

# GRACE **IN** FOCUS

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## HOW TO PREACH AND TEACH



**PLUS** Forgiveness and Justice / Moody: Then and Now / Proverbs 31 / Teach the Truth /  
Retire to a Small Church? / Dressed for the Bema / Noah and Her Sisters / Thinking

## CONTENTS

### 3 From the Editor

### 4 How to Preach and Teach

BY BOB WILKIN

### 10 A No-Guilt Look at Proverbs 31

BY MARCIA HORNOK

### 14 Teach the Truth (1 Timothy 4:6-16)

BY ZANE C. HODGES

### 18 Noah and Her Sisters

BY PAM ESTEVEN

### 22 Why Not Retire to a Small Church?

BY BILL LEE

### 25 The Bookstore

### 33 Dressed for the Bema

BY BILL FIESS WITH PAM ESTEVEN

### 35 Review: *Paul, Apostle of Christ*

BY JOSH MEIER

### 37 A Kind of Thinking

BY JAMES MORISON

### 38 Vines by the Book

BY ALLEN REA

### 40 The Mailbag

### 41 Partners in Grace



### 43 Forgiveness and Justice

BY CHARLIE MCCALL

### 45 Moody: Then and Now

BY SHAWN LAZAR

## GRACE IN FOCUS

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Spring is a wonderful time of year. Winter is over, and summer is just around the corner.

We at GES are so thankful for the support of so many of you. Because of you, we are able to send out magazines to nearly 11,000 people, not counting 100,000-plus people who read it electronically.

Did you know that there were two Noah's in the OT, and that one of them was a woman? Pam Esteven tells us about Noah and her sisters.

Proverbs 21:10-31 is about the type of woman that King Lemuel, and all men, should seek as a bride. Marcia Hornok skillfully shows that these verses apply to all women and to various stages of their lives (early, middle, later years).

Josh Meier gives a favorable review of the movie *Paul, The Apostle of Christ*. While he doesn't say specifically, it sounds like he gives it two thumbs up and 3.5 out of 4 stars.

The *Vines Expository Bible* is a new study Bible. Allen Rea reviews it so that you can have some help in deciding whether you should add this to your study tools.

The Bible doesn't have much to say about how to preach and teach. After I point that out, I give some suggestions based on modern speech theory.

Did you know that a preacher can save himself? That is what 1 Tim 4:16 says! Zane Hodges, though now with the Lord, speaks from beyond the grave, giving us an excellent exegesis of 1 Tim 4:6-16.

D. L. Moody was a giant in the Christian world. Today we have a school, a publisher, and a magazine named after him. Shawn Lazar compares the 1989 edition of *The Moody Handbook of Theology* with the 2014 edition of the same work. The 1989 edition advocated belief in Christ as the only condition of salvation. However, the 2014 edition reverses course



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

and says that one cannot be saved simply by believing in Christ.

Have you ever heard of a bi-vocational pastor where one of his vocations is retirement? Well, Bill Lee tells you all about it in a heart-warming story of how God can use us if we are available.

Faith is persuasion. That simple statement is widely rejected by many in Evangelicalism today. James Morison was a Scottish theologian who lived from 1816 to 1893. Long before the modern Free Grace movement, Morison argued that we are saved by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

Bill Fiess and Pam Esteven discuss last-days wardrobe: "Are you planning now what you will wear at the Bema?" All Christian should plan ahead.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

# HOW TO PREACH AND TEACH



LIGHTSTOCK



## BY BOB WILKIN

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**M**ost of our readers are not pastors and will never preach in a church. However, all of you teach others about the Lord Jesus Christ in one way or another.

Many of you have taught, are teaching, or will teach Sunday school. Some teach home Bible studies. Some speak at the local Gospel Rescue Mission or Young Life or Campus Crusade for Christ. And, of course, parents teach their children.

We all teach. So we all can benefit from learning how to preach and teach.

### THE BIBLE DOES NOT TELL US HOW

The first thing to realize is that the Bible gives no instructions on how to preach or teach.

None.

While I took four courses at Dallas Theological Seminary on how to preach, none of them showed me any Bible verses that backed up the method we were taught. We were taught to use principles gleaned from modern communication theory.

Thus, freedom is possible in preaching and teaching. We are not locked into an introduction, three main points, each with an illustration, and a conclusion. We can please the Lord using various methods *as long as we accurately communicate what God's Word says.*

### THE BIBLE BARELY SHOWS US HOW

There are examples of sermons in Scripture. Unfortunately, the examples we have are, for the most part, not full sermons.

And we do not have a lot of sermons in either the OT or the NT. We have some. Most are in Acts.

I do not think that the partial examples we have of sermons are meant to tell us how we should preach and teach. I think they give us principles upon which we can draw. But there is no indication that there was some formal way to preach.

## IDEAS FROM COMMUNICATION THEORY

Anyone who has ever taken a speech class knows that a message should have an introduction that draws the listener in, a body with one big idea, and a conclusion that reminds the listener about your big idea.

Most would suggest using illustrations as ways to draw readers in and keep their attention.

In Scripture, we find that most illustrations were examples of OT accounts. When Stephen preached in Acts 7, he covered: Abraham's call and his journey of faith; Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve patriarchs; the journey to Egypt; Joseph; Moses in Egypt; Moses and the burning bush; Moses as deliverer; the tabernacle; Israel's resistance to God; and then Israel killing Jesus the Christ.

Before I went to seminary, I spoke topically. If I wanted to give a message on giving, I'd draw together ten or more passages on giving and try to weave that into a message.

In seminary, I learned to preach passages of Scripture. Rarely do I speak topically anymore. Probably 80 to 90 percent

of my messages are verse-by-verse exposition of a single passage.

The advantage of preaching passages is that you are constrained by the context to preach what the original author intended. It is very tempting when preaching topically to take verses out of context to make the point you want to make without the need of dealing with the details of passages. But

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**“A house is framed so that the rooms turn out right. A sermon or lesson has an outline so that the message stays on track.”**

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that means you end up preaching your thoughts, not God's thoughts.

## THE BIG IDEA

Step one is knowing what it is that God is saying. You need to be able to reduce the entire content of your message into one fairly short sentence. Ideally, I try to make the title of my message the big idea. So the title of my message on Jas 2:14-17 is “Faith without Works Is Unprofitable (= Dead).”

You are not ready to write your sermon until you can summarize what your passage means. And, yes, I suggest you write out your sermon, even though I recommend you not read it to the audience. You just

have it in front of you to remind yourself of your main points. But writing it out helps clarify your thinking.

Once you have the big idea in writing, it is time to produce your outline.

## THE OUTLINE

This step is often skipped. I know from experience that is a huge mistake.

Without an outline, the message is just a stream of consciousness. Words follow words without a necessary connection to the message. The audience can't see where you are going.

Your outline will be your two or three main points, as well as possible sub-points under each main point.

A house is framed so that the rooms turn out right. A sermon or lesson has an outline so that the message stays on track.

The points of your outline might reflect the flow of thought in the passage.

Or, you might cover the entire passage under point one, and then points two and three might cover possible objections to what the passage is saying, and possible applications of the passage.

Your outline must produce your big idea. The points either build to the big idea, explain the big idea, defend the big idea, or apply the big idea.

Develop an outline before you start writing.

## THE INTRODUCTION

I like reading fiction. I find that reading the dust jacket summary makes it easy to get started.



**“MAKE SURE YOUR  
INTRODUCTION PULLS  
PEOPLE IN, THEN  
LEADS THEM IN THE  
RIGHT DIRECTION.”**

In a sense, your introduction is like the blurb about a book or the trailer that movie makers produce to get people to go to their movies.

The introduction is attempting to tap into what is called a *felt need*. That is a need with which most people identify.

Your introduction should pull your listeners in, but it needs to go somewhere. A standup comic can pull the listener in, but he isn't going anywhere with his jokes. Our introduction needs to pull your listeners into what the text is teaching.

I remember in my senior preaching course, my professor told me that my introduction was clever and got his attention. However, it was like a reverse in football. In the introduction, I had the listeners going in one direction. Then in the body of the sermon, I went the other way. I gained their attention, but the message itself did not deliver on what the introduction led the audience to expect me to say. Make sure your introduction

pulls people in, then leads them in the right direction.

## THE BODY

The body can have just one point—just your big idea. Or it can have two, three, or more points which are related to or which built toward your big idea.

Most of the time I like to outline the passage I'm preaching and make my sermon points correspond to the way the passage develops. For example, here is my outline for the body of my sermon, "His Promised Return Is Certain (2 Peter 3:1-9)":

1. Focus on Christ's Soon Return (vv 1-2)
2. Don't Let Scoffers Distract You (vv 3-4)
3. Remember the Flood (vv 5-7)
4. The Delay Is Not Long from God's View of Time (v 8)
5. God Will Fulfill His Promise Soon (v 9a)

6. The Delay Is Because Death Does Not Please God (v 9b)

## THE CONCLUSION

Sometimes I write the introduction and conclusion before I write the body of the sermon. When I write the conclusion, I like to make sure that it links up with the introduction.

Did I raise some questions in the introduction? Then I answer them in the conclusion.

Did I raise a felt need in the intro? Then I need to explain how God's Word answers that felt need.

Did the sermon challenge our worldview? Then in the conclusion I will talk about how this passage changes the way we view our world.

Ideally, I will mention the big idea multiple times in the sermon and multiple times in the conclusion, too. In my sermon on 2 Pet 3:1-9, I will often repeat that Jesus' soon return is certain. It is guaranteed. It will happen any day now. It is

imminent. We should be watchful because when He returns we long to hear Him say, “Well done, good servant.”

## THE LENGTH OF THE MESSAGE

The length depends on where you are speaking. Most of the time I’m given 30 to 40 minutes to speak. For me, that is around 2000 to 2500 words in my sermon manuscript.

At times I’m only given 3 to 5 minutes to speak. Many of the little videos we’ve done for GES are that length. In those cases, I typically do not manuscript what I’ll say. Instead, I put down my big idea and three or four things I want to say about it.

In little messages that are topical and not based on a specific text of Scripture, I find it vital that I have an anchor passage. I will quote the passage in the video so that people can see that the idea comes from Scripture and not just from theology. It is not enough to teach the truth. We must teach the truth *from Scripture*.

Of course, in a 3-minute message, I will not give a detailed explanation of a passage. But I will quote it and at least give enough explanation so the listener can see that the truth I’m explaining does come from Scripture.

On the occasions when I manuscript short messages, I’ve shot for around 500 words for 5 minutes. For example, for my Logos Course on Free Grace Theology, I wrote up 72 short segments designed to be around 10 minutes each. I aimed to keep those to 1000 words or less.

## DIFFERENT STYLES CAN BE EFFECTIVE

J. Vernon McGee simply marched through the Bible. He did not have much of an introduction or a conclusion. He used illustrations. But he did not use lots of illustrations. He taught the Bible verse by verse. And people loved it. They still love it today, long after he has gone to be with the Lord.

R. B. Thieme had a similar approach. However, he would dig in very deeply on every verse. Thus one message might cover only one verse. Or it might take several messages to cover one verse. He loved to teach people key Greek and Hebrew words. Doctrinal pastors today continue that method of preaching. And I’ve observed that it has a powerful impact on many people.

