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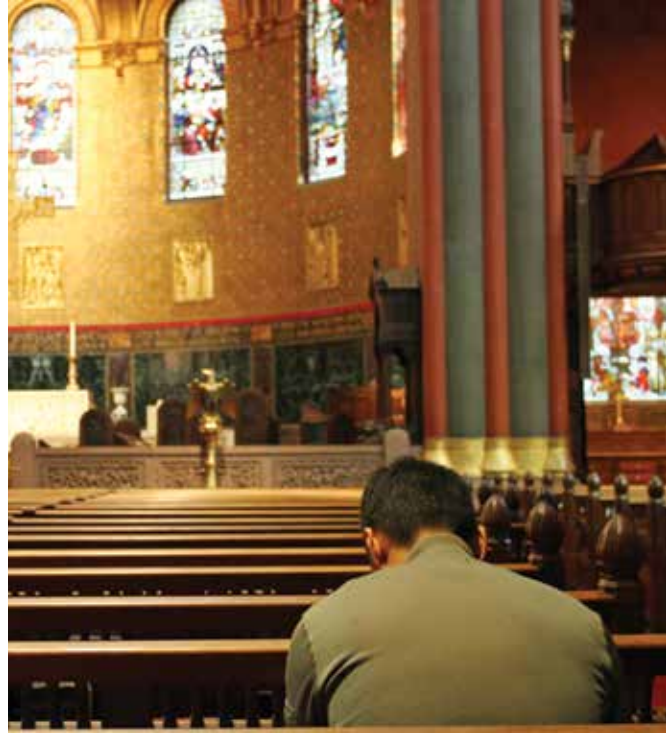
SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2020

JOHN 6:35 AND TOTAL DEPRAVITY

PLUS FAITH ALONE IN FOUR VERSES / CHRISTIANS DENYING THE LORD / CHRISTENDOM /
BELIEVING LORDSHIP SALVATION / PINNING HOPES ON ETERNITY / TABERNACLES / **AND MORE!**

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FROM THE EDITOR

Grace Evangelical Society exists to promote the free gift of everlasting for all who simply believe in Jesus, and the related yet distinct truth that the good works of believers will lead to eternal treasure and rewards to be given out at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Our magazine is one of the ways in which we teach about eternal life and eternal rewards. We also promote these truths in our daily blogs (including Spanish blogs) and podcasts and in our regional conferences and our annual conference (Oct 26-29 in Coppell, TX).

Ken and Kathryn Yates travel overseas to carry the grace message to Bible colleges and seminaries in Central America, Africa, and Asia.

We also promote the grace message by writing books.

My latest book is called *One Hundred Faith-Alone Verses in the Bible*. We have been editing it since the pandemic began. Now we are in the final proofing stage. We anticipate having it in print by the end of September.

I did not expect to be encouraged personally as I wrote the book. My hope was to encourage others. Yet I have found myself greatly encouraged by the many wonderful quotes I have found supporting the faith-alone message. Even people who do not hold to the grace message will sometimes make super statements about faith-alone verses.

Our position does not require special pleading. We do not need to twist the meaning of passages. The Bible is crystal clear that the only condition of everlasting life that can never be lost is




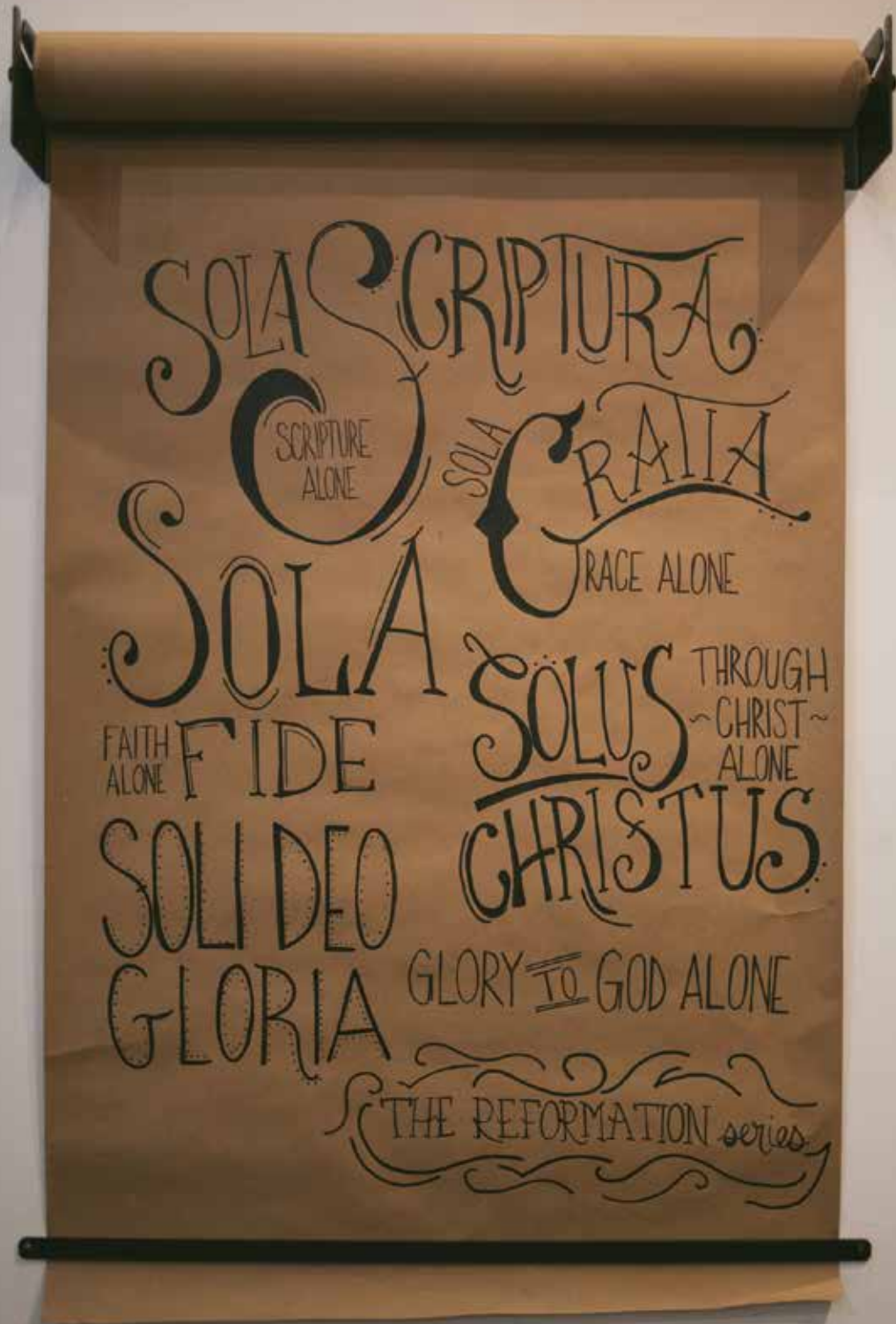
No Special Pleading

Robert N. Wilkin, **EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

to believe in Jesus Christ for it. From Genesis to Revelation the faith-alone message rings true.

May we carry this faith-alone message to our family, friends, and coworkers. The grace message is beautiful, inspired, and powerful.

Thank you for your support of our ministry. 



BY BOB WILKIN

Faith Alone in Four Verses

An Excerpt from *Faith Alone in One Hundred Verses*

Chapter One

*And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.
(Genesis 15:6)*

My parents had given up hope. Though their first child, a daughter, came after just a few years of trying, the second child, another daughter, did not come until nearly eight years later. Seven years after that, when my mom was thirty-nine and well past hope, they found out they were expecting. When I was born, they learned they finally had a boy. I imagine that is what Abraham felt when Isaac was born. But unlike my parents, Abraham had a promise from God Almighty that he and Sarah would indeed have a son. That promise from God came long after it was reasonable for them to have a child.

THE ACCOUNTING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS REFERS TO JUSTIFICATION BEFORE GOD (ROMANS 4; GALATIANS 3)

Paul quotes Gen 15:6 in Rom 4:3 and Gal 3:6. In those contexts, Paul is clearly defending justification before God by faith in Christ, apart from works (see Rom 4:1-8; Gal 3:6-14, esp. vv 8, 11). Genesis 15:6 tells us that God declared Abraham righteous because he had faith in the Lord. But was Paul stretching things to suggest that

Abraham is an example of one who believed in the Messiah for his justification before God?

ABRAHAM BELIEVED IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST FOR EVERLASTING LIFE (JOHN 8:56; HEB 11:10)

If all we had was the Book of Genesis, we would have to do some guesswork about what Moses meant when he said, “And he believed in the Lord.” Without other OT and NT books, we would not know that he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for everlasting life.

But it is clear from Gen 15:1-6 that Abraham believed the Lord was going to provide an heir who would be from him and Sarah. Considering Gen 12:1-3, we know that Abraham believed this coming heir would be the source of worldwide blessing. As Ross puts it, the promises given in Genesis 12 were primarily for the benefit of Abraham but would “ultimately benefit all the families of the world.”¹ In light of the land promises of the Lord to Abraham, we also know that Abraham believed this coming heir would rule in the Promised Land, and Abraham believed that he himself would be resurrected and would gain the land which was promised to him.

If we go outside Genesis, we know that the Lord in whom Abraham believed is the Messiah, the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, the Lord Jesus Himself said, “Abraham rejoiced to see My day” (John 8:56). That is, Abraham was happy to realize that the Lord Jesus was coming



to establish His kingdom in the Promised Land. Compare Heb 11:10, which says that Abraham was looking for the New Jerusalem.

Paul quotes Gen 15:6 in both Romans 4 and Galatians 3. In both cases he uses that verse to prove that justification is by faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ. Moo maintains that Paul sees a “Christological focus” in Gen 15:6 and that this focus is both “fair and appropriate.”² If Gen 15:6 is not about justification by faith in Christ, then Paul has deceived us. But that is impossible, for God’s Word is true.

ABRAHAM ACTUALLY MET THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND SPOKE WITH HIM ON MANY OCCASIONS (GENESIS 12-18, 21-22)

We tend to think of Abraham as someone who knew little or nothing about the Lord Jesus. But that is not true. He met the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ on many occasions. Face-to-face. See especially the dialogue Abraham had with the Lord Jesus in Genesis 18 as Abraham comically tried to negotiate for the saving of Sodom (50...45...40...30...20...10). You and I have never seen Him. But Abraham met with Him

often. Neyrey takes this position. While God the Father is invisible, Christ is the visible God that appeared to Abraham.³

Remember that the Lord Jesus said, “Abraham rejoiced to see My day.” He saw, that is, anticipated, Jesus’ day, His coming kingdom, while he was meeting with Him. Now, we do not know if Abraham knew that His name is Jesus. He probably did not know that. But he knew that He was the Lord. And He believed that by faith in Him he would spend eternity in His coming kingdom in the Promised Land.

Chapter Two

“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved” (Luke 8:11-12).

In the 1950s, there were two major crusade-style evangelists, Billy Graham and Charles Templeton. Both spoke nightly to stadiums filled with 25,000 or more people wanting to

hear about Christ. Graham went on to become the leading evangelist of the second half of the twentieth century. In 1957, Templeton left the ministry, declaring himself an agnostic. In 1995, he wrote a book entitled *Farewell to God: My Reasons for Rejecting the Christian Faith*. He died in 2001. If Templeton believed in Christ before he fell away, is he with the Lord now?

