

GRACE FOCUS

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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2019

ROMANS 1

*A Concise
Commentary*



PLUS SEEKING GOD / A TESTIMONY TO GRACE / TWO TYPES OF FILLING OF THE SPIRIT / WORSHIP
ISN'T WHAT YOU THINK / FRANCIS CHAN / PSALM 119 / THE MILLENNIUM / MORE!

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GRACE IN FOCUS

Volume 34, Number 6
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Evangelical Society

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FROM THE EDITOR

Winter. Thanksgiving. Christmas. Family. Food. Fellowship. Travel. November and December are a unique time of the year, especially for Christians.

We don't know when Jesus was born. Sometime in April or May is most likely. History.com explains,

...the presence of shepherds and their sheep suggest a spring birth. When church officials settled on December 25 at the end of the third century, they likely wanted the date to coincide with existing pagan festivals honoring Saturn (the Roman god of agriculture) and Mithra (the Persian god of light). That way, it became easier to convince Rome's pagan subjects to accept Christianity as the empire's official religion (<https://www.history.com/news/why-is-christmas-celebrated-on-december-25>).

I have no problem celebrating Jesus' birth on December 25 (or January 7 for the Orthodox). I do, however, worry about C and E Christians, people who typically only go to church on Christmas and Easter.


Many of those "C & E" Christians are not born again because they have not yet believed in Jesus for everlasting life. And those who are born again are missing out on vital weekly instruction in the local church (2 Cor 3:18; 1 Pet 2:2-3).

As we celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas, may we appreciate anew the gift of everlasting life. And may we share that message with all who will listen, for it is a message sorely needed today.



Equipped for the Season

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

Our aim is that this issue of *Grace in Focus* will encourage and equip you in your life of service to the Lord Jesus Christ. We all want to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." While eternal life is secure the moment we believe in Him for it, His commendation one day is not. We must endure if we are to reign with Him (2 Tim 2:12). 

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Wilkin".



LIGHTSTOCK

Two Types of Filling of the Spirit in the New Testament

BY BOB WILKIN

When I was on college ministry staff with Campus Crusade for Christ (now Cru), I was confused about what the filling of the Holy Spirit was. According to some of the CCC literature of the time, the filling of the Spirit was when the Holy Spirit took control of a person's life. You would confess your sins and ask the Holy Spirit to take control. And He would.

What I never understood is how a believer could ever sin after once being filled with the Spirit, if being filled meant being controlled. Why would the Holy Spirit let go of control? I wanted to be sinless. So did the college students I was discipling. So why would any sin ever occur once the Holy Spirit took control?

When I arrived at Dallas Theological Seminary, this was

one of the issues I wanted to resolve. I learned in seminary that many theologians and exegetes argue from the book of Acts (and from Luke) that there were two types of fillings of the Holy Spirit in the NT.

FILLING OF THE SPIRIT AS SPECIAL ENABLEMENT FOR A TASK

One type of filling of the Spirit is a special enablement for special tasks.

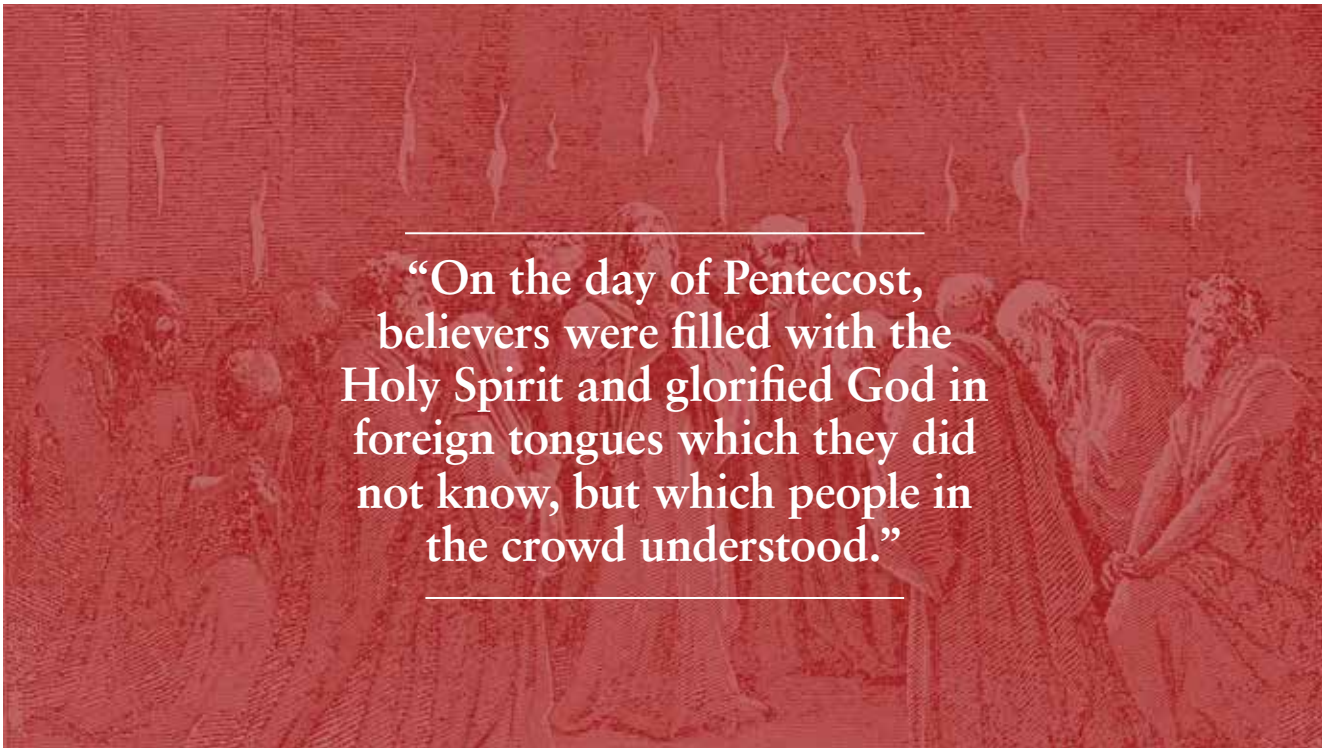
On the day of Pentecost, believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and glorified God in foreign tongues which they did not know, but which people in the crowd understood (Acts 2:4ff).

Peter and the other Apostles were later arrested and held overnight. The next day they were brought before the Jewish

religious leaders. Luke writes, "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them..." (Acts 4:8ff). Peter's powerful message came about by special enablement.

Later in Acts 4, after threatening the Apostles and commanding them not to speak in Jesus' name again, the Jewish leaders let them go. Then Luke reports that "when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). The filling of the Spirit was the enablement they needed to speak God's word boldly.

We could also consider Stephen in Acts 7:55, which reads, "But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus



“On the day of Pentecost, believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and glorified God in foreign tongues which they did not know, but which people in the crowd understood.”

LIGHTSTOCK

standing at the right hand of God.” The amazing sermon that Stephen gave in Acts 7 was a result of special enablement by the Holy Spirit. As he died by stoning, his powerful words were also a result of that special enablement.

The Father of John the Baptist, Zacharias, prophesied when he “was filled with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 1:67). His ability to prophesy resulted from temporary enablement by the Spirit.

When the Mother of John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit, she spoke powerfully about Mary (Luke 1:41-45). Her ability to give these great words, which later became part of Scripture, was because the Spirit enabled her to do so.

Some have puzzled over the unborn John the Baptist being filled with the Spirit while still in his mother’s womb (Luke

1:15). This evidently occurred when Elizabeth was filled with the Spirit. While John the Baptist was not yet born again (or born, for that matter), he did experience temporary enablement to glorify God even from the womb, with Luke telling us that “when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb...”

These are all examples of temporary enablement for a specific task. This does not describe total control.

I should add that I believe the Spirit still does this today. There is no Biblical evidence that this was just a first century experience. I have had many times while speaking at churches or on the radio when I think God’s hand was upon me in a special way. I think that God gave me special enablement at such times. It seems to me that God does this for us even if we don’t

ask for it. When He wishes to give us special aid, He can and does do so.

FILLING OF THE SPIRIT AS A DESIGNATION OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

The second type of filling of the Holy Spirit is essentially a reference to one who is spiritually mature.

For example, in Acts 6:3, when the Apostles picked the first deacons, they told the disciples to seek out “men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom...” (Acts 6:3). Notice that “full of the Holy Spirit” is in parallel with “full of wisdom.” Most often when you see two things united by the word “and” in the NT, the two elements help us understand each other. The words “full of wisdom” are very helpful. They meant that one

was wise. They did not mean that wisdom overpowered or controlled his life. Likewise, the expression “full of the Spirit” meant that one was Spiritual (or spiritual), that is, that the Spirit of God had renewed his mind and transformed his life (Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18).

Two verses later, in Acts 6:5, Peter said that one of those chosen, Stephen, was “full of faith and the Holy Spirit.” That is, he was one who believed God (or was faithful, depending on how you understand *pisteōs*) and one who was Spiritual/spiritual.

We see a similar linkage in Acts 13:52, “the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” That is, they were joyful and spiritual. To be filled with joy was not to be controlled by joy. It was to be joyful in one’s experience. In the same way, to be filled with the Holy Spirit was to be spiritual in one’s experience.

In Acts 11:24, Luke reports that Barnabas “was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith” (*pisteōs*). As with Acts 6:5, Barnabas was spiritual and faithful (or full of faith in what God says).

These incidents did not look at control or even temporary enablement, but at maturity.

NO NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF THE SPIRIT CONTROLLING A PERSON

The idea that the filling of the Holy Spirit was control over a person’s life is not supported by the uses of that expression in

Acts. Nor is it supported by any references to the filling of the Spirit anywhere else in the NT.

Nowhere in Acts or anywhere in the NT do we read that someone prayed and asked the Holy Spirit to take control of his life. Nowhere do we see that happening, either. We see the Spirit empowering people to do special tasks. But that is not what most people today think of as the filling of the Spirit.

The only other reference to the filling of the Spirit outside

“To be filled with the Holy Spirit was to be spiritual in one’s experience.”

of Luke-Acts is found in Eph 5:18, which says, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.” That is often understood to refer to being controlled by the Holy Spirit, not being controlled by wine. But wine does not control a person. Wine simply loosens one’s inhibitions. Besides, the point is that drunkenness is bad, and being filled with the Spirit is good.

Most likely, Eph 5:18 refers to the second type of filling, that is, being spiritually mature. Instead of being drunkards with wasted lives, we should be spiritually mature with productive lives. When we compare Eph 5:18-19 with the parallel text in Col 3:16 (“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and

admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”), the association with spiritual maturity is confirmed. To be spiritually mature is to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.” That is not special enablement. And that is not some sort of external control.

We don’t become spiritually mature by praying throughout the day, “Holy Spirit, please take control of my life.” We become spiritually mature by having our minds renewed by the Holy Spirit as we hear God’s Word taught week in and week out at a solid Bible-teaching church (Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18), and by personal Bible study. We develop a spiritual mindset (1 Cor 2:14-16; Rom 8:5-6). And if we have that spiritual mindset, then we are filled with the Spirit in the sense of being spiritually mature. ■



Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He lives in Highland Village, TX, with his wife of 43 years.

Sharon. His latest book is Turn and Live: The Power of Repentance.

