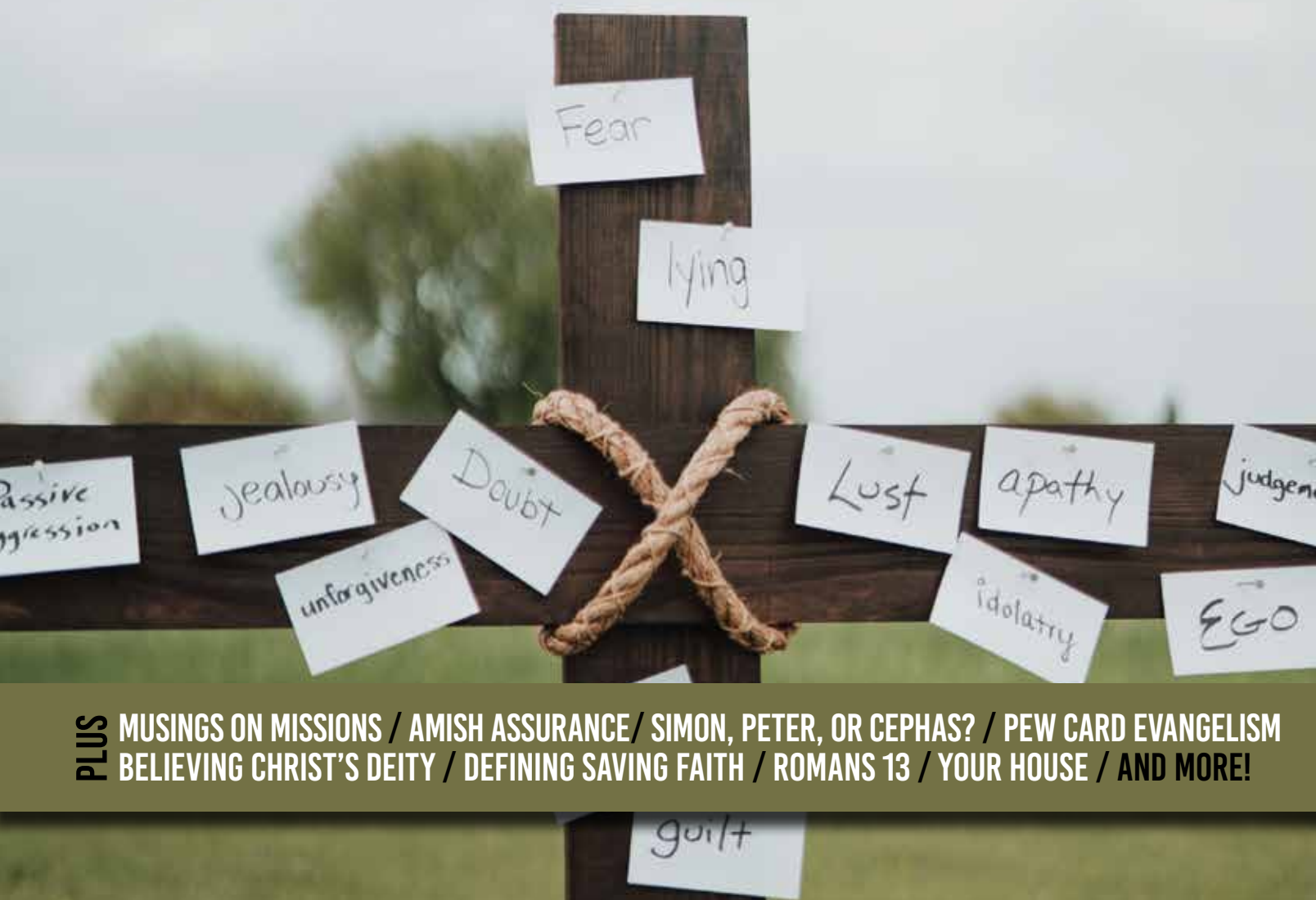


GRACE **IN** FOCUS

WWW.FAITHALONE.ORG

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2021

Must We Confess to Be Forgiven?



PLUS MUSINGS ON MISSIONS / AMISH ASSURANCE / SIMON, PETER, OR CEPHAS? / PEW CARD EVANGELISM
BELIEVING CHRIST'S DEITY / DEFINING SAVING FAITH / ROMANS 13 / YOUR HOUSE / AND MORE!

CONTENTS

- 3 From the Editor
- 4 Must We Confess to Be Forgiven?
BY BOB WILKIN
- 8 How Do We Grieve the Holy Spirit?
BY KEN YATES
- 10 Romans 13: A Concise Commentary
BY ZANE HODGES
- 16 Top 5 Reasons Not to Tear Down
Your House
BY SUMMER STEVENS
- 20 How Would You Define Saving
Faith?
BY BOB WILKIN
- 22 *Partners in Grace*
- 24 Paul Rejected Salvation by Non-
Meritorious Works
BY SHAWN LAZAR
- 25 The Bookstore
- 33 Simon, Peter, or Cephas?
BY LAURENCE M. VANCE
- 36 Musings on Missions
BY KEN YATES
- 39 The Mailbag
BY YOU
- 40 Parting with the Theologians
BY ANDREW ENGELMAN



- 42 Pew Card Evangelism
BY MARCIA HORNOK
- 44 Must You Believe in Christ's Deity to
Be Saved?
BY ZANE HODGES
- 46 Why Are the Amish Against
Assurance?
BY SHAWN LAZAR

GRACE IN FOCUS

Volume 36, Number 6

© 2021 by Grace
Evangelical Society

CAPTAIN

Robert N. Wilkin, Ph.D.

NUMBER ONE

Shawn Lazar

COMMUNICATIONS

Bethany Taylor

REDSHIRT

Mark Gray

GRACE IN FOCUS is a bimonthly magazine about the gospel, assurance, and related issues. For your free U.S. subscription sign up on our website or send your name and address to **P.O. Box 1308, Denton, TX 76202**. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to offset the costs of printing and postage, it would be greatly appreciated.



Address changes? Comments? Prayer requests? Testimonies?

Send them to ges@faithalone.org. Theological questions? Send them to questions@faithalone.org or write to *Grace in Focus*, P.O. Box 1308, Denton, TX 76202.

FROM THE EDITOR

In October, I spoke at Upland Bible Church in Las Vegas. The pastor, Rich Olsen, likes to greet people by saying, “Merry Christmas.” All year long.

He greeted two of his grandkids that way and they returned the greeting. Rich likes to say that every day is a celebration of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. How true!


Every day is Thanksgiving Day, too. We are to give thanks for all we have: life, health, family, food, home, clothes, jobs, friends, church, and so on.

This issue of the magazine falls during the two months in which we have special holidays set aside for Thanksgiving and for the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even in our secular society, we as a nation pause to remember the Christian roots.

It appears that Covid is on the decline.

These past two years have been far different than any years since WWII. There has been upheaval in health, jobs, worship, sports, weddings, funerals, nursing home visits, and so much more. But all of this has been an opportunity for believers to let our lights shine before men.

When the darkness is greatest, we who have everlasting life and walk with Christ serve as salt and light.

I hope you enjoy our year-end magazine for 2021. It has been prepared with love. 



Merry Christmas Everyday

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

have a particular
wrong. *James Ea*
the confessed kill

confession /kə

1 A **confession** is
in which they ac
particular crime.
sion.

2 **Confession** is

Must We Confess to Be Forgiven?

BY BOB WILKIN

I received an actual letter—handwritten—from Robert asking about confession and forgiveness:

Some preachers teach that we as Christians must confess our sins in order to be forgiven of sins after we are born again, according to 1 John 1:9. As I understand it, all our sins were forgiven at the cross. We appropriated our salvation when we believed in Jesus for eternal life. God gave the Apostle Paul the dispensation of the gospel of grace...Where in Paul's epistles does it teach us to ask for more forgiveness after salvation? When we do fail and sin, we thank God for His forgiveness through what He did for us at Calvary (1 Cor 15:1-4; Eph 2:8-9)... Am I correctly understanding this?

There are two very important questions here.

First, must we Christians confess our sins in order to be forgiven?

Second, if that is true, where do we find that teaching in Paul's epistles?

The traditional explanation is that there are two types of forgiveness. Positional forgiveness is what Robert is talking about. When we believe, we are forgiven of all our sins, even all future ones. Positional forgiveness is linked with our

eternal security. Fellowship forgiveness is different. The issue in this forgiveness is not our eternal destiny, but our ongoing fellowship with God. In order to remain in fellowship with God, a believer must confess His sins.

RETHINKING POSITIONAL FORGIVENESS

I've been challenged by a pastor friend to rethink the idea of positional forgiveness. He suggests that all forgiveness is fellowship related. It is true, of course, that once we believe in Jesus we have everlasting life, we will never die spiritually, we will never come into judgment regarding everlasting life, and we have already passed from death into life. However, where in the Bible is that called forgiveness?

When the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He said that they should say, "And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us" (Luke 11:4).

When the Lord washed the disciples' feet (John 13:5-11), He illustrated the truth of Luke 11:4 and 1 John 1:9. The eleven believing disciples were clean, but Jesus said to Peter, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me" (John

13:8). The word part (*meros*) refers to fellowship with the Lord.

First John 1:9 indicates that if we confess the sins of which we are aware, then God forgives us of those sins and He cleanses us from all unrighteousness, that is, all the sins of which we are not aware. By the way, 1 John 1:7 is often overlooked. It says that the blood of Jesus only cleanses us from our ongoing sins if we are walking in the light, a reference to sitting under sound Bible teaching and having a godly mindset.

An event from the ministry of Paul is instructive here as well: “And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds” (Acts 19:18). While that confession was before men, it was certainly primarily to God. And why were they confessing their deeds unless Paul had told them to do so?

I have not had time to study all of the NT passages that refer to forgiveness. I plan to write a journal article (hopefully for Spring 2022) on the question of whether there is such a thing as positional forgiveness. But there is no question that born-again people need fellowship forgiveness.¹

Question 1: Yes, we Christians need to confess our known sins in order to have ongoing fellowship with God. The proof is seen in the passages I cited above.

No, we do not need to confess our sins to retain everlasting life. Once we are saved, we always will be saved.


Question 2: Yes, the idea of confession of sins and fellowship forgiveness is found in Paul’s epistles in my opinion. However, I must admit that Paul does not use the expression *confess sins* (though see Acts 19:18 mentioned above) and he only twice in his epistles uses the expression *the forgiveness of sins* (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; see also Col 2:13, “having forgiven you all trespasses”). He also uses that expression twice in his recorded Acts sermons (Acts 13:38; 26:18). When he does refer to the forgiveness of sins (or forgiveness), it is not certain whether he is referring to the *fellowship* forgiveness of our past sins that we have experienced, or to *positional* forgiveness. For example, Eph 4:32 is quite close to being a paraphrase of Luke 11:4. Paul wrote, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one

another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.” Colossians 3:13 is a parallel text.

I realize many understand Paul to be speaking of positional forgiveness in Eph 4:32 and Col 3:13 (as well as in Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 2:13). But it is much more likely he is speaking of the fellowship forgiveness we have received. We forgive others as God has forgiven us. We do not forgive others in advance for their future sins. We forgive them after they sin against us. Ephesians 4:32 probably is saying that God forgives us when we confess our sins.

I think the idea of confession of sins is implied throughout Romans 5-8 as well. See, for example, Rom 6:12-14, 19; 7:24; 8:5-7.

I plan to do more work on this question as well.

Let me close by saying that even those who do not believe that we need to confess our sins to gain fellowship forgiveness still nonetheless teach that we must not deny our sins. As Robert suggests, all of us at a minimum when we recognize sin thank God for the forgiveness of sins that we have in Christ and in His blood. Whether you see that as positional or fellowship forgiveness or both, every time you are aware of sin in your life, you are drawn to acknowledge it (not deny it) and to rely on Christ’s blood for your forgiveness. 



Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He lives in Highland Village, TX, with his wife of 45 years, Sharon.

¹ Some do teach that there is no such thing as fellowship forgiveness. Some understand 1 John 1:9 to be an evangelistic verse, which is quite odd since the apostle includes himself when he says, “If we confess our sins...” Some suggest that all forgiveness is positional and final at the moment of the new birth. I plan to address this issue, too.

Help Promote the Promise

The scope of GES's mission is expanding. Now, more than ever, we are reaching the world with the message of God's free grace and Jesus' promise of everlasting life. Your support has been crucial in helping us produce:

- Daily podcasts
- Blogs in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Filipino, Russian, and Italian
- *Grace in Focus* magazine six times a year
- Weekly YouTube videos
- Regional and national conferences
- Books
- Overseas teaching and training of pastors and students

If you decide in your heart to give (cf. 2 Cor 9:7), you can donate monthly at www.faithalone.org.