The string of pearls approach may be effective at drawing crowds, but it doesn’t really produce strong disciples. That approach was made famous by Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller. The string is a principle from the Bible. The pearls are illustrations. So the pastor might start his sermon with a story, then mention a verse or two, state a principle that comes from the verse, and then the rest of the sermon is illustration after illustration supposedly fleshing out the principle. While entertaining, not much discipleship occurs. People do not learn the Bible. They learn little ditties like, “Life by the yard is hard. Life by the inch is a cinch.”

Effectiveness in preaching is measured by what pleases

God, not by what draws large crowds or raises large amounts of money. A small church that accurately proclaims God’s Word has effective preaching. A megachurch that does not accurately preach God’s Word has ineffective preaching.

Another style is dramatic presentations. Pastors with acting ability sometimes do a great job of this. While this can’t be done every week (unless you don’t care about teaching the whole counsel of God’s Word), it can occasionally be done with great interest.

I’ve been in churches where the sermon is linked to a skit. The skit is done by actors in the body who prepare the audience for the sermon. In a sense, the skit becomes the introduction to the sermon.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

The Bible does not command us to preach or teach in a certain way. We might use different methods depending on what we are teaching or preaching. But the key we must never forget is that we aim to proclaim God’s Word accurately. We want to please Him. No matter who is sitting in the pew, He is our ultimate audience every time we preach or teach. ■



*Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He lives in Highland Village, TX, with his wife of 41 years,*

*Sharon. His latest book is Is Calvinism Biblical? Let the Scriptures Decide.*

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# A No-Guilt Look at Proverbs 31

By Marcia Hornok

**R**aise your hand if you have heard a Proverbs 31 sermon on the second Sunday in May.

I see a great many hands.

The problem with Mother's Day is that it marginalizes women who are not mothers.

However, Prov 31:10–31 does not.

Yes, it mentions a husband and children, but the topic of virtue fits all categories of females.

As proof, consider the only woman in Scripture who was called virtuous (Ruth 3:11).<sup>1</sup> At the time, Ruth was not married and had no children. So what does that say about virtue, except that all women should attain it?

Furthermore, if this acrostic poem is part of the utterance which King Lemuel's mother taught him, then the passage speaks about a marriageable (single) woman of virtue, which Lemuel should seek until he finds.

A problem arises, however, with those qualities. Some say this idealistic poem was relevant for Solomon's culture but not for ours. Others take a literal approach, encouraging women to live up to God's paragon of virtue. She burns the candle at both ends by getting up early (v 15) and staying up late (v 18). With income from her manufacturing business (v 24), she buys real estate (v 16), while making clothes for herself and her family (vv 21–22). Besides meeting the needs of her household, she helps the poor (v 20) and never neglects her relationship with God (v 30).

Neither view suffices.

The first disregards Biblical relevance, and the literal view is exhausting.

The answer lies in seeing Proverbs 31 as a photo album of a godly woman's lifetime, rather than as selfies of her daily activities. Thus by her senior years, assuming she is elderly along with her husband in v 23, her virtue and accomplishments result in praise (vv 28–31).

This interpretation invites two questions: First, can the passage be outlined with reference to a woman's entire life rather than her daily chores? Second, what comprises virtue?

## A LOGICAL OUTLINE OF PROVERBS 31:10–31

Martha Montgomery (1909–1997), a home Bible teacher in Dallas for over 30 years, identified a unique literary structure to these 22 verses: three verses of introduction, five verses for each of the three stages of life—the early, middle, and later years—and four concluding verses.<sup>2</sup>

Each of the three stages includes a statement about her household and a note about apparel or qualities she wears.

### THE INTRODUCTION (VV 11–12)

The poem opens with a preview, not a predicament (v 10). Like a precious gem, this woman's worth increases with age. Her husband gets an early mention because if a woman is married, her focus needs to be *husband-centered* at every stage of life. He can trust her and has no reason to seek

“plunder” by looking elsewhere for his needs to be met. She routinely asks—what good thing can I do for my husband today? (v 12).

### THE EARLY YEARS (VV 13–17)

She provides winter clothing (wool) and summer clothing (flax) and goes to great lengths to feed her *household* (v 14). She puts her maidens (by application, appliances) to their tasks early in the day (v 15).

Some commentaries impose a real estate business on v 16, mistranslating the *fruit of her hands* as “earnings.” However, v 31 defines the *fruit of her hands* as “her own works.” She works in her vineyard, where presumably her children are with her. Indeed, seven verses in the Hebrew text talk about her hands/palms, but popular English versions substitute “earnings” in this verse.

Another unfortunate translation in v 16 is the word “buys.” This Hebrew word means “to take, receive, capture,” and hardly ever refers to money.<sup>3</sup> She considers a field, not to buy it, but how best to use it, and then takes it over.

This early stage concludes with what she wears—strength—in her loins (childbirth area), and her arms as she runs her household effectively. Although the passage portrays a married woman with children, single women will benefit from an organized home. Likewise, mothers who need to have a career should carefully focus *priority* on their families. Most women today spend only one-third of their lives—less than 20 years—raising children. Equipping the next generation trumps all other pursuits for that short time.

### THE MIDDLE YEARS (VV 18–22)

She senses her involvements are good. This most likely refers to shopping! She bartered or traded wisely. Thus she is prepared with adequate oil so her lamp does not go out at night (v 18). The burning lamp may also speak of availability, not lack of sleep. If her family or travelers needed help during the night, she was ready.

With her children growing up, she widens her areas of usefulness. Her hands reach out to provide for her *household* (v 21), herself (v 22), and for the poor and needy (vv 19–20). Without guilt, women can postpone the time for volunteer work and community interests until the stage when

their children can do more for themselves and help with chores. Verse 22 makes another reference to what she wears. Fine linen and purple speak of dignity and honor, emphasizing strength of character.

## THE LATER YEARS (VV 23–27)

In the empty-nest stage, her husband sits with the elders, a position of authority (v 23). We may assume she also is elderly and shares his good reputation. With children grown and years of experience under her belt, the virtuous woman's expertise in making garments generates income (v 24).

Again she wears strength (from the early years) and dignity (from the middle years). These qualities, ripened by life, give her a positive outlook on the future (v 25) and wisdom to share with kindness (v 26).

Notably, only one out of 22 verses mentions her tongue. In this stage, she watches over the ways of her *household* and does not become idle (v 27).<sup>4</sup>

Aging women must resist the urge to withdraw from helping others. Eventually, they may be unable to do more than pray, but what a valuable ministry that is. (See 1 Tim 5:5.)

## THE CONCLUSION (VV 28–31)

This passage gives the virtuous woman's secret—fearing God. Charm deceives, and beauty dissipates, but godliness never goes out of style and has a great reward. All her life she has excelled at giving. Now at the end, something is given to her: her children bless her; her husband praises her for her virtue; her own works praise her (public recognition), but the source of praise for her godliness (v 30) is obscure. Could it foreshadow praise from God in eternity?

## WHAT COMPRISES VIRTUE?

Having viewed the passage, not as a daily to-do list, but as a lifetime of fruitfulness, we can then ask, what is virtue? Does virtue mean women should make their own clothing or do things from scratch? It does seem like the Proverbs 31 woman excelled at sewing, but what was Ruth's virtue?


Care-taking for her mother-in-law (Ruth 2:11).<sup>5</sup>

Virtue simply means being good at something that benefits others. The emphasis of Proverbs 31 is on usefulness, not busyness.

This makes Proverbs 31 practical and attainable. (Remember v 29: “*Many* daughters have done virtuously....”) As time increases the value of jewels, so women become virtuous with age and experience by fellowshiping with God, while cultivating abilities that help their own households, people in need, and the business community.

Women today are told to advance themselves and seek personal success, but self-fulfillment comes from working toward a greater purpose—that of honoring God by what they do. That makes even menial tasks delightful (v 13). However, women usually enjoy the things they do well, which means that attaining virtue is fun.

This user-friendly look at virtue in Proverbs 31 requires answering two questions: What are you good at? How does that expertise benefit others?

The next time you hear a Mother's Day sermon on Proverbs 31, don't feel guilty for not measuring up. If you fear God and are using your skills to help people, you are a virtuous woman.<sup>6</sup> 



*Marcia Hornok is a retired editor and wife of a retired pastor.*

1. Consider also that the Hebrew Bible places Ruth immediately after Proverbs. (See [soniclight.org](http://soniclight.org) Study Notes for Ruth, 2017 Edition, p. 2.)

2. Martha's series titled “Every Wise Woman” was taught to many wives of Dallas Theological Seminary students,

and Martha's husband John served on the Board of Trustees of DTS during the 1960s.

3. The BDB *Hebrew and English Lexicon* lists 965 uses of the word *laqach*. Only in Prov 31:16 is it translated “buys.” The only other occurrence of the exact construction is Ezek 33:4 where the sword “takes” a life.

4. The word implies peering into the distance like a watchman.

5. In Ruth 2:12 Boaz blesses Ruth: “The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel.”

6. For further discussion, see the author's article on Prov 31:10–31 in *The Journal of Dispensational Theology* (Summer/Fall 2013), pp. 143–158.

Teach the

TRUTH



## (1 Timothy 4:6-16)

By Zane C. Hodges

### REGARDING THE MINISTER OF CHRIST

In 1 Tim 3:14–4:5 the Apostle sets forth the importance of his instructions about the truth itself, while in 4:4–16 he sets forth their importance to Timothy himself. If Timothy is faithful in teaching and charging these things, they will truly make him a good servant of Jesus Christ who saves himself as well as others.

**4:6.** The **these things** (*tauta*) of this verse is probably of broad significance, covering the general truths of the epistle. To a certain extent it may be resumptive of the “*these things*” of v 14, though surely not excluding the intervening material. The truth is all interwoven.

The word *instruct* (*hupotithemenos*) seems to involve a word-play as it signifies “to suggest” or “to advise,” while at the same time the verb root means “to put under.” The figure of the “house of God” (3:15) is thus recalled and these truths presented as foundational for those in that house.

Note also that **the brethren** recalls the family character of that “household.” The brethren constantly need the solid footing afforded by these divine “suggestions.” How treacherous is the footing today for the brethren as they conduct themselves in God’s house according to human advice.

Note also the parallelism of the present participles **instruct** and **nourished** (*hupotithemenos* and *entrephomenos*). Both are seen as going on at the same time. As Timothy is advising others, he is himself experiencing the nourishment of these



truths. The Lord's servant always finds that in watering others he is himself watered also.

## BEWARE SPIRITUAL SENILITY

4:7. Occupation with good doctrine and the words of faith leads naturally to the rejection of what is profane and valueless. They are non-nourishing (cf. v 6).

Observe the contrast between **old wives' fables** (*graōdeis muthous*) and **training** (*gumnaze*). Those who have lost the vigor of spiritual youth find themselves, like the gossipy old ladies, toying with idle fables that tantalize the fancy. When we cease to vigorously train and exercise ourselves to excel in true piety, we are in danger of spiritual senility. Idle and abstruse theological debates are of no interest to the active spiritual athlete; they only attract spiritual old women.

4:8–10. The spiritual exercise which the Apostle commends has unlimited benefit for **all things** (*pros panta*) as over against the **limited profit** (*pros oligon*) of athletic discipline. The values of piety are experienced in two worlds, this life, and the hereafter.

## BE PIOUS IN LABOR

The phrase **this is a faithful saying** (*pistos ho logos*) is sometimes construed with v 8 rather than v 10, and the objection raised that the **for** of v 10 is out of place in the “faithful saying” and appears redundant. But this formula usually seems to precede the assertion to which it applies, and certainly v 10 is by far the weightier of the two statements. Moreover, *for* need not here be inferential but simply emphatic, being understood as “indeed” or “certainly.”

