

ISTHE GOSPEL MISSING IN JOHN?

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FROM THE EDITOR

Thave seen lots of changes in our world over my lifetime.

We did not have a TV until I was five. We did not have a color TV until I was a teen. We did not have home air conditioning until long after I graduated from college and seminary. I got my first computer in 1985, after I finished college and graduate school.

When I was five, I got one of the first polio vaccines. Prior to that I was at risk of getting polio.

I got my first cell phone when I was about fifty. Texting was something I did not do until about three years ago.

I remember a time when the best mortgage rates were over 12%. Inflation was rampant.

9/11 was a very scary time. The turmoil in our country and world was palpable.

But none of those changes come close to what has happened in the past six months in the U.S. and around the world. First, Covid-19 struck. Never in my lifetime had healthy people been quarantined. Every state in the Union was shut down for months. Only a small number of *essential businesses* could stay open. Churches were not considered essential. Our own church, Victor Street Bible Chapel, did not meet in person for three months. We just restarted in-person services on June 21.

Second, protests began all over the country about the Covid-19 restrictions.

Third, George Floyd died in Minneapolis, and protests, riots, and looting took place, not just in Minnesota and the rest of the U.S., but all over the world. As of the time of this writing, the protests continue, and a section of Seattle is essentially lawless.

I am shocked at what has been happening. Most people worldwide have been shocked. Some welcome the unrest and even anarchy. Some lament these events. But everyone is impacted.

Over thirty million jobs were lost in the U.S. The stock market fell 40% before rebounding.



Shine as Lights

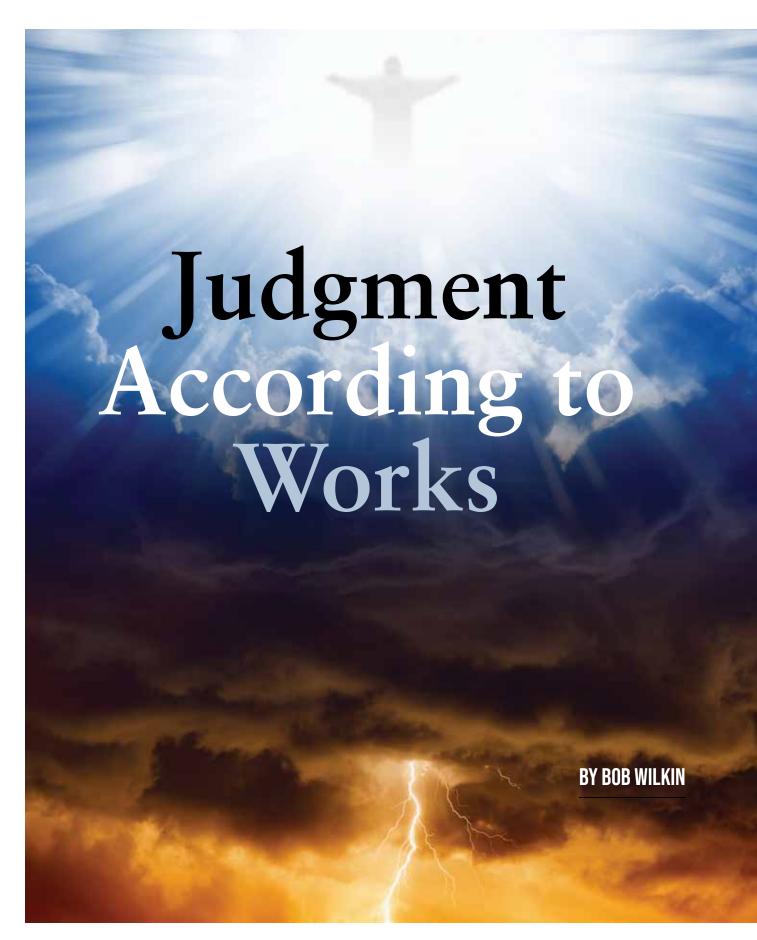
Robert N. Wilkin, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Jobs have started coming back. But the future is uncertain.

I'm reminded of the lyrics, "This world is not my home. I just a-passing through." The Christian perspective is not one of fear and despair. God is still in control. He is allowing this to happen. The Lord Jesus is coming soon, and this is an opportunity for us to shine as lights in the darkness.

Thank you for your support of our ministry.

St Will.



Precognizes that God promises that at the recognizes that God promises that at the end of the age, He is going to judge everyone according to his works. Eschatological judgment will not be according to one's faith. Works will be the issue.

A SAMPLING OF WORKS JUDGMENT TEXTS

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14. "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil."

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

Luke 19:15. "'And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading."

1 Corinthians 3:8. "Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor."

2 Corinthians 5:10. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

Galatians 6:7. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap."

James 3:1. "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment."

1 Peter 1:17. "And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear..."

Revelation 20:13. "The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works."

Revelation 22:12. "'And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work."

Many pastors and theologians speak of only one eschatological judgment, which they call *the final judgment*. In their view, the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:9-10) and the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11-15) are two different names for the same judgment. In this view everyone finds out his or her eternal destiny after this life is over when this *final judgment* takes place.

I was one of four authors in a book put out by Zondervan called *Four Views on the Role* of *Works at the Final Judgment*. In response to my defense of the view stated in this article, Dr. Tom Schreiner wrote, "When I first encountered solutions like Wilkin proposes regarding the judgment, I found it impossible to remember in the judgment passages whether the judgment of believers or unbelievers was in view" (p. 52).

The Bible, however, distinguishes between two separate judgments, which we will now consider.

THE SEPARATE JUDGMENTS OF BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS

The eschatological judgment of believers is called *the Judgment Seat of Christ*. It will occur before the Millennium. (I am convinced that it will occur on earth after the Tribulation.

However, most Dispensationalists suggest that it will occur in the third heaven during the Tribulation.)

The eschatological judgment of unbelievers is called *the Great White Throne Judgment*. It will occur after the Millennium (Rev 20:11-15 immediately follows the Millennium of Rev 20:1-10).

For those who believe in the millennial reign of Christ, the judgment of believers must be before the Millennium starts because faithful believers will be chosen to rule with Christ in the Millennium (and forever on the new earth as well). They could not rule with Christ in the Millennium unless they were judged before it began.

One passage that discusses both judgments is Luke 19:11-27, the Parable of the Minas. In this parable the Lord tells of two groups of people. One group is made up of people who hate the Lord and do not want Him to reign over them. The other group consists of His servants, each of whom He gives one mina (about \$10,000 in today's value) and commands, "Do business till I come [back to earth]."

After the Lord returns, He "commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading." The results are mixed. One servant gains ten minas and is highly praised and rewarded (Luke 19:17). A second servant gains five minas and he receives no praise and only half the reward of the first servant. A third servant gains no minas and is rebuked by the Lord and receives no reward.

The judgment of the servants illustrates the Judgment Seat of Christ.

But remember there is another group in the Parable of the Minas. Note v 27: "But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me." The judgment of the enemies of Christ clearly follows the judgment of believers. In fact, the enemies are not even present at the judgment of believers.

But how could there be 1,000 years between Luke 19:26 and Luke 19:27?

That is a common practice in prophetic truth. The same thing is found in Zech 9:9-10. Verse 9 speaks of Jesus' triumphal entry in AD 33. Verse 10 speaks of the millennial reign of Christ. So far

there are 1,987 years between Zech 9:9 and Zech 9:10.

The same prophetic gap is seen in Acts 2:17-21, where there is a major gap between vv 18 and 19. Verses 17-18 were fulfilled in the first century. Verses 19-21 will be fulfilled at the end of the Tribulation, which is yet future.

The judgment of Jesus' enemies in the Parable of the Minas is a brief description of the Great White Throne Judgment. There is a clear linkage between the words "slay them before me" in Luke 19:27 and the words "Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (Rev 20:14). The unbelievers in the Parable of the Minas were cast into the lake of fire, that is, they experienced the second death.

WHY WILL GOD JUDGE BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS?

The simple answer is because God is just, and He fairly recompenses everyone according to his deeds done in this life. Paul answers the question when he writes, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap."

Of course, to some, this may seem to contradict justification by faith alone. Each person's eternal destiny is based solely on faith in Christ. The ones who believe "shall not come into judgment" concerning everlasting life (John 5:24). The ones who did not believe will be cast into the lake of fire because their names will not be found in the book of life (Rev 20:15).

But each person will reap what he or she sowed in this life. Believers will be judged according to their works to determine degree of eternal reward. Unbelievers will be judged according to their works to determine degree of eternal torment.

The idea that all in the kingdom or all in the lake of fire will have the same eternal experience is contrary to the Word of God. The motif of judgment according to works guarantees that there will be great variation in abundance of life in Jesus' eternal kingdom and great variation in torment in the lake of fire. Of course, all in the kingdom will experience eternal joy. And all in

the lake of fire will experience eternal torment. But there will be degrees of each, depending on the works of each person.

ONLY THE FREE GRACE VIEW MAINTAINS THE PURITY OF THE PROMISE OF LIFE

If you fail to distinguish between justification by faith alone and judgment according to works, then you end up making statements like this:

The prize is salvation, eternal life. The racetrack represents salvation. If one abandons the race one will not receive the prize (Schreiner and Caneday, *The Race Set Before Us*, p. 40).

Paul does not guarantee that believers will inherit the kingdom regardless of how they live. He warns that those who succumb to the flesh will not enter the kingdom (Schreiner and Caneday, *The Race*, p. 294).

Philippians 2:12 [means that] Christians therefore must 'bring to accomplishment their own salvation with fear and trembling.' Paul's choice of words and phrases accents the priority of God's work without minimizing the necessity of the believer's obedient act... God is at work through the gospel by urging us onward with the command to bring to completion our own salvation" (Schreiner and Caneday, *The Race*, p. 185).

The Free Grace understanding of judgment according to works does not have believers "bring[ing] to completion our own salvation." It does not suggest that "the prize is salvation, eternal life." The eternal destiny of believers is not in doubt until the day we die since perseverance in good works is not required to gain or maintain everlasting life.

The one who has come to faith in Christ for everlasting life "has everlasting life" now (John 5:24). He does not gain everlasting life if he keeps on running the Christian life until the end. He *has* it.

The believer "shall not come into judgment" regarding everlasting life (John 5:24). The Lord Jesus guarantees that he will not be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment.

Once a person believes in Jesus for everlasting life, he has "passed from death into life."

We speak of believers who have died as having passed on to glory. Well, every believer has already passed to glory, in some sense, long before he dies. The moment he believed in Christ, he passed from the sphere of death (lacking the life of Christ) to life (having everlasting life).