How Do We Grieve the Holy Spirit?

By Ken Yates

We have all been told that as believers we should not grieve the Holy Spirit. I think it is safe to say that what we normally think this means is that if I commit a sexual sin, or some other kind of sin, the Holy Spirit who lives within me is grieved.

I have also heard it said that the Holy Spirit is grieved when I don't pray enough. He wants to have communion with me. After all, as a believer I am a temple of the Holy Spirit.

While all of this is no doubt true, I am convinced that this is not what Paul means in Eph 4:30. The usual way of understanding this verse has too much emphasis on the individual.

A couple of years ago, GES had a national conference on the Book of Ephesians. One of the things that came out in that conference is that Ephesians emphasizes the church. That made me take a closer look at what it means in Ephesians to grieve the Holy Spirit.

The verse in question occurs in a section that runs from 4:25-32. Even a casual reading of these

verses indicates Paul is talking about how believers treat one another within the Body of Christ. In the verse immediately before this section, Paul speaks of the "new man" (v 24). This is a reference to the church. The exact same phrase occurs in 2:15, where Paul specifically says the new man is the church.

We should notice how Paul speaks of the fact that we are "neighbors" and "members of one another" (v 25). Believers are to "share" with each other (v 28). We are to speak in a way that builds up others in the body (v 29). Members of the body are to be kind to "one another" and forgive one another. All of these things show the importance of how believers treat each other.


The command not to grieve the Holy Spirit is given right in the middle of these verses. In the previous verse (v 29), Paul tells the believers in Ephesus to speak to each other in a way that builds others up and is gracious. We are not commanded to be gracious *to ourselves*! We are to be gracious *towards others*. Within the body,



our words to each other should not be “corrupt.” The word *corrupt* has the basic meaning of *bad* or *useless*. In other words, within the church, we should speak in a way that builds up the body and does not tear it down. The very next sentence is: “don’t grieve the Spirit.”

It seems to me that in this context Paul is saying that believers grieve the Spirit when they do and say things that are not edifying the believers around them in the church. If we remember that it is the Spirit that has united us to the Body of Christ, this makes sense. If the Spirit has made us one, when we forget that we are united and manifest it by treating other believers badly, the Spirit is grieved.

What I am trying to say is that the grieving of the Spirit here is talking about how a church operates. It is talking about a corporate thing. The Spirit is grieved when the body is not functioning in a godly way. A picture of what Paul is discussing is a church that is full of dissension. Such a church breaks the heart of the Holy Spirit.

It is hard for us to think in this manner. We automatically think of our spiritual well-being in a very individualistic way. Paul is saying that it is not all about us as individuals. The church is extremely important to God. It is not just the individual Christian that is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). The church is the temple of the Holy Spirit as well (1 Cor 3:16). He is pleased when He sees healthy churches where the believers grow as a body. 



Ken Yates speaks for GES all around the world. His latest book is Hebrews: Partners with Christ.



123RF

Romans 13

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

By Zane Hodges

OBEYING THOSE IN AUTHORITY (13:1-7)

13:1. Paul begins by making clear that he conceives of no exceptions to what he is now saying (**every person**). The subjection enjoined here is based on the simple fact that **there is no authority if it is not bestowed by God**. God does not merely *allow* certain men to rule; He *arranges* it.

This point is now explicitly applied to the present situation. No one should attempt to divert the application to other times or circumstances. It is **the present authorities that are established by God**. This is true in our day as well.

13:2. Resistance to earthly authority is resistance to God Himself. Behind the emperor or the governor is **the ordinance of God Himself** who “appointed” these human authorities.

By *the ordinance of God* Paul refers to the God-ordained authority wielded by earthly officials.

Unless a law runs counter to a *direct divine command*, there is no Biblical authorization to disobey it (Acts 5:29). On the contrary, this passage commands obedience. Disobedience would result in **judgment** either from the secular ruler or from God, who is behind *the authority*.

13:3. A Christian need not be afraid about “judgment” from the earthly authority so long as his conduct is **good**. In fact, he can expect to

receive **praise** from the earthly authority for such behavior. Paul was well aware of potential exceptions to these words, but he is giving the basic principle.

The real way **not to be afraid of the authority** was to be a good citizen in every respect. A government is not normally in the habit of dealing out “judgment” to those who are good citizens. Instead such people are normally praised.

13:4. The civil ruler was **God’s servant** to them. Moreover, God’s “agent” was intended to produce **what was good** for the people, not evil. No doubt Paul has in mind the good order and societal tranquility which was a major function of government.

But if in fact the Christians did what was evil, they should indeed **be afraid**, since the government had the power of **the sword**. The words, **he does not bear the sword in vain**, remind the Christian readers that this power of *the sword* was no empty threat but a reality in the government’s dealings with evildoers.

The one in authority is **God’s servant, an avenger to bring wrath on the person who does evil**. The word *wrath* (*orgē*) occurs a dozen times in Romans (twenty-one times in all of Paul’s letters). The pivotal nature of this word in Romans is signaled by its extensive treatment early in the



123RF

main body of the epistle (1:18–2:5). Here Paul’s words are a warning that resistance to constituted authority would once again bring a believer within the range of God’s wrath, this time as conveyed through governmental authorities.

13:5. For Paul, **because of the wrath** as well as the **conscience**, the conclusion was obvious. If “the authorities that exist are established by God” (v 1) and “the person who resists” those authorities “resists the ordinance of God” (v 2), then a good conscience toward both God and men will naturally urge submission (cf. Acts 24:16).

13:6. The same reason for general submission applied to **taxes**. Tax collectors are referred to here as **God’s ministers**. It was certainly contrary to the general conception of tax collectors to regard them as ministers of divine things. Yet the civil ruler has a divine right of collecting taxes. To refuse to give these ministers their taxes, whether done overtly or covertly, was to refuse to give them what belonged to God.

The final words, **who are devoted to this very thing**, suggest that tax-collectors are engaged in a sacred duty.

13:7. No one should think that his duty is fulfilled if he pays just one kind of tax. What Paul seeks is a broad, general compliance that

results in the Christian rendering **to all what they are owed**. Whatever the form of tax might be, a **customs duty** for example, the Christian should pay it.

Nor is this submission to taxation to be accompanied by a rude and abrasive manner, but with **respect** and **honor**. No required tax is to be neglected, no official given less than the deference he deserves.

LIVING IN THE LIGHT OF THE LORD’S RETURN (13:8-14)

13:8. From the responsibility not to owe unpaid taxes, Paul now proceeds to urge the payment of all debts (**owe no one anything**), except the one debt that can never be fully paid: **to love one another**.

Paul is obviously thinking here of love for other Christians as the words *love one another* show. It is significant that Paul here explicitly affirms that **the one who loves another has fulfilled the law**. Paul’s words here are very precise. When one treats another person with love, he is doing what the law requires. In so far as he treats a person that way, he has *fulfilled the law* as regards *that* person. But a broad fulfillment in all areas of

Subscribe to the

**for new subscriptions.
Includes two issues.
Great gift for your
pastor.**



Spring 2019 / Volume 32 / Number 62

The Confession of the Centurion in Luke 23:47
Kenneth W. Vidou

Is the Concept of Reper Gospel, and If So, What?
Robert A. Wilkins

A Review of Richard J. F. Discipline: The Path to a Great Doshoo

The Whirlpool's Deadly
Zane C. Hodges

"Abraham Rejoiced to See It": Jesus' Take on Randy Rhoads

Review of Craig L. Blom
Reliability of John's Gospel
Edwin Eider

Book Reviews

**Journal
the Grace
Evangelical
Society**

Volume 32 / Number 63

and the

Kinson's Locations of Hope

U.S. Celebration of Economic Growth, Part 2

Samaritan Woman

rong on Ephesians 2:
It's Dead Man's Faith

**Journal of
the Grace
Evangelical
Society**

Spring 2020 / Volume 33 / Number 64

Discipleship and the Widow's Mites (Mark 12:41-44)
Kenneth W. Tate

Testing Yourself Regarding God's Approval and Disapproval (2 Corinthians 13:5-7)
Robert N. Wilkins

Crossing the Tiber: What's Driving the Evangelical Exodus to Rome?
Philippe R. Sterling

Dallas Theological Seminary on Salvation: A Survey of Some Popular Professors Between 1965-1990
Shawn Lazar

Dispensationalism's Refusal of the Social Gospel and the Effect of Its Refusal on the Urgency of Evangelization
Yoonhee Oh

Book Reviews

conduct is impossible for a sinful human being and is not at all in view here.

13:9-10. The proof of Paul's statement is extremely simple. The familiar commands not to "commit adultery," not to "murder," not to "steal," or not to "covet" are all designed to prevent wrong treatment of another ("your neighbor"). They can therefore be summed up by the second of the two great commandments of the law, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (cf. Matt 22:34-40). One should note here that *love (agapē)* is not defined by feelings, but by actions. Love's basic principle is that it does **not produce what is bad for a neighbor.**

13:11. Christians have a hope. Love is to be motivated by the realization that our final destiny is not far away. This meant that his readers already **know the time.**

In the phrase **you know...that the hour for us to awake out of sleep is already here**, Paul draws upon a familiar eschatological image, namely, that of the sleeper who is abruptly awakened by the unexpected arrival of prophesied events (Matt 24:43-44; Mark 13:35-36; Luke 21:36; 1 Thess 5:4-7).

With the words **now is our deliverance nearer than when we believed**, Paul refers again to the hope of a full and permanent deliverance from sin and from sin's impact on our Christian life. The consummation of this deliverance will be accomplished at the coming of the Lord. And since His coming is *nearer than* it was *when we believed*, the passage of time means that this consummation is closer than ever.

13:12. The era of spiritual darkness (**the night**) is far along (**has moved on**) toward its consummation in a brand-new day when righteousness shall reign on earth. The result is that **the day**, the new era of God's kingdom, **has drawn** that much nearer.

Christians should therefore "get dressed" for the arrival of *the day*. The image of dressing is conveyed by the Greek words for **let us take off...** and **let us clothe ourselves...** The Christian should

not be caught wearing "night clothes," that is, **the works of the darkness**. Instead he should dress himself in "day clothes," or in an outfit that is suited for the arrival of *the day* and the light. Clearly Paul has conduct in mind.

13:13. Christians should therefore **walk circumspectly**, that is, in a morally decent and decorous way. This meant that they should avoid **carousing and drunkenness**.

Such things could lead to **sexual misbehavior and licentiousness**, which is crass immorality.

Strife and jealousy also easily spring from such activity. Christians should avoid all this evil conduct.

13:14. Paul urges his readers to **clothe themselves in the Lord Jesus Christ**. Since for Paul "to live [was] Christ" (Phil 1:21), he obviously thinks that if *Jesus Christ* is manifest in a believer's conduct that this is the essence of true Christian experience.

In addition, they should **take no forethought for the desires of the flesh**. The Christian is not to "set his mind" on the things of the flesh and thus pre-condition himself to fulfill its desires. He should *take no forethought* for that and instead cultivate a spiritual perspective by "putting on" *the Lord Jesus Christ*. His mental and moral focus should be on Jesus Christ. ■

"[L]ove (agapē) is not defined by feelings, but by actions. Love's basic principle is that it does not produce what is bad for a neighbor."



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

GRACE FOCUS

Would people in your church, small group, or Bible study benefit from a free subscription to *Grace in Focus*? Then sign them up!

Top 5 Reasons Not to Tear Down Your House

By Summer Stevens

I watched him walk up the stairs to our room. It was the third weekend in a row we'd had a stupid argument, and this one was on me and we both knew it. I flopped onto the couch and sighed in frustration.

Immediately a verse flashed into my mind: "A wise woman builds her house, but the foolish one pulls it down with her hands" (Prov 14:1).

That's quite a picture—a wild-eyed woman tearing and clawing at the very bricks that protect her from the elements, heaping them into a pile. She's hurting herself, and she knows it, but she can't seem to stop. And at the end of the day, she has to return to that broken-down mangled house and live in it.

I don't want to live in that house. No woman does. Every married woman I know wants a strong marriage, a happy home, and a life of purpose. Yet I allow little destructive behaviors, thoughts, and words into the most sacred places and relationships.

What does it mean to pull down your house, and why do women do this? More importantly, how can we be wise women who build our houses?