SALVATION FROM ETERNAL CONDEMNATION IS IN VIEW

No other type of deliverance makes sense in this context. Commenting on v 12, Bock says that the “spiritual condition of this first seed is clearly a picture of the unsaved.”⁴ The devil wants to keep people from being born again. So he works hard to take the word out of the hearts of people. Satan knows that if they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, then they will be irrevocably saved. He puts a lot of effort into keeping people from coming to faith in Christ.

THE SOLE CONDITION IS FAITH

The Lord does not mention repentance, turning from sins, commitment, obedience, or anything other than faith. While He does not specify that the faith is in Him, it would be obvious to Theophilus, the believing reader of Luke-Acts, or to any believing reader, that the Lord was speaking about faith in Himself.

Luke is not an evangelistic book. But there is enough in Luke 8:12 to show that salvation from eternal condemnation is by faith alone in Christ alone.

THE LORD THEN ILLUSTRATES THREE TYPES OF BELIEVERS (LUKE 8:13-15)

Verses 13-15 illustrate three types of people who believe and are saved.

Only in v 13, with the rocky soil, do we specifically read “who believe.” We know from v 12 that what they believe is the saving message. So they are saved. Yet the Lord said that after they believe “for a time,” “in time of temptation [they] fall away.” The first type of believer is one who falls away. Green points out that this parable of the Lord clearly teaches that there is “the possibility” that those who have believed will not finish the course.⁵ If Templeton believed the faith-alone message before his departure, then he is indeed with the Lord now.

“Some believers fall away. Some believers are distracted and only halfhearted in their service for Christ. And some believers are wholehearted in their service. But all believers are born again.”

Verse 14 tells us of a type of believer whose fruitfulness is choked out by “cares, riches, and the pleasures of life.” Cares are not sinful. Nor are riches. Nor are the pleasures of life (hunting, fishing, golf, tennis, reading, talking, etc.). But all of them have the potential of robbing a believer of his devotion to Christ. Ironside says that these kinds of things are “innocent,” but if they occupy the mind of the believer, he will be “sorry through eternity” that he put

these things before devotion to the Lord.⁶ This sort of believer does not fall away. But he also fails to bring “fruit to maturity.”

The third type of believer (v 15) is the one who endures in faithfulness to Christ. The Lord calls him “the good soil.”

Make no mistake. Soils 2, 3, and 4 all “sprang up” (Luke 8:6, 7, 8). The Word of God germinated in their lives. They believed in Christ and were born again.

Some believers fall away. Some believers are distracted and only halfhearted in their service for Christ. Other believers are wholehearted in their service. But all believers are born again.

Chapter Three

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12).

Prince Charles and Diana, Princess of Wales, were overjoyed to have a son, William, who would likely one day become the king of England. Prince William is a child of royalty. He is tremendously blessed. An even greater blessing is being a child of God, the Almighty.

THE PROLOGUE LAYS OUT THE FAITH-ALONE MESSAGE

John 1:1-18 is the prologue of the book. In the prologue, the Apostle John whets the unbelieving readers' appetite (John 20:31) for the saving message. He tells them a bit of who Jesus is.

JOHN 1:12-13 MAY BE THE PINNACLE OF THE PROLOGUE

Various chiastic structures (e.g., ABCDC'B'A') have been suggested for the prologue. Many of these show John 1:12-13 as the very center of the prologue.

Most in Israel rejected Jesus and His message (John 1:11). Bruce states that Jesus "came in the form of special revelation to the people of Israel," but this revelation was repeatedly ignored.⁷ But some received Him and His message. That is, some "believed in His name." Those who believed in His name "become children of God" (John 1:12) and hence have been "born of God" (John 1:13).

Faith. Alone.

THE ISSUE IS FAITH IN CHRIST FOR EVERLASTING LIFE

John 1:12-13 clearly states that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has become a child of God and has been born of God. Brodie says that the main idea of these two verses is that "belief generates birth, a supernatural birth."⁸ The sole issue is faith in Christ for the life He promises.

Chapter Four

"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).

"A type is a literal historical event which has prophetic significance. Abraham offering up his only son Isaac foreshadows God the Father offering up His only Son on the cross for our sins."

Have you ever wondered about the odd symbol of the American Medical Association? It is two snakes wrapped around a staff. Well, in Greek mythology snakes on a staff or pole are associated with healing. However, that myth goes back to an actual historical account of how dying Israelite people were healed by looking upon an uplifted bronze serpent made by Moses. The Lord

Jesus referred to that account to teach people that He saves all who look to Him in faith.

THE BRONZE SERPENT MOSES LIFTED UP (JOHN 3:14; NUMBERS 21:4-9)

The Lord here recalled a famous event in Israel's history. During the forty years of wilderness wandering, the people often complained and rebelled. On one of those occasions the Lord sent venomous snakes through the camp. As a result, "many of the people of Israel died" (Num 21:6).

After the people confessed their sins, Moses prayed for them. God told Moses to make a

serpent and set it on a pole “that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.”

Look and live.

This deliverance from physical death was not of works. Barnhouse emphasizes this fact when he says that the Israelites “were to cease from human remedies and turn to a divine remedy.”⁹ The people did nothing for this healing other than look to the uplifted serpent as God had said.

THE CROSS AND THE GIFT OF LIFE ARE THE ANTITYPE (JOHN 3:15)


This incident was a type of Christ being lifted up on the cross (“so must the Son of Man be lifted up”) and of faith in Him for eternal life (“that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life”). Boice rightly says that we can only understand the point of Numbers 21 here in John 3 when we see that it is “intended to prefigure the raising up of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.”¹⁰

A type is a literal historical event which has prophetic significance. Abraham offering up his only son Isaac foreshadows God the Father offering up His only Son on the cross for our sins. Likewise, Moses lifting up the bronze serpent on a pole for healing to all who look upon it foreshadows Jesus being lifted up on the cross for salvation to all who look to Him for that salvation.

By looking in faith to the uplifted Messiah, we live. That is, we gain everlasting life which can never be lost. The Israelites in Numbers 21 “received a prolongation of mortal life, but it is

eternal life that the Son of Man ensures to those who look to him.”¹¹

Look and live.

The sole condition is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. 



Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He lives in Highland Village, TX, with his wife of 44 years, Sharon. His book *Faith Alone in One Hundred Verses* is forthcoming.

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John 6:35 and Total Depravity

By Laurence M. Vance

And Jesus said unto them, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).

CALVINISM

Calvinism is the teaching that man is so dead in sin that God has to irresistibly call him and regenerate him against his will before he can exercise faith in Christ. But all men are not eligible, just the elect whom Christ died for. That is the five points of Calvinism in a nutshell. The five points are total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints (TULIP).

Total depravity is the teaching that the unregenerate man is totally dead in sin to the extent that he has the inability to freely accept Jesus Christ. *Unconditional election* is the teaching that God, by a sovereign, eternal decree, unconditionally elected a certain number of men to salvation. *Limited atonement* is the teaching that Jesus Christ, by His death on the cross, only made an atonement for the group of men previously elected to salvation. *Irresistible grace* is the teaching that God irresistibly overpowers the will of the elect sinner with His grace and regenerates him, granting him faith and repentance to believe on Jesus Christ. *Perseverance of the saints* is the teaching that all of the elect who have been regenerated by God will persevere in the faith and ultimately die in a state of grace.



Calvinists call their system the “doctrines of grace,” implying that if you don’t believe the system, then you are denying salvation by grace.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

I want to focus on Total Depravity.

I actually agree with Calvinists about the *depravity* of man. This is certainly a Biblical doctrine. Man is “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1). “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9). David said: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps 51:5). Because God is holy, man is an “enemy of God” (Rom 5:10), “at enmity with God” (Eph 2:15), and “alienated from God” (Eph 4:18). Man’s first birth is no good. That’s why he must be born again.

But the Calvinist view of total depravity is not about *depravity*; it is about *inability*. In fact, some Calvinists call their first point *total inability*. Total depravity is the *result* of man’s depravity. Total depravity is one of the three essential points of Calvinism. It is also the foundation of Calvinism. It necessitates the doctrines of unconditional election (UE) and irresistible grace (IG). If men have the inability to come to Christ and believe on him, then it logically follows that if any of them are to be saved, then God must first

determine who they are (UE) and then irresistibly overcome their inability (IG) so that they can come to Christ and believe on Him. Calvinists think that for God to get the glory for salvation, man must be unable to accept or reject it. God has to elect people to salvation because they *can't* respond and then has to regenerate them against their will so they *can* respond. In Calvinism, regeneration precedes faith; the offer of salvation is only intended for the elect; and no one has the ability to accept Christ of his own free will.

John 6:35 contradicts Calvinism on total depravity.

JOHN 6:35

And Jesus said unto them, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

Jesus had just taken some loaves and fishes and fed over 5,000 men (plus women and children). Many came to Him the next day, not because of the miracle He performed, but because they "did eat of the loaves, and were filled" (John 6:26). When Jesus encouraged them to believe on Him whom God had sent, they asked for a sign that they might believe Him. Then, even after they had eaten of the bread that Jesus miraculously provided, they had the audacity to mention how God had fed their fathers in the wilderness with manna, and even quoted from the Psalms to reinforce it. Jesus then shifted the argument from physical bread to spiritual bread. But like the woman at the well (John 4:15), the people were still thinking in purely physical terms. Jesus then made it perfectly clear that He is the bread of life.

There are three things that we see in John 6:35 that are found throughout the NT: faith precedes regeneration; the offer of salvation is indiscriminate; and salvation is a personal decision.

FAITH PRECEDES REGENERATION

Calvinists put the theological cart before the Biblical horse. In Calvinism, believing on Christ is the *result* of salvation, not the *cause* of salvation. Here is R.C. Sproul: "The Reformed view of predestination teaches that before a person

can choose Christ his heart must be changed. He must be born again" (*Chosen By God*, p. 72). Sproul again: The maxim "regeneration precedes faith" is "a cardinal point of Reformed theology" (ibid.). And here is Loraine Boettner: "A man is not saved because he believes in Christ; he believes in Christ because he is saved" (*Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, p. 101).

John 6:35, "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." "Cometh to me shall never hunger" and "believeth on me shall never thirst" show us that faith precedes regeneration.

The coming to Christ and the believing on Him *precede* the never hungering and the never thirsting. You must partake of the bread of life to get everlasting life. Calvinism turns things around and says that you must get everlasting life so you can partake of the bread of life. But if someone is already regenerated, then why does he have to come to Christ? If someone is already saved, then why does he have to believe on Jesus? Can a man be regenerated without coming to Christ? Can a man be saved without believing? Can a regenerated man go to hell? Can a non-believer go to heaven?

In the Bible, God saves those who believe and condemns those who don't believe, not those who have the misfortune of not being part of the "elect":

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

John 6:35 contradicts Calvinism on total depravity.

AN INDISCRIMINATE OFFER

Calvinists maintain that the gospel message is only for the elect. The reprobate have the inability to respond. They may outwardly hear the gospel call, but it is not for them. According to John Gerstner, both the "internal spiritual call" and the "external audible call" are to the regenerate. "This one call to the regenerate is heard by the ears of many unregenerate. But what they

hear is not a call to them but to the regenerate” (*Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, p. 120).

John 6:35,

“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”

“Jesus said unto them” shows us that the offer of salvation is indiscriminate.