The connection of vv 9–10 with v 8 seems to be something like this: Piety often involves fatiguing **labor** (*kopiōmen*) and unjust criticism (*oneidizometha*). We cannot always see its profitableness, and there often seems a lag between its promise and its fulfillment. But, says Paul, we nonetheless have a basis for hope. It is a dependable assertion that all should receive; namely, we both toil and are reviled for the very reason that we have placed hope in a God Who is very especially our Savior.

If God is **the Savior of all** (*sōtēr pantōn*)—and He is because “He gives to all life, breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25b), and has even made provision for the spiritual salvation of all (1 Tim 2:4–6)—how much more will He prove Himself to be this to us who believe? All indeed are

preserved and profited by Him; how much more indeed those who have faith. Surely piety holds out great promise of blessing—whatever the toil and reproach of it—if the fulfillment of that promise rests on such a One.

Note that this hope rests on three great facts as its base: (1) what God is in Himself (living), (2) what He is toward all men, (3) what He is especially toward us (*who believe*).

In times when godliness seems to promise nothing but toil and reproach (cf. Ps 73:13-14), we must recall where our hopes for this life and the next all inescapably lie—upon a Living God Whose preserving power affects all and surely most especially those who believe.

## BE A SPIRITUAL ATHLETE

**4:11–16.** What follows is basically a description of the spiritual athletics in which the young servant of the Lord is vigorously to exercise. All the equipment of the spiritual gymnasium is presented and is to be put to use.

In passing it must be noted that *youth* (*neotēs*) was in ancient times a relative term. Irenaeus affirms its applicability till the age of forty. Timothy was about 35-40. The elders over whom he wielded apostolic authority were likely many years his senior.

Challenged by the reminder of his hope in God, he is urged to take up the toil of charging and teaching all these truths. He could forestall much criticism, especially of his youth, by carefully presenting an exemplary pattern of life (v 12). But private discipline and example were not enough—**public reading** (*tē anagnōsei*), **exhortation**, and teaching were also part of his spiritual gymnastic equipment (v 13).

To be satisfied with mere exemplary living and not public ministry would be to neglect a supernaturally imparted **gift** (v 14). To practice these public ministries however immersed in them, was to guarantee an advance and progress that all could see (**evident to all**, v 15). Careful attention to oneself and one's doctrine and continuance in these things would be richly beneficial to oneself and to one's hearers (v 16).

There is here much instruction and warning for the Lord's servant. We must recognize how long we really remain young and our constant need

to forestall criticism based on our immaturity by maintaining a careful, exemplary life. Youth that is exemplary is not despised. However, we must never settle into a satisfaction with mere exemplary living if God has imparted to us a gift which can be used publicly. Some who turn from the "professional" ministry do.

There is a ministry even in the public reading of Scripture from which also arises exhortation based upon it and ultimately exposition of its truth. None of these things which we can do are to be neglected.

As a side note, the prepositions of v 14, **by** (*dia*) and **with** (*meta*), are to be distinguished. The preposition *by* suggests the effective medium through which the gift was imparted, for prophecy in Scripture is ever presented as that which guarantees the issue spoken of (cf. the gospel idea that things took place that a prophecy might be fulfilled in Matt 1:22, etc.). On the other hand, the preposition *with* points merely to an accompanying circumstance. The body of elders in the aggregate (probably those at Lystra, Acts 16:1) apparently signified in this solemn way their consent to what God was doing and their approval of it. It was a solemn moment for Timothy to remember.

## BE MENTALLY ACTIVE

The verb **meditate** (*meleta*) in v 15 (cf. Mark 13:11; Acts 4:25) signifies mental activity. But its most common use in Greek literature is "to practice," and this seems most suitable here. It is contrasted with **do not neglect** (*mē amelei*) of v 14. The Lord's servant is to be thoroughly absorbed in service. He is never to cease to seek improvement in his ministry.

The word **save** in v 16 cannot refer to what is past for us (cf. Titus 3:5). The NT has much to say of the salvation of the soul (*psuchē*) or life, which is achieved only by discipleship to the fullest extent. The thought here is that of Mark 8:34-38 and John 12:25-26. We save first ourselves, secondarily others.



Zane Hodges taught New Testament Greek and Exegesis at Dallas Theological Seminary.

By Pam Esteven

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**D**id you know there are two Noahs in the Bible? One was a man, the other a woman. There is the Noah who built the ark, and there is the Noah who was a daughter of Zelophehad (Num 27:1).

The story of Noah and her sisters—Mahlah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah—is a remarkable account of God’s love, mercy, grace, and provision.

### **A SPECIAL CASE OF INHERITANCE**

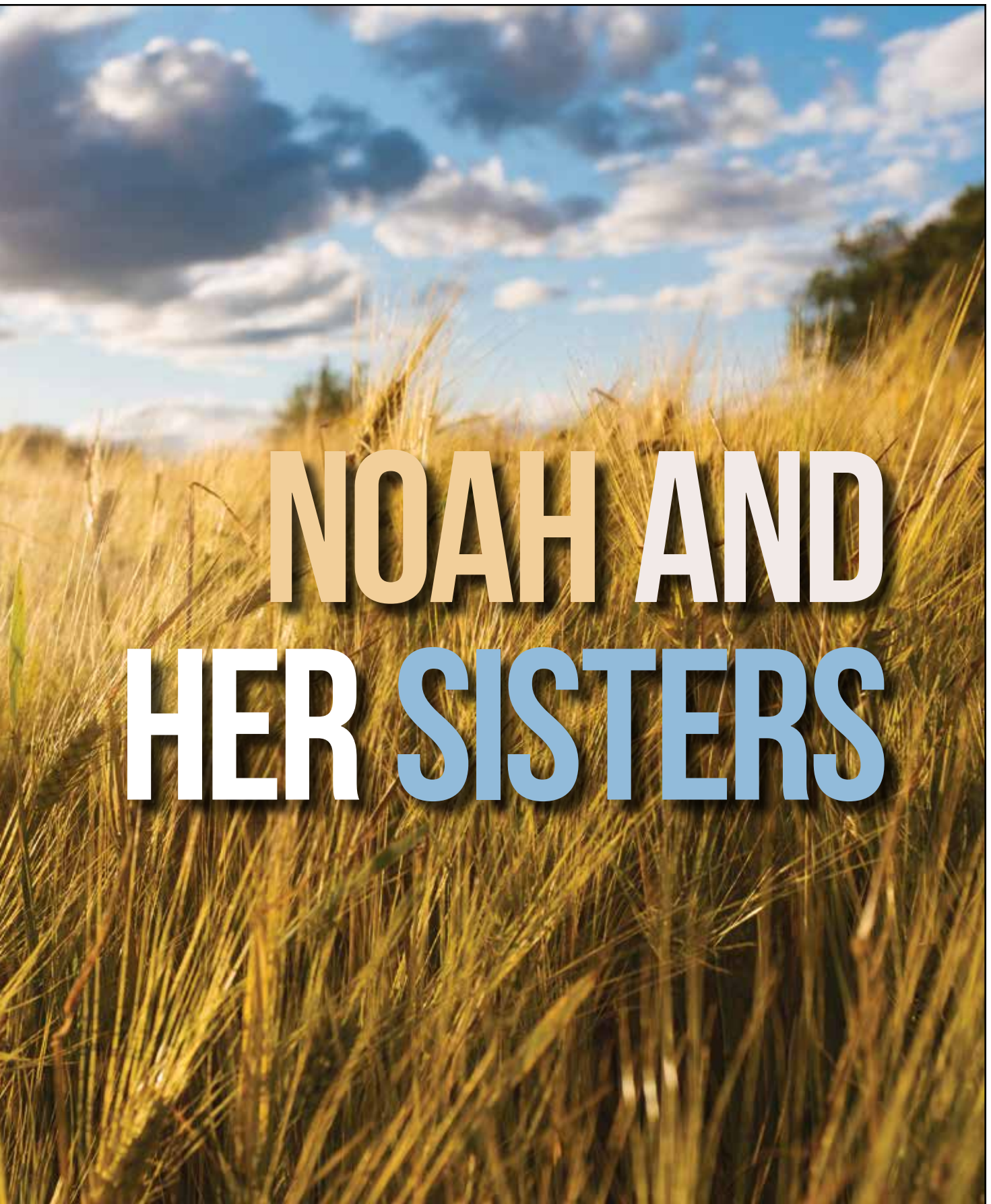
Numbers 26 records that God had ordered Moses and Eleazer the high priest to take a census of the male Israelites twenty years old and above. This census would determine property allocation for each tribe of Israel once the nation entered the Promised Land.

In Numbers 27 we discover a special case of inheritance not specifically covered in the Law of Moses: a man named Zelophehad had five daughters, no sons, and had died before the census was taken.

What would happen to his five daughters? Were they entitled to a share in the Promised Land, even though their father had not been counted in the census (he had “died in the wilderness,” Num 27:3, before the census was taken)?

Also, inheritance passed from father to son, not from father to daughter. Through no fault of their own, these daughters of Zelophehad were unmarried, fatherless women with no prospect of inheritance rights. How could they live and support themselves in the Promised Land?





# NOAH AND HER SISTERS

What to do?

In many ancient cultures, women did not have personal or property rights. Thus, it is noteworthy that Noah and her sisters had the confidence, faith, and freedom to approach Moses and Eleazer with their question about inheritance: “Why should the name of our father be removed from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father’s brothers” (Num 27:4).

They were asking for two things: they requested that their father be counted posthumously in the census since he had no male heir to be counted, and they asked that they be given the land that would be rightly theirs if they were sons.

These are impressive women: they are intelligent, articulate, and familiar with the Law. They believed God’s promise that their generation would enter the land, and they believed that the Lord would favor them; otherwise, they never would have approached Moses, Eleazer, the leaders, and the entire congregation in the first place.

Moses and the other men could have easily told these women to go home, get married, and not worry their pretty little heads with this legal issue. But these men did not do that. This speaks highly of the woman’s place in Israelite culture, as opposed to a woman’s place in the pagan cultures surrounding them.

Moses took this case to the Lord, and the Lord agreed with the women. He told Moses to give them their portion of the land. But not only that. Numbers 26:33 mentions Zelophehad and his daughters in the census count.

Why?

Because the census was adjusted to include Zelophehad posthumously for the sake of his five daughters.

Did you catch that?

Zelophehad and his entire generation, except Joshua and Caleb, had died in the wilderness, yet

God allowed the census to be adjusted so that Zelophehad could be named in it for the sake of his daughters.

Now that is grace!

Thanks to Noah and her sisters, the order of inheritance was made clear: son, *daughter*, brother, paternal uncle, nearest family member.

These women asked by faith, and God graciously and lovingly honored their request.

There are many lessons we can glean from this account.

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**“We believers have the privilege of approaching God freely, without reservation, and without need of long, grandiloquent prayers. We can have confidence that He always gives us a fair hearing.”**

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## **BELIEVE THE PROMISE**

First, Noah and her sisters believed God’s promise that they would enter the land and enjoy physical blessings there.

