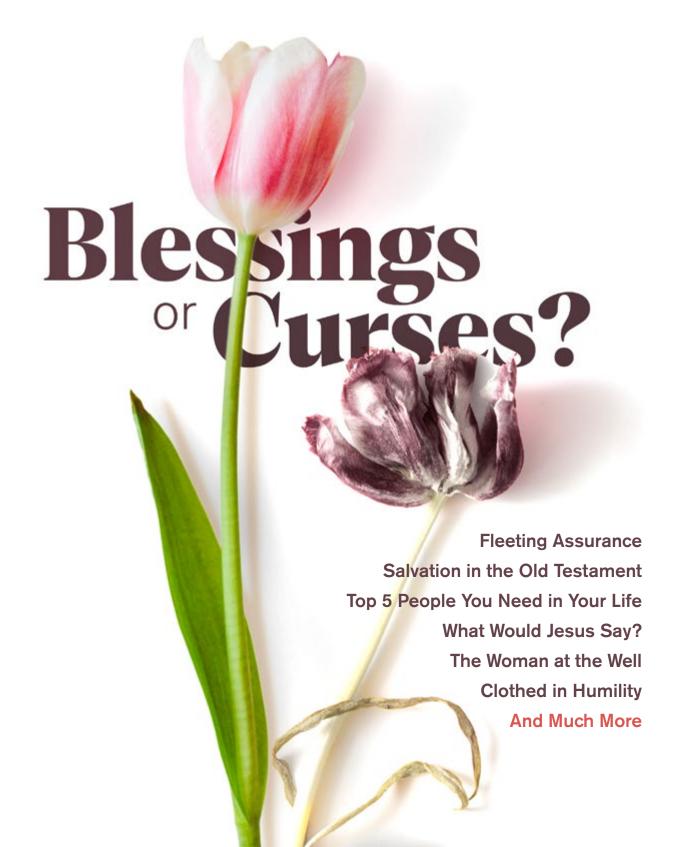
GRACE (in) FOCUS

WWW.FAITHALONE.ORG

JULY / AUGUST 2022



Contents

JULY / AUGUST 2022

_3	Bob Wilkin	Editor's Letter
_4	Bob Wilkin	When Assurance of Salvation is Fleeting
_6	Michael D. Makidon –	Robert Sandeman (1718-1771)
_8	Ken Yates	Blessings or Curses-Which Do You Want?
12	Kristah Kitchen	Is That True?
_14	Summer Stevens	Top 5 People You Need in Your Life
_16	Philippe Sterling	What Would Jesus Say? Wake Up Call: The Letter to Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6)
22		Partners in Grace
24		Book Review
25		The Bookstore
34	Chuck Deveau	Trials Are a Normal Part of Christian Growth (James 1:12)
38	Ken Yates	Let's Make Every Month Free Grace Pride Month (Romans 1:16)
42	Bob Wilkin	Did the Woman at the Well Need to Repent to Have Everlasting Life?
44	Shawn Lazar	Clothed in Humility (1 Peter 5:5-11)

GRACE (in) FOCUS

Founder and Editor-in-Chief: Robert N. Wilkin, Ph.D. Editor: Shawn Lazar. Typesetting and Design: Matthew Simmons. Office Manager: Bethany Taylor. Order Fulfillment: Mark Gray. Director of GES Missions: Ken Yates. GES Missions Assistant: Kathryn Wright. International Translators: Kelley Johnson Easley, Alla Kristina Lozenko, Manuela Mazzei, Dante B. Nieto, and Öscar Pellus.

Volume 37, Number 4 © 2022 by Grace Evangelical Society

Address changes? Comments? Prayer requests? Testimonies? Send them to ges@faithalone.org or write to Grace in Focus, P.O. Box 1308, Denton, TX 76202.

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.







Editor's Letter

ur annual conference was May 23-26. Our attendance was the best since 2006. The fellowship was the best ever. People visited in the dining hall, in the Tally Center plush leather chairs and couches (often till after midnight), at the campfires, and in the recreational activities (bowling, women's craft night, youth fellowship, game nights, putt-putt golf, frisbee golf, etc.). VBS was a hit too, with about 25 children ages 4 through 15.

We are so thankful for your encouragement, prayers, and support that make this possible.

We are also thankful for our stable of authors who write good articles for *Grace in Focus* each issue. And special thanks to Pam Esteven for the great editing she does.

We are living in a strange time. After two years of lockdowns and restrictions due to Covid-19, we still face Covid (though a less virulent strain), plus inflation, super high gas prices, war in Ukraine, and much more.

Who would have thought that a virus might cause our churches to decline? But now, hopefully after the worst of Covid, it appears that some people have stopped attending church in person and prefer to attend virtually. Even lots of Free Grace churches have seen some declines in attendance. While most people have come back, some have not.

Our aim is to assist local churches in proclaiming the amazing free gift of everlasting life to all who simply believe in Jesus and the beautiful doctrine of eternal rewards for all who deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow Christ.



Robert N. Wilkin, Editor-in-Chief

Our magazine is one way we seek to accomplish that aim. Other ways we do so include our annual and regional conferences, Ken and Kathryn's overseas teaching ministry, our daily blogs (now available via translation in Spanish, Portuguese, Filipino, Russian, Italian, German, and Polish) and podcasts, our semiannual journal, our short videos on YouTube, our books and booklets, and our website with thousands of free downloads. Please take advantage of all these resources, most of which are free, free, free.