Who is the “them” that Jesus is speaking to? It is certainly not the elect. He was speaking to “a great multitude” (v 2) and “a great company” (v 5). Compare vv 7, 9, 10-12, 14-15, 22, 24-30, 32, and 34. Most of the multitude Jesus was offering salvation to never received Him (cf. John 1:1). And it’s not only “they” who can believe, for we are told in v 33 that the bread of God “giveth life unto the world.” As John said earlier: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). God’s offer is indiscriminate: “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isa 45:22). And God’s offer is genuine: “I said not, seek ye me in vain, I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right” (Isa 45:19).

John 6:35 contradicts Calvinism on total depravity.

A PERSONAL RESPONSE

According to Calvinism, since men are dead in sin, they can only do according to their depraved nature; they do not have the free will to come to Christ and believe on Him. Calvinists equate man’s ability to receive Christ with the ability to regenerate oneself.

John 6:35,

And Jesus said unto them, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”

“He that” shows us that salvation is a personal decision.

This is the universal testimony of Scripture:

“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (John 7:37).

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (1 John 5:1).

“Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17).

These verses, and other verses like them, including John 6:35, have no meaning if no one can will to accept Christ.

The Bible does not say: if any man *whom God wills* thirsts, let him come unto me and drink. The Bible does not say: *whomsoever God wills* to believe that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. The Bible does not say: *whomsoever God wills* to believe in Him should not perish. The Bible doesn’t say: *whomsoever God wills*, let him take of the water of life freely.

The Bible is clear that believing or not believing on Christ is a conscious choice. The response to Paul’s preaching was that “some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not” (Acts 28:24). The preaching of the cross is both “foolishness to them that perish and “the power of God” to the saved (1 Cor 1:18). The reason men do not come to Christ and believe on Him to everlasting life is not because of their *inability*, but because of their *unwillingness*. As Jesus said: “Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life” (John 5:40).

John 6:35 contradicts Calvinism on total depravity.

CONCLUSION

If total depravity is true, then there is absolutely nothing a man can do but *hope* he is one of the elect and that God will save him. But if total depravity is not true, then men can be saved without the other points of Calvinism, and the whole foundation of Calvinism collapses. ■



Laurence M. Vance is the author of *The Other Side of Calvinism* and many other books.

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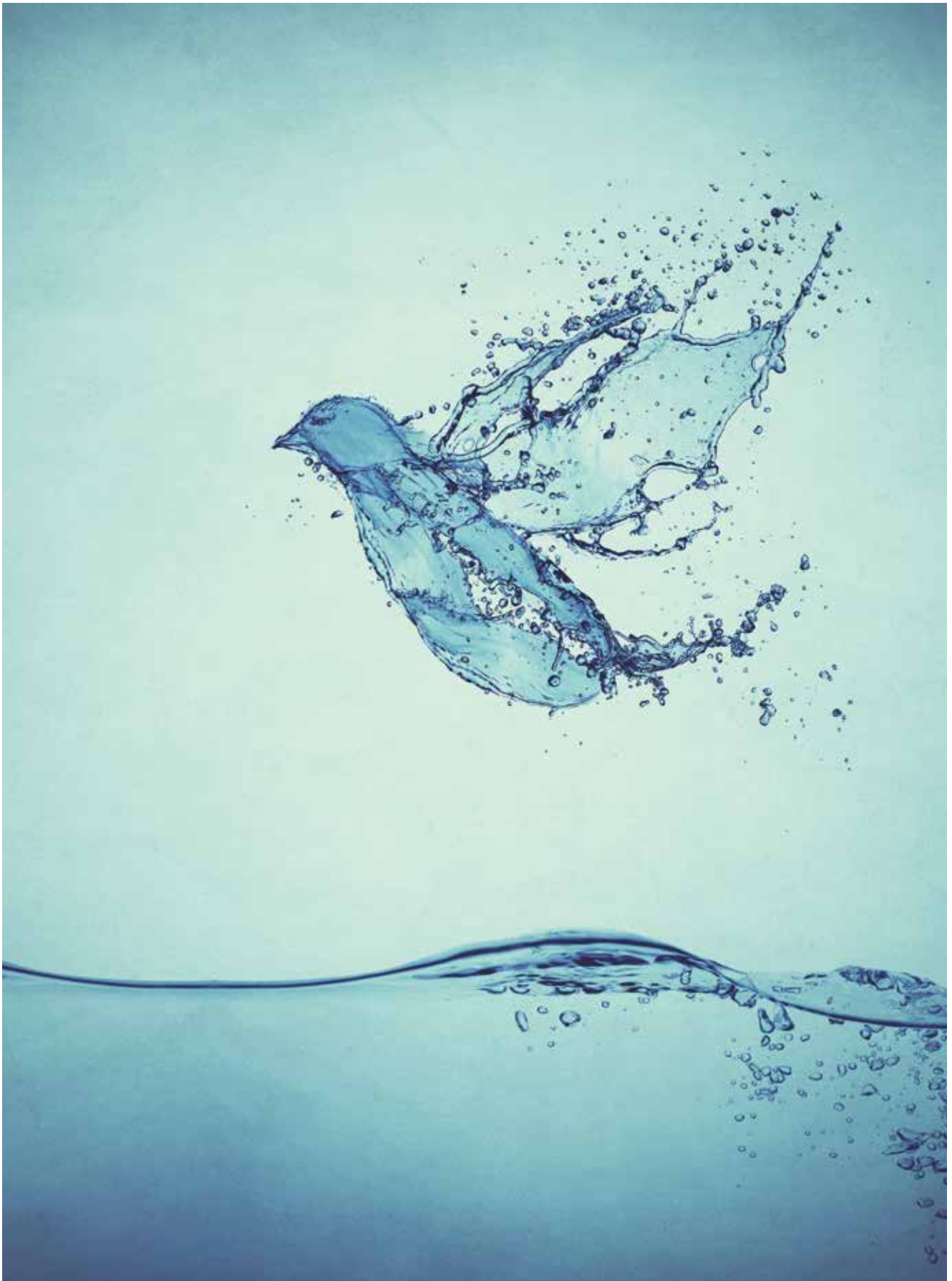
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Romans 6

A Concise Commentary From *The Grace New Testament Commentary* (Revised Edition)

By Zane Hodges

OUR UNION WITH CHRIST IN HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION (6:1-11)

6:1-2. Paul dismisses a false conclusion. Should we **continue in sin so that grace may become greater**? Far from it! Such a conclusion is unthinkable precisely because Christians **have died to sin**. Significantly, the concept of dying to sin is here introduced for the first time in Romans. It will be elaborated in the material that immediately follows.

It is evident from Paul's following discussion that our death to sin does not make it impossible for us to *commit* sin. Paul uses the metaphor for death, not to indicate that all sin has been eliminated from our lives, but (as we shall see) that we are no longer in bondage to it.

On the other hand, Paul will go on to teach that if we *do continue in sin*, it will not be an experience of *life* but rather of *death* (see 8:13 and the discussion there).

The words *How shall we who have died to sin still live in it*, convey the thought of something that is totally inappropriate for a Christian person. It is much as we might say, "How can loyal Americans cheat on their taxes?"

It is utterly unsuitable that believers in Jesus Christ should go on living their lives *in sin*.

6:3. Many interpreters see water baptism here. But we know that *baptism by the Holy Spirit* was a doctrine profoundly significant to Paul. It

is what forms the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13). Thus our spiritual union with Jesus Christ is affected by the Holy Spirit's baptism, and it is precisely to our union with Him that the following verses in Romans appeal.

Moreover, in no NT passage is water baptism unambiguously referred to as *baptism into Christ Jesus* (= *baptism into the Body of Christ Jesus*). Where water baptism is linked explicitly to Jesus Christ, it is always *in His name* (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 1 Cor 1:13, 15 [by inference]).

The baptism of the Holy Spirit means that believers **have been baptized into His death**. This union with Christ in **His death** is in fact the key to a new life experience.

6:4. Our spiritual union involves "immersion" into Christ's death. Immersion into His death effectively "purifies" the inner man from sin, rendering him dead to it (see vv 5-11; also Titus 3:4-7).

The Christian has been united with Christ in His death so that he may also share in His resurrected life (**walk in newness of life**).

As Paul will go on to point out, especially in 8:1-13, this glorious resurrection power is precisely what will enable the believer to surmount the impediment of his sinful body.

The issue before Paul's mind, both here and up to 8:13, is how those who *are* alive from the dead can live like it. In other words, how can such people *walk in newness of life*?

6:5-6. Paul is not discussing our future resurrection from the dead. On the contrary, he is discussing walking “in newness of life” (v 4).

Inasmuch as **we are united with Christ in the likeness of His death** by means of the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, it follows that we can also expect a similar union with Christ *in the likeness of His resurrection*.

We know, Paul affirms, **that our old man has been crucified with Him**. The reference to *our old man* can only be a reference to the inner self, which “lived” inside our physical bodies prior to our union with Jesus Christ. This “old self” has died.

This truth implies that a “new man” (that is, a “new inner self”) has replaced this *old man* (cf. 7:22, “my inward man”). The “old man/new man” terminology also occurs in Eph 4:20-24, where the idea is that Christians should not “wear” their old self, but their new self.

When we speak of regeneration and of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we are talking about spiritual events that radically alter the inward reality of our being. When we believe in Christ for eternal life, the inward man is reborn with that life. And when we are baptized at that same moment by the Holy Spirit, we are united with the spiritual Body of Christ and thus are also united with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection.

Paul’s point here is this. Our union with Christ in *His death* has as its purpose that this **body of sin might be nullified, so that we might no longer serve sin**. *The body of sin* (and by extension, the physical body itself) has lost its unbreakable dominion over us. Now this slavery **no longer** exists.

6:7. Paul here uses the verb for *justify* (*dikaioō*) to describe our relationship to sin (**justified from sin**). He has already used this verb ten times in the forensic sense of the divine act of ascribing righteousness to men (2:13; 3:20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5; 5:1, 9) and once of the vindication of

God (3:4). For Rom 6:7, BDAG offers the translation, “the one who died is *freed* from sin” (italics added).

Paul’s point is that sin has no claim on the person who has been united with Christ in His death. Death has freed us from the dominion of sin.

6:8-9. If, as Paul has affirmed, **we have died with Christ**, we conclude (**we believe**) as well **that we shall also live with Him**.

For Paul, we who will *live together with Him* in the future (cf. 1 Thess 5:10) can *live together with Him* in the present by the resurrecting power of the Holy Spirit (see 8:11).

Thus the truth Paul is beginning to expound about our victory over sin is part of the same basic truth, namely that death *with Him* leads to life *with Him* (cf. 1:17). *Living with Him* is the true portion and destiny of the justified person, both here and hereafter.

This conviction (*that we shall also live with Him*) is accompanied by the knowledge (**knowing**) that since

Christ was raised from the dead, He no longer dies. Therefore, the life we experience when *we...live with Him* is nothing less than *eternal life*. Precisely this is what we obtained when we received “the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness” so that we might “reign *in life*” (5:17), for in fact eternal life is God’s gift to us “in Christ Jesus our Lord” (6:23). It is this life that we *experience* through our union with Him.

Since, then, Christ will *no longer* die, it follows that **death no longer has authority over Him**. Thus the life we also share with Him is not under the *authority* of death either. As Paul has just said (v 7), we are “justified (freed) from sin”; that is, sin and death have no claim on us since we have died with Him.

The tyrant, death, has lost its temporary power over Jesus. *Death no longer has authority over Him*. The “rulership” conferred on death by the

“Paul is not discussing our future resurrection from the dead. On the contrary, he is discussing walking ‘in newness of life’ (v 4).”

sin of the first Adam, has been broken by the Second.

