

GRACE **IN** FOCUS

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IS JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH AND SALVATION BY WORKS?

PLUS "WE MAY HAVE CONFIDENCE" / PASTORS WHO WANT TO LEAD CHANGE / MISCONCEPTIONS /
LIFE APPRAISAL / JESUS SAID IT FIRST / GRACE IS APPROACHABLE / **RADIO** / **AND MORE!**

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FROM THE EDITOR

As we all know, salvation is by faith apart from works.
Or is it?

Would you be surprised to know there's also a salvation by works?

I'm not referring to the free gift of everlasting life. That, clearly, is given through faith in Christ, apart from all works done before, during, or after the moment of faith (John 3:16; Gal 2:16). But receiving everlasting life that cannot be lost at the point of faith, or being justified before God, does not exhaust what it means to be "saved."

Most Christian traditions have a very "flat" reading of salvation in the Bible. They reduce its meaning to only one kind of deliverance, and then read every other occurrence of the words *save* or *salvation* as if it meant that definition, irrespective of context.

If you've been reading Free Grace Theology over the years, you'll know we hold that the NT teaches different forms of "salvation." There is salvation from the Lake of Fire, yes, but there's also deliverance from physical threats to your life, such as from disease, persecution, or shipwreck. And sometimes salvation refers to a fuller experience of eternal life in the here and now. As Jesus said, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). There is an abundant life to be had.


This issue of *Grace in Focus* has several articles that address the issue of how salvation works itself out beyond the point of faith. The Christian life is rich with the possibilities of growing to Christian maturity. There is a strong NT expectation, that while believers will never come under judgment for their eternal destiny, we will be



Every Kind of Salvation


Shawn Lazar, **EDITOR**

evaluated and rewarded based on our faithfulness. Salvation is deep and wide.

I hope that, in some small way, this issue will help you see more clearly how Jesus comes to bring you salvation. 

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "S. Lazar".





Justification by Faith and Salvation by Works?

The Key to Understanding Romans 10:9-10

BY BOB WILKIN

*...that if you confess with
your mouth the Lord Jesus
and believe in your heart that
God has raised Him from the
dead, you will be saved.*

*For with the heart one
believes unto righteousness,
and with the mouth
confession is made unto
salvation.*

Romans 10:9-10 is found in most gospel tracts. It is widely used as an evangelistic verse. However, taken out of context, the verse is quite confusing and leads to a false gospel.

Let's begin with the way most people understand it.

THE COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF ROMANS 10:9-10—EVERLASTING LIFE IS BY FAITH PLUS WORKS

Most people think Paul is speaking of one thing with two conditions: regeneration (or

justification) by faith plus works. For example, C. E. B. Cranfield says,

It is clear that no substantial distinction is intended between *dikaïosunē* (righteousness) and *sōtēria* (salvation), both referring to eschatological salvation (*Romans*, p. 2:531).

In his commentary on Romans, Pastor John MacArthur says concerning Rom 10:9-10:

Many people acknowledge that Jesus is both the Son of God and the Lord of the universe. But Paul is speaking here of the deep, personal, abiding conviction that, *without any reservation or qualification* [italics his], will confess Jesus as Lord, that is, will confess that Jesus is the believers own sovereign, ruling Lord, in whom alone he trusts for salvation *and*

to whom he submits” (Romans, Vol. 2, p. 7, emphasis added).

Similarly, Cranfield says this about the meaning of confessing with your mouth the Lord Jesus:

There is expressed in addition the sense of His ownership of those who acknowledge Him and of their consciousness of being His property, *the sense of personal commitment and allegiance*, of trust and confidence (Romans, p. 2:529, emphasis added).

The level of confusion there is enormous. Why? It would mean that faith alone is not enough to be justified. Note what other conditions must be added in addition to faith:

- No reservation to the Lordship of Christ in my life.
- Jesus rules my life. I am committed to Him. I give Him my allegiance.
- My submission and following of Christ will continue till death.

The simple message of John 3:16 gets lost in such preaching. And such an understanding of Rom 10:9-10 puts Paul in opposition to the Lord Jesus.

But that cannot be.

The Lord Jesus and His apostles preached the same evangelistic message: everlasting life by faith alone, apart from works.

John Murray is not much better in his comments. He says that “confession without faith would be vain” and that “likewise faith without confession would be shown to be spurious” (p. 56). He also says that “Confession verifies and confirms the faith of the heart” (p. 57). But that makes the condition of everlasting life faith plus works (i.e., confession).

Interestingly, Murray is on the right track when he makes this comment about v 10:

The righteousness contemplated must be that which is unto justification and it is consonant with the teaching of the epistle throughout that faith should be represented as the instrument (p. 56).

However, since Murray, like MacArthur and Cranfield, has a wrong understanding of salvation in Romans, he ends up veering off track.

Romans 10:9-10 is clear if we just read those verses in context with the rest of Chap. 10 and with the entire book.

SALVATION IN ROMANS IS DELIVERANCE FROM TEMPORAL WRATH, NOT ESCHATOLOGICAL SALVATION FROM ETERNAL CONDEMNATION

The word *save* occurs nine times in Romans, and three times in Romans 10 (vv 1, 9, 13). The word *salvation* occurs four times in Romans, and once in Romans 10 (v 10). Thus four of the 13 uses of the words *save* and *salvation* occur in Romans 10.

Murray’s comment should be enough for anyone to see that whatever type of salvation Paul has in mind in Romans 10, it is not eschatological salvation.

A careful study of other uses of those words in Romans makes that clear as well:

Romans 1:16: “The gospel...is the power of God to salvation” = deliverance from wrath (1:18-32).

Romans 5:9: “We shall be saved from wrath through Him.”

This is a future salvation (“shall be saved”). And it is salvation from temporal wrath.

Romans 5:10: “We shall be saved by His life.”

As we live out the resurrection power of Jesus (i.e., progressive sanctification, cf. Romans 5-8), we are saved from temporal wrath by His life. The issue is not salvation from the lake of fire.

Romans 13:11: “Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.”

This refers to the Rapture, not to being born again.

There is really only one verse in Romans in which the word *save* might refer to the new birth, namely, Rom 8:24, “For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what one sees.” Notice this is a past tense salvation.



However, Zane Hodges, in his book *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*, suggests that as everywhere else in Romans, this salvation is not regeneration. It is the deliverance from sin's bondage that we experience when the indwelling Spirit applies the resurrection power of Jesus to our lives.

Hodges thinks that the words *we were delivered* look back to Rom 8:1-13. Those who walk "in newness of life" "experience the Spirit's quickening of their 'mortal bodies' (8:10-11) and thus 'by the Spirit' they 'put to death the deeds of the body' (8:13)" (*Romans*, p. 231).

WHEN PAUL WISHES TO SPEAK OF ESCHATOLOGICAL SALVATION IN ROMANS, HE SPEAKS OF JUSTIFICATION OR RIGHTEOUSNESS (ROMANS 3:21-4:25)

The justification section in Romans is Rom 3:21-4:25. Not once in that section does Paul use the words *save* or *salvation*. But he uses the words *justify* (6 times) and *righteousness* (11 times) a total of 17 times in that section. In

Romans, Paul never equates justification with salvation. They are distinct.

Romans 4:4-5 is a good example. We are justified by faith alone, not by faith plus works or even faith that works.

By the way, calling on the Lord is not found in that section, nor is confessing Jesus as Lord.

MISGUIDED ZEAL FOR GOD IS WORKS SALVATION (ROMANS 10:1-3)

Paul longs for Israel to be delivered from God's wrath. That is, he wants the nation to believe in Christ and follow Him so that the kingdom might come. When that happens, Israel will be under God's blessings, not His wrath.

Misguided zeal for God was a problem in Paul's day. And it is a problem we also face today.

Much of our evangelism is to people within Christianity who are "seeking to establish their own righteousness." They are not accepting the righteousness of God by faith.

Romans 10:1-3 contradicts the normal way in which people understand Rom 10:9-10 as teaching regeneration by faith plus works.

GOD PROMISES RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH, NOT BY WORKS (ROMANS 10:4-8)

Christ is the end of the law for the believer. That is, the believer is not under the Law of Moses.

Paul then cites from Lev 18:5 in which Moses wrote, “The man who does those things shall live by them.” That is not what Paul calls “the righteousness of faith.” That is what Paul calls “the righteousness which is of the law.”

In v 6 Paul speaks of the justification of faith as though it were a man crying out its message. The righteousness of faith does not demand for Christ to come back to earth.

Paul does not say what the righteousness of faith says until vv 9-10. Verse 8 introduces the issue of what it says, but does not complete it.

The point in vv 4-8 is that God has always promised the righteousness of faith, not righteousness of the Law. This too contradicts the way most understand Rom 10:9-10.

John 5:39-40 is similar to Rom 10:3-8.

SALVATION FROM WRATH IS BY WALKING IN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

Calling upon Him (v 12) and calling on the name of the Lord (v 13) are not simply a one-time crying out. This refers to a person who is part of the worshipping community. He calls upon Him and calls on His name every time he is at church with other believers.

Calling on Him or calling on His name is the same as confessing Him as Lord in Rom 10:9-10. This is not something different.

Verse 13 is a quotation from Joel 2:32. Joel 2 is discussing the end of the Tribulation where Jews who are calling on the Lord will be delivered from physical death.

What does it mean to call on the name of the Lord? Zane Hodges says, “Thus believers who gather in Christian assemblies acknowledge the Lord Jesus with their mouths and publicly appeal to His name for all that they need” (*Romans*, p. 304). He adds, “It is evident that, as a description for Christians, to *appeal to the name of the Lord* does not describe a one-time event. It becomes a basic description of them (see again,

1 Cor 1:2; 2 Tim 2:22) precisely because it was done *habitually*, especially in gatherings for Christian worship and prayer” (*Romans*, p. 304).

GOD HAS BEEN DRAWING ISRAEL TO HIMSELF FOR ALL OF ISRAEL'S HISTORY (ROMANS 10:14-21)

Notice how v 14 makes it clear that the ones calling on the name of the Lord in v 13 must be believers.

Here is the order of events from vv 14-15:

- A preacher is sent (v 15).
- People hear the preacher preach (v 14c).
- People believe what the preacher preaches (v 14b).
- The new believers call on the name of the Lord (v 14a).