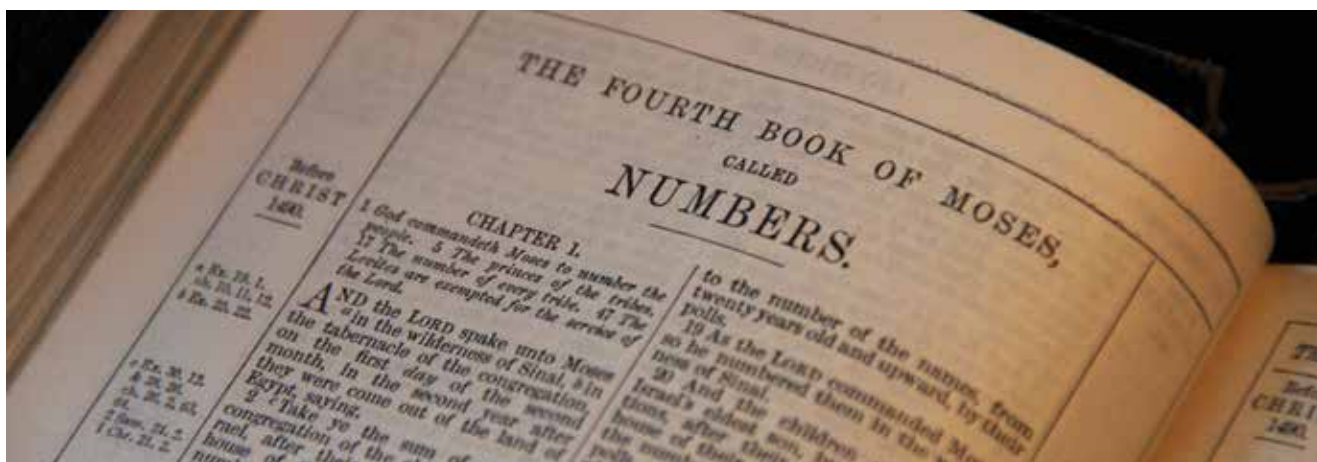
We in the Church Age have been promised that we have been blessed with “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3b). God’s Word tells us these blessings are ours now. Do you believe that the life Jesus gives is everlasting, not probational or conditional? Do you believe God’s promise that you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and that you are positionally in Christ? Are you enjoying the

spiritual blessings that God has said are already yours?

## **BOLD CONFIDENCE**

Second, Noah and her sisters approached Moses boldly and with confidence.

The writer to the Hebrews exhorts believers to “come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). The Greek word translated *boldly* indicates freeness of speech, or unreserved expression. Noah and her sisters spoke to Moses and the other leaders freely and confidently and were to the point (another nuance of *boldly* in Heb 4:16). We believers have the privilege of approaching God freely, without reservation, and without need of long, grandiloquent prayers. We



can have confidence that He always gives us a fair hearing.

## SEEK THE LORD

Third, Moses sought the Lord in what he considered a difficult case; he demonstrated wise leadership in doing so.

The NT encourages us likewise to ask God for wisdom: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (Jas 1:5). Moses was the human author of the Law which bears his name, yet he did not consider himself above asking the ultimate Author of the Law for His ruling on the case. We should follow Moses’ example in asking God for wisdom.

## GOD CARES ABOUT THE DETAILS

Fourth, this account of Zelophehad’s daughters is a striking demonstration that God is merciful and gracious and cares about the details in our lives.

He is “not far from each of us” (Acts 17:27b).

The Apostle Peter encourages us to cast “all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Pet 5:7).

Like Noah and her sisters, we can have full confidence in God’s caring provision. Simply put, God loves us.

## GOD CARES ABOUT THE FORGOTTEN


Fifth, this account underscores how much God cares about those often forgotten by society: the orphan and the widow. God is the “Helper of the fatherless” (Ps 10:14b; see also v 18). He is not

only the Helper of the fatherless but is also “a Father of the fatherless, a Defender of widows” (Ps 68:5a).

In addition, the NT exhorts us to take care of the orphan and the widow: “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble” (Jas 1:27a). The Greek word translated “visit” carries with it the idea of looking after and taking care of. If God cares about orphans and widows, then so should we.

## RICHES IN NUMBERS

And finally, this account of Zelophehad’s daughters is embedded in a too often ignored book of the Bible, yet it is in Numbers that we find some of the most significant events in Scripture, such as the bronze serpent, Korah’s rebellion, Aaron’s rod that budded, and Balaam’s prophecy.

Numbers is as inspired as Isaiah or the Gospels. We will do well not to neglect the parts of Scripture that may not at first glance strike us as particularly exciting. But as we study these less popular books of the Bible, we will be gratified to discover great riches hidden in their depths. “It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out” (Prov 25:2). 



*Pam Esteven is a writer and editor. She lives in Baton Rouge, LA.*

# Why Not Retire to a Small Church?

By Bill Lee

I began my life in Christ back in 1968 when I first heard the gospel. Like most Christians, that opened for me an amazing life I never imagined possible.

I met my wife Jeanette while volunteering at the Christian Servicemen's center in Memphis, TN. I picked up a four-year degree in Biblical Studies with a focus on missions at Mid-South Bible College. After graduation, I took a position as a bi-vocational pastor at a small country church.

From that beginning, the Lord granted Jeanette and me many different opportunities in ministry. We also slipped in a short corporate career the Lord used to teach us some valuable lessons in leadership. And each year we spent time visiting with our extended families. Jeanette's family was from Northwest Wisconsin, and I came to really love that area. At some point early in our marriage, we dreamed of one day making our home there.

In time, that dream became a plan. And in May 2015, it became a reality.

We retired and moved into our new home in Spooner, WI.

The plan was to settle into the community and look for opportunities to serve as volunteers. Before arriving, we checked every church website in a five-county area and found no Free Grace churches.



It sounded like the perfect place to execute our plan. Of course, God had His own plans.

## WITHOUT A SHEPHERD

The very first church we visited was without a pastor. He had resigned the same week we moved into our new house.

Six months later Trego Community Church (TCC) hired me as their pastor. I was once again a bi-vocational pastor, but this time my other vocation was "retired."

If you're going bi-vocational, that is the way to do it.

And that brings me to why I am writing.

## THE NEED AND THE OPPORTUNITY

Rural America is populated with many small churches that lack the resources to attract full-time pastors.

A weak local job market further complicates the possibility of hiring a bi-vocational pastor.

Moreover, I imagine the pool of grace-oriented candidates is also small.



Many of these churches have no experience with the exegetical teaching of God's Word.

I believe there are many churches like TCC, full of people with a Berean mindset—people who are ready to receive the Word of God and who are excited to search the Scriptures to see if the grace message is true.

God worked the timing of our retirement move to bring us together with TCC. We came with a plan. The Lord had a better one. And today you can find TCC listed on the GES Church Tracker map.

I know there are other small churches out there hungry for the message of God's grace. Has there been an organized appeal to Free Grace pastors to consider using their retirement years serving in a small town church somewhere in the American heartland? If not, then let this be the first.

If you are retired, would you consider serving the Lord in bi-vocational, rural ministry?

I asked the Elders at TCC to give their side of our story because it is the church's story and not just my own.

## BACK TO LIFE

"Having Bill and Jeanette in our church is a tremendous answer to our prayers for a pastor. The experience, training, and leadership that they bring to our church goes far beyond anything we could have afforded or expected.

"Best of all, the clear teaching of God's Word is bringing our church back to life. We are very grateful that Bill decided to only partially retire and provide us with the leadership we desperately needed.

"On a personal note. What the grace message has done for me is to bring a life's worth of work, worship, prayer, and Bible study out of my imagination and made it real.

"I had given up on assurance of salvation.

"I knew the Bible was true but competing denominational views and inconsistencies over the meanings of critical texts had left me with no solid ground.

"When I finally understood that belief apart from works was the only requirement for eternal salvation everything started falling into place. I could now understand the difference between eternal salvation and the rewards of discipleship. I could finally accept the simplicity of the gospel and begin building on that solid foundation.

"Jesus has always existed. He is reality. And now through the 'rightly divided' word of truth, He is real to me."

~Phil Miller, Elder, TCC

## SIMPLE BELIEF

"I grew up in a Christian home and came to know the Lord at the age of seven at Vacation Bible School. I grew up in a charismatic church and came to believe, among other things, that salvation came from works, with a clear understanding that salvation is precarious. In other words, salvation could be lost with any given sin and that separation from God would be permanent should one die before reconciling that sin with God.

"Needless to say, I became quite an expert at saying the 'Sinner's Prayer.'

"During my formative years, belief in Christ was very important to my parents. But all the baggage of salvation through works came with that.

"After meeting my future wife, I began to step away from the charismatic church and came to know the concept of eternal security through TCC. But even then, the assurance of salvation eluded me, not only because of my past, but also because of my lack of understanding of God's grace.

"It wasn't until I came to know Bill, that I developed a clearer understanding of the grace message. I came to know that my simple belief in Christ and everything the Bible says about Him, formed a binding contractual agreement between Christ and myself, that guaranteed my place in heaven for all of eternity.

"Sadly, that message was in front of me my whole life, in the Scriptures that I grew up memorizing. The good news is I now have that blessed assurance of eternal salvation which frees me up to develop an unfettered and clearer understanding of God's word."

~John Bronson, Elder, TCC

## NO OTHER WORKS REQUIRED

"I was an elder at TCC for several years prior to meeting Bill and Jeanette.

"We had been through a period where we had relied on pulpit supply for a few years before hiring a man, whom we thought at the time, would be our pastor for many years.

"At the time, this man was working full-time for a company in the Minneapolis, MN, area and was commuting about two hours to Trego for Sunday morning and Wednesday evening services.

"Shortly after the time this pastor informed us that he was resigning in order to move to Georgia, Bill and Jeanette started attending our church. We did not know he was himself a pastor.

"Bill eventually asked our Pastor Search Committee if he could 'throw his hat in the ring' for consideration to hire him, which they accepted.

"After having Bill preach a couple of times as a candidate, our search committee presented Bill to the congregation as the recommended choice for our church's pastor. The congregation voted unanimously to hire Bill, which he accepted even knowing the limited financial package a small congregation like ours could offer. Many prayers were offered up during this search and most of us here at TCC truly believe that God absolutely had

His hand in bringing Bill and Jeanette into our church family. It was certainly much more than coincidence.

"I personally have attended Sunday School and church services for almost sixty years now and as a youngster trusted in Jesus. The churches I grew up in, and gravitated towards, were mostly the strict fundamentalist type. Even though they preached Scriptures from the Bible, most of these churches taught that just believing in Jesus wasn't enough. Some other form of works was always required in addition to belief.


"One church even taught that there wasn't security in salvation. They taught salvation could be lost for living a life which they deemed not to be 'righteous' enough. They had a couple of Scripture verses that they used to supposedly prove their way of thinking.

"While attending this church, I always questioned what sin or even group of sins causes us to lose our salvation after belief in Jesus. Even though I didn't buy into this way of thinking, I wanted to attend a 'Bible teaching Church,' so I put up with it.

"However, it didn't take long being under Bill's teaching and leadership to confirm what I knew in my heart all along to be correct. Jesus invites us to merely believe in Him for salvation, which Scripture over and over again validates. No other works of our own are required. His loving grace is sufficient.

"I thank God that He is in control and His timing brought Bill and Jeanette to our little congregation in Trego, WI. They have been a great blessing to us."

~Rick Harder, Elder, TCC

Being retired doesn't mean being expired. There is a great amount of work that needs to be done in rural communities. Instead of thinking of your retirement as the end of your ministry, why not prayerfully consider it a new beginning? 