6:10-11. The death **that He died** was a **once for all** encounter with sin in which sin was fully atoned for. **He died to sin** permanently. Now that this sacrificial work has been accomplished and He has risen from the dead, **He lives to God**. From now on, in His resurrection life, the life **that He lives** is fully oriented *to God*.

The relationship of Christ, both *to sin* and *to God*, is precisely the way believers should relate *to sin* and *to God*. They should, in fact, **consider themselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord**. Here then is the bottom line of the identification truth that Paul introduced at 6:3. Believers have been spiritually united with Christ in His death and resurrection. The first step to walking “in newness of life” is to consider this to be so.

The word rendered *consider* is the same verb that in chap. 4 Paul has used repeatedly of God “imputing” righteousness to the believer (4:3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 22, 23, 24). Thus, the person *whom God considers* righteous by faith *should consider himself* to be now *alive to God*. Thus, at a fundamental level, “the one who is righteous by faith” already *lives* (cf. 1:17), and he should consider that to be his fundamental status.

ACTING ON OUR UNION WITH CHRIST (6:12-23)

6:12-14. In view of the spiritual reality expressed in the previous verse (v 11), believers should not only consider themselves to be “alive to God,” they should actively reorient their behavior in the light of that truth. Whereas formerly, in their unregenerate days, they had allowed **sin to reign in their mortal body** so that they obeyed **it with its lusts**, they are to do so no longer.

This previous obedience to sin’s lusts had been put into effect by their turning over their **body’s members as instruments for doing unrighteousness**. The *body’s members*—its eyes, arms, legs, etc.—had been used in the pursuit and enjoyment of sinful aims and activities. This kind of behavior should now cease.

The new lifestyle is to be marked by conscious commitment to God and to His will. Now they

are to **turn themselves over to God as people who are alive from the dead**. They are not to think of themselves any longer as subjects reigned over by sin and death. Instead they should see themselves *as people who* have been raised from the dead to walk in newness of life (see 6:4).

The attitude expressed when they turn themselves *over to God* should be followed by appropriate actions. They are to *turn over* the members of their body to Him **as instruments for righteousness**. That means that they are to employ their eyes, arms, legs, hands, and all their other *members* for the will of God. They are to use them *as instruments for righteousness*. When both the attitude and the actions cohere, Christian living is experienced.

In addition, both the new attitude and the new behavior are appropriate and possible precisely because sin has lost its capacity to **have authority over them**.

Paul insists, **you are not under the law but under grace**. With these words Paul introduces the dominant theme of the discussion to follow (6:15–8:13). Although grace was referred to in 6:1, it has not been directly mentioned since then, and *the law* has not been referred to in this chapter at all. The ineffectual nature of *the law* figures prominently in the discussion that follows.

Contrary to the opinion held even by many Christians in Paul’s day (see Acts 15:5), the Mosaic law was no more an effective instrument for Christian living than it was an instrument for justification (see 3:19-20). Those who lived under it could not truly escape the authority of sin in their lives. In contrast to this, freedom from sin’s authority can be experienced by Christian people precisely because they *are not under the law but under grace*.

6:15-16. The fact that **we are not under the law but under grace** does not give us a license to sin (far from it).

The question “**shall we sin?**” was functionally equivalent to asking whether we should be the slaves of sin. Thus, after dismissing the suggestion categorically, he asks rhetorically, **Don’t you know...you are slaves of the one you obey?** “Don’t you realize,” he says, “that sinning entails slavery to your sinful practices?”

The fact was that to whomever they might turn themselves **over as slaves in obedience**, they were *slaves of the one* they obeyed. They could therefore either become slaves to sin or to its opposite, righteousness (cf. v 18).

The one who *turns himself over* to sin is on the path that produces death (**whether of sin producing death**). But the one *who turns himself over* to obedience is on the path that produces righteousness (**obedience producing righteousness**). Stated this way, the only reasonable choice was the obedience that produced righteousness, since who would wish to produce death?

6:17-18. Paul is grateful to God for the Christian experience of the Roman believers. In their unconverted days they had been **slaves of sin**,

but after their conversion they had **obeyed from the heart** (i.e., sincerely) **the form of teaching in which** they had been instructed. That is to say, they had responded obediently to the Christian teaching they had received.

Paul is no doubt thinking of the general format in which Christian instruction was usually given to converts to Christianity.

The Roman Christians were not total strangers to Paul (see 16:1-20) and he even states that their “obedience” has become widely known (16:19). Since they had obeyed the Christian *teaching in which they were instructed*, their personal *experience* had been one of being **liberated from sin** and of being **enslaved to righteousness**. In other words, they had turned away from sin to do what was right in God’s sight. Their servitude was now to Him and not to sin.

6:19. Paul is not altogether comfortable with describing their Christian obedience as being “enslaved to righteousness” (v 18). He does so due to **the weakness of their flesh**.

A more abstract description would have failed due to their human limitations. Paul is working with an analogy, moving from the familiar

(slavery to sin) to the unfamiliar (slavery to righteousness).

Formerly they had **turned over** their **body’s members as slaves to uncleanness and to wickedness**. The result of this servitude to sinful practices was simply wickedness.

The Roman Christians are **now** to **turn over** their **body’s members as slaves to righteousness**. The result of this new form of active obedience will be the production of holiness. Thus the evil result of the former servitude can be replaced by the good result of a new servitude.

6:20-21. Paul expands his analogy between the old servitude and the new one. As **slaves of sin** they had been **free from righteousness**. Righteousness had been “powerless” in their lives. It had no control over what they did. It was not their “master.”

There could be no positive outcome from such a life. It was a life that **now** made them feel **ashamed**. The rhetorical question, **So what fruit did you have then...?** assumes that there was none at all. How could there be, since **the result of those things** could only be **death**?

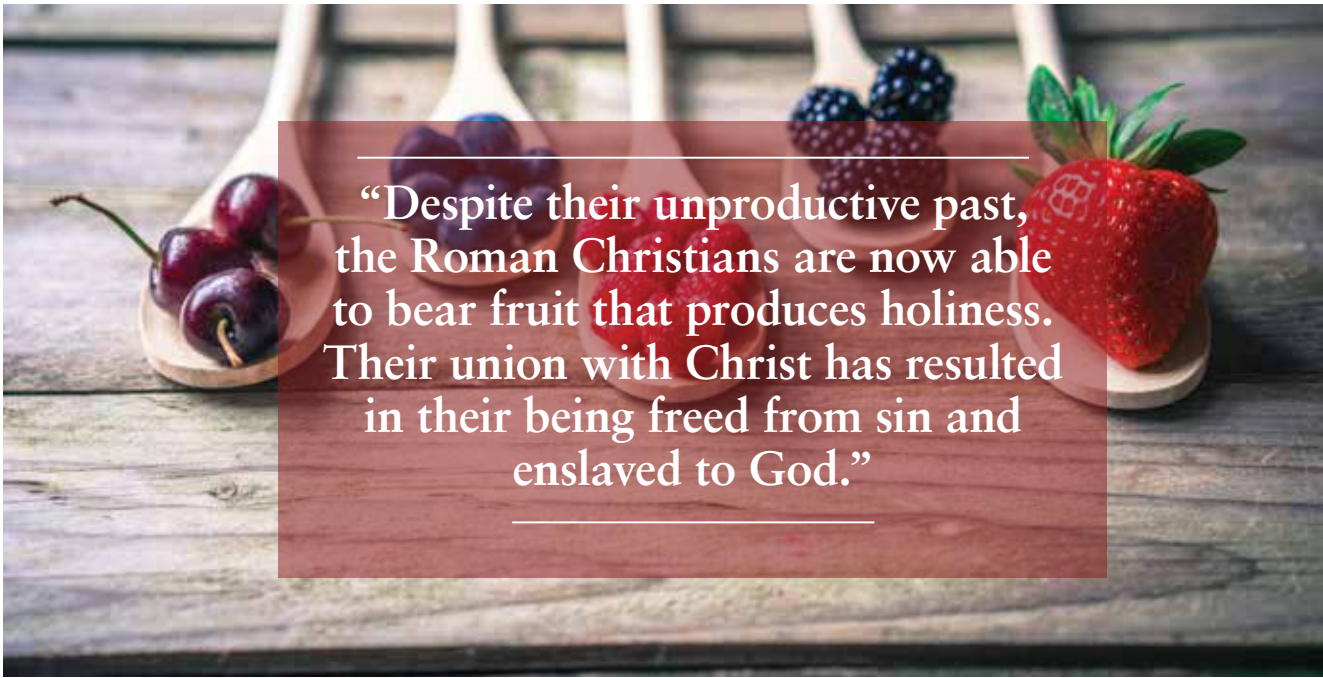
In speaking of death here, Paul no doubt had physical death in mind, but his concept of death is much broader (cf. 7:18-23; 8:6-13). For Paul, death is also an experience

that is qualitatively distinct from true life.

As Paul puts it in Eph 4:18, the unregenerate are “alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them.” But as he will show clearly in the following two chapters, such “alienation” from God’s life is experienced also by the Christian when he submits to the desires of his spiritually-dead physical body.

6:22-23. Despite their unproductive past, the Roman Christians are now able to bear fruit that produces holiness. Their union with Christ has resulted in their being **freed from sin and enslaved to God** (cf. 6:7).

“Contrary to the opinion held even by many Christians in Paul’s day (see Acts 15:5), the Mosaic law was no more an effective instrument for Christian living than it was an instrument for justification.”



“Despite their unproductive past, the Roman Christians are now able to bear fruit that produces holiness. Their union with Christ has resulted in their being freed from sin and enslaved to God.”

A new lifestyle is made possible in which the believer can “walk in newness of life” (6:4). This “newness of life” is **eternal life**. The believer’s “walk” in this new life is the outcome of possessing that life *in Christ*. Thus the end **result** of **producing holiness** is nothing less than an experience of *eternal life* itself.

Paul can now wrap up the fundamental truths on which the entire unit (6:1-23) is based. On the one hand, death in all its aspects is the “pay-off” (**wages**) of **sin**. Obviously, a statement like this is deliberately broad enough to embrace all the various aspects in which death is the “compensation” for sin. In other words, it states a principle and should not be narrowed to an exclusive reference to the “second death,” or the lake of fire (Rev 20:14). Paul will later say to these believers that “if you live in relation to the flesh, you will die” (Rom 8:13) and that concept is one specific aspect of the principle he states here.

With sin, therefore, one receives what one has earned (wages). But **eternal life** is an *unearned* experience because at its core *eternal life* is **the gift of God** that is given **in Christ Jesus our Lord**. By virtue of our being *in Christ* (see 6:3-4), we possess this gift. When we produce holiness, we are living out *the gift* that God gave us when we were justified by faith.

The word used here for *gift* (*charisma*) is picked up from 5:15-16 where its occurrences are the first ones in the body of Paul’s argument. As is clear from 5:12-21, for Paul righteousness and life are part of one and the same *gift* (cf. 5:17-18).

The closing words of v 23, *in Christ Jesus our Lord*, are identical in Greek to the words that close v 11. Thus, they form an *inclusio* with v 11 and mark the present sub-unit (vv 12-23) as complete. The repeated words also serve to emphasize the truth that the *eternal life* which is given to us as a gift (by virtue of which we are “alive” [v 11]) is our possession *in union with* the Savior in whom we died and in whom we have been raised to walk in God’s paths. ■



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



Three Tempting Tabernacles

By Allen Rea

In Matthew 17, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up to the top of a mountain. Jesus was transfigured before them, and Moses and Elijah appeared with Him. They were talking together. However, Luke lets us know that they were speaking about His departure (Luke 9:31).

