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Tips for Future Seminary Students

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A NEW SONG / ROMANS 10 / "CONTINUOUS" BELIEVING? / OVERLOOKED WOMEN / **AND MORE!**

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FROM THE EDITOR

Summer is nearly here. For those of us in Texas, May is our last reasonably mild month until October. June, July, August, and September are hot, hot, hot. Often our overnight lows are in the mid-eighties.

In spite of Covid-19 and national economic woes, our ministry has been very hot.

There are over 1.8 billion websites. Shawn found a tool that measures websites (Alexa Traffic Rank). The lower the number, the more people use that website.

A few months ago, we were around 850,000. We implemented some ideas that Shawn found and we have steadily climbed in usage. As of April 13, we are just above 441,000.

Every month, over 100,000 people access our magazine, journal, blogs, Facebook, podcasts, church tracker, and so forth. Every month we are sharing the message of life with people who are desperate to know more about God's grace.

We also think we are seeing an uptick in people viewing our YouTube videos. To aid that we plan to start releasing one 5-to-10-minute video each week, starting the week of our conference, April 26-28.


Many of you support GES by your prayers, gifts, and purchases of GES books. We appreciate you and your partnership in this ministry (Phil 4:17-19).

The Lord Jesus is soon to return. Our desire is that we will love His appearing (2 Tim 4:6-8; 1



Website Rankings

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

John 2:28) and that we will hear those blessed words, "Well done, good servant" (Luke 19:17). While all believers have everlasting life that cannot be lost, only those believers who are abiding in Christ at His return will have His approval and praise. 

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



Tips for Future Seminary Students

BY BOB WILKIN

“Historically conservative seminaries and Bible colleges have been changing over the years. In this article, I will point out some seminary teachings I believe are detrimental.”

Fourteen years ago, I taught a discipleship group for seminarians. I sought to help them avoid some of the pitfalls of seminary education. In this article, I will share some of the tips I have for those I was mentoring. These tips apply to both seminary students and Bible college students.

Historically conservative seminaries and Bible colleges have been changing over the years. In this article, I will point out some seminary teachings I believe are detrimental.

LORDSHIP SALVATION

Many schools that were formerly Free Grace or at least Free Grace friendly now say that to be born again, one must turn from his sins and submit his life to the Lord Jesus Christ, making a decision to follow and serve Him. That teaching is inconsistent with John 3:16 and over 100 verses in the Bible (see my book, *Faith Alone in One Hundred Verses*).

FINAL SALVATION

When I was in seminary, I was taught that our salvation was final the very moment we believed in Christ for everlasting life. Once saved, always saved. Today it is increasingly common, especially among Calvinist professors, to speak of *initial salvation*, which is by faith alone, and *final salvation*, which is by works. In this view, you won't get final salvation unless you persevere in "the race set before us." That teaching is part

works salvation and part Lordship Salvation. It is very dangerous since it denies the promise to the believer of everlasting life that can never be lost.

WEAK INERRANCY

The doctrine of inerrancy has been gradually changing over the past thirty years. Today many leading conservative schools teach that some of the details of Jesus' teaching were never intended to be taken as the actual words of Jesus. Instead, the Gospel writers gave us the *gist* of His teachings, or the *core* of His teachings. The main points are accurately presented, but many of the fine details are not meant to be taken as things Jesus actually said. In this view, the Gospel writers altered what Jesus said to express their theology. The gist is right, even if some details are not. This view has gained a lot of support among students. It makes it easy to handle discrepancies between the Gospels. They can be swept away since they are not part of the core teaching. Of course, the danger is the Bible is no longer fully accurate. Now we need people with special theological training to tell us what was said and what was changed by the Gospel writers.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Back in the day, we did not have groups and classes on what is now called *spiritual formation*. We were taught back then that God's Word would renew our minds and thereby we would be transformed (Rom 12:1-2). Today, however,

theology students are often required to participate in spiritual formation, which is the application of contemplative spirituality. Many spiritual practices not taught or commanded in the Bible are being passed down to the next generation of Christian leaders. In my opinion, this is very dangerous. It is bringing in the practices of ancient Catholic mystics and of Eastern religions.

POETIC HISTORY

Is the creation account history? How about Noah's flood? According to many leading conservative Bible scholars, the answer is, it is not history in the modern sense, but it is history in a specialized sense called *poetic history*. Some even call it *myth*. What this means is that details in the creation account are not necessarily meant to be taken literally. Instead, what is taught in Genesis 1-2 is the general truth *that God created*. But those chapters are not trying to tell us whether creation occurred over six days or six million years, whether Adam was created from dust, whether Eve was created from Adam's rib, whether there was a talking serpent, or whether there was forbidden fruit. *Some* conservative scholars would still affirm those details were meant to be taken literally, as happening in history just as described. But others would say they were not meant to be literal, but contain figurative elements. What most *current* conservative seminary scholars agree upon, however, is that we should not conclude that every detail in the creation account is literal history—the same with the Flood. While Genesis 6-9 presents a worldwide flood, many conservative scholars believe that it was a local flood. This change in understanding inerrancy in conservative schools today is of great concern to me.

CHANGES IN DISPENSATIONALISM

Even at historically Dispensational schools, Dispensationalism is often not being taught. Instead, they teach a modified form of Dispensationalism called *progressive dispensationalism*. In this view, there is a sense in which Jesus is currently ruling as the Davidic King on earth. The idea of *already, not yet* is prominent. The kingdom is already here, yet the kingdom is not yet here. Of

course, those two ideas are contradictory. Both can't be true, at least not in the same sense. This shift in the teaching of Dispensationalism at many conservative schools is something incoming students must consider. In many cases they will need to study classic Dispensationalism on their own since they won't be studying it in class.

NEW FORMS OF PREACHING

It used to be that conservative schools for the most part taught verse-by-verse Bible preaching. Today the shift is toward finding a core truth in a passage and preaching that core truth with little attention to the words of the passage. In the place of walking through the passage, the preacher finds clever ways to communicate the core idea. This includes illustrations, jokes, skits, songs, and short video clips. A great sermon today is one that captures the attention of the audience, keeps them interested, and conveys the core truth. Unfortunately, even people in Bible churches today can be uninformed about the actual meaning of key Bible verses. This all starts in seminaries and Bible colleges where homiletics is being taught.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Forty years ago, at my alma mater, women were not allowed in the Master of Theology program. I do not think that it is inherently wrong for women to earn Th.M. or even Ph.D. degrees in theology. I have no issue with women teaching

“I’ve met people who think that going for higher Christian education is just too risky. I understand the concern. However, I think it is worth the risk in most cases. Some of the schools out there are still truly conservative.”

in Bible colleges and seminaries since those are not churches. I see no prohibition of women working in parachurch groups, writing books, or teaching men and women in Bible studies or conferences. The NT merely prohibits women teaching in the meeting of the local church (or serving as elders in the local church). However, more and more conservative theological schools are graduating women who are becoming senior pastors and elders. Male leadership in local churches is beginning to wane. Part of the reason is what is being taught in conservative theological schools.

LET THE BUYER BEWARE

Though we often don't think of education as something we purchase, it is indeed one of the greatest purchases a young person can make. The average college graduate in 2018 in the U.S. has a student debt of \$38,000. The average debt for those obtaining a degree from graduate school (like seminary) is an additional \$57,600. That means that someone getting a college degree and then a master's degree from a seminary likely has a total debt of \$100,000. That is more than a young person will spend on any other purchase in his lifetime, other than buying a home. Yet often students enter theological studies as though they were not purchasing something. Bible college and seminary students should take great care to learn precisely what it is their prospective school is teaching. Better yet, they should have five or ten *prospective schools* and compare them all.

One mistake I see is that students assume that because a school was great fifty years ago, it must still be great today.

Schools change.

I remember one of my historical theology professors say that all theological schools eventually fall away from the fundamentals of the faith. His hope was that DTS would avoid such departure for a long time. That is a good desire and prayer request for each school. I pray that for my alma mater. Prospective students ought to put in a lot of study as to what their leading schools are teaching, especially on the types of issues I mention in this article.

It is hard for someone to go to a liberal school to receive his or her doctorate and yet not become

less conservative in the process. Many conservative schools want professors who have degrees from the leading schools in the world. But those leading schools are not conservative. Everything I've said in this article applies to doctoral work as well. Seminary graduates going on for doctoral work should take great care in selecting the school they will attend. I naively thought that I could go to any school for doctoral work and I would have remained conservative. I wanted to go to one of the leading schools in Europe for my Ph.D. Fortunately my wife, Sharon, told me that we lived in Dallas and right here at home was a great school with a great doctoral program. I ended up going to a conservative school for my Ph.D. I thank God, and my wife, that I did.

I've met people who think that going for higher Christian education is just too risky. I understand the concern. However, I think it is worth the risk in most cases. Some of the schools out there are still truly conservative. And even in schools that are not conservative, it is possible for a student to reject teaching that is inaccurate, especially if the student is involved in distance education, an increasingly popular option today. ■



Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He lives in Highland Village, TX, with his wife of 44 years, Sharon.

“Glory” in Romans 8

By Ken Yates

The noun *glory* occurs sixteen times in the Book of Romans. The verb *glorify* is used an additional five times in Romans. Many of these twenty-one uses refer to *the glory of God* (1:23; 3:7, 23; 4:20; 6:4, etc.) and to glorifying God (1:21; 15:6, 9). I would like to narrow down the topic a little and look at how the words are used in Romans 8. The verb and noun each are used twice. In Romans 8 it does not refer to the glory of God but to the glory that believers can and will obtain.

Many would probably think that when the NT discusses the glory that awaits believers, it simply refers to going to heaven. But I think when we look at Romans 8, that is only part of the picture.