*Bill Lee is Pastor of Trego Community Church in Trego, WI.*

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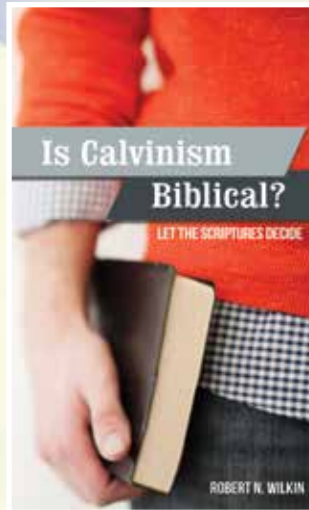


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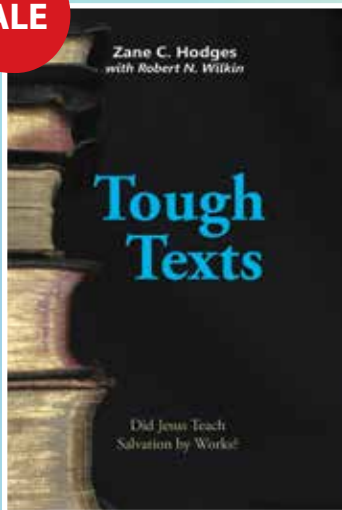
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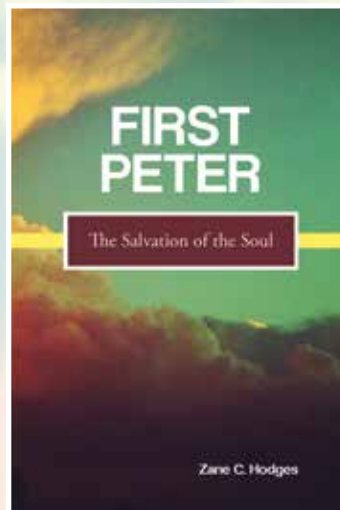


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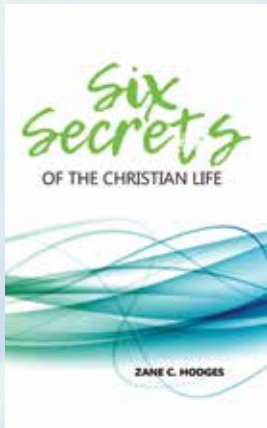
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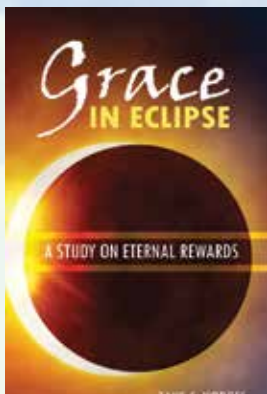


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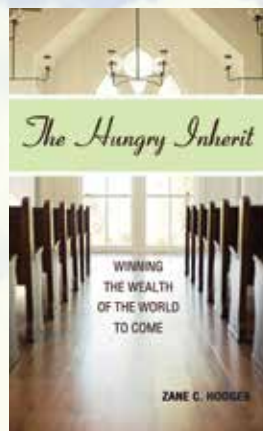


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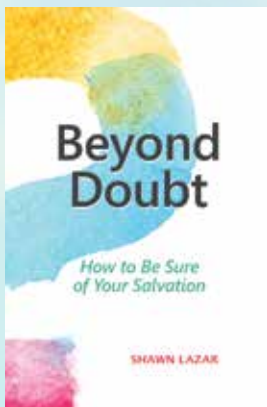


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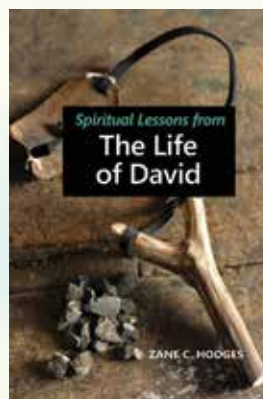


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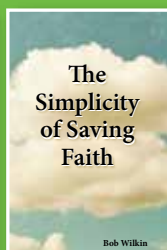
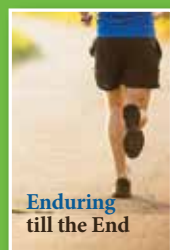


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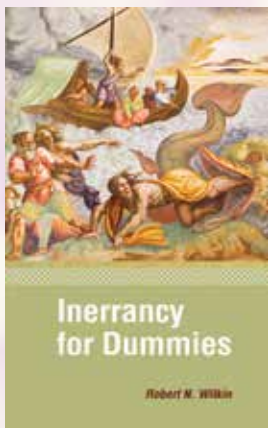
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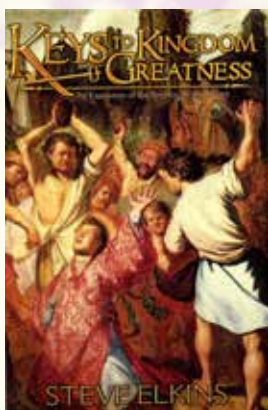


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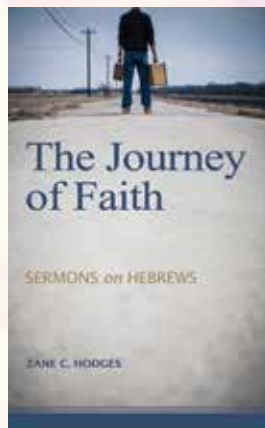


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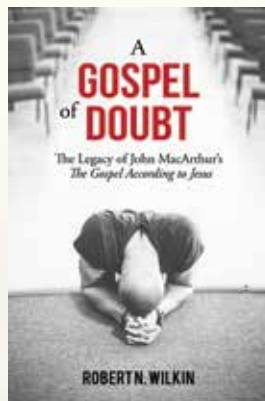


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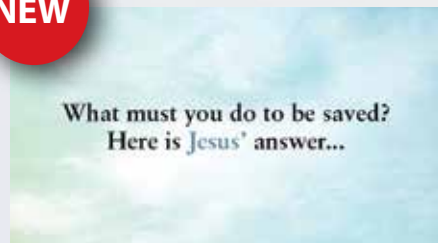
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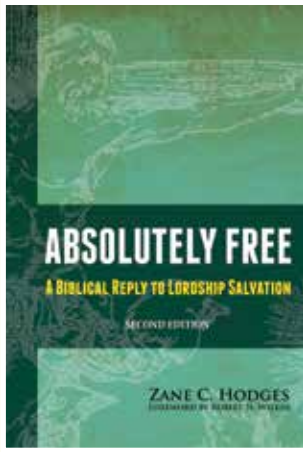


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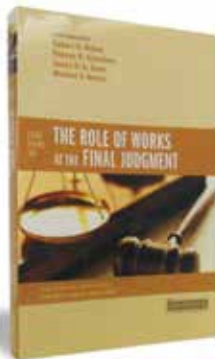
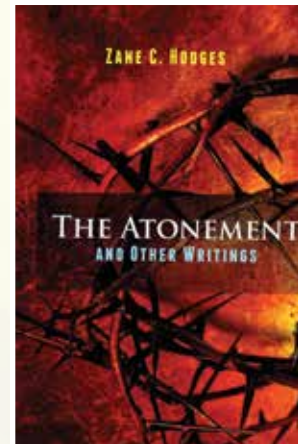
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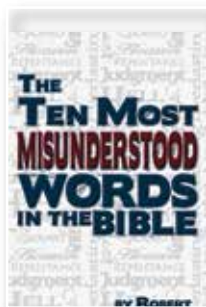
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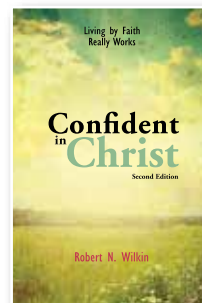
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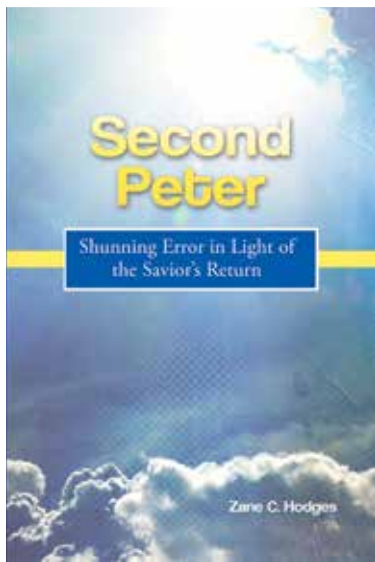
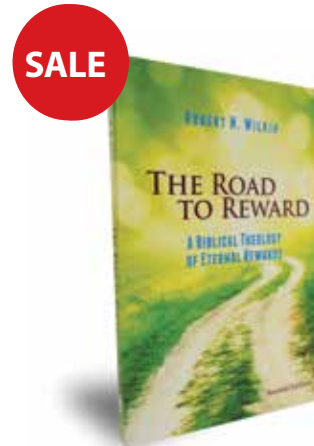
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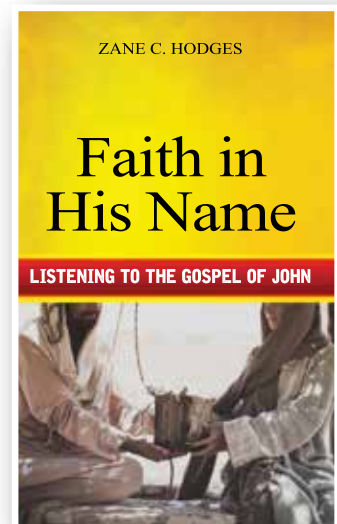
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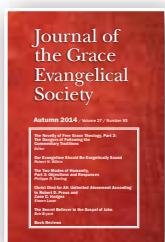
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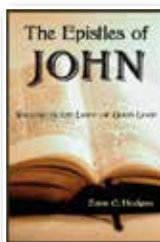




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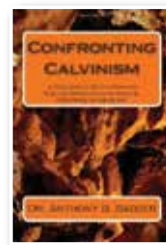


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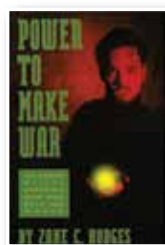


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# Dressed for the Bema

By Bill Fiess with Pam Esteven

In the book of Revelation there is an impressive number of references to clothing which encompasses a variety of Greek words. Often in Scripture, the believer's garment represents righteous works done in faithful obedience to God (e.g., Rev 16:15; 19:8).

For the sake of brevity, we will examine a few of the verses in Revelation which mention the *himation*, an outer garment or cloak that was typically woven from wool or linen. The *himation* was put on over the *chiton*, the inner tunic, and was worn by Jews and Greeks alike. The Hebrew style and the Greek style were virtually indistinguishable. When *himation* occurs in the plural, it can refer to both the outer and the inner garment.

Three occurrences of *himation* are found in Revelation 3, the second half of Jesus' seven letters to the churches in Asia Minor.

## SARDIS

Jesus told the church at Sardis, "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments [*himatia*]; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy" (Rev 3:4).

Some believers in Sardis had remained faithful to Christ, even in the midst of a church which He had called "dead." Jesus promised that those who overcome "shall be clothed in white garments [*himatiois*], and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels" (Rev 3:5).

It quickly becomes evident that the *himatia* mentioned here are much more than physical



garments; they also refer to lifestyle choices and deeds. Each believer must take care to guard his own "garments," and for those who do, there is the promise of great reward.

## LAODICEA

We find the third occurrence in Jesus' letter to Laodicea: "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments [*himatia*], that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed..." (v 18a).

Jesus gave them a list of items they needed to purchase from Him in order to change their status. The white garments Jesus mentioned in v 18 represent the "righteous acts of the saints" (see Rev 19:8). At the time of this letter, the Laodicean church had no righteous acts to their account.