Peter, never one to keep silent, says,

“Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” (17:4).

Jesus does not have to answer, because His Father does so for Him in v 5:

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” (emphasis added).

Peter and company shortly see what we should all see: Jesus only (17:8).

What Peter was asking was to set up three different places of worship and thus *share* Jesus’ glory with Moses and Elijah.

It is easy to condemn Peter for this until we take an honest look at ourselves. Have you built, or are you building, places of worship and admiration for anyone or anything but the Lord Jesus Christ?

Let me share with you three tabernacles that many are building that rob Jesus of His glory.

THREE DISTRACTIONS

First, I see many pastors build a tabernacle to a denomination (and I have done this in the past myself).

Many get so busy climbing the denominational ladder that they have little time for Jesus Christ. They hold offices in the denomination, and their sheep suffer under their absence. I’ve learned that many can lead a denomination, but God called a specific man to lead a specific church.

Also, I am sorry to report that denominational politics is no better than the politics in Washington. If denominations crumble, then the kingdom of God will stand. The NT’s emphasis is on the local church.

Second, I see many Christian families build a tabernacle to the television. I know this is a little old fashioned, but hear me out.

How is the television not an idol? The main room in the house is built around it. All chairs face the idol. American families spend countless hours watching it and doing its bidding. If it has to be on, and if you can not stand to miss a show...then, friend, you are addicted.

Do yourself a favor and cut it out completely or at least set a strict time limit on it daily. Every moment spent watching television is a moment not spent in the Word of God.

Redeeming the time, for the days are evil (Eph 5:16).

Third, I see many Christians build a tabernacle to sports.

In America, *ball* has become *Baal*.

Beloved, if the children can throw a ball straight, but cannot name the books of the Bible, have we not failed them as parents?

The sad reality is that most kids have little to no chance of going professional, but they all have a hundred percent chance of standing before the Lord Jesus Christ. We must not allow America’s pastime to be more important than God’s time.

TEAR THEM DOWN

Remember the strong and convicting words of our Heavenly Father—we must hear Jesus. There are many tempting tabernacles. Which are you building in your life? Let us endeavor to take the Word of God and tear down these tabernacles. We need to see Jesus only. ■



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



The faithful in Mineola and some tired kids after a long drive.



Victor Street Bible Chapel Dallas, TX July 19

We are still meeting on Zoom. During the Bible teaching hour, Bob spoke on six incidents in the early ministry of Jesus from Mark 3:1-35. All six incidents tell us about how people should or should not respond to the ministry of Jesus. In the last incident of chapter 3, the Lord powerfully announces that His spiritual brothers and sisters and mother are those who do the will of God, that is, those who believe in Him for everlasting life (Mark 3:34-35; compare John 5:24; 6:39-40). In the Lord's Supper he overviewed the Book of Habakkuk.

July 26 Lake Country Bible Church Mineola, TX

Shawn and the kids drove to Lake Country Bible Church to teach (2 hours each way). Shawn spoke on

"Cheap Law Preaching: What It Is and Why It's Wrong" during the Sunday school time, and "Worrying at the Red Sea: Lessons from Exodus 14" in the main service. As always, the church was very welcoming. Please pray for the leadership as they are seeking a grace pastor.



Zambia on Zoom.

Ken's Ministry in July

Ken has been working on a commentary on the Gospel of Mark and is currently working on chapter 3. Due to Covid-19, Ken and his

daughter Kathryn have been able to do several classes through Zoom. They are going through the Gospel of John with a group initially based in Spain, which continues to grow internationally each week. Another class through Zoom was started for the staff of a Bible school in Zambia. That class is going through the



Dinner with the Board.



The Board with the car magnet Bob designed.

Book of Hebrews, and has already shown fruit among the professors. They are hopeful that this will have a large impact not only for the faculty at this school, but the students they will inevitably teach for years to come. Earlier in the spring, Ken taught on the Book of Colossians for a school in South Korea. He found out this week that the school was pleased with the teaching, and has invited both Ken and Kathryn back to teach the Book of Revelation and Acts. Though many of the physical trips had to be postponed due to the virus, they are thankful to see the Lord is still working and creating opportunities for them to share the message of grace all around the world.

A Death in the Family

On July 14th, Elisabeth Yates, the daughter of Ken and Pam Yates, passed away unexpectedly. Elisabeth suffered from cerebral palsy, and though she had many physical difficulties, her faith in the Lord was strong. She often spoke of the coming kingdom and longed for the day she would meet her Savior face to face.



Elisabeth Yates.

The Yates family is comforted in knowing she is no longer in pain, and is walking with the Lord. They are thankful for the GES community and for all the prayers and support they have received.

Faith Alone in 100 Verses

Bob's new book has gone through the second round of proofing and will be going through a third round, while Shawn makes the indexes. We are hoping to have the book available sometime in September.

Summer GES Board Meeting July 31

On the first day of the meeting, the board received reports on our finances before we voted on the budget for fiscal 2021 (July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021). In spite of over 30 million jobs lost, giving for fiscal 2020 was up \$30K over last year (coming in \$6K above budget), which was a terrific surprise. Our total revenue was the best ever, slightly up over fiscal 2012 and fiscal 2019. We are very thankful.

We set a new budget of \$573,000* (*corrected), a slight increase. That is being optimistic since the effects of the shutdown of our economy are likely to linger for some time. However, our radio ministry continues to have great impact, and we hope to expand. (BTW, we now have three months of shows in reserve, which was our aim. That gives us flexibility in case we hit an important writing promise, the national conference, or other things which keep us from recording for a few weeks.) Also our new Spanish language blogs and book translations have great promise.

Fiscal Year End Financial Report

Budget	\$538,700
Revenue	\$545,522 (+ \$6,822)

The Mailbag

By You

We thank GES for the clear stand on the gospel and are blessed by the podcasts.” ~Cumming, GA.

“I’ve learned so much from Zane Hodges over the last 30 years from his commentary on Hebrews and 1 John in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*. I was introduced to GES about five years ago, and God has used your teaching through Bob, Shawn, Ken and others to help me handle the Word of God more accurately than ever before. The recent article by Kathryn Wright, “Is Desiring Eternal Rewards Selfish?” is so well done I will share it with our small group tonight as we study the coming kingdom from Isaiah.” ~Salisbury, NC.

“Thank you for presenting the gospel message in a good, clear, uncluttered manner, without works. Keep up the teaching.” ~Plymouth, NE.

“Please accept this donation to further the cause of spreading the Free Grace message. It seems that many ‘theologians’ have departed from the simplicity of faith alone in Christ alone and are luring many thousands of men and women into a false hope by means of their law-works theology. It is a sad fact that many of these teachers place ‘historical theology’ above the written Word of God. It is refreshing to hear and read the clear message of the gospel. Thanks so much for all the study materials GES supplies such as *Grace in Focus*, YouTube, the blog, and the *Journal*.” ~Lynchburg, VA.

“Thank you for your ministry in promoting greater clarity to the gospel. I’m learning that part of doing the work of an evangelist is training



and helping believers be more clear on the gospel. Thanks for what you do.” ~Letter.

“Thank you to all the people involved in making the podcasts. My children and I listen to them most mornings during breakfast, and they have provided a lot of good teaching, as well as good conversation points about the Bible and God.” ~Email.

“Thank you for all you do for defending the faith.” ~Garden Grove, CA.

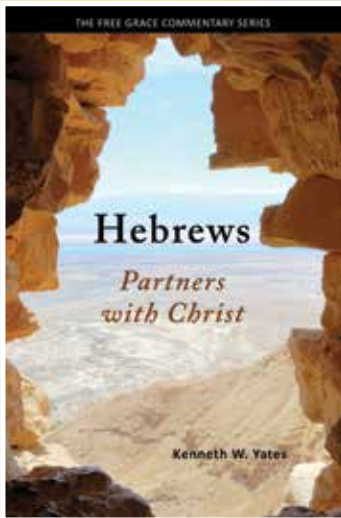
“I’m giving this gift in appreciation of Shawn’s blog post from June 18, 2020, “Is Christendom Sick or Dead?” Wish I could give more.” ~Email.

“I love y’all’s website. I go there with some of my questions.” ~DeKalb, MS. 📧

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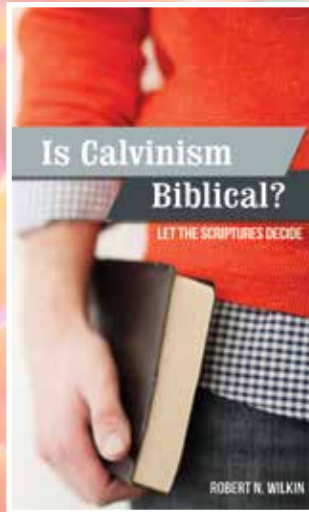
Kenneth W. Yates

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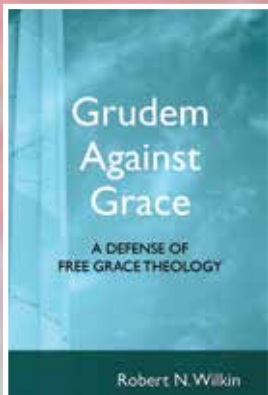
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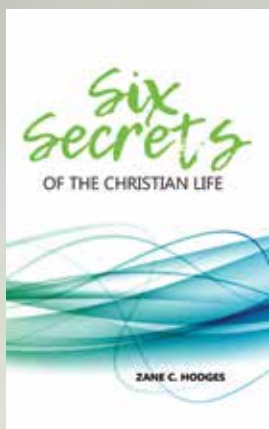
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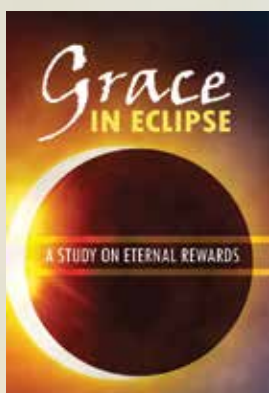


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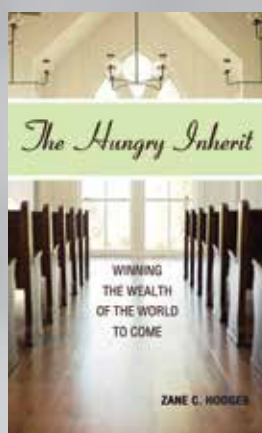


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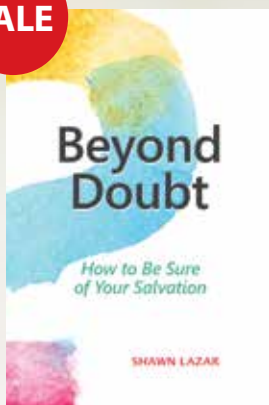
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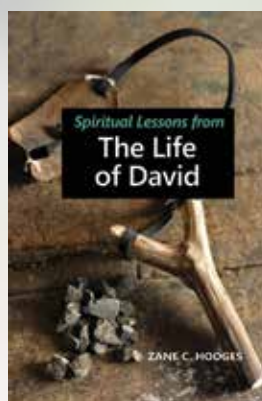