Seeking God: Hebrews 11:6 and 2 Chronicles 15:2

By Ken Yates

I have a confession to make. Sometimes it is difficult for me to determine how to apply a passage in the OT to my life. I know that all Scriptures are profitable (2 Tim 3:16), but when I try to ask what certain passages addressed to the nation of Israel have to do with the Church, I am sometimes at a loss. I feel that in some cases I may be forcing some kind of application.

But then there are other times when the application and parallels are crystal clear. In Heb 11:6 we are told that God rewards those who seek Him. In the context the author is talking about eternal rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. God does not hide from us as His children. He wants us to seek Him. We will find Him if we do. We will be greatly rewarded in the process.

GOD'S PROMISE TO ASA

Recently I was reading through the book of 2 Chronicles and found a great OT example of what Heb 11:6 teaches. Asa was the king of Judah. Idolatry was a constant problem with the Jews, both in the North (Israel) and the South (Judah). We are told that Asa was a good king and did right in the sight of God (2 Chron 14:2).

In 2 Chron 15:2, we are told that God sent a prophet to Asa and told him that if he sought the Lord, he would find Him. God would reward him if he did so. Clearly, this is a great parallel with Heb 11:6.

In the verses that follow in 2 Chronicles, we see how that promise by God worked its way out in the life of Asa. In chap. 15 we see how Asa sought God. He removed idols from Judah. He restored the altar in the temple. He made sacrifices to the Lord. He convinced his people to seek the Lord. He even removed his own mother from her position of authority because she was a fanatic idol worshiper (15:16).

And how did God reward Asa for seeking after Him? God gave him peace from all his enemies (15:19). He had a successful reign as king over his people.

WHEN ASA QUIT SEEKING

But in chap. 16, everything changes. Asa quit seeking the Lord. When he found himself in a bind, he sought the help of a pagan king instead of the Lord. Even though the Lord had brought him victory in battle before (16:8), he had forgotten what the Lord had done. As a result of his

“If we seek the rewards that come from being faithful to the Lord—both in this life and the one to come—we can rest assured that God will ensure that our quest is successful!”



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lack of trust in the Lord, Asa experienced wars the rest of his time as king (16:9).

This also impacted other areas of Asa's life. He became angry at God's prophet. He oppressed his people (16:10). When he became sick to the point of death, he would not go to the Lord for help (16:12).


When Asa sought the Lord, he was rewarded by God. When he did not seek the Lord, he experienced the opposite.

In the midst of the account of Asa's rebellion against God, the author of 2 Chronicles adds an additional theological point. A prophet reminded Asa that God looks for those people who are committed to Him (16:9). In other words, God seeks for those who seek Him!

SEEK THE LORD

God wants to reward His people in whatever age they live. He wants us to seek Him. And He is seeking for people who do so. While we look

for Him, He is looking for us. Asa experienced that.

And so can we. If we seek the rewards that come from being faithful to the Lord—both in this life and the one to come—we can rest assured that God will ensure that our quest is successful! 



Ken Yates is the pastor of Little River Baptist Church in Jenkinsville, SC. He teaches at Bible institutes all over the world on behalf of GES.

Lamad in Psalm 119

By Bill Fiess

The Hebrew root *LMD* (teach) is found 94 times in the OT. But there is no chapter in the Bible that contains as many occurrences (13) of this verb as Psalm 119 (vv 7, 12, 26, 64, 66, 68, 71, 73, 99, 108, 124, 135, 171). Listed below are a few representative uses:

Blessed are You, O Lord! Teach me Your statutes (Ps 119:12).

The earth, O Lord, is full of Your mercy; Teach me Your statutes (Ps 119:64).

Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy, And teach me Your statutes (Ps 119:124).

Make Your face shine upon Your servant, And teach me Your statutes (Ps 119:135)

SOME SYNONYMS FOR GOD'S WORD

Of course anyone looking at Psalm 119 (even in a very cursory way) cannot help but notice that basically every verse is about the Word of God.

Nonetheless, the writer uses a number of synonyms for God's Word (each of which is used in the *plural*) in this Psalm. Let us survey these briefly. These definitions are from *The Lexham Theological Wordbook*.

- *Statutes* is used 8 times.
- *Commandments* is used twice.
- *Judgments* is used twice.
- *Testimonies* is used once.

It is noteworthy that each of these synonyms is used—at least once—with the word *teach*. The Psalmist wishes to be taught God's Word.

APPLICATIONS

I think that it could legitimately be said that Psalm 119 is a conversation between the believer and Yahweh regarding the Word. For example, God's personal name, *YHWH*, is used 24 times in Psalm 119.

Note in our passage list above:

Blessed are You, O Yahweh! Teach me Your statutes (Ps 119:12).

The earth, O Yahweh, is full of Your mercy; Teach me Your statutes (Ps 119:64).

Accept, I pray, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O Yahweh And teach me Your judgments (Ps 119:108).

The Psalmist, therefore, is basically seeking two things from Yahweh.

He wants to be *taught* by Yahweh Himself the truths of His Word.

He wants to *learn* (i.e., understand and master) from Yahweh the truths of His Word.

Note in the three verses mentioned above how the Psalmist pleads and cries out to Yahweh to *teach* him His Word. He has confidence that Yahweh can do so because of His magnificent and infinite attributes (His blessedness, mercy, goodness etc.)

I think that it is significant that the Psalmist did not seek out his favorite authors or Biblical commentators to teach him the Word—but rather Yahweh Himself. Here is a (probably provocative) quote from the well-known 19th century Christian leader George Muller (who was mightily used of God to found orphanages in England):

I had a great deal of time to study the Bible while I recovered (from an illness). During this time, God showed me that His Word alone is our standard of judgment in spiritual things. The Word can be explained only by the Holy Spirit who is the teacher of His people. I had not understood the work of the Holy Spirit in a practical way before this time.

The Lord enabled me to put this aspect of the Holy Spirit to the test by laying aside my



commentaries and almost every other book and simply reading the Word of God. That first evening when I shut myself in my room to pray and meditate over the Scriptures, I learned more in a few hours than during the last several months.


The Psalmist actually *prayed* (the 8 verses involving the Piel imperative) that Yahweh would “*Teach him His Word.*” That, I take it, is what we should also do today.

This, of course, is not to say that our Christian friends and favorite commentators cannot help us in our desire to understand the Word of God. But it is to say that God desires me to ask Him to teach me His Word—and He will respond by doing so.

Of course, the *goal* is to *learn* from the Lord. (Note the three verses involving the *QAL* stem). It is, of course, possible to “hear” from God and not “learn” from Him. Note:

It is written in the prophets, “And they shall all be taught by God.” Therefore everyone who hears and has learned from the Father comes to Me (John 6:45).

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls (Matt 11:29).

May we prayerfully seek to be *taught* and to *learn* from our Lord. 



Bill Fiess teaches math in Virginia. He also writes hymns.



Romans 1

A Concise Commentary*

**The following is a condensed version of the full-length commentary by Hodges on Romans. This will be part of the new one-volume Grace New Testament Commentary, due in December.*

By Zane Hodges

I. INTRODUCTION: PAUL CONNECTS WITH THE ROMAN CHRISTIANS (1:1-15)

A. DOCTRINAL SALUTATION (1:1-7)

1:1. The salutation reveals Paul's sense both of his position and of his purpose before God. Two phrases denote his position: **a bondservant of Jesus Christ** and **a called apostle**. The first title stresses subjection; the second stresses privilege.

Paul's purpose is that he was **set apart for the gospel of God** (i.e., God the Father). Paul probably thinks of his being *set apart for the gospel* as a work of God's Holy Spirit. If so, the implicit reference to the Spirit makes Paul's initial self-identification in Romans Trinitarian.

1:2. The gospel for which Paul had been separated was not his own invention, nor was it even a revelation made especially for him. Instead, the gospel was **promised beforehand through God's prophets of old in the Holy Scriptures**. This is precisely the perspective taken in the book of Acts (see, for example, Acts 17:2-3; 24:14-15; 26:22-23; 28:23). In Acts, Paul persistently appealed to the OT Scriptures as giving authority to his gospel. But this viewpoint goes back to our

Lord Himself (see Luke 24:25-27, 44-47). The gospel is rooted in the OT.

1:3-4. The subject of the gospel is God's Son. The first phrase, **the One who came from David's seed**, identifies His human origin in David's royal line. The second phrase, **the One who was designated as the Son of God with power**, identifies Him as a divine Person who possesses mighty power.

In this twofold identification, Paul begins with a reference to the Incarnation and His human status (**as regards the flesh**). His resurrection, however, clearly disclosed a higher status that was related to God's Holy Spirit (**as regards the Spirit of holiness**).

The Holy Spirit is indeed *the Spirit of holiness* since it is He who produces holiness in Christian experience (see esp. Rom 8:11-13). The Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is the divine source of true holiness.

The reality of **the resurrection of the dead** is manifested in the raising of God's Son back to physical life. Where there are first fruits, there will also be a harvest, and that harvest will include everyone who has ever died.

It should also be observed that this *power* is inseparably related to His right to judge all men. As Jesus personally declared, "...the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22).

Finally, Paul implicitly lays the foundation for the truth he will more fully expound in this epistle. The gospel, he will soon tell us, "is *the power of God* for deliverance" (1:16, emphasis added). But this power for deliverance is nothing less than the resurrecting power of "the Spirit of Christ" (8:9-11), and so it is also an expression of the power that God has designated His Son as possessing.

In the English verse divisions, the phrase **Jesus Christ our Lord** concludes v 4.

1:5. Paul acknowledges himself as the recipient both of grace and of apostleship **through Him** (Jesus Christ our Lord).

The goal of Paul's apostleship is **to bring about obedience by faith...among all the Gentiles.**

We may dismiss out of hand the view that the phrase refers to the obedience that *inevitably* flows from true faith. It is possible, however, that the phrase might mean "the obedience which is faith" in the sense that faith is a form of obedience. That is certainly a correct doctrine (see John 3:36 in Greek, *ho apeithōn*).

But the most natural sense here is that this refers to the obedience that can and should be produced *by faith* in God's Son. The Apostle was obviously interested in bringing about a response of faith to the gospel message he proclaimed (vv 1-4). But he was interested in more than that. He was also profoundly concerned with the obedience to God that ought to result from that faith.

Faith in God's Son is the *starting point* from which obedience proceeds. Thus Christian living is obedience stimulated by, and caused by, the original justifying faith. Obedience is the *product* of such faith. Or, as the literal rendering indicates, this is *faith's obedience*. This truth will become more evident when Romans 6-8 are considered in detail.

Paul's apostolic ministry was aimed at producing faith's obedience *among all the Gentiles*. And this obedience was intended to glorify "Jesus

Christ our Lord," that is, it was to be done **for His name's sake.**

1:6. Paul now clearly affirms that the Gentile readership of Romans is part of the larger circle of Gentile believers (**among whom**) who are the object of his purpose to "bring about [an] obedience" that proceeds from their faith (see v 5). Thus this letter to the Roman Christians is fully harmonious with Paul's apostolic goal for Gentile believers in general. His readers are among those **called by Jesus Christ** and thus they possess a faith that should lead them to obey the One who called them.