If it gets really hot where you live in July and August, remember, fall is coming soon. And better still, remember that the King of kings will be here soon.



S everal years ago, I received an email from a friend. He gave me a link to an article entitled "When Assurance of Salvation Is Fleeting." It was a Feb 15, 2017, blog by Jason Helopoulos at The Gospel Coalition.

The first two headings of the blog give you a good idea of the author's view: 1) "Faith may include assurance" and 2) "Faith doesn't equal assurance." Helopoulos says:

A child of God may and should possess a true sense of inner peace and confidence regarding personal salvation.

Though the gift of assurance regularly accompanies faith, many Christians find it elusive or even non-existent in their own experience.

The Westminster Confession helpfully addresses the underlying error when it states, "infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties, before he be a partaker of it" (WCF 18:3). The Westminster divines rightly understood that one may possess saving faith, yet not possess the assurance that often accompanies that faith.

According to Helopoulos, assurance is found in introspection (seeing "evidences of Christ's grace in our lives"), yet "many Christians suffer from overzealous introspection." So, while we are to examine our lives, we need to avoid doing so too much. His solution is to make sure that it is not true that "our gaze is always within." We are also to look outside ourselves. He suggests we do so when we take the Lord's Supper and when we pray.

As I read this article, I experienced sadness for the many people who believe as Helopoulos does and who are regularly plagued with doubts about their eternal destiny.

The author correctly points out the dangers of introspection. Yet he says that we are commanded in Scripture to examine ourselves to see if we are born again. So, he is torn. While I appreciate his irenic spirit and his cautions about too much introspection, his advice is not satisfying.

If I don't know for sure that I have everlasting life, why am I partaking of the Lord's Supper? Isn't the Supper only for those who have been born again? Taking the Supper to try to discover if I'm born again is backwards.

Besides, from a Calvinist viewpoint one cannot be sure when he takes the bread and the wine that Jesus actually died *for him*. In the Calvinist way of thinking, Jesus only died for the elect. And since the Calvinist can't be sure he is elect, he can't be sure that Christ died for him.

Helopoulos rightly calls the ones who lack assurance to pray. But he does not ask them to pray that God would show them from His Word that all who believe in Jesus have everlasting life. Instead, he suggests prayer, because in prayer they can sense the presence of God.

But isn't sensing the presence of God in prayer subjective? Isn't it in some sense looking for a feeling to convince you that you have been born again?

The author does have one paragraph on the role of God's Word in assurance. But even there the point is not that we find the promise of life to the believer. In fact, he doesn't quote even one verse that might give a person assurance. Instead, Helopoulos suggests that as we read God's Word, "the promises of Christ comfort our souls, the beauty of Christ stirs our affections, and the commands of Christ move our spirits." Once again, feelings are being sought. The Word of God can spark feelings within us that give us some measure of assurance. But are feelings reliable? Don't feelings come and go like the tides?

The Lord Jesus said, "He who believes in Me has everlasting life" (John 6:47). There are scores of such verses in John's Gospel and in the Bible. Assurance is really as simple as taking God at His word. But since many Calvinists make a point of rejecting assurance as being of the essence of saving faith, as Helopoulos does, the result is that assurance is elusive.

Let's point others to the wonderful promise of everlasting life to all who simply believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Believing that promise results in assurance that is not fleeting. The only way such assurance can be lost is by ceasing to believe the promise. Our feelings and emotions have nothing to do with it. Introspection has nothing to do with it. We just take Jesus at His word.

Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He lives in Highland Village, TX, with his wife of 46 years, Sharon. He is an avid race walker and marathon walker.

¹ This article is a revision of a blog that first appeared on Feb 22, 2017, at the GES website.

See https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/kevindeyoung/2017/02/15/when-assurance-of-salvation-is-fleeting/.

Robert Sandeman (1718-1771)

ROBERT SANDEMAN, ARTIST UNKNOWN. PUBLIC DOMAIN

By Michael D. Makidon¹

BIOGRAPHY

For most, the Lordship controversy began in the late 1970's to early 1980's. However, in an article entitled "History Repeats Itself," J. I. Packer correctly noted, "The view that saving faith is no more than 'belief of the truth about Christ's atoning death' is not new. It was put forward in the mid-eighteenth century by the Scot Robert Sandeman."2

If the average Free Grace proponent was told that his view of saving faith was nothing more than a revival of Robert Sandeman's theology, he would most likely ask, "Who's Robert Sandeman?"

After discussing the ministry of Sandeman and the ill effects of his view of faith, Packer concludes by stating, "The narrow intellectualism of Sandeman's view of faith dampened life-changing evangelism. This was one reason why the Glasite-Sandemanian denomination did not survive."3 Nevertheless, Sandeman's motto "contending earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"4 clearly demonstrates that he was not vying for denominational superiority. Rather, he was merely "contending earnestly for the faith." Therefore, while Packer's observation was correct concerning the demise of this group as an organized fellowship, the impact that the theology of Robert Sandeman has had upon the church for the last 250 years cannot be ignored.

While there were certainly many who influenced Sandeman, John Glas, his father-in-law, had one of the greatest effects upon his life.

In 1744, at the age of 26, Sandeman was appointed an elder of Glas's congregation and became their primary literary publisher. The most controversial and widely read of all his works was Letters on Theron and Aspasio (1757). This work was a dialogue between Sandeman and James Hervey, a well-known Calvinist minister from Northamptonshire, concerning Hervey's work Dialogues between Theron and Aspasio (1755). In this book, Hervey concentrated on the doctrine of justification by faith. South comments, "Hervey had been influenced by John Wesley at Oxford, but later asserted that he had altered his view of how salvation is obtained, through correspondence with George Whitefield."5 This dialogue brought Sandeman's theology into the spotlight.