The salvation in Rom 10:13 is the salvation of a believer, not of an unbeliever. One must believe in Jesus before he can call upon Him.

Verses 16-21 deal with the fact that God has been drawing Israel to faith in Messiah since its founding. Note v 21: “All day long I have stretched out My hands” to Israel. The words *All day long* mean *incessantly*. Since Israel's birth until Paul's day, and even today, God has continued to stretch out His hands.

Verses 14-21 show that it is faith in Christ which results in justification and that if a believer then calls on the name of the Lord, the believer will be saved from temporal judgment.

So now let's go over what Rom 10:9-10 actually means.

The key is to see that there are two separate issues in view.

1) JUSTIFICATION IS BY FAITH ALONE AND 2) SALVATION FROM GOD'S WRATH IS BY FAITH PLUS WORKS

Commentators are partially right when they speak about confessing the Lord Jesus. Yes, it involves commitment to Him, allegiance to Him, and surrender to His Lordship. No, confessing Christ is not a condition of everlasting life. It is a condition for escaping temporal wrath.

Those who get this wrong then go to John 3:16 and read their faulty thinking into it. So then they speak of *true faith* and as faith which is *committed, obedient, surrendered, and so forth*.

You and I are justified before God by faith. That is a done deal.

We may or may not experience salvation from God's wrath in this life. To do that, we need to walk in newness of life—walking with Christ and His people.

Notice that in vv 9-10 Paul reverses the order of confessing with one's mouth and believing in one's heart. In v 8 the order is mouth then heart. But in vv 9-10 the order is heart then mouth.

Verse 9 is talking about salvation from temporal judgment, which requires believing and confessing.

Hodges thinks the best translation is not confessing *the Lord Jesus*, or *Jesus as Lord*, or *Jesus is Lord*, but instead he suggests *Lord Jesus*.

But what would it mean to confess "Lord, Jesus"? It would mean crying out to Him. The believer who is regularly crying out "Lord Jesus" as part of a local assembly is one who will be delivered from temporal wrath. Of course, these are not magic words. It is not merely saying, "Lord Jesus" that leads us to be delivered. It is saying those things with a corresponding attitude of submission, allegiance, and desire to please. Hodges makes this excellent comment,

But as is obvious, this direct appeal to Jesus, with the accompanying title 'Lord,' necessitates that the one who makes the appeal should believe that Jesus is *alive* to hear it. Thus the attitude of the heart is crucial. When one calls on Jesus with his mouth in order to be delivered, he must therefore have faith in his heart that God has raised Him from the dead (*Romans*, p. 299, emphasis his).

So in v 9 Paul is not saying that everyone who believes that God raised Jesus from the dead is born again. Verse 9 is not about the new birth at all. Instead Paul is saying that if a believer continues to believe in the living Lord and continues to call upon Him, then he will be delivered *from wrath in this life*.

However, v 10 is not talking only about salvation from temporal judgment. It is also talking about justification by faith that makes salvation from temporal judgment possible. "With the heart one believes unto righteousness." That is a

reference to justification by faith alone. How can anyone miss that?

Notice that in v 10 Paul does not explain what it is that one believes unto righteousness. He already laid that out in Rom 3:21–4:25. It is believing in Jesus as the justifier of all who have faith in Him.

Hodges says concerning v 10: "Thus in the matter of obtaining righteousness, Jesus is the object of faith. But in the same way, He is also the object of our confession: **but with the mouth He is confessed for deliverance**" (*Romans*, p. 300, emphasis his).

René López lists six different understandings of Rom 10:9-10. He calls Hodges' interpretation the "Christian Deliverance View" (*Romans Unlocked*, p. 212). López says that "abundant life is available only to those who *believe and confess*" (*Romans Unlocked*, p. 212, emphasis his).

The key to understanding Rom 10:9-10 is to recognize that two different issues are in view: justification by faith alone and deliverance from temporal wrath by faith plus works.

APPLICATIONS

First, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for your justification.

Second, remain assured of your justification by continuing to believe the promise.

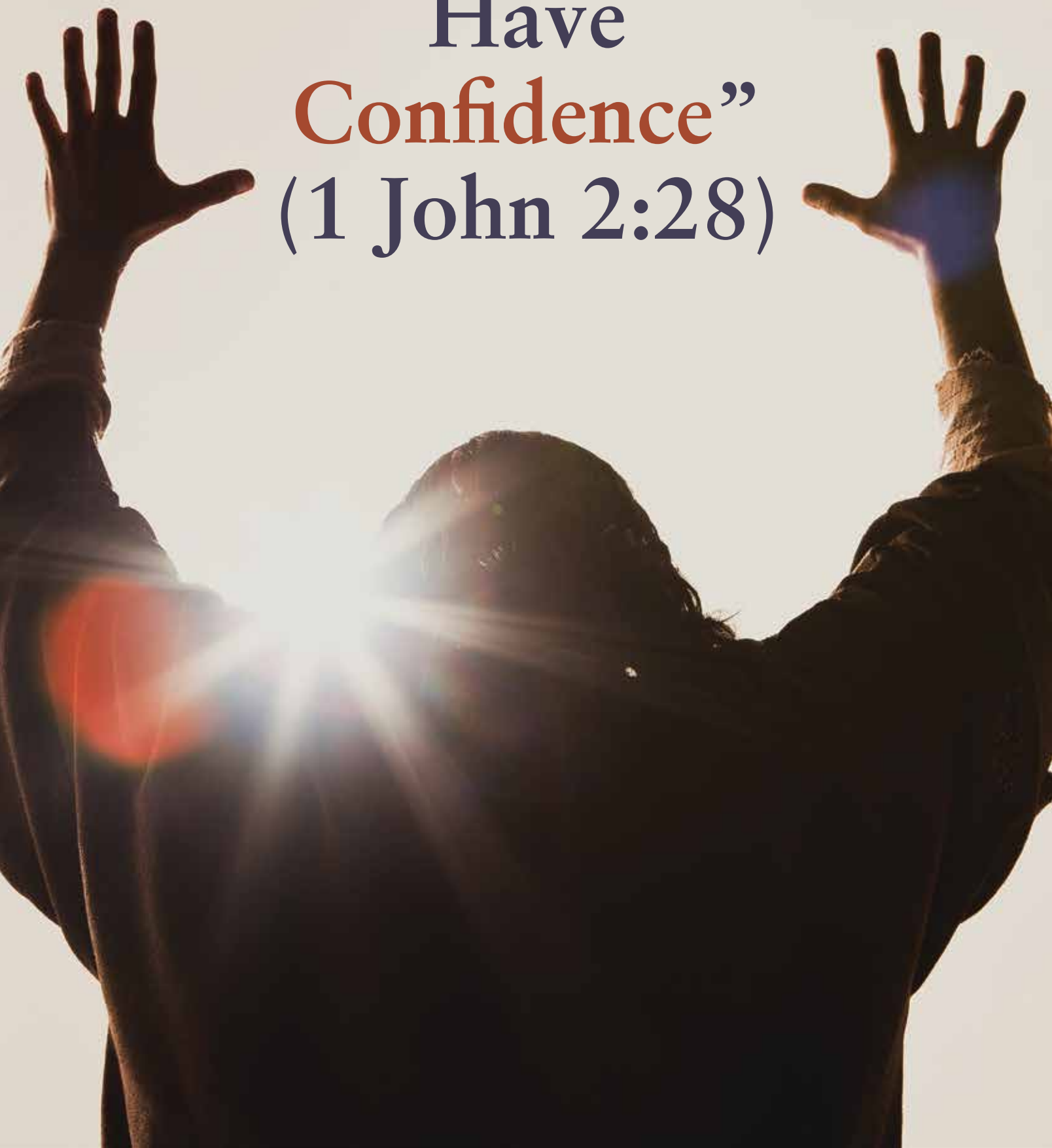
Third, call upon the Lord every week in a solid Bible-teaching church so that you and your family will be saved from sin's bondage and from the temporal wrath which it brings.

Fourth, help those who are seeking to establish their own righteousness to see that doing so is impossible and that the only way to be justified before God is by faith in Christ, plus nothing. ■



Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He lives in Highland Village, TX, with his wife of 42 years, Sharon. His latest book is *Is Calvinism Biblical? Let the Scriptures Decide*.

“We May
Have
Confidence”
(1 John 2:28)



By Bill Fiess and Ken Yates

At the end of 1 John 2, the Apostle writes about the day when Jesus Christ returns (“He appears.”). John writes:

And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming (1 John 2:28).

This is quite a statement. We all know people who are, by nature, confident. But John is talking about being confident before the Lord Himself when we stand before our King at the Judgment Seat of Christ. How is that possible?

Many times I have been in conversations with other believers about the Judgment Seat of Christ. Very often one of us will say that the idea of standing before the Lord and having Him evaluate our lives is a very sobering thought. No matter how confident a person may be in this world, we simply cannot see how any of us could be confident on that day.

John tells us how we can. But we can also have confidence in another area.

THE KEY IS THE WORD “ABIDE”

First John is a small book. A very important word in it is the verb “abide.” It occurs over 20 times. It appears in 1 John 2:28, but the first time it occurs is in 2:6. In that verse, we see what it means. The person who “abides” in Christ is the believer who “walks just as” Jesus walked.

When we look at how the verb is used in 1 John, we see that the believer who “abides” in Jesus is the one who does what Jesus commands us to do. It is the believer who is comfortable—who feels at home—with the Lord.

John clearly says that such a believer can have confidence at the Judgment Seat. But John repeats this point later in the book.

THREE OTHER TIMES JOHN SAYS WE CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE

John mentions three other times that the believer can have confidence. This involves being confident in two areas. In 2:28, as we have seen, it deals with being confident at the Judgment Seat of Christ. In 1 John 4:17, he says the same thing.

In that verse, John says we can have confidence in the Day of Judgment. This is also a reference to the Judgment Seat of Christ. A believer can have confidence on that Day if he loves (4:17-19). The reason that confidence is warranted is because, as John says, the believer who loves has conducted himself in this world in a way which mirrors the Lord (4:17).