GLORIFIED WITH

The first time the verb occurs in Romans 8 is v 17. The verb occurs with the preposition *with* attached to it. Paul says that the believer who suffers with Christ will be *glorified with* Christ. Here, we see that this is talking about rewards and not simply being in the kingdom. This refers to reigning with Christ. The faithful believer will share in the glory of Christ's reign over the world to come.

GLORIOUS REWARDS

In the very next verse (v 18), Paul uses the noun. The sufferings the believer experiences by following Christ are not worthy to be compared with *the glory* that is to be revealed in him. It seems to me that this would not just refer to receiving a new body. It emphasizes the glorious rewards that await faithful Christians, just like in the previous verse. Whatever a believer suffers for Christ pales in comparison to the reward he will receive.

RELEASED FROM BONDAGE

The next occurrence of the word *glory* seems to break this pattern (v 21). Paul speaks of the glory the children of God will experience in the kingdom when they are released from bondage to the power of sin. This certainly involves the reception of a body that cannot sin. But even here there is more implied. When believers walk by the Spirit and suffer with Christ, they experience the fruit of the Spirit. They long for the day when they no longer have to fight the desires of the flesh (v 23). When the Lord returns, all believers will be set free from this struggle. The *glory* on that day will


“Paul speaks of the glory the children of God will experience in the kingdom when they are released from bondage to the power of sin.”

be the experience of every citizen of the kingdom. But faithful believers already have a glimpse of that glory now when the Spirit produces righteousness in their lives.

GLORIFIED

The last time the word is used in Romans 8 is once again a verb. In Rom 8:30, it speaks of those who will be glorified. While many understand this to refer to the fact that all believers will be glorified at the time of the Rapture, which is true, it seems there might be a better way to see it in light of how the word *glory* is used in this section of Romans.

God has called all believers to reign with Christ. Those who suffer with Him will be declared righteous at the Judgment Seat of Christ, not just because of their faith (which is true of all believers), but also because of how they lived. They will then be glorified at the Judgment Seat by reigning with the King (v 17).

It is true that all who have believed in Jesus Christ for eternal life will be in the kingdom. They will receive a glorified body that will never sin or be subject to death (1 Cor 15:43). But when Paul uses *glory* in Romans 8, he expands on the theme. Believers who suffer with Christ get a glimpse of the glory they will have in the kingdom when they receive that body. The Spirit produces righteousness in them which looks forward to the day when they will no longer sin. Such believers will also share in the glory of reigning with Christ. 



Ken Yates speaks for GES Missions all around the world. He is also the pastor of Little River Baptist Church in Jenkinsville, SC. His latest book is Hebrews: Partners with Christ.



Romans 10

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

By Zane Hodges

ISRAEL'S NEED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS (10:1-4)

10:1. Though it is true that Israel is under God's wrath, Paul strongly affirms that his desires for Israel are positive. **The desire of his heart**, as well as his **prayer to God**, is that their spiritual situation might be radically altered by the experience of deliverance.

The question might well be raised whether the Pauline ministry to the Gentiles did not, in fact, show a basic hostility toward God's ancient people. He will now say specifically, his gospel was precisely what Israel needed.

10:2-3. Israel does **have a real zeal for God**. Paul can **bear witness** to that fact. But this zeal is not properly guided by **knowledge**. Instead it is founded on ignorance about **God's righteousness**. By *God's righteousness* Paul means the righteousness that comes "through faith in Jesus Christ, which is *for all* and is *upon all* who believe" (3:22, emphasis added).

Israel, therefore, is both ignorant of God's righteousness and is also **seeking to establish their own righteousness**. The result is that they have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

In short, Israel refuses *God's righteousness* in an ignorant preference for *their own righteousness*.

10:4. Christ Himself, whom they have rejected, provides what Israel wrongly thinks is attainable by the law. In Christ alone is found the

realization of the otherwise impossible goal of the law, namely, perfect **righteousness** (Gal 3:21).

Righteousness was indeed the true *goal of the law*. Though no divine law could accomplish that, Christ could do it **for everyone who believes**. This includes Gentiles but here it particularly means any individual Jew who believes.

ISRAEL'S NEED FOR PAUL'S GOSPEL (10:5-15)

10:5. According to **Moses**, the **righteousness which is by the law** could only be obtained after a person had done the things *the law* required. Israel has failed in this regard (2:17-29; 3:9-20).

Paul here quotes from Lev 18:5. It is noteworthy that Paul's citation does not use the term *righteousness* and instead refers to *life (shall live)*. For Paul, the failure of *the law* was not simply a failure to make righteousness possible, but specifically an inability to impart life. Life was available under *the law* only to the person who *has done these things*.

As Paul will proceed to show in this section (10:5-13), Israel needed the experience of *life* in order to be free from divine wrath.

10:6-7. Paul now draws a sharp contrast between "the righteousness which is by the law," as spoken through Moses (v 5), and **the righteousness which is by faith** that speaks (as it were) in the gospel. To do this he adapts wording drawn from Deut 9:4; 30:12-14; and Ps 107:26.

The righteousness which is by faith says clearly to anyone who hears it, “Do not say in your heart” the question Paul then asks. It is important for Paul to draw attention right away to what goes on in the heart since the attitude of the heart is the key to Israel’s deliverance from wrath.

The heart attitude, therefore, must not reflect the mind-set that Messiah (the Christ) had yet to come and needed to be brought **down** from **heaven** by someone.

Such an attitude is foreign to the perspective of *the righteousness which is by faith*. The Christ has *already* come down from heaven in the person of Jesus the Messiah.

But in addition, neither should one say in his heart that the Christ was still in Sheol (i.e., Hades). Paul’s reference here to “the Abyss” is naturally construed as a reference to the abode of the departed.

The two questions here represent the two extremes of Jewish unbelief about Jesus.

10:8. Unlike the statements of unbelief, **the word of faith** Paul preached presented something quite near at hand and readily available.

Paul utilizes terminology found in Deut 30:14. The reference is to the fact that Israel already had the law. They could recite it (in your mouth) and remember it (in your heart).

Just as the law had been near the Israelites of Moses’ day, so now Paul could say that, *the word of faith which we preach* presently “*is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.*” The words for *you/your* are all singular. The response that the *individual* Israelite should make is now to be stated explicitly.

10:9. The response of the mouth should be a confession directly addressing Jesus with the designation “**Lord.**” This confession is made in prayer (vv 12-13). This is an appeal to His Lordship for the needed deliverance from divine wrath.

The direct appeal to *Lord Jesus* necessitates that the one who makes the appeal should believe that **Jesus** is *alive* to hear it. Thus, the attitude of the heart is crucial. When one calls on *Jesus* with his **mouth** in order to be delivered, he therefore must have faith in his **heart that God has raised Him from the dead**. When these two conditions obtain, the individual Jew who calls on Him **will be delivered** from God’s temporal wrath.

10:10. What happens in the heart, though vital, is not enough for **deliverance**. **The heart** is where

it all begins. One gets righteousness (**He is believed for righteousness**) by the believing response of *the heart*. Jesus is the object of that faith.

But in the same way, He is also the object of our confession: **but with the mouth He is confessed for deliverance**. The Jerusalem Bible captures the actual sense almost perfectly: “By believing from the heart you are made righteous; by confessing with your lips you are saved.”

While the Jew is granted

righteousness on the basis of faith in his heart, God will *not* grant him deliverance on the basis of that faith alone. He must also confess with his mouth.

10:11. The believer should not hesitate to confess the Lord Jesus Christ. If the Jewish person had put faith in this “Stone of collision (9:33),” he should also fulfill the admonition of the prophet that he should “**not be ashamed.**”

Obviously as a follow-up from v 10, Paul construes the necessity to “*not be ashamed*” as the functional equivalent of a command to confess Jesus Christ. Contrary to much contemporary theology, neither Paul nor the rest of the NT requires confession as a condition for receiving everlasting life (cf. John 12:42-43; Acts 16:31; Eph 2:8-9; 1 Tim 1:16).

What Paul exactly has in mind here is made clear in the following verses.

“While the Jew is granted righteousness on the basis of faith in his heart, God will *not* grant him deliverance on the basis of that faith alone. He must also confess with his mouth.”

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10:12-13. Although the text of these verses (especially v 13) has been used innumerable times as though it referred to a cry for salvation from hell, in context the verses are no such thing. God's anger rests heavily upon unbelieving Israel and their first step must be to believe in their Messiah for righteousness (v 10a). But though necessary, this alone will not bring deliverance from God's temporal anger. In fact, deliverance comes by confessing "Lord Jesus!" with the mouth (v 10b).

This truth is affirmed in Joel 2:32. The Lord Jesus is able to respond lavishly to **all who appeal to Him**. Since, in fact, Jesus is **Lord of all**, His ability to respond applies to all, **either Jew or Greek**. This terminology becomes a Pauline way to identify all Christians (*either Jew or Greek*) who assembled together and invoked "the name of the Lord" (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Tim 2:22). It does not describe a one-time event of crying out "Lord Jesus!" Those who openly and regularly appeal to the Lordship of Jesus (i.e., in corporate worship) receive what Paul is actually discussing—deliverance from divine wrath.

And the Lord **deals richly with** them. Not only are they *justified* with a perfect righteousness through what they believe in their heart, but they are also *delivered* from God's wrath by appealing, with their mouth, to the power of the exalted Lord.

The quotation from Joel 2:32 shows that the prophet is concerned with temporal wrath and with the end times, not salvation from hell. Christians of every age are living in the last days.

The Jewish believer (and Gentile as well) should not stop with faith in the heart, vital as that was. He should join the fellowship of others who made it a habit to appeal to the name of the Lord with the mouth.

10:14. If Israel needs to appeal to the Lord Jesus in order to be delivered, then how could they

possibly do so without first believing in Him? **How then shall they appeal to Him in whom they have not believed?** But it follows also that if they must first believe in Him before they can *appeal to Him*, how can they do this without first hearing about Him? **How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?** The human preacher is, therefore, a necessity for **how shall they hear without a preacher?**

"Believing in" and "appealing to" are obviously *not* synonymous terms. Believing in Him *must precede* appealing to Him.