First, we must ask the question, what is my house? I am going to propose that our house is our domain of domestic responsibility and

authority. How we build or tear down impacts those with whom we live.

Here are five ways we tear down our house:

1 By not being a gatekeeper. There is something significant that happens when someone crosses the threshold of our home. What happens inside our home is our responsibility. Women must be the gatekeepers to guard what types of influences we allow in. Many husbands trust their wives in this arena, so while he is ultimately responsible for his home and family, women can and should provide the first level of defense.

First, examine movies and music and books. We must be diligent here! Not only for children's media but also for our own. I've had to put down an intriguing book series because there was an element of witchcraft woven into each story, and I felt convicted about bringing that into my mind and into my home. When I allow influences into my home that I know don't honor God, I am not only hurting my fellowship with Jesus, but I'm doing damage to the atmosphere of the house that I have the privilege of building.

As gatekeepers, women also determine what types of attitudes we let through. Are we a family that gives the silent treatment? Do we use sarcasm? Do we explode over little things? Ladies,



123RF

even if you work outside the home, the home is your domain—you get to control what passes through your door.

Build your house: Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and discernment to guard your house from destructive influences and for the strength to make changes.

2 **By cutting down our husbands.** This is the primary way most women tear down their house—by tearing down their husband. He doesn't help enough; he doesn't talk enough; he doesn't listen; he works too much; he doesn't work enough; he's not like my friend's husband; he's not like my dad; he's just like my dad. As the proverb says, "It is better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman" (Prov 25:24). The wise woman builds up her house by building up her husband. It doesn't matter how great everything else is, if you have a contentious relationship with your husband, no one wants to be in that house.

God has given your husband to you as your protector, so let him protect you. His presence and provision are the essential elements of the bricks of your house, and when you criticize and cut him down, or when you will not trust his decisions, you remove yourself from his protection and make your house weak.

Build your house: If you have a habit of cutting down your husband, the easiest way to make a change is to start thanking him for big things and little things *every day*. If your criticism of him is mostly in your head, make an agreement with yourself to arrest those thoughts, and every time a negative thought comes, replace it with three things about him that you're thankful for (2 Cor 10:5).

3 **By allowing discontentment to creep in.** A few years back I started watching HGTV. There was something so satisfying about

watching a boring home transform into something sparkling and stylish in under an hour. I was hooked. The more I saw other people's successful projects, the less appealing my own kitchen appeared, and the more interested I became in fixing it up. I would spend hours looking on Pinterest, and then I signed up for Instagram and it got even worse. When we decided to remodel our own "boring" house, my online searches became even more frenzied. I knew my time investment in redoing my kitchen had gone beyond proper stewardship, but by this point I was too far into it to back out. It's not that the remodel itself was a sin, but my discontentment was. All I could see in my house was what was

plain or outdated. I got a beautiful kitchen, but I failed to see the fullness of the beauty of Jesus in that season of life. My relationship with Him was stagnant. I was so thankful when Jesus rescued me from that mentality and restored my perspective. (And we moved into another dated house, but I'm so thankful for my home and the people in it that I'm not consumed by a desire to fix it.)

A foolish woman tears down her house when she allows discontentment to cloud the beauty and provision of God. This isn't just about your physical house;

discontentment can seep into any arena of life, from relationships to church life to body image.

Build your house: Remember, *you* are a critical part of your house. You set the tone in your home for the rest of your family. May we be women of profound contentment and praise! "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh 24:15).

4 **By neglecting our house.** You might be thinking that this contradicts point 3, but obsession and maintenance are two different things, and they originate from different places in our souls.

Whether you rent a tiny city apartment or own a sprawling estate, women have the privilege of creating the culture of the home. What kind of

**"Build your house:
Ask the Holy Spirit
for wisdom and
discernment to
guard your house
from destructive
influences and for
the strength to
make changes."**



home do you envision? Is it one of peace and tranquility, where people come to rest and rejuvenate? Or is your home a place of joy, creativity, and laughter? Perhaps you value hospitality, making guests feel welcomed over a meal shared or a guest room thoughtfully prepared. The foolish woman does not consider her house a thing of value and therefore not worthy of care. I'm not talking only about the four walls, I'm talking about what her home means to her family and beyond. Do you take time to intentionally cultivate the atmosphere of your home, to make it a place of safety and renewal and love for your husband, your children, your guests and yourself? If not, why not? Where do you and your loved ones go to have these needs met if not at home?

Build your house: With input from the members of your family, take time to describe the home you envision for your family, and make a list of a few things you can do to make that home a reality. If kids' activities, work, or volunteering have so crowded your life that you have no time to devote to "home-making," consider reducing your commitments.

5 By starving the builder. Jesus frequently spent time alone with God to rest and recover from the demands of discipling *grown men*, and somehow as moms we think we

can handle the all-encompassing needs of dependent children and run a home without taking care of our own bodies and souls. A builder cannot continue to build if he is starving. Here is the hard truth—we will tear down our house if we do not order our life. If we are physically or spiritually depleted, everything and everyone in our house suffers.

Build your house: Prioritize your time to allow for physical and spiritual restoration—time in the Word, time alone to pray, think, journal, or be still, time to exercise, time for daily hygiene, time for romance, and time to play with your kids. **GLE**



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.

How Would You Define Saving Faith?

By Bob Wilkin

I still use the expression *saving faith* occasionally since it saves a lot of space. By saving faith, I mean faith in the saving object, the gift of God (everlasting life, John 4:10, 14; Eph 2:8) given by the Messiah Giver Jesus (John 4:25-26; 6:47).

But what is faith? It probably is no surprise to you that most Evangelicals today do not believe that faith is persuasion. Indeed, many ridicule the idea that saving faith is merely being convinced of the saving truth.

Please take a moment and put down on paper in 25 words or less what faith is.

All done?

Here is what most Evangelicals today say.

One leading pastor and theologian defines faith in this way: “Receiving Christ as your supreme Treasure is what faith is,” and “An essential element of saving faith is treasuring Christ above all things,” and “Faith includes the embrace of Jesus as our all-satisfying Treasure.”¹

A President of a theological school defines saving faith more theologically and philosophically: “...faith is more than intellectual assent.”² He said it includes a mental aspect,

“comprehending the claims of Christ,” an emotional aspect, “[having] confidence in the claims of Christ,” and a willful aspect, “committing to the claims of Christ.”³ What are the claims of Christ that one is to comprehend, commit to, and have confidence in? And what precisely does that mean?

A leading pastor, theologian, and radio personality said on his daily radio show,

...the Bible does not present faith as simply “mental assent to the facts of the gospel.”

True saving faith involves repentance from one’s sin and a complete trust in the work of Christ to save from sin and make one righteous. The Reformers spoke of three aspects of faith: recognition of the truth claims of the gospel, acknowledgment of their truthfulness and exact correspondence to man’s spiritual need, and a personal commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ who, by virtue of His death, provides the only sufficient sacrifice for one’s personal sin. Any one of these three aspects of faith, taken by themselves, is insufficient to meet the biblical definition of saving faith. However, the presence of all three components together results in saving faith. In other words, saving faith consists of mental, emotional, and volitional elements. Saving faith involves both the mind and the will.⁴

Is it any wonder that people are confused about what they need to do in order to be born again? If faith in Christ is not simply believing in Him, but includes some sort of emotional and volitional responses, then no one can be sure that he is born again. That is why so many Evangelicals look to their works as evidence that they have had the proper emotional and volitional responses to the claims of the gospel, whatever those are.

So, how did you define faith?

Here is my definition of faith and of saving faith:

Faith is being convinced that some proposition is true (8 words). Saving faith is being persuaded that the saving proposition is true (10 words).


In other words, saving faith is being convinced that Jesus guarantees everlasting life to all who are persuaded that by faith in Him they have that



irrevocable life. To believe in Jesus for everlasting life is like believing in President Biden for stimulus checks. We did not need an emotional response or a volitional commitment in order to believe that stimulus money was coming. Indeed, if you file your taxes electronically, then the stimulus money was directly deposited into your bank account.⁵

“He who lives and believes in Me shall never die [spiritually]” (John 11:26a). Simple. Easy to understand.

The question is, “Do you believe this?” (John 11:26b).

If you do, then you know that you have everlasting life. 



Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He lives in Highland Village, TX, with his wife of 45 years, Sharon.

1. John Piper at <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/why-does-john-piper-complicate-saving-faith>.

2. David R. Anderson, *A Defense of Free Grace Theology*, ed. by Fred Chay, p. 69. He says that I am the only person he knows who believes that faith is mere intellectual assent (p. 69).

3. Ibid., p. 71.

4. John MacArthur, “What is the nature of true saving faith?” at <https://www.gty.org/library/questions/QA164/what-is-the-nature-of-true-saving-faith>.

5. Of course, the illustration is not airtight since you did not have to believe that the President was sending out stimulus checks in order to receive them. You did not need to do anything. You simply had to be a U.S. citizen. But if the government had the ability to know who believed, they would send a check, and the government could limit those who receive the money to those who believe in the President for the money.



North Carolina Regional



Free Grace Bible Church September 11 & 12

Pastor John Brumett came down with a cold and stuffy head and cough—but not Covid. He called and asked if I could speak for him. Because of Covid, he had to move his church from its old location to meeting in homes.

He asked me to critique perseverance theology as found in Wayne Grudem's book, *Free Grace Theology: 5 Ways It Diminishes the Gospel*. I worked up a message with the broader title of "Why Soft Lordship Salvation



Studying with saints from Sachse

Misses the Grace of God." *Kathryn, Ken, Olivia, Rod, Bernie*

I gave the same message on Saturday and Sunday. Both were well received. The people were very receptive for the teaching, and they really encouraged me.

Ken and Kathryn's Ministry in September

After coming back from Kenya at the beginning of September, we (Ken and Kathryn) resumed our Zoom classes. We have started a new series on Tuesday mornings that will cover Revelation and end times. We have a few new members, and it looks like it will be a good study. We are also continuing our class on the Gospel of John on Saturday afternoons and a Thursday study on Bob's book *The Ten Most Misunderstood Words*. We are excited to see how these studies grow this fall.

We also had a follow-up meeting with *Acres of Mercy* in Kenya to discuss our future plans. The couple who



Jimmy and Catherine from Acres of Mercy



Bojects in mirror are larger than they appear.

run this ministry, Jimmy and Catherine, are solid Free Grace supporters and have a desire to reach the churches in their area with Free Grace. After speaking with them we are planning on expanding our ministry there by having community Bible studies and leadership conferences. This would include developing long-term courses that build upon our previous conferences. The goal would be to not just reach the pastors, but also the leadership, Sunday school teachers, and even laymen. We are excited to see where the Lord takes this ministry. Prayers would be appreciated.



We are also heading to Pennsylvania the last week of September for the *Christian Chiropractors Association* convention. Ken will be speaking three times on the Book of Hebrews.

Tours de Fleurs Half Marathon White Rock Lake, Dallas September 18

Bethany and Bob both competed in this half marathon (13.1 miles) in the heat of mid-September in North Texas. It was 71 degrees at the 7AM start and 82 degrees by the time we finished. It was a challenging race. We both finished in under 3 hours.



Bob "the Jet" Wilkin

Chapel Hill North Carolina Regional September 24-25

Ken, Kathryn, and Bob went to this regional to speak. Pastor Rod Chaney also spoke and graciously hosted the event. About fifty people from North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, and even one couple from Ohio came. Our theme was 1 Thessalonians. We walked through the entire book. Videos of the conference can be seen at the Sunrise Church website (<https://www.isunrise.org/ges-rc>). We hope to have the messages on our YouTube channel within a few weeks.



Bob towering over Matt and Emily

Progress on Old Testament Commentary

Lucas Kitchen has already completed the first draft of commentaries on Esther (10 chapters) and Ruth (4 chapters). Ken Yates has completed sixteen chapters for Deuteronomy. David Renfro and Bob Wilkin have each completed several chapters on Exodus and Genesis, respectively.

This is remarkable progress in just over a month and bodes well for completing the commentary on schedule.

Paul Rejected Salvation by Non-Meritorious Works

By Shawn Lazar

Some works-salvation teachers will try to soften—or obscure!—their message by saying that doing good works is necessary for salvation, but those works are not meritorious. In their view, requiring works for salvation becomes a problem only if you think you can earn your way into heaven.

Is that a possible Biblical position?

Consider what Paul said about wages and grace—

Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt (Rom 4:4).

Here's a straightforward principle—if someone pays you for your work, is that considered grace? No. If you work for someone, then he owes you for your work. When your boss pays you for a 40-hour week, he isn't doing you a favor but paying what's rightfully owed you. He's in your debt.