In Letters on Theron and Aspasio, Sandeman wrote,

But one thing in the general may be freely said, that where the faith necessary to justification is described, every epithet, word, name, or phrase, prefixed or subjoined to Faith, not meant as description of the truth believed, but of some good motion, disposition, or exercise of the human soul about it, is intended, and really serves, instead of clearing our way, to blindfold and decoy us; to impose upon us, and make us take brass for gold, and chaff for wheat; to lead us to establish our own, in opposition to the divine righteousness; even while our mouths and our ears are filled with high sounding words about the latter.⁶

Two hundred years later, Earl Radmacher echoed Sandeman's sentiment with these words: "We need to beware of the tendency to over-psychologize the word 'faith' and add to it more semantic baggage than it was ever intended to carry by distinguishing faith and saving faith or some other kind of faith."

Apparently, just as the word "faith" has been over-psychologized in the twenty-first century, so it was in Sandeman's day.

Sandeman said that "justification comes from bare faith."8

In 1760, word reached Sandeman in London that his work *Letters on Theron and Aspasio* had caused quite a stir in the American colonies. Encouraged by their response to his views on bare faith, Sandeman, with John Glas's blessing, left England for America.

Sandeman became an elder of a congregation in Danbury, Connecticut, where he died on April 2, 1771.

SANDEMANIANISM

Theopedia has this brief explanation of what has come to be called *Sandemanianism*:

Sandemanianism refers primarily to an aspect of theology regarding the nature of faith promoted by Robert Sandeman (1718-1781 [sic]), from which it derives its name, and his father-in-law John Glas

(1695-1773) in Scotland and England during the mid-18th century.

To the Sandemanians, the nature of saving faith reduces to mere intellectual assent to a fact or proposition. This is illustrated rather clearly in the following quote. "In a series of letters to James Hervey, the author of *Theron and Aspasia* [sic], he [Sandeman] maintained that justifying faith is a simple assent to the divine testimony concerning Jesus Christ, differing in no way in its character from belief in any ordinary testimony."

Those who hold to the concept of Lordship salvation argue that the view espoused by proponents of Non-Lordship salvation is essentially the errant view of the 18th century Sandemanians.¹⁰



Michael has a Th.M. from DTS and a Ph.D. from South African Theo. Seminary, serves as an elder at Centerpoint Church (Mesquite, TX), and resides in Rockwall, TX with his wife, Gina, and two kids, Josiah and Emma.

- 1 Editor: A much longer form of this article appeared in *JOTGES* (Spring 2002): 75-92. Available at www.faithalone.org. The quotation of the article on Sandemanianism from Theopedia was added by the editor.
- J. I. Packer, "History Repeats Itself," Christianity Today (September 1989): 22.
- 3 Ibid
- 4 Thomas J. South, "The Response of Andrew Fuller to the Sandemanian View of Saving Faith," (Th. D. dissertation, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993), 60.
- 5 Ibid., 59.
- 6 Robert Sandeman, Letters on Theron and Aspasio, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Sands, Donaldson, Murray, and Conchran, 1759), 329-30.
- 7 Earl Radmacher, "First Response to John F. MacArthur, Jr.," *JETS* (March 1990): 38.
- 8 Sandeman, Letters, 329-330.
- 9 Encyclopedia Britannica, Eleventh Edition (1911), now in the public domain; s.v. Glasites, or Sandemanians, bracket (i.e., [Sandeman])
- 10 "Sandemanianism," available at https://www.theopedia.com/sandemanianism. Last accessed April 14, 2022.



By Ken Yates

INTRODUCTION

reader recently sent in a question to GES: "Could you point me to Bible references in which the blessings for the obedient Christian and the curses for the disobedient Christian are listed? Thanks, T.V." I will attempt to answer that question in this article.

The Bible is crystal clear that works of obedience have nothing to do with obtaining eternal salvation (John 3:16; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). All who believe in Jesus for eternal life receive it as a free gift. Since we did no works to obtain this life, we can do no works to keep it. That being the case, eternal life can never be lost because retaining it does not depend upon us in any way (John 4:14). The bottom line is that good works have nothing to do with where a person will spend eternity.

Once a person understands these Biblical truths, the question automatically arises, "What role do works play in the life of a believer?" That is really what is behind this question sent in to GES. Even though we cannot earn our salvation from the lake of fire by works, good works are important. The whole Bible teaches that good works result in blessings, and evil works have negative consequences.

EXAMPLES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Probably the key passage of blessings for obedience for God's people in the OT comes from Deuteronomy 28. As the Jews were about to enter the Promised Land, God told them that if they obeyed Him by keeping the Law, all kinds of blessings would come upon them. It is important to understand that these blessings are not the same thing as receiving eternal life.

The blessings included having many children. The animals of their herds would also multiply. They would have plenty to eat. Their enemies would be defeated before them. The land would produce abundant crops. Other nations would look up to and borrow from them. They would fulfill their purpose of being a light to those nations (Deut 28:1-14).