10:15. But one must be sent by God to preach. Paul refers to Isa 52:7, which also refers to the last days. Israel's ultimate deliverance is in view. Those who proclaim this deliverance are extolled as persons with "beautiful... feet," since their feet carry them to Israel with this good news.

Paul is choosing OT proof texts that deal directly with the issue of Israel's deliverance from divine wrath. These texts refer in fact to the end of the age when the nations

have assembled against Jerusalem and when that city is dramatically delivered from their attack by the direct intervention of the Lord Jesus Christ. The good news with which Israel will be evangelized in that day is the "good news about peace" and about the "good things" that come with God's deliverance.

ISRAEL'S NEED FOR FAITH (10:16-21)

Paul will now highlight the sad state of Jewish unbelief.

10:16-17. Paul quotes from Isa 53:1 where the prophet laments the general rejection by Israel of the report about Messiah's sufferings, death, and resurrection (Isa 53:2-12). The question, "Lord, who has believed our report?" suggests the meagerness of the believing response by Messiah's own people. Israel as a whole has not **obeyed the gospel** (John 1:11).

"The Jewish believer (and Gentile as well) should not stop with faith in the heart, vital as that was. He should join the fellowship of others who made it a habit to appeal to the name of the Lord with the mouth."



For Paul, it follows (**So then**) from Isaiah's words that a report was needed to produce faith. That is to say, **faith** comes **from the report**. But this report is nothing less than the gospel Paul himself preached. Paul knew the absolute necessity for Israel to hear it if they were to believe and be delivered from God's wrath.

The last part of v 17, **and the report by means of the word of God**, makes clear the process Paul has in mind. Just as faith is derived from believing the preached report, just so the preached report is in turn derived from the very mouth of God. Paul's gospel is not merely what *he* says; fundamentally it is what *God* says.

10:18. Israel's problem does not lie in the fact that the gospel has not been preached to them. This proclamation was indeed universal, including Jews in the Diaspora, in accordance with the words of Ps 19:4. While Ps 19:4 does not refer to the preaching of the gospel, but to the testimony of nature, Paul applies it to the worldwide preaching of the gospel. Just as the testimony of nature is for all, so is his gospel.

The expression "into all the earth" signifies the outward thrust of the gospel that has brought it *to the ends of the* [Roman] *world*. Even so, in this context, the rhetorical question Paul asks (**it's not that they haven't heard, is it?**) must mainly have signified that most Jewish communities that were situated in the Roman Empire had received the message about Jesus Christ.

10:19. Not only is it true that Israel has *heard* (v 18), it is also true they have **known**. The gospel

has indeed been preached to the Jews (they *have* heard). But their inclination is to resist and reject it because so many Gentiles have believed (cf. Acts 13:45-51). But this angry rejection has already been revealed in Scripture and has thus been made known to them.

Moses in Deut 32:21 specifically predicted that God would arouse the **jealousy** and anger of Israel through His dealings with Gentile people ("those who are not a nation" and "a foolish nation"). God's provocation of Israel has the goal of bringing them to divine deliverance (11:11-14).

10:20-21. Isaiah 65:1-2 show how the Gentiles ("those who did not seek Me") have obtained righteousness ("I have been found") and Israel has missed it ("a people who disobey and contradict Me!", cf. Rom 9:30-33). It finalizes Paul's explanation of Israel's present unbelieving situation. That situation is in fact a realization of Israel's own God-given Scriptures. The question that must now be addressed is whether this rebellious condition is permanent for national Israel. That important issue is the subject of 11:1-36. **III**



Zane Hodges was a pastor, author, and professor of Greek at Dallas Theological Seminary. He was promoted to glory in 2008.

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Obtaining God's Approval

By Bill Fiess

There is a word in the NT that all believers need to be aware of. In Greek, it is the word *dokimos*. A NT Greek dictionary will tell us that the word means either “approved” or “tested.” These two ideas go together. Something can be put to the test to see if it is approved.

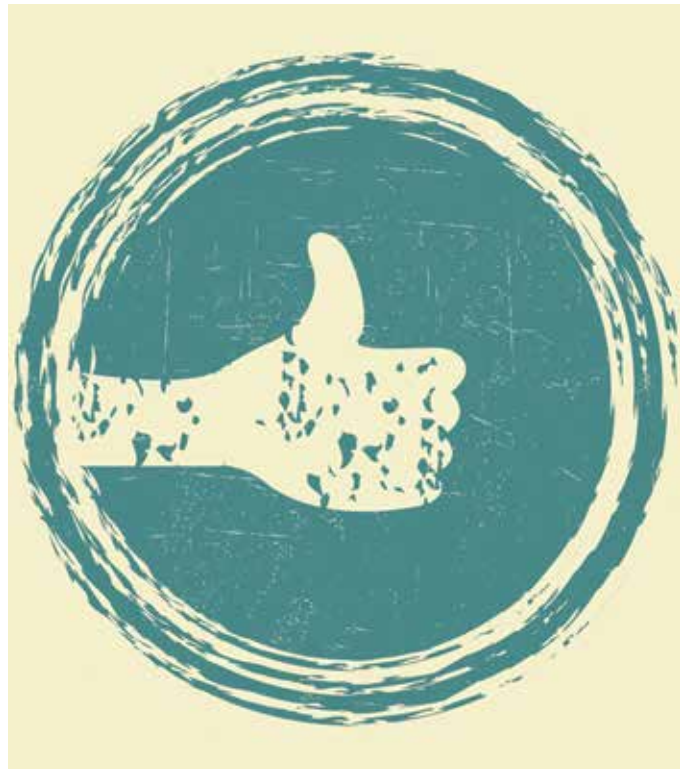
One day, everyone who has believed in Jesus Christ for eternal life will undergo such a test. It will happen at the Judgment Seat of Christ. No believer can lose eternal life, so the Judgment Seat is not a place where that is the issue. Instead, the Lord will examine our lives to see if we will receive His approval. If we gain His approval, we will receive eternal rewards. If we don't, we will lose those rewards.

In light of this, it would benefit us to look at how the word *dokimos* is used in the NT in those contexts which speak of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

SOMETIMES THE ADJECTIVE IS USED

In 2 Tim 2:15, Paul uses the adjective *dokimos*. Paul is about to be martyred for the faith and writes to his young lieutenant Timothy, “Be diligent to present yourself *approved* to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (emphasis added).

Paul wants Timothy to accurately teach God's Word. Why? So that he may be approved (*dokimos*) to God. In this verse, Paul doesn't say when Timothy could possibly gain this approval.

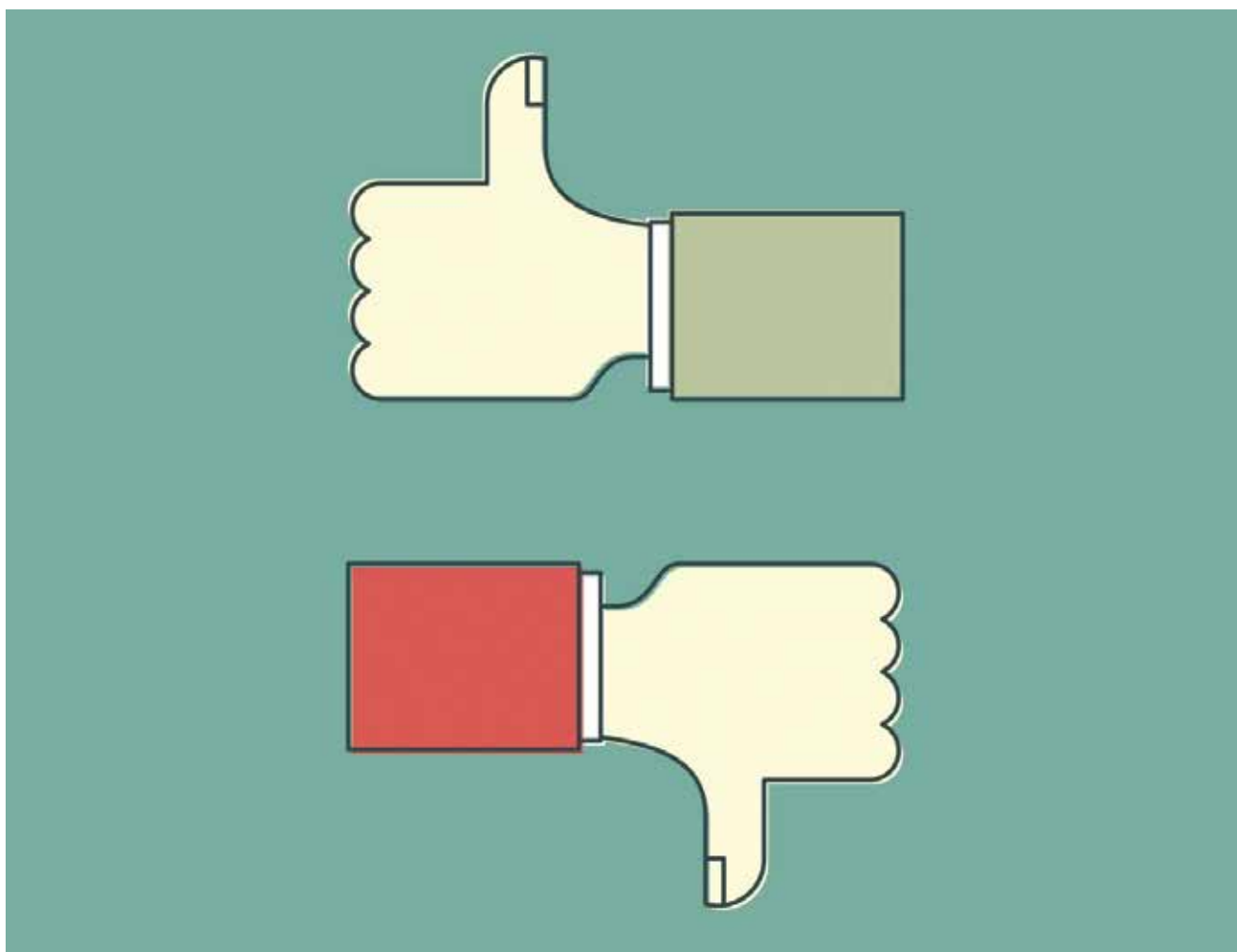


However, just a few verses earlier he tells Timothy that if believers are faithful to the Lord, not only will they be in the kingdom with Christ, they will reign with Him. There is a difference between being a citizen in the kingdom and reigning in the kingdom. What a great reward! Imagine actually reigning with the King of the coming world in His kingdom!

