Matt 18:14 and John 6:39. Each of those verses speak of *the will of the Father* and each say that it is His will that no believer should perish (*apollumi*):

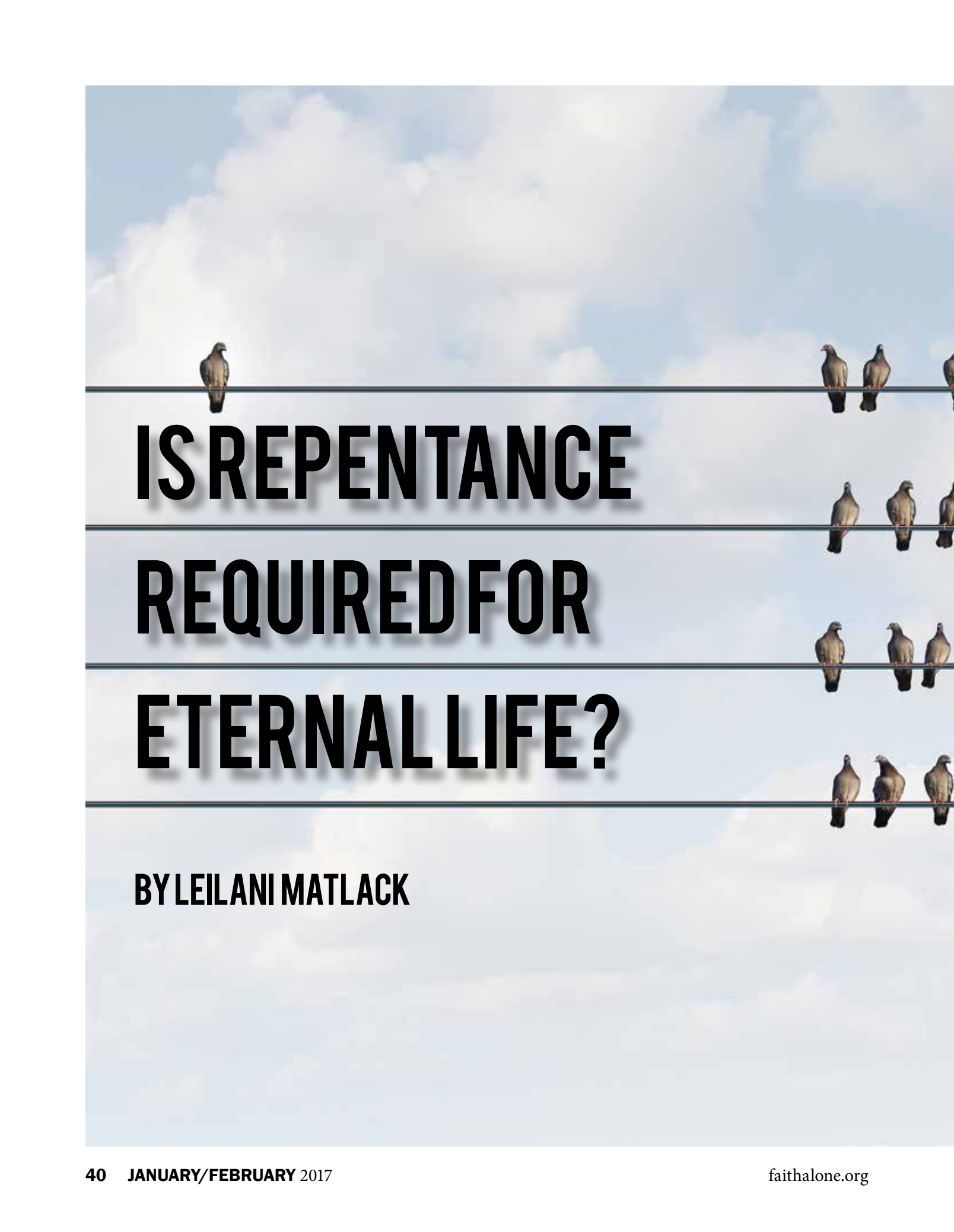
Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish [*apollumi*] (Matt 18:14).