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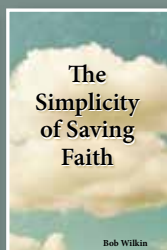
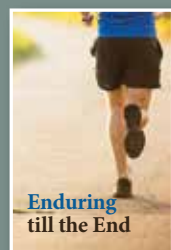


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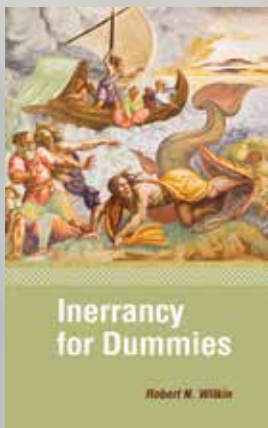
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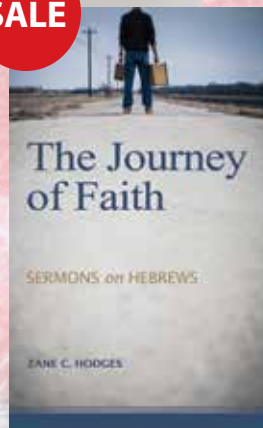
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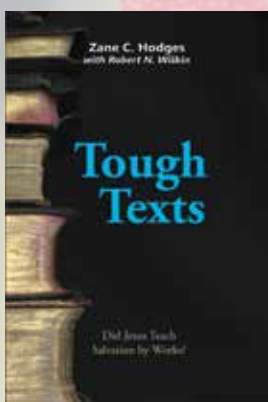


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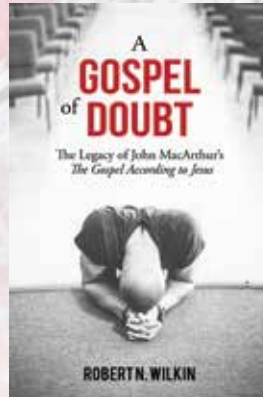


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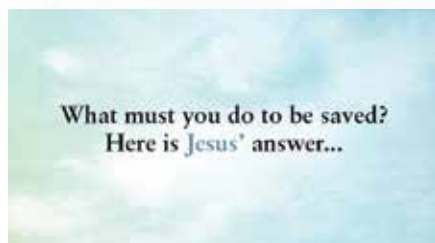
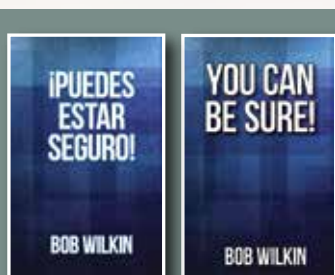


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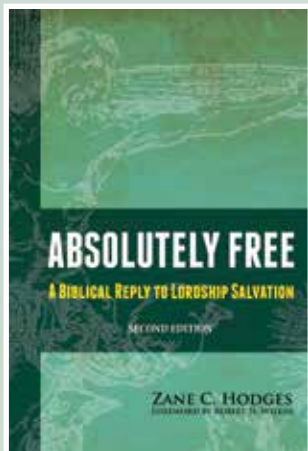
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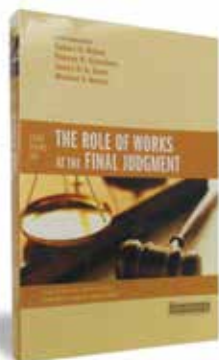
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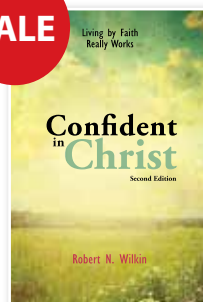
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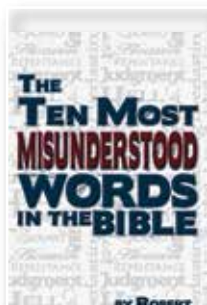
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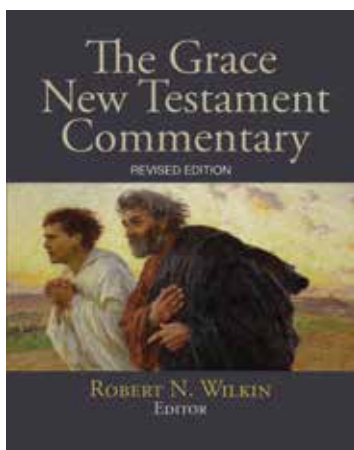
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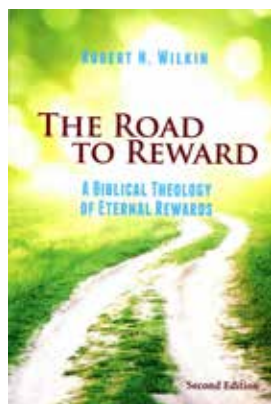
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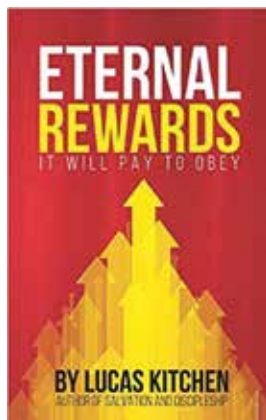
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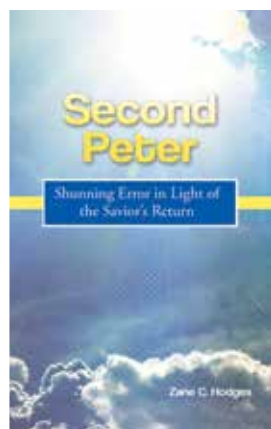
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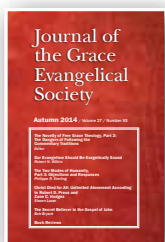
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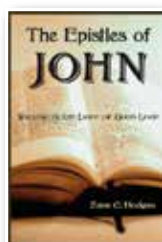
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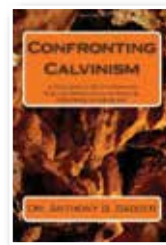


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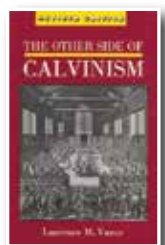


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Christians Denying the Lord (Mark 14:27-31)

By Ken Yates

One of the many strange things we hear Christians say is that a true Christian will never deny the Lord. Of course, when this is said the hearer almost always thinks of Peter. Peter clearly denied the Lord three times. What about him?

The answer that is often given is that Peter only *temporarily* denied the Lord. Plus, after he did it, he felt bad about it. He repented of his sin. So, we are told, we need to modify our position on this issue. A real Christian will feel bad if he denies the Lord, and he will soon repent and return to Him. We are never told how quickly a fallen Christian will repent, only that his denial will certainly not go on forever.

The NT, however, teaches that we can deny the Lord in ways other than Peter did by simply saying we don't know Him. For example, Paul says that if a person does not provide for his family, he has denied the faith. This is in the context of providing for elderly parents/widows (1 Tim 5:8). Perhaps we all have known Christians who have done this for a long period of time and have never repented of this sin.

Paul also says that we deny the Lord if we do not remain faithful to Him by enduring trials in His name (2 Tim 2:10-12). Surely many Christians have denied Him in this way even if they did not verbally deny the faith. They simply avoided trials and persecutions to make life easier for themselves.

Paul also says we can deny the Lord by living sinful lives (Titus 1:16). Once again, there have been Christians who have denied Him in this way for decades.

The fact is that "true" Christians can indeed deny the Lord. They can do it and never repent

of that denial. They are still saved from hell, but they do invite the discipline of God in their lives, and they will lose eternal rewards.

Since it is possible to deny the Lord, we can probably look at what Peter did and learn some lessons in order to avoid doing so. Jesus tells Peter he will fall away. He quotes the prophet Zechariah in this regard. He says that God will strike the Shepherd (Jesus) and the sheep will be scattered (Mark 14:27). In other words, God the Father, Jesus, and the prophets say that God's people can deny the Lord. To know that the Scriptures teach that "true" believers can fall is the first step in avoiding it.

But Peter says that others might fall, but he would never (Mark 14:29). Pride goes before the fall. Believers who think they will never fall are particularly prone to do so. Of course, Peter does deny the Lord. The Lord even points out that he will be worse than the ones he thought he would be better than. He would deny Him *three* times. They wouldn't do that.

But there is good news. The Lord says that later, after Peter's denials, the Lord will once again shepherd Peter and the others (Mark 14:28). How encouraging to know that when we deny the Lord by our words or deeds, we can always return to our gracious Lord to serve Him.

Peter teaches us some valuable lessons through his fall. The Scriptures tell us that as Christians we can deny the Lord. We should avoid the prideful attitude that leads us to think that others might do it, but we never would. And finally, when we deny the Lord, we can take comfort in knowing that we have a gracious Shepherd. Peter learned all these lessons. We can learn from his mistakes. ■



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 and has written a commentary on Hebrews: Partners with Christ.



Pinning Our Hopes on Eternity

LIGHTSTOCK

By Kelley Easley

A TIME OF TESTING

Like so many others the world over, our family has been experiencing a time of significant testing since my husband was furloughed from his job in mid-March. The ramifications of sudden job loss have been numerous, and I'd be lying if I said we weren't stressed. In an attempt to get our minds off the strain of our current situation, we planned a small getaway with my mom, compliments of her. We were so looking forward to a time of rest and relaxation and a chance to just get away from it all.

GETTING AWAY

I love vacations. Like anyone else, I love to see and experience new and exciting things and greatly benefit from a change of scenery—especially when out in nature. So last week we packed up and headed for a nearby lake resort. I was especially keen on hitting the pool and just chilling out (well, as much as one can with a three-year-old in tow!).

Once there, however, instead of soaking in the beauty, I found myself sharply aware of the artificial contrivance of my environment. It may sound ridiculous, but as we were nowhere near a tropical climate, the potted palms placed carefully around the deck of the pool seemed phony to me. I began to meditate upon the fact that this was the developers' attempt to create an ideal environment and how impossible this is to achieve

in a fallen world where nothing wrought by the hand of man can rival the beauty or perfection of God's original (or ultimate) design for His creation.

Now don't get me wrong; we did enjoy some very special moments together during our time away. We did some really fun things and beheld some breathtaking vistas. It was good to have a change of pace and to get away. But you can't ever really escape reality.

REALITY ATTACKS

My poor mother had been dealing with a tremendously difficult situation of her own over the months leading up to our trip, and leaving town did not prevent her from receiving constant phone calls about it. Her older brother—my uncle—has a rapidly deteriorating form of dementia which escalated dramatically while we were gone. Each phone call was more heartbreaking and shocking than the last. These traumatic phone calls occurred throughout our trip and further shattered the illusion of a perfect place to get away to.

In addition, a seemingly ceaseless stream of news articles detailing the tragic state of our nation bombarded our phones at all times of the day and night. The change of venue could not possibly shelter us from the real difficulty of our current predicaments.

So there was fun, but there was also disappointment. Just facing our reality—the shared reality that this life and this world will never fully satisfy our longings for peace, beauty, order or perfection. However, the Holy Spirit took the opportunity to build upon something He’d been teaching me (and I had been slowly learning) over the past year or so. Which is, not only is the world and its desires passing away, as 1 John 2:17 tells us, but also that the world to come—our eternal abode—is infinitely more to be desired!

AN ENTHUSIASM FOR ETERNITY

One of the things I most admire about my pastor is his unbridled enthusiasm for eternity. I am somewhat embarrassed to admit, however, that I have at times attributed this to his advancing age. As if only the elderly really look forward to heaven! The truth is that this zeal for his eternal home is fueled by a realistic assessment of this world and a Biblical understanding of the next. Over and over he will tell us, “Our future is grand!” At first I thought, “Well, he has to say that; he’s a pastor!” But over time, this slogan has begun to sink in and take root in my heart.