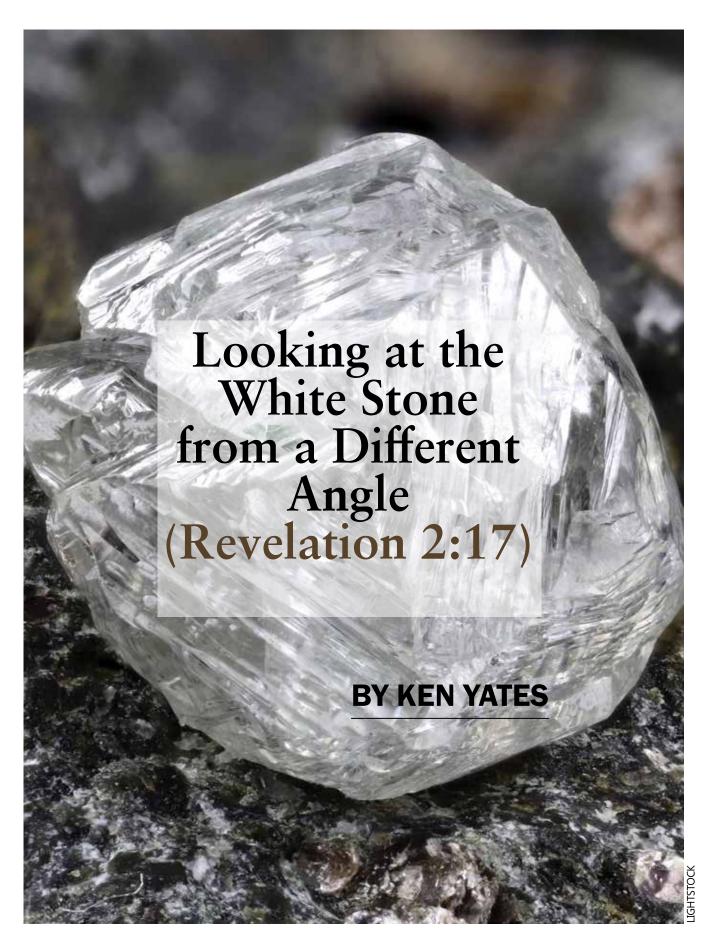
CONCLUSION

A friend of mine, Pastor Bob Bryant, likes to share with people he is evangelizing about this issue of judgment according to works. He first points out that because of Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross, all who simply believe in Him have everlasting life that can never be lost. But then he goes on to talk about the issue of works. He says that while we are not saved by works, we all will be judged according to our works. Believers will receive degrees of reward depending on the eternal value of their works. Unbelievers will receive degrees of torment depending on their works.

We need not shy away from the truth that everyone will be judged according to his works. That doctrine does not contradict the gift of everlasting life to the believer. Both are true. A child in a healthy home is secure in his family status no matter what he does. But that does not mean that he has his parents' approval and blessings no matter how he lives. Parental approval and blessings are conditional. So, too, are God's approval and blessings. As Brad McCoy wrote in the very first issue of our journal in 1988, we are "Secure, Yet Scrutinized (2 Timothy 2:11-13)."



Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He lives in Highland Village, TX, with his wife of 44 years, Sharon. His latest book is Turn and Live: The Power of Repentance.



In Rev 2:17 Jesus promises to give to the overcoming believers at Pergamos a white stone. This is clearly a reward for faithfulness. It is a reward that will be given at the Judgment Seat of Christ, when the Lord rewards believers for their obedience.

I have often wondered what this reward will mean for the believer. I have heard different suggestions. Will it mean that the faithful believer will have a ticket to go to certain events? Will it mean he will have a place of honor in certain venues? Will it be like a medal given to a hero on the battlefield by which others will see and recognize that he was a faithful disciple?

As I have thought about this white stone, I have always looked at it as something that will give special privileges to the person who has it. My guess is that it is correct to see it that way.

However, just this week a friend of mine made me look at it in a different way. My friend was a gemologist during his working years. He owned a jewelry store. He said that when he sees the words "white stone," he thinks of a pure diamond. A diamond has a numerical rating from 0 to 10. The less color it has in it, the closer it has to a rating of zero. A zero is a perfect diamond with no color. It is a white diamond. As I understand it, a perfect zero does not exist.

Years ago, he wanted to give his wife a special gift. He wanted to find a diamond as close to a zero as he could find. He found one with a rating of .3. It was a special gem and one that was very expensive.

He gave it to his wife on that special occasion. Being married for many years, she knew the special character of that gem. She knew that her husband had gone out of his way to give her this stone. She knew he wanted to give her something very special.

I don't think I need to tell any reader of this magzine that this was a special piece of jewelry to this woman. Sure, it was beautiful. Sure, it was

not like any other piece of jewelry she had. Sure, it was expensive.

But there was something else about that gem. She knew that her husband had great joy in giving it to her. Every time she wore it, she was reminded of how he loved her. She knew that it had come from her husband who wanted to honor her.

In other words, this gem was valuable to her because of the one who gave it to her. It was valuable because it showed what he thought of her. He found her worthy of this gem.

Don't you think that it will be like that with those who receive this white stone at the Judgment Seat of Christ? John tells us that the stone will have a new name on it. The believers who receive it will know that the Lord thought they were worthy of it. They will know that He received great joy in giving it to them. The fact that it came from Him will make it of infinite value.

I usually don't look at rewards that way. The white stone will come from Him! I don't know what having that white stone will do for the believer in the kingdom. But I am sure that for those who have it, the fact that the King gave it to them will make it the greatest accessory of their wardrobe.



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.

Is the Gospel Missing in John?

By Shawn Lazar

was reading an article by a mid-Acts theologian about the saving message in John's Gospel ("The Gospel Missing in John"). Although I sympathize with emphasizing the "Jewishness" of the Gospels, and I've learned a great deal from mid-Acts and Acts 28 dispensationalists, I think the contrast between the Twelve and Paul is often overblown. This article would be a case in point. Here is his thesis:

John's gospel was the gospel of the name of Jesus. This was also the gospel preached in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The gospel missing in John is the gospel given to the Church today for eternal life.

I've never before heard anyone say that John's Gospel is not for eternal life (which it is), but there you have it. He believes there are important differences between John and Paul in their respective messages. What differences are those?

WORKS SALVATION IN JOHN?

For one, the author seems to think that John taught a form of works salvation:

Whosoever believed in the authority (name) of Jesus, as sent from God to be King of Israel, and followed him into the kingdom would find life (John 5:24).

But does John's Gospel say that you need to follow Jesus into the kingdom to find life? Not

at all. I have no idea why the author quotes John 5:24 as a proof-text for that statement. It reads:

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life (John 5:24).

Is the condition to have everlasting life "following Jesus into the kingdom"? No. The only requirement is to believe. If you do, you have everlasting life. Is that really different from Paul?

NO SALVATION FOR THE WORLD?

Another difference the author sees between John and Paul is that Paul says *the world* can now receive eternal life:

While Israel would be saved by Jesus [sic] name as the promised kingdom Messiah, the world can now receive the gift of eternal life by what Jesus did on our behalf on the cross.

But is that "gospel" missing in John? Can you think of any verse in John that might say *the world* can receive eternal life? How about the most famous verse in that book?

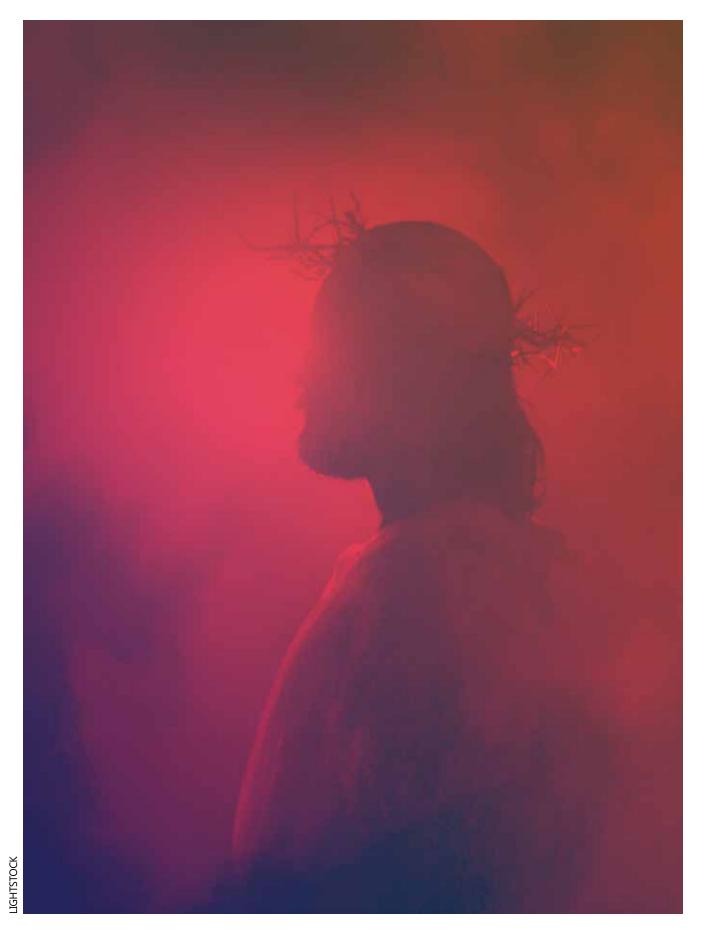
For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:16-17).

According to John, who can believe and receive eternal life? Not just Israel, but anyone in the world.

Actually, the theme of *the world* is very prominent in John, occurring at least 81 times in 60 verses. He repeatedly emphasizes the importance of Jesus' coming for the whole world. For example, think of what the Samaritans said:

Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world" (John 4:42).

According to John's Gospel, is Jesus only the Messiah for Israel? No. He is the Savior of the world.



In fact, John's Gospel was written at a time when Israel had already rejected Jesus:

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him (John 1:11).

I do not see a difference between John and Paul on this issue.

NO CROSS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL?

Another difference the author sees between John and Paul concerns the cross. The author claims the message of the cross is not in John's Gospel:

The gospel of his name found in John 20:31 was the theme of the Lord's earthly ministry to Israel in the book of John. Not one verse in John mentions the mystery gospel of the glory of the cross (Gal 6:14).

There is a difference between the gospel of his name, and the gospel of his finished work on the cross. John's gospel of his name does not include the good news of his death, burial, and resurrection as found in the mystery of Christ later given to Paul.

This is very bizarre. Is it true that John's Gospel does not mention the glory of the cross? Does it present the death of Christ as a finished work or as good news? You can decide for yourself:

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John

What does the death of Christ do? It takes away the sin of the world.

Or consider this:

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:14-15).

What will the lifting up of the Son of Man accomplish? That whoever believes should not perish but have eternal life.

Moreover, read John 19 and 20 which are all about the good news that Jesus died and rose again. For example, after the risen Jesus appeared to Thomas, did that apostle take it as good news?

The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Iesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name (John 20:25-31).

Clearly, Thomas received the resurrection of Christ as good news. In fact, it led him to faith in Christ's deity as shown by his exclamation, "My Lord and my God!"

And notice why John said he included the resurrection in his narrative: it was one of the signs to lead people to faith in Christ for eternal life—

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ...

So, in John's Gospel, Jesus is sent to die on the cross to take away the sins of the world, because He is the Savior of the world, and anyone in the world may believe in Him and have eternal life.

How is that different from Paul?