Apart from Christ, our lives will not produce righteous acts worthy of God's approval. In encouraging the believers in Rome to "put on Christ" (see Rom 13:14), the Apostle Paul used a word regularly employed to describe putting on a garment. We must "put on Christ" if we want

to live lives that produce works pleasing to God. Jesus and His Word are the only sources from which God-approved works flow; they do not flow from self, a lesson the Laodiceans badly needed to learn.

The Greek word translated “nakedness” in Rev 3:18 can mean the state of being completely stripped of all clothing, or it can simply refer to the lack of a *himation*. Whether the word here refers to complete nakedness or merely to the lack of an outer garment (and thus, a lack of righteous acts), it is clear that shame is a real possibility when a believer is assessed by the Lord.

## HE WHO WATCHES

A significant use of *himation* is found in Rev 16:15b: “Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments [*himatia*], lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”

The Greek word translated *watches* refers to spiritual alertness and vigilance, while *keeps* denotes both observing and preserving.

In other words, it is the believer’s responsibility to take care that his works are pleasing to the Lord. Good and godly works do not occur automatically in the believer. If they did, the Bible would skip everything between Acts and Revelation.

Note that vigilance leads to blessing, but a lack of vigilance leads to shame (see also 1 John 2:28). A believer who is not watchful is in danger of not producing works pleasing to God (hence, the nakedness referred to here), and therefore not reigning with Christ in the Kingdom. This is more evidence that there are various degrees of rewards and experience for believers in the life to come.

## JESUS’ GARMENTS

Just as our *himatia* will reflect our righteous deeds, so, too, does the Lord Jesus’ *himation* reflect His.

When Jesus returns to earth at the end of the Tribulation, His clothing is noteworthy: “He was clothed with a robe [*himation*] dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God” (Rev 19:13).


Jesus’ *himation* is dipped in blood, not His own, but that of His enemies (see, e.g., Isa 34:1-8; 63:1-6; Mic 2:12-13; Hab 3:12-16). Jesus’ *himation*

commemorates His righteous works. He has acted righteously as Avenger of Israel and Conqueror of God’s enemies. His *himation* will be inscribed with the title “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Rev 19:16). Operation Footstool will be accomplished at last!

## GETTING DRESSED FOR THE OCCASION

A cursory survey of clothing mentioned in Revelation demonstrates the importance of the topic, especially as it relates to the *himation* representing righteous acts approved by God. Each believer is responsible for the condition of his *himation*, and no believer can accomplish anything without Christ: “I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13).

It is beneficial to remember that “we must all appear before the Judgment Seat [Bema] of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor 5:10).

Are you planning now what you will wear at the Bema? Do you need to update your spiritual wardrobe? 



*Bill Fiess teaches math in Virginia and is an ardent LOGOS user. Pam Esteven is a writer and editor in Baton Rouge, LA.*

# Review: *Paul,* *Apostle* *of Christ*

By Josh Meier

I recently saw *Paul the Apostle of Christ*. I enjoyed the movie and would encourage any of my congregation, as well as anyone reading this review, to take the opportunity to view it.

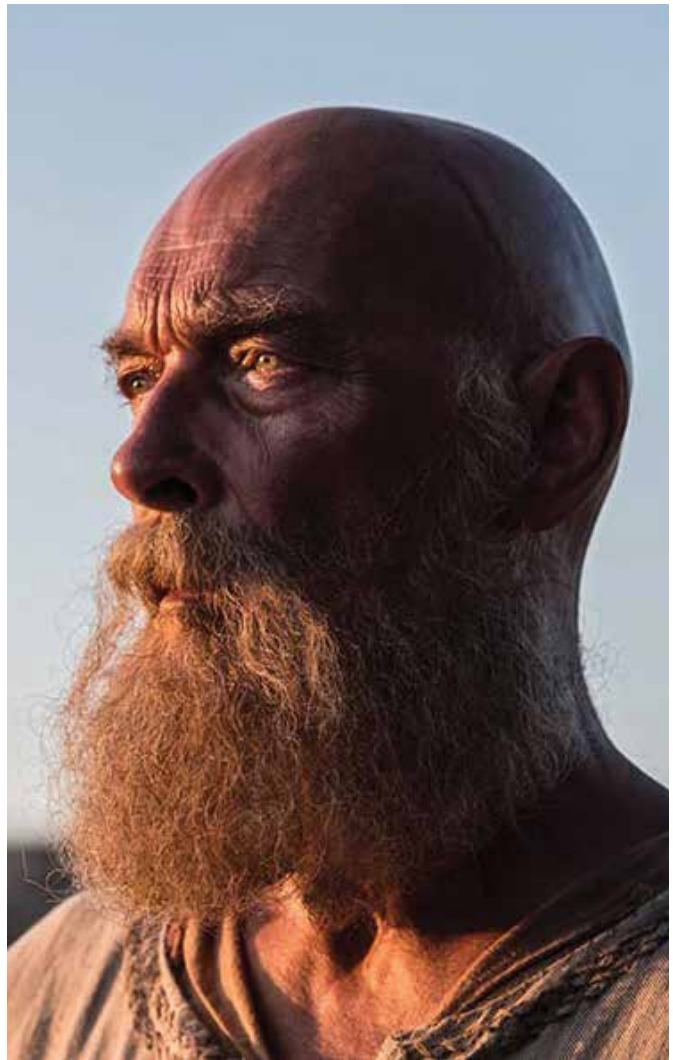
## THE STRENGTHS

Since this is a positive review, I'll start with what I see as the strengths.

First is the decision to make the dramatization center around the final days of Paul's life. Scripture does not contain much information about this time. This gap leaves the door open to reasonable license in telling Paul's story. This may not seem an advantage to those who take the historical-grammatical interpretation of Scripture seriously, as I do. But from my perspective, since little is known about Paul's last days, it permits creative dramatization without mangling Scripture—an offense many “Biblical” films have committed over the years.

Second, the film presents Christ as superior to every pagan sacrifice, religion, and god present in Rome. That is a very important point in our increasingly pluralistic environment.

Third, the unity of the body amidst intense persecution, as well as the individual's responsibility to follow the leading of the Spirit in his response to any circumstance, are unmistakable themes throughout the film.



Fourth, martyrdom for the sake of Christ is seen as an honor. As Luke witnesses the martyrdom by fire of a believer known to him, he is silently admonished not to interfere.

Fifth, the film also supports a Free Grace perspective of Scripture. In Paul's conversation with the Roman prefect, true to his Biblical writings, he presents salvation as a free gift and a universal offer on the basis of faith alone in Christ alone, regardless of past behavior. There is no ambiguity about the validity of one's justification based on future performance.

Sixth, Paul is depicted as having a preeminent concern that Jesus Christ alone should receive glory, and not Paul himself. He even questions Luke's desire to compose a record of his ministry. While this interchange is not recorded in Scripture, it seems consistent with the record of Paul's own testimony.

Seventh, throughout the movie, Christ's love, grace, and mercy are preeminent. Whether or not the viewer is persuaded that this indeed should be his view of Christ, it is unmistakable that it is Paul's view and the view of the Roman believers.


## WEAKNESSES

The weaknesses are few and may be a matter of personal preference.

First, there are some social gospel overtones presented in the discussions between Priscilla and Aquila, demonstrated in her concern for the "darkness of the city of Rome"; this seems to pertain primarily to temporal issues.

Second, as someone pointed out to me, there are some instances in which Paul quotes himself. Bible students will recognize those quotes are anachronistic, in that Paul would have written those words earlier in his ministry. It would have been more consistent, perhaps, to include these as part of a flashback to Paul's earlier ministry. However, I think it is reasonable that Paul may have quoted his writing back to himself, as encouragement in his times of persecution, and this may have been the movie's intent.

Third, and finally, in the closing text, Paul is said to have established "Christian Communities" throughout the ancient world. While that word may be more amenable to the ears of many watching the movie, I believe it is warranted to distinguish the local church from other "communities" and would strongly prefer the Biblical vocabulary at that juncture.

Again, I would encourage anyone to watch the movie, but in the same breath I would encourage anyone to read the book of Acts, and Paul's letters themselves. I believe the former is capable of inspiring the latter. 



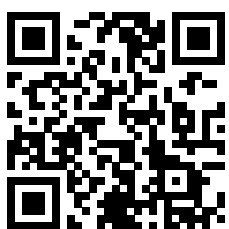
*Josh Meier is the pastor of El Paso Bible Church.*



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# A Kind of Thinking

By James Morison

## WHAT FAITH IS NOT

Believing is not a kind of feeling. Neither is it a kind of willing. It is *a kind of thinking*. “The understanding,” as James Fraser of Brea expressed it, in his *Treatise Concerning Justifying Saving Faith*, written by him while “a prisoner for Christ in the Bass Rock,” “is the proper and immediate subject of ‘faith’” (Vol. I, p. 175).

When we believe that there is a God, we do not feel that there is. Neither do we will that there shall be. We think that there is. And we think that there is, because we have reason for entertaining such a thought.

When we believe that there is a land called Australia, we do not feel that there is. And we do not choose that there shall be. We think that there is and we think that there is, because we have evidence to satisfy us that there is such a country.

When we believe that Abraham was the father of the Israelites, we do not feel that he was. We do not will or choose that he should be. We think that he was. And we think that he was, because we have evidence to satisfy us that he was.

When we take money to the bank and lodge it for a period, we have faith that we shall get interest for it, and that we shall get it back whenever we may wish to have it. We *believe* that we shall get interest. And we *believe* that we can get back the entire sum.

What is this believing or faith? It is, assuredly, neither feeling nor willing. We do not feel that we shall get interest. And though we choose or will to get it, yet our choice or will is founded on our believing or faith, and is thus not the believing or faith itself. When we believe that we shall get interest—and both interest and capital as soon as we wish to have both—we just *think* that we shall



get interest, and our capital, too. And we have this thought because we have evidence that satisfies us that the bank is worthy of being trusted—of being entrusted with our money. The bank’s *credit* is good with us. The bank commands *credit* in the money market.

## FAITH IS PERSUASION

Believing then, is *a kind of thinking*, though not the same kind of thinking as that by which we demonstrate a mathematical proposition, or that by which we observe the facts of science, or that by which we weave a web of imagination. It is that kind of thinking which is founded upon evidence. It is a *persuasion* of the mind.

It is assuredly of great moment that men should bear in mind that, when they are called upon to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, *it is thinking that is needed*. It is our thoughts of things that ultimately rule us. It is thought that rules the world.

If, then, men would believe in God, they must think, and think the right thought about God. ■

---

*James Morison (1816-1893) was a Scottish theologian. This is an excerpt from his book Saving Faith (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1871), pp. 22-25.*

# Vines By the Book

By Allen Rea

**T**he *Vines Expository Bible* is available in the New King James Version, which is my translation of choice for preaching. The text is double columned in 10.5 font. The pages are thin but they hold up fine with mechanical pencil writing and a Bible highlighter. The genuine leather edition comes with three medium quality ribbon markers. The Bible has a sewn binding with a paste-down liner, but the perimeter of the leather cover is stitched. This Bible will be able to survive plenty of wear and tear from ministry.

This is not your common study Bible, such as a Scofield or Ryrie. You would not buy this Bible for the notes. Instead, it has several features that make it worth a spot on your desk.