If they disobeyed, however, the exact opposite would occur. There would be severe negative consequences. This was the case, even though they would remain the chosen people of God. The offspring of their bodies and their herds would be diminished. They would experience pestilences and disease. The heavens would withhold rain, thereby destroying their crops. Their enemies would defeat them, even taking them far away as captives and making slaves of their children. Instead of admiring them, other nations would pity and mock them. The nation Israel would need to borrow from other countries. They would become so oppressed, they would even resort to eating their

own children when their enemies put their cities under siege. Large numbers of adults would also lose their lives (Deut 28:15-68).

A few chapters later, the Lord added some other negative consequences of sin. If the Jews were disobedient and fell into idolatry, the Lord would send famine their way. Wild beasts would devour them, and poisonous creatures would bite them (Deut

32:24). In Leviticus 26, regarding their obedience and disobedience, God stated the same things to His people that He did in the book of Deuteronomy.

The prophets of the OT often reminded the people of these realities. They pointed out that the tribulations the Jews encountered were because they had forgotten the Law of Moses and disobeyed it. Jeremiah, for example, was a prophet sent to the nation to tell them that the Babylonians were going to defeat them and take them into captivity as slaves because they had rebelled against God. Even though the Lord would not destroy His people completely (Jer 4:27; 5:10, 18), the negative consequences spoken of in the Law of Moses for rejecting the Lord had come upon them (Jer 3:3; 4:6-7; 5:17). If they obeyed, the blessings mentioned in Deuteronomy 28 would be theirs (3:12, 16, 22; 5:24).

We must always remember when interpreting the Bible that Israel is not the church. The promises of blessings for obedience, as well as the warnings about the consequences of disobedience, made to Israel in the OT most often focused on national things. The church is not a nation. The NT believer is not under the Law of Moses. He is under the teachings of Christ and His apostles, which are found in the NT. Like the nation of Israel in the OT, the individual Christian will be blessed if he obeys what Christ taught. That is the

A major emphasis in the NT on the importance of obedience for the child of God is that such obedience will result in abundant life.

emphasis in the NT. These blessings often involve spiritual benefits. In addition, the believer will suffer negative consequences if he does not obey.

BLESSINGS FOR OBEDIENCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Many passages in the NT speak of the blessings that the individual believer will experience if he walks in obedience. Numerous verses tell us that obedience will result in eternal rewards in the world to come (Matt 5:12; 25:20-21; Rom 8:17; 1 Cor 3:10-15; 2 Cor 5:10). In this section, I will address a select number of passages. These passages, however, speak of blessings experienced in this life.

Obeying the Lord will result in being closer to Him. The believer will become more like Christ (Luke 6:40; John 15:14; 1 John 1:7). The Lord says that such a Christian will bear much fruit

(John 15:8). This fruit is best understood as the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us that these blessings include love, joy, peace, longsuffering (or patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22-23).

A major emphasis in the NT on the importance of obedience for the child of God is that such obedience will result in abundant life. Every believer has eternal life that can never be lost. But this life is not static. It can "grow" in the sense that one can have a greater enjoyment of it. Some believers have a more abundant experience of that life (John 10:10). Many of us do not speak in these terms, but when a Christian walks in obedience through the power of the Holy Spirit, he walks in and enjoys in a deeper way the life Christ has given him (Rom 8:6).

The Jews under the Law of Moses in the OT who obeyed that law would be given a greater enjoyment of physical life. The NT believer who is obedient to Christ will have a greater enjoyment of the spiritual life that was given to him when he believed.

CONSEQUENCES FOR DISOBEDIENCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the OT, we saw that the consequences of disobedience were the opposite of the blessings for obedience. Disobedience often resulted in the loss of physical life. The NT believer can experience a similar thing.

If the obedient Christian has a greater experience of life, the proper way of describing the result of disobedience would be death. This is exactly what Paul calls it. The believer who lives according to the flesh in disobedience to what Christ has taught lives a kind of life that in reality can only be characterized as death (Rom 8:6). It is devoid of the life that the believer will have for eternity. It does not produce the fruit of the Spirit.

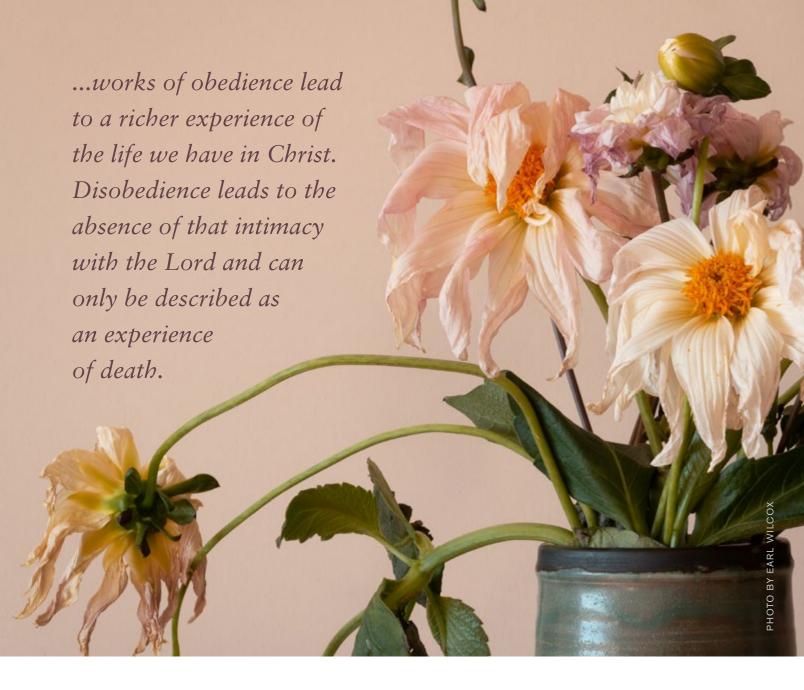
What does such an experience of death bring forth? Paul lists these negative consequences as well. They are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contention, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambition, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and other such things (Gal 5:19-21). It is plain that all these things are "dead" because they will have no part in the coming eternal kingdom of God. The believer who experiences them is experiencing things that are momentary and will pass away.