CONCLUSION

I regularly read mid-Acts and Acts 28 dispensationalists and often find them profitable. I do see differences between Paul and the Twelve, but not where it concerns the cross and the free gift of eternal life through faith in Christ.

Shawn Lazar is Director of Publications for Grace Evangelical Society.

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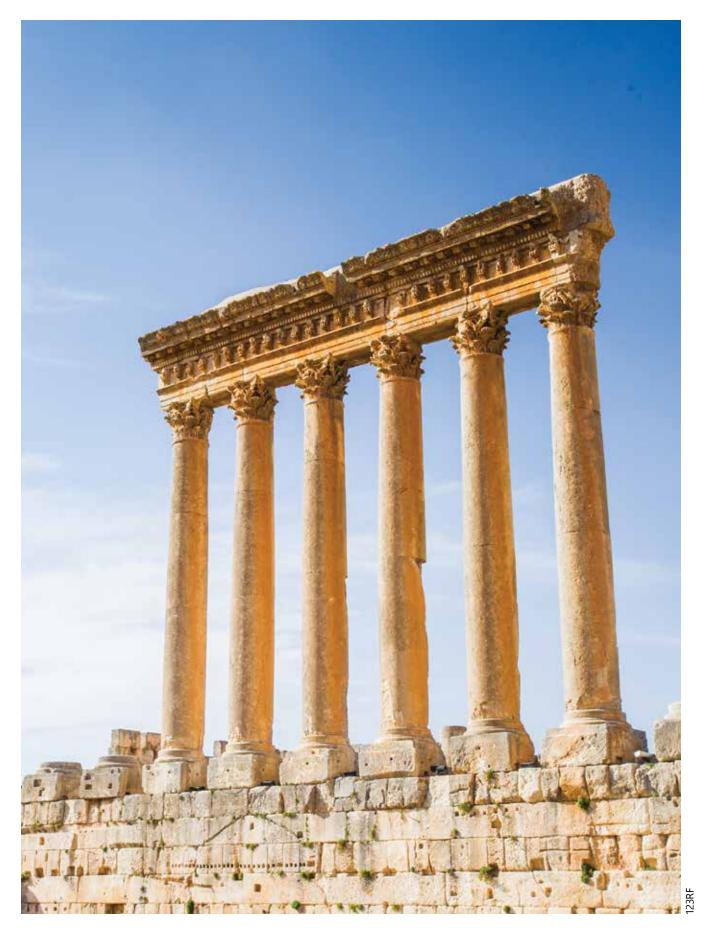
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A Concise Commentary

From The Grace New Testament Commentary (Revised Edition)

By Zane Hodges

THE DESCRIPTION OF THIS VICTORY (5:1-5)

5:1. The first of the results of by-faith justification is the blessing of **peace with God**. When God justifies a sinner who believes in Jesus, a fundamental *peace* is established between the sinner and God.

The nature of this *peace* is of course *judicial*, since justification is the act of God as our Judge. We should avoid understanding the idea as inner tranquility. The *peace* involved here is like that which results when two warring nations are no longer in a hostile relationship to each other.

The sinner is fully accepted as righteous in God's eyes. Thus, this *peace* is realized **through our Lord Jesus Christ** who in His own Person is our "Mercy Seat."

5:2. Another result is that justified persons also possess access...into this grace. Paul appears to be thinking of the presence of God as a place of grace into which we now have a right to enter at any time (cf. Heb 4:16). Prayer is the obvious way in which we utilize the *access* we now have as justified persons.

A third benefit that flows from justification by faith is the expectation of the glory of God. So

exciting is this *expectation*, in fact, that the justified person can **exult** in it.

Paul is likely thinking especially of corporate Christian worship in which assembled Christians come boldly before God to offer exultant praise (cf. Heb 10:19-25).

Paul's initial statement in this unit proclaims a "trinity" of benefits that flow from justification: (1) peace, (2) access, and (3) joy (i.e., exultation). In vv 3-4 he discusses another benefit that is equally remarkable.

5:3-4. The justified believer can now see his afflictions in a new light and can regard them as a process that produces **endurance**. This, in turn, creates an **approvedness** that results in yet further **expectation**.

The person who is righteous by faith can learn to view *afflictions* from a new vantage point. How this can be true Paul will elaborate later (8:18-38), but for now he simply summarizes the important truth that our *afflictions* can have positive results.

Paul is saying that our *afflictions* can produce the ability to bear up under difficulties (*endurance*), and this capacity in turn results in our becoming people upon whom God's divine approbation can rest (cf. 1 Pet 1:6-9).

This represents a remarkable progression in human experience. Since God's wrath (see 1:18ff) expresses His *disapproval* of unrighteous men and their conduct, the justified person can now achieve a state of *approvedness* as a result of his personal conduct under trial. This *approvedness* bestows on him a further endowment of *expectation*, though the exact nature of this *expectation* is not spelled out here. Paul will deal with it more explicitly later (see 8:17-25).

5:5. The expectation that is produced in us through enduring our trials and becoming approved in God's sight promotes a boldness about our Christian profession. What Paul means

is that we can *unashamedly* (i.e., boldy) *confess* such a believing *expectation*.

Afflictions can usher in a deeper appreciation of the love of God. It is as though the love of God is poured forth in our hearts. That is to say that our hearts are suffused with His love as the Holy Spirit makes that love a joyous realization within us.

With these words, Paul has reached the climax of his "staircase" treatment of the benefits of justification in 5:1-5.

THE BASIS FOR THIS VICTORY (5:6-11)

5:6. Paul stresses the fact that the basis of the experience he has just described in vv 1-5 arose while we were still weak.

But God had a solution for this profound weakness on our part, and thus when the proper time came, Christ died...for the ungodly. The death of Christ, which was for the ungodly, came at precisely the point in human history that God had foreordained for it. It thereby became the fundamental starting point by which weak and ungodly people like ourselves could be brought into the experience of spiritual strength.

5:7-8. Paul returns to the theme of divine love that had climaxed in vv 1-5. A willingness to die for a righteous man is found only rarely. On the other hand, the willingness to die for a good man can conceivably (perhaps) be thought of as more natural. It is something someone might even dare to do.

Clearly Paul means here that mere moral rectitude (i.e., a righteous man) rarely inspires the laying down of life, while goodness (particularly to others) could perhaps more readily do so. But in contrast to both examples is the way that God demonstrates His own love for us. For although we were neither righteous nor good (see 3:10-12),

but instead were still sinners, nevertheless Christ died for us. The starting point for all human realization of the Creator's love for His creatures is always the cross of Christ.

5:9. Few verses in this epistle are more crucial to the correct understanding of Paul's letter than the present verse and the next.

Here the Greek participle *dikaiōthentes* (since we have...been justified) is the functional equivalent of a conditional clause that is assumed to be true. The conclusion to be drawn (we shall be delivered) is natu-

rally expressed in the future tense since it refers to something that is logically expected, but not guaranteed, to follow from it.

Paul does not assume that the "deliverance" he is speaking of is independent of our willingness to avail ourselves of God's provision for it.

In addition, it needs to be stated that Paul's assertion must necessarily be understood in the light of the argument of the epistle thus far. When Paul writes that *we shall be delivered* from wrath through Him, it is illegitimate to refer the word *wrath* to eternal damnation. No such use of *wrath* occurs in Romans.

But now that Paul has established that God imputes *righteousness* to (i.e., He justifies) the

believer in Jesus, the question becomes profoundly relevant: What is the relationship of the justified believer to this universal display of heaven-sent wrath?

Paul's answer is that it is reasonable and fully to be expected that the person who has **now been** justified by His blood shall be delivered from wrath through this very Jesus. This implies the necessity of a change in mindset and lifestyle and that is precisely the subject Paul will now proceed to discuss (5:12–8:39).

It is important to observe here (and also in v 10) that the word translated *delivered* $(s\bar{o}z\bar{o})$ has a very wide range of meanings in normal Greek usage. The word *delivered* is used in my translation to avoid the almost automatic reflex most readers have that assumes the reference is to salvation from hell. That assumption in vv 9-10 would be false to the progression of Paul's thought.

So important is the transitional statement of this verse that Paul at once repeats it, in carefully altered form, in the next verse.

5:10. In our former condition, as unrighteous people, we were God's enemies. But now through the death of His Son, we have been reconciled to God. The fundamental state of enmity has been removed, and God accepts us as *righteous* people based on our faith in His Son.

As a result of standing in this new friendly relationship to God, we can expect to be **delivered** by His [Christ's] life. The sense here of course is precisely what we observed in the previous verse. Our "deliverance" is from the *wrath* which formed the starting point of Paul's argumentation at 1:18 and is explicitly referred to in v 9. It is logical in the highest degree that those who have received this "reconciliation" should no longer be objects of divine anger. Logical, but not guaranteed, as Paul will proceed to show.

This deliverance from wrath is *by His life*. The sense can be paraphrased as follows: **we shall be** delivered *in the experience of* His life. Paul will develop this concept in the following chapters.

5:11. In this verse Paul brings to a climax his anticipation that a justified person will be delivered from the divine anger under which mankind in general lives.

We *should* expect to be delivered from temporal wrath, **but also** we should anticipate that this experience will be accompanied by **exulting in** God (cf. 5:3). Deliverance and joy are therefore the keynotes of the experience Paul will describe in chaps. 6–8.

But this kind of experience can only come to us through our Lord Jesus Christ since He is the One through whom we have now received this reconciliation.

With this verse, Paul reaches the conclusion of an extensive section that began in 3:21. His theme has been *the righteousness of God* that sinful man can obtain through faith in Jesus.

In what follows this great Apostle teaches about the nature of, and the means for, a truly Christian life-experience.

THE SIN PROBLEM AND ITS SOLUTION (5:12-21)

5:12. Paul's sentence is never actually finished. The idea left unexpressed here is not picked up again by Paul until vv 18-19.

In view of the truth just mentioned in vv 9-11, *life has become available* through one Man (Jesus Christ), *just as* sin, as well as death, have entered the world through one man (Adam).

The entrance of sin and death into mankind's experience has become universal: death came to all men because all have sinned. Death became a universal experience precisely *because all* human beings *have sinned (cf. 6:23)*.

Paul is not concerned here with the "mechanics" of the transmission of a sinful nature from generation to generation. It is enough to know that what Adam and Eve did in the garden has produced descendants who, *without exception*, have committed sin. Since everyone is sinful in word and deed, everyone also *dies*. This is the straightforward reality described by Paul here.

5:13. Since Paul has just stated that "all have sinned" (v 12), the question might be raised as to how human beings could sin in the absence of God's law.

Paul flatly asserts that **until the law sin was** *in the world*. Even a cursory examination of the book of Genesis would prove it, beginning with the murder of Abel.

The only distinction between the pre- and postlaw eras is expressed by the words **but sin is not itemized when there is no law.**

As he has already told us (in 2:14-16), Gentiles without the law will be judged in terms of their conscience as this is manifested by their discussions about right and wrong among themselves. Though badly defaced, the law is nevertheless written on each conscience in a way that permits God to judge individuals as individuals.