One of this Bible's greatest assets is the introductions. There are a couple of paragraphs introducing each book of the Bible, addressing the authorship, date, and outline & themes. Dr. Vines is both wise and witty, and these introductions are a literal gold mine of information for the Bible student.

There are four categories of helps: "Presenting the Message,"

"Living the Message," "Applying the Message," and "Discerning the Message."

## PRESENTING

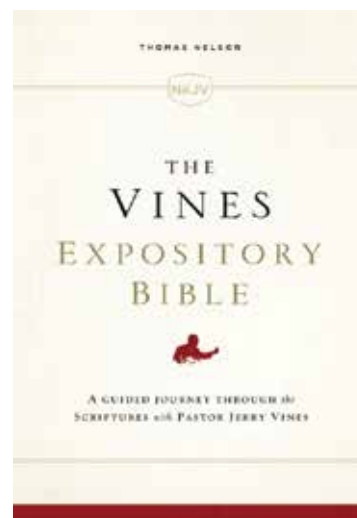
The "Presenting the Message" notes are detailed sermon outlines from Dr. Vines's sermon archive. There are 205 of these, and they alone are worth the price of the Bible. There is enough here to preach from and enough worthy of a week of study. These are more than a lifesaver when a preacher gets in a "Saturday night tight." They are powerful examples of what exposition should be. These outlines are not forced on the Biblical text but flow from the text itself.

## LIVING

The "Living the Message" sections are 148 articles that provide illustrations for our daily Christian life. These are usually four to five paragraphs in length, and a great help in making provisions for the truths of Scripture in everyday life.

## APPLYING


The "Applying the Message" sections are 237 notes written for the purpose of showing the pertinence of Scripture for daily life as a Christian. These are essential for the pastor or teacher who struggles with providing application to his hearers. These sections are especially strong at putting the passage within the whole counsel of Scripture.



## DISCERNING

The "Discerning the Message" sections contain 311 studies that highlight key words in the Scripture. These are the helps that are the most numerous throughout the Bible, though they tend to be the shortest in length. Dr. Vines, who is currently pursuing another doctoral degree, is no stranger to Greek and Hebrew studies. He has an amazing gift sharing the truths gleaned from the original languages to the lay congregation. They are wonderful little nuggets of truth peppered through the text itself.

## CONCLUSION

If you are looking for a traditional study Bible, you are better off sticking with Ryrie. However, if you want to grow in your organization of sermons and lessons and enjoy great golden nuggets of truth from the original languages, then Vines is right for you. 

---

*Allen Rea is Pastor of Higgston Baptist Church in Ailey, GA.*



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# The Mailbag

By You

**K**eept sending us your letters. We enjoy getting familiar with your names by seeing your letters month after month.

“I truly love your magazine *Grace in Focus*. The articles speak to my heart and spirit. It is so good to find someone who reads the Scriptures and doesn’t put his own slant or beliefs to it. The Scriptures are plain if one will just be open to reading, studying, and grasping the truths therein. Your stance, especially on rewards earned instead of ‘losing’ salvation is, as far as I’ve ever read and understand, right on the mark.” ~D.W., Century, FL.

“I think the greatest enemy to the grace gospel is to think or believe that self-effort, laws, or works can add anything to our salvation. Our salvation must be 100% by God’s grace, His gift, end of story.” ~R.B., Lake Mary, FL.

“Thank you for the nice mug you sent. I’m enjoying using it.” ~H.M., Baton Rouge, LA.

“I’ve really appreciated your magazine, as well as the books and online articles. I just signed up my aunt’s family for *Grace in Focus* (with her




Not the kind of mail we want.

permission), so I thought I’d offset a little of the cost of publishing and sending the magazine to her family. Thank you very much!” ~A.H., Fort Wainwright, AK.

“I love the magazine and the prospect of GES radio time.” ~J.H., Bynum, TX.

“Thank you for *Grace in Focus* and your books! What a gift! Another gift of God, like the free gift of salvation.” ~B.E., N. Manchester, IN.

“Blessings on your strategic ministry in 2018!” ~K.P., Fort Worth, TX.

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BAD QUOTE

“Though the Antinomian heresy has surfaced with varied justifications and emphases over the centuries, its latest explosion in the so-called ‘grace’ movement has its most immediate roots in the extreme manifestation of Darbyite Dispensationalism referred to as the ‘Free-Grace’ movement of the 20th century (led by teachers such as Lewis Sperry Chafer, Zane Hodges, and Charles Ryrie) that eventually persuaded some of its number to become near or even complete universalists, believing that not even specific belief or trust in Christ or the cross was required to be saved, since, according to them, ‘grace’ meant there are no requirements or conditions of any kind for salvation.”

From: The Modern Grace Message—Revolution or Rebellion?  
By David Kowalski.



The Los Angeles Regional. Did Ken hurt his back?

## **Southern California Regional Conference BIOLA University La Mirada, CA March 16-17**

**K**en, Shawn, and Bob all flew to Southern California for our first regional there in over a decade. The theme was *Is Calvinism Biblical?* Speakers included Ken, Shawn, Bob, and Brad Daskocil (GES Board chairman), George Bryson (author and speaker), and Chris Clark (pastor).

We had between 40 and 50 on Friday night and 30 to 40 on Saturday. Everyone was very enthusiastic about the conference.

The audio from the conference should be available at our website soon.

Ken flew out a day earlier because of the time change between California and South Carolina. He was picked up at LAX by Michael Kramer and his son. They took him to their home and graciously put him up for the night and took him to the

conference the next day. The food was great at their home, and Ken enjoyed getting to know the whole family. The whole family attended the conference (see picture, second row).

Thank you for making it possible for us to do this. Our cost was a bit over \$2,500 for this free conference. We had donations and sales totaling a few hundred dollars. Without your partnership, we could not put on conferences that are spiritually, but not financially, profitable.

## **Bob Swift Departs from This Life March 18**

Bob Swift, longtime friend of GES, died peacefully at home on Sunday, March 18, after battling pneumonia for 13 years and then recently having a series of strokes.

Bob Swift had been a speaker at the GES national conference, and he had written two book reviews and one journal article (on salvation in





Teaching grace in Kathmandu

Philippians) for our journal. He also wrote for DTS's journal, *BibSac*.

What a godly man and committed servant of Christ. He meditated on Scripture constantly.

He will be sorely missed.

Please pray for his wife, Carol, and his children, Steven and Laura. They rejoice that Bob is with the Lord now. But they also are grieving his departure.

(David Renfro and Bob Wilkin spoke at Bob Swift's memorial service, which was a joyous occasion.)

## Pray for Ken

We don't tell people enough about what Ken does overseas.

He was in Nepal from April 3 to April 27.

He spoke at two churches in Kathmandu. He also taught 1 and 2 Corinthians at Kathmandu Bible Institute.

Ken's daughter Kathryn, who will soon graduate from Luther Rice Seminary, taught a class on Bible study methods at the same time.

A generous donor contributed towards sending a bunch of free books to these Nepalese students.

Please pray for more funds and more opportunities for GES to minister to pastors and students overseas. We would love to grow this aspect of our teaching ministry.



Excited to be at the Hope Center

## Back in Print

The *Free Grace Primer* is back in print. Printing the book on-demand has raised the unit cost significantly. We have to put the retail price at \$20.00 on Amazon.com, but hope to sell it for less on our website.

## New Books by the Conference

Shawn is working on three new books for the National Conference.

Bob's *Grudem Against Grace* is a response to Grudem's book-length critique of Free Grace Theology. Bob takes on Grudem's somewhat loose arguments.

We will be printing Zane's commentary on 1-2 Timothy.

And Ken Yates will be publishing his first book, a commentary on *Hebrews*.

## 23rd Annual GES Conference The Hope Center, Plano, TX May 21-24

Our national conference is soon approaching. We are so excited to see our extended GES family and get some good Bible teaching to refresh our souls. We are also excited to try out the Hope Center in Plano, TX. It's a beautiful building, with nearby hotels and nice places to eat. It will bring a different dynamic to our conference.

# Forgiveness and Justice

By Charlie McCall

“Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you” (Eph 4:32).

## JESUS SATISFIED GOD’S JUSTICE

**F**orgiveness is natural to God. But it is not arrived at easily. Before He can forgive, God’s justice must be satisfied. It is impossible for Him to forgive by simple declaration. He cannot remain just and righteous and pardon the guilty. Sin creates a debt, and that debt must be paid.

God gave His Eternal Righteous Son as the debt payer for our sin. Only Jesus could justly, righteously, and eternally make payment for all sin. On the basis of the cross, God forgives us. God’s love motivates Him to forgive, but love is not the basis of forgiveness. The basis of forgiveness is that justice has been satisfied through the death of Christ.

## OUR SENSE OF JUSTICE

This brings me to our forgiveness of others. We have all struggled unsuccessfully with forgiving those whom we love. Why is this? If we love them, forgiving them should be easy. So we think. Yet that is not typically our experience.

There is without a doubt more than one reason for this contradiction between our love and our ability to forgive. My desire is to focus on only one: the need for justice. The sense of justice is the strongest aspect of conscience in every human being. It is this sense of justice that contributes to

making forgiveness difficult. Sadly, we communicate to people that a loving person wouldn’t be interested in justice.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

God is love, and God is just. Desiring justice is a good thing. It speaks of our humanity being in the image of God. It is the pursuit of justice on our terms that is wrong. Vengeance, the punishment of evil, is God’s territory. Not ours. But to want it is not in itself sin.

So how then do we reconcile love and forgiveness—both of which we are commanded to do—when we instinctively know that forgiveness is wrong if it ignores the demands of justice? Does God expect us to simply act like the sin never occurred? Does He want us to love in denial of what really happened? No, that would be a lie.

God is truth. He doesn’t call us to ignore sin or to call it by some other name so as to minimize it.

Then on what basis does a just and holy God call us to forgive our enemies? He, better than anyone, knows that it is wrong to pardon the guilty! He is the One who put that sense of justice in us!

I have come to experience great freedom and joy in knowing that the forgiveness I am called to give is not based on love and is not in violation of justice. The forgiveness God calls me to is based upon the just payment that Jesus

has made for all sin: all of my sin and all of everyone else’s sin. All sin has been paid for. God has forgiven it. Therefore, it is justly forgiven. It is just for me to forgive sin that has been justly paid for.