This, of course, is parallel with what John says in 2:28. The believer who is obedient to the Lord, who walks as He did, by loving other believers, is like the Lord. He is like the One who will judge him. If such a believer has done what the Judge has said and has lived like the Judge, he can expect that His Lord will be pleased with his life. He can be confident of that fact.

But such a believer can have confidence in a second area.

CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER

As we’ve seen, two of the occurrences of “having confidence” deal with the Judgment Seat of Christ. The remaining two occurrences deal with having confidence in prayer. These two references are in 1 John 3:21 and 5:14.

First John 3:21-22 talks about prayer. In v 21 he says that we have confidence before God. But

that confidence is related to prayer. In v 22 he says that we can have this confidence in “whatever we ask” of God. We can have confidence that we will receive it.

But this confidence in prayer, this assurance that we will receive whatever we ask of God, depends on a couple of things. First, that the believer “keeps His commandments.” This, of course, reminds us how we can have confidence at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The second requirement is that the believer does those things that “are pleasing in His sight.”

John is saying that the believer who is abiding in Christ by doing what He asks of us will experience answered prayer. Such a believer is walking with the Lord and is at home with Him. He will ask those things that are pleasing to His Lord. He can have confidence that the Lord will do what He asks.

This is what John repeats in the last instance in which “having confidence” is mentioned in 1 John. In 5:14 he says that the Lord hears if we ask Him “according to His will.” Such a prayer will result in receiving from the Lord what we ask.

The believer who is walking with the Lord, who is “abiding” in Him, will ask from the Lord according to His will. In the words of the famous song, he won’t ask, “O Lord, won’t you buy me a Mercedes Benz; my friends all drives Porches; I must make amends.” Instead, as a believer who obeys the Lord by loving others, he will ask those things that the Lord desires. He not only desires to answer those prayers, but because He is able to answer them, He will do so.

CONCLUSION

Many Christians have no idea that the Judgment Seat of Christ is coming. They have never been taught. But the day will come when we will give an account of our lives before the One who has given us eternal life. This Judgment has nothing to do with the gift of eternal life, but has everything to do with rewards in the kingdom of

God. Even though it does not impact whether we will be in the kingdom or not, how can we keep being motivated by that Day? It only makes sense to live each day in light of the prospect of having the Lord look at our lives.

First John tells us we need to abide in Christ. We need to walk in obedience to His commandments. We need to make ourselves at home with Him. As we do, we live as He did. We live as the One who will judge us on that day. If we do that,

we can have confidence that the Judge will approve of what He sees in how we lived.

But our confidence does not only deal with a future day of Judgment. Twice John says we can also have confidence in our prayers. We can know God will answer our prayers. How? In the same way we can have confidence on that future day: by abiding in Christ. By walking as He did. By know-

ing from that intimate relationship what pleases Him. Such a believer will ask the all-powerful Lord to do the things that He desires to do. How could such a believer not have confidence that his prayers will be answered?

We all know confident people. But four times John tells us how to be confident in our prayers as well as on that glorious day when we shall see the Lord face to face. May we all have such confidence! ■

Bill Fiess teaches math in Virginia and is a Logos guru. Ken Yates is Editor of The Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society and GES’s East Coast and International speaker. He is the pastor of Little River Baptist Church in Jenkinsville, SC.

RECOMMENDED READING FOR PASTORS WHO WANT TO LEAD CHANGE

BY BUD BROWN

It has been my privilege to mentor pastors who want to see their churches become more effective at winning people to faith in Jesus. I've read countless volumes, journal articles, and academic papers on this topic. At one point, over twenty feet of my library shelves bulged with these materials. I have culled them down to a handful of books I find especially helpful for pastors.

Whether you seek to cultivate greater spiritual depth or more effective evangelism in your church, these five volumes will reward your reading. One is a delightful, informative, and thought-provoking introduction to "mission" as a theme that organizes the Biblical narrative. Another shows how all churches stay on mission throughout their life cycles.

Two suggest a new paradigm to enhance church leadership. Finally, there's a "tool box" many will find helpful with the daily issues of pastoral ministry.

MISSION AS HERMENEUTIC

Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*. Zondervan, 2010. 301 pages.

Wright's helpful manual explains how a church can stay on mission at every point in its life cycle.

My colleagues and I have learned that we can accurately predict several things about any church stuck on a plateau or trapped in a death spiral. Invariably, the pastors of these

“The ability to lead a stagnant church to new life and effective mission rises or falls on how the pastor thinks about himself, his role in the life of the church, and whom he thinks he is leading. ”

churches struggle to explain how their churches connect to and advance the Biblical narrative.

As a result, they lack compelling arguments in favor of beneficial change. Discussions about proposed changes—intended to help the church minister more effectively—devolve into arguments over taste and preference.

Christopher Wright’s book approaches the Biblical narrative from the Biblical theologian’s perspective. He uses the concept of “mission” as his unifying theme to organize his theology. Although his view of the current nature of the kingdom of God differs from mine, I find that his work makes it much easier for pastors to connect the purpose of the local church to God’s initiative in creation.

This is especially needful in low functioning churches because it provides objective Biblical means for assessing a church’s ministry and re-locating its resources into more effective work.

SURPASSING BARRIERS

Gary L. McIntosh, *Taking Your Church to the Next Level: What Got You Here Won’t Get You There*. Baker, 2009. 215 pages.

A lot has been written on breaking the 200 barrier. A few books are actually beneficial.

McIntosh’s book is extremely helpful in two ways. First, it provides useful insight into the organizational dynamics which cause churches to stall at various congregational sizes. He observes that “the diminution of consensus about organizational values and goals is a normal consequence of growth...[due] mostly to the brute fact that as an organization grows, its relationships to

its members and to the environment necessarily change.”

How many churches get stuck on a plateau because the pastor doesn’t realize he must change the way he relates to church members?

Second, McIntosh specifies how a pastor’s leadership behaviors must change as the church grows. He gently tutors pastors through several paradigm shifts—e.g. from “chaplain” in the family-sized church to managerial leader in the mid-sized church—that keep the growing church a growing church.

This book will reward you with a detailed task list and a workable plan if you read it with pen and paper in hand.

NEW LEADERSHIP PARADIGMS

This brings us to the most fundamental (and often most difficult) change required to move a church off plateau. The single most important change occurs in the heart and mind of the pastor. The ability to lead a stagnant church to new life and effective mission rises or falls on how the pastor thinks about himself, his role in the life of the church, and whom he thinks he is leading. Pastors we’ve worked with have found three books particularly helpful.

Jack Shitama, *Anxious Church, Anxious People: How to Lead Change in an Age of Anxiety*. Charis Works, Inc., 2018. 153 pages.

This insightful and helpful guide will change the way you answer the question, “Who is it that I’m leading as pastor of this troubled church?” Shitama’s adroit, lucid explanation of the application of systems theory to the church provides a

global perspective on church leadership. Pastors will gain significant insight into why churches invariably react to anxiety in predictable patterns.

Reflective reading and thoughtful consideration will reward you with insight on how to lead difficult churches or respond to challenging issues. You'll find tools that will help you develop reasoned responses based on principle. As you become proficient with this new leadership style, you will avoid unproductive reactivity based on emotional pain.

In time your church will enact beneficial changes that move the church to higher levels of function, more effective ministry, and conversion growth. Along the way you will find yourself maturing in Christ and becoming more confident, better able to handle criticism, and find greater satisfaction in your service.

LEADERSHIP NEEDS

Lavern Brown, Gordon Penfold, Gary Westra, *Pastor Unique: Becoming A Turnaround Pastor*. Westbow Press, 2016. 310 pages.

Okay, I admit that this one is a bit self-serving. But apart from my personal interest in the book, the fact remains that this volume represents groundbreaking research into the leadership behaviors that result in church revitalization. Gary McIntosh, the dean of church growth research, has written that "each year thousands of books are written, published, and distributed. Few are really significant works. *Pastor Unique* is, in my view, a significant book."

Rather than using typology, which is grounded in Jungian archetypes, this research employed a statistically reliable and valid instrument (the Birkman Method™). This enables us to delve into the underlying needs that are manifested in leadership behaviors and stress responses. Several chapters apply the research findings to such crucial challenges as leading change and managing conflict.


PRACTICAL MINISTRY HELP

George G. Hunter, III, *Leading & Managing a Growing Church*. Abingdon, 2000. 156 pages.

The research literature is replete with evidence that pastors often fail in ministry due to a lack of two things: a lack of training in managerial skills and counterproductive relationship management skills. Hunter's book addresses the first problem. (The two books in the previous category address the second).

Extensive research and years of experience inform this insightful and Biblical approach to church management. He specifies church management processes that most books on leadership take for granted. The result is a practical guide and a proven paradigm for leading a growing and changing church.

CONCLUSION

Pastors face many interesting, occasionally difficult, challenges these days. Whether your interest is in improving your church's evangelistic ministry or cultivating greater spiritual depth, these books will guide you as you think carefully about how you lead. 



Bud Brown is President and Co-Founder at Turnaround Pastors. He is the co-author of Pastor Unique: Becoming A Turnaround Pastor.

Get a **FREE eBook** when you sign up for our blog at www.faithalone.org/blog



Top 5 Misconceptions About Free Grace Theology

By Summer Stevens

1. FGT IGNORES THE SERIOUSNESS OF SIN, AND THEREFORE PROMOTES CASUAL CHRISTIANITY

One of the most common misconceptions of Free Grace Theology (FGT) is that it downplays sin and leads to lawlessness. The argument goes that if someone is not fearful of losing his salvation—if his works don't matter—he will pursue sin with reckless abandon. Therefore, it is thought that Free Grace adherents, intentionally or not, give a nod of approval to a life of sin, thereby cheapening Jesus' death on the cross.

FGT is persuaded of Jesus' promise that those who believe in Him have eternal life and have crossed over from death to life (John 5:24). Believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at the point of faith. The Holy Spirit then continues the work of convicting the believer of sin to bring about life change. Sadly, believers can ignore the Holy Spirit's leading and, because of sin or brokenness, pursue a life without God. As a result, they can experience God's discipline, a loss of fellowship with God, and a loss of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Given these negative consequences, FGT warns against the harmfulness of sin and affirms church discipline, confession, repentance, and a changed life—just not as a condition of eternal salvation or a proof of it.