Later, Paul will say that since he has been faithful to the Lord, he will be rewarded. The Lord will give him a “crown of righteousness” (see 2 Tim 4:8). Since crowns will be given out at the Judgment Seat of Christ, Paul is referring to that day. The Judgment Seat is also the place where it will be determined which believers will reign with Christ.

Paul wants Timothy to be approved (*dokimos*) on that day. It should be the goal of every believer to gain that approval.

James also uses the word when he writes to his readers: “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been *approved* [*dokimos*], he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (Jas 1:12). Here is an example of the word *dokimos* used in both the main senses of the word. James says that



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God puts believers through hard times in order to test them. If they endure these tests in a God honoring way, they will be approved. Once again, at the Judgment Seat, such approval will result in a special crown.

SOMETIMES THE VERB IS USED

Sometimes the verb form “approve” is used. In Greek, it is the similar word *dokimazō*. In 1 Corinthians, Paul writes about teachers within the church and tells them that they need to be careful about how and what they teach. Why? Because “each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will *test* [*dokimazō*] each one’s work, of what sort it is” (1 Cor 3:13, emphasis added).

Here, we see that the verb is used with the meaning of “to test.” Paul tells the teachers at Corinth that one day, the Lord will put to the test their work as teachers. If their work passes

the test, they will receive a reward (v 14). In other words, their good works will be approved by God.

In this wonderful passage, Paul says that at the Judgment Seat of Christ, the works of believers will go through the fire of Christ’s testing. Perhaps we could say that the fire of the Lord’s gaze will look over what we have done. Since He knows everything, this gaze will burn up anything that was not done with the right motive or anything evil that we have done. Our good works will pass the test, remain, and be approved by God.

That sure puts the work we do for the Lord in a new light!

SOMETIMES THE NEGATIVE IS USED

When the ancient Greeks wanted to make a word negative, they often put the letter “a” in front of it. We do this in English when we use

words that come from the Greek. For example, the word “theist” means somebody who believes in a god. If we put an “a” in front of it, we get the negative. An “atheist” is somebody who does *not* believe in a god.

In 1 Cor 9:27, Paul does this with the word *dokimos*. He puts an “a” in front of it. He talks about his ministry and then states, “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become *disapproved*” (emphasis added). The word *disapproved* is *adokimos*. Paul was afraid that at the Judgment Seat of Christ when the Lord looked at his ministry, he might be found disapproved. Clearly, Paul did not worry about going to hell. That is not the point.

When Paul engaged in his apostolic ministry, he chose not to get married. He chose not to take any money from the Corinthians. Sometimes, he did not eat specific foods because it might offend the people he preached to. In other words, there were things Paul could do and which would make him more comfortable that he did without. Why did he do such things?

Paul exercised discipline by denying himself certain things because by doing so he could more effectively serve the church at Corinth. He did not marry so he would have more time to conduct ministry. He did not charge them for his spiritual service so as not to give others the opportunity to accuse him of greed. He did not offend people with his food because they would be more open to hear what he had to say.

He could have thought of himself and not disciplined himself in that way. But if he did, he would be disapproved at the Judgment Seat of Christ. He would have lost eternal rewards in the coming kingdom of God. He willingly gave up things in this life in order not to be disapproved.

CONCLUSION


A Christian is somebody who has believed in Jesus for eternal life and has therefore received this life that he can never lose. That life is the result of God’s grace, is a free gift, and is not based upon our works in any way.

But that does not mean that our works are not important. If you are a believer, one day you will

stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. On that day, your life will be “tested” to see if it is “approved.” The Greek word *dokimos* has these two meanings.

Sometimes the adjective occurs. Sometimes it is the verb. And sometimes it is the negative form of the word. However it appears, one thing is clear: if we as Christians have a Biblical understanding of what God wants us to do with our lives, we will have a great desire to be approved (*dokimos*) by God on that day.

Failure is an option, but no believer has to experience it. With the help of the Spirit of God and His Word, we can all hear the Lord say to us, “Well done!” when He puts our lives to the test.

Can there be a greater motivation in life than to hear those words of approval? 



Bill Fiess teaches math in Virginia.



The students at Word of Life Bible Institute in South Korea

Meeting to Discuss Possible Book about Zane Hodges March 3

Shawn and Bob met with Mike and Letitia Lee and Steve Elkins, all of whom knew Zane Hodges for a long time. We discussed getting some people who knew Zane well and were heavily influenced by him to write a short (3 to 5 page) chapter of a very practical nature, explaining how Zane impacted their life. GES would serve as publisher.

Nothing was nailed down. But we have a lot of interest in moving forward on this project.

Update on International Ministry

From Mar 12-25, Kathryn and I (Ken) taught a class on the Book of Hebrews and another on the Book of Colossians at the Word of Life Bible Institute at Jeju

Island, South Korea. We did both classes through Zoom. Lord willing, we are hoping to be able to teach there in person after the Covid situation changes.

Each student received a digital copy of my commentary, *Hebrews: Partners with Christ*, which served as the textbook for the Hebrews class. They also received a digital copy of *The Grace New Testament Commentary* for the class on Colossians.

This is the second year that I have taught at the school. They have also asked us to teach a class on Revelation later this summer.

These two classes in March provided us with an excellent opportunity to discuss the freeness of eternal life as well as the concept of rewards in the Book of Hebrews. The Book of Colossians shows the danger of heretical teaching and how such teaching can rob us of those rewards. We are also looking forward to dealing with these issues in the class on Revelation, as they relate to the Judgment Seat of Christ.



Studying Hebrews in Arkansas with Kathryn

Each class had plenty of time for the students to ask questions. There were fifteen students, and the same students attended both classes. Some commented that they had never been taught the doctrine of rewards before, so this was an exciting experience.

Special thanks go out to Michael Ivey and Johan Strydom for all their help in conducting the classes. Thanks for having us!

Women's Ministry

Kathryn's Thursday ladies' group has been through *Tough Texts* and is now following Bob's book on *The Ten Most Misunderstood Words*.

This past week Kathryn was able to drive out to Arkansas. During her time there, she was able to meet with several of the ladies including long time friend of GES, Diane Boring. Kathryn was also blessed to speak with a group that one of our translators, Kelley Easley, leads. They are following the Hebrews commentary by Ken. They had a fruitful time of fellowship and study.

Victor Street Bible Chapel March 7

I (Bob) spoke on Mark 7:24-30. The Lord blesses all who diligently seek Him. That includes Gentiles, even Gentile women. While the Lord put Israel first, He did not neglect Gentiles. And before He ascended to heaven, He commissioned His disciples to take His promise of everlasting life to the ends of the earth.

In the Lord's Supper we discussed what Hades is like now and what the lake of fire will be like forever. We also discussed that we must be careful in evangelism in



Anderson University (can you see the students?)

this regard since when the Lord evangelized, He did not discuss Hades or the lake of fire. While eternal conscious torment is true, it is not essential that we share that truth every time we evangelize.

Anderson University March 10

I (Bob) spoke in Dr. Jason Neill's psychology class for an hour. I discussed and fielded questions on assurance of everlasting life.

Due to Covid-19, many of the class watched via Zoom. I could see six in the live audience. It was a good time of interaction.

Final April 26-28 Conference Preparations

During March we finalized the schedule (at www.faithalone.org). The conference will run from Monday April 26 at 1 PM until Wednesday April