This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose [*apollumi*] nothing, but should raise it up at the last day (John 6:39).

Also, John 10:27-29 says basically the same thing without using the exact expression *the will of the Father*:

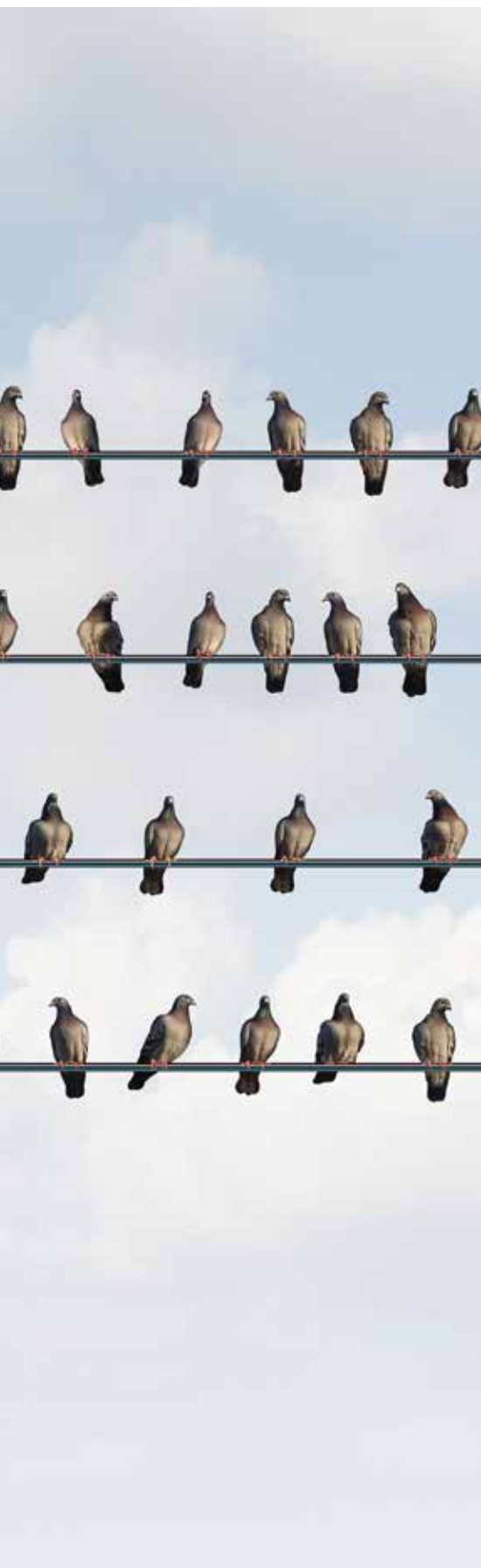
My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish [*apollumi*]; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. 





# **IS REPENTANCE REQUIRED FOR ETERNAL LIFE?**

**BY LEILANI MATLACK**



**W**hile I was teaching a ladies' Bible study, the subject of repentance came up, and it became apparent that many assumed that repentance was a condition of eternal salvation—an idea I strongly denied. So I wanted to put down on paper why that was not true, and why believing in Jesus is the one and only condition to have everlasting life.

### ONLY BELIEVE

The word translated *believe* (*pisteuō*) is used over 240 times in the NT, 100 of which are in John. John very clearly links believing with eternal life.