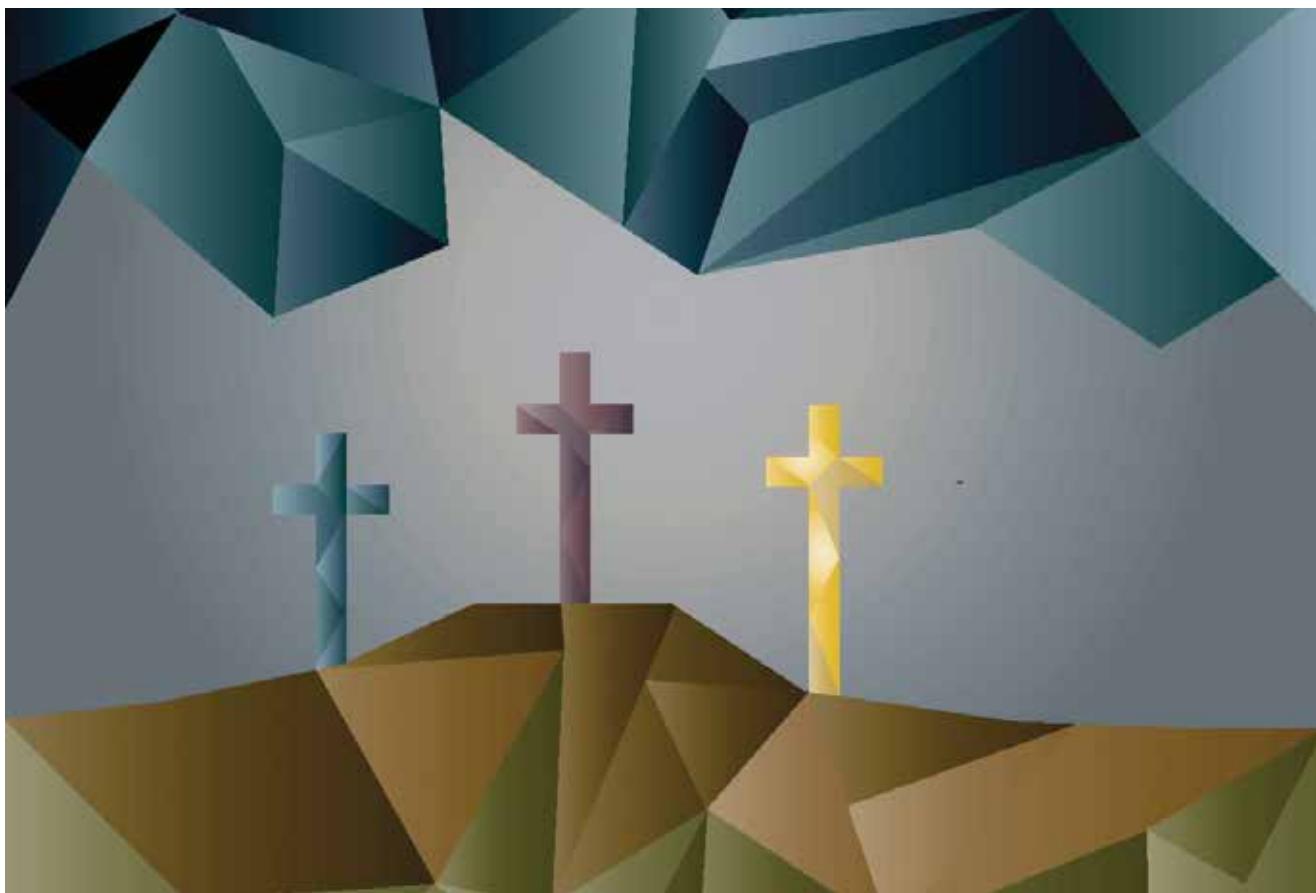
There is no debt. There is no obligation. There is not even an apology that is needed. It has all been paid for and forgiven. This is not “make-believe.” It is reality. Jesus paid it all.

The forgiveness that God has offered to us is offered freely through faith in Jesus Christ. If it is not received on that basis, it will not be experienced. The forgiveness I extend to another is also offered freely on the basis of what Christ has done.

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**“God gave His  
Eternal Righteous  
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payer for our sin.  
Only Jesus could  
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and eternally make  
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sin.”**

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It has been a great help to me to realize that the forgiveness that God calls me to extend to another is predicated upon God's just acceptance of Christ's payment for the very sin that I have suffered from. He is not telling me to feel forgiving, or to suspend judgment, or to love more. He is telling me to be in agreement with His justice as demonstrated in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

### **NOT FORGIVING IS A VIOLATION OF JUSTICE**

With this understanding, I realize that to not forgive sin that has been paid for by Christ, and forgiven by God, is itself a violation of the very justice that I long for. It is an injustice, and it is sin. There is also the realization that to refuse to forgive what God has forgiven is pride, the root of all sin.

Refusal to forgive is, in effect, telling God that He was wrong to raise Jesus from the dead. It is to say that His death was inadequate payment for the sin I have suffered from. It is to say that Jesus should still be hanging on a cross or lying dead in a tomb.

This leaves me with a question: who am I to not forgive what God has righteously and justly forgiven through the payment of Christ's shed blood?

We enter into the life and joy of Christ when we humbly allow God's just verdict on sin to be our verdict: Forgiven. Forgiveness isn't easy but it is just when it is in response to Christ's payment for sin.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for dealing fully with my sin and with the sin of those who have hurt me. Thank you that justice has been served, that I am forgiven, and that I can give forgiveness on that basis. ■



*Charlie McCall is the General Director of His Hill Bible School and Camp in Comfort, TX.*

# Moody: Then and Now

By Shawn Lazar

Institutions, especially theological ones, tend to change over time. Most of the time they change for the worse. And there is nothing more dangerous than a downward trend in your understanding of the saving message.

For example, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* seems to have repented of its view of salvation.

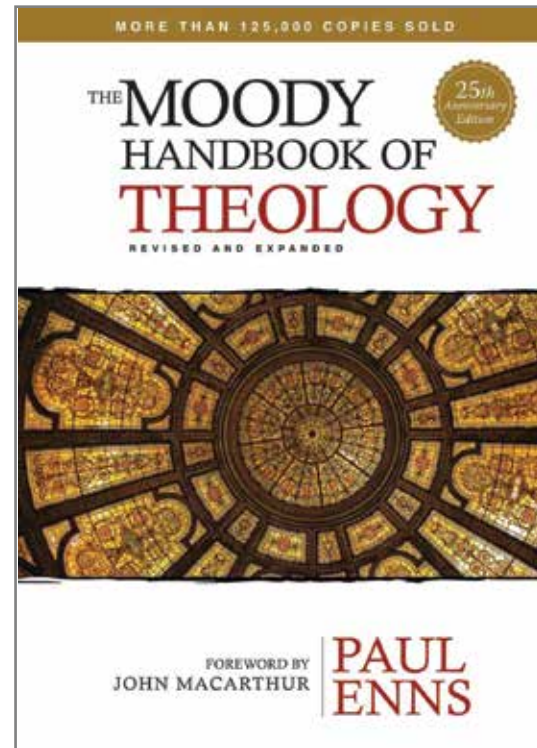
A reader pointed us to a significant difference between the 1989 and 2014 editions under Soteriology: Doctrine of Salvation > Man's Side > Erroneous Views.

## A CRUCIAL ERROR IN SALVATION: 1989

Here is what the 1989 edition says is the number one error in salvation:

(1) Repent and believe. Repentance should not be understood as a separate condition of salvation for believing in Christ. If repentance is cited as a condition of salvation in terms of feeling sorry for one's sins, then it is a wrong usage of the term. It should not be understood as a separate step in salvation. Acts 20:21 indicates that repentance and faith should not be seen as separate items in response to the gospel but together they signify belief in Christ. To believe in Christ is to change one's mind about Christ and trust Him alone for salvation (*The Moody Handbook*, 1989, pp. 330-31).

In other words, in 1989, *The Moody Handbook* said that it was wrong to say that there were two conditions of salvation: repentance and faith. Those are not two steps, but one step. Why are



they one step? Because repentance is defined as a “change of mind.” Hence, repentance and faith both “signify belief in Christ.” Believing in Christ is the only condition of salvation.

That’s more or less a Free Grace view. It makes clear, I think, that works are not part of the condition of salvation.

But that position on faith alone was reversed in the 2014 version.

## A CRUCIAL ERROR IN SALVATION: 2014

Look what the 2014 edition lists as the number one error on man's side in salvation:

(1) *Believe only*. Some say salvation need not include repentance nor spiritual fruit in one's life, for either one adds works to salvation. Yet repentance is a biblical word clearly related to salvation. Jesus began His ministry with a call to repentance (Matt 4:17)...It can readily be seen that repentance involves not only a change of mind, but a change of direction, remorse for sin, and as a result, a change of life...Such change of mind, and of the whole person, means true belief includes a transformed life—salvation includes transformation...Advocates of “believe only” subscribe to what has been called the “non-

lordship view” of salvation—that making Jesus Lord upon salvation is adding a work to the simple act of faith...In summary, lordship salvation stresses that in salvation, a person responds, acknowledging Jesus as Lord of his life (*The Moody Handbook*, 2014, pp. 344-45).

Did you notice the number one heresy in the new edition?

Is it salvation by works? Nope.

Is it legalism? Nope.

Is it sacramentalism? Again, no.

The number one heresy is to *believe only*.

Faith alone is the number one error in salvation according to the 2014 edition of *The Moody Handbook*!

Let that sink in.

## A CHANGE IN THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE

There are two important doctrinal changes between the 1989 and the 2014 editions of *The Moody Handbook*.

First, the definition of repentance changed. The 1989 edition defined repentance as a change of mind and hence, a synonym for believing itself. But the 2014 edition denies that repentance is only a change of mind, but includes a change of behavior, too.

Second, this kind of repentance is a condition for salvation along with faith. That implies that works are a condition of salvation, too, since repentance means doing good works.

The author unsuccessfully evades the charge of teaching salvation by works. For example, at first, the author recognizes that if repentance is a change of behavior, that may be adding works to salvation:

Some say salvation need not include repentance nor spiritual fruit in one's life, for either one adds works to salvation... (*The Moody Handbook*, 2014, p. 344).

Later he writes that works are not a part of salvation:

...no works factor into the issue. It is correctly stated that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, for the glory of God alone (Ibid., p. 345).

That sounds good. But does he really believe it? It seems not. He goes on to imply that works are

part of repentance, which is part of the condition for salvation:

It can readily be seen that repentance involves not only a change of mind, but *a change of direction*, remorse for sin, and as a result, *a change of life* (Ibid., p. 344, emphasis added).

He goes on:

William Mounce defines repentance (*metanoēō*) as “a radical, moral turn of the whole person from sin and to God” (Ibid).

Morally speaking, you were acting in sin. But repentance requires a radical moral turn from sin.

What other behavior changes are required?

“Such change of mind, and of the whole person, means true belief includes a transformed life—salvation includes transformation” (Ibid).

Do you see the contradiction?

At first, the author protested that his view did not make works a condition of salvation. But isn't that exactly what his definition of repentance means?

Doesn't a change of direction mean you will act differently?

Doesn't a change of life involve a change of behavior?

Doesn't a moral turn of the whole person from sin mean that you stop doing evil and start doing good?

Don't those changes clearly, and unambiguously, mean doing good works?

Of course they do.

So what does that mean for how he understands the condition of salvation? Does he believe in faith alone, that is, in salvation by faith apart from works?

It seems not.

It is a law of logic that if A = B, and B=C, then A=C. Likewise, if works are a part of repentance (as the author teaches), and repentance is a condition of salvation, then it follows that works are a condition of salvation.

That is clearly what the 2014 edition teaches.

There's no escaping the simple logic of it. The author is teaching a form of salvation by works. That represents a serious corruption of the purity of the gospel.

## DIFFERENT FOREWORDS


This radical change in *The Moody Handbook* is reflected in the authorship of the respective forewords.

In 1989, the foreword was written by J. Dwight Pentecost. And can you guess who wrote the foreword to the 2014 edition?

John MacArthur.

Readers of this magazine will certainly not be surprised at that.

Sadly, this change to *The Moody Handbook* represents a downgrading of the message of life. Instead of correctly distinguishing between faith and works, the 2014 edition makes doing good works part of the definition of repentance, and hence, a co-condition for salvation.

*The Moody Handbook* has changed its mind about salvation once. Let's hope that, in a future edition, it repents of teaching works salvation and goes back to affirming that salvation is by faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from works. 



*Shawn Lazar is the Editor of Grace in Focus magazine. He is the pastor of Gateway Baptist's Faith Fellowship in Denton, TX.*

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