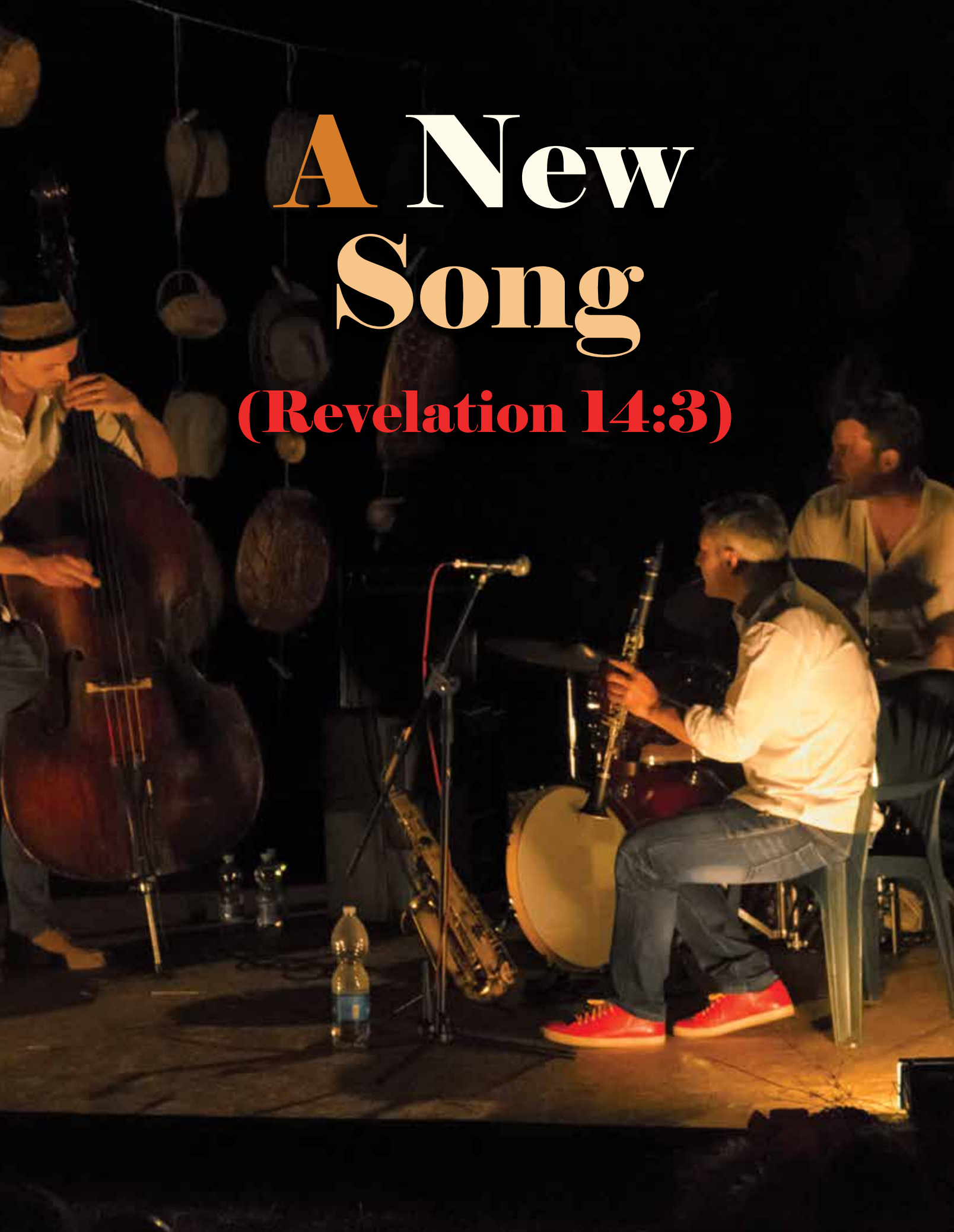
28 at 5 PM. Plenary speakers include pastors from OK, TX, NJ, and UT: Bond, Bryant, Elkins, Freeman, Janssen, Renfro, and Sterling. Also speaking are Shawn, Bob, Lucas, and Ken. Special speaker is Dr. S. Craig Glickman.

You can register in advance until April 25 at www.faithalone.org. Or register in person at the conference. The cost is \$75 for the entire three days (prorated for 1 or 2 days). Scholarships are available.



A New Song

(Revelation 14:3)



“They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and *no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand* who were redeemed from the earth” (Revelation 14:3, emphasis added).

By Kathryn Wright

AN INTIMATE SETTING

A few years ago, my husband and I got the chance to visit Nashville, Tennessee. It was an incredible trip, where we got to walk downtown and hear music flood the streets from the honky-tonks and open mics that make the town famous. We visited the Country Music Hall of Fame and the Grand Ol' Opry. We ate too much fried goodness, but more than that, we got a taste for what really makes Music City so magical.

There are many attractions in the city, but one in particular is the Blue Bird Café. From native Nashville residents to the nerdy tourists, this small café is renowned for its intimate setting and its celebrity sightings. Located in a small strip mall, you might not even notice it. It can only hold 90 people, making seats hard to come by, which only adds to its charm.

Every night, three or four song writers and musicians, both new and old, will sit in the center of the café and swap stories and songs while everyone eats yummy southern food. It's incredibly intimate and makes the audience and the artists feel more like childhood friends, rather than strangers. Singers like Garth Brooks got their big break at the Café, and on any given night you might see anyone from Carrie Underwood to Steven Tyler perform.

I love the portrait of intimacy that the Café provides for their patrons. I think it's this intimacy around a meal that we often see in Scripture as well, especially as it relates to rewards in the coming kingdom (Matt 8:11). The Last Supper comes to mind. A small group of men, sitting around a table with the Lord while He lovingly teaches them and communes with them around a meal. We also see in Scripture that there is a wedding feast that is to come, and those who will be rewarded greatly will be given the honor to sit closer to the Lord (Luke 14:7-14).

SINGING A NEW SONG

Recently, I was studying in the Book of Revelation, and I was struck by a verse that provided a new layer to my understanding of rewards and the intimacy that will be given to faithful believers. In Revelation 14 the Apostle John has a vision of the 144,000 with the Lord. These are Jewish witnesses that come to faith in Jesus during the tribulation period and testify to the Lord among the nations during those seven years. In the vision, John sees them with the Lord, with His name written on their foreheads (v 1). There are harpists playing, and then in verse 3 we are told that the 144,000 sing.

“They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth” (Rev 14:3, emphasis added).

We are told in this verse that the 144,000 are singing a new song. Not only that, but this song is special. It is one that only the 144,000 know. It is a song that no one else can learn. It’s a unique song of worship, meant just for this group of faithful believers.


I am reminded of the Blue Bird Café. A small group of people, in an intimate setting, given the honor of hearing a new song. Unlike the Café though, this song is not just any teenage love song or funny ballad about a truck. This song was written just for them to know and to sing. Not only that, but this song wasn’t written by a country music star; it was given by the Lord as a special, intimate moment of worship for these faithful believers.

With this verse, I think we are given another glimpse into what rewards will be like for the overcoming believer. Much like patrons in the Blue Bird Café, faithful believers will sit with the Lord over a private meal, and not only will they be given the privilege to sit closer to the Savior, but also there will be a time of singing, and in that time of singing, there will be special songs for certain groups of people.

Will there be a song just for the martyrs? Or a song just for the apostles? The Bible doesn’t give us that detailed knowledge, but I like to think there will be.

WORSHIP WITH THE SAVIOR

On the night of the Lord’s death, we are told that after the meal they sang a hymn (Matt 26:30). I have always found that verse interesting. What was the song that they sang? Was it based on something in the OT? Most scholars say it was a Psalm. Did it foreshadow His death or have some other meaning? Some Psalms certainly did.

Whatever they sang, I think ultimately it was meant to be a picture of intimacy and worship with the Savior. A special Blue Bird Café, just for those companions of the Lord. My prayer is that we all strive to have that same intimacy with the Lord, and perhaps we too will have the privilege of learning a new song in the coming kingdom. 



Kathryn Wright works for GES Missions.

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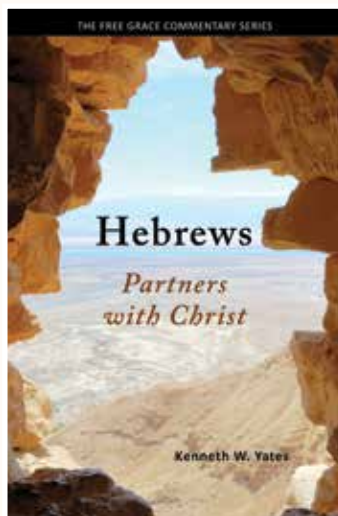
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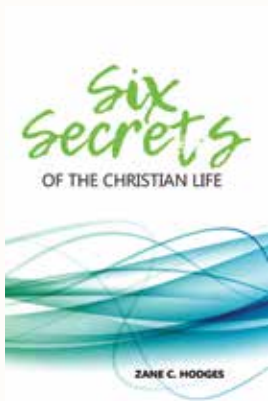
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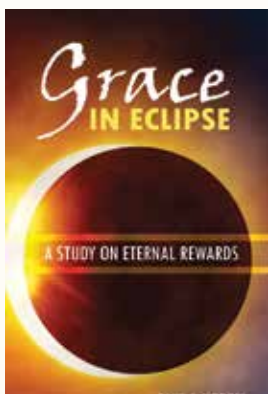


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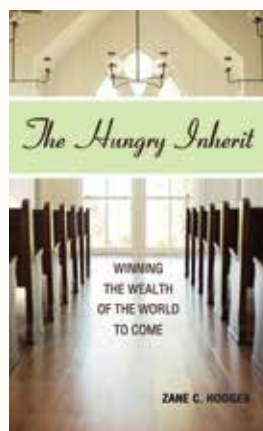


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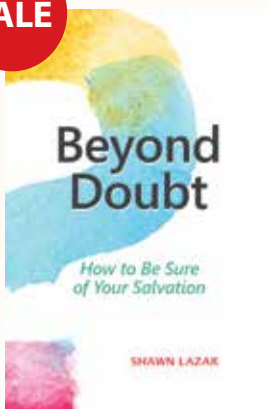
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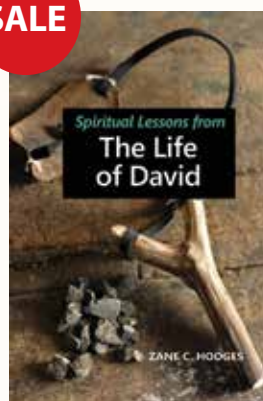
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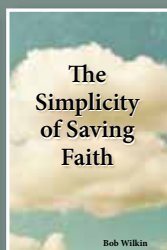
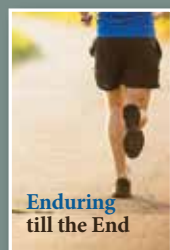


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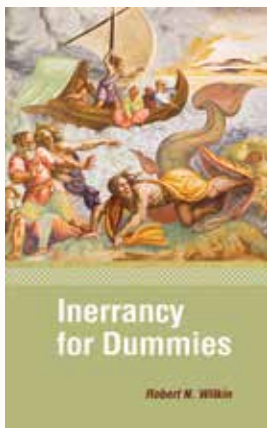
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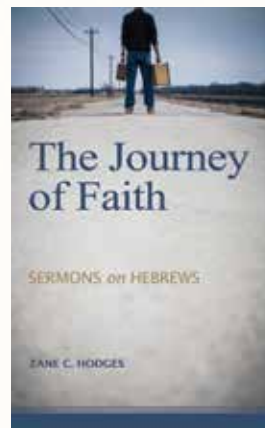