2. FGT SEES SANCTIFICATION AS OPTIONAL

This one is half true. FGT does see sanctification as “optional” in the sense that you can be born again without being experientially sanctified in this life.

Sanctification is described as the “process of being made holy.” This is a process that begins the moment of salvation and continues until



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death. The evidence of our sanctification may never be noticed by others. But other people are not our judge. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4,

For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God (1 Cor 4:4-5).

Certainly, Free Grace proponents do not condone sin. The apostle Paul dealt with the very same argument in Romans 5 and 6. In 6:15 he wrote,

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! (Rom 6:15).

He gives the reason a few verses below:

So now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification (Rom 6:19, NASB, emphasis added).

Sanctification is a process of allowing the Holy Spirit to be more and more at home in our hearts. It is a work of God, but our hard hearts can restrict His moving.

FGT gets to the heart of the matter. A commitment to follow Jesus is absolutely necessary to our sanctification, fellowship with God, and our rewards in heaven.

3. FGT REDEFINES WORDS TO MAKE THEM FIT THEIR THEOLOGY

I have never seen more careful, thoughtful scholarship than in the works of GES authors. There is a respect for every word of God in the Bible. Because of that reverence, the Scripture is studied closely. The result is a logical, reasonable, consistent terminology (e.g., how the word “saved” can refer to either temporal or eternal salvation, depending on the context).

Some have criticized FGT by saying that there is no way the early readers would have come to these conclusions. But words have always had different meanings in different contexts, and Scripture has always been studied carefully! It is a disservice to early Christians to assume that they were not capable of thoughtful scholarship and study.

Redefining a word to fit one’s theology is dishonest. Doing rigorous exegetical work to draw out a word’s full and complete usage and meaning is called research.

For example, in Bob Wilkin’s book, *The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible*, he gives a thorough argument for the accurate understanding of commonly misunderstood words. He doesn’t redefine them; he simply explains the meaning that has always been present.

4. FGT DOESN’T CARE ABOUT REPENTANCE

FGT does not consider repentance a co-condition with faith to be born again. It bases that conclusion on John’s Gospel, which was written for an evangelistic purpose (John 20:30-31). Tellingly, the word “repentance” does not even appear in John’s Gospel. The only condition to have everlasting life is to believe in Jesus. Hence, repentance does not get the “air time” in our evangelistic messages as it does in the Lordship Salvation camp. One could therefore conclude, wrongly, that FGT dismisses the need for repentance altogether. On the contrary, repentance is a crucial aspect of FGT’s understanding of the Christian life. In fact, a careful study of the Bible reveals different usages of repentance.

For example, in Jonah 3, we see that repentance is a condition for avoiding temporal judgment and destruction.

In the NT, believers are called to repent when they are persisting in sin. Luke 17:3 says, “Watch out! If your brother sins, rebuke him. If he repents, forgive him.” Repentance is necessary for harmony between people, and between the sinner and God. All believers should come to God and others with a humble heart seeking forgiveness when we sin.

For more information, see Zane Hodges’s book *Harmony with God: A Fresh Look at Repentance*, and Bob Wilkin’s article entitled, “Part 4: New Testament Repentance: Repentance in the Gospels and Acts” *JOTGES* (Spring 1990).

5. FGT BELIEVES THAT REWARDS ARE THE PRIMARY MOTIVATION FOR HOLY LIVING

It is true that FGT has a robust doctrine of rewards and this is one motivation for holiness. But it is not the primary one. The primary motivation for holy living is Jesus Himself. 1 John 2:28 says,

Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

We abide in Jesus because Jesus is life! We cling to Him because we need Him, and we know that in Him (and in the truth He has revealed in His Word) we will find rest for our souls. We live holy lives so that we can hear, when we enter into the presence of God,

“Well done, good and faithful servant...come and share your master’s happiness” (Matt 25:23).

We obey Him not only for the reward to come, but ultimately, because we love Him.¹¹



Summer Stevens has been a “pastor’s wife” for almost 12 years. She and her husband Nathanael live south of Pittsburgh where he serves as the pastor at the Bible Chapel—Rostraver Campus.



The fine folk at Breadalbane Baptist!

January 6 Breadalbane Baptist Church Dalkeith, ON, Canada

Shawn preached at Breadalbane Baptist Church in Dalkeith, Ontario, Canada. The congregation was founded two hundred years ago by Scottish immigrants.

Shawn taught at the Sunday school on “The Cross: Different Benefits, for Different People, Under Different Conditions,” and then again in the worship service, “Walk By Faith, Not By Sight.” The messages were very well received. Shawn’s friend, Vahag Santourian, an elder at the church, arranged the visit, and it was very much appreciated. We need to get a grace newsletter established in Canada.

Lii Bible Study January 18

On Friday night I (Bob) spoke at a high school Bible study near SMU in Dallas. It was at the home of Mike

and Letitia Lii. Their son Payton is a senior who is now making college plans.

I spoke on worldview. Students must work hard to maintain a Christian worldview. Most colleges and universities promote an atheistic or agnostic worldview. Life really doesn’t have any meaning (nihilism). There is no creator. We simply evolved after a big bang. Luck over time.

I urged them to plug into a solid church during college. Plus try to find a good Christian organization on campus. And see if they can find a group that has a conservative worldview like Prager Force, Young Americans for Liberty, Turning Point USA, and the Young Americans Foundation.



Shawn and Vahag

Winter GES Board Meeting January 11-12

We had a very unusual meeting. Because Sharon was having her first chemo treatment on Day 2 of the



The Board: Bob, Shawn, Ken, Brad, Tony, Bernie, and JB



Board supper: Bob, Ken, Brad, Tony, and Bernie

meeting, we got all of the major items of business done on Day 1. It was a very productive time.

On Saturday the board—minus me as I was with Sharon in chemo—spent time in brainstorming and fellowship.

December giving was great. We are in good shape entering the second half of our fiscal year.

This meeting introduced a new board member: Tony Taffar, from South Carolina. He becomes our young guy. He's just 55.

Our thanks to Brad Doscocil, Bernie Hunsucker, J.B. Bond, Tony Taffar, and Ken Yates for their outstanding service.

BTW, Sharon's first chemo went great.

GES's 23rd Annual Conference: The Hope Center, Plano, TX May 20-23

We are very excited for the National Conference. We will be going through Paul's letter to the Ephesians verse-by-verse.

We'll be back at the Hope Center. This year we've organized the meals better than last year. Boxed lunches will be an option. And the Tuesday night banquet will be held at the Lutheran church that shares a parking lot with the Hope Center.

Last year, Shawn took a small group of book nerds to the enormous Half Price Books warehouse. He'll do that again for anyone who loves to browse used bookstores.

Special Publications Updates

The one-volume reprint of *The Grace New Testament Commentary* is on track to be ready for the National Conference.

Ken's commentary on *Hebrews* is next to be typeset. Look for it in the coming months.

Bob is putting final touches on his *The Power of Repentance* book. We're hoping for a Conference release date.

And Shawn continues to write his book on *Final Punishment*. He's hoping to finish by the Conference, but there are so many other projects.

Review Our Books on Amazon

Be sure to review our books on Amazon.com. There's no reason why each of our books should have less than one hundred reviews. The more reviews, the more that seekers will be likely to buy them. If you haven't written a review, please do it today!

NOTES AND LETTERS

"Dear Shawn, I finished reading your book, Beyond Doubt. I believe and know that I have eternal life right now, at this very moment in time, because it is based on Jesus' promise. Your book was simple, clear, and easy to understand. I will definitely recommend this book to as many people as I can. Thanks and God bless." ~T.A., mail





Grace Is Approachable

By Shawn Lazar

I was listening to a podcast by Paul Zahl entitled “A Disease I Do Not Have the Courage to Name.”

The title comes from a now out-of-print book entitled *My Son Is a Splendid Driver*, set during the Great Depression. In it, the protagonist’s mother is given a deadly STD by her husband, a traveling salesman. She feels ashamed—too ashamed to go to church.

“Mother had stopped going to church. ‘Church isn’t the place to go with your troubles. Church is just a place to go when you’re feeling good and have a new hat to wear.’ There was a little bitterness in what she said, a little self-pity, but there was also truth. Our minister would have been the last person in the world she could have talked to, to have lifted the curse she felt upon her and save her from feeling damned. She would have embarrassed the man into speechlessness had she gone to him with her story. He would have been unable to look at her or my father without coloring.”

That hit me.

Am I an unapproachable pastor?

Am I the last person who could relate to a woman who caught an STD from her husband?

Are you?

If that were the case, what would that say about *my religion*?

GLAD TO EAT WITH JESUS

I thought about Jesus. He ate with sinners. He was well known for it. In fact, sinners *wanted* to eat with Him. After Jesus called

Levi (Matthew) to be a disciple, he threw a banquet for the Lord, provoking some gossip:

The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?” (Luke 5:30).

At church, we just finished going through Galatians. My emphasis throughout the series was how Paul distinguished between law-religion and grace-religion, between law-thinking and grace-thinking.

Hence, it’s not surprising to me that it was the teachers of the Law (i.e., the scribes) who objected to Jesus’ eating with tax collectors (i.e., collaborators and traitors) and sinners.

That’s all the law can do: *condemn*.

The law doesn’t see people, but perpetrators. It reduces people to their sins and tells you why they should be rejected.

No wonder sinners find that sort of religion unapproachable. No wonder sinners weren’t keen to eat with the Pharisees and scribes (assuming the opportunity ever came up). And if that’s the kind of religion depicted in *My Son Is a Splendid Driver*, no wonder the mother was too ashamed to go to church.

HITTING THE STREETS

I recently took a break from preaching in Ephesians to discuss Luke 5:30. I told the congregation some of my experiences working with “street people” in Montreal.

I was in my early twenties.

Single.

Working.

But wanting to serve Jesus and live the Christian life.

So I decided to reach out to the homeless, of which Montreal has plenty.

I didn’t do the ministry with an organization. I did it on my own time, with my own money, with a couple of other Christian friends, but often on my own.

I’d go out on Friday nights with a bag of sandwiches and a couple thermoses of homemade soup. I told my congregation how it sometimes

took weeks, if not months, of regular contact before I could even get a genuine hello out of some of the panhandlers I met, but, eventually, I had a few breakthroughs. I even got invitations back to their places.