THE WHOLE CREATION GROANS

Speaking of this present world, Rom 8:22-23 explains:

For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

From this verse, we see that both believers and the creation itself are straining towards the day when all will be renewed and made perfect once again. We struggle against the limitations and disappointments of life on a planet “subjected to futility” and “bondage to decay” (Rom 8:20-21),

and yearn for the day when Christ will gloriously transform both us and it.

With reference to eternity, we hear “the best is yet to come” and are told that the most sublime experiences we’ve had on this earth will simply pale in comparison with the life to come. Of course, I know what the Bible has to say about the future that awaits those of us who have been promised eternal life as a result of simply believing in Jesus for it (John 3:16; John 11:25-26; John 5:24). With my head, I acknowledge that it will be far more magnificent and wonderful than anything we could possibly conceive of (1 Cor 2:9). And yet if I’m honest, in my heart, I don’t know if I can say that I have been eagerly awaiting the day when my “faith shall be sight.” In truth, until the past couple of years, I think that several misperceptions about heaven had held my imagination captive.

“I imagined heaven might be boring or repetitive or just a neverending choir practice.”

MISPERCEPTIONS

I imagined heaven might be boring or repetitive or just a neverending choir practice. You know, the stereotypical image of strumming on a harp while sitting on a cloud. But over the past year or so, those misperceptions have been replaced by a greater understanding of what my eternal home will really be like, and I’m beginning to get excited!

Recently, I’ve been reading Bob Wilkin’s excellent book, *The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible*, and his chapter on heaven has definitely recaptured my imagination:

To suggest that we will be floating on some cloud singing praise hymns forever is a near-complete misreading of where God has called us to live and what He has called for us to do. The greatest paintings have not yet been painted. They will be painted on the new earth. Architecture, transportation, technology, the arts, sports, science, recreation, literature, worship—all of that pales in comparison to what will be on the new earth and in the new universe... The entire new universe will be a canvas on

which we can glorify our Lord...The way we think about heaven is wrong and we need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18). Our eternity is more glorious than we can imagine (*Ten Most Misunderstood*, p. 83).

So far from the monotony I had imagined, the future for believers will be the most exciting, dynamic existence imaginable! Not only so, but we will finally be free from the presence of sin, and real harmony will replace the broken, strife-filled relationships that we contend with on this earth. What a comforting thing to consider as our country becomes more divided by the moment!

MY REAL HOPE

On the last day of our trip, my husband received word from his company that his furlough would be extended by an additional three months. Although we knew that the chances of him being called back to work any time soon were slim, we were honestly stunned. For the first time since this all began back in March, I felt genuinely afraid. I know my husband felt it, too. Our sense of security was shaken, and I realized that our hope had been misplaced. Again, the Holy Spirit nudged me to consider how this blow

(though harsh) might be viewed from a different, eternal perspective.

As things continue to deteriorate and trials increase, my expectation of finding fulfillment and stability in this life is lessening. That's a good thing. In actuality, the disappointment I'm feeling is a gift. It reminds me that my real hope and expectation should be firmly fixed on my eternal home, where peace and perfection shall reign and where all things shall be made new (Rev 21:5). Until then, I pray that the Lord would continue to grow in me a greater sense of anticipation for that day!

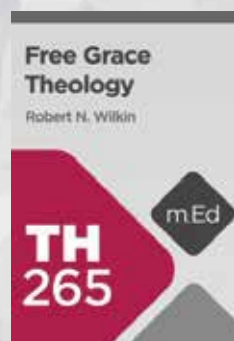
For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil 3:20). GII



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

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A Review of Andy Stanley's *Irresistible*

By Bob Wilkin

Andy Stanley was a few years behind me at Dallas Theological Seminary. I recall grading some of his papers. I've long had a high regard for him.

As I read his recent book called *Irresistible*, I became concerned about the direction his ministry appears to be taking. He seems to be downplaying the Bible because he thinks that doing so improves our ability to reach unbelievers and even new Christians.

EIGHT MAJOR POINTS

I found eight major points Stanley is making in *Irresistible*.

First, he suggests that we should never say to unbelievers, "The Bible says..." That is a very *resistible message*. Most people today do not respect the Bible or believe that it is authoritative. He thinks if we avoid talking about what the Bible says, our listeners will be more open to what we have to say.

Second, Stanley urges us to announce the names of speakers or authors, but not book, chapter, and verse. For example, if we wanted to quote Jesus' words in John 3:16, we might say, "Jesus said that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." But we would not mention "John 3:16," and we would not mention "the Bible." In a heading he puts it this way,

"JESUS FIRST, BIBLE SECOND" (caps his, p. 298).

Third, when teaching the Bible to *Christians*, he charges that we must take care to avoid presenting OT principles as though they were still in force today. He strongly rejects what he calls "mixing and matching (pp. 93-95, 104).

Fourth, Stanley believes that the OT is not as authoritative as the NT. I know. It sounds like I must have misread him. But that is what he says. He writes, "'The Bible says' establishes the Bible, as in *everything in the Bible as equally authoritative*. It's not. If it is, we have a schizophrenic faith because, as we've noted, the Bible contains two covenants with two different groups for whom God has two different agendas" (p. 307, emphasis added).

Fifth, Stanley thinks it is more accurate to say that the authors of the Bible were inspired, rather than saying that the Bible itself is inspired. He writes, "So while we are accustomed to saying *The Bible is inspired*, it is more accurate and helpful to say, *The authors of Scripture were inspired*" (p. 302). For support he quotes Peter and Paul, though without mentioning where they said these things, though at the end of his book, Stanley does list specific chapter and verse.

Sixth, the reason why so many Americans do not go to church is "because we're too caught up in *what's in it for us* rather than *what love requires of us*" (p. 322, emphasis required).

Seventh, "most ancient Jews didn't believe in an afterlife. Why? Their Scriptures did not assume one" (p. 165).

Eighth, the Christian faith is based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ: "There once existed a version of our faith that rested securely on a single unprecedented event—the resurrection. That's the version I'm inviting you to embrace. The original version. The enduring, defensible, new covenant, new command version" (p. 321; see also pp. 23, 293-299).

I disagree with the first seven of those points.

NO AUTHORS OR VERSES?

Regarding points one and two mentioned above, Stanley gave no Biblical proof that we should mention names of authors or speakers



rather than name the book, chapter, or verse. He might have noted that the Lord Jesus Himself never quoted book, chapter, and verse. Jesus instead would say, “Moses commanded” (Matt 8:4; Mark 1:44) or “Well did Isaiah prophecy...” (Mark 7:6) or “Isaiah said...” (John 12:39, 41). But the reason He did not mention book, chapter, and verse is probably because those things did not exist then. While it is fine to quote the Lord or the authors of Scripture, we must be clear that these things

come from the Bible. The Bible is the proof that the citations we mention are accurate.

AVOID OLD TESTAMENT PRINCIPLES?

Regarding the third point—Stanley’s reticence to teach OT principles—I recognize that people might teach Law of Moses commands as though they were still in force today. That would be a mistake. But *the principles found in the OT and in the Law of Moses* are still in force (cf. 2 Tim 3:16-17).

LESS AUTHORITATIVE?

The fourth point, that the OT is less authoritative than the NT, is confusing to me. The word *authoritative* means “recognized or accepted as being true or reliable” (collinsdictionary.com). Is the OT *less true* and *less reliable*? If all Scripture is inspired (2 Tim 3:16), then it is all equally authoritative. Maybe Stanley means that much of the OT is not *directly applicable*, but is instead applicable by first discerning the eternal principle involved and then applying that

principle to us today. But if so, why doesn't he talk about *how relevant or how directly applicable the OT is*? Calling the OT less authoritative bothers me. The ice is thin when we separate out two-thirds of the Bible as being less true than the other third.

WHOSE AUTHORITY?

The idea that it is the authors of Scripture who were inspired, rather than what they wrote, the fifth point mentioned above, is bizarre. How can I know that Eph 2:8-9 is true unless the words themselves are inspired (i.e., God-breathed)? Oddly, one of the two proofs Stanley gives is Paul's words, "All Scripture is God-breathed..." (2 Tim 3:16). That verse refers to *the Scriptures being inspired, not the authors*.

SELF-INTEREST?

The sixth point, in which Stanley denounces church attendance and obedience to God based on "what's in it for [me]," is contrary to Scripture, which encourages rather than denounces self-interest. Jesus commanded us to set our hearts on heavenly treasure (Matt 6:19-21). Paul told us to seek to win the prize, the imperishable crown (1 Cor 9:24-27). Paul clearly was seeking those prizes (1 Cor 9:27; 2 Tim 4:6-8). It is

a major emphasis of Scripture that self-interest should be one of our motivations in serving God (along with gratitude and love for God).

Shouldn't unbelievers go to church to learn how they can have everlasting life? And once they come to faith, shouldn't they continue to come so that they learn how to live the abundant life that Jesus offers and

many other texts (Job 19:26; Dan 12:2-3; John 8:56). There could have been no one saved before the time of Christ unless people believed in the coming Messiah for everlasting life (Gen 15:6; John 8:56; Rom 4:1-8).

RESURRECTION

I agree with the eighth point that the Christian life depends on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Of course, it also rests on Jesus' sinless life, the miraculous signs that He did, His death on the cross for our sins, and the authority of the Bible as God's Word.

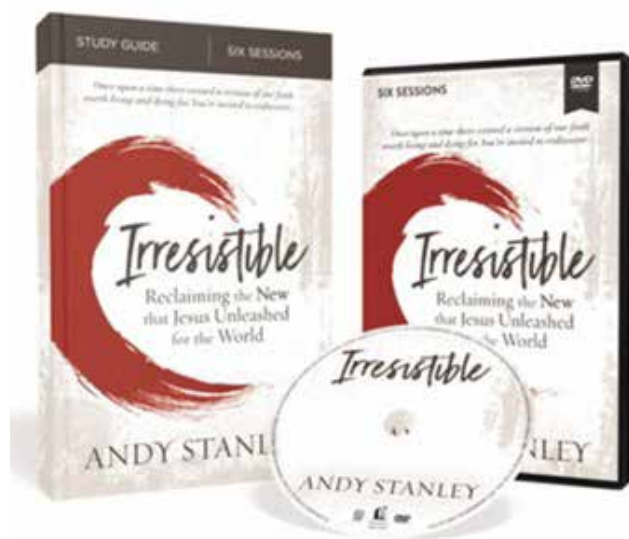
WHAT IS STANLEY SEEKING?

Now a few questions about what Stanley is seeking from the readers.

Is he saying that pastors should stop preaching the OT in their churches? He writes,

"I'm convinced our current versions of the Christian faith need to be stripped of a variety of old covenant leftovers... We are dragging along a litany of old covenant concepts and assumptions that slow us down, divide us up, and confuse those standing on the outside peering in" (p. 92).

Is he suggesting that the entire OT is no longer in force? Or is he saying that the commands of the OT not repeated in the NT are no longer in force?



how to lay up eternal rewards? What is wrong with a desire to learn "what's in it for us"? Stanley says that we ought to be calling people to love others ("What does love require of me?" pp. 245, 247-60). True. But loving others is good for us as well as for those whom we love.

NO AFTERLIFE?