1:7. Paul concludes the formal salutation of his letter by explicitly identifying his audience and by wishing a benediction on them. Specifically he is writing **to all who are in Rome** who have become the recipients of God's gracious love and now have the status of saints, to which status He had summoned (called) them. Paul's hope and expectation for such privileged people was that they might have an on-going experience of God's abundant **grace and peace**. As Christians, they would know that these blessings were sourced in **God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

B. PAUL'S DESIRE TO VISIT ROME (1:8-15)

1:8. The first thing Paul wishes to do is to assure his readers of his appreciation for their Christian faith, news of which is widely published **throughout the whole Roman world.** Though they are not his converts, he rejoices, nonetheless, in the fact that their faith has impacted people in countless places. It must have been no insignificant matter for the early Christians that their confidence in Jesus Christ was shared by people in no less a place than the capital of the empire. The report of the gospel's fruitfulness there must have spread rapidly from congregation to congregation.

1:9-10. Paul's interest in the Romans, however, goes beyond merely rejoicing in their faith. As a matter of fact, that interest finds significant expression in his prayer life. God Himself can witness to the fact that Paul has a constant remembrance of them in his prayers. After all, those prayers were made *to Him*. But this prayer activity, Paul suggests, is part of his service to

God **in my spirit** on behalf of **the gospel of His Son**. Since Paul knew the value of intercession, he understood that **the gospel** could be truly served not only with our lips, but also with our spirits through the medium of prayer.

But not only did Paul mention the Roman Christians constantly before God, he also was regularly **requesting...in [his] prayers** the opportunity to come and visit them in Rome. This had not been possible up to now (see v 13), and Paul realizes that the success of any effort he makes to come depends on **the will of God**. Paul had learned through many experiences that the sovereign hand of the Lord determined where he went and when.

1:11-12. The desire for personal fellowship with the objects of his prayer and the desire to be of **benefit** to them are merged in Paul's heart as one desire. The man who asks God's gifts for men wishes naturally to be able to give some gift himself. To be attuned to God's generosity is to become generous; to wish with such an attitude to see individuals is to wish to share with them for their good.

The words **some spiritual benefit** take the Greek word *charisma* in a non-technical sense. Paul's doctrine about spiritual gifts was that every Christian already had one (see Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:12-31). There is no persuasive evidence that Paul believed a Christian could change his gift or add one he did not previously possess.

Paul is not so proud, however, as to imagine that only the Romans will benefit from mutual interaction with him. On the contrary, he anticipated that he and they would **be encouraged together** by means of their mutually shared **faith**. The Christian teacher who thinks that other believers can no longer bring him spiritual enhancement is a teacher in urgent need of additional wisdom.

1:13. Many times Paul had decided to come to them but was **prevented** from doing so. Given the multiplicity of his spiritual responsibilities, plus the frequency with which he was persecuted, the delay was fully understandable. But the intention was there.

The fruit of which he speaks, the aim of his coming, was that he might impart some

"spiritual benefit" (1:12; cf. Phil 1:21-25). Elsewhere, Paul uses *fruit* of the holy and beneficial results of Christian experience (see Rom 6:21-22; 15:28; Gal 5:22; Eph 5:9; Phil 1:11, 22; 4:17), and somewhat differently in 2 Tim 2:6. No other uses of *fruit* occur in his epistles except 1 Cor 9:7 as a discussion of material remuneration.

Paul moves from the concept of his burden for the Romans to his obligation to them. He wants **fruit among** them, just as he had elsewhere **among the rest of the Gentiles**. He will now tell the Romans that this desire grows out of his sweeping responsibility to the Gentile world.

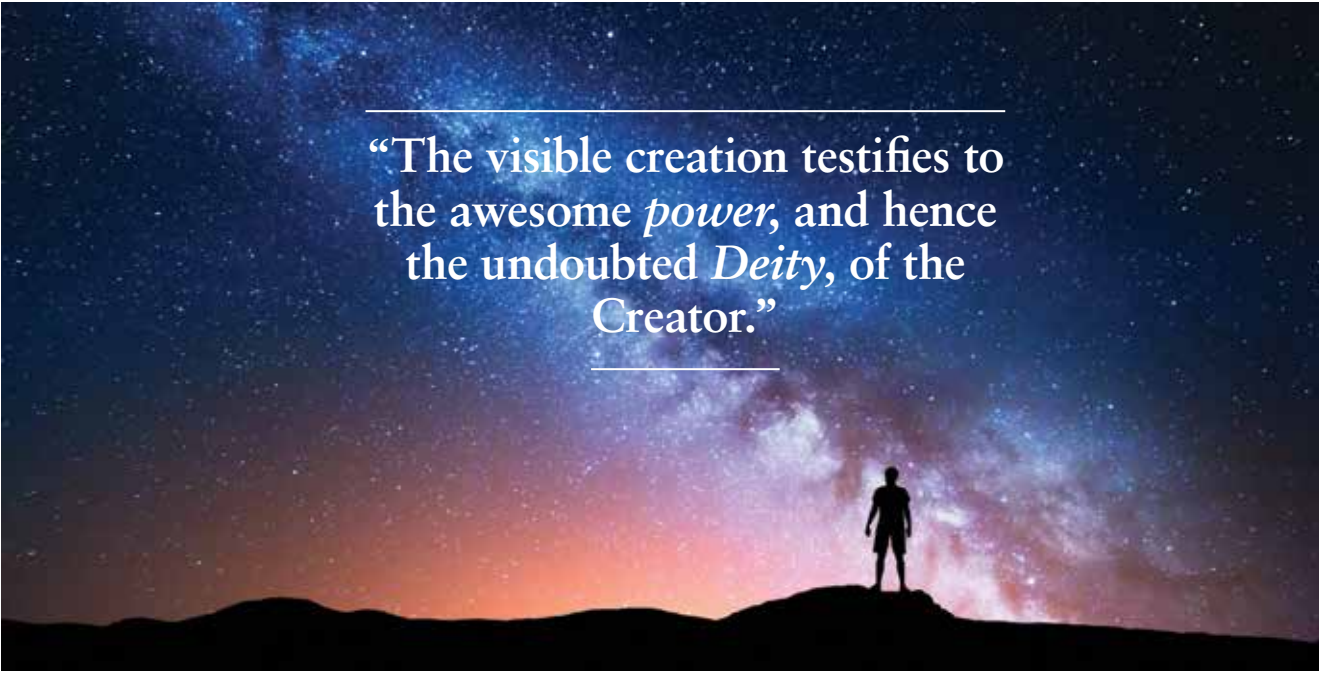
1:14-15. Paul considered himself a **debtor** to the Gentile world because he had "received grace and apostleship to bring about obedience by faith for His name's sake among all the Gentiles" (1:5). It is not that the Gentiles have some claim on Paul in their own right, but rather that the Lord Jesus Christ has a claim on him because of the "grace and apostleship" that He had bestowed on Paul.

Thus, he is a debtor to every kind of Gentile—**to Greeks and to barbarians** (those outside the Greek culture).

He had a **readiness...to preach the gospel also** in Rome. His debt extends to those in that city as well. As the capital of the empire, of course, Rome would be a locale unthinkable to pass by in a ministry designed to reach all types of Gentiles.

Note that Paul's desire *to preach the gospel* is personalized as directed **to you who are in Rome**. No doubt the *you (humin)* is broad enough to embrace the idea of "you people" who are in Rome. Naturally this includes the unconverted whom Paul would certainly try to reach. Yet the *you* also implies that he will "gospelize" his readers as well when he comes. No preacher worth his salt would fail to spell out the gospel he preached to a new group of Christian hearers, since the Apostle knew quite well how readily believers could be diverted from the simple truths of God's saving grace. If we doubt this, we ought to read Galatians again—more carefully!

Paul's gospel, therefore, will be proclaimed when he comes to Rome.



“The visible creation testifies to the awesome *power*, and hence the undoubted *Deity*, of the Creator.”

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II. THEMATIC STATEMENT: THE GOSPEL CONTAINS GOD'S POWER FOR DELIVERANCE (1:16-17)

1:16-17. Paul now states the fundamental theme of the epistle. The words **I am not ashamed of** are an understatement for “I am quite proud of” the gospel of Christ. He is proud of Jesus’ gospel because it is the power of God for deliverance for everyone who believes.

In my translation, the word *deliverance* replaces the more familiar word *salvation* that is found in most translations. The word *salvation* prejudices interpreters right from the start since it is traditionally understood as “salvation from hell.” The word *deliverance* properly leaves the issue open and almost automatically elicits the question, “deliverance from *what*?”

An examination of the Epistle to the Romans turns up the surprising fact that after Rom 1:16, the Greek word for deliverance or salvation (*sōtēria*) does not occur again until Rom 11:11, and the verb form of this word (*sōzō*) occurs next at Rom 5:9-10. Thus, the noun and verb are totally absent from Paul’s discussion of justification in chaps. 2–4, even though, on the traditional view, this is where they would most naturally appear.

In addition, in Rom 5:9-10, the experience from which we are saved or delivered is specified as “wrath” (5:9). Although this word, too, has a traditional meaning (i.e., the wrath associated with hell), Paul’s epistle does not support this. In Romans, *wrath* is a manifestation of God’s *temporal* displeasure. This is clear from 1:18ff and 2:5-8. Given the close proximity of 1:16 to 1:18, and in the light of 5:9-10, we may conclude that in Rom 1:16 *deliverance* refers to being rescued, or “saved,” from the divine temporal anger that is so vividly described in Rom 1:18-32.

The believing Roman recipients of this letter can embrace its message, whether they happen to be Jewish or Gentile (Jew...and...Greek).

The gospel of Christ is the power of God since it reveals the righteousness of God. God’s power never operates contrary to, or inconsistently with, His righteousness. For *the gospel of Christ* to be a source of *deliverance* for men, it must also be manifestly consistent with God’s righteous character.

Paul is thinking principally of *the righteousness of God* that is imputed to those who believe (note especially, 3:21-22). This is made clear by the words **by faith, granted to faith**. The *righteousness of God* is attained by means of faith and it is bestowed on, or granted to, faith.

The following words express the connection Paul finds between justifying faith and the *deliverance* he has just mentioned. Thus, “**Now the one who is righteous by faith shall live**” (Hab 2:4). The righteous man, therefore, is the one who can *live* in precisely the sense Paul elaborates in Romans 6–8. In fact, he states, “if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will *live*” (8:13). Life in the truly Christian sense of that term can only be “lived” by *the one who is righteous by faith*.

Accordingly, in Rom 1:16-17, the Apostle has set forth his theme succinctly and effectively. He is proud of the gospel precisely because it makes available *the power of God* that accomplishes *deliverance* in the lives of believers. This *deliverance* of sinful creatures is in full harmony with God’s own righteousness. That righteousness is revealed in the gospel as a righteousness actually attained *prior to* deliverance on the sole basis of faith. Thus the gospel leads to the realization of the profoundly important truth stated in Habakkuk: if a person *is righteous by faith*, he can *live*. For the NT person, that is nothing less than victorious Christian experience.

III. BODY OF THE EPISTLE: SPIRITUAL DELIVERANCE ARISES FROM THE RIGHTEOUSNESS GOD GRANTS TO FAITH (1:18–15:13)

A. GOD’S DISPLEASURE WITH HUMANITY IS MANIFEST (1:18–3:20)

1. Humanity Stands under God’s Wrath (1:18–2:5)

a. *The Declaration of This Manifestation (1:18)*

1:18. The first word of this verse in Greek is the one rendered *is revealed* (*Apokaluptetai*). The gospel, Paul has just said in v 17, is a message wherein God’s *righteousness is revealed* (*apokaluptetai* is used there, too). Now he speaks of *the revelation* of God’s **wrath**. The repetition of *apokaluptetai* highlights the contrast.