There was a group of pretty fearsome (on the outside) punks who eventually got used to me. They looked like what you would expect—mohawks, face tattoos, piercings, leather. I offered to buy them groceries if they told me where they lived. So they did. And the next week I brought them groceries, enough for all of them. I did the same thing two weeks later. And then two weeks after that. And again. And again.

I’d get to this decrepit three-story apartment building in the worst part of town which no one in his right mind would come near. As I walked up, one of the punks might growl, “What the &\$%# do you want?” and then one of the others would say, “No, no, he’s cool,” and they’d let me in.

I got to know the guy who signed his name on the lease, a big ‘ole punk nicknamed Fats. And once Fats said it was cool for me to be there, everyone else fell in line.

I got to know a few of them.

One day, they even asked me to stay for supper, and they cooked the steak I bought for them.

It turns out...they were just kids like me.

Teens.

Early twenties.

Some from normal homes.

Others from nightmarish homes.

Most of them made poor choices over and over again.

Others had poor choices thrust on them by their parents, and they were just doing what they knew.

The bottom line is they were just people who needed love and grace like anyone else. And once they saw I wasn’t in it for anything other than to show some kindness to them, no one objected to me being a Christian. No one.

At first, yes.

At first, if I started with a gospel presentation, then I was met with eyerolls and rejection.

But not after I was just...*kind* to them. Not after I went out of my way to help. Not after I

showed a little grace. And then...I got to eat with them.

That happened with the punks.

That happened with some Native Americans.

That happened with several street people.

Grace opened doors.

My point to my congregation was that I'm no prude. I've seen a lot of human depravity (including outside of my own heart!), and I've witnessed first hand some very terrible consequences of sin. And frankly, I'm not shocked by it. Not anymore. It doesn't make me speechless. My face doesn't go red. And more importantly, I don't think any of it puts you out of the reach of God's grace.

Sin is sinful, *but grace is greater.*

REACHING THE SICK

Coming back to Jesus, in answer to the accusation made by the scribes and Pharisees, the Lord said:

"It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick" (Luke 5:31).

I can't say I had any spiritual breakthroughs with any of those kids. However, I did re-connect with one of them through Facebook a few years ago. Frankly, I was glad to find out they were still alive. None of those kids expected to live past thirty. Many didn't. I asked if they remembered me. And that kid, now an adult, answered, "I'll never forget you." I cried. I really did. I hope that line of communication stays open because there's still good to be done, grace to be shown, and good news to be shared.

For whatever reason, as small as we are, our little church has seen some very marginalized people come through its doors.

When I started pastoring, I thought I'd be teaching the Bible to upper-middle-class theology nerds.

Nope.

God has put me in a place where I'm meeting people who have hard lives: homeless, just out of prison, burnt out, struggling with drug addictions, or barely keeping their families together.

There are "normal" people, too, but their lives are full of anxiety, and trouble, and the pressures of trying to "make it" in life while the world tries to draw them away from Christ.

So what do I do?

I preach grace.

Actually, I make it a point to end every sermon with grace. Not law. Not a to-do list. Not an application. Nothing that calls them to do or to be or to change their behavior. Those things might come out in the sermon, but not at the end of the sermon. I end with grace. I end with some way that Jesus brings salvation "to you."

Our church needs to do better reaching out to the people who come through the doors. We need to do better in loving them and expecting them to be there.

Grace is approachable.

Or it should be.

I'd like to be a pastor with whom it doesn't take any courage to name your disease.

And I'd like to be a church where sick sinners want to go, and where they know exactly why they've come—because the Great Physician is there to love and heal them. ■



Shawn Lazar is the Editor of Grace in Focus magazine and co-host of Grace in Focus Radio. He is married to Abby, and they have three children. He is the pastor of Gateway Baptist's Faith Fellowship in Denton, TX (www.faithfellowshipdenton.org).

Jesus Said It First (Romans 3:8)

By Ken Yates

Years ago, there was a popular country song called “I Loved Her First.” It was about a young woman getting married. The song is from the perspective of the woman’s father. He reminds the groom that the father loved the girl first.

I also remember years ago, in a Bible study, someone saying that everything we read about in the NT was addressed, at least in seed form, in the teachings of the Lord. Even if Jesus did not address something specifically, or if it had not been revealed during the life of the Lord, the concept is found in His words. Whatever we find in the NT, then, we can say that Jesus said it first.

PAUL’S TEACHING IS AN EXAMPLE

I was reminded of these things recently while studying the Book of Romans. In Rom 3:8, Paul says,

And why not say, ‘Let us do evil that good may come’?—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.

Paul mentions here that some people accused him of teaching that God’s people could, and even should, do evil. They slandered him in that way. They said that Paul did not think it was important to live righteously. But Paul says that such accusations are clearly wrong.

Later in the Book of Romans, Paul reminds us again that what he was teaching would lead some to say that keeping the commandments of God was not important. In Chap. 6, he states that since the Christian life is based upon the



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grace of God, it would lead some to conclude that Paul was saying the Christian should sin in order to experience a greater measure of God’s grace (Rom 6:1).

Then the Apostle specifically says that the Christian is no longer under the Law as a rule of living (Rom 6:15). This statement would also lead some to say that what Paul was teaching was that the Christian should just go ahead and sin, if that were the case.

With both of these accusations in Chap. 6, Paul responds with a strong, “God forbid.” Clearly Paul was not teaching that sin was not important in the life of the believer. However, in the teachings of Paul, sin has no impact on the reception of eternal life. In addition, sin has no impact on keeping eternal life. Eternal life is eternal and cannot end. Instead, sin results in an experience of death in the life of the believer. But this is something the believer encounters in this life. It is a temporal experience. When we as Christians sin, this experience is one of encountering the wrath of God in our lives. Sin brings God’s disapproval and discipline. Who in his right mind would choose to experience that? But Paul makes it clear that the Christian can indeed choose to

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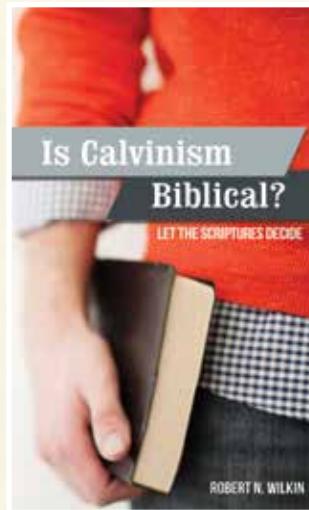


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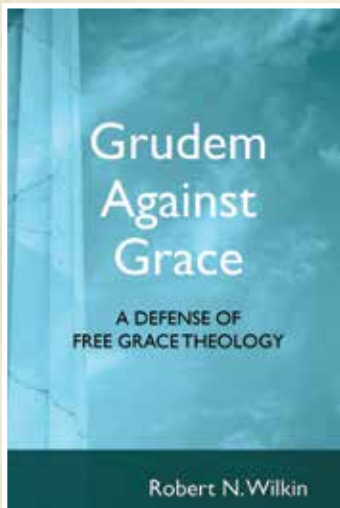


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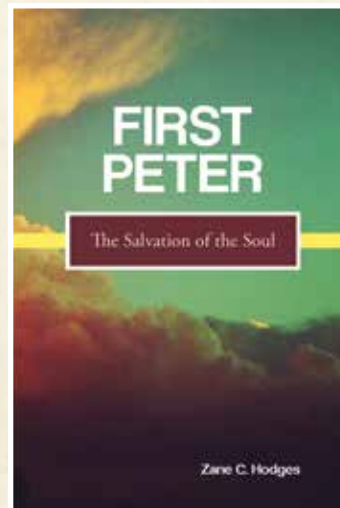


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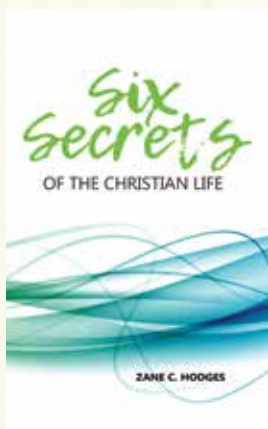
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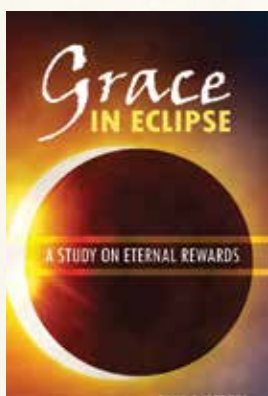
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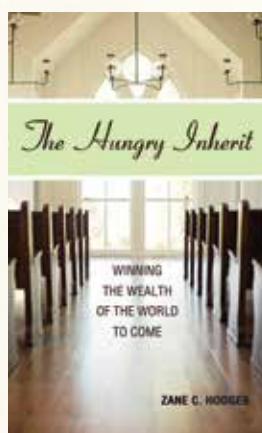
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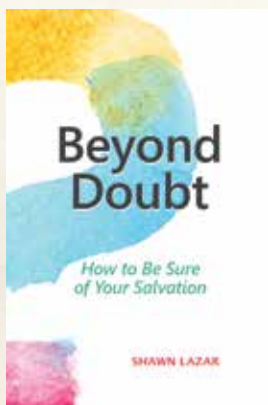
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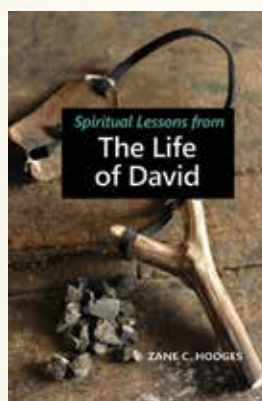
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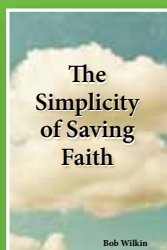
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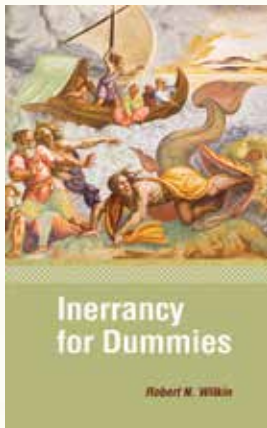
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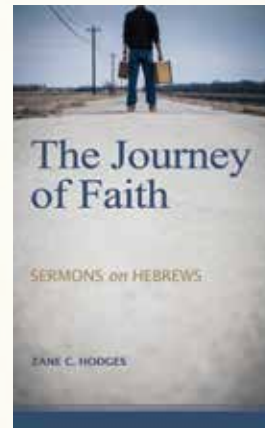