In other words, Paul wants you to see there is a difference between working for payment and receiving a gift. And he makes no distinction between meritorious and non-meritorious works. As far as he's concerned, all works are meritorious and therefore a matter of debt and payment. That sets up the other side of the antithesis:

But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness (Rom 4:5).



123RF

You might expect Paul to contrast the *worker* with the *non-worker*, but what he does is contrast the *worker* and the *believer*. Works have to do with wages. Faith has to do with grace.

So as far as Paul is concerned, there are two religious possibilities. Either you hold to a works and wages system or to a faith and grace system. What you cannot do is have a hybrid system of non-meritorious works combined with grace. The one excludes the other:

And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work (Rom 11:6).

So don't be fooled—salvation by faith plus “non-meritorious” works is just another name for works salvation. That is contrary to grace. You should reject it, just as Paul rejected it, because if something is of works, then it is no longer of grace.

The argument for salvation by non-meritorious works is without merit. **■**



Shawn Lazar edits and writes for Grace in Focus. In his spare time, he practices the peaceful art of nap-fu.

THE BOOKSTORE

40% off
retail on bulk
orders of
10+ copies

SALE



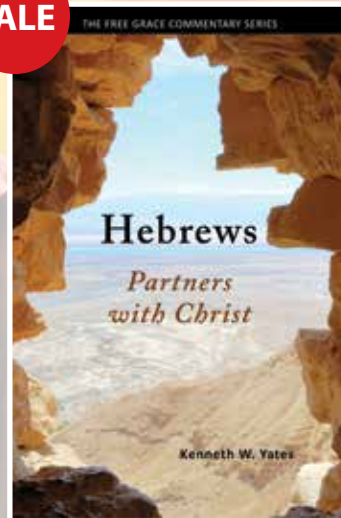
Faith Alone in One Hundred Verses

Robert N. Wilkin

Did you know that there are at least one-hundred verses that teach salvation by faith? Written in a devotional style, this book guides the reader through the overwhelming evidence for salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus.

USD ~~\$18.00~~ **\$8.00**
Softcover • 296 pages
Code: fav

SALE



Hebrews: Partners with Christ

Kenneth W. Yates

This verse-by-verse commentary explains how Hebrews encourages believers to persevere so they will rule with Christ in His kingdom. It also warns against the deadly consequences of falling away from Christ.

USD ~~\$22.00~~ **\$8.00**
Softcover • 244 pages
Code: hpwc



Is Calvinism Biblical? Let the Scriptures Decide

Robert N. Wilkin

Wilkin compares the five points of Calvinism against twelve key verses.

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 166 pages
Code: icb

SALE

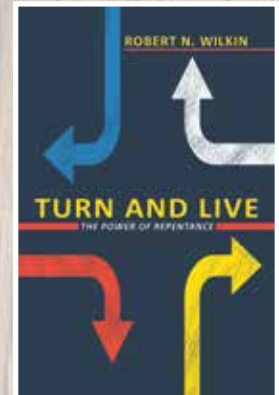


Chosen to Serve: Why Divine Election Is to Service, Not to Eternal Life

Shawn Lazar

Is Biblical election about eternal life or service to God?

USD ~~\$18.00~~ **\$8.00**
Softcover • 284 pages
Code: cts



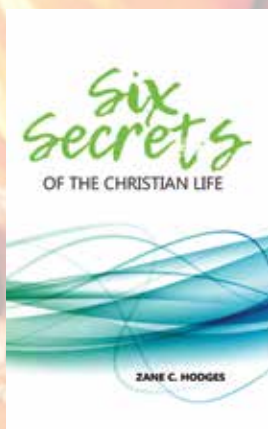
Turn and Live: The Power of Repentance

Robert N. Wilkin

What is the nature and purpose of repentance?

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 158 pages
Code: tal

GO TO WWW.FAITHALONE.ORG TO SIGN UP FOR FLASH SALES!



Six Secrets of the Christian Life

Zane C. Hodges

Hodges sets forth some basic principles for growing in Christ. Second Edition, with study questions.

USD \$12.00
Softcover • 100 pages
Code: ssl2

SALE



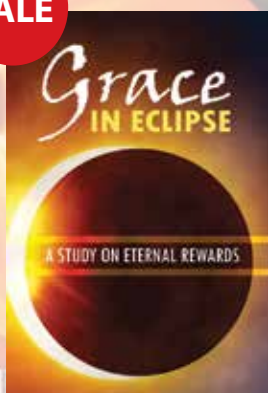
The Gospel Under Siege: Faith and Works in Tension

Zane C. Hodges

What is the relationship between faith and works?

USD ~~\$16.00~~ **\$5.00**
Softcover • 266 pages
Code: gus2

SALE



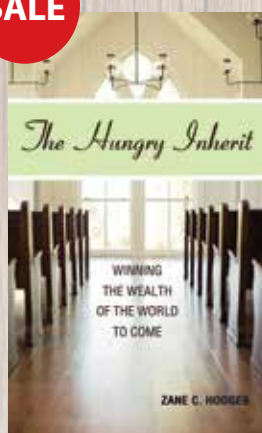
Grace in Eclipse: A Study on Eternal Rewards

Zane C. Hodges

How does the doctrine of rewards relate to the saving message?

USD ~~\$15.00~~ **\$5.00**
Softcover • 168 pages
Code: gie2

SALE

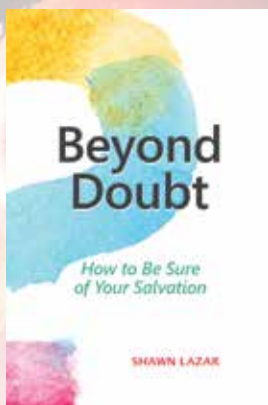


The Hungry Inherit

Zane C. Hodges

The burden of this work is to clearly distinguish between salvation and discipleship.

USD ~~\$15.00~~ **\$5.00**
Softcover • 160 pages
Code: thi

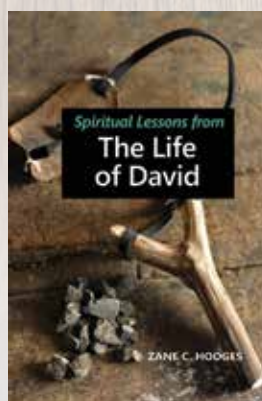


Beyond Doubt: How to Be Sure of Your Salvation

Shawn Lazar

What are the most common errors that lead to a lack of assurance?

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 154 pages
Code: bd

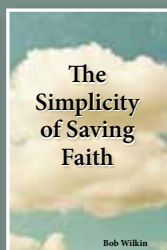
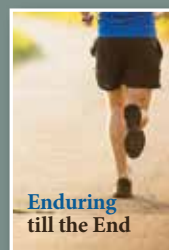


Spiritual Lessons from the Life of David

Zane C. Hodges

What can you learn about the spiritual life from David and Saul?

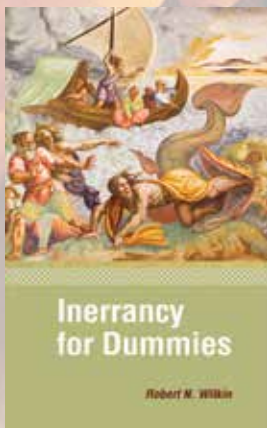
USD \$10.00
Softcover • 94 pages
Code: lod



Booklets

- Enduring till the End / Code: ete
- His Promise Is Certain / Code: hpc
- The Simplicity of Saving Faith / Code: ssf
- What Is Free Grace Theology? / Code: fgt
- You Can Be Eternally Secure / Code: ycbs
- You Can Be Sure! / Code: ycbs
- Puedes Estar Seguro / Code: ycbs-sp

Quantity:	Price Each
1-24	\$.25
Pack of 25	\$5.00

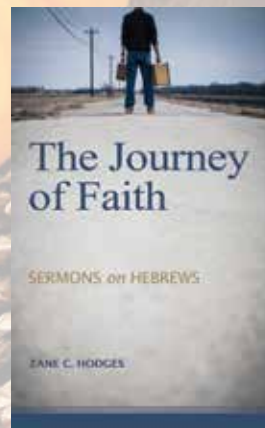


Inerrancy for Dummies

Robert N. Wilkin

Wilkin explains “true inerrancy,” and how to resolve alleged discrepancies in the Bible.

USD \$7.95
Softcover • 75 pages
Code: ifd

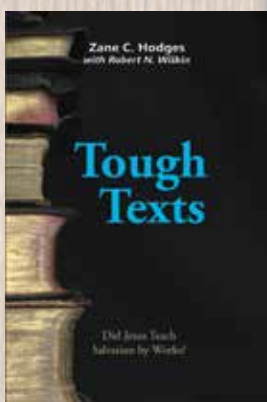


The Journey of Faith: Sermons on Hebrews

Zane C. Hodges

The Epistle to the Hebrews is about the incredible journey of faith.

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 212 pages
Code: jof



Tough Texts: Did Jesus Teach Salvation by Works?

Hodges & Wilkin

Zane and Bob discuss passages in the Synoptic Gospels that seem to teach salvation by works.

USD \$18.00
Softcover • 174 pages
Code: tt



Power to Stand: An Exposition of Jude

Zane C. Hodges

God gives every believer the power to stand, so as not to fall away.

USD \$9.00
Softcover • 76 pages
Code: pts



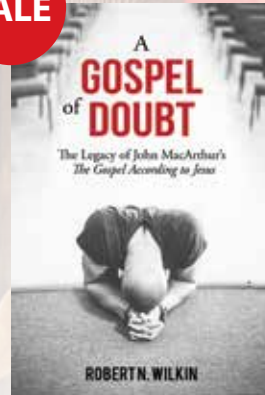
What Is the Outer Darkness?

Zane C. Hodges with Robert N. Wilkin

Zane and Bob discuss all three occurrences of the phrase “the outer darkness” in Matthew.

USD \$14.00
Softcover • 112 pages
Code: wod

SALE

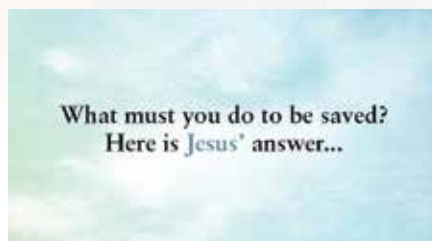


A Gospel of Doubt: The Legacy of John MacArthur's The Gospel According to Jesus

Robert N. Wilkin

Wilkin shows how to move from a gospel of doubt, to a gospel of assurance.

USD ~~\$22.00~~ **\$8.00**
Softcover • 305 pages
Code: agd



Evangelism Business Cards

USD \$15.00
Box of 200 cards
Code: ebc

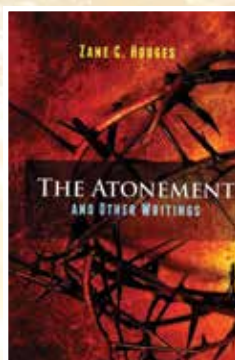


Absolutely Free: A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation

Zane C. Hodges

This book clearly explains how popular theologies tend to confuse faith and works, salvation and discipleship, eternal life and eternal rewards.

USD \$20.00
Softcover • 272 pages
Code: af2

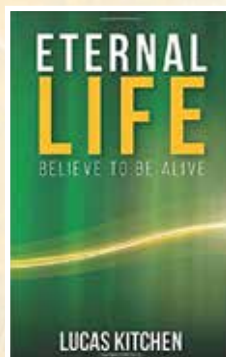


The Atonement and Other Writings

Zane C. Hodges

This book collects three hard-to-find shorter works by Hodges: *The Atonement*; *Jesus, God's Prophet*; and *Did Paul Preach Eternal Life?*

USD \$15.95
Softcover • 116 pages
Code: atm



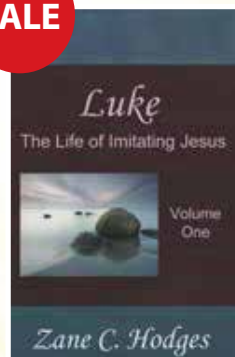
Eternal Life: Believe to Be Alive

Lucas Kitchen

This easy-to-read book gives an entertaining and illustrative view of the concept of eternal life and what you must do to receive it.