It is noteworthy that the NT teaches that for a believer, such an experience of walking in death can actually result in physical death. In Acts 5, there is a believing man and wife who, in an example of jealousy, greed, and pride, lied to the Holy Spirit. These fruits of death led to their dying under the discipline of the Lord (Acts 5:1-10). In the church at Corinth, others walked in death by causing divisions in the church by despising the poor. While doing so, in their arrogance, they even became drunk at the meeting of the church. This cost some of them their lives as well (1 Cor 11:21-30).

CONCLUSION

In whatever age, God's people are blessed if they obey Him and suffer the consequences if they don't. This is true even though these things involved the nation of Israel in the OT and involve the members of the church in the NT. The specific blessings and consequences are different for each group, but the principle of blessings and negative consequences remains.

The author of Hebrews understood this was the case and saw the Jews in the OT as pointing to this reality. The Jews foreshadowed such things. He was writing to NT believers who were thinking of abandoning God through an extreme act of disobedience. He warns them that if they do, God will judge them in a terrifying way. He then quotes from Deut 32:36, where God had warned the nation of Israel what would happen to them if they rebelled against Him. The point is clear—God might not bring hungry lions or poisonous



snakes to attack the original readers of Hebrews, but if they disobeyed, they would experience the discipline of God, nonetheless.

In the case of the Jews in the OT, obedience to the Law of Moses would result in long and healthy lives in the land. Their nation would be prosperous. Disobedience would result in physical destruction and the loss of life at the hands of their enemies and through other means. While sin in the life of the NT believer can also result in the loss of physical life, the emphasis is on something else. Even though eternal life can never be lost, works of obedience lead to a richer experience of

the life we have in Christ. Disobedience leads to the absence of that intimacy with the Lord and can only be described as an experience of death. Disobedient believers are really like dead men walking. Obedience is a matter of life and death.



Ken Yates retired as a Lt. Col. from the Army after 20 years as a chaplain. He and his wife, Pam, live in Columbia, SC, but will soon move to Indianapolis to be around their grandkids. Ken leads the GES international ministry.



It was a warm morning at the flea market, so I headed for the section of the open-air trading grounds nestled under the grove of towering oaks. After a full day of setup, it was the first morning the market was open to shoppers. Many vendors were taking it easy in their lawn chairs, with bare

feet propped up and a cup of black coffee in hand. I spotted a man in full nap mode with an authentic Marlboro man cowboy hat tipped over his eyes. This was preferable because he had mounds of 45s on the three tables set up under his tent.

I like to take my time when flipping through old vinyl records. As a personal rule, I only buy them one at a time, so I needed to choose wisely. But I didn't need long this go-round. As I flipped through, there it was at the front of the first box: Simon and Garfunkel's *Greatest Hits*. The jacket was faded and frayed on the edges, but the record itself was in mint condition, revealing a little bit of history about this once loved album. It was a perfect addition to my collection. Marlboro man awakened out of his mid-morning slumber. No bargaining was needed. He had a fair price on the cover. He handed me his card along with the record and told me to call him if I had any issues with it.

That night before I started dinner, I gingerly placed my vinyl prize on the turntable. I let the kids assist me in dropping the needle that sent the warm, crackling tones of the 60s into the room. Forty-four seconds into side one, I hear my 7-year-old ask a question.

"Is that true?"

"Is what true?"

"They just said, 'Heaven holds a place for those who pray.' Is that true?" As if on cue Paul Simon sang the line again,

God bless you, please, Mrs. Robinson Heaven holds a place for those who pray Hey, hey, hey

I didn't realize a folk-rock theology lesson was part of the bargain when I purchased my gem at trade days. But our theology isn't always shaped solely from the pulpit. It is affected by the music we listen to, conversations we have, influencers we watch, and more. Peter warned some of his dear friends against false teachers who would come into their midst, twisting God's truth for their own devices. He said:

...beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:17-18a).

Just because we have learned truth doesn't mean it can never be twisted and used to turn us away from God. How do we find the answer? We do as the Berean Jews in Acts did. They "...examined the Scriptures every day" to see if what Paul and Silas said was true (Acts 17:11).

"Is that true?" is a great question to constantly ask when it comes to what we choose to believe about God.

Thankfully, He gave us His Word to use as a litmus test for any teaching we hear about Him. We study it to get our foundation, and we continue studying it to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord."

Were Simon and Garfunkel "the wicked" trying to lead us away in error? Probably not. But unfortunately, they shared a works-based gospel with a lot of people when they wrote this Grammy award-winning song. I'm grateful my daughter asked the question. It was a striking reminder to me and a great teachable moment for her.

So, whether it's Paul Simon or some other Paul, remember to search the Scripture to see if what they are saying is true. As you do, you will grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



Kristah Kitchen is a writer with Free Grace Women and content creator for Free Grace International. She is a wife and mother to three creative little ones. She and her family live in East Texas.