It is precisely because man is so clearly under divine *wrath* that he stands in need of a gospel of divine *righteousness*. Specifically, this *wrath* is directed **against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men**.

Man thus stands far distant from the basic character of God who possesses a perfect *righteousness*. But, in addition to this, unrighteous man is also hostile to the truth of God. Hence, the revelation of God’s wrath is said to be against the sinfulness of **men who suppress (*katechontōn*) the truth by unrighteousness**. It is serious enough for man to deviate from God’s holy standards. It is even more serious for him to seek to hold back God’s truth.

This tendency is everywhere on display in our own day and time.

b. *The Cause of This Manifestation (1:19-23)*

1:19-20. What mankind can know about **God**, says Paul, is perfectly plain, that is, **evident (*phaneron*) among them**. In fact, **God Himself has made it evident (*ephanerōse*) to them**. Paul does not imply by this that all the information humanity might need about God falls under the category of self-evident truth.

What Paul has in mind by **what is knowable (*to gnōston*)** is defined in v 20 as **His invisible attributes**, specifically, **His eternal power and Deity**. These *attributes* are seen clearly by means of the **creation of the world**. That is to say, the visible creation testifies to the awesome *power*, and hence the undoubted *Deity*, of the Creator.

Invisible realities about God are clearly visible to the rational faculties of mankind, that is, *they are seen clearly*, and this perception arises directly **from the things that have been made**. Paul does not entertain the notion here, or anywhere else, that the evidence of creation is somehow insufficient if not buttressed by sophisticated argumentation. Those who reject the testimony of nature are **without excuse**.

The greater the complexity of a system, the more emphatically that system testifies to a Designer. Only with regard to the cosmos, the most complex system of all, is this self-evident truth denied.

The responsibility of men is precisely Paul's point. Since God's *eternal power and Deity* can be *seen clearly*, humanity has no defense for its ignorance of these realities, **so that they** [mankind] *are without excuse*. If there is ignorance, it is willful ignorance and hence, suppression of the truth (v 18).

Of course, the gospel Paul proclaims is itself a special divine revelation and in no way deducible from the natural world. But if men were willing to recognize the manifestation of the Creator which creation itself affords them, they would then be in a position to search out the further will of their Maker (cf. Acts 16:9-10; 17:27). However, as long as they suppress, with their idolatry, the true witness of nature, no such progress is possible. To acknowledge the existence of a Creator is implicitly to acknowledge human accountability for unrighteous behavior. Unrighteous man does not want to do that.

1:21. There was indeed a time when the God of creation was known (**when they knew God**).

Paul is thinking here of the period covered in the early chapters of Genesis, after the fall of man. Even Lamech, the second murderer in human history, implicitly acknowledges the God who had promised vengeance on anyone who hurt Cain (see Gen 4:23-24). Shortly after, we are told that "then men began to call on the name of the Lord" (Gen 4:26). There is no evidence prior to the flood of a movement toward idolatry. Yet at the same time, man's failure to honor his Maker and to appreciate His gifts is transparent (Gen 6:5-7).

Mankind's response to the God they knew was dramatically insufficient in three ways. First, mankind **did not glorify God as God**. His manifest "power" and "Deity" were not acknowledged with the reverence and honor that was fitting. Second, neither **were they thankful** for His innumerable gifts, starting with physical life itself. Third, they **engaged in their empty reasonings**. The net result was that **their senseless heart was darkened**. Out of this inward darkness arose the hideous distortion of Deity found in idolatry.

1:22-23. Yet, strangely, benighted man is never as self-confident as when his ignorance is most deep: **claiming to be wise, they became fools**.

So far was mankind from recognizing their own darkness that they confused it with light! The consequent descent into idolatry was a powerful testimony to this utter lack of true perception.

Something like this darkening process has repeated itself today. Most of academia holds tenaciously to the view that natural processes explain everything, when in fact they explain nothing. The folly and perversity of this attitude should be manifest.

The supreme Intelligence that is so obvious in our cosmos, and becomes more obvious as new discoveries are made, is excluded from human calculations. The wise have become fools.

In Paul's day, this folly was transparent in the degradation to which the image of the Creator-God was subjected by idolatry. **The glory of the immortal God is exchanged by some idolaters for an image made in the likeness of mortal man.** Others made idols of birds, and of four-footed creatures, and finally of reptiles. These elements of idolatry underline the abject decay of the concept of the living God whom mankind refuses to see in the evidentiary character of the creation itself.

c. The Results of This Manifestation (1:24-32)

1:24-25. Precisely because of this idolatry (**therefore**), God has **turned them over** to their own iniquity. It is evident that the section encompassing vv 24-32 is unified by a threefold use of the phrase *turned them over* found in vv 24, 26, and 28. It is here that we meet Paul's fundamental thought about the wrath of God which the Apostle has already declared to be revealed from heaven (v 18). This divine anger, Paul has said, is directed against men who restrain the truth (vv 19-23). It is now appropriate that God's wrath should be spelled out specifically.

Since men have dishonored the Creator God by misrepresenting Him with creature-like images, they are given over to the outworking of their corrupt inward desires (**the lusts of their hearts**) and are dragged into a moral uncleanness that dishonors their own physical bodies. Those who have degraded God with "bodily" representations

of Him are allowed to experience their own “bodily” degradation!

Physical existence has no real meaning apart from a transcendent reality that gives it meaning. When man loses his sense of a God who transcends all physical representation, man cannot avoid reducing his own physical experience to the shameful level of immorality. The sanctity of physical life is only maintained by means of the perception of a God who transcends physical life and who thus gives it its ultimate significance and value.

The idolatry described in vv 21-23 was nothing less than an exchange of the truth of God for a lie that resulted in worshipping the creature rather than the Creator.

In idolatry, Paul says, men have exchanged reality for a falsehood. The truth of God’s transcendence over His creation is replaced by the implicit lowering of God to the level of a creature of whatever form the idolater chooses. But this in fact is creature worship. Thus, *the creature* becomes the focus of everything.

In a creature-centered world, where the purposes and restraints of *the Creator* are forgotten, immorality is the tragically predictable result. Yet, as Paul affirms in the final words of the verse, *the Creator* whom men have forgotten is **blessed forever**. Man’s inexcusable defection in no way touches or diminishes the blessedness of the transcendent God.

1:26-27. Man’s idolatry (vv 21-23) leads to the debasing of his physical experience (v 24). But this debasing is founded on the exchange of truth for a lie (v 25), leading to a similar exchange of truth for a lie in perverted sexual practice (vv 26-27). Thus, man descends the staircase of moral corruptness. In lesbian/homosexual behavior, mankind embraces the lie that this form of sexual encounter is an experience equivalent to God-ordained sex.

The **dishonorable passions** to which God has also **turned them over**, therefore, are nothing less than distortions of reality in the sexual sphere. The key phrase here is that **females exchanged** (v 26) and **males also left** (v 27) **their natural practice** (vv 26-27).

The connection with v 25 is quite evident since the term *exchanged* of v 26 recalls the same verb in v 25 and thus stresses the correspondence between the sin and its penalty.

Once again, as in v 24, man’s failure to honor God properly leads to his own dishonor.

Paul’s description of homosexuality between

males is fuller than his treatment of lesbian activity. Paul explicitly refers to the improper sexual desire for other men that leads to **doing what is sexually shameful**. In addition, it is pertaining to males that he speaks specifically of physical consequences.

The first words in vv 24-32 to refer to a direct physical judgment are those at the end of v 27. Homosexual males are described as **receiving back in themselves for their error the recompense which was due them**. Paul is not referring to eternal condemnation here.

No doubt Paul is thinking of sexually transmitted diseases. Of course, the same penalty may accompany the other sexual sins as well (vv 24, 26), but Paul stresses here the retribution deserved by male deviants.

1:28. For a third time we are told that **God turned men over to something**. This time it is to a **debased mind**. The reason now given is that **they did not see fit to retain God in their knowledge**. The sexual perversions just described (vv 26-27) cannot be comfortably engaged in when the human mind is thinking about God.

But a refusal to keep God before the mind is not confined to this type of sinner alone. When this banishing of God from the mind occurs, God simply allows them to possess the natural result—a *debased mind*.

**“The supreme
Intelligence that is
so obvious in our
cosmos, and becomes
more obvious as new
discoveries are made,
is excluded from
human calculations.
The wise have become
fools.”**

Deprived of the ennobling concept of the Creator God, people suffer from the depraved and defective mental life to which God has *turned them over*.

The result of this base mindset in humanity is that **they did unseemly things**. These *unseemly things* are now detailed in the graphic verses that follow.

1:29-31. The list of vices contained in these verses falls into four groups that are indicated by the way Paul structures his list.

The opening series consists of five terms connected with the words **filled with all**. Mankind's character and behavior reflect a surfeit of all kinds of **unrighteousness** (perhaps more specifically, "injustice"), **immorality**, **wickedness**, **greed**, and **malice**.

The second series begins with the words **full of**. Five additional characteristics of depraved humanity are now listed: **envy**, **murder**, **strife**, **deceit**, **malignty**. The stress in this series falls on the harsh hostility that so often characterizes human beings' relations with one another. This last word, *malignty*, cannot be sharply distinguished from *malice* which concluded the first chain of words. Thus, each series is rounded off by a similar idea, namely, the spiteful spirit that manifests itself in mankind's interpersonal relations.

The third series in Paul's list contains six words: **whisperers**, **slanderers**, **God-haters** [or repugnant], **insolent**, **arrogant**, **boastful** (**inventors of evil things** is a dependent genitive modifying *boastful*).

As *inventors of evil things*, nothing evil is beyond the range of their corrupt inventiveness.

Finally, the fourth series, beginning with **disobedient** (*apeitheis*) **to parents**, contains six terms that round off Paul's withering analysis of humanity's condition under God's wrath. All six of the Greek words in this final series begin with the Greek letter *alpha* and thus form a climax to the whole list that has a pleasing alliteration.

The loss of respect for parental authority brings in its wake a lack of discernment (**undiscerning**, *asunetous*), a lack of fidelity (**unfaithful**, *asunthetous*), whether to commitments or to established standards, a lack of concern and affection

(**unloving**, *astorgous*), a lack in the ability to accommodate or make peace (**irreconcilable**, *aspondous*), and a lack of elementary compassion (**unmerciful**, *anēlēmonas*). Sin is much more than what people do. It is also what people *do not* do!

Thus, Paul's sweeping description of man's moral state effectively articulates the broad dimensions of God's displeasure with sin. Man's very own condition proclaims loudly that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven" (v 18). Here, in Paul's elaborate exposure of the depths of human depravity, the discerning eye can see how God has "turned [humanity] over" to the depraving effects of their own "unrighteousness and ungodliness" (see v 18). One final charge against mankind remains to be stated.

1:32. This verse offers a grim finale to Paul's depiction of humanity under divine wrath. Although God is no longer held in recognition (v 28), a consciousness of **God's righteous standard** remains. Man's perception of what is right and just has not been totally effaced (**they know**). The realization that sin cries out for punishment can never be wholly eradicated.