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 300 pages
Code: el

SALE

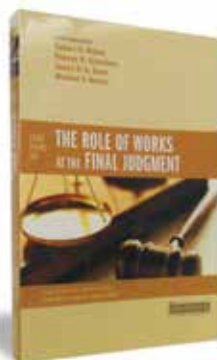


Luke: The Life of Imitating Jesus, Volume Two

Zane C. Hodges

The second volume of sermons on Luke, delivered by Zane Hodges at Victor Street Bible Chapel, East Dallas.

USD \$8.95 ~~-\$2.50~~
Softcover • 71 pages
Code: Luke-Vol2

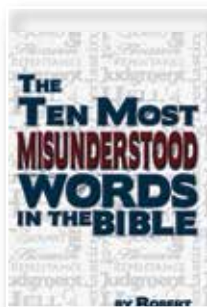


Four Views on the Role of Works at the Final Judgment

Robert N. Wilkin, Thomas R. Schreiner, James D. G. Dunn, Michael P. Barber

Through a discussion of Biblical texts, this book presents four perspectives on the role of works at the final judgment including: Robert N. Wilkin, works will determine rewards but not salvation, and Thomas R. Schreiner, works will provide evidence that one actually has been saved.

Out of Stock.

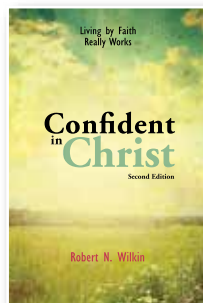


The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible

Robert N. Wilkin

An exploration of Biblical terms everyone knows, and yet few understand.

USD \$9.95
Softcover • 221 pages
Code: ten



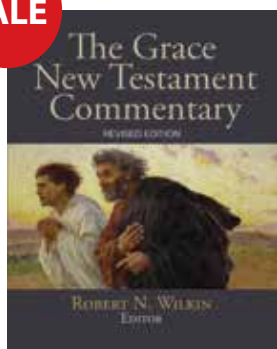
Confident in Christ (Second Edition)

Robert N. Wilkin

This book examines sixteen "tough texts" from the NT that are often used to teach salvation by works.

USD \$22.00
Softcover • 278 pages
Code: cic2

SALE



***The Grace
New Testament
Commentary (Revised
Edition)***

Ed. Robert N. Wilkin

This edition has hundreds of corrections, and is newly typeset as a one-volume paperback. It now includes a condensed version of Zane Hodges's *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*.

USD ~~\$35.00~~ **\$20.00**

Softcover • 658 pages

Code: gntc



***Grudem Against
Grace: A Defense of
Free Grace Theology***

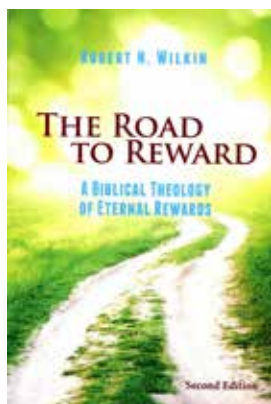
Robert N. Wilkin

Wilkin responds to Grudem's critique of Free Grace.

USD \$15.00

Softcover • 144 pages

Code: gag



***The Road to Reward
(Second Edition)***

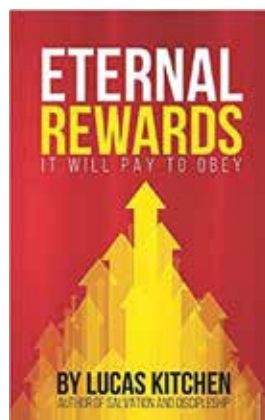
Robert N. Wilkin

Robert N. Wilkin takes us through the Biblical doctrine of eternal rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

USD \$20.00

Softcover • 200 pages

Code: rr2



***Eternal Rewards: It
Will Pay to Obey***

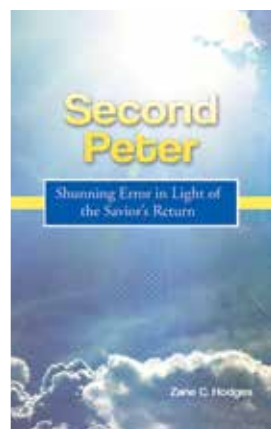
Lucas Kitchen

Whether you're new to the concept, or a long-time student of the Bible, you will enjoy this graphical exploration of rewards in Heaven.

USD \$15.00

Softcover • 280 pages

Code: er



***Second Peter: Shunning
Error in Light of the
Savior's Return***

Zane C. Hodges

Second Peter is about growing in holiness in light of the Second Coming. Through this commentary, you will long for the Savior's soon return!

USD \$15.00

Softcover • 142 pages

Code: 2pet



***First Peter: The
Salvation of the Soul***

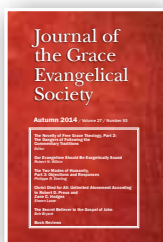
Zane C. Hodges

As you read through First Peter, you will better understand God's desire to save your soul.

USD \$10.00

Softcover • 106 pages

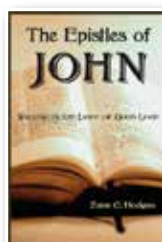
Code: 1pet



Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

100+ pages. Two issues each year. Scholarly yet practical articles and reviews.

USD \$18.50 / \$9.25 for new or gift subscriptions.
Code: jotges
View website for other special deals.



The Epistles of John

Zane C. Hodges

First John is all about fellowship with God, not tests of life. Second and Third John are also explained in this valuable commentary.

USD \$8.95
Softcover • 312 pages
Code: 1-3john



Best of Zane Hodges DVD

Over 10 hours of Zane Hodges's messages on two DVDs utilizing a combination of video, when available, or audio with transcription.

USD ~~\$40.00~~ \$15.00
2 DVDs
Code: bozhdvd



The Epistle of James

Zane C. Hodges

This is the best commentary available on James. The section on James 2:14-26 has helped thousands understand this pivotal passage.

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 128 pages
Code: jas



Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism

C. Gordon Olson

Defends a middle view of salvation between Calvin and Arminius.

USD \$20.00
Softcover • 467 pages
Code: bca



Secure and Sure

Robert N. Wilkin

Assurance of eternal life is one of the most important, and for many, elusive truths. You can be secure and sure.

USD \$9.95
Softcover • 252 pages
Code: sas



A Free Grace Primer

Zane C. Hodges

Collects three of Hodges's books, *The Hungry Inherit*, *The Gospel Under Siege*, and *Grace in Eclipse*.

USD \$20.00
Softcover • 571 pages
Code: fgp2

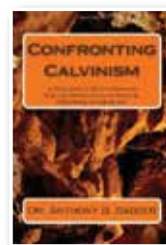


Romans: Deliverance from Wrath

Zane C. Hodges

Romans teaches us about deliverance from temporal wrath and slavery to sin.

USD \$24.99
Softcover • 488 pages
Code: rom

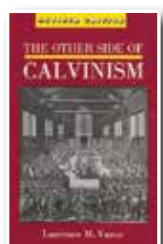


Confronting Calvinism

Anthony B. Badger

A detailed refutation of the Five Points of Calvinism from a Free Grace perspective.

USD \$24.95
Softcover • 397 pages
Code: cc



The Other Side of Calvinism

Laurence M. Vance

This is a detailed historical examination and critical Biblical analysis of the philosophical speculations and theological implications of Calvinism

USD \$29.95
Hardcover • 800 pages
Code: osc



Harmony with God

Zane C. Hodges

Repentance is one of the most misunderstood doctrines in the church today. If you have questions about repentance, read this book.

USD \$9.95
Softcover • 133 pages
Code: hwg



Free Grace Theology on Trial

Anthony B. Badger

This book presents a careful, point-for-point defense against the charges made by Wayne Grudem in "Free Grace" Theology: 5 Ways it Diminishes the Gospel and D.A. Carson's *Exegetical Fallacies*.

USD \$24.95
Softcover • 375 pages
Code: fgtt

The Master List

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

- ~~\$18.50~~ (renewal) / \$9.25 (new or gift subscription) Other options available on website.

The Grace New Testament Commentary (Revised Edition)

- ~~\$35.00~~ **\$20.00**

Anthony B. Badger

- Confronting Calvinism*, \$24.95
- Free Grace Theology on Trial*, \$24.95

Steve Elkins

- The Roman Road Revisited: New Vistas on the Road to Resurrection Living*, **Out of print.**
- Keys to Kingdom Greatness: An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*, \$19.95

Zane Hodges

- Absolutely Free* (2nd ed.), \$20.00
- The Atonement and Other Writings*, \$15.95
- The Epistle of James*, \$15.00
- The Epistles of John*, \$8.95
- Faith in His Name: Listening to the Gospel of John*, \$15.00
- First Peter: The Salvation of the Soul*, \$10.00
- A Free Grace Primer*, \$20.00
- Grace in Eclipse*, ~~\$15.00~~ **\$5.00**
- The Gospel Under Siege*, ~~\$16.00~~ **\$5.00**
- Harmony with God*, \$9.95
- Here Walks My Enemy: The Story of Luis*, \$5.00 (**hardcover**), \$3.00 (**paperback**)
- The Hungry Inherit*, ~~\$15.00~~ **\$5.00**
- Jesus, God's Prophet*, \$5.95
- The Journey of Faith: Sermons on Hebrews*, \$15.00
- Luke* (Vol 1) **Out of print**
- Luke* (Vol 2), ~~\$8.95~~ **\$2.50**
- Power to Make War*, \$8.95
- Power to Stand: An Exposition of Jude*, \$9.00
- Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*, \$24.99
- Second Peter: Shunning Error in Light of the Savior's Soon Return*, \$15.00
- Six Secrets of the Christian Life* (Second Edition), \$12.00
- Spiritual Lessons from the Life of David*, \$10.00

- Tough Texts: Did Jesus Teach Salvation by Works?*, \$18.00

- What Is the Outer Darkness?*, \$14.00

Lucas Kitchen

- Eternal Rewards: It Will Pay to Obey*, \$15.00
- Eternal Life: Believe to Be Alive*, \$15.00

Shawn C. Lazar

- Beyond Doubt: How to Be Sure of Your Salvation*, \$15.00
- Chosen to Serve: Why Divine Election Is to Service, Not to Eternal Life*, ~~\$18.00~~ **\$8.00**

Bill Lee

- Grace Recovered*, \$9.95

C. Gordon Olson

- Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism*, \$20.00

Lawrence Vance

- The Other Side of Calvinism*, \$29.95

Bob Wilkin

- Confident in Christ* (2nd ed.), \$22.00
- Four Views on the Role of Works at the Final Judgment* (Out of stock)
- A Gospel of Doubt: The Legacy of John MacArthur's The Gospel According to Jesus*, ~~\$22.00~~ **\$8.00**
- Faith Alone in One Hundred Verses*, ~~\$18.00~~ **\$8.00**
- Grudem Against Grace: A Defense of Free Grace Theology*, \$15.00
- Inerrancy for Dummies*, \$7.95
- Is Calvinism Biblical? Let the Scriptures Decide*, \$15.00
- The Road to Reward* (2nd ed.), \$20.00
- Secure and Sure*, \$9.95
- The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible*, \$9.95
- Turn and Live: The Power of Repentance*, \$15.00

Kenneth W. Yates

- Hebrews: Partners with Christ*, ~~\$22.00~~ **\$8.00**

For more titles and exclusive online sales go to www.faithalone.org

3 WAYS TO ORDER

1. BY PHONE (940-270-8827)
2. ONLINE AT FAITHALONE.ORG/BOOKSTORE.HTML
3. OR COMPLETE THE ORDER FORM BELOW



ORDER FORM

Prices effective until January 15, 2022
Refunds / Exchanges only within 60 days of purchase date.



SHIPPING ADDRESS

(NO PO BOXES IF ORDER IS OVER \$30)

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

PHONE

EMAIL

ACCT.# (IF YOU KNOW IT)

BILLING ADDRESS

(IF DIFFERENT FROM SHIPPING ADDRESS)

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

PHONE

EMAIL

ACCT.# (IF YOU KNOW IT)

METHOD OF PAYMENT (CIRCLE ONE)

CASH

CHECK

MONEY ORDER

CREDIT CARD

SEND CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO:

GRACE EVANGELICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 1308
DENTON, TX 76202

CREDIT CARD INFORMATION:

VISA

MASTERCARD

CREDIT CARD #

EXP. DATE

CSC# (3 DIGIT CODE)

NAME ON CARD

CODE

TITLE

QTY

PRICE

AMOUNT

EXTRAS

Extra copies of this magazine are available for \$1/ea, while supplies last. Call for cost of shipping and handling. Foreign subscription prices are \$28 per year to Canada, and \$48 per year for all other countries.

SHIPPING

All personal orders \$150 and over will receive free shipping. Bookstores and institutions will be charged regular UPS shipping rates.