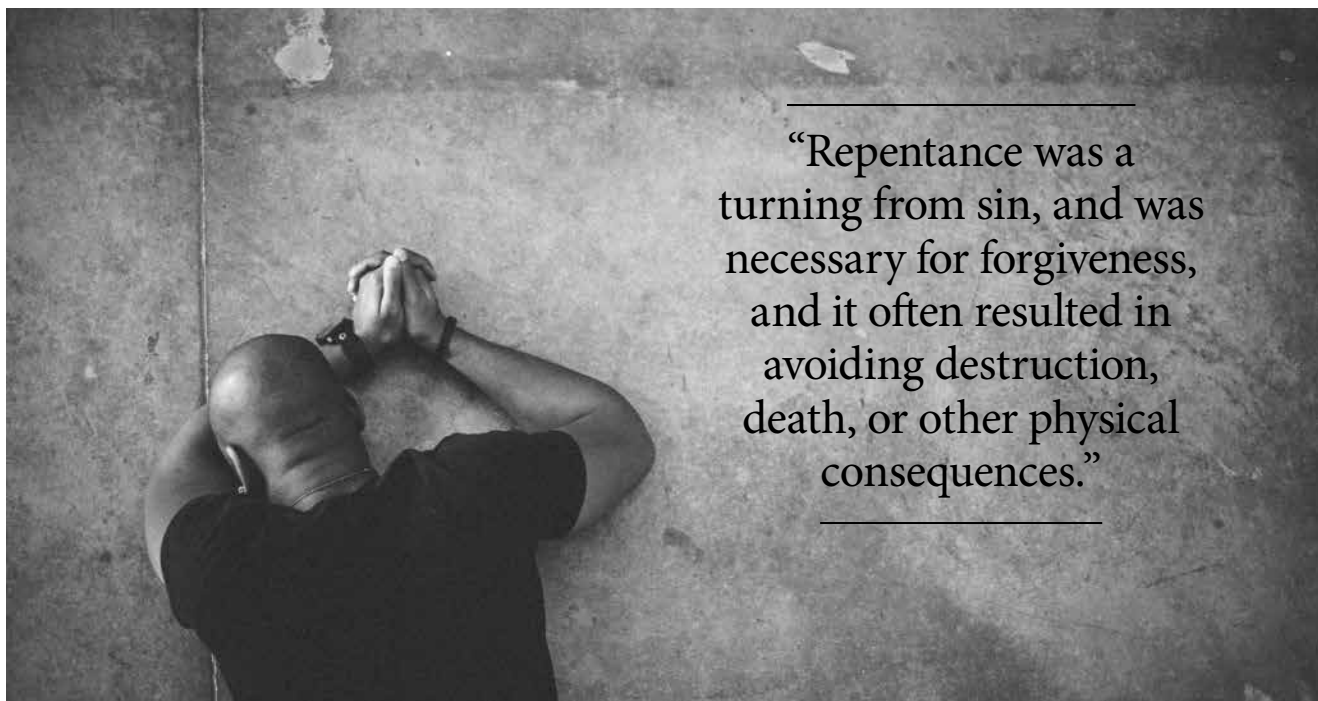
Moreover, not once in the book of John are the words *repent* or *repentance* used. Not once! This is especially significant since the purpose of John's Gospel is that we might believe and have eternal life (John 20:31). If repentance were a necessary part of obtaining eternal life, it would be a rather glaring error for John to leave it out.

### REPENTANCE FOR REMISSION OF SINS?

Further, we know that John the Baptist preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). Repentance is often linked in the NT with remission or forgiveness of sins.

However, if we look at John's Gospel, neither remission of sins nor forgiveness of sins is mentioned. We either believe and have eternal life, or we don't believe and don't have eternal life. We either believe and are not condemned, or we don't believe and are condemned already. The purpose of John is so that we can have eternal life, not so that we can have remission of sins or forgiveness of sins.

We know that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Tim 3:16), therefore, the failure of repentance to appear in the book of John was not accidental. This indicates that repentance is not necessary for eternal life. A look at the use of the word *repentance*



“Repentance was a turning from sin, and was necessary for forgiveness, and it often resulted in avoiding destruction, death, or other physical consequences.”

LIGHTSTOCK

helps us understand what the purpose of repentance is.

## WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

While the roots of the Greek word *metanoia* refer to a “mind change,” a look at how the word is used in Scripture indicates that it is actually a *turning from sin*.

In Luke 13:3 Jesus says to a group of people, “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all perish in the same way.” The ISV translates *perish* as *die*, which fits with the context. Jesus was recounting the death of the Galileans whose blood had been mingled with sacrifices and then the death of eighteen as a result of a tower falling on them. In this passage repentance would result in avoiding *physical death*.

This is consistent with the OT view of repentance. We see in Jonah how the Ninevites “turned” (Hebrew word *shub*), which can be translated *repent*, and as a result they were spared from physical destruction or death (Jonah 3:10).

Another instance of *shub*, consistent with the concept of repentance resulting in forgiveness, is found in 2 Chron 7:14, “if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn [*shub*] from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” Repentance was a turning from sin, and was necessary for forgiveness, and it often resulted in avoiding destruction, death, or other physical consequences.

Second Corinthians 7:9 also indicates repentance is more than a change of mind: “I now rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that you were made sorry to repentance...” Being made “sorry” indicates a change of mind. Just because we are sorry for what we did, doesn’t equal a change of behavior. But in this case, the Corinthians’s “sorrow led to repentance.”

In Acts 2:37-38 we see the response to Peter’s sermon. Those who heard it were “pricked in their

heart.” In other words, they realized what they had done (i.e., that they had killed the Messiah). This would only prick their heart if they had changed their mind as to who Jesus was. However, when they asked what to do, Peter said they should repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins. They had already changed their mind and believed Jesus was the Messiah. Their repentance wasn’t necessary for eternal life but it was necessary to avoid or mitigate the temporal consequences for their actions.

This sermon took place on the day of Pentecost, which corresponded with the giving of the Torah. What event occurred in conjunction with the giving of the Torah—the golden calf, which resulted in death to three thousand people. The Jews understood that devastating consequences could result from their choices.

It is interesting to see that the number who repented and were baptized was three thousand.



Sadly, many more than three thousand of Peter's generation would perish in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

In conclusion, repentance is not a change of mind, but rather a turning away or turning around.

## WHY SHOULD WE REPENT?

As we just saw, the Jews understood what John the Baptist meant when he was preaching repentance for the remission of sins. John the Baptist tells us why he baptized: "for this reason I came baptizing in water: that he [Messiah] would be revealed to Israel" (John 1:31). The Baptist wasn't preaching repentance and baptizing so they could have eternal life, but to prepare the way, so that the Messiah would be revealed to Israel. He understood that repentance wasn't necessary for eternal life. In fact, he recognized Jesus as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The Baptist also clearly stated, "One who believes in the Son has eternal life, but one who disobeys the Son won't see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" (John 3:36).

While John the Apostle fails to discuss the topic of remission/forgiveness of sins in his Gospel, a look at his other writings sheds light on the subject. For example, in 1 John 1:9, speaking to believers, John states, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In other words confession/repentance for remission or forgiveness is not something that we only have to do once. It is something that we have to do in order to receive forgiveness and to help mitigate the consequences of our actions. By contrast,

if we believe we have eternal life. It is once for all, it is not something we have to strive to keep, or have to do numerous times.

## WHY PREACH REPENTANCE?

If repentance is not required for eternal life, why are we told that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47)? That commission is consistent with the one Jesus gave at the end of Matthew: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you" (Matt 28:19-20).

Our commission is not merely to bring people to eternal life, but to make disciples. If we stop once we have brought people to a belief in Jesus as Messiah then we have failed to do what we were called to do.

On the other hand, we need to understand that, as discussed above, repentance is not required for eternal life. If we use this passage to say it is a requirement, we would also have to add baptism to the list.

Concerning the passage in Acts 26, Paul indicates that he was called to teach repentance:

"Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to them of Damascus, at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing *works* worthy of repentance" (Acts 26:19-20, emphasis added).