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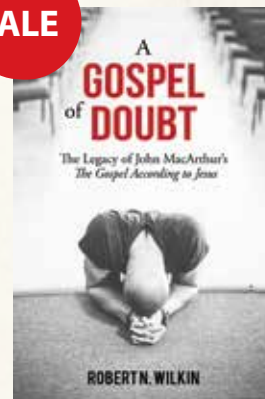


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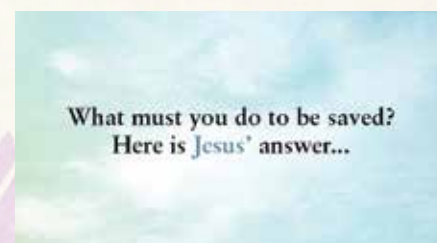
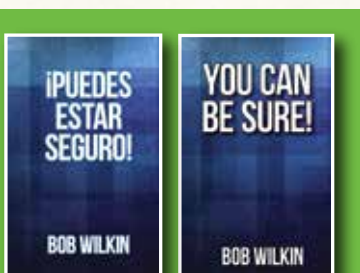


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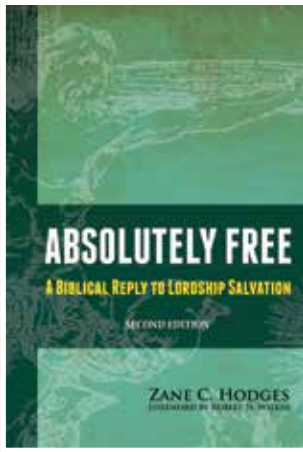
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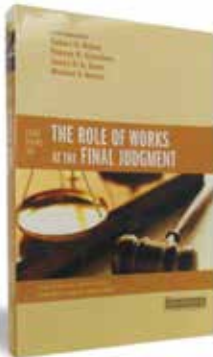
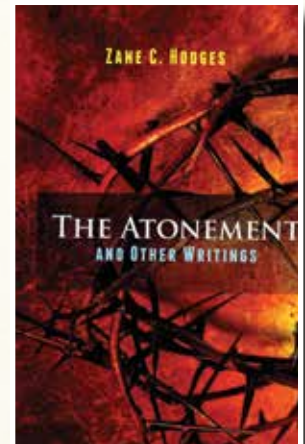
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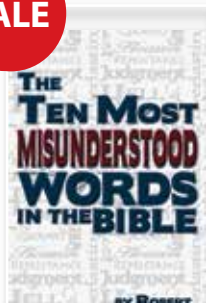
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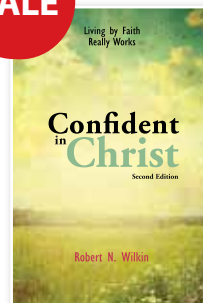
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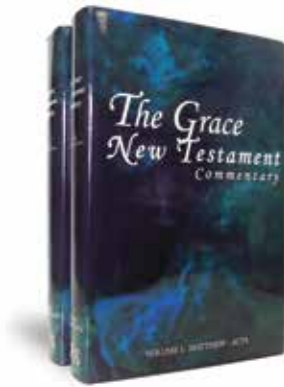
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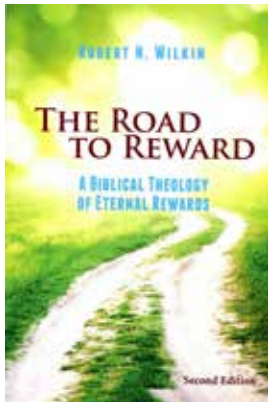
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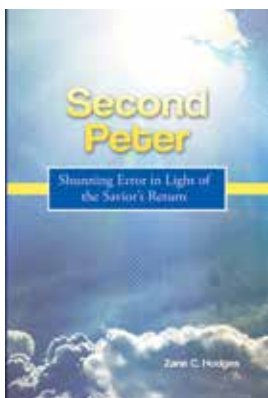
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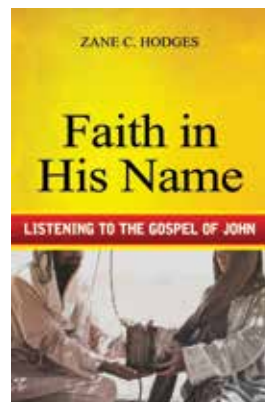
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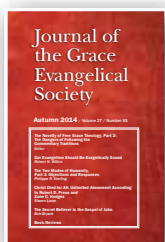
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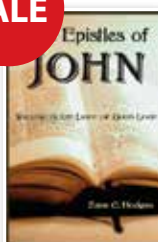


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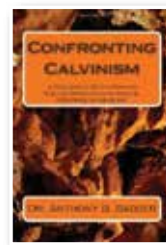


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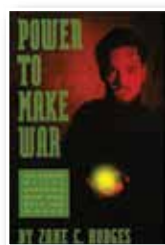


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make such a foolish decision, even though the believer still retains his eternal life.

WE CAN FOLLOW PAUL'S EXAMPLE AND EXPERIENCE

Paul preached a gospel that resulted in his being accused of teaching that sin was not important. Of course, this is what can be expected if somebody preaches a gospel of grace today. If we say that a person receives eternal life completely free and cannot lose that life no matter how he lives after receiving it, many will accuse us of teaching that a person can live however he wants. People who make that accusation do not understand the motivation that grace gives us to godly living. They also do not understand the free offer of eternal life. In addition, they usually do not grasp the fact that like Paul in Romans 6, most of the NT does not deal with how a person receives eternal life. The majority of the NT teaches us how Christians should live after they receive that life.

Of course, those of us in the Free Grace movement are constantly accused of the same thing Paul was accused of. We can take comfort in the fact that we have the Apostle Paul in our company. In fact, if people do not accuse us of these things, we are doing something wrong. Clearly, Paul also preached a Free Grace gospel of eternal life!

Since everywhere Paul went, he preached that gospel to Jews, we can rest assured that many of those Jewish people concluded that Paul was saying the Law of Moses, with all of its commandments, was not important. In fact, they would have concluded that Paul's preaching was an attempt to do away with the Law completely. However, I am sure Paul found comfort in knowing that what he was teaching was taught by Jesus first.

JESUS PAVED THE WAY

Recently I noticed that Jesus Himself encountered the same accusations Paul encountered. The Lord mentions it in the Sermon on the Mount. He comments, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come

to destroy but to fulfill." Jesus was a Jewish man who lived righteously. In fact, in John 8:46, He asks which of His opponents could accuse Him of sin. Of course there were none. How could anyone come to the conclusion that He had come to destroy the Law or the Prophets? How could anyone conclude that He was teaching that the commandments of God were not important and that He had come to do away with them? In His life, death, resurrection, and return, He will fulfill all that the Law taught.

Jesus' ministry was to the Jews. We know from the Gospel of John that before Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, He had already told people how to receive eternal life. It was by faith in Him alone (John 2:23-25; 3:16). The Jews who heard such a message would naturally wonder what place the Law of Moses played in receiving eternal life. Many of them thought that such life was earned through obedience to the Law. Jesus was teaching that was not the case. The natural conclusion for many was that Jesus had come to do away with the Law.

In other words, Jesus also preached a Free Grace gospel. He did it before Paul. He did it before we did. When we preach that the commandments have no role in eternal salvation, either before, during, or after faith, we will be accused of promoting lawlessness. Sin is important in the life of a believer. Sin has devastating consequences. But the commandments of the Law play no role in receiving eternal life or even proving that we have it. Obedience to God falls within the area of Christian living. We must keep the gospel of eternal life separate from the wisdom of Christian living.

No doubt, many will accuse us of the same thing they accused the Lord and Paul of. What we say will be interpreted as promoting sin and lawlessness. We can expect it and expect opposition. We just need to remember: Jesus said it first. ■



Ken Yates is Editor of The Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society. He is the pastor of Little River Baptist Church in Jenkinsville, SC.

Life Appraisal

By Lucas Kitchen

Chapter 11, Eternal Rewards: It Will Pay to Obey. Available in the bookstore.

I was speaking at a small church in South Texas one summer. The church had been flooded recently and was getting a much needed update. This meant that while I was preaching, some workers, who were not church attendees, were installing flooring in the back of the room. I don't know why they needed to do this on Sunday morning during church service hours, but I'm glad they were there. In my sermon, I was talking about the kind of judgment that Christians will have to face. Apparently, one worker was listening because in the middle of my sentence he put down his glue trowel and stood up. Seemingly unconcerned about interrupting a church service to get his inquiry answered, he interjected a loud question from the back of the room. He blurted out, "A minute ago you said Christians won't be judged, but now you're saying they will be judged. Which is it?"

This was a great question, and it gave me a good chance to offer clarification. I gestured him forward so that we could have a dialogue in front of the congregation about this important subject. What a cool guy, so eager to understand the Bible that he would stop a sermon to find out what he wanted to know. I explained that Christians will not have to





stand before the final judgment that sends people to hell. However, there is an appraisal at which they have to appear. Though condemnation is not waiting for believers, an assessment of success is. Although eternal damnation has been taken off the table, a life-evaluation awaits those who are in Christ. We know this because Paul said:

For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Rom 14:10).

He wrote his letter to believers in Rome. He said to those Christians that they all, including himself, will have to stand before Jesus to be assessed. Jesus' promise that we will not be condemned still stands. The Judgment Seat of Christ is not an event that will result in people going to hell or any kind of condemnation. Something very different will happen there.

If our eternal destiny is set, what more is there to consider? Lots more, actually. In another place Paul says:

We make it our aim...to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat 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 5:9-10).

The Judgment Seat of Christ is an event that will someday require your attendance and involvement. Remember, there's no condemnation since your salvation is already in place. So, what will you do there?

Paul gives the answer in the same verse when he says, "that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

Since you became a believer, a tally has been running. Everything you've done since that moment is being recorded. On a coming day, you will have to stand before Jesus and give a performance report. The work you've done will be weighed out and considered by the Judge. The Judge will then repay you for the work you've done. So it's a judgment, but it's not a judgment that has anything to do with condemnation. It has to do with performance.