SHIPPING CHARGES

Media Mail:
\$4.00 first item
\$2.50 for each additional item
\$150+ FREE

UPS:

\$0-\$20	\$12.75
\$21-\$50	\$16.75
\$51+	30%

SUBTOTAL

SHIPPING

DONATION

TOTAL

Simon, Peter, or Cephas?

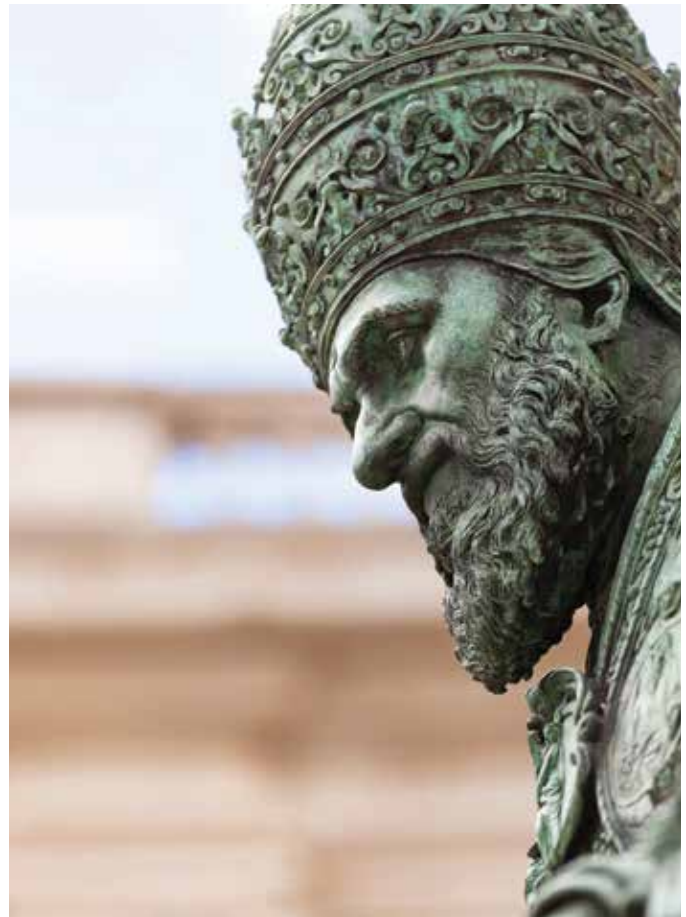
By Laurence M. Vance

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed” (Gal 2:11).

Although this verse seems rather inconspicuous, it is actually one of the most significant verses in the New Testament. This is not to say that Paul meant it to be so when he initially wrote it, for he could never have imagined how things developed in church history after his death. But for that matter, neither could any Christian in the early church have ever imagined what nowadays passes for Christianity or a church.

THE APOSTLE PETER

In the Pauline Epistles, Peter is only mentioned in 1 Corinthians and Galatians. His name appears six times in Galatians chaps. 1-2 (1:18, 2:7, 8, 9, 11, and 14). Although he is only referred to as “Cephas” on one of these occasions (Gal 2:9), most modern versions (CSB, ESV, HCSB, NASB, NEB, NET, NRSV, REB, RSV) change the name “Peter” to “Cephas” in three places (Gal 1:18, 2:11, 14), following the NA/UBS critical text. Some modern versions (CEV, GNT, NIRV, NLT) read “Peter” in all three places, following the KJV, NKJV, Majority Text, and the Textus Receptus. The early editions of the *New International Version* (NIV) read “Peter,” but the latest edition (2011) reads “Cephas.” The Roman Catholic *Rheims New Testament* (1582) reads “Peter” in Gal 1:18, but “Cephas” in the



123RF

other two places. Modern Catholic Bibles like the *New American Bible* (NAB) read “Cephas” in all three places.

WHY THE CHANGE?

Why were these verses changed early in church history?

Before launching into a discussion of justification by faith, Paul recounts to the churches of Galatia some events that transpired in his dealings with the other apostles because it is relevant to his discussion of justification. We are told here that Paul not only “withstood” Peter “to the face,” but that Peter “was to be blamed.” Whatever Peter did, it was not only wrong, it was his fault. The next verse gives the reason why Peter “was to be blamed.” What should be noted here, however, is the fact that Paul “withstood him to the face.” What is so profound about this statement is that Peter, according to the Roman Catholic Church, was the first pope—the bishop of Rome, the vicar of Christ, the head of the church.

THE POPE

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the “rock” of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock. The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head. This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church’s very foundation and is continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope.

The *Pope*, Bishop of Rome and Peter’s successor, ‘is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful.’ For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of this office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.

For anyone to withstand a modern pope “to the face” would be unthinkable. Yet, this is exactly what Paul did to Peter, supposedly the first pope. So as John Calvin said: “And here the Roman Papacy is struck down by another thunderbolt.”¹

So how does changing Peter’s name to Cephas solve the problem? Is not Peter also called Cephas (Gal 2:9)? Yes he is, but since Peter is rarely called Cephas, it is easier to invent another person named Cephas than it is to invent another person named Peter. And this is exactly what some of the church fathers did. They made another disciple named Cephas one of the seventy that Christ sent out (Luke 10:1). Therefore, the Cephas that Paul rebuked was not the Apostle Peter.

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

If Peter and Cephas are the same person, what of the variation in names in Galatians 2? In Mark 3:16-17, the Lord Jesus surnamed Simon with the name of “Peter”; James and John he surnamed “Boanerges.” Peter’s original name was Simon, the Greek form of the Hebrew Simeon. Boanerges is defined in the passage as “the sons of Thunder”; however, the name Peter is not

defined. Although some claim that the name Peter means “rock,” this is based on a false reading of Matt 16:18, which says: “And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” There are four reasons why Peter could not be the rock: 1. In John 1:42 Peter was surnamed Cephas (the Aramaic form of Peter), then Cephas was defined as “a stone,” not a rock. 2. In 1 Cor 10:4, Christ is said to be the rock. 3. In John 2:9-21, the similar phrase “this temple” clearly refers to Christ. 4. According to Matt 16:23, if your church is built on Peter then it is built on someone prone to error.

So why the variation in names? Could it be purely stylistic?

Well, it is in the case of Jacob, who was also called Israel: “And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, ‘Jacob, Jacob.’ And he said, ‘Here am I’ (Gen 46:2). In the Book of Acts, “John, whose surname was Mark” (Acts 12:12), is called both “John” (Acts 13:13) and “Mark” (Acts 15:39). And concerning Peter, not only is he so named in the Book of Acts, but he is also called “Simon” (Acts 10:18) and “Simeon” (Acts 15:14).

If there is any doubt at all that the variation in names in Galatians 2 is purely stylistic, then one should consider the account of Jesus Christ when He was addressing Peter:

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me (Luke 22:31-34).

POPE PETER?

So, if Paul really did rebuke Peter, then Peter is a very poor choice to be the first pope—something that all Catholics are supposed to believe. There are a number of reasons why this is so.

First of all, Peter was never in Rome. The Bible never says that Peter was in Rome. Peter was the

apostle to the Jews; Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. Rome was the capital of the greatest empire of the ancient world. What would Peter be doing there? The Jews were expelled from Rome (Acts 18:2). When Paul wrote to the church at Rome, he sent greetings to over twenty-five people, but never mentions Peter (Rom 16:3-15). When Paul was in Rome he not only never mentioned Peter, but said: “Only Luke is with me” (2 Tim 4:11). Both the church father Irenaeus and the church historian Eusebius make Linus the first bishop of Rome (2 Tim 4:21). Peter claimed to be at Babylon, not Rome (1 Pet 5:13).


Secondly, Peter was not above the other disciples. After the incident at Caesarea Philippi, which supposedly elevated Peter above the other disciples (Matt 16:13-19), they obviously did not recognize his authority over them, for they still argued among themselves who was the greatest (Luke 22:24). The same authority given Peter was given to all the disciples (Matt 18:18). Peter was subordinate to the church at Jerusalem (Acts 8:14). Peter was only one of three pillars in the early church (Gal 2:9). Christ’s favorite disciple was John, not Peter (John 21:20). The head of the church at Jerusalem was James, not Peter (Acts 15:13; Gal 2:12). Peter worked with the other disciples (Acts 3:1, 4, 4:13, 5:29). Paul mentions Titus thirteen times (2 Corinthians, Galatians, 2 Timothy, Titus); he mentions Peter only ten times. But is not Peter mentioned in the NT more than any other disciple? Yes, but the Bible also records more of his errors than those of any other disciple.

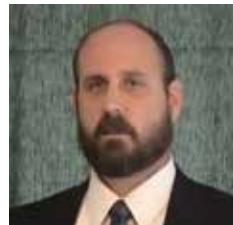
Thirdly, Peter did not act like the pope. Unlike a modern pope, Peter was married (Mark 1:30; 1 Cor 9:5), something no pope is supposed to be. Peter had no riches (Acts 3:6); the pope is surrounded by riches. Peter had apostolic signs (Acts 3:6-7); the pope doesn’t even profess to have any. Peter suffered persecution for Christ (Acts 5:40-41); the pope has the respect of the world. Peter was a preacher and a teacher (Acts 5:42); the pope is a politician and a celebrity. Peter did not accept worship (Acts 10:26); the pope lets people bow down to him. Peter preached the true gospel (Acts 15:11); the pope preaches a false gospel.

Peter was an elder, a servant, and an apostle (1 Pet 5:1; 2 Pet 1:1); the pope claims to be the “Holy Father” and the “Vicar of Christ.”

And fourth, supposing that there was a first pope, it would have to be Paul the Apostle. Paul was actually in Rome (Acts 19:21; 27:1; 28:14, 16). Paul received special revelation from God (Gal 1:11-12). Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom 11:13). Paul was not below any other apostle (2 Cor 11:5). Paul rebuked Peter (Gal 2:11). Paul had the care of the churches (2 Cor 11:28). Paul gave orders to the churches (1 Cor 16:1). Paul taught the churches (1 Cor 4:17). Paul put a curse on people (Gal 1:8-9).

There is only one way that Peter did act like the pope: he denied Christ (Matt 26:69-74). The pope denies Christ when he makes Mary the mediatrix (1 Tim 2:5); he denies Christ when he teaches salvation by works (Eph 2:8-9); he denies Christ when he celebrates the mass (Heb 10:10-14).

Simon, Peter, or Cephas? Take your pick. The first pope? Never. And yet, over the past twenty years, some notable Evangelicals have joined the Catholic church, thereby acknowledging that they think the papacy is Scriptural. 



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

1. John Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, vol. 11; *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, trans. T. H. L.

Parker (1548; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 34.

A large crowd of people, mostly men, are seen from behind, with their hands raised in a gesture of praise or worship. They are gathered in a room with a plain, light-colored wall. The people are wearing various casual clothing, including striped shirts, a green t-shirt, and a blue shirt. The atmosphere appears to be one of a religious gathering or church service.

Musings on Missions



BY KEN YATES

Part of what I do for GES is to teach in other countries. My daughter Kathryn usually accompanies me on these teaching trips. We recently returned from a couple of weeks of teaching in Kenya. There is a solid Free Grace couple from Kenya who invite us on an annual basis to come and conduct conferences for pastors and their wives.

We have done similar things in other countries, sometimes conducting classes in Bible colleges. These countries include Zambia, Nepal, Ukraine, and Costa Rica. Because of COVID, we have done work through the miracle of Zoom classes in places like South Korea and Europe.

It is always dangerous to make blanket statements based upon limited experience. Others have been doing this kind of ministry for much longer than we have. But I can make some general observations as a result of what I have seen. Readers may find them helpful in evaluating what is happening in other places around the world.

A REJECTION OF ETERNAL SECURITY

Overwhelmingly, people in churches and Bible colleges in other countries reject the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer. It is very rare to find people who have assurance that they have eternal life. The message of grace is non-existent or is rejected out of hand. The people we come into contact with have almost universally never had anybody defend this Biblical doctrine.

The good news is that when they hear it explained, the majority believe it. Through donations to GES, we always take literature with us on these trips and the “students” all appreciate the material and are eager to read it. They also

ask *lots* of questions. I am convinced that many of these people receive eternal life during these conferences or classes, or by reading the books and tracts that are given to them. It is amazing to consider that this is the case when one realizes that many of these people are pastoring churches when they come to faith. Even though such people should not be leading churches, the fact that many are coming to faith is truly exciting.