Top 5 People You Need in Your Life

By Summer Stevens

If the pandemic taught us anything, we don't quite function properly without people. Even simple face-to-face interactions, like saying good morning to a security guard or tipping the barista, contribute to a sense of well-being. Turns out, there are a lot of people we need in our lives. For the Christian, those relationships are unique—people that we need in our lives so that we can live out our purpose and experience Jesus' promise of abundant life now.

THE JETHRO

Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, offered him a piece of well-timed advice: after witnessing Moses mediate the disagreements between the Israelites from sunup to sundown, Jethro advised him to appoint godly and capable men to rule over the thousands, the hundreds, the fifties, and the tens, and to have the people bring only the most difficult cases to Moses. Surely Moses was exhausted, spending all day every day solving people's problems. The Israelites went to him to hear from God and learn from God's law what they should do. Jethro's solution was that Moses was to raise up leaders—to teach them God's laws—so they could share the burden of conflict resolution. We all need a person like Jethro in our lives: someone with more life experience, who knows God, and who will give us good advice, even when we don't ask for it. Interestingly, either no one suggested this to Moses, or he wasn't willing to heed the good advice from anyone else. As growing Christians, we need to have a Jethro in our lives; when that person speaks into our lives, we will do a full stop and listen.

THE TIMOTHY

Paul called Timothy his "true son in the faith" and his "beloved son." Both epistles to Timothy reveal Paul's heart toward the young man he mentored—he entrusted him with significant ministry tasks and encouraged him in the areas of life in which Timothy needed advice and care. The relationship begins in Acts 16 when Paul chooses Timothy to accompany him on his missionary journey. I can only imagine how much Timothy learned from observing the greatest missionary in the world! This was an intentional mentoring relationship. These types of relationships are characterized by a time commitment and an investment so deep it can parallel the obligation to a biological child. Every Christian should be able to name at least one person he or she is regularly spending time—being a "Paul"—for the spiritual growth and maturity of a "Timothy."

THE MARY

Are you the kind of person who always cares for others but never accepts help? I'm so humbled by the fact that our Lord and King Jesus Christ allowed people to minister to Him. Mary Magdalene is at the top of the list of women who supported Jesus' ministry, and she's the first at the tomb on Resurrection Sunday with the plan to anoint His body with spices. If Jesus allowed people to care for Him, we surely need to be willing to let other people minister to us in times of need. Who in your life has tried to care for you—perhaps to bring you a meal, give you a ride to the airport, provide you with money when you're

broke, or be a listening ear? Let the person. You don't always have to return the casserole plate with cookies in it. Just be grateful for people who love you and minister to you.

THE JONATHAN

The friendship between David and Jonathan is one of sacrifice, honesty, and love. On paper, it was the friendship that should have never been. As Saul's son, Jonathan was heir to the throne. But God had anointed David. Jonathan could have followed his father's obsessive quest to eliminate the threat in David, but he did the opposite—he protected David at his own personal risk. First Samuel 18:1 tells us that "the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." A true, deep friendship is supposed to be like that. Unlike a Timothy or a Jethro friendship, a Jonathan friendship is unique in its mutuality. You reveal your soul to a Jona-



than, as he does with you, knowing that your joys will be celebrated, and your losses will be grieved together. You give of your time and your life in sacrificial ways, but it's with gladness, knowing that he or she would do the same for you. As Christians, we were created for this type of soul-knitting. It takes vulnerability, commitment, and time. But the rewards of a sweet friendship will last throughout eternity!

THE TAX COLLECTOR

Now of course we don't have the same relationships to tax collectors today as people did in the first century, but you get the idea. You need people in your life who don't know Jesus. All Christians are called to fulfill the Great Commission. If you don't know any unbelievers, go out and meet some! Do what Jesus did, and hang out with them. Sometimes we forget how fun Jesus was. The "tax collectors and sinners" actually liked being around Jesus-and that must say something about Him. He was witty and gracious and kind and funny, and He could tell a great story. He was accused of being a drunkard and a glutton! Jesus was the life of the party, and people loved being around Him. I think that's supposed to be our model for our interaction with unbelievers. People were attracted to Jesus because He was full of Life! People should be attracted to us for the same reason.

Who is your Jethro? Your Timothy or your Mary? What about your Jonathan? Do you have a "Tax Collector" in your life? If you do, be thankful! If not, ask God to bless you with those relationships so you can live faithfully and wholeheartedly for Him.



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. WHAT WOULD JESUS SAY? Wake Up Call: The Letter to Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6)

Philippe Sterling





esus judged the church at Sardis that was asleep.

Have you ever had a "wake-up call"? Figuratively speaking, a wake-up call is something that grabs a person's attention, alerting him to the seriousness of a matter and moving him to corrective action.

Have you ever attended a dead church? The services are dull and lifeless. Everyone is bored and nodding off to sleep. The Lord said to the church at Sardis that was ready to die, "Wake up!"

DESTINATION

The fifth church of Revelation 2-3 was in Sardis, about 30 miles south of Thyatira. It was a commercial city at the junction of five roads, perched on a plateau, 1,500 feet above a valley at the western end of the Great King's Highway from Susa.

Sardis had a great history, but it was going downhill. It had been the ancient capital of Lydia, but its greatest glory was in the past.

In the sixth century BC, King Croesus of Sardis had amassed vast golden treasures. The city had a strong fortress. Despite its great fortress and steep cliffs, Sardis was caught off guard and captured multiple times, most notably by the Persians and later by the Greeks.