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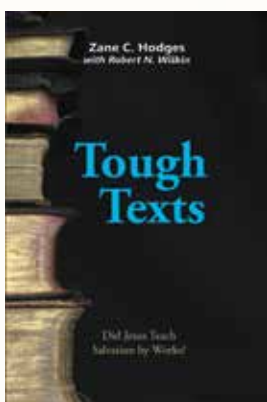


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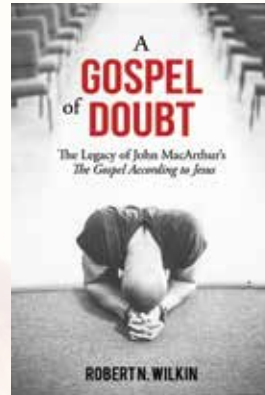


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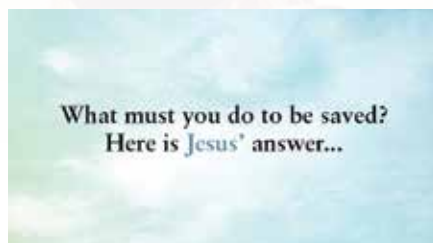
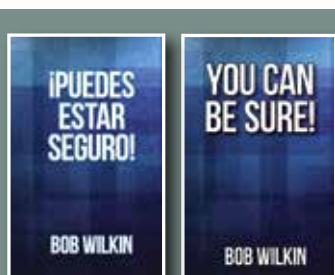


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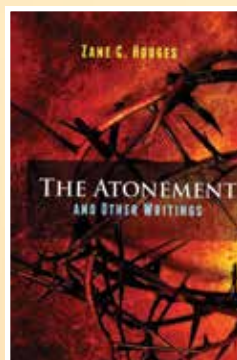


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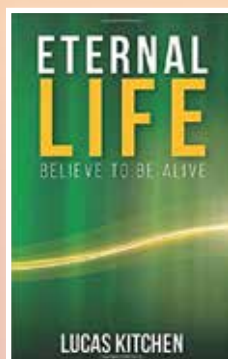


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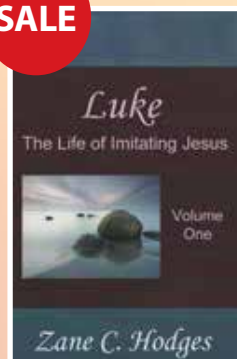
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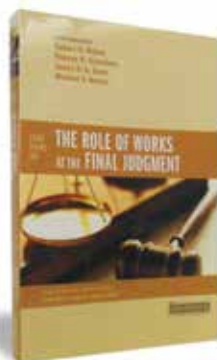


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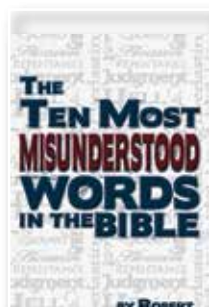


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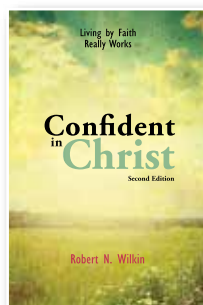


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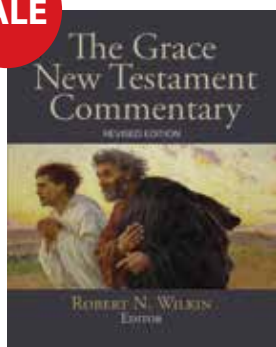
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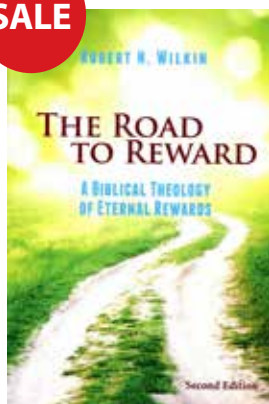
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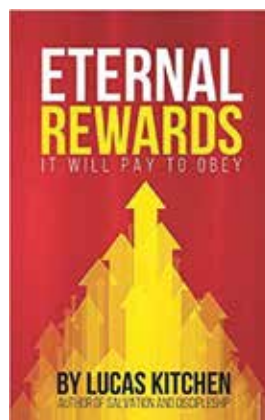
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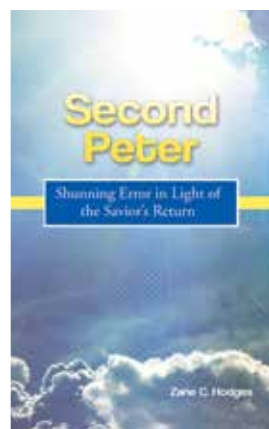
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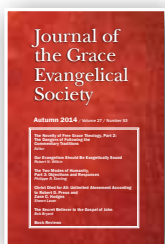
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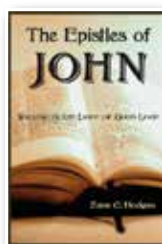
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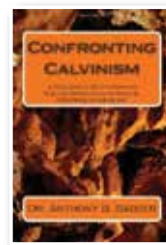


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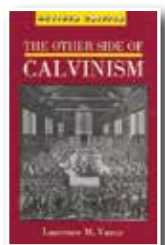


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HOW DO WE KNOW THAT SAVING FAITH REQUIRES NO WORKS ON OUR PART?

123RF



By Bob Wilkin

Recently I wrote a blog entitled, “Understanding Saving Faith Is Not Like Breaking the Enigma Code.” I argued that saving faith is simply being convinced that the Lord Jesus Christ guarantees everlasting life that cannot be lost to all who believe in Him for that life. J. H. read that blog and asks:

I have been reading your blogs for a while now. At times I agree with you, and other times I don’t. At times I am perplexed by your writings. So, let me ask a question: do you think that belief requires no “works” on our part? Conversely, does unbelief require works?

The answer to the first question is an emphatic *Yes!* The answer to the second question is *No*.

UNBELIEF WITHOUT WORKS?

I will start with the second question first. Does unbelief require works?

Let’s say that someone not only does not believe in Jesus for everlasting life, but he also does not believe that Jesus even existed. He thinks Jesus is a mythological figure. Would it require any

works on his part to believe that Jesus never existed? Of course not. It requires no works to disbelieve in Jesus, just as it requires no works to disbelieve in Donald Trump or Joe Biden or Xi Jinping.

There is no necessary connection between unbelief and works. An atheist might be a good spouse, parent, employee, citizen, driver, and so forth. Or an atheist might sell drugs to children and murder people.

BELIEF WITHOUT WORKS?

Now to the first question. Does belief require no works?

The point is the same. Just as there is no necessary connection between unbelief and works, so too for belief and works.

In the first place, good works are not required to have everlasting life (John 5:39-40; 6:28-29; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5) or to be justified once and for all before God (Rom 4:4-5). The sole condition is faith in Christ. In the second place, there is no guarantee that all believers will persevere in living righteously.

Let’s say that 50,000 Americans came to believe in Jesus for everlasting life in 2001 while

in college. If we tracked those 50,000 people over the next twenty years, we would find a wide range of works. Some would be godly people who are serving Christ faithfully in their local churches. Some would even be pastors and missionaries and famous Christian songwriters and authors.

But some of those 50,000 believers will be found in prison for murder, rape, drug dealing, embezzlement, and so forth. I know of three graduates of my alma mater, Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS), who went to prison for aggravated sexual assault, rape, and statutory rape (of boys). All three were pastors in the Dallas area, two of Bible churches and one of a Baptist church. The number of pastors of conservative churches who have gone to prison in the last twenty years is surely in the hundreds, if not thousands. All seminaries, not just DTS, have graduates who are in prison. If you consider all believers, not just pastors, who are now in prison, the number is in the tens or hundreds of thousands.

Hopefully well over half of those 50,000 believers are walking in fellowship with God. But not all of them are.


I realize that some would say that those three pastors who went to prison lost their salvation. Others would say that they proved that they were never born again in the first place. But the truth is, King David is not the only believer who committed adultery and murder.

TAKE HEED

If you think that you cannot fall because you are born again, then you make it much more likely that you will fall. Paul warned the believers in Corinth, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12).

The Lord Jesus guarantees me everlasting life since I have believed in Him (John 3:16). But He does not guarantee me that I will never sin, nor that I will never sin very much. I could fail to persevere in the Christian life.

I fear spiritual failure. Do you? You should pray daily asking God to keep you from temptation and to deliver you from evil. While we have born-of-God new natures within us, we still have the flesh. We are no longer slaves of sin in our position (Rom 6:16-17), but we can be slaves of sin in our experience if we cease abiding in Christ and His Word (John 8:30-32; Rom 6:12-13; 7:13-25).

I love the Lord Jesus and want to bring praise to Him. I long to hear Him say, “Well done, good servant” (Luke 19:17). But knowing that success is not guaranteed keeps me seeking Him every day. 



Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He lives in Highland Village, TX, with his wife of 44 years, Sharon.

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The Mailbag

By You

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“Thank you for sending me Ken Yates’s book on *Hebrews*. It is really good and much needed. Time is flying by and at times I feel like I am going backwards, caught up in some eddy in the stream of life. I am thankful to be part of a ministry that is reaching out to the world with the original teaching of Scripture, specifically the ‘Free Grace’ message. May the Lord of Glory sustain you in the work.” ~Bynum, TX

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Cancer: A Holy Experience

By Marcia Hornok

ALONE WITH GOD

I have a Holy of Holies in my home. A place where nothing interrupts my solitude with God. Neither phone calls, media messages, nor family members intrude when I enter it. Only God and I meet there daily in this Holy Place.