SOME BELIEVE IT BUT DON'T TEACH IT

But there is also some depressing news mixed with the good. Based solely upon my limited experience, the churches in these places do not seem to be benefiting from the message of grace in any significant way. Many times, pastors who say they now believe in eternal security and understand that we are eternally saved by grace point out that they cannot teach such doctrine in their churches. They believe the people will not accept it, and the pastors will be fired from their positions.

In Kenya, I am told that a pastor who is relieved of his position cannot start a new church. Only approved denominations can plant a new church, according to governmental regulations, and if the bishop fires a pastor from his position for teaching assurance or eternal security, that pastor cannot simply move down the street and start a new church, like we can in the U.S.


In most places I travel to, the charismatic influence on the churches is very strong. The people come to church to speak in tongues, have demons cast out, have their dreams interpreted, and to see miracles. There are reports of pastors raising the dead, turning into animals, and many claiming

to be modern day prophets and apostles. Associated with all of this is the basically universal belief that a church member can lose his salvation for a whole assortment of reasons. In poor countries, especially, the pastors who are exposed to grace do not have the courage to oppose such teachings. In fact, their very livelihood depends on promoting such false doctrines. For example, in Kenya, some pastors receive part of their pay by interpreting the dreams of the members of their congregation.

IS AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY EXPLODING?

I often hear missionaries, and even others not involved in mission work, say that the churches in these countries are “exploding.” It is pointed out that the church in the U.S. may be materialistic or worldly, but God is doing great things in the churches overseas. The world is a big place, and I admit that I may be ignorant of what is going on in the many places of which I have no knowledge. I can only say that when I hear of such reports, I receive them with a great deal of skepticism.

FUTURE OF FREE GRACE MISSIONS

I share these musings to perhaps start a conversation. I think when all of us speak of mission work, we need to discuss how to help churches in the countries in which we are involved become healthy. If we support missionaries, we need to have such conversations with them. As those in the Free Grace movement realize, the Great Commission is not telling us to simply proclaim the good news of eternal life by faith in Christ alone. We are also called to make disciples. That requires that we work to have healthy churches for new believers to attend. I admit that I do not have the wisdom on how to go about it. As we start the conversation, I am open to all the advice I can get! 



*Ken Yates speaks for GES all around the world. His latest book is *Hebrews: Partners with Christ* and he is currently working on a commentary on Mark's Gospel.*

Share Grace!

We are privileged to send *Grace in Focus* free to over 10,500 households. We also reach 100,000 people a month with our daily blogs and podcasts.

If you believe in this ministry, would you prayerfully consider supporting us on **a MONTHLY BASIS?** Just go to WWW.FAITHALONE.ORG/DONATE and become a monthly donor at any amount, so we can reach even more people with the promise of everlasting life.



The Mailbag

By You

Dear Bob and Shawn, thank you for your faithful ministry. I love reading the blogs. Always instructive and edifying.” ~Lebanon, OR.

“This is long overdue, but thank you, thank you for all the work that went into the April GES convention. The convention was such an encouragement to us both and a highlight of our year! Thanks for all that you do. We appreciate you all so much.” ~Marion, KS.

“Thank you for your consistency in clarifying the truth of God’s Word! We are praying for you!” ~Rock Valley, IA.

“Really enjoy the YouTube clips!” ~Shreveport, LA.

“My pastor says you cannot be saved unless the Spirit draws you. Does that mean I can’t just right now, without any drawing, believe 1 Cor 15:1-4 and be saved? That Jesus died for my sins, was buried, and rose from the dead. Please explain. I need help!” ~Email. [Editor: You can believe in Jesus for everlasting life right now, and you will have it (John 3:16). We will answer this question more fully on the podcast.]

“I would like to donate \$35.00 to help GES. May Jesus’ salvation only by grace through faith be better known and understood because of your ministry.” ~Vestavia Hills, AL.

“So grateful to God for this ministry. Praying for His continued blessings upon it!” ~Email.


“I just wanted to say thank you for all your hard work on teaching the Bible with a consistent interpretation. I started a few months ago listening to the podcast, and it has been a great



123RF

blessing to my life and has encouraged me to continue serving our Lord Jesus faithfully. I serve in a Hispanic Baptist Church, and I’m grateful for so many resources and publications that have helped us understand the Scriptures. Thank you for all the effort translating written materials to Spanish. We really love you guys and hope we can one day do a grace conference in Spanish here.” ~Tallahassee, FL.

“Thank you for your extremely important ministry.” ~Georgetown, TX.

“When I read doctrinal statements for churches in my area, I’m grieved over how confused they are and for the people they are teaching. I thank the Lord for GES and how He has been expanding the ministry to open up more avenues for people to come to a knowledge of the truth. Praying you will soon be on a radio station in Chicago!” ~Chicago, IL. 

Send your letters to ges@faithalone.org or to GES, PO Box 1308, Denton, TX 76202.

Parting with the Theologians

By Andrew Engelman

YOU CAN'T BE SURE?

They threw it all at me—all of it. They said that before the fall of man, God ordained who would be saved. They told me I was dead, a corpse, unable to receive the gift of grace unless it had already been chosen for me. I had to be regenerated before I could believe, and God did all this lest I consider myself a merit monger claiming credit for my salvation.

Then they told me I couldn't be sure that I was saved. I had to keep believing and believing and believing, and I needed to produce evidence of my faith. But they never told me how much evidence was necessary to prove my salvation.

It was all very confusing.

FAMOUS THEOLOGIANS SPREAD CONFUSION

I told them Billy Graham said a person could be sure of his eternal destiny. They answered that Graham wasn't a theologian and therefore was not an expert in the matter.

A bona fide theologian did tell me, "You don't go to heaven by faith alone. Eternal life fully depends on whether we have been freed from sin by faith in Jesus and whether we go on living under the rule of God. It is safe to say that without either the decisive part or the progressive part of sanctification, we have no hope to be saved in the end." His statement sounded like works salvation. He admitted he did not think salvation was truly by faith alone. But many insisted that type of theology still counts as faith alone.

More confusion.

After this, I read Calvin's *Institutes*. He wrote, "God has no redeeming interest in certain



people." In other words, God sees five people drowning, saves two, and leaves the other three to die. Calvinists call that double predestination. That view of God didn't seem right. But they told me that God's ways are not our ways, and we shouldn't use our own logic to try to understand the Lord.

I read Bonhoeffer because of his unbridled courage in the face of Nazism. But Bonhoeffer wrote, "Scripture must be interpreted and preached. In its essence it is not a book of edification for the congregation." This startled me since it flies in the face of Luther's insistence on the priesthood of all believers. Bonhoeffer also complained that the NT was too overgrown with "redemption myths." But Christianity has always been regarded as a religion of redemption.

THEY MISSED IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS

I remembered the word "propitiation"—that God is satisfied with Christ's death. I was one of His, a part of His family. And when I believed in Him, I was baptized by the Holy Spirit and had "positional sanctification."

But they often said that's not quite right. "You must persevere until the end of your life."

I mentioned the thief on the cross, but they told me that Jesus promised him heaven before the crucifixion, so atonement was not yet actualized at that point. That seemed strange to me.

I understood justification and sanctification—the former meaning the baby is born, and the

latter meaning how well the baby is growing. To me, that was easy to understand. Salvation and discipleship are two separate issues. But they said, “Salvation is free, but it will cost you everything.” People complicated it again. They put those two concepts of salvation and discipleship together and wouldn’t separate them.

They agreed that David and Solomon were in heaven despite some terrible deeds, but they never explained why. David broke the Ten Commandments, but he still had salvation. Solomon did not persevere in good works at the end of his life.

Relationship and fellowship are separate, and there is a difference between entering the kingdom and inheriting the kingdom.

But they didn’t know the difference between eternal salvation and maturing in our journey of sanctification.

They didn’t know of God’s chastisement of lazy believers.

Some didn’t acknowledge crowns and rewards for believers who will be judged for their works.

No one understood the difference between the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Great White Throne Judgment—they lumped them together.

UNDERSTANDING THE AUDIENCE

I read the NT. Except for John’s Gospel, most of it is written to believers. People said, “I don’t think that is a fact,” or “Those writings are to believers and unbelievers.”

So I went book-by-book to prove that the epistles are to believers, urging them to be better disciples and that they concerned degrees of fellowship.

By contrast, John’s Gospel is about how to get eternal life if you are an unbeliever (John 20:31).

When I told people this, none of them understood the distinction and passed over it quickly.

I counted the word “believe” almost 99 times in John’s Gospel. Jesus tells unbelievers how to get salvation and be sure of it.

When I mentioned the Gospel of John never lists *submission* or *repentance* or *obedience* to receive everlasting life, they said, “That is an argument from silence,” or “So what?” or “Those three words [submit, repent, obey] occur in other parts of the NT.” I said yes, they are

mentioned, but in the context of believers. They were not convinced. One deacon told me I am a heretic because I pointed out that repentance is not mentioned in John’s Gospel. No one in the class wondered why John omitted the word. They said repentance is essential, and I agreed that it is essential for one *who is already a believer*, but not essential for one to *become* a believer. To them, that was heresy.

I knew salvation is a free gift, but I was accused of cheap grace and semi-Pelagianism.


Some said even the demons believe. I agreed, but the demons are not candidates for eternal salvation and thus do not believe in Jesus for eternal life. Jesus died for human beings, not for demons.

STICKING WITH GRACE

It is lonely to have all these thoughts.

I have respect for other Christians, but I think some teach error. Unlike what I have had others tell me, I want to tell people the truth of salvation. I want to go to a person and tell him, “Based upon your testimony to me about your believing in Christ, you have everlasting life and eternal security.”

I have read Calvin, Edwards, Bunyan, Spurgeon, Ryle, Lloyd-Jones, and a host of men like them, and I find their expositions of Scripture to be in-depth and helpful in many ways. But I also find it hard to believe that my entrance into heaven depends on persevering in works. So I part with those men on how to get eternal life. I am sticking with John’s Gospel!

Believe in Jesus Christ alone for eternal life. 



Andrew Engelman is a Soviet refugee and has lived and worked all over the world for multinational companies. Married for 51 years, he has two daughters and five grandchildren.

Pew Card Evangelism

By Marcia Hornok

Recently I attended a large Bible church, well known in Evangelical circles for expository sermons and the longevity of its lead pastor's ministry. He has a vast online presence; his popular study Bible has been distributed worldwide, and he founded a seminary to train pastors.

Enjoying the organ music while waiting for the service to begin, I picked a pew card out of its slot and read, "What It Means to Be a Christian." The first four paragraphs described God as the Sovereign Creator who is holy, while mankind is sinful and "utterly incapable of understanding, loving, or pleasing God on our own (Rom 3:10-12)." The fifth paragraph told about sin demanding a penalty, which is death (Ezek 18:4). *It was the final two paragraphs that infuriated me.*

Paragraph six began, "Jesus Is Lord and Savior. Romans 10:9 says, 'If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.'" The little card never told what to be saved from. It did say that God "will forgive and save those who place their faith in Him (Romans 3:26)"—a verse that mentions faith in Jesus, but not forgiveness or being "saved."

Of all the verses that could have been chosen to explain that salvation from sin and hell means eternal life, the pew card used verses which never mention the words *eternal life*. The only thing

that comes close in the card is John 17:3, given as a citation for "pursuing Christ." And just as inexplicable, the words "gift" and "grace" are totally absent from the wording on the card, as well as from the Scripture references cited.