The word translated *works* is the same word Paul uses in Rom 3:28,

"We maintain therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law." For Paul to preach that repentance and works were necessary for eternal life in Acts would completely contradict what he writes in Romans, that works are not necessary.

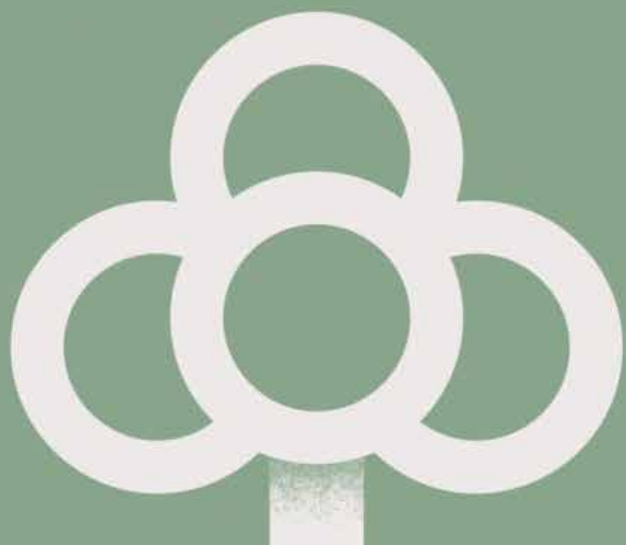
However, Paul recognized that he was called to make disciples and was preaching a message of repentance to believers. This fits perfectly with the rest of Paul's writings to different groups of believers that they be who they were called to be in Christ.

## WHAT IS REPENTANCE GOOD FOR?

Scripture shows that repentance is more than a change of mind, but is a turning around or change of direction. To add repentance to belief as a condition of eternal salvation is to add works to faith. That would contradict both Paul and John who clearly teach that eternal salvation is by faith, apart from works. What, then, is repentance for? While it is not required for eternal life, it does have benefits for both unbelievers and believers, and plays an important role in making disciples. ■



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



# ASSURANCE MADE SIMPLE



By Shawn Lazar

What does it mean to be assured of my salvation?" That's a question I often get asked. People want to have assurance, but they're often confused about it. What is assurance? How can you have it? What is it based on? And is there a difference between genuine and false assurance? If so, what?

These are all important questions that require clear thinking. I find it helpful to think about assurance in terms of a simple syllogism.

## ASSURANCE IS A BELIEF

To begin, assurance of salvation is not a feeling, emotion, or experience, but a *belief*. Specifically, it is the belief that, "I have everlasting life."

If you are persuaded that you have everlasting life, then you have assurance. That's what it is. That's all it is.

Simple, right?

Of course, you don't need to believe *those exact words* to have assurance. Instead, you could believe, "I will go to heaven when I die," or "I will spend forever with God," or "I am saved" or the equivalent. If you believed any of those propositions, you would be assured of your salvation.

The big question is, how do you reach the conclusion that you have everlasting life? What is it based on?

That's where the syllogism comes in.

## A SIMPLE DEDUCTION

Do you remember studying simple logic in high school? The first thing you might have learned was the deductive syllogism. Here's a classic example:

All men are mortal.

Socrates is a man.

Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

You take one premise (e.g., "All men are mortal"), add a second (e.g., "Socrates is a man"), and then draw the necessary conclusion (e.g., "Socrates is mortal").

It's the simplest form of logical thinking, the kind we use every day, often without realizing it.

You can think about assurance as a deductive syllogism where the conclusion is, "Therefore, I have everlasting life." But what are the premises that conclusion is based on?

## THE PRACTICAL SYLLOGISM

When it comes to assurance, Calvinist and Arminian theologians teach the so-called *practical syllogism*. Their syllogism is "practical" because it bases assurance on your practical behavior.

Here's how it works.

The first premise of the practical syllogism is some standard of behavior that regenerate people are expected to live up to.