The idea that the OT believers did not believe in an afterlife, the seventh point, is blown out of the water by Hebrews 11 and

Is he saying that there will be no temple in the Tribulation and in the Millennium (pp. 49, 65)?

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Five final items before I close.

Item one: I had an uneasy feeling as I read this book. Not once *in the text of the book* does Stanley tell the reader the book, chapter, and verses he is quoting. He leaves that to endnotes at the back of the book. Is he implying that *even when writing to believers*, we should not give them Bible references?

Item two: I don't see how anyone can understand the NT without having an excellent grasp of the OT. Yet Stanley's book makes the OT look outdated and irrelevant. While I would not start a new believer in Genesis or Leviticus, I'd certainly want a mature believer to read and study every book of the Bible.


Item three: I was taught in seminary to avoid attributing dialogue to God. The reason is that the Bible tells us not to take the Lord's name in vain. Stanley has a very odd fictional conversation between God the Father and Jesus (pp. 115-16). Cosner comments, "He is also too cavalier when talking about God. Case in point, his 'conversation between the Father and the Son' starting on p. 115 should horrify any Christian, where Stanley apparently imagines God the Father as a cross between a Harvard MBA and a used-car salesman, and Jesus as the ambitious but clueless

go-getter. It's appalling to hear any pastor be so irreverent."³

Item four: Instead of encouraging Christians to defend the Bible against attacks to its credibility, Stanley encourages Christians to simply throw the OT under the bus as irrelevant to our faith: "When skeptics point out the violence, the misogyny, the scientific and historically unverifiable claims of the Hebrew Bible, instead of trying to defend those things, we can shrug, give 'em our best confused look, and say, 'I'm not sure why you're bringing this up. My Christian faith isn't based on any of that'" (p. 290).

Item five: Andy Stanley is not clear about Free Grace issues. When he discusses Peter evangelizing Cornelius and his household and then the Jerusalem Council, for example, he doesn't say that all who believe in Jesus for everlasting life (or for justification) have it (pp. 117-30). I did not find a single place in the book where he laid out the faith-alone message clearly, even though this book has as one of its purposes to teach us how to evangelize people. He has the Apostle Peter speak about "my decision to follow Jesus," which appears to be Stanley's statement of Peter's understanding not of discipleship, but of justification (p. 287). At the end of the book he seems to equate "what it means to follow Jesus" with "your faith" (p. 315). (See also p. 299, "embracing Jesus as Savior.")

CONCLUSION

I do not recommend this book. I do, however, strongly recommend the book that Andy Stanley helped his father, Charles Stanley, write. That is the 1990 book *Eternal Security*. In the acknowledgement, Charles Stanley wrote, "I am grateful to my son, Andy, whose diligent research and keen insight made this book possible." 



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1. Andy Stanley, *Irresistible: Reclaiming the New that Jesus Unleashed for the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018).

2. This article is a revision of a Sept 25, 2019 blog entitled "Irresistible by Andy Stanley."

3. Lita Cosner, "Andy Stanley Takes the Easy Way Out." See <https://creation.com/stanley-irresistible-review>.

Believing the Message of Lordship Salvation Does Not Result in Eternal Life

By Mike Lii

Back in the early 1990s, the subject of Lordship Salvation had arisen in the college fellowship that I was attending. This typically manifested itself with statements from my contemporaries along the lines of, “Well if you are not doing [insert a good work here] or if you are doing [insert a bad deed here], then I doubt you are really saved.”

A few years prior, I had come to believe Jesus’ promise of eternal life (John 3:16; Eph 2:8-9) and through the efforts of my church’s high school fellowship was assured of my eternal destiny because of this belief. So, statements such as the above bothered me as they seemed to introduce works into the saving message that I had been taught previously.

John MacArthur had become very popular among the leaders of this church’s college fellowship. However, these leaders’ statements on the subject had been confined to expressing doubts about salvation of others based on their works. I did not understand what was meant by the expression *Lordship Salvation*. Still, I realized that I needed to investigate this, because if I misunderstood the terms of eternal salvation, then I was wrong on the most important issue



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of all—how one receives eternal life. I proceeded to order John MacArthur’s *The Gospel According to Jesus* and Zane Hodges’s *Absolutely Free!* I was not familiar with Zane Hodges and had never read any of his books or writings before. The reason I ordered Hodges’s *Absolutely Free!* was because it was available on clearance for \$4.95. This would turn out to be the best \$4.95 I had ever spent. Before and while reading these books, I would pray to God that He would help me to see the truth about salvation.

I read John MacArthur’s book first and came away thinking that many of the interpretations seemed forced, were contrary to the plain meaning of the text of the passages, were contradictory (e.g., a gift that costs you everything), or, if correct, would mean that salvation is by works and not by faith, which contradicted other clear passages of Scripture.

I read Zane Hodges’s book after MacArthur’s and came away impressed with interpretations that fit the text of the passage instead of twisting the text to fit one’s biases or preconceived theology (Luke 14:27-28; Luke 18:11-30; John 11:25-26; John 20:30-31; Rom 10:8-13; 1 Cor 9:24-27; 1 Tim 1:18-20).

My conclusion after reading these books was that salvation is received by believing in Jesus Christ and that surrendering to Jesus as Lord of



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one's life or repentance, defined as being willing to give up one's sins, are not necessary in order to be saved.

However, I was left with a question that troubled me. If you do what Lordship Salvation teaches you to do, will you be saved? My preliminary conclusion was that Lordship Salvation is not the saving message because it is not teaching that all who believe in Jesus alone for salvation are born again.

Lordship Salvation teaches that someone must surrender to Jesus as Lord of his life and must be willing to give up his sins in order to be saved. That is not the message that Jesus and His apostles taught.

This conclusion troubled me greatly, as it would mean that Lordship was not just a minor error, but one which, if believed, would not result in salvation.

Now this was back in 1992, before e-mail, social media, and the worldwide web, so it was hard to contact someone without a personal connection. My conclusion continued to bother me, as the implications of Lordship Salvation being taught were very serious. I noticed in *Absolutely Free!* that there was a post office box address. So, I decided to write Zane Hodges at that address with the question of whether if one does what Lordship Salvation teaches, will that person be saved? In my letter, I explained my preliminary conclusion of "No." Now, I was uncertain whether Hodges would respond, as I fully expected that someone who was an author published by a major Christian book publisher, a former seminary professor, and a pastor of a church, would not have the time for a personalized response to a college student asking questions.

However, a few weeks after I wrote, I received a letter with the following response:

Thank you for your letter of 5/18/92 and the encouraging words about *Absolutely Free!*

I believe you have reached exactly the right conclusion about the salvation of those who profess Lordship Salvation. If such a person, at any time, has put his faith for eternal life in Christ alone, then he is surely saved (according to God's promises) regardless of what he now believes.

If, however, such a person has never trusted Christ alone, he then has trusted Christ plus his own commitment or works or fruit. This, of course, is not the Biblical gospel and thus cannot save anyone.

As a matter of fact, there is reason to believe that some of the prominent Lordship teachers had, at one time, believed the Biblical gospel in its simplicity. If so, they are saved, but their responsibility before the Judgment Seat of Christ will be enormous.

Thanks for writing. Your letter is certainly a model of clear thinking. God guide and bless you as you make known His grace!

The question that I pondered almost 30 years ago remains a question that is still debated today. The answer to that question continues to be answered in John 11:25-27:

Jesus said to her [Martha], "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live. And everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

"Yes, Lord," she told Him, "I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world" (Logos 21 Version).

Those who believe in the message of Lordship Salvation cannot answer like Martha did: "Yes, Lord." That's because Lordship Salvationists don't believe "this." Instead of believing Jesus' words in John 11:25-26, they believe something else entirely: "He who surrenders his life to Jesus as Master and is willing to give up his sins, even if he dies, will live. And everyone who lives and surrenders his life to Jesus as Master and is willing to give up his sins, will never die."

One cannot believe what Lordship Salvation teaches as true and yet at the same time believe that Jesus gives eternal life to those who believe in Him for it. Eternal life is received by believing Jesus' promise in John 11:25-26, and not by believing the message of Lordship Salvation or any message that requires commitment and works for salvation. ■

Mike Lii serves at Victor Street Bible Chapel in Dallas, TX and helps to administer the Zane Hodges Library, which includes many free audio and video messages by Hodges (www.ZaneHodges.org).

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IS CHRISTENDOM SICK OR DEAD?

BY SHAWN LAZAR

LIGHTSTOCK

In response to a blog about the need for missionaries to Christendom, a reader wrote: Shawn, I must admit I was quite taken aback by your words. You are just a year younger than I am, and from your books, blog posts and radio podcasts I've listened to that you share with Bob, I know you are as passionate about theology and Church history as I am. So when you call your family in the faith sick, I am saddened deeply.

I'm glad for the comment and the chance to clarify something. I want to be absolutely clear that I do not consider works salvation denominations a part of my "family in the faith." Moreover, I think it is dangerous to think they are—as dangerous as thinking that Mormons and JW's are fellow family members.

Why?

Only believers are God's family (John 1:12), and those denominations do not believe. Yes, they believe *something* about Jesus. But they do not believe in Him *for eternal salvation*. In most cases, they explicitly label the saving message as heresy!

I don't say that to be mean, but I do say it to shock and, most of all, to emphasize that eternal life or death is at stake for many if not most within Christendom. In my blog, I called Christendom "sick," but I should have said it was "dead." I want to reach the lost *within Christendom* with the free gift of eternal life (John 3:16-36) because that is the life they lack.

Think of it this way—did all the Jews in Israel automatically believe in Jesus for eternal life? No. Likewise, neither do all the "Christians" in "Christendom."

The reader also wrote:

You don't have to be a doctrinal minimalist, but neither must you be a doctrinal separatist.

On the contrary, we absolutely *must* be "doctrinal separatists" towards Christendom—that is, towards those denominations that teach false gospels or that deny the gospel.

I think we—the Free Grace movement—must recover a Biblical doctrine of separation.

On the one hand, I think that Fundamentalists have gone too far in applying the doctrine of separation—i.e., what they tell their people to

separate from (e.g., musical styles and pants for women) is not what the NT tells us to separate from.

On the other hand, Evangelicals have committed the opposite error of not exercising Biblical separation at all. Instead, they've become incredibly permissive about a range of issues dealing with both orthodoxy (right Christian belief) and orthopraxy (right Christian living). I still call myself an Evangelical, but I'm nearing the point of having to drop the label because it no longer reflects what I believe.

In my studies of the Biblical doctrine of separation (which are ongoing), the grounds for "coming out from among them" (2 Cor 6:17) are actually quite narrow, and most often concern *behavioral* issues, not *doctrinal* ones. However, if there is one doctrine over which we must separate, it is over the saving message. False gospels are accursed (Gal 1:8), which means those denominations that preach false gospels are under God's curse.

If you belong to a denomination that denies eternal salvation through faith in Christ, then you must leave it because it is not "the church."

Of course, individual members of those denominations—whether Catholic, Orthodox, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, etc.—may be born again, because at one time he or she believed in Jesus for eternal salvation. But as a whole—as a denomination—we must be reaching Catholics, Orthodox, Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, and Free Will Baptists (among others) with the message of eternal life, *because they do not yet believe it*.

We are missionaries to Christendom; but we aren't looking to convince people about doctrinal peccadillos—we're missionaries bringing the message of everlasting life to people who desperately need it. ■



Shawn Lazar is Director of Publications for Grace Evangelical Society. He has been married to Abby for fifteen years.

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