Maybe it would help to remember that there are different kinds of judges. There are judges in courtrooms, but there are also judges in singing contests. There are judges for the Supreme Court, but there are also judges for beauty pageants.

There are judges in criminal cases, but there are also judges for boxing matches. There are judges who decide penalties, but there are also judges who decide who gets the award. When He's sitting on His Judgment Seat, Jesus seems to be playing the role of reward giver rather than punishment dispenser.

I want to be careful here, though. Just because the judgment is not about condemnation doesn't mean it is going to be pleasant for everyone. I cannot stress this enough. You will want to be able to give a good report on that day. It would be a huge mistake for me to trivialize this event. It won't be a cakewalk for many. To see why, it might help to understand the setting.

"When and where will the Judgment Seat happen?" you might ask. Jesus answered that question with no uncertain words when He said:

For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works (Matt 16:27).

After Jesus was resurrected, He hung around for a little over a month, spent time with His disciples, and appeared to a bunch of people. After that, He went back to heaven. Before He left, He made a very important promise, one that we are still talking about today. He promised to return to the earth. His return will not be like His first coming, which was humble and quiet. His second arrival will be a loud, obvious affair in which He will wrest control of the world's governments from human hands. He will conquer all the enemies that stand against Him. He will change the geopolitical landscape in a single day. He will be enthroned in radiant glory on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. After all of that, He has an appointment with little ole' you. The most important and powerful person in all of history will meet with you to talk about how you did while He was out of town. Take a deep breath. It's intense.

As Paul continues with his description of what will happen at the Judgment Seat of Christ, he says:

So then each of us shall give an account of himself to God (Rom 14:12).

This verse adds an emphasis that should not be missed. It places the responsibility on the one who's required to give account. Each person is accountable for his own life. You won't be able to blame your poor performance on your disobedient children. You won't get to shift the focus to an incompetent coworker. You won't be able to wiggle out of the hot seat if your work was sub-par. You will have to give account for it. You will have to look the King of the world in the face and tell Him why you didn't do what He told you to do. It's going to hurt if you have been disobedient.

Now, there is a joy in this verse as well. For those who are faithful to Christ, it will be an immeasurably happy moment when they give their report. The obedient servant of Jesus will be brimming with enthusiasm as he eagerly stands before his King. The bold follower of Christ will be able to stand before the Judgment Seat with a confident smile, knowing that the King is not only a Savior of the outcast but also a Rewarder of the faithful.

So whether the Judgment Seat of Christ is a pleasant or painful event will be entirely dependent upon how you lived. Paul adds some details to what we know about this coming event in his letter to the church of Corinth:

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?...and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor (1 Cor 3:5-8).

Each person has a different role to play. Paul and Apollos were both ministers. Some people in the church of Corinth considered Paul greater, whereas others considered Apollos greater. Apollos may have been a more entertaining speaker, where Paul was an academic and a theologian (this is speculation for the purpose of illustration). Paul challenges the idea by reminding them

that both Paul and Apollos are just playing their part; a part that they would both be rewarded for accordingly.

In talking about himself and Apollos, Paul gives us a lesson that can be applied more broadly. He says, "Each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor." So even if your skill set is different from mine, the righteous judge will look deep into the life of each to determine what reward we deserve.

This leaves us wanting to know more. What will this event be like? What will be considered as we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ? Fortunately, Paul does not leave us hanging. He goes on with an analogy everyone can understand. He uses a construction site as an allegory for the Judgment Seat of Christ. He says:

For we are God's fellow workers, you are God's field, you are God's building... As a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:9-11).

He explains that there is a field on which a building is being erected. That field and building are a metaphor for the church at Corinth, and ultimately all believers everywhere. So the construction site represents the church in its various stages of growth. There are specialized construction workers that are working on this building. As in modern construction, there is a worker who specializes in foundations. That is Paul, who calls himself a master builder. The foundation represents Christ. It was Paul who introduced those in Corinth to Christ, and therefore it was he who laid the foundation.

He goes on to say there are other construction workers on the job site as well. After Paul laid the foundation, by evangelizing those there, other workers took over the project. This is where Apollos and others come in. It's not just Paul's building project, but a shared work site of



all those who are part of the church. Paul then continues:

Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire (1 Cor 3:12-15).

In this metaphor, Paul teaches us that the quality of our deeds will one day be tested. They will be evaluated when we stand before the Judgment

Seat of Christ. All the work that we've done as a believer will be revealed, as by fire.

It's as if everything you do from the moment you become a believer is a building phase which happens on this construction site. You can build with high-quality, flame-retardant, expensive materials, or you can build with dry, burnable stuff you find in the yard. What you decide to build with will determine how much you are rewarded on the day you stand before Christ.

So when a Christian performs good deeds for Christ, he's building with gold, silver, and precious stones. However, when a Christian wastes time, is lazy, or neglects his discipleship, he's building with wood, hay, or straw.

One of the greatest dangers for city dwellers in the ancient world was fire. That's because so many of the houses were built with cheap flammable materials, and every home had an open flame for cooking, heating, and illumination. This metaphor would strike them at their heart since Corinth was a big city, and they had likely all witnessed house fires.

So that we can't confuse what he's talking about, Paul throws in this important final line,

If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire (1 Cor 3:15).

He's reminding us that the salvation of an individual Christian is an absolute promise even if that Christian is lazy, neglectful, and does no good deeds. Even the wicked, slothful servant (Matt 25:26) will be saved, but you'll smell the smoke on him when he arrives in heaven. It's as if Paul's saying Christians who aren't obedient to Christ during their life will enter heaven without a cent to their name and with their hair singed. Still, there is a reassuring promise of life for all believers whether faithful or not, but a grave warning for disobedient believers.

The verse says that the Christian who was lazy and disobedient will "suffer loss," but what does that mean? We can understand it in light of the previous verse. Paul says, "If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss..."

So the thing in view is reward. Those Christians who work hard and stay committed will receive something very valuable. Those who are lazy and build with twigs will miss out on valuable rewards they could have had.

Can you imagine that? You could enter heaven with a house load of gold, silver, and precious stones, or you could enter heaven as poor as a beggar. It all depends on how you build now. If you spend every day of your Christian life seeking, obeying, and growing, you can bet you're going to be rich when you get there. If you got

saved and have done nothing of spiritual value since, you may be on the path to heavenly poverty. Just like someone who has his home burnt to the ground, you could suffer incredible loss if you don't get busy.


The lesson is fairly simple. As we've already seen, Paul put it so well:

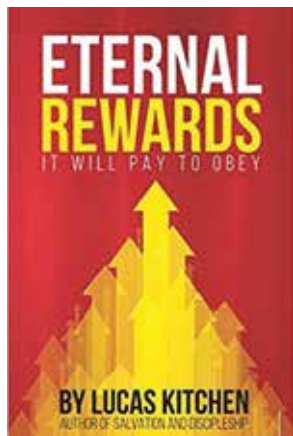
Run in such a way as to get the prize (1 Cor 9:24b).

We could encircle it in all kinds of theological language, but the best metaphor for what we are to do is this:

Run!

In this chapter we've seen that once the free gift of salvation is given to the believer, no condemnation can ever befall him or her. However, everyone must go through a life-evaluation. In that accounting, our work will be assessed and judged. For those who worked hard doing the deeds Christ

commends there will be reward. For those who were lazy, there will be loss. 



Lucas Kitchen is a filmmaker and writer. His primary works have included writing and producing a number of independent documentaries and narrative movies. He lives with his wife in Longview, TX. Buy his new book, Eternal Rewards: It Will Pay to Obey in the bookstore.

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Over the last few years, GES has ramped up our output. Bob and Shawn are now writing a daily blog and putting out a daily podcast, on top of producing all of GES's other materials. They can only do that while upheld by your prayers.

Thank you for your continued support! 





Courtesy of Stellite Photography

An Interview with David Zahl

By Shawn Lazar

As a preacher and as a writer, I am always trying to find new and better ways to communicate the gospel of grace to the people who need it most.

That brought me into contact with a ministry named Mockingbird (mbird.com). I came across them because they publish books by Paul F. M. Zahl and Robert Farrar Capon, two theologians who wrote about grace in creative ways.

To be clear, Mockingbird is *not* a Free Grace ministry. They are approaching grace from a different perspective. There are obvious areas of disagreement. But I have found their work to be helpful, especially in looking for ways to illustrate how a works salvation mindset can manifest itself in a secular culture.

In October 2018, I decided to attend a Mockingbird conference held in Oklahoma City. There I interviewed Mockingbird's founder and director, David Zahl.

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GRACE

Shawn Lazar (SL): David, what is Mockingbird?

David Zahl (DZ): We like to say that Mockingbird is a ministry that tries to connect grace to everyday life. What that means is that we've become a media platform where we do everything we can to trace where the gospel of God's grace touches down in unexpected and tangible ways. So we have a magazine, an active website, and a new app. We also do conferences and a podcast.

SL: Why emphasize *grace*? Doesn't everyone already know about grace?

DZ: Not at all! The world is full of mercilessness and law. I think Christians use the word *grace* a lot. It's a positive word. But different Christians use it in different ways—Catholics use it differently than Protestants.

Megachurches use it differently than mainline churches.

SL: To build on that: a lot of people think about grace as a divine “push”—that little bit of extra energy that helps you make it the rest of the way on your own.

DZ: Totally. Or it's like you're trying to get on a plane, and maybe you make it all the way to the gate, and then that last little bit that gets you on the plane is *grace*. Grace makes up whatever you lack in yourself.

And that's a *nice* idea. But I don't think that's what grace is.

I think grace is one-way love. It's love to the loveless. It's the opposite of what you deserve. God does it all, and we receive. That's grace.

SL: So you saw a need for that message to be clearly presented and connected to daily life?

DZ: Yes, but I also think we saw an *opportunity*. When

we started, we had a crowd of people, especially young men, who were captivated by an uncontaminated vision of God's grace for sinners that they found enlivening and exciting. They felt they had never heard that before, even though they had been Christians their whole lives. And so, whether it was novel or not, we had the energy to do it.