Now I'm not an especially disciplined Christian, but I am a clean one, because I'm talking about my shower stall. A place for taking inventory, reporting for duty, and unloading my burdens. There I can weep without scaring my family. Soul gets cleansed along with body. I have no prayer list to get through or formula to follow. Just the reality of God with me. Immanuel.

STRUGGLING WITH GOD

One year my shower sanctuary turned into Gethsemane's Garden when my soapy fingers felt a lump. Surely it would not be malignant—haven't I done everything right? Nursed all my babies, grown and preserved my own food, no addictive substances—I bet it had been ten years since I had a Big Mac with fries! And what about all those aerobics classes?

With no family history, surely I could dodge the breast cancer bullet. But when the doctor called it "suspicious," I responded the way I usually do to trials: *What did I do to deserve this? Why*

me? What about our trip to Scotland to visit our daughter and husband?

Having already survived a different type of cancer, I didn't think I needed a remedial course. Arrogantly, I thought I had learned the cancer lesson about surrender and accepting God's inscrutability. Yet here it was again.

Under the shower I railed at God. "Why do you give me a stone when I ask for bread? I thought You were my loving Father, but You are such a hard taskmaster. Are You punishing me for some sin in my past?"

When circumstances sideline me, I can forget God's generosity faster than Simon Peter forgot his promise to stand by Jesus.

Fortunately, God is patient, and in my case, longsuffering. Two surgeries later, I was pronounced "stage one." No chemo necessary. God is merciful.

With the lump removed and no cancer in the lymph nodes, I told my surgeon, "Thank you very much; I hope I never see you again."

"Oh no," he answered, "I'm in your life for good."

Then he told me about frequent mammograms, regular check-ups, and estrogen-blocking meds *after* I had 35 radiation treatments.

Radiation?

I told God I wouldn't do it. I couldn't do it—especially after I read about the side effects: the burned skin, scar tissue, possible deformity. Two doctors told me I would need corrective surgery afterward. One woman undergoing radiation showed me her chest—it was dark maroon! No thanks!

SURRENDERED TO GOD

However, one evening in my Holy of Holies, I did the surrender thing again. I started focusing on what I had left, not what I had lost. The lump was small and caught early. I had lumpectomies, not a mastectomy. Sentinel lymph node was clear. No chemotherapy. The airline even refunded all but \$100 when we canceled our Scotland trip. Gratitude grew as I thanked God for each evidence of His goodness.

My husband and my medical insurance both encouraged radiation. If not, and the cancer returned, I would regret that I did not do everything the doctors had recommended.

So I started entering another Holy of Holies at 3:15 pm every weekday. There I laid my body on the altar so part of me could be carefully burned. While lying still, I poured out to God the needs of my family and church during the ten minutes it took for the procedure.

I remember my husband telling me, "Every day at 3:15 pm, I pray for you." I said those same words back to him, and we smiled at this new aspect of marriage unity.

At 10:15 pm in Scotland and at 4:15 pm in Wheaton, my daughters prayed for me. My son set his watch alarm for 3:15 pm and remembered me.

According to Romans 8, we joined the prayer circle of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. This mystical reality amazes and comforts me.

My car also became a Holy Place. On my way to the hospital every day, I would sing Charles Wesley's words: "Jesus, Lover of my soul, let me to Thy bosom fly....Hide me, oh my Savior hide till the storm of life is past....All my trust on Thee is stayed....Cover my defenseless head [breast] with the shadow of Thy wing."


When I received the cancer diagnosis I had asked friends to give me Scriptures, and I made

them into a card pack of "Battle Verses for Cancer." To counteract radiation fatigue, I took walks with my card pack, flipping through the verses and meditating or praying God's words back to Him. Walking with God in the literal sense.

An additional mystery began to emerge: God can teach me the most from situations I understand the least. That which hurts me can also heal me. I can choose to groan or to grow. My two cancer experiences broke my will, but also bonded me into new intimacy with God and new fellowship with those who pray for me.

ENJOYING GOD

My radiation Holy of Holies was temporary. Cancer reveals that everything about life is temporary—except my eternal relationship with God. Being alone with Him reminds me that I am never alone. I enjoy Him more now than I did before my affliction. He is not a demanding Father or a mean Master but a wise and loving Coach. His training process hurts but also helps me develop spiritual muscles and endurance. When He gives me extra laps, it's for my good and His glory.

Tonight when I step into His presence and reach for the soap, I will praise Him for that. 



Marcia Hornok writes from Salt Lake City where her husband pastored Midvalley Bible Church for 39 years. For a free digital copy of her illustrated book of 40 Brief Evangelistic Analogies, email her at marcia.hornok@gmail.com.

Is “Continuous” Believing Required for the New Birth?

By Steve Elkins

I really enjoyed Dan Wallace when I had him for Greek grammar. I thought he was one of the best teachers at my seminary. But presently I’m grieved that his *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* has won the day in Evangelical schools and carries such great influence over preachers and teachers.

In writing about the substantival present participle (which is simply a present participle with the article and acts as a noun), he correctly points out that the *aspect* of the tense is *diminished*. *Aspect* means the progress, result, or simple occurrence of something.

All the grammars say this, including that the tense becomes *gnomic* (i.e., timeless). In other words, the substantival participle is not stating something *is* happening, just that it *has* happened.

Other grammars (e.g., Robertson) point out that the emphasis (via the article) is now placed on the noun it has become or the person the verb is modifying.

THE BELIEVER AND THE BAPTIST

For instance, concerning the present participles in John 3:16, the emphasis is not at all on the continual nature of belief, but *gnomically*, that this person *has* believed. Therefore, the emphasis now is on “what happens” to such a person: he or she will never “perish, but has eternal life.”

Thus, the participle functions as a noun: *the one who believes* could be translated *the believer*.

See, for example, John the Baptist.

In Mark 6:14 we read, *Iōannēs ho baptizōn*. That is the name *John* and the present participle of *baptizō*. It could be translated as *John the one who baptizes*; *John the one who baptized*; *John*



the baptizer; or, as nearly all English translations render it, simply *John the Baptist*.

This verse illustrates the point well since John was already dead, having been beheaded by Herod. He was not baptizing anyone anymore. But he was still *John the Baptist*.

Wallace correctly discusses,

Thus, for example, in Matt 5:28, “everyone who looks at a woman (*pas ho blepōn...*)... does not mean “*continually* looking” or “*habitually* looking” any more than four verses later “everyone who divorces his wife” (*pas ho apolūōn...*) means “*repeatedly* divorces”! (*Greek Grammar*, p. 616, emphasis added).

Thus, for example, *ho baptizōn* in Mark 1:4 does not mean one who “*continually* baptizes” but simply “*the baptizer*” (*Greek Grammar*, p. 620, emphasis added).

So far, Wallace is agreeing with all the Greek grammars, but then he says something odd, because it’s so contradictory to his point later,

Secondly, many substantival participles in the NT are used in generic utterances...As such it is expected to involve a *gnomic* idea. [ed. *gnomic*= a timeless fact. It does not say that something *is* happening, but that something *does* happen.] Most of these instances involve the present participle. But, if they are already *gnomic*, we would be *hard-pressed* to make something more out of them—such as a progressive idea” (*Greek Grammar*, pp. 615-16, emphasis added).

Shockingly, while he admits he’s “hard-pressed” to find the progressive/continuous idea, that’s just what he proceeds to do!

In an extreme case of special pleading, with no support at all, Wallace departs from what all grammars say and argues that the substantival participle of John 3:16 is a special category all to itself.

The idea seems to be *both gnomic and continual*: “everyone who *continually* believes.” This is not due to the present tense only, but to the use of the present participle of *pisteuō*, especially in *soteriological texts*

of the NT (*Greek Grammar*, pp. 620-21, emphasis added).

I said above that Wallace has no support because, as is usual from fellows of this persuasion, they offer non-validated proof-texts, of which the briefest glance shows them to argue not *for*, but *against* their points (e.g., footnote 22, p. 621. I scratch my head at how such a brilliant guy can say these things).

JOHN 3:16 AND THE CONDITION OF ETERNAL SALVATION

Earlier in his book, Wallace listed the present participle of *pisteuō* in John 3:16 as an example of what’s often called a “continual present” (which Wallace classifies as a “Customary [Habitual or General] Present,” *Greek Grammar*, p. 521).

In this Gospel there seems to be a qualitative distinction between the ongoing *act* of believing and the simple *fact* of believing (*Greek Grammar*, p. 522, emphasis added).

But no support is given at all for that statement. Rather, Wallace commits what Barr, Nida and others call the “tense fallacy.” On the contrary, any study of John shows just the opposite. There’s no argument for *ongoing* belief. Rather, emphasis is placed on the simple *fact* of belief. Among other arguments are these:

1. The metaphors—all emphasizing a single “act” of belief: receive, look, drink, come, eat, hear, (and these non-metaphors: instant life and being raised from the dead).
2. The instantaneous nature of regeneration—one act causing irreversible new birth.
3. The interchangeable aorist tense (36 times)

Here are just some of the aorists in John. All are interchangeable with the present tense:

- 2:11: “and His disciples believed in Him...”
- 2:23: “Many believed in His name...”
- 4:39, 41: “the Samaritans believed... and many more believed...”
- 7:31: “the people believed in Him...”
- 8:30: “and many believed in Him...”

- 9:18: “the Jews did not believe..”
- 10:42: “many believed in Him...”
- 11:45: “many of the Jews...believed in Him.”
- 12:42: “many rulers believed in Him...”

This presentation was already complete before I read Bob Wilkin’s wonderful article, “Is Continuous Drinking Required for Eternal Life?” In it he states,

Let’s say *ho pinōn* (a present substantival participle) means, as Wallace suggests, “everyone who *continuously* drinks” (p. 621), and thus it takes *continuous believing* to be born again...When would a person fulfill that requirement? At a moment in time? Certainly not... After a day of continuous drinking? Nope. After a year? A decade? Five decades? No. If a person ever stopped drinking prior to death he would not fulfill the requirement of *continuous drinking*.