The second premise comes from observing your behavior to see if you have met the standard.

You then draw the appropriate conclusion based on those premises. Usually they look for negative behavior. For example,

Regenerate people do not commit adultery.

I commit adultery.

Therefore, I am not regenerate.

The problem is, there are usually many different standards of being regenerate, and even if you live up to one, chances are you'll fail in another. You might not commit adultery, but do you get angry, jealous, doubtful, envious, or covetous?

How do you know if you're really regenerate with such mixed results?

You don't.

And what's worse, even if you meet a standard *now*, there's no guarantee you will *in the future*. You don't know what the future holds. You might end up committing adultery. In which case, that would prove you weren't really regenerate to begin with.

In other words, the practical syllogism is *never grounds for assurance of salvation*. If anything, it is grounds *for doubting your salvation*.

## THE ASSURANCE SYLLOGISM

By contrast, consider what I'm calling *the assurance syllogism*. It's based on faith in Jesus' promise, not on observing our standards of behavior. We can see it at work in John 11:25-27, where Jesus spoke to Martha about the message of life.

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?" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."



Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus had several ways of presenting the promise of life. In this case He told Martha that whoever believes in Him “will never die.”

Of course, if you can never die, that means you have everlasting life, which is the term Jesus most often uses (cf. John 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:35).

Let’s take that promise as the first premise in our syllogism.

Now what’s the second premise?

## THE SECOND PREMISE

Next, Jesus asked Martha a simple question—“Do you believe this?” This is the question everyone must answer when presented with Jesus’ message of life. Do you believe it?

Martha could have given three different answers: “I don’t believe,” or “I don’t know if I believe,” or “I do believe.” Each answer can be taken as the second premise in our syllogism. And each would lead to a different conclusion.

Let’s consider each one in turn.

## THREE POSSIBILITIES

Let’s imagine that Martha answered, “I don’t believe.” What conclusion would she come to?

Whoever believes in Jesus has everlasting life.

I don’t believe.

Therefore, I don’t have everlasting life.

If Martha concluded, “I don’t have everlasting life,” she would obviously not have assurance of salvation. At least, not based on Jesus’ promise. She might have assurance *based on other grounds* (a possibility I’ll discuss later), but it would not be based on believing Jesus’ promise of life.

Many people have that same problem today. They lack assurance because while they may believe different facts about Jesus, they don’t believe in His promise of life.

Of course, Martha could have answered, “*I don’t know* if I believe.” That would have led her to this conclusion:

Whoever believes in Jesus has everlasting life.

I don’t know if I believe.

Therefore, I don’t know if I have everlasting life.

Of course, if you don’t know you have everlasting life, then you lack assurance.

(And notice that whether you disbelieve or doubt Jesus’ promise the result is the same—no assurance).

But what did Martha *actually* answer? “Yes, Lord, I believe.” She believed what He said! She had faith in Him. She believed Jesus was the Messiah who would guarantee her everlasting life simply by believing in Him for it. As soon as Martha gave that answer, she could conclude:

Whoever believes in Jesus has everlasting life.

I believe.

Therefore, I have everlasting life.

By believing that by believing in Jesus she would never die, Martha would have been assured of her salvation. She would be sure she’d never die.

That’s the assurance syllogism in a nutshell.

Unlike the practical syllogism it is based on faith in Jesus’ promise, not on our works.

If you believe Jesus’ promise, you should reach the same conclusion, and be sure of your salvation.

## THE ESSENCE OF SAVING FAITH

If you’re not sure of your salvation, but claim to believe in Jesus’ promise, maybe you don’t really understand what Jesus said.

The Lord promised that everlasting life is the *present possession* of believers. “He who believes *has* everlasting life,” the Lord said (John 6:46, emphasis added). Has. That’s present tense.

So, if you consider yourself a believer, and you know that Jesus gives everlasting life as a present possession to believers, what do you have?