Yet tragically men ignore this perception and not only perpetuate their own sin (**they not only do them**), but they even go so far as to **approve of those who do them**. It is bad both to *do* these things and to extend acceptance and commendation to the doers!

The result is an elevation of sin to a level of respectability among sinners, with the consequent ignoring of divine sanctions against it. This awful state is exemplified in many ways in our own time as well.

Paul's indictment of humanity culminates in mankind's tragic effort to make evil a virtue. The depth to which mankind has fallen under the wrath of its Creator painfully discloses the nature and extent of God's displeasure. ■



Zane Hodges was a Bible teacher and Professor of Greek at Dallas Theological Seminary. He passed away in 2008.

A Testimony to Grace

By Kelley Easley

A HERITAGE OF GRACE

I guess you could say that I'm both old and new to Free Grace theology. Old, because I grew up in a Free Grace church. New, because for a good long while, I forgot what that even meant, wandered around in a fog of doctrinal error, and only recently found my way back to the clear and simple truth of the gospel.

I grew up in Tulsa, OK, and attended Patrian Bible Church, pastored then by Glen Carnegie (and later, by Dan Hill). The church was a little quirky, extremely patriotic, with a high regard for the military. The pastor was one who loved and taught along the lines of R.B. Thieme. From a young age, I was exposed to in-depth teaching on many topics of Bible doctrine. Most importantly, around age 7, I heard the clear gospel message of John 3:16, and the truth of Eph 2:8-9, and I believed in Jesus for eternal life.

I recall sitting in Sunday school and learning all about how there was a family circle and a fellowship circle, and how once you were in the family circle (saved), you had permanent membership.

So eternal security was a concept I understood and believed in from a young age.

HIGH SCHOOL HOLINESS

During my junior year in high school, without really having any concept of the doctrinal differences, I started attending a Pentecostal Holiness church with a friend. For me, the focus shifted



from security to commitment. For the first time, I was exposed to teaching that said you had better be “prayed up” at all times because if you died in a state of unconfessed sin, you could lose your salvation.

I'm not sure I ever really swallowed this line of thinking whole, but maybe a seed of doubt had been planted.

That was just a set-up for what I experienced in college.

COLLEGE CONFUSION

In college, I became involved with Campus Crusade for Christ and attended a well-known Bible church with ties to Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS). Because my former Free Grace pastor and other Free Grace teachers I had known of had come from DTS, I assumed that this DTS pastor and his church would also hold to Free Grace.

So I was caught completely unawares when one night after our large group meeting, I asked a question and received an answer which would land me in the wilderness of Lordship thinking for decades. The pastor from my Bible Church had spoken to our Crusade group that night and something which I can't recall now provoked me to ask him about the role of works in salvation, as something he had said confused me.

I do remember saying, “I know that it’s not works = salvation, and I know it’s not faith + works = salvation...but...?” I knew it had to be faith alone = salvation, but a doubt had now crept in.

He answered by writing down the following equation on a piece of paper: “salvation = faith + works”.

And as a young college student, despite what I had learned and knew in my heart to be true from Scripture, I allowed this pastor’s background and education to supersede my own beliefs.

This was the beginning of the unravelling of my assurance. It’s ironic, actually. In Crusade, as I was being discipled and trained both to disciple and to evangelize, the gospel tract we frequently used (the *Four Spiritual Laws*) contained a corollary on assurance. But sadly, the pastor’s words and seeming logic cast a shadow of doubt over everything else I had heard or learned.

A CYCLE OF DOUBTS

The ensuing years were marked by pretty intense anxiety over the possible loss of my salvation each time my behavior failed to live up to the standard of holiness I now had in my head. Without even fully realizing it, I was now standing on the sinking sand of my performance vs. the solid ground of His sure promise.

This continued after college, as I attended another Bible church back in Tulsa, whose pastor had studied under John MacArthur. At the time, I was unaware of the Lordship debate and once again, just assumed that in a Bible church, the Word would be rightly divided. While Lordship was not overtly taught, I wouldn’t say I received any teaching to the contrary, either.

As I continued to struggle with besetting sins, I continued to wrestle with assurance.

During one such episode, a well-meaning friend gave me a copy of John MacArthur’s *Saved Without a Doubt*. As I seemed to pass all the tests of “evidence” of being saved, my fears were assuaged...until the next time.

And on and on it went, for years into marriage and motherhood.

FAITH WORKS

Just about two years ago, my husband and I had become members of a small, non-denominational church with an intimate, vibrant community and seemingly strong teaching. We sat through an entire sermon series on the book of James called “faith works.” By this time, I suppose the deception had really taken root. The Lordship stance it took seemed so logical. It was as though I had forgotten that there were any alternatives out there.

We later ended up leaving that church because of other errors we were able to discern and returned to a larger Bible church which we had attended for two years previously. Again, we were confronted with error, as contemplative spirituality was being boldly (and shockingly) promoted from the pulpit during a summer teaching series. Again, we left. But this time, we had nowhere else to go.

RE-DISCOVERING FREE GRACE

It was at this point that I became reacquainted with the glorious truth of God’s free grace!

Soon after we left the last church, quite randomly, I clicked on a quote from GES that a friend had posted on Facebook. To my knowledge, this friend is not Free Grace and does not follow GES. In fact, I’ve never seen her post anything from them either before or since.

I had never heard of GES, but liked the quote, followed the link, and for the first time in decades, recalled that a thing called Free Grace actually existed. Exploring their website brought me back to everything I had learned as a child, growing up, and the thick haze of Lordship thinking began to lift.

Through their Free Grace Church Tracker, I found a church 45 minutes from our town. Out of curiosity, though not really expecting it to be an option for us, I decided to check out the church’s website. I thought I might at least be able to find some solid sermons I could listen to online. And boy, did I! It was like finding water in the desert as themes of grace and assurance flooded back.

Eventually, I managed to convince my husband to visit the church. Our first time there, we were asked how we had heard about the church, and I replied that I had found them through the GES church tracker. In about 3 seconds flat, I was introduced to Diane Boring. To say that meeting Diane was a pivotal moment in my Christian walk would be a huge understatement! Diane and I became friends, and a running dialogue about grace began. Diane is amazingly generous and began to loan me every book ever published by GES (just a slight exaggeration).

Reading Bob Wilkin's *A Gospel of Doubt* and Zane Hodges's *Absolutely Free* felt like having a giant boulder removed from my shoulders. The truth became crystal clear again, and I felt a freedom in Christ that I had not experienced in years.

This past Christmas, my kids and I put together some care packages for a few homeless people in our area. While the goodies were nice, I knew that what they really needed was hope. And for the first time in what felt like forever, I knew that I was capable of delivering exactly what they

needed. For years I hadn't wanted to share my faith, as for me, the good news had become not-so-good. Now, however, it was all so clear and simple again. I wrote out a heartfelt prayer and the words to John 3:16 and included them in each care package. I knew now that I didn't need to add any caveats or provisos to the simple requirement of faith in Christ for eternal life. The good news which I shared with them had once again become good news to me!

The past several months, I've enjoyed interacting with other commenters (some of you!) from the GES blog, before the closure of their comments section. Truly, that interaction has caused me so much opportunity for sharpening, refinement, and growth. I couldn't be more appreciative to all who've helped to shape my understanding today!

Looking forward to more of the same here! 

Kelley and her husband Marcus live in northwest Arkansas, where they navigate the daily joys and struggles of homeschooling two kiddos and raising a late-in-life baby.

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The Mailbag

By You

Thank you for your wonderful magazine. And thank you for your stand for free grace salvation. ~T. B., Macon, GA.


My story begins several years ago, when I was struggling with my salvation. Not a struggle of assurance, but one of the elements of salvation. In fact, legalism had begun to dominate my thoughts, to the point of questioning, not whether I was saved, but when. Did my salvation begin the moment I believed, or was it the moment I surrendered? This, I'm sure is not an unfamiliar story to you. Thankfully, God directed me to a man named Bill...It was through Bill that I encountered Free Grace Theology, a doctrine that I would struggle with at first—due to my past influence by John MacArthur. Yet through God's grace, Bill's guidance, and your publication, I have embraced Free Grace. ~L.D., Nashville, NC.

I've been a spirit-filled Christian for 30 years and thought I could lose my salvation. Eleven months ago I was given nine of your magazines and am fully convinced of my assurance of eternal salvation due to your magazine. Please put me on your mailing list. ~J.K., Sheridan, OR

Trusting you all are doing well (especially Sharon—you've been in our prayers!). We are excited about the new radio ministry! ~J. & C.C., Tyler, TX

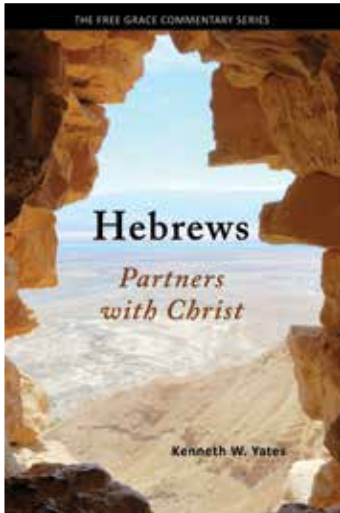
I wanted to write because I am so excited and grateful to have been introduced to this ministry. A little bit ago, I began questioning my salvation after being presented with some Lordship type



studies. I became very confused about repentance and felt very unsettled when judging my fruits for my salvation status. The more I studied this type of material, the more confused I became. If repentance was a condition of salvation, I needed to know exactly what repentance meant, and I wasn't getting a clear answer. My husband, who came out of a Calvinist background, pointed out that I was reading these verses out of context. He also listened to the studies I was focusing on, and totally disagreed with what was said. After doing some research, he came across faithalone.org and ordered me *Turn and Live*. At first, the concepts in the book sounded very strange and foreign to me, and I didn't reject it right away, but I also wasn't automatically convinced. I read the book again and studied the verses and probably bugged the heck out of my poor husband with a billion questions and arguments. In time, I couldn't help being persuaded. This was logical and just plain Biblical. After a while of studying the Bible more and considering the Free Grace view, I went back and listened to the Lordship studies. Now I can hear how nonsensical they sound...Anyways, thank you for all the blogs, radio shows, magazines and books...And thank you for defending the proper Biblical view of the faith alone message. ~LA., email. 