So, if what Wallace is saying is true, a person is not *born again* unless he *continues in faith until death*.

This leads to tough questions. How can you have *assurance* before death that you are born again? What if a believer were to go through a time of *doubt*? Is he unregenerate in Wallace’s understanding? What about a person who has a mental condition that causes him to stop (believing), like paranoid schizophrenia, OCD, or Alzheimer’s?...


At the very moment of faith a person is born again once and for all. That is the message of John 3:16; 5:24; 6:35; 11:25-27. At the moment of faith a person “has passed from death into life” (John 5:24). Paul says, “By grace you have been saved...”—a *done deal*... (Wilkin, “Continuous Drinking,” emphasis added).

SCHOLARS CAN BE BIASED

Wallace is a scholar. He’s also irenic, saying nice things about Zane Hodges in a blog upon his death. But he’s biased. Look no further than his cover endorsement of Wayne Grudem’s treatise against Free Grace: “This book is...rock solid in its penetrating insights regarding the Free Grace Movement.” Interesting, since so much of Grudem’s book is against the positions held by Dr. Chafer and the founders of the seminary at which Wallace teaches. It seems he’s more



comfortable with John MacArthur, J.I. Packer, and Thomas Schreiner (fellow endorsers), who have little in common with Chafer, Ryrie, and Hodges, concerning the gospel.

Twisting Greek grammar, in this case, is tantamount to twisting the Scriptures. Wallace seeks to make the Scriptures fit with his theology—rather than vice versa. If one didn’t know he was so sincere, it would seem an obvious act of subterfuge. 



Steve Elkins is associate pastor at Coppell Bible Fellowship. Before coming to CBF, Steve was on staff with Young Life Ministry for 25 years and was a pastor in Corsicana for 11 years.

Top 5 Overlooked Women in the Bible

By Summer Stevens

The Bible is filled with fascinating accounts of women such as Deborah, Esther, and Rahab. We study these women for their faith in God despite dangerous or uncertain circumstances. Many of the Bible's popular female characters make it into Hebrews' "Hall of Fame," as they should. But there are many other women whose names we aren't as familiar with, though their stories of significance or bravery may match those others.

Here are five overlooked women in the Bible whose stories deserve to be noted.

THE WARRIOR: Jael (JUDGES 4)

Jael is a rare picture of feminine fierceness. When Israel cries out to the Lord for help after twenty years of oppression from Jabin, king of Canaan, He brings deliverance as Barak defeats the heavily fortified army, slaying every single man. Except one. Sisera, commander of the army, flees on foot to the tent of Jael, where he hopes to find protection. Jael invites him in, covers him with a blanket and offers him milk to drink. She's mothering him and caring for him, which is why what comes next is such a surprise. "Then Jael, Heber's wife [if we needed to be reminded], took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went down into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died (v 21)."

Wow. This is quite a woman. She's the MVP of the battle, capturing and killing the leader of the Canaanite army, without stepping foot onto the actual battlefield. She acts with cunning, efficiency and fearlessness, and she's in the unique position to help rescue Israel because she's physically present, caring for her home.



THE LOVING WIFE: MICHAL (1 SAMUEL 19)

Michal has a bad reputation because she mocked David when he danced passionately before the Lord (2 Sam 6), but early in the story the reader is twice told that Michal loved David.

She was the daughter of Saul, and he used her love for David to try and destroy him.

Saul required as a dowry for Michal the foreskin of a hundred Philistines, which Saul believed David would die trying to secure. But the Lord was with David and his men, and they delivered.

When Saul went into a mad rage and tried to kill David, "Michal let David down through a window. And he went and fled and escaped" (v 12). She then put a large idol in their bed, covered it with goat hair and clothes, and lied to her father's messengers when they came to seek David, saying he was ill. When they returned to kill him, her father discovered what she'd done.

We rightly remember the friendship David has with Saul's son Jonathan, but we don't often remember the loyalty of Jonathan's sister, who risked her life, too, to preserve his.



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“It is Joanna and other women who arrive at the empty tomb early Easter morning to offer what they believe is their final service to Jesus by wrapping His body with spices. She cared for Jesus—what a beautiful privilege!”

THE RESCUER: JEHOSEBA (2 KINGS 11)

After the death of her son, King Ahaziah, wicked Athaliah sought to destroy all the royal heirs so she herself could ascend to power:

But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons who were being murdered; and they hid him and his nurse in the bedroom, from Athaliah, so that he was not killed. So he was hidden with her in the house of the Lord for six years, while Athaliah reigned over the land (vv 2-3).

Jehosheba showed tremendous courage to hide the rightful heir to the throne for six years until the priest Jehoida revealed his identity and overthrew Athaliah.

It's easy to get lost in the names here, but Jehosheba was rescuing her little nephew from his power-crazed grandmother.

He grew up to serve the nation of Judah for forty years, restored the temple, and did right in the eyes of the Lord while Jehoida the priest instructed him. Most importantly, he preserved the Davidic line from which our Savior Jesus Christ would be born.

THE FAITHFUL SUPPORTER: JOANNA (LUKE 8:1-3; 24:10)

Joanna is mentioned only two times in the Bible, but both reveal a commitment to Jesus at great personal risk.


Our introduction to this woman is in Luke 8, where she is grouped together with other women who support Jesus' ministry, presumably financially or possibly through providing food or necessities.

Joanna is the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household. She is married to a man of

significant public stature in the Roman government, so her support of Jesus put their livelihood and possibly their lives in danger. She, along with Mary Magdalene, Susanna and others, traveled with Jesus as “He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God” (Luke 8:1). This appears to be early on in His ministry, and she's with Him to the very end.

It is Joanna and other women who arrive at the empty tomb early Easter morning to offer what they believe is their final service to Jesus by wrapping His body with spices. She cared for Jesus—what a beautiful privilege!

ONE CLAIM TO FAME: DAMARIS (ACTS 17:34)

We know only one thing about Damaris: she believed the gospel message. When Paul gives his famous speech in Athens about the altar to the unknown god, the Bible records that some mocked him, and some wanted to hear more. “So Paul departed from among them. However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them” (v 34). Damaris joined Paul and believed. At the end of my days, even if I'm called to be a warrior like Jael or a rescuer like Jehosheba, what I want the most is to be remembered like Damaris: one who believes in Jesus. 



Summer Stevens is married to Nathanael and they have five children. She has a Master's in Biblical Studies from Dallas Theological Seminary and enjoys running (but mostly talking) with friends and reading good books to her kids.

GRACE IN FOCUS

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This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Why Many Puritans Died Without Assurance

By Shawn Lazar

The Puritans remain immensely popular. But reading the Puritans can be dangerous for your assurance. R. T. Kendall explains why.

Kendall went to Oxford to study the Puritans and was surprised by how they lacked assurance of their salvation. He explains it in the introduction to his book *Grace*:

I went to Oxford in 1973 to study John Owen's doctrine of the priestly work of Christ. It turned out that my thesis took a different direction, but it plunged me deep indeed into the Puritans (*Grace*, p. 3).

While the Puritans did not *explicitly* teach salvation by works, they taught that you could not *claim* to be saved without doing those works:

no one could claim to be saved if they did not keep the works of the Law. Not that you could lose your salvation; it only meant you were not really converted in the first place if there was not a careful keeping of the Ten Commandments. After all, one dare not look directly to Christ for assurance—that would be presumptuous; one looked to his own faithfulness in keeping the Law first, and then—and only then—did one have the warrant to look to Christ for salvation. I kept telling myself that what these Puritans wrote

surely was not what they appeared to be saying. I kept reading (*Grace*, p. 3).

I like how Kendall puts it. The Puritans dared not look directly to Christ for assurance. So, where did they look?

Most of the Puritans that I read can be described in this scenario: How do you know you are saved? By your sanctification. How do you know you have sanctification? By good works. How do you know what good works are? By the Ten Commandments (*Grace*, p. 4).

This is not the same as *explicitly* teaching salvation by works—not exactly:

It is not that they believed you are saved by good works; it was merely that you could not know you are saved unless you kept the Ten Commandments. Martin Luther's discovery that we are justified by faith alone had sadly passed behind a cloud (*Grace*, p. 4).

Of course, if you cannot be assured unless you have the right amount of good works, how many works do you need? How good do you have to be? And for how long? How do you know if you're better than the average sinner? Is that the standard? Who knows? No wonder many Puritans died in doubt:

I was also surprised to learn how so many of the Puritans died. William Perkins (1558-



1602), the architectural mind for what became the tradition that led to the historic Westminster Confession of Faith, died “in the conflict of a troubled conscience.” His immediate successor Paul Baynes (d. 1617) “went out of this world, with far less comfort than many weaker Christians enjoy.” Sadly, this kind of dying testimony was not uncommon (*Grace*, p. 4).

It was not uncommon for Puritans to die in doubt because when sinners look to their behavior, they’ll see lots and lots of sins, which provide no ground for assurance.

So what’s the alternative?

As Kendall says, *look directly to Jesus for assurance.*


And how do you do that?

It’s simple: *believe Jesus’ promise.*

Jesus promised that whoever believes in Him has everlasting life (cf. John 3:16; 5:24; 6:47; 1 John 2:25; 1 Tim 1:16). So if you believe in Jesus, what do you have? Everlasting life!

Your works do not enter into the assurance question. If they did, you could never have

assurance because you’re a sinner in need of a Savior, and if you look within, what you’ll find is an unstable mixture of good and evil that can assure you of nothing. Newsflash—the Puritans weren’t pure!

The Puritans tried to base their assurance on keeping the Law, but they died doubting their salvation because they broke it. If that’s your struggle, let me point you away from the Puritans and the Law to Jesus and His promise of eternal life. If you want assurance of salvation, then base it on His free grace, not on your feeble works. 



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

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