If you believe Jesus’ promise, you know you have everlasting life right now, as a present possession, because that’s what you’re believing in Him for.

In other words, you cannot believe Jesus’ promise without being sure of your salvation.

Assurance is of the essence of saving faith.

For example, imagine if I promised you, “I just put \$100 in your pocket.” Now, are you sure you have \$100 in your pocket? Well it depends on whether you believe me or not. If you believe me, you’ll be sure. If you don’t, you won’t.

Likewise, with assurance of salvation. If you believe Jesus, you’ll be sure. If you don’t, you won’t.

Now, if Jesus had promised that believers could only have the *possibility* of gaining everlasting life *sometime in the future*, then lack of assurance would be built into His promise. You could *hope* you'd be saved, but you couldn't be *sure* of it. Given that kind of promise, assurance *wouldn't* be the essence of saving faith.

But the fact is assurance is built into Jesus' promise. The Lord said *that believers have everlasting life* (John 3:16, 36; 5:24). If you consider yourself a believer who has faith in that promise, then you must believe you have everlasting life *as a present possession*. And if you believe that, you have assurance.

## FALSE ASSURANCE

Of course, not everyone who believes "I have everlasting life" actually has it. There is such a thing as *false assurance*. There are many people—millions and billions—who think they are going to spend eternity with God, but who aren't born again.

So what's the difference between genuine assurance and false assurance?

Once again, if you think in terms of a simple syllogism, the difference is obvious. While genuine assurance is based on believing *a true premise* (i.e., Jesus' promise of everlasting life), false assurance is based on believing *a false premise*. Here are some examples of what I mean.

First, false assurance can come from believing in a false god. So, for example, a Muslim might reason like this:

Allah will save those who die in jihad.  
I will die in jihad.  
Therefore, I will be saved.

A Muslim who believes that may have assurance of salvation, but it would be false assurance because Allah does not exist and no one will be saved by murdering people.

Second, false assurance can come from believing a false gospel. For example:

God will save everyone who is baptized as a child.  
I was baptized as a child.  
Therefore, I will be saved.

People who believe in salvation by works often have assurance of salvation, but it is false assurance because

no one is saved on the basis of works (Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16).

Third, false assurance can be based on mystical experiences. For example:

Whoever has felt a burning in the bosom is saved.  
I felt a burning in my bosom.  
Therefore, I am saved.


If someone's assurance is based on a mystical experience, it would be false assurance, because the Bible does not base assurance on fleeting experiences and emotions.

In order for a conclusion to be true, the premises must be true. In the case of assurance, the only genuine basis to conclude that you have everlasting life, is to believe in Jesus' promise.

## CONCLUSION

What does it mean to be assured of your salvation? It simply means believing, "I have everlasting life." If you believe that, then you have assurance. And if you believe that based on Jesus' promise of everlasting life, your assurance is genuine.

If you're doubting your salvation, it's probably because you don't understand Jesus' promise, or you don't believe it. In which case, I suggest you read over the promise of life and think of it as a simple syllogism.

Jesus promised everlasting life as a present possession to believers. If you believe that, *then what do you have right now?* 



Shawn Lazar is Director of Publications for Grace Evangelical Society. His book, *Beyond Doubt* is forthcoming.

## Grace Evangelical Society

P.O. Box 1308

Denton, TX 76202

---

*Believe in Him for Life*

NONPROFIT  
US POSTAGE

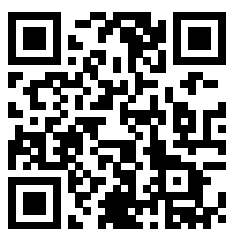
**PAID**

ABERDEEN, SD  
PERMIT #200

## Send the Word

We are privileged to send *Grace in Focus* free to over 10,000 households thanks to your tax-deductible gifts.

Would you prayerfully consider supporting us, so we can reach even more people?



[WWW.FAITHALONE.ORG](http://WWW.FAITHALONE.ORG)