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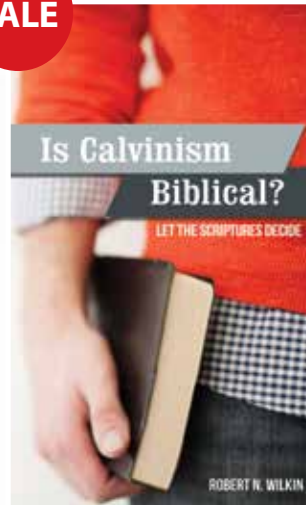
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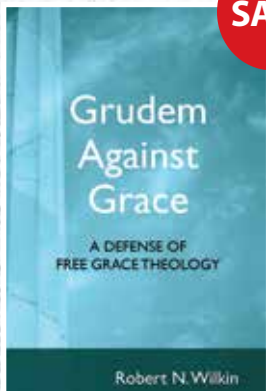
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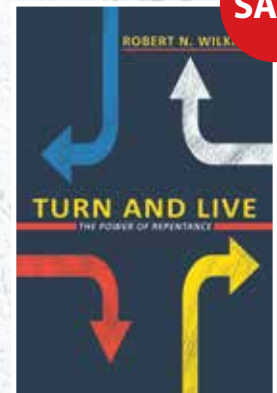
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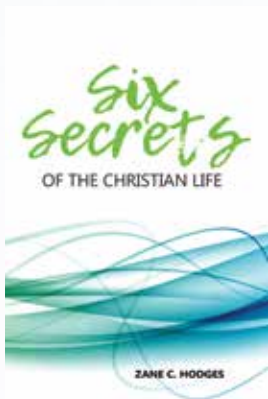
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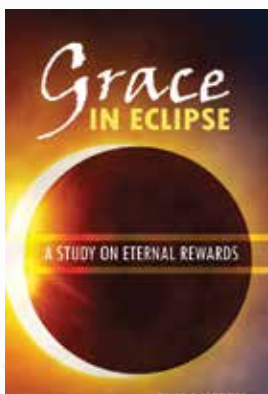


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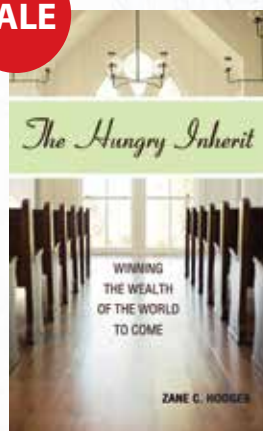
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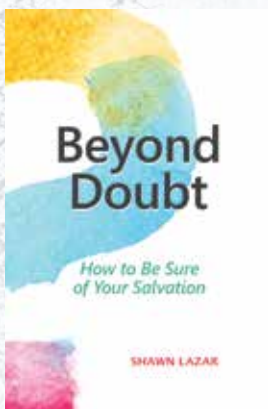


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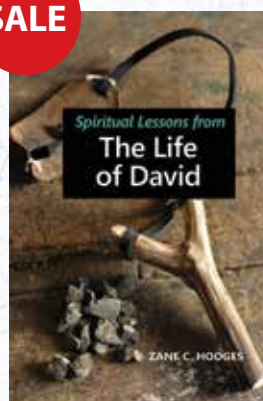
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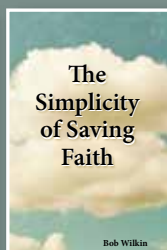
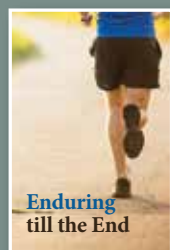


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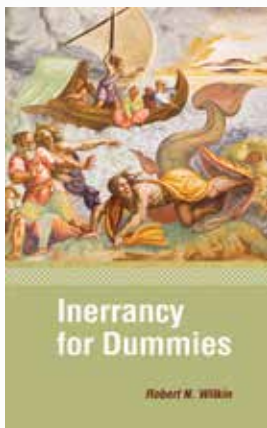
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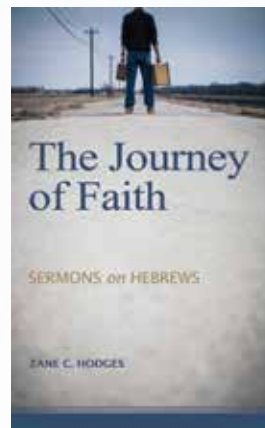


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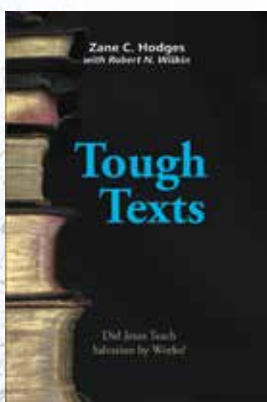


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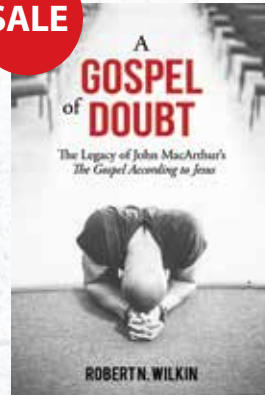
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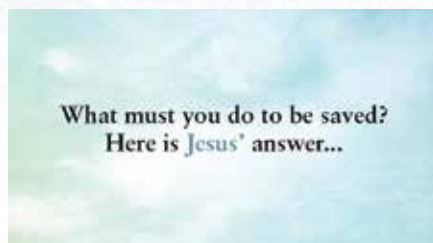
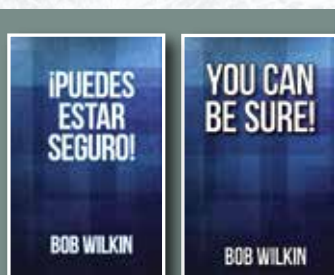


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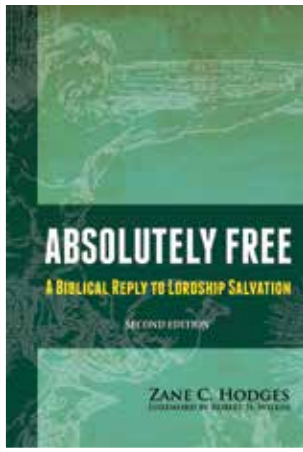
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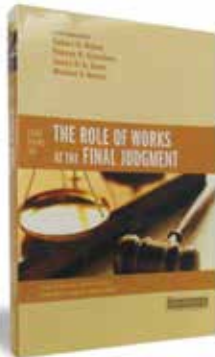
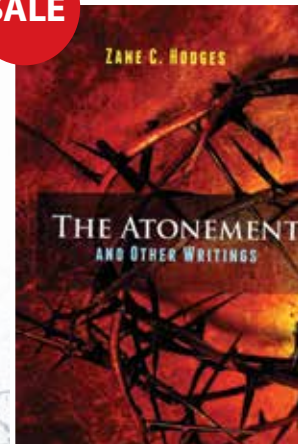
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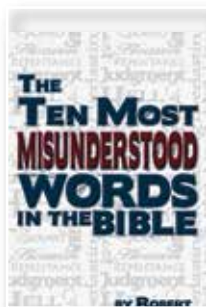
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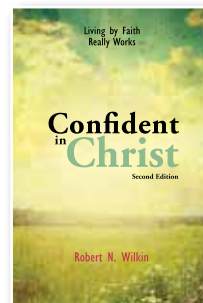
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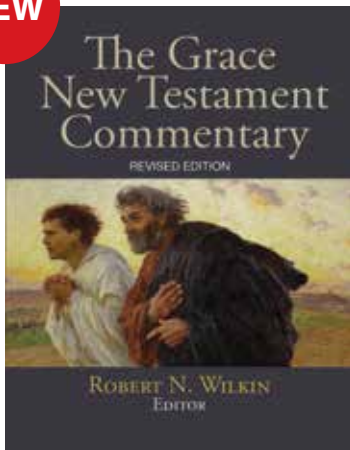
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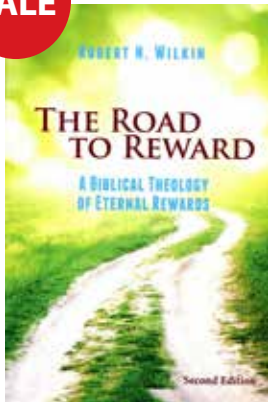
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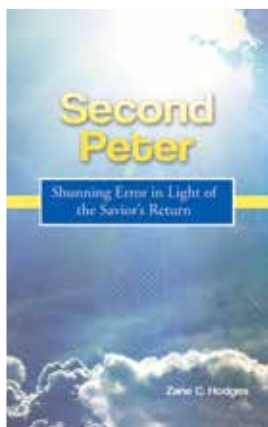


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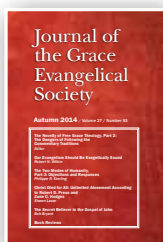


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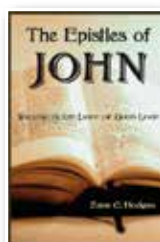
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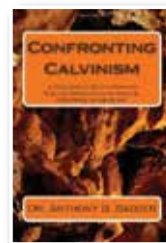


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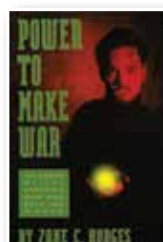


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How Do You Know You're Trusting Jesus to Save You?

By Shawn Lazar

QUESTION

How do I know that I am trusting in Jesus to save me? I am worried if I was to die, I'd find out that I was believing something else. I guess I get a bit confused because I was raised believing that if someone is truly saved, he will have a changed life, and I have experienced a changed life such as a hatred for sin and desire to be in fellowship with other believers.

ANSWER

Thanks for the question. How do you know that you're trusting in Jesus to save you? I'm not surprised that you were taught to look to your works for the answer. "How do you know? Look at your works!" In other words, you're supposed to know if you're trusting Jesus to save you *if your behavior has changed*. Predictably, that has left you with worries and doubts.



LIGHTSTOCK

Other traditions teach people to look to their participation in the sacraments. "How do you know that you're saved? Well, you were baptized as a baby!" Or "You take communion!" But those same traditions will say that baptized people can end up in hell, and some who take communion are wolves in sheep's clothing.

So let me give you a different answer. You know that you're trusting in Jesus to save you if you have *assurance of everlasting life*.

Let me explain.

A PROMISE WITH A CONDITION

Jesus' promise of everlasting life is conditional. If you meet the condition, then what He promises is true of you. In this case, if you believe, then you have everlasting life. Think of it as a syllogism:

Whoever believes in Jesus has everlasting life
(cf. John 6:47).

I believe in Jesus.

Therefore, I have everlasting life.

That conclusion is the answer to your question. “How do I know that I am trusting in Jesus to save me?” Well, you know you’re trusting Jesus to save you if you believe that He has given you everlasting life, just as He promised. If you doubt that, then you aren’t trusting Him. If you’re putting your faith in anything else (such as in your behavior), then you aren’t trusting Him, either.

If you aren’t sure you have eternal life based on Jesus’ promise to give that life to you, then you aren’t believing in Him to save you.

CONTINUOUS ASSURANCE NOT NECESSARY TO SALVATION


Now, to be clear, all it takes to be saved is one act of faith. If you have *ever* believed in Jesus for everlasting life in the past, then you are born-again and secure forever, whether or not you have assurance right now. But if you want to have *continuous* assurance—assurance *right now*, and *for the rest of your life*—then keep on believing His promise of everlasting life.

HOW TO BE CONVINCED

But let me take it a step further. You might really be asking, “I know what He promised—but please *convince* me to believe in Jesus’

promise!” That might be the real issue. In which case, here’s my advice:

First, *make sure you understand what Jesus promised*. You can’t believe in Jesus for salvation if you’re unclear about what kind of salvation He offers and upon what conditions He offers it. Since there are so many false gospels out there, you should make sure you can distinguish between what is false and what is true. Who knows what kind of mental and spiritual baggage you might have? That baggage will keep you from assurance. When you’re clear on what Jesus promised, then you’ll be able to believe in Him for it.

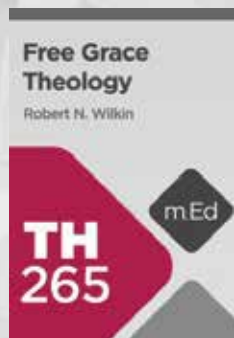
Second, *keep reading about the life of Jesus*. Meditate upon His acts and miracles and teachings. Can Jesus *really* give you everlasting life *just like that*? Can you trust Him to do it? Eventually, I believe the life of Jesus, which is full of “signs,” will convince you that His promise is true. You’ll believe that Jesus is both trustworthy and fully able to fulfill His promise of everlasting life to you. 