And this is what we *want* to do, too. A lot of us felt—and I can speak for myself—that God's grace releases you to do—not what you *have* to do—but if I can do anything, what would I do? For us, it was to start Mockingbird.

There's some arrogance in that. Some hubris. But we've had a lot of fun.

GRACE AND SANCTIFICATION

SL: When people think about spirituality, they often think about programs of introspection. They emphasize techniques to look at your life to see if you're really saved or really growing, and that usually makes people worried about their standing before God. What would you say to those people?

DZ: Well, I usually want to listen before I tell them much. But Steve Brown has this slogan, "God is not mad at you." You point to the cross—this complete sufficiency of imputed righteousness.

But at a basic gut level, everyone is worried about judgment of some kind. They may not think of it as God's judgment.

It may be judgment from their parents or from society. I think that being able to confess, express, that in a way that is not met with more judgment, but instead is met with patience, humility, and a word of absolution...Mockingbird is trying to create places where that message can be heard, and those things can be expressed.

SL: How are people responding to that message?

DZ: Occasionally, you get people who say, "That's not Christianity. That's terrible. You're telling people they can do whatever they want and that God loves them no matter what."

You also get those who've been beaten up by life who find it to be—well, they'll travel from Australia to be here. They'll come anywhere to hear about grace.

I'd say this message makes some people nervous.

And for some people, it makes them indignant that they'd never heard this before. They feel like they've been lied to, and they feel upset about that. A lot of times you'll see that when people hear the gospel, they feel that indignation. Steven Paulson talks about how that should be tolerated. You simply have to allow people to have their reaction and be mad at other Christians and be Pharisaical about other Pharisees. You sort of have to allow it.

SL: I love the phrase, "Pharisaical about other Pharisees."

People might have that reaction initially, but you have to move beyond that and learn to minister grace gracefully.

DZ: That's so true.

REACHING YOUNG PEOPLE

SL: One question that always comes up in ministry is "How do we reach the young people?" Our ministry [GES] tends to skew a little older. And we want to reach younger people. It looks like your ministry is doing that. I have heard some people say that young people want to be challenged by a rigorous, ascetic, rule-based spirituality. But do you think young people are hungry for grace?

DZ: Yes. I think young people are full of themselves. *I* am. I'm not young anymore, but I think if you say "are you looking for grace?" they may not know what you're talking about. But are they under a huge amount of pressure? Scrutiny? Do they feel like everyone else is happy, but not them? Social media is creating this pressure cooker environment. They are dying for some release.

SL: Because they are living under law—not the Mosaic law—but the law of the American dream.

DZ: Oh yeah. Do more. Be more. Get skinny. Have a lot of money. Thou shalt be successful. Thou shalt be authentic. Thou shalt be liked. And I think young people are tremendously anxious and lonely for that

reason. Just as we all are. But they almost don't know anything else. We have to translate grace differently in certain contexts.

I think it helps a young person if they've had a few defeats in life.

And I do see a lot of young people say, "Tell me what to do! Tell me what to do! I'm going to take over the world for God."

Young people have become very moralistic around political things especially. Young people used to be "anything goes," while older people were about rules. But now it's the other way around. I think that grace is still the only answer.

SL: How does Jesus enter the life of a student who is feeling pressure to get into the right school, so he can get into the right company to earn the right salary, to live an upper-middle class life or better? How does Jesus bring rest to that kind of anxiety?

DZ: Ultimately, I think it is the Holy Spirit's working in a person's life that brings the rest. But I think the message that usually precedes that is some sense that Jesus paid it all, that Christ has done for you what you cannot do for yourself. There's nothing that needs to be done that hasn't been done. Ultimately there are tests to be passed, but the ultimate test has been passed. There's that message of the gospel. And it is not a one and done thing. As Steven Paulson talked about today, we die every day.

SL: I believe the second speaker, Curt Benham, said, "Good trees produce good fruit *but aren't aware of it.*" Do you think that is how sanctification works?

DZ: To go along with the imagery, a tree can't grow if you dig it up every five seconds to monitor its growth. That sort of introspection can be really neurotic. I think sanctification is a beautiful thing and unself-conscious, as we talked about. People are being transformed in certain ways, not according to their own timeline or agenda. But you do see that certain twinkle in the eye. I believe in eternal life.

SEEING GRACE IN ART AND POP CULTURE

SL: One thing that I love about *Mockingbird*, and what I think you're doing better than any grace ministry that I know, is that you're connecting with people through aesthetics. The arts. Culture. You're connecting the message of grace through what is beautiful. You're mining pop culture for sermon illustrations. How did that aesthetic aspect of your ministry come out?

DZ: I can speak only for myself. I grew up with a father who is a theologian [Editor: Paul F. M. Zahl] who loved pop art and high art and whose love of art was never divorced from his spiritual life, whether it came to paintings of the Reformation,

or post-Impressionism, or monster movies and flying saucers. He was integrating everything because it was just reality.

As we grew up, we were encouraged to like the things we liked in a way that did not see those things as divorced from God's world.

And so, when I want to talk to people about the gospel, I grew up in a setting where culture—movies, music, TV, books—formed me. That's the language I speak. So talking about the gospel without using that is like talking without my bottom jaw.

So it's not contrived. It's not like "Hey, I'm trying to use this art to get to you." Art and culture are more like my reference point.

When you write like that, it's "like calls out to like." You start writing about these things, and people respond, "Oh, it's ok to like this? I can talk about how this speaks to me?"

People are on screens all the time. So if you want to talk to them where they really live, some of that is going to come up. So you engage it. You come with the question, "What about that song, or movie, or show speaks to you? What heart strings is that plucking? Where does it coincide with reality?"

SECULOSITY

SL: You announced that you have a new book coming out?

DZ: Yes, it's called *Seculosity*. That's a combination of *secular* and *religiosity*. The subtitle is:



Courtesy of Stellate Photography

How Career, Parenting, Technology, Food, Politics, and Romance Became Our New Religion and What to Do about It. And it's really about how, as conventional religion has declined, we've filled that hole with all kinds of—*idolatry* is not the right word—but we've taken all the things I mentioned and made them arbiters of “enoughness.”

People are still looking for justification. I'm justified according to the food I eat, how I vote, whom I'm married to, and we've turned all these things into religions of law. And as a result, we're in bad church all the time. And people are exhausted.

In the book, I try to bring into context how these things operate. How do you turn your career into your religion? What does grace look like in that? What is the relief?

SL: I love the line, “we're in bad church all the time.” You're saying that the people who think they're avoiding church

are still seeking secular forms of justification and discover they can't be justified by works.

DZ: Everyone is wired for righteousness. You might as well call it “enoughness.” People want to feel like they are enough. They need someone to tell them they're enough because you can't just tell yourself that. No one would believe it because we know the messenger too well. So I'll try to wrestle that enoughness out of my spouse, my career, my bank account, the food that I eat, my children, the way I parent, and as a result you're constantly being measured and falling up short.

That's where the gospel meets us, of course, in our shortcoming.

But when you have no gospel, no grace, and it's just people trying to justify themselves in every single aspect of their lives, and never hearing the word of pardon, I think that is inescapable. Hopefully, the message of grace will get through.

SL: So for someone struggling with enoughness, and finding that what they've surrounded themselves with is *not* enough, where will they find the real thing?

DZ: I think God is in the business of giving us enoughness. He bestows it on us. It's not another roadmap to engineering it or earning it. The message of the gospel is the proclamation that you have been gifted with that enoughness—that God sees you as enough, through His Son, through the shed blood of Christ. That's the real solution.



Shawn Lazar is Editor of Grace in Focus and co-host of Grace in Focus Radio, available on iTunes and Stitcher.

Chuck Swindoll Says That People Will Miss Eternity with Christ If They Make Salvation Too Difficult

By Bob Wilkin

A reader told me about a January 7 *Insight for Living* broadcast in which Chuck Swindoll talks about the time when Moses lifted up the bronze serpent, and those who looked on it were healed of the plague (Numbers 21). I just listened to the section in question, and it is fantastic. You can hear that message here by clicking on Part 3 (“Hope Beyond Snakebite”).¹ I especially suggest you listen from 5:30 to 12:00. In that six and a half minutes, Swindoll clearly and concisely presents the promise of everlasting life by faith alone.

After saying at the 6:21 mark that those who looked lived, he states, “There was no issue made of Lordship looking. Some of you are saying, ‘What?’ Others of you got it. There was no, You need to be spiritually sincere when you look. Or, You need to look for the next three hours so we know that you really have determined that you are really going to look. Just look! Just look! ‘Cause all the other stuff is too subjective.”

Swindoll then takes the audience to John 3:14-15 in which Jesus cites the uplifted serpent while evangelizing Nicodemus. Swindoll says that Jesus told Nicodemus, “All you have to do is take the gift. Believe” (8:40). Swindoll said that Nic responded, “Believe? That’s all?” (8:50).


When Swindoll gets to John 3:15, he says, “...so that whoever believes.’ Look at it! Whoever believes will have eternal life. Not believes and hopes to give up his sins. Not believes and desires to be sincere. Not believes and proves that he is honest and just in his motives. Not believes because he has cleaned up his life and finally deserves to believe. He looks...In John 3 the message is Don’t make it difficult. Don’t make it difficult. It’s a gift. Some of you are still outside of



Christ because you have made it difficult...Stop doing that! Take it! Take it!...This is the way you get in...Look! You’ll live!” (9:30-10:56).

He continues, “A lot of people want to buy Him (Christ). They want to earn Him, because, you know, there is no free lunch. I know one. It wasn’t free to Him. It cost Him His life, but He’s given it to you. Why in the world don’t you take it? How many people will step into eternity without Christ, spend hell there for the rest of their lives, realizing then I made it difficult. I didn’t take Him at His word that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. I love it!” (11:19-12:00).

I highly recommend this broadcast. Chuck Swindoll did a terrific job. Two of his seminary professors, Charles Ryrie and Zane Hodges, would surely be very pleased to hear this. More importantly, the Lord Jesus Christ was and surely is well pleased by what Chuck Swindoll said that day.

It is so encouraging to hear well known speakers proclaim the clear message of life. When it happens, we should take note and rejoice. 



Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society and the host of *Grace in Focus* Radio.

1. <http://insight.org/broadcasts/player/?bid=3290>

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