The town had begun building a massive temple to the goddess Artemis. It would have been as great as the one at Ephesus, but the town never completed the construction.

On the skyline of Sardis was a massive cemetery with thousands of burial mounds. The city seemed to have a preoccupation with death.

There was a substantial wool industry in Sardis, which may explain the references to clothing in the passage. The people may even have taken on the lethargic attitude of the sheep they tended.

In Roman times, Sardis was a minor city in comparison to the coastal cities of Ephesus and

Smyrna. An earthquake hit it in AD 17, and it never fully recovered.

As Sardis had fallen because of a lack of vigilance, so also was the church in danger of falling. As the city flourished and decayed, so also had the church. The believers had grown indifferent to spiritual things and declined over the years.

PORTRAYAL OF JESUS

Jesus described Himself as the one who held the seven spirits and seven stars. The sevenfold character of the Holy Spirit rested upon Jesus, enabling Him to exercise righteous judgment (Isa 11:2-5). He held the leaders of the churches accountable to Him.

PRAISE FOR THE CHURCH

There was no praise for this church. Later in the letter, there was recognition of the few faithful in Sardis, but the church as a whole was failing.

CRITICISM OF THE CHURCH

Jesus knew the deeds both in reputation and reality of the believers in Sardis. He said, "You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead." This was true of the city. It was also true of the church. This searching judgment of Christ may also apply to churches today.

When I lived in Arlington, VA, I used to go to the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC, and look at the exhibits of the animals of North America. They looked lifelike in their natural habitat, but they were dead. Note, though, that they had once been alive and vibrant. We can have eternal life and yet allow our faith to wither and die (Jas 2:17 and 26).

EXHORTATION

The Lord gave an exhortation that provided the answer to escaping the spiritual graveyard (vv 2-3). Five commands comprise the exhortation. First, "Wake up!" Perhaps the believers of the church were sleeping in the sense of not growing in their faith and not caring for the spiritual needs of those around them.

Second, "Strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die!" They had apparently taken the first few steps of the Christian life, but they had not progressed to maturity.

Third, "Remember!" This was not a simple recall. The basis for renewal is to bear constantly in mind that which we have received and heard.



Fourth, "Keep!" Keep on keeping the body of truth just alluded to in connection with the receiving and hearing. Rebuild on what was left from the earlier days of fruitfulness.

Fifth, "Repent!" Turn from spiritual apathy to spiritual watchfulness (Eph 5:6-14; 1 Thess 5:1-11). Sentries are to stay awake and watch.

Become vigilant and diligent about your walk with Christ. Wake up and revitalize the good things you have going for you. If you don't, what you have will "die." Maintain a living faith.

PENALTY OR REWARD

If the church did not wake up, Jesus said that He would come suddenly, like a thief, to judge them. The earlier verses introduced a remedy for the dying condition of the church. This verse posed a threat for not accepting the remedy. Failure to wake up (watchfulness) exposed them to a possible surprise coming of the Lord in temporal judgment.

It may also be a reference to the Rapture. Contributing to the sin of the church may have been a



failure to watch for the Lord's return. A possible negative outcome at the Judgment Seat of Christ serves as an incentive for believers to wake up and stay alert (1 John 2:28).

The history of Sardis would have warned the believers concerning sudden and unexpected judgment. Sardis had twice fallen because of overconfidence and failure to watch. In 549 BC, the Persian King Cyrus had ended the rule of Croesus by scaling the cliffs under cover of darkness. In 214 BC the armies of Antiochus the Great captured the city by the same method. Herodotus tells of the incident with Cyrus.

Sardis was considered an impregnable fortress. It was built on the slope of Mount Tmolus, at the base of which ran the Pactolus River. Like a pier jutting out from Mount Tmolus was a ridge of rock with great cliffs on either side. On that high pier of solid rock Sardis had built its impregnable fortress. When Cyrus besieged the city, he could not advance farther until that fortress was taken. So the Persian general said that if any man would find a way to storm

the fortress and overwhelm it, he would give large rewards.

A Mardian soldier by the name of Hyroeades was standing one day watching the cliff and the battlement on top and a Lydian soldier on top of the battlement. As he watched.

...the overcomer will walk with Christ in white garments, the symbol of righteous acts.

the Lydian soldier accidentally dropped his helmet over the battlement and picked his way slowly to the base of the cliff to recover his helmet and climbed back to his place of sentinel duty. The Mardian soldier carefully watched as the Lydian came down and back up, and that night with a picked band of Persian soldiers, he made his way up to the height. It was unguarded, and Sardis fell into the hands of the Persians.

With that story as background, we can see the emphasis of Jesus when he said, "Be watchful . . . if you don't watch, I will come like a thief."

Some believers had not soiled their clothes. Believers soil their clothes when they walk in the ways of the ungodly world. The church had a reputation for being alive, but only a few of its number lived up to that reputation.

We find no mention of persecution in the passage. It is possible the local authorities didn't care about the church. Most of the believers were going with the flow, perhaps offering incense to the emperor just to fit in, taking part in the pagan feasts to be "good citizens."

PROMISES TO OVERCOMERS

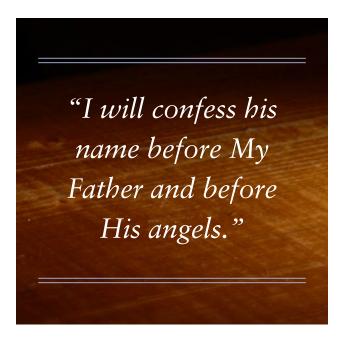
Jesus promised the overcomer three things.

First, the overcomer will walk with Christ in

white garments, the symbol of righteous acts (Rev 19:8). This is not the imputed righteousness of Christ given to all who believe in Him for everlasting life. This is an added reward reflected in royal clothing. The word "white" can have the meaning of "bright and shining." Like a

bright and shining diamond, the garments will have many colors and hues reflecting the overcomer's devotion and service to Christ in this life.

Second, Jesus will keep the overcomer's name in the Book of Life. The overcomer in Revelation



is the believer who is faithful until physical death or the Rapture. The "name" can refer to a person's self or reputation. The immediate context indicates the meaning. In Rev 13:8 and 17:8, for example, "name" refers to a person's self. In the context discussed here, removing the "name" from the Book of Life may be the removal of a commendable reputation. The overcomer can gain a new name (see 2:17), a praiseworthy reputation or title which conforms to his faithfulness. The program at my Dallas Theological Seminary's graduation ceremony contained the names of all the graduates. Next to some of the names were stars: one star, two stars, or three stars, representing graduating with honor, high honor, or highest honor, respectively.

In addition, Jesus may also have used the figure of speech *litotes*, an understatement in which

an affirmative is expressed by the negative of its contrary, such as saying, "you won't be sorry" and meaning, "you'll be glad." By saying that He would not remove the overcomer's name from the Book of Life, Jesus meant that He would highlight the overcomer's commendable reputation.

The third promise of Jesus clarified this, "I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." Jesus will declare the overcomer's commendable reputation before the Father and His angels. If we are faithful to the end, Jesus will tell the story of our faithfulness, and it will reverberate from mouth to mouth throughout all future ages.

GENERAL ADMONITION

The Lord ended all seven letters with this general admonition: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

CONCLUSION

What would Jesus say (WWJS) to the sleeping church? He'd say, "Wake up! Watch for My soon return and make a name for yourself."



Philippe Sterling is the pastor of Vista Ridge Bible Fellowship in Lewisville, TX. He and his wife, Brende, have a son and daughter and several grandkids.

Partners in Grace



The obligatory and impossible group photo of everyone involved in this year's conference

GES Annual Conference

MAY 23-26 // DENTON, TX

Attendance was high. (approximately 205 adults—and 25 children for VBS). Fellowship was better than ever before. Messages were very strong.

Here are some of the comments that conferees left on their evaluations: "Superb content; loved being with old friends and meeting new ones!" "Great fellowship after hours." "Great time of learning, fellowship, and fun." "It is incredibly encouraging to learn truth from likeminded people!" "Beautiful location." "Great fellowship—great teaching—great God!" "Edifying!" "Fascinating, helpful, and relieving of anxiety." "I loved it." "Enjoyed fellowship more than ever before." "It was very refreshing and relaxing." "Spurred me to love, grace, mercy, and good deeds." "Excellent." "Absolutely wonderful! Rich fellowship, fun, and amazing presentations." "So powerful." "A great blessing."

Next year's conference is set for May 22-25 and will again be held at Camp Copass. The theme will be "Vital Free Grace Issues."

Pastor Marino, William, David, Francisco, and Junior from Tallahassee, Florida

St Francis Village Protestant Fellowship

MAY 15 // CROWLEY, TX

Pastor Ken Parlin was out of town and asked me (Shawn) to speak at the Protestant Fellowship in St Francis Village, near Fort Worth. I was happy to return. I spoke on "Rest for the Weary (Matt 11:28-30)." In that passage, Jesus gives two commands: one to "come" and another to "take." Jesus promises to give rest to those who come, and those who take His yoke will find rest. It was a pleasure to be around seasoned believers. Only one person slept through the sermon—my son, Zane!

JUNE 2022 www.faithalone.org



Students at the Bible college in Zambia

Ken and Kathryn's Zambia Ministry

MAY 5-19

We went to Zambia to teach at a Bible college. This is the fifth year we have made the trip. Kathryn taught the doctrine of salvation to the freshmen. I taught the book of Romans to the juniors.

Probably without exception, all the students (a total of around 50) came to believe that eternal life was a gift given by faith in Christ alone that could never be lost. Each student was given a number of Free Grace books, and other FG literature was donated to the library. A special thanks to those who donated to GES to make this possible.

While there, I was asked to speak at the school chapel. I spoke about how even when a believer sins, he remains a child of God. Sin in the life of the believer brings the discipline of God in his life and the loss of rewards.

A local Baptist church asked us to come speak one Sunday. Kathryn led the Sunday school, teaching how the Gospel of John repeats that the believer can never lose eternal life. I spoke in the main service, concentrating on one of those passages in John. After the service, the pastor related how such assurance is sorely needed in Zambia. He wants us to come back and do a two-day conference next year. If the Lord delays His coming and He permits, we are looking to return next summer.

Bayside Community Church

MAY 29 // TAMPA, FL

The church has two services each Sunday. I (Ken) spoke on two passages in Acts that are often used to rob people of their assurance. The first message was from Acts 8:9-24 and dealt with a believing sorcerer named Simon. The second message was from Acts 13:44-48, where the issue of predestination was addressed.

Every time I visit Bayside, the people are so friendly. There were many positive comments after the services, and those who hosted me for meals made me feel like I was in my own home. Thank you, Susan Service and Gerry Hynes!

Vista Ridge Bible Fellowship

MAY 29 // LEWISVILLE, TX