Shawn Lazar is Director of Publications for Grace Evangelical Society.

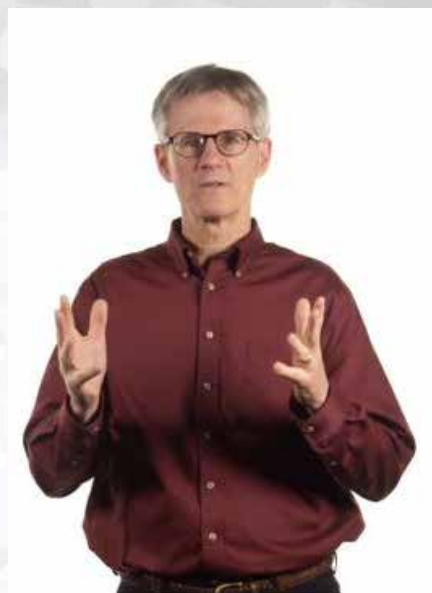
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LIGHTSTOCK

Top 5 Gifts to Give This Christmas

By Summer Stevens

The Christmas story never loses its wonder. It is an unimaginable epic combined with a humility that takes your breath away. A wholly majestic and powerful Creator God exchanges the heavenly splendors for a tiny human baby body, removed of the ability to talk, to walk, or even care for Himself.

Jesus was the ultimate gift, given at just the right time, in full-orbed perfection.

One of the special things about Christmas, then, is the giving of gifts. We give gifts to others to reflect the gift God gave to us—His precious Son, to live on this earth right alongside us, to feel our pains and experience our joys, and then, to die for us. It's a beautiful picture of the heart of God. This Christmas, let's express the heart of God in our own gift giving. Here are the top 5 gifts to give this Christmas.

1. Forgiveness. At our church, we have added a time of personal confession to our Sunday service. The congregation is led to examine our hearts and ask God for forgiveness for whatever comes to mind so we can worship Him with a clear conscience. It's amazing how often I realize, in that moment, how much judgment or negativity or worry I've been hanging on to. I need God's forgiveness on a daily basis, even if I only remember to ask for it on Sundays! This

Christmas, take the time to get on your knees and ask God to reveal to you whom you need to forgive. It might be your spouse, someone from your past, extended family, an old boss, your financial planner, or even our political leaders! God offers us forgiveness each and every day; let's soften our hearts and, as a reflection of God's greatest gift to us, extend forgiveness to those who have wronged us.

2. Attention. This year, in my husband's Father's Day card, I didn't tell him the big reasons I love him. He's used to that. I've been telling him for years. Instead I wrote a list of all the little details that I love about him. Things like he puts his sneakers on first thing in the morning; he's always the one to go check out weird noises at night; and that he smashes bugs with his thumb. He appreciated that card more than most others because I took the time to *pay attention*. And it does take time. There is a multi-billion dollar industry that competes for your attention. Advertisers and entertainers have attention down to a science. A Microsoft study revealed that the average human being now has an eight-second attention span. This is down from twelve seconds in 2000. Give the gift of your attention this Christmas. Go out to dinner with your spouse

and leave your phones in the car (and sit where you can't see a TV screen on the wall). Plan a family night where the focus is doing something fun with your kids or grandkids. Take the time to visit with the lonely person at church who talks too much—hear her story, and empathize with her, even if you're anxious to get home to lunch. Jesus paid attention to people. He took the time to really know those close to Him. He saw people that other people dismissed, and He loved people that others thought weren't valuable. Let's be like Jesus and give our attention this Christmas.


3. An invitation. Jesus' ministry started with an invitation: Follow Me. He was inviting people not just to His church's Sunday potluck or to a Men's Breakfast, but into His life. We associate invitations with events, but Jesus didn't do this. He invited people to share in His soul-satisfying life and purpose, to be His friend and be touched by Him. ("Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" Matt 11:28; "I am the bread of life: he that comes to Me shall never hunger, and he that believes on me shall never thirst" John 6:35.) We can apply the gift of invitation also this Christmas as we invite people into our inner circles of friendship and trust, or as we invite them to learn about the person of Jesus.

4. Something costly. Part of what makes Christmas so special is the very dear price that God the Father paid in giving His Son to the world. It cost Him greatly. Free Grace people often say, *Jesus' gift is free, but it certainly wasn't cheap*. There is an important aspect of the heart of God in this truth. The thing we most needed—rescued from our sins—cost Him the very most. Parents know that seeing our children suffer is far worse than suffering ourselves. How can this be reflected in our lives this Christmas? As we look around, what is most needed, that costs us greatly? It might be financial; it might be our time; it might be a long drive. Whatever your sacrifice is, do it joyfully as it enables you to participate in one of the great gifts of Christmas.

5. Joy. One of my favorite Christmas carols is the adapted version of "Joy to the World" by Chris Tomlin, with the chorus:

Joy, unspeakable joy
An overflowing well
No tongue can tell
Joy, unspeakable joy
Rises in my soul, never lets me go

Because joy is like that sometimes, isn't it? It is something you can't articulate, but it feels like a rush of wild water inside your chest. Jesus bursts onto the world scene with an angelic declaration of *joy*. In Luke 2:10 the angel says to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people." Jesus' arrival was cause for celebration! Finally, hundreds of years in the making, despite a rebellious people, infertility, and Satan's best attempts to destroy the bloodline, the Savior. Has. Arrived. *Amen!* I love v 13 in which "a multitude of heavenly host" spontaneously break forth in praise right after the angel's announcement of Jesus' arrival.

As Christians, we can be a conduit of this joy in our homes, churches, and communities. We are ambassadors of Christ, and this means that during Christmas particularly, we can share the real cause for celebration. It is not elves on shelves, a perfectly decorated tree, or even family time—it is the remembrance of the greatest gift in history, when God in the flesh began His 33 year journey that would change the world. 



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Q&A

By Staff

QUESTION

I've been reading through James, and he speaks about a law of liberty. I thought Christians were not under the law anymore. What is the law of liberty?

ANSWER

Thanks so much for your question. As you know, the phrase "law of liberty" is found in James 1:25 and 2:12.

The key to understanding what it means is found in the context immediately before its first occurrence (1:25). James has just spoken of the new birth (1:18) and then talks about the believer who looks into the Word of God and forgets who he is (vv 23-24).

The believer is a new creation; he has a new nature. He is a child of God, and the Spirit lives within him. The Scriptures reveal who we are and how we are to live (to become more like Christ).

What the teachings of Christ tell us is a law of liberty because we are told to live according to who we are by that new birth. We are free to be ourselves.

This is liberating because our inner man rejoices to do the things we "see" in God's Word (I think that is what John 8:31-32 is talking about as well). It is not automatic or inevitable that we will live that way. We can opt not to walk by the inner man/Spirit, but rather we can walk by the flesh. But when we walk by the Spirit, following what the Lord has taught us and gave us an example in His life to do, we are walking in the freedom of what our new nature wants to do.



QUESTION

The parable with the men getting paid different amounts, what is that about? Don't we all get the same amount?

ANSWER

The parable is found in Matt 20:1-16. I think the first thing we see is that there is a connection between this parable and what goes on before. The last verse of Matthew 19 says the first will be last and the last, first. Then, at the end of the parable, Jesus says the last shall be first, and the first last. Clearly this whole parable and context is talking about rewards. It is not talking about receiving eternal life. The parable is talking about doing work in God's field. In leading up to the previous verses, Peter specifically asks what rewards will be given to those who follow Christ, and Jesus speaks about sitting upon thrones, which is a reward (19:27-28). With that context in mind, we have a couple of ways to understand the parable. The first is that the rewards believers will receive are completely dependent upon God's grace and discretion. A person who comes to faith later in life can serve the Lord and be rewarded, at least in some ways, as well as those who served the

Lord longer. The other way this parable can be understood combines 19:27-30 with the parable. Peter and the other disciples starting serving the Lord from the very beginning of Church history. Jesus promises them great rewards. But that was 2000 years ago. What about believers today? The parable would be teaching that believers of any age, whenever in the Church Age they live, can be rewarded as well for their faithfulness to the Lord. We are not penalized because we were not with the Lord from the very beginning.

QUESTION

Is there a difference between intellectual assent and saving faith? Take, for example, the very many churches each Sunday which have the entire congregation recite the Apostles' Creed. What percentage of those persons who recite orally the Apostles' Creed are saved? Is reciting the Creed orally or silently a guarantee that one has saving faith? Isn't reciting the Creed orally at the very least intellectual assent? And is intellectual assent saving faith?

ANSWER

Thank you for the questions. Let me try to answer them.

"What percentage of those persons who recite orally the Apostles Creed are saved?"

I don't know. Only God knows. And only God knows if the Creed came from the Apostles—which I highly doubt.

"Isn't reciting the Creed orally at the very least intellectual assent?"

No. Saying something out loud and believing it to be true are two different things. I can read the Quran or the Book of Mormon out loud, without believing either to be true.

"Is reciting the Creed orally or silently a guarantee that one has saving faith?"

No. As I said, you can recite something out loud without believing it to be true.

But what if you believed the Apostles' Creed? Would you be saved then?

No, because the Creed does not contain the saving message.

Yes, it recounts some very important facts about Jesus' life which we should all believe to be true. But it does not give the saving message.

Here is the Creed:

I believe in God,
the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
He descended into hell;
on the third day He rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father Almighty;
from there He will come to judge the living
and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Holy Catholic Church,
the communion of Saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.

The problem is, you can believe those things and also believe works salvation. Wouldn't the Judaizers in Paul's day have said they believed that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate and died and rose again? Wouldn't they have said they believed in forgiveness, resurrection, and life everlasting? But how do you get those things? The Judaizers would have said you needed faith plus circumcision to get them—a false message that Paul called "another gospel" and "accursed" (Gal 1:8). Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and others who recite this creed often add an even longer list of works to do to be saved. They, too, teach and believe "another gospel."

How do you get forgiveness of sin, bodily resurrection, or life everlasting? The Creed does not say. Hence believing the Creed is not salvific.

If the Creed contained the promise of life, then believing it (not merely reciting it) would be salvific, because it would mean believing in Jesus for eternal salvation (John 3:16; Eph 2:8-9). ■

Send your questions to questions@faithalone.org.

Francis Chan's *Letters to the Church*

By Lucas Kitchen

SUMMARY

Francis Chan's book *Letters to the Church* begins with the story of the rise of Chan himself. He recounts his days building one of the fastest-growing churches in America. For the reader who doesn't know Chan, this is an excellent primer on why everyone *else* knows him. Eventually, he became discontent with the mega-church model, left it all behind, and moved his family to Asia.

When he returned begrudgingly to the States, he began a new type of church, borrowing ideas from his time in the East. The remaining chapters of the book explain why the American model of church is sinfully wrong. The final chapter explores Chan's new church model, which is promised to rescue America from the brink of complacency.