Now I will quote the final paragraph. Read it as if you are an unbeliever, and see if it entices you to want to become a Christian:

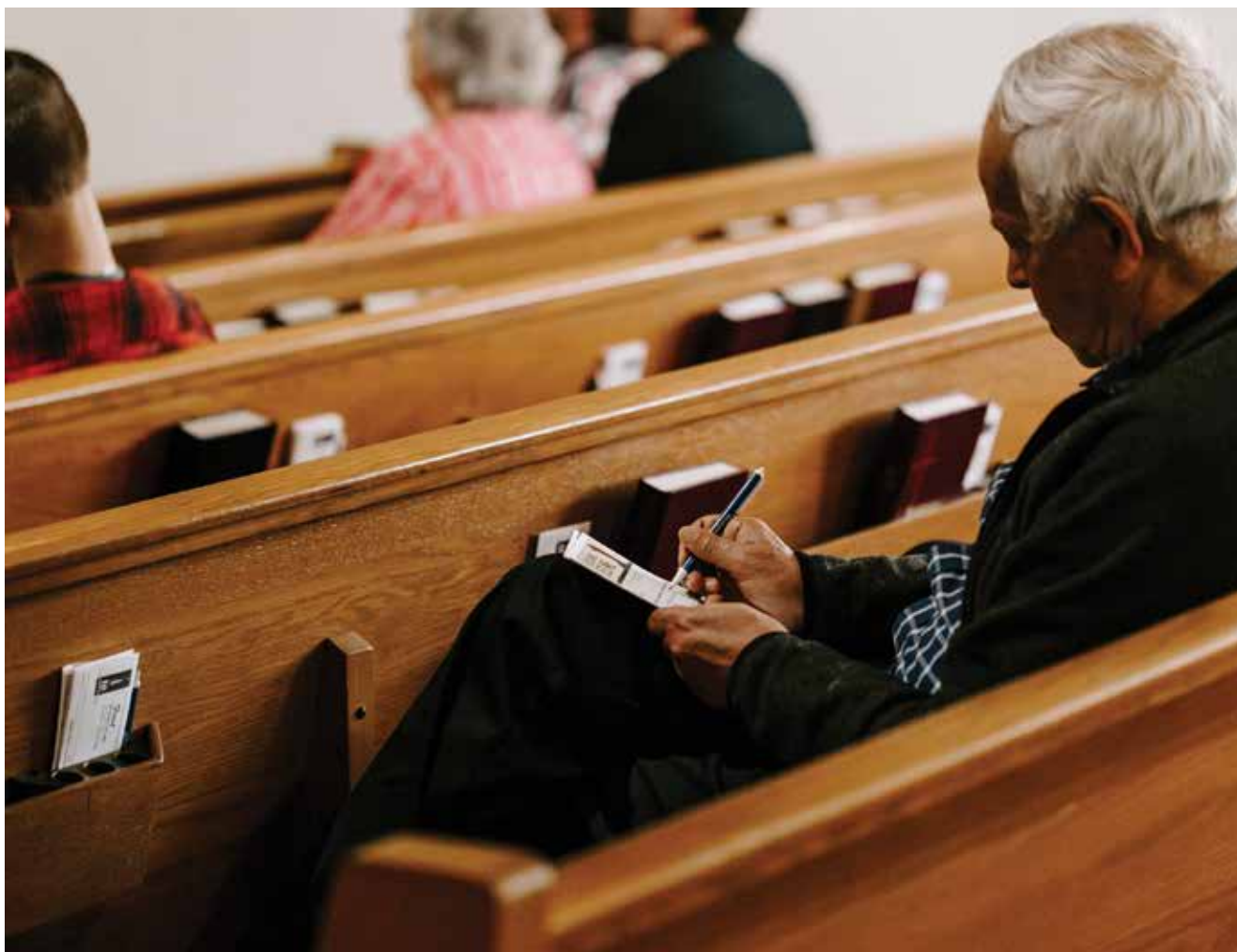
The Character of Saving Faith. True faith is always accompanied by repentance from sin. Repentance is agreeing with God that you are sinful, confessing your sins to Him, and making a conscious choice to turn from sin (Luke 13:3,5; 1 Thessalonians 1:9) and pursue Christ (Matthew 11:28-30; John 17:3) and obedience to Him (1 John 2:3). It isn't enough to believe certain facts about Christ. Even Satan and his demons believe in the true God (James 2:19), but they don't love and obey Him. True saving faith always responds in obedience (Ephesians 2:10).

That is how the card ended—with all those conditions added to faith.

How is that "good news"?

This 3x5 card, containing 455 words, cited 20 Scripture references, but quoted only 3: "You shall be holy for I am holy" (1 Pet 1:16); "There is no man who does not sin" (1 Kgs 8:46); and Rom 10:9, cited above.


The lead pastor of this church prides himself on exegetical preaching, but his approach seems to be "interpretation by cross reference," often



disregarding context, as one can see from his reference to Rom 10:9 above. Having read several of his books, I was not surprised that he adds works to faith for salvation, while the Bible does so only for sanctification.

God wrote all Scripture to His people “for doctrine, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). Even in the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus’ ministry purpose can be seen as training His disciples through everything He said and did. Yes, He evangelized the lost and rebuked religious leaders, but then He pointed out to the Twelve what He had done, often by asking them questions in true rabbinical style. Lucas Kitchen said, “Matthew, Mark, and Luke didn’t write to tell unbelievers how to become believers, but they wrote to believers to tell them how to obey Christ, which is what discipleship is all about.”¹

When we Evangelicals explain the gospel, we must focus on Jesus’ person, provision, and

promise, then invite people to receive the free gift of eternal life by believing. That’s the good news we need to share in person, through social media, and on pew cards. 



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.

1. Lucas Kitchen, *Eternal Life: Believe to be Alive* (Free Grace International, nd), 75.



Must You Believe in Christ's Deity to Be Saved?

By Zane Hodges

QUESTION

September 30, 2007

Dear Zane,

I pray that all is going well with you. You are constantly in my prayers for your strength, endurance, health, and wisdom for interpretation and writing.

In your two-part talk and paper at the GES [conference], "How to Lead People to Christ (Part 1 and Part 2)," you illustrated the tenet that God only requires faith in Jesus for eternal life; there are no doctrinal stipulations and pre-qualifications to simply receiving the free gift of God through faith in Christ.

As much as you would care, would you comment, please, on those who seek to front-load the saving message with their "God-mandated" requirement that one assent to the divinity of Christ?

BTW, please pray for me as I am leaving October 10 for India. I will be doing evangelism for 5 days and having a conference with 100 Indian pastors, whereby I am going to give them a crash course on Free Grace theology.

I am praying for you!

Antonio

ANSWER

October 2, 2007

Hi Antonio,

People who speak about believing in the "divinity" of Christ to be saved rarely seem to define what they mean by that. Must one have a Trinitarian theology

to be saved (=Jesus is the second Person of the Godhead)?

Did the disciples themselves understand His deity? Note John 14:5-9; Matt. 8:27, etc.

Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him." Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:5-9).]

So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (Matt 8:27).

The fundamental error here, however, is the assumption that one must know everything about a person to be able to believe who he is. That is illogical and wrong. Do I have to understand the President's powers, or his personality, to believe he is the President and trust him for something?

Of course, the promised Messiah is divine, but He is also the King of Israel:

Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (John 1:49).

There was no such person as a Messiah who is not Israel's King. Must one believe that, too? In fact, it can be argued that in Nathaniel's statement, "Son of God" is defined as "King of Israel." The Messianic sonship was the sonship promised to David's kingly descendants in 2 Samuel:

"I will be his Father, and he shall be My son" (2 Sam 7:14).

...it is the sonship the writer of Hebrews has in mind in Heb 1:5, which cites 2 Sam 7:14:

For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son"? (Heb 1:5)

Psalm 2:7 (*I will declare the decree: the Lord has said to Me, "You are My Son, today I have begotten You"*) shows that *this* sonship was not eternal. If a person does not believe all this, he even misunderstands the title "Son of God" in its Messianic sense. Is he saved???


The illogical beginning assumption leads inevitably into a logical quagmire and produces absurd conclusions. There is so much sloppy thinking out there it is appalling. Some people seem to believe in justification by correct theology rather than justification by faith in Jesus (Rom 3:26).¹

[God is] the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom 3:26).

A tragic error!

But the simple fact remains that *no one has ever believed in Jesus of Nazareth for the gift of eternal life, who did not get it!* Thank God for that!

I'll pray for your trip to India. Have a good week,

Zane. 



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

1. Editor's note: Jesus has always been the Son of God. But when Zane mentions this "sonship," he is referring to Jesus as the Messiah.

Why Are the Amish Against Assurance?

By Shawn Lazar

Like many Americans, I have a fascination with the Amish. I'm intrigued by their life, and I respect their resilience in maintaining their identity in the face of massive societal pressure. They have survived for centuries. If large-scale cultural collapse is on the horizon, Evangelicals should take lessons from the Amish about swimming against the cultural counter-currents.

However, what do the Amish say about salvation?

I picked up *A Pocket Guide to Amish Life* by Mindy Starns Clark which provides an overview of Amish customs and beliefs. Clark says the Amish believe,

Salvation comes through grace by faith (p. 18).

That's a good start, but it's not decisive. Every Christian denomination would agree with that statement, and many would find a way to reconcile it with works-salvation. However, Clark adds:

The Amish are not a cult, they do not try to earn grace by their lifestyle, and they do believe in salvation (p. 19).

I'm glad the Amish don't try to earn grace through their works (i.e., their lifestyle). If you take those two statements together, it seems like the Amish believe that salvation is by grace, through faith, apart from works. If that's true, I'm glad. I was under the impression the Amish believed in works-salvation.

However, there's a wrinkle in that claim. Clark adds that the Amish reject assurance of salvation:

Feeling that it would be prideful to claim an assurance of that salvation, however, most Amish districts prefer that their members maintain what they call a "living hope" or a "continued effort" on the topic, trusting the ultimate fate of their soul to God's providence rather than claiming it with certainty (p. 19).

Later, Clark repeats the point:

Myth: The Amish think they are the only ones who are going to heaven.

Fact: Despite their strong faith and regulated lifestyle, most Amish do not claim an assurance of heaven even for themselves, much less for anyone else. Instead, they live in the Christian hope that they will go to heaven but believe it would be prideful or presumptuous to know for sure.

How can someone believe in salvation by grace apart from works and yet deny assurance?

Notice that Clark distinguishes between having *assurance* and having *hope*. That is exactly right. Being merely hopeful about your salvation is not the same as being assured of your salvation.

Isn't it sad that the Amish are actively taught not to have assurance and to be merely hopeful about going to heaven when they die?

ASSURANCE IS ESSENTIAL

The Free Grace position holds that assurance is of the essence of saving faith. In other words, believing Jesus' promise of everlasting life—as opposed to disbelieving or doubting it—logically entails being assured of your salvation. How?

Think of assurance in terms of a simple syllogism:

P1: Everyone who believes in Him has everlasting life.

P2: I believe in Jesus.

C: Therefore, I have everlasting life.

Jesus' promise is conditional. If a person believes in Him, then something becomes true of him, i.e., he "has" everlasting life. So if you believe, what do you, as a believer, get from



Jesus? Everlasting life. You cannot believe that Jesus' promise is true without also believing that He gives you everlasting life, *because that is what the promise is about*. Hence, assurance is of the essence of saving faith.

Any Amish person who reads John 3:16 and believes it will know that Jesus has given him everlasting life. So how can their leadership encourage people to *doubt* their salvation without teaching them to disbelieve Jesus' promise?

Clark gives a hint when she says the leadership "prefer that their members maintain what they call...a '*continued effort*' on the topic."

What does it mean to have "continued effort"? Works?

If so, the Amish are put in the impossible position of having to believe contradictory things, namely, 1) they cannot earn grace by their lifestyle, and yet 2) their salvation depends on "continued effort."

So which is it? Is salvation by grace or by continued effort? It can't be by both.

Jesus did not promise that *whoever puts in continued effort* shall not perish but have everlasting life. That is changing the gospel.

PRIDE IS NOT A GOOD OBJECTION TO GRACE

While I appreciate the Amish leadership's opposition to pride, they're wrong to use that as an objection against having assurance. Pride *is* a problem—for works-salvation. One of Paul's


arguments against salvation by works is that it can lead to pride, i.e., "lest anyone should boast" (Eph 2:9). But Paul does not raise that as an issue in salvation by grace, through faith apart from works.

Is it *prideful* to believe that Jesus keeps His promises?

No!

Since salvation by grace through faith has nothing to do with your worthiness, cleverness, or goodness, and everything to do with His great mercy, love, and sacrificial death, there is no place for pride in yourself, as if salvation were your accomplishment. If pride is involved at all, it is in what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for the believer. As Paul says, "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord" (1 Cor 1:31b).

One last thought—and a hopeful one! If the Amish leadership must actively teach their people to *lack* assurance, doesn't that imply that many of them naturally *have* it? I wonder how many Amish have read Jesus' promises of salvation, believed Him, and therefore have everlasting life, only to be told to doubt their assurance later on?

The Amish are very good at resisting calls to compromise their way of life. I hope they're just as good at resisting calls to compromise their assurance. 

Shawn Lazar is Director of Publications for Grace Evangelical Society. He is happily married to Abby.

NONPROFIT
US POSTAGE

PAID

ABERDEEN, SD
PERMIT #200

Grace Evangelical Society

P.O. Box 1308

Denton, TX 76202

Believe in Him for Life

Change Service Requested

**SUBSCRIBE
TO OUR
YOUTUBE
CHANNEL!**



WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/USER/GESVIDS/VIDEOS