5:14. Despite the fact that there could be no itemization of sins in the pre-law period, **nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses**.

With the word *reigned*, Paul is implying that death *exercised a tyranny over humanity* by which man was somehow enslaved. This makes death part of the spiritual bondage under which humanity lives.

It was a "reign" even over those who had not sinned in a way that resembled the transgression of Adam. Death was able to extend its "domain" over all mankind despite the differences between humanity's many transgressions and the single transgression of Adam.

Here Paul specifically introduces the comparison of Adam with Christ by describing Adam as a type of the Coming One.

Adam and Christ are two Headships. Adam is the "head" of the fallen race of men since their fallenness is derived from his sin. By contrast, Christ is the "Head" of the redeemed race since He is the source of their redemption.

5:15. The effect of Adam's offense was that many died. The effect of Jesus Christ is the reception of the free gift that is bestowed through His grace.

The word *offense* is a contrast with the grace of God and the grace of...Jesus Christ. God is certainly not the Source of Adam's disastrous offense, but He is most emphatically the Source of the gift given through the grace of...Jesus Christ. "God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9).

Furthermore, the *gift given through the grace* of one Man has **abounded to many**. Those who have been justified by faith can live so triumphantly that they can even exult in God in the

face of all their tribulations (cf. 5:3-4, 9-13; 8:31-38).

5:16. The *effect* of the free gift is **not** *like what happened* when a quite different *effect* was produced **through one** *man* **who sinned**. The latter resulted in **servitude** *to sin*, while **the free gift** results in **righteous action** (or, conduct).

In the case of the one man who sinned the result was that the judgment came for one offense. By contrast the free gift brings release from many offenses. Paul's reference here to the judgment is undoubtedly a reference to the divine decree that brought death to Adam, and to the sinful race which has descended from him, as a result of his single sin.

Moreover, *the judgment* of death on Adam produced for him and his race *servitude to sin* (*eis katakrima*). The word *katakrima* is used here and also in v 18 and is then picked up again in the important statement of 8:1. Its treatment in the commentaries has been largely inadequate.

The judgment passed on Adam led to a penalty, i.e., servitude to sin. Adam was now spiritually dead, and physically dying, and in this condition, he fell under bondage to sin.

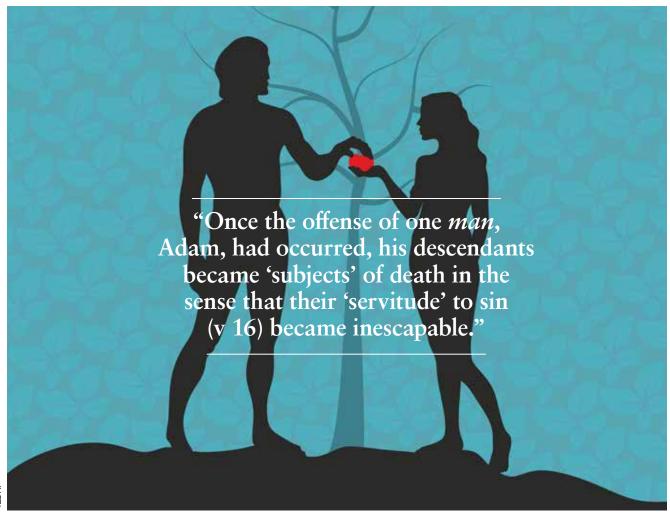
By contrast with this, however, the free gift of justification from many offenses leads to righteous action (dikaiōma). Dikaiōma is the reversal of katakrima, slavery to sin. The person who has received the free gift (imputed righteousness) can now be "restored" to an experience consistent with this imputation, so that he can produce righteous action.

The contrasted terms are *katakrima* (*servitude*) and *dikaiōma* (*righteous action*). Adam's sin led to the former (slavery to sin), while *the free gift* leads to the latter (*righteous action*).

5:17. Once the offense of one *man*, Adam, had occurred, his descendants became "subjects" of death in the sense that their "servitude" to sin (v 16) became inescapable.

However, in contrast to this, one *Man*, Jesus Christ, makes possible a different kind of experience. This new experience is described as one in which the participants in it shall reign in life (cf. 5:9 and the discussion there).

On the one hand, death itself reigns. But on the other, certain people *shall reign in life*. And, as



Paul has already said, the life in question is nothing less than the very life of God's Son (5:9-10). Thus the participants in this life are identified as those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness (= the abundantly gracious gift of righteousness). For Paul, the abundance of God's grace is magnified by its enormous potential for transforming human experience.

5:18. Paul now recaptures the thought that he had begun, but not completed, in v 12.

The intervening verses (13-17) have prepared us for the other half of Paul's comparison. As surely as God's *judgment* has brought *servitude to sin*, so also the **righteous action** of "one Man, Jesus Christ" has made available **justification** sourced in life.

In sum, Paul's statement in this verse points to two diametrically opposite experiences traceable to two "men" whose single actions result in widely varying outcomes. On the one hand, Adam's single offense produced universal *servitude to sin*. On the other hand, Christ's *righteous act* on the cross is efficacious *for all men* so that they can now possess, by faith, *righteousness sourced in life*, in consequence of which they will be able to live (1:17).

5:19. Verse 19 is the climactic back-reference to v 12. As indicated in v 12 by the words "all have sinned," so here Paul reaffirms this fact in the statement many have been constituted sinners.

The initial word *many* (*hoi polloi*) indicates the totality of those who *have been constituted sin- ners* as a result of the disobedience of *one man*.

The second *many* indicates the totality of those who shall be constituted righteous as a result of the obedience of *one Man*.

Thus the repetition of v 18 in this verse presents the second Man as the supreme model of obedience to God in a world where *the disobedience* of the first man has wrought the calamitous tragedies of sin and death. Paul is now moving toward a discussion of our own *obedience* to God in the Christian life (chaps. 6–8).

5:20-21. Since "sin was in the world" even before the law (cf. v 13), why then was the law added? The reason, says Paul, is that the offense might become greater.

But in sharp contrast to this grim reality stands God's magnificent (superlatively great) grace.

This excelling of human sin by divine grace makes possible an astounding result, which reverses the reign of sin. Although through Adam "death came to all men" (v 12) and made the world an arena of death in which sin held human beings in bondage, through Jesus Christ our Lord a different experience is possible. Thus Paul tells us that just as sin has reigned in the sphere of death, so also can grace...reign through righteousness unto eternal life.

When the believer gains victory over sin, grace is reigning in his life experience. The means by which this victory is attained is the subject of the following chapters (Romans 6–8). The present passage (5:12-21) is intended as an introduction, stating the fundamental problem and anticipating the solution about to be expounded.

The unit Paul had commenced in 5:12 closes here with the words *through Jesus Christ our*

Lord (cf. 5:1 and 5:11). When eternal life is experienced, as grace reigns in the Christian's life, this experience comes through Jesus Christ our Lord. As Paul will show, this is true because we have been united with our Lord in His death, burial and in His resurrection life (see 6:1-11).

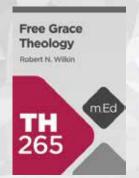
The following unit (6:1-23) expounds the truth stated in the present verse. Both in 5:21 and 6:23 the expression *our Lord* is climactic (contrast 5:1 and 11), since we are now about to consider truth which relates directly to the *Lordship* of *Jesus Christ* in the life of the believer.



Zane Hodges was a Bible teacher and Professor of Greek at Dallas Theological Seminary. He was promoted to glory in 2008.

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A Letter from Nepal

By Suresh Budhaprithi

affected the lives of people around the globe. But I would like to shed light upon a virus which is a thousand times more dangerous and deadly than COVID-19. It is the virus that people have been carrying from generation to generation, often without even noticing it. In other words, you may not know that you have this virus, and surprisingly, many infected persons fail to realize it, and they are reluctant to accept this bitter truth. The deadly virus that I am writing about here is the virus of *sin*.

The novel coronavirus is a newly discovered virus in the world. However, the virus of sin has been in the world since the fall of human beings in the Garden of Eden. While not everyone will catch the coronavirus, nobody can escape the effect of the virus of sin, which keeps unbelieving mankind from being accepted in the eyes of God.

Since all are infected by the virus of sin, all are sinners. The wages of sin is death. More importantly, the unbeliever does not have eternal life. Before a person can receive eternal life, the issue of his sins has to be addressed.

The cure for the coronavirus has not been discovered yet. However, the cure for the deadly virus of sin has already been found. It is revealed in the Scriptures. First Peter 2:24 says that Jesus bore our sins in His own body on the cross. Jesus paid for all of our sins—past, present, future. All of our sins have been paid for!

As a result, God can and does give eternal life to all who believe in Jesus for it (John 3:16). All of this is by God's grace, a free gift that anyone can receive for free (Eph 2:8-9). We live in a world where you get nothing for free, but in this case, there are no hidden costs. The Scripture says in Acts 16:31: "Believe in the Lord Jesus



Christ, and you will be saved." All you have to do is believe in Jesus for eternal life. There are no other "do's" or "don'ts." There are no other conditions.

But there is another piece of great news when it comes to the virus of sin. Not only did Jesus pay for all of our sins so we can receive eternal life as a free gift, but His death also makes it possible for us to no longer be slaves of sin. In 1 Pet 2:24 Peter adds that Christ died for our sin so that we "might die to sins and live for righteousness." Paul says that when we believed in Jesus for eternal life, we became new creations (2 Cor 5:17). Through the Spirit that lives within us, as believers, we can live victorious lives. We don't have to be impacted by the consequences of sin.

If you are reading this and have never believed in Jesus for eternal life, I hope you do that right where you are. Because Jesus has taken care of your sin once for all, the offer of eternal life is for you. For those of us who have already believed and know we have eternal life, the virus of sin does not have to rob us of experiencing the life we have in Christ right now. We can experience abundant life (John 10:10). The world is trying to find a vaccine for COVID-19. In Christ, we already have the cure for the problem of sin.

Suresh Budhaprithi is a student in Nepal who was taught by Ken Yates and his daughter Kathryn Wright.





Ken's online class at Word of Life Bible Institute in South Korea

Bayside Community Church Videos

re-recorded and re-submitted all three short videos I mentioned last month. The first 15-minute video is entitled "Hold On, He's Coming Soon." It appeared at the Bayside website on May 11.

GES Website Use Growing Steadily

Our online presence is growing. In May, we reached 18,000 people through our Facebook page, 60,000 through our website, and 6,200 through our daily blog. All in all, we are very close to reaching 1,000,000 people per year with the promise of eternal life!

Ken Teaches Around the World in May

During the first part of May, Ken and his daughter Kathryn taught a class through Zoom for students at the Word of Life Bible Institute in South Korea. They

taught the book of Colossians. It was originally planned to be a class taught face to face, but the Coronavirus intervened. Each student was given a digital book by Zane Hodges—*Did* Paul Preach Eternal Life: Should We?

They taught the same

Ken's Spanish Zoom class

students two classes in April, and this was their first experience teaching classes with Zoom. There were a lot of questions, and the students were very receptive. The school has asked them to return. Hopefully, the next time it will be in person!

Kathryn and Ken continued their class on Free Grace theology for people in Spain through Zoom. They tag team the teaching as they go through the Gospel of John, emphasizing the verses that deal with Free Grace issues. They have about ten in class each week. A few of the people taking part in it are continuing to translate some of the GES blogs into Spanish.



Lake Country Bible is looking for a pastor



In May I loaded in the rest of the edits of Ken Yates, forwarded the edited documents to Pam Esteven, and then loaded in her edits. By the end of May, we had a third draft of all hundred chapters and Shawn began typesetting.

During June the aim is for Shawn to finish the typesetting, and then the typeset manuscript will be proofed by Ken, Pam, me, Mark, Bethany, Shawn, and the GES Board. Hopefully we will have this book in print in July.

Skype with Israeli Bible Student May 4, 6, 11, 18, 25

Eli is a Junior at Israel College of the Bible, is solidly Free Grace, and had some questions for me. We spoke over Skype over several days.

"What does *loving Jesus* mean in John 8:42?" "What is the salvation in 1 Cor



3:15, and are church leaders in view there?" "Is the New Covenant in operation today?" "What do you think of Dillow's understanding of the entering the kingdom sayings in the Gospels?" "Will there be some reward for a believer who perseveres in faith until death, but who is a secret believer who is not confessing Christ and is not living a holy life?" His questions were great. Pray for the grace message to spread throughout Israel.



Our new conference venue in Coppell.

Lake Country Bible Church Mineola, TX May 31

Mineola is a small town about two hours east of Dallas. In the Sunday School hour, Shawn spoke on "Ecclesiastes and the Desperate Search for Meaning," and in the worship service he preached on "Created to Rule" and how eternal rewards and ruling with Christ answer Solomon's quests for purpose in life. Mineola is a great town—vibrant, leafy, and clean. Pray for this church as they look for a Free Grace pastor. It would be great for a retiree or someone who is bi-vocational.

New Conference Dates

Be sure to note that our new national conference dates are Oct 26-29, and the location is Coppell Bible Fellowship in Coppell, TX. On May 28th, we visited with the pastoral team and the new venue looks amazing. Almost all speakers are still committed to coming.

Giving

Given COVID-19, I thought giving would be down about \$10,000 for April. *Instead, giving was up by over \$20,000 compared to April 2019.* That is amazing. We are so thankful. While we have reserves, we hope to use those for future ministry, and we are rejoicing that in April we didn't have to draw on reserves. Thank you, Lord, and thank you for your fellowship in this gospel ministry.



Building A Bible Study Library

By Allen Rea

ccasionally, though not as often as I'd like, I'm asked how to start a good Bible study library. You do not need thousands of volumes to study the Bible; if you will invest in a few volumes and spend a lot of time in them, then you will grow. When it comes to study tools, you want to deal with quality rather than quantity. Please allow me to walk you through a few necessities.

The one non-negotiable tool for Bible study is the Holy Spirit. It is very wise to always pray asking God to teach you every time you open the Bible. Remember that you are about to read a Book without contradiction or error.

Amazingly enough, you need a Bible for Bible study. Bible study will not happen with a Sunday school book or a book about the Bible. You need a Bible. I will not enter into a translation debate here, but I have a strong personal preference for the New King James Version. Study Bibles with voluminous notes can be a hindrance in the sense that the notes distract from the Bible itself. Remember that the notes are not infallible; the Bible is. Therefore, a Bible that has cross-references is your best friend. I cannot more highly recommend the Scofield Reference Bible and the Thompson Chain Reference Bible. The latter is more pricey but will last a lifetime. If, however, you do want a study Bible that is saturated with notes, my recommendation would be the Ryrie Study Bible.

Next, you will need a concordance. While many Bibles possess a concordance, these are abbreviated. Concordances, though massive, can be bought very cheaply and will be something that you use daily. You can buy concordances

based on the translation you are using; however, there are two that I would recommend: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance and Cruden's Concordance. You will also want the Bible student's prized possession, R.A. Torrey's The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, which has every cross-reference for each verse in the Bible.

Though not as popular as they once were you can still find Bible study handbooks. You cannot find one better or more conservative than *Halley's Bible Handbook*—a small volume packed with an amazing amount of information.

What about commentaries? We must be careful that commentaries do not become a crutch. We are to be students of the Bible, not students of men's comments on the Bible. However, we are wise to find value in the records of what God has taught others. Be warned, however, that not all commentaries are equal. If a commentator does not believe the Bible is the Word of God, then I will not give him the time of day. Among my favorite conservative Bible commentators are J. Vernon McGee, Oliver B. Greene, John R. Rice, and Zane Hodges.

You may also want to listen to sermon series on books of the Bible from pastors. A pastor that practices expository preaching (i.e., preaching verse-by-verse through books of the Bible) can offer you a running verbal commentary. Again, pay no man any mind who does not unapologetically stand on the infallibility, inerrancy, and sufficiency of Scripture. Commentaries should be used only after you've spent time in the Word yourself.

The last resource is one that only you can provide—time. Turn off the television, and open the Bible. You cannot obey 2 Tim 2:15 without taking the time to make Bible study a daily reality for yourself. If you invest in the resources and put in the time, you will be an admirable Bible

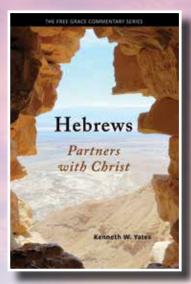
student. Let's get to work!



Allen Rea is pastor of Higgston Baptist Church in Ailey, Ga.

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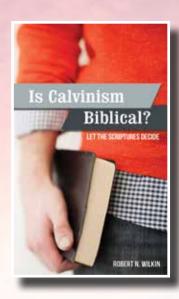


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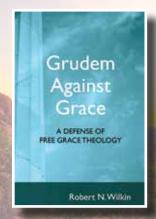


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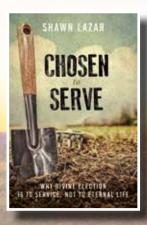


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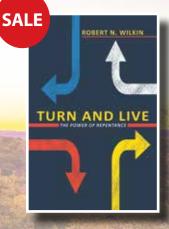


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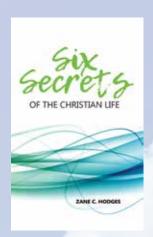
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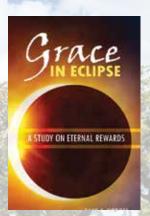


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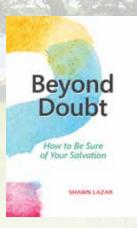


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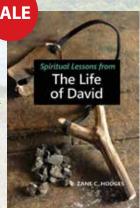


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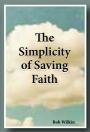
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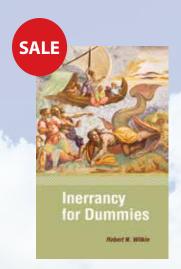




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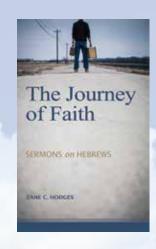


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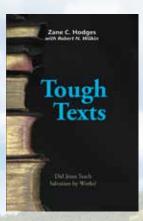


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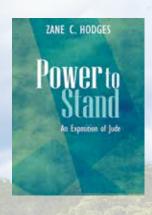


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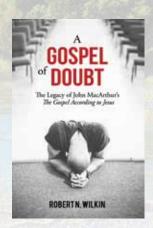


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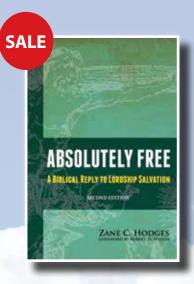
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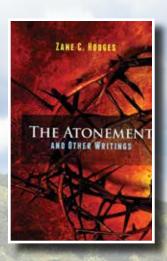
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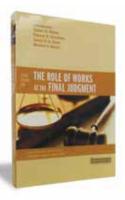
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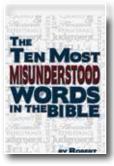


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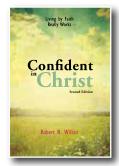


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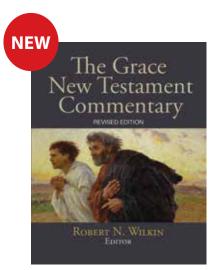


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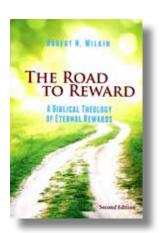


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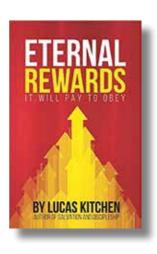


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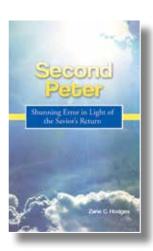


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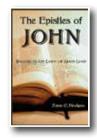
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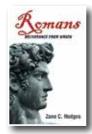


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The Mailbag

By You

Tread your *Grace in Focus* magazine coverto-cover each month and find great teaching support in many of the articles. Bob, Ken, Shawn "all" provided great insight" ~Frederick, OK.

"I have and do appreaciate many of GES's blog posts, podcasts, books, and articles, but I wanted to say a special thanks for the recent blogs about Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes is my go-to book of the Bible when I am feeling depressed, though it is not a portion of the Bible that I have heard taught very often. Reading your blogs has helped me think more about what the book actually is saying and what it isn't, as well as reminding me that it is important to both study all of Scripture and to understand that different parts are written for different reasons—a concept that I say I know, but that I am realizing more fully." ~Email.

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"My Dad loves, reads, and looks forward to the magazine. Thanks for y'all's stands for the gospel." ~ De Kalb, MS.



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"We are so thankful for your ministry! I enjoy the daily blog, too!" ~Marion, KS.

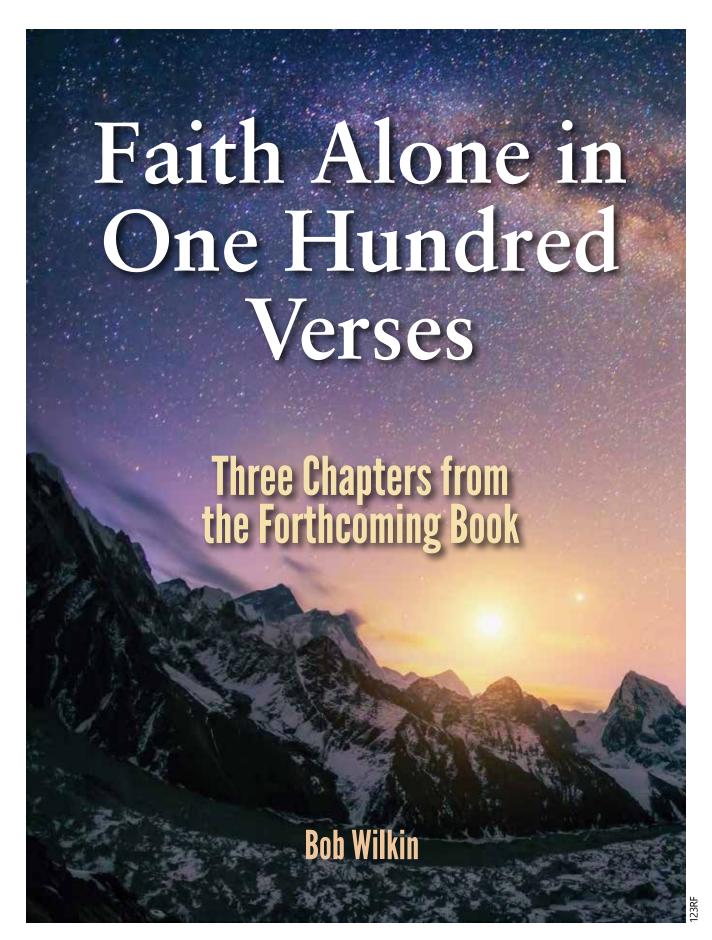
"Appreciating the clear gospel message of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone." ~Spokane Valley, WA.

"Thank you, guys, for your dedication to the truth that we are saved by grace, not by works. I want to share a gift with you. Please use it to continue publishing *Grace in Focus*." ~Alberton, MT.

"Bob, thanks for your ministry in proclaiming the gospel message." ~San Ramon, CA.

"For some months now I've been following you guys and listening to the podcast, which I really like. I've also read several of Bob's books. Recently in one of your episodes it was mentioned that some blog posts are translated into Spanish but not all. If you guys think it's a good idea, I'd be happy to help translate one or more posts a week for free." ~Barcelona, Spain

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Triply Justified by Faith, Not Works (Galatians 2:16)

...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

NOT JUSTIFIED BY WORKS OF THE LAW

hree times in this one verse Paul denies justification before God on the basis of works. Boice points out the emphasis of this verse: "The threefold repetition of the doctrine of justification by faith in this one verse is important, because it shows the importance the apostle gives to the doctrine."

Some commentators suggest that Paul was not renouncing justification by works, but instead only justification by works of the Law of Moses. While it is true that Paul denied justification by works of the Law of Moses, he meant more than that, as Rom 4:1-8 shows. One cannot be justified before God by works of any kind. Timothy George says that what is being contrasted in Galatians is "God's free initiative in grace versus human efforts toward self-salvation."²

The context here is Paul's public rebuke of the Apostles Peter and Barnabas for withdrawing from Gentiles, evidently at the Lord's Supper, the love feast. Hence Paul speaks of the works of the law especially since Peter and Barnabas were kowtowing to Judaizers regarding the OT dietary laws, which were no longer in force (see Peter's three visions in Acts 10).

When Peter and Barnabas withdrew from the Gentiles, they "were not being straightforward

about the truth of the gospel." While they did not verbally say that one had to do more than believe in Jesus to be justified before God, their actions implied that. Campbell makes this point when he says that Peter and Barnabas "were denying by their actions the truth that on the basis of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection Jews and Gentiles who believe are accepted equally by God."³

Verse 16 is not merely a sentiment Paul wrote for the believers in Galatia confronted by Judaizers who were trying to get them to start seeking justification by works of the law (Gal 1:8-9; 3:1; 5:4). It is a statement he made to Peter and Barnabas in front of the believers in Antioch, and that statement has direct relevance to the believers in Galatia (and all believers everywhere) as well.

JUSTIFIED BY FAITH IN CHRIST

Three times Paul refers to believing in Jesus in order to be justified before God. "By faith in [Jesus] Christ" occurs twice for emphasis. He also uses the verb *believe* (*pisteuō*) in conjunction with one of the references to faith: "Even we have believed in Jesus Christ" for the purpose "that we might be justified by faith in Christ." The word we refers to Jewish believers, including Peter and Barnabas. When they withdrew from table fellowship with Gentiles, they were essentially contradicting their own justification by faith "and not by the works of the law."

By withdrawing from the Gentile believers, Peter and Barnabas were unintentionally calling into question justification by faith alone. Paul said that "they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel" (Gal 2:14). Justification is by faith in Christ, apart from works. It really is that simple.

Receiving the Spirit by Faith, Not Works (Galatians 3:2)

This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

RECEIVING THE SPIRIT

Paul is amazed that Judaizers had bewitched the believers in Galatia (Gal 3:1). That leads to the question raised in v 2. How did the Galatians receive the Spirit?

When a person believes in Christ, many things happen to him. He is justified by God the Father right then. The Holy Spirit regenerates him, baptizes him into the Body of Christ, and seals him forever. The Spirit also takes up permanent residence in the believer. This is called *indwelling*. Here Paul refers to the initiation of the Spirit's indwelling as the time when the readers *received the Spirit*. To receive the Spirit is another way of speaking of regeneration or justification, since they all occur simultaneously.

NOT BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW

Paul's question is rhetorical. The answer is obvious.

The readers were Gentile unbelievers when Paul evangelized them. He did not preach the Law of Moses to them. They did not receive the Spirit by works of the law. Yet when Judaizers came into their churches, they were being duped into thinking that in order to retain the Spirit and their justification, they had to keep the law. That makes no sense.

BY THE HEARING OF FAITH

The expression "by the hearing of faith" (*ex akoēs pisteōs*) sounds a bit wooden. It has been variously explained by commentators as "[by] listening to the doctrines of the faith," "by hearing God's word with faith," "by faith in the Word of God," "by faith in the gospel message," "[by]

hearing and believing,"8 and "on the basis of believing what you heard."9

Regardless of how we render that expression, Paul's point is that the readers received the Spirit and were justified by faith in Christ, not by works of the law.

Supply of the Spirit and Working of Miracles by Faith, Not by Works (Galatians 3:5)

Therefore, He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

THE SUPPLY OF THE SPIRIT & THE WORKING OF MIRACLES

s in Gal 3:2 (chapter 54), Paul uses other expressions to refer to regeneration. "He who supplies the Spirit to you" refers either to the initial reception of the Holy Spirit by the readers when they first believed in Christ, or possibly to that plus the ongoing permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit which began when they believed in the Lord Jesus for everlasting life. The reference to "He who...works miracles among you" refers to the miraculous works which the Apostle Paul did in their midst by the power of the Holy Spirit. It might also include any additional miracles that God did among them after Paul left. Though he does not mention God's name explicitly, Paul puts the attention where it belongs, on God, who is the Source of the Spirit and of the miracles that they witnessed. In addition, they have nothing to boast about in regards to these miracles. Thomas Constable correctly points out that "God did not perform them [the miracles] because the Galatians did something special to earn them."¹⁰

NOT BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW

Paul denies that the Spirit's indwelling ministry or the miracles done among the Galatians were

"While justified people are expected by God to produce lives full of good works, those good works are not a condition either of being justified or remaining justified."

due to "the works of the law." The believers in Galatia did not receive the Spirit by means of the works of the law. Nor did God do miracles among them because of works of the law. To this point Campbell adds the important fact that when Paul arrived in Galatia, "The Galatians did not [even] know the Law, and Paul's message was that of justification by faith."

Paul is once again denying justification/regeneration by works.

BY THE HEARING OF FAITH

The same odd expression found in v 2 is repeated here in v 5 (*ex akoēs pisteōs*, "by the hearing of faith"). The basis of the indwelling Spirit and the miraculous works that were done in Galatia is "the hearing of faith," or by "believing what you heard," or by "faith in the gospel message," or by "faith in the Word of God." That expression refers to faith in the saving message that they heard. See chap. 54 for details.

There were people, whom we call *Judaizers*, who were distorting the gospel of Christ (Gal 1:8-9). They were saying that faith in Christ was not enough to make it into Christ's kingdom. They were essentially teaching justification by law-keeping (see Gal 5:4; cf. Acts 15:1). Justification is by faith in Christ, apart from works. Not even works done after justification are required to remain justified. While justified people are expected by God to produce lives full of good works, those good works are not a condition either of being justified or remaining justified. Temporary or even ongoing failure is possible for believers (as the Book of Galatians itself illustrates). Justification is by faith alone. For a person who believes in Christ to be misled—to take his eyes off Christ—and then to buy into a

works-salvation mindset, is like being bewitched (Gal 3:1-2). George says that in the case of the Galatians, Paul was telling them that those who were teaching them justification by works were "like evil magicians...trying to seduce [them] from the way of Christ to a counterfeit gospel."¹²



Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He lives in Highland Village, TX, with his wife of 44 years, Sharon. His latest book is Turn and Live: The Power of Repentance.

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2. Timothy George, Galatians

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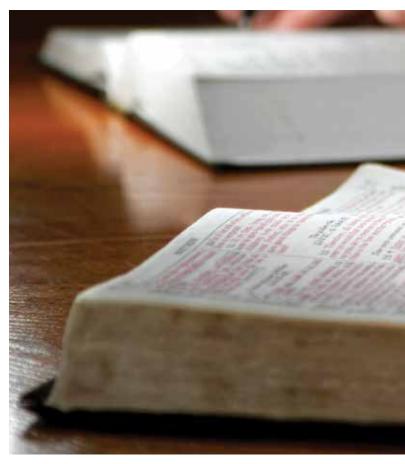
- 3. Donald K. Campbell, "Galatians" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, New Testament Edition, ed. by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 595.
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- 9. Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 103; Scot McKnight, *Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 140.
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 - 12. George, Galatians, 214.

Top 5 Passages to Ponder

By Summer Stevens

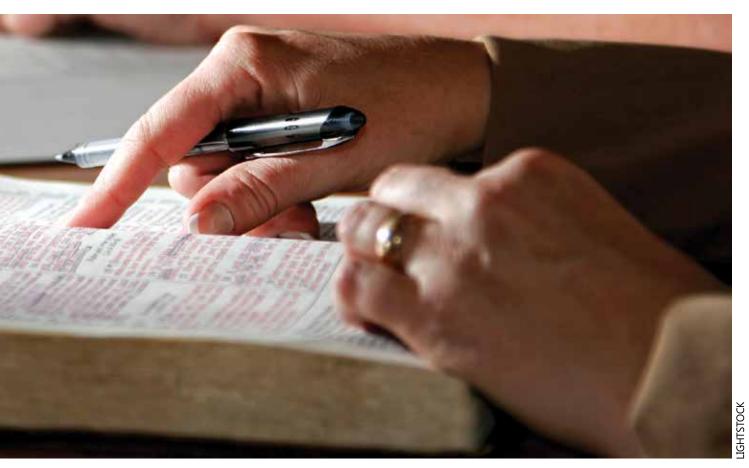
cross the globe, these last few months have given most people a precious gift: Ltime. Time for family and relaxation, sure, but hopefully you've also taken the opportunity to spend extra time in prayer and in the Word. The pressure has been off to get kids on the bus or rush off to a morning church meeting, allowing a few extra moments to linger in the passage you're reading, make a few notes, or follow the references. One of my favorite things to write in my Bible are question marks. There is so much I still don't fully understand, and those question marks are like invitations to return and study and meditate on a passage or pray for insight. I've returned to some of my question marks these last few months—what I'm calling "passages to ponder." I'm sure you have your own, or perhaps you have clarity on these passages that I don't have! Either way, my invitation to you is to use this unique time in history to engage in those tougher texts, the ones you struggle with, are mesmerized by, don't understand, or frankly, don't like. You don't have to like a passage to obey it! But the Holy Spirit, I believe, will meet you in the pages as you seek to know Him better because Heb 11:6 promises that "God will reward those who earnestly seek him."

1. Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26). I have so many questions about this passage! First, I'm struck by the fact that this could be an unanswered prayer request by Jesus. "Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me" (Matt 26:39). Why did Jesus ask that this cup be taken from Him?¹ What would have happened if God the Father had honored Jesus' request? What exactly is the "cup"—the physical suffering of the cross? The spiritual weight of the sins of the world? The agony of separation from the Father?



For me, the Garden prayer is the most haunting part of the crucifixion story. Jesus is mostly silent after He's arrested. We see a willing Savior who accepts brutality and death on our behalf. But it appears here that Jesus had a choice to make in the matter, and He was agonizing over it in the Garden. His humanity is so clearly seen here: He is in anguish! Scripture gives us an interesting little description: it tells us Jesus was in so much distress, He was sweating profusely—so much so that it was dripping from His body the way a fresh cut drips blood. This makes me love Jesus even more. He knew His destiny, but He had a choice. He was wrestling with His very human body and mind that night, and love won.

2. The spiritual battle in Daniel (Daniel 10). This is a fascinating passage where a spiritual being practically apologizes to Daniel for being late in responding to Daniel's prayers because he was detained by a demon!



"But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future..." (vv 13-14).

A few verses later, the "one who looked like a man" parted with these words,

"Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come...no one supports me against them except Michael, your prince" (vv 20-21).

We have a glimpse into the supernatural world that most of us don't spend time contemplating. While there are different interpretations, the passage seems to depict godly and demonic angelic warfare. Some of the bad ones are very powerful, so powerful that at times reinforcements need to be called in for help! This passage brings up so many questions. The spiritual beings in Persia and Greece appear to have had geographical domain; do demons still have that today? What is the hierarchical system among the angels (holy

and unholy), since here we see a prince, another prince, a chief prince and a king? What role do they play in the lives of believers today? While Scripture is clear we are not to worship or pray to angels, there are many other passages worth pondering that discuss their roles in the lives of believers and in the world (Ps 91:11-12; Matt 18:10; Heb 1:14).

3. Peace during the millennial kingdom (Isaiah 11). If it's been a while, stop reading this article and read Isaiah 11. Especially in this time of political and social unrest across our nation, it reads almost like a fairy tale—righteous rulings, hope for the needy, just punishments for the wicked, and then the world is so set right that even the animals have peace with one another! "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat" (v 6). And then (for mothers), the most striking picture: "The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest" (v 8). What does that picture do to you? Does it sound

too good to be true? Does it make you fearful? Do you long for that kind of peace? I mean really long for it? That kind of justice? Isaiah gives the reason for this peace in the world in v 9: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Just as surely as salty water fills up the oceans, the knowledge of the Lord will literally transform the world. Take some time and imagine the world when Jesus rules. It is coming!

4. God's intimate knowledge of you (Psalm 139). I'm currently memorizing this psalm with a friend. I've written about the benefits of Scripture memory before, but it's been a while since I tackled a whole chapter. If you're looking for a passage to work on, may I suggest Psalm 139! I've had a lot of time to "ponder" it, and it keeps getting richer and more meaningful. Verse 1 begins: "You have searched me, O Lord, and you know me." You could stay a while just with v 1. God, Creator of the universe, has searched me, and He knows me. David gives us some details, then he sums it up at the end of v 3 with, "You are familiar with all my ways." I find so much comfort in this. God is familiar with my favorite running route. He's familiar with my tendency to stop at garage sales and buy books I don't need. He's familiar with the times I say I'm going to get out of bed and the time I actually get out of bed. God sees the big picture, and He sees the details. If you struggle with anxiety about the future or guilt from the past, Psalm 139 helps the reader acknowledge God's sovereignty: "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (v 16). Take some time to read through, pray through, and meditate on God as reflected in this psalm. If I can confess, I always enjoyed this psalm up until the "slay the wicked" part. It seemed a bitter ending to a beautiful expression of God. But, the beauty of memorization is that it forces you to focus on each word in its progression. Just as above we talked about justice, you simply can't acknowledge the beauty and goodness of God without an honest cry, "But the world is not as it should be!" David's plea is that God, in His power and authority, would set the world right, that He

would exercise justice like only He can. I've come to appreciate the "slay the wicked" parts of many of the psalms because they are an honest reflection of our heart's desire for Jesus' perfect rule, which you shall see in the next point.

5. Christ on a white horse (Revelation 19). I like the picture of Jesus in the Gospels. He was humble, loving, tender-hearted, and generous. He loved children, and He rebuked the hypocrites. He healed the outcasts and bucked religious authority. We see Jesus fired up when He clears the temple of the moneychangers, and we like that side of Him. Serves them right! We have grown so comfortable with our "suffering Savior" riding on a donkey, that we forget what is coming. Revelation 19 is coming, and He's riding on a horse.

With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire...He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood...Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. 'He will rule them with an iron scepter.' He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty (Rev 19:11-15).

Wow. How often do we hear Sunday sermons about *that* Jesus?

Yes, this book has a lot of imagery, but you can't miss the picture: Jesus is fierce, and He's a warrior. He will fight, and He will win. Now I love the picture of Jesus with little children on His lap as much as you do, but you can't stop there. Our Lord that we worship is powerful, and the Day will come when a great battle will be fought with Jesus at the helm. To fully worship Jesus and see Him clearly, we need to spend time pondering the passages that describe Jesus as the mighty warrior to come.



Summer Stevens lives outside of Pittsburgh with her husband Nathanael and their five children.

1. Editor's note: While this is the traditional interpretation of Jesus's struggle in the Garden, for an alternative view, see John Niemelä, "Father, Take This Cup." https://faithalone.org/grace-in-focus-articles/father-take-this-cup/

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Is Desiring Eternal Rewards Selfish?

By Kathryn Wright

INTRODUCTION

Tremember when I was a teenager attending an adult Sunday school class for the first time. The lesson was on 2 Cor 5:10, which talks about the Judgment Seat of Christ. This judgment is not to determine salvation from hell, but rewards given for faithful service to the Lord. One of the participants had an interesting question. She asked, "Isn't working for rewards selfish?" She went on to say that she didn't want to do good works for rewards. Instead, she desired to do them out of love for the Lord, not asking for anything in return.

I think this woman was sincere but mistaken. Her point of view is common among those who reject the doctrine of eternal rewards. Since that day in Sunday school, I have been asked the same question many times by people from all walks of life. If you have been a part of the Free Grace movement, you may have also encountered this same sentiment. Perhaps you have personally struggled with the idea that rewards are selfish. If so, I would like to give three responses to this question that might be helpful.

TOLD TO SEEK REWARDS

In addressing the issue of whether seeking eternal rewards is selfish, let us first and foremost

consider that the Lord Himself commanded us to seek them. If that is the case, then doing so cannot be selfish.

In Matt 6:19-21, the Lord tells us to store up treasure in heaven. This is not a mere suggestion of the Lord. It is a command. We are instructed by God to invest in the kingdom to come. Furthermore, the doctrine of rewards is all over the NT (1 Cor 3:10ff; 2 Tim 2:12; 1 John 2:28; Luke 19:11-27; Hebrews 11; and many others). Since God has told us to strive for rewards, it cannot be sinful. If anything, it is the obedient thing to do.

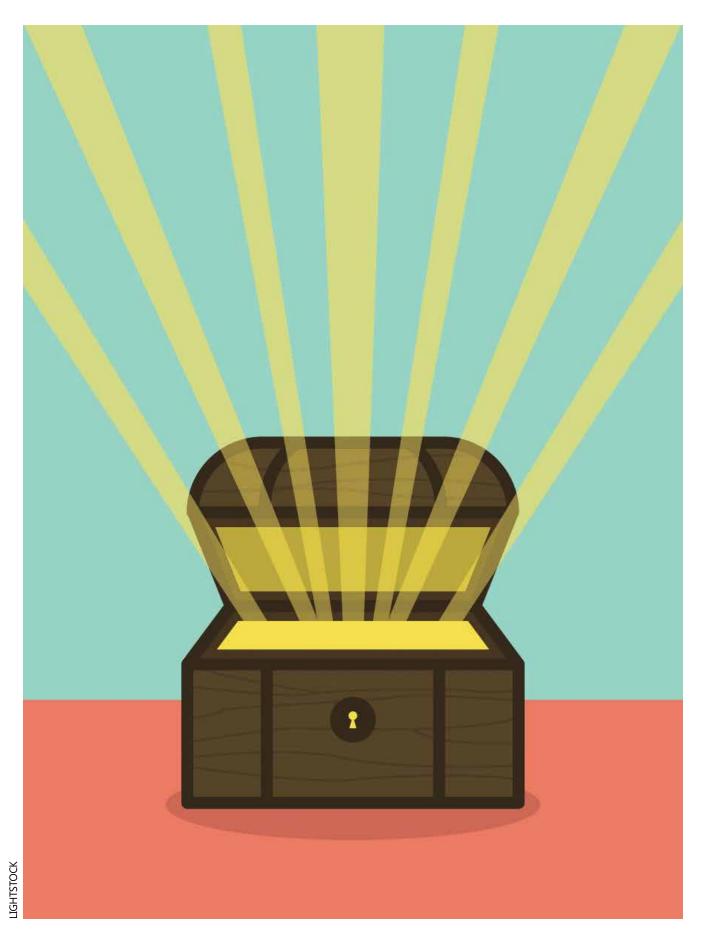
We don't fault a man for having a bank account and saving his money here on earth. In fact, we tell people they should make wise investments and save their money. We teach our children to save their money. Is this a greedy practice? Are we training our children to be selfish when we tell them to use money wisely? Obviously not. It takes discipline and hard work. It is the smart thing to do.

The same thing is true with eternal rewards and investing in the coming kingdom of God. It is a wise use of our time and resources. No wonder the Lord commanded us to do so.

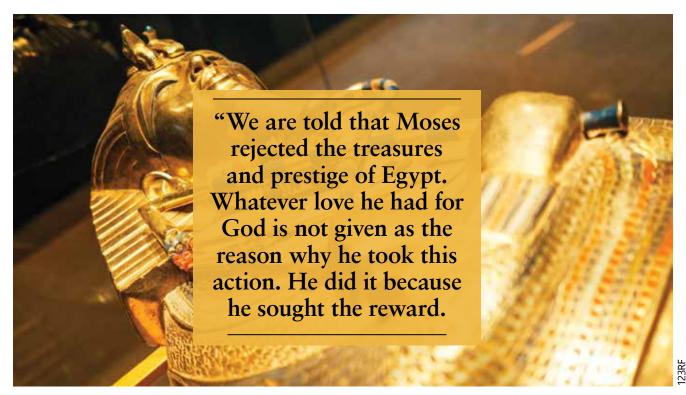
BECAUSE WE CAN'T GROW WITHOUT SEEKING REWARDS

A second reason to seek eternal rewards is that we cannot mature spiritually without believing that our God will give such rewards. The author of Hebrews tells us that we cannot please God unless we believe He is and that He is a rewarder (Heb 11:6). That is a bold statement and is worthy of some meditation. To put it another way, if you reject God's promise of rewards, you have called Him a liar. By default, you are disobeying His command to work for rewards. If we can't please Him without believing in rewards, then the believer who rejects this doctrine is fundamentally stunted in his Christian experience.

There is a false view of spiritual maturity when it comes to the issue of rewards. The lady in the Sunday school class thought that mature Christian living was following the Lord with no intent of receiving a reward. This sounds holy, doesn't it? We might even say that she was being humble.



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We should obey because we love God, right? While on the surface, this sounds great, the NT says that loving God is not the only reason to obey Him. Seeking rewards is another.

The author of Hebrews gives us Moses as an example to follow in this regard:

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward (Heb 11:24-26).

We are told that Moses rejected the treasures and prestige of Egypt. Whatever love he had for God is not given as the reason why he took this action. He did it because he sought the reward. His intent is very clear and is given as an example of great faith. Moses was a reality. He saw the two kingdoms being offered to him, and he sided with Israel. Moses could have temporarily ruled over the Egyptians as a prince, or he could eternally reign in the kingdom to come, a major theme in the Book of Hebrews. He counted the cost of following the Lord and chose to suffer with Israel. He did this because he understood which kingdom would be a better one to invest

in. This is not a discussion about salvation from hell. Moses was already saved. It is all about rewards.

This concept seems counterintuitive for a lot of Christians. Part of the reason for this is because spiritual growth is often described in the abstract phrase of "loving God." This can lead to the idea that the only incentive we have to obey God is because we "feel" a certain way about Him. With Moses here in Hebrews 11, it is much less touchyfeely. He desired the riches of eternal rewards in the kingdom of God over the temporary rewards that Egypt offered him.

The Lord also talked of discipleship in a practical way. In Luke 14:27-30, He describes discipleship like a man who sits down to calculate the cost of building a tower. This is a very practical way to look at the issues of obedience and discipleship when compared to the sincere feelings of the lady in Sunday school. When one sits down and counts the cost, it is not an easy decision. It will cost you something to be obedient to the Lord.

This isn't to say God doesn't care about our hearts and affections. The Lord concludes His discussion on rewards in Matthew 6 by saying that "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (v 21). The lady in Sunday school got it backward! The result of striving for rewards is love for God. If you want to love God's coming kingdom, and ultimately grow in your love for the Lord, you need to invest in His kingdom.

If working for rewards pleases God, produces love for His kingdom, and helps us mature, how can striving for them be selfish?

BECAUSE GOD WANTS TO REWARD US

The third response to this question deals with the character of God. As we saw, Heb 11:6 states

that God is a rewarder. It is in His very nature. The Lord longs to reward His children, and by rewarding us He is glorified. Just like earthly parents, the Lord is a Father who desires to praise His children when they are obedient. When we are obedient, He wants the whole world to know about it.

Look at any Facebook feed, and you will see par-

ents plastering their page with pictures of their children. Why? Because their children bring them joy, especially when they succeed in something. From weddings to graduations, or potty training, parents love to showcase their children's accomplishments. In addition, they love to reward their children for those accomplishments. If this is true for earthly parents, it should not come as a surprise to see our heavenly Father have a similar desire.

In Hebrews 11, the author of Hebrews talks about faithful believers. In v 16, we are told that God is not ashamed to be called their God. I have always found this verse particularly insightful. Basically, the author of Hebrews is saying God takes pleasure in being identified with certain believers. We see this fleshed out in a few ways in Scripture. For example, over and over again, the Lord identifies Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He points to them repeatedly and says, "I am their God." It's like a proud father at a football game saying after a

touchdown that the quarterback is his son. God doesn't do this with all of the OT saints. This is an honor for those particular men who glorified Him. In Heb 11:16, we see this will be true for other believers who endured (see also Rev 3:5). It pleases the Lord to be identified with faithful believers. It is in His very character to reward those who obey Him.

CONCLUSION

"The result of striving for

rewards is love for God.

If you want to love God's

coming kingdom and

ultimately grow in your

love for the Lord, you need

to invest in His kingdom."

Recently I was teaching a group of college students that I have had the privilege of mentor-

ing since middle school. They are all believers. They understand that salvation is simply by believing in Jesus Christ for eternal life. They also have been taught about the doctrine of rewards and the Judgment Seat of Christ. The other day, one of these young people stopped in the middle of the lesson and asked me a familiar question. She asked,

"Aren't rewards selfish?" I'll be honest. I was a little shocked by the question. I realized later that even among Free Grace people, the doctrine of rewards could sometimes feel selfish. I think this is an example of when we need to allow the Word instead of our emotions to transform our thinking (Rom 12:1-2). As a general rule, the world and many false religions have taught that rewards are a sinful motive for obedience. I disagree. I would argue that not only is striving for rewards the obedient thing to do, it is something that helps us mature. It is also a way to make our Father proud.



Kathryn Wright lives in Columbia, SC, with her husband Dewey and their dog Pippin. She teaches at Bible schools overseas.

Two Reflections on Ecclesiastes

By Shawn Lazar

ECCLESIASTES IN A SYLLOGISM

s I was making lunch, my son, Zane, came into the kitchen and asked, "Has it been an hour yet?"

"An hour from when?"

"No! Just, has it been an hour?"

"From now? I'll have to start counting."

"No from later."

"Well, if it's an hour from *later*, then it hasn't happened yet, because it's *now*, not later."

"Ugh, Dad. Has it been an hour yet or not?" I couldn't give Zane a proper answer until I could understand his question! (He wanted to know if his sister had to get off the computer and play with him.) Sometimes an answer won't make sense unless you know the question first. Which brings me to Ecclesiastes. What purpose does that book serve in the Bible? Peter Kreeft suggested this:

Ecclesiastes is the contrast, the alternative, to the rest of the Bible, the question to which the rest of the Bible is the answer. There is nothing more meaningless than an answer without its question. That is why we need Ecclesiastes (*Three Philosophies of Life*, p. 19).

Ecclesiastes is the question.

So what's the question?

That is, what is Solomon's basic argument in Ecclesiastes?

I think you can put it in the form of a simple syllogism.

Premise 1: All labor is under the sun (Eccl 1:3). Premise 2: All under the sun is vanity (Eccl 1:14).

Conclusion: Therefore, all labor is vanity.

Is Solomon right? Is everything we do vain? If his conclusion stands, it would be a devastating blow to anyone or to any philosophy, religion, or worldview that has tried to seek meaning "under the sun." Materialism, hedonism, Marxism, existentialism, pragmatism, agnosticism, pantheism, paganism, etc—Ecclesiastes would be a reductio ad absurdum challenge to them all.

But it would also be a challenge to Christians to explain why our lives aren't ultimately vain, too. After all, the Bible says it is all vanity, doesn't it?

Is there any hope for us?

Ecclesiastes explores and defends the second premise of the syllogism. Solomon will recount all the different ways he looked for meaning under the sun and explain why they all failed to satisfy. Understanding where Solomon failed to find meaning may help us understand today's culture. People are looking everywhere under the sun for meaning—and they have relatively fewer opportunities and resources than Solomon had for conducting the experiment.

If Solomon can show that meaningfulness and purpose do not come from under the sun—if everything (that he has tried) really amounts to vanity—that raises one of the biggest questions of all: if you can't find meaning under the sun, where can you find it?

WHY ETERNAL REWARDS ANSWERS SOLOMON'S OUEST FOR MEANING

The teacher in Ecclesiastes was on a search for the meaning of life "under the sun," but all his attempts to find meaning failed.

He looked for purpose through pursuing wisdom (Eccl 1:12-14, 18), pleasure (Eccl 2:10-11), leaving a legacy (Eccl 2:18-20), building wealth (Eccl 5:10-11), even having children (Eccl 6:3-4)—among other things—and concluded all labor under the sun was "vanity" or "meaningless" (Eccl 1:1-3; 12:8). Why? For several reasons.

None of his desires could be satisfied (Eccl 1:8); nothing he did made a difference to the world,

which just kept on going eternally, as if humanity didn't exist (Eccl 1:4, 9); nothing he did would be remembered (Eccl 2:16), and finally, anything he could accomplish would end with death, the same as any other man (Eccl 9:2-3). So why bother laboring under the sun? Why put in the effort? As Solomon asked:

What profit has a man from all his labor In which he toils under the sun? (Eccl 1:3).

Why work?

It was meaningless.

Or at least, it seemed meaningless...if you evaluated things

from a merely human perspective.

That's the key to Ecclesiastes. It is a *reductio ad absurdum* for a merely earthly point of view. As the rest of the Bible teaches—there is a reality above and beyond the sun. And that is the answer to Solomon's question—our longing for eternity can only be answered by eternity (Eccl 3:11). More spe-

cifically, I want to suggest that the Biblical doctrine of eternal rewards, especially the reward of ruling with Christ, answers Solomon's quest for meaning.

Too few churches teach that eternal life is a free gift, given through faith, apart from works (cf. John 3:16; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8-9), and even fewer teach that Jesus will also reward believers based on their faithfulness, endurance, overcoming, and works (cf. Luke 19:17; 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 3:21; 22:12). But eternal rewards are the answer to Solomon's pessimism! Consider four facts about eternal rewards which show that laboring under the sun is worthwhile:

Every good deed you do—down to giving a single cup of water—will be remembered (Matt 10:42).

Yes, in history, people will forget what you've done. But in eternity, God does not. On the

contrary, everything you have done, whether good or bad, will be remembered and rewarded accordingly at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:11-15).

Your rewards will outlast the present earth (Rev 21:1). Solomon thought that the generations come and go but that the earth was eternal (Eccl 1:4). But the earth only seems that way from the limited perspective of being "under the sun." On the contrary, from a divine perspective, the present earth will pass away (2 Pet 3:10), while anyone who believes in Jesus will never perish (John 3:16). And the rewards they receive for

their works will be eternal, too (1 Cor 9:25). Your rewards will outlast death (Rev 20:6, 14). Contra Ecclesiastes, death is not the end. In fact, there will be an end to death when it is cast into the lake of fire. Believers will be resurrected from the dead and have already passed from death into life (John 5:24; 11:25).

Your rewards will affect your status in

the kingdom into eternity (cf. 1 Cor 9:25; 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 21:24). What you have done may have negligible effects now and may seem futile, but be sure they will have eternal consequences. Your faithfulness now will help determine your position in the kingdom for all eternity.

Solomon asked what profit has a man from his labor done under the sun. For the believer who has been faithful, the profit is eternal.



Shawn Lazar is Director of Publications for Grace Evangelical Society, which he finds very meaningful work!

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