SOMETHING IS MISSING

For the reader who wants exegesis, the book disappoints. Chan gives only a brief nod to the original letters written to the seven churches in the book which we now call Revelation. Less than a page is devoted in comment to the Biblical content from which the title of Chan's book is derived. In short, Chan chooses not to explore what Jesus said to the seven churches and instead



LIGHTSTOCK

writes his own, almost apostolic-styled condemnation of the modern American church.

ENAMORED WITH THE EAST

Chan seems utterly enthralled by the underground churches of persecuted Asia and Africa. He spends something like 200 pages complaining about the shortcomings of the modern American church. Many of his complaints are not technically grounded in any Biblical injunction but seem to grow out of the mega-church malcontent which doggedly follows some of the magnet men of the movement.

Peppered throughout his scorching criticism of the American model of *ecclesia* is Chan's unabashed praise of the virtue of Eastern underground churches. It is no surprise that after Chan left the mega-church model behind, he began an imitation which strongly resembles that which is found in Asia and parts of Africa. This is what he offers as the answer to the drooping fervor of the American way of worship.

NEVER GOOD ENOUGH

Throughout the book, the reader is told repeatedly that his or her church is not loving, devoted,

or spirited enough to please God's demanding expectations. The entire read gives the foreboding sense that there is no model which the modern church could adopt that would satisfy the Lord. When the author finally offers, at the end of the book, his new cell-church model, the damage is done. There is no compelling reason he gives that this solution can fix the massive problem he has identified with the American church.

Chan reveals severity in his chase for organizational perfection when he says, "I once told my staff to let me know if they were not praying at least an hour a day. This way I could replace them with someone who would" (p. 113). In another place, he says, "Just the other day, a one-hour teaching session spontaneously turned into thirteen hours of prayer!" (p. 21). How anything that lasts *thirteen hours* could be called *spontaneous* is a mystery. Later he says,

My goal in shepherding has changed so much. Long gone are the days when I am content with a bunch of people who sing loud, don't divorce, and give to missions. I now want to know I can drop off any member of my church in a city, and that person could grow in Jesus, make disciples, and start a church (p. 121).

What he expects of his average church attendee is that they be a type of modern apostle. This is an expectation that even the Lord's apostles did not hold their congregants to. His expectations throughout the book are bold but also seem detached from reality. The reader feels as if any effort to meet the impossible spiritual demands is going to be inadequate.

CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM

Chan is well known for his passionate delivery. This book does not disappoint those who enjoy this style. However, it left me with a type of emotional fatigue. Chan, in his pursuit of a more excellent Christianity, has succumbed to the phenomenon of third and fourth hand stories of healings in remote places in the developing world. It's challenging to see Chan's approach as anything other than a type of modernized mysticism which relies on the ever-increasing demands of emotion and devotional pressure.


A LITTLE LORDSHIP SLIPS THROUGH.

Through the entire book, Chan does not often put on display his theological outlook concerning the way of salvation. It is possible to read nearly the entirety of this book and not realize the author's Lordship perspective. This is true except for a few scant claims made only as a passing mention. This is one such statement:

Our suffering proves to us that we really are Christians... The suffering in his [Paul's] life was proof he believed the first verse we all memorized. He knew he would "not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16)(p. 145).

That Chan views suffering as the litmus test for belief reveals that his definition of the word *believe* includes attributes foreign to the otherwise simple idea. How suffering proves belief is not spelled out in the chapter and thus leaves the reader confused about the source of one's assurance.

READ THE ORIGINAL

The book was critical, heavy-handed, and at times, insulting. Instead of Chan's book, this reviewer suggests that you read the actual letters to the seven churches. In that, there is a blessing (Rev 1:3). 



Lucas Kitchen is the author of 16 books and the pastor of Shreveport Bible Church. He lives in Longview, TX with his wife, two kids, and his arrogant cat. His latest book is *Eternal Life: Believe to Be Alive*.



Worship Isn't What You Think (Mark 15:19)

By Bob Wilkin

I admit it. My understanding of worship is a bit of a pet peeve. It bothers me that many people mistakenly think that singing with gusto is worship. That raising your hands is worship. That listening to a sermon is worship. That swaying to the music is worship.

Biblical worship is none of those things. Now we might say that those things can reflect a worshipful attitude. We might call that spiritual worship *if one's heart is right*. But the heart of Biblical worship is different.

Our church reading program came to Mark 15-16. While reading I came to a familiar verse: "The soldiers...twisted a crown of thorns, put it on his head, and began to salute Him, 'Hail, King of the Jews.' Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; *and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him*. And when they had mocked Him, they...put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him" (Mark 15:16-20, emphasis added).

Did you see what Mark calls *worship*? Worship is bowing one's knee or head before another person or before an idol. In this case

the worship of the soldier is mocking worship. But it is still called worship.

Lest you think this is an isolated experience, consider other Biblical texts dealing with worship.

In Gen 24:26, “the man [Abraham’s servant] bowed down his head and worshiped the Lord.”

In Gen 24:52, “when Abraham’s servant heard their words...he worshiped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth.”

Bowing one’s head is an act of worship in some OT texts (e.g., Exod 4:31; 12:27).

Bowing the knee to an idol or God is worship (e.g., 1 Kings 18:42; Isa 45:23; Matt 27:29; Mark 15:19; Rom 11:4; 14:11; Eph 3:14; Phil 2:10).

Often, falling before God or an idol is called worship (e.g., Josh 5:14; Isa 44:15, 17; Dan 3:5, 6, 7, 10, 11; Matt 2:11; 4:9; Acts 10:25; 1 Cor 14:25; Rev 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4, 10).

Anyone who bowed down to the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar made was worshiping it (Dan 3:5-11). The wise men fell down and worshiped the infant Jesus (Matt 2:11). Satan promised Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if He would fall down and worship him (Matt 4:9). Cornelius fell down at Peter’s feet and worshiped him (Acts 10:25). When an unbeliever hears the secrets of his heart revealed, Paul says, “falling down on his face, he will worship God” (1 Cor 14:25). The twenty-four elders (angels, I believe) repeatedly (see Rev 4:9) “fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him...” (Rev 4:10; see also Rev 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4). The Apostle John fell at the feet of an angel “to worship him” (Rev 19:10), but the angel told him to get up and only worship God.

I’m not suggesting that you can only worship if you bow your head, bow your knee, or fall prostrate on the ground. What I am suggesting is that it is at the heart of Biblical worship. Now if a person is doing that in his heart, it is accurate to call that worship in a spiritual sense (cf. Rom 12:1). But simply singing with gusto is not necessarily bowing the knee before God spiritually. Simply sitting *in a worship service* is not worship unless you are spiritually prostrate before the Lord and His Word.

But if you simply bow the knee to an idol, you are worshiping it, whether your heart is connected or not. If you bow before God, you are worshiping Him.

In the old days, churches would have people kneel during prayer. I remember that at First Baptist Dallas, around 1980, when I was an intern there, we had kneeling rails that could be put down so that people could kneel during prayer.

When I was on staff with Campus Crusade for Christ, I was moved by the kneeling one of my supporter families did often. Sharon and I stayed with them many times, and each time we would be kneeling in prayer with them one or more times a day. I found it very moving—or worshipful.

One day every knee shall bow before our Lord and Savior (Isa 45:23; Rom 14:11; see also Phil 2:10). That is worship. At the Great White Throne every unbeliever of all time will bow the knee before the Lord Jesus. They will all worship Him before they are cast into the lake of fire.

So, give some thoughts to bowing your head, kneeling, and even prostrating yourself to God in your private life (and in church). That is worship.

But in addition, I’m suggesting that every time you sing or raise your hands or listen to God’s Word being taught, you should spiritually bow your heart before the Lord. It is possible to go through the motions of worship without actually worshiping God.

All worship grows from the person who bows before God, whether literally or spiritually or both. ■



Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He lives in Highland Village, TX, with his wife of 43 years, Sharon. His latest book is Turn and Live: The Power of Repentance.

Fifteen Characteristics of Life in the Millennium According to Isaiah

By Shawn Lazar

The Millennial kingdom will begin after the Tribulation. What will life be like? A great deal could be said about it. For starters, here are fifteen characteristics of life in the Millennium, based on three passages from the prophet Isaiah.

ISAIAH 2:2-4

*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days
That the mountain of the Lord's house
Shall be established on the top of the
mountains,
And shall be exalted above the hills (v 2a).*

First, in the Millennium there will be hills and mountains. We're talking about a physical earth, not an immaterial heaven of clouds and spirits.

Second, there will be a temple, "the Lord's house." It will be where it has always been, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The first and second temples were destroyed. A future temple will exist during the Tribulation. There will also be one during the Millennium.



Edward Hicks, The Peaceable Kingdom

*And all nations shall flow to it.
Many people shall come and say,
"Come, and let us go up to the mountain of
the Lord,
To the house of the God of Jacob" (vv 2b-3a).*

Third, there will be nations. The Tribulation survivors will enter the Millennium in natural bodies and will have children and grandchildren. They will form the nations. Faithful Christians from the church age will rule in different capacities over these nations.

Fourth, there will be worship. The nations go to the temple to worship God.

*"He will teach us His ways,
And we shall walk in His paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (v 3b).*

Fifth, there will be teaching and learning. You will have things to learn, especially about God and His ways. (I suspect we will be learning about everything—science, culture, and the arts will all need to be developed).

*He shall judge between the nations,
And rebuke many people (v 4 a).*

Sixth, there will be judgment and rebuke. That means there will be sin. The descendants of the Tribulation survivors will need to be evangelized

and disciplined. They will have fallen natures and be capable of sinning. Hence, the need for judgment and rebuke.

*They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war anymore (v 4b).*

Seventh, there will be political peace. While the Tribulation was war-torn, the Millennium will be peaceful. However, the nations, the natural descendants of Tribulation survivors, will have to *learn* peace. It won't come naturally to them.

ISAIAH 11:6-9

*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little child shall lead them.
The cow and the bear shall graze;
Their young ones shall lie down together;
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole,
And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.
They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
As the waters cover the sea (vv 6-9).*

Eighth, there will be animals. God loves animals. He created them before He created people. It seems their nature will be changed.

Ninth, there will be children and child-rearing. These are the children of Tribulation survivors.

Tenth, all creatures will be full of the knowledge of the Lord. Biblical truth will not be something that is hard to find. The earth will be filled with it (see #4).

ISAIAH 65:20-23

*"No more shall an infant from there live but a few days,
Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days;
For the child shall die one hundred years old,
But the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed" (v 20).*

Eleventh, there will be aging and death. Resurrected believers will not age, but Tribulation survivors and their descendants will. However, lifespans will be much longer than they are now.

Twelfth, there will be sinners (see #6). The Tribulation survivors and their children are natural people who will sin. Those are the people Jesus—and we—will judge and rebuke.

*"They shall build houses and inhabit them;
They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
They shall not build and another inhabit;
They shall not plant and another eat;
For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people,
And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands
They shall not labor in vain,
Nor bring forth children for trouble;
For they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the Lord,
And their offspring with them" (vv 21-23).*

Thirteenth, there will be construction. God loves architecture. God builds gardens and tabernacles and temples and compares us Christians to a spiritual house being built by Him. The nations will need places to live, and they will build them.

Fourteenth, there will be agriculture. People will need to eat. They will plant and grow food.

Fifteenth, there will be work. Retirement is not an option. God created you to serve, to rule, and to love. And that takes work. ■



*Shawn Lazar lives in Denton, TX,
with his wife Abby and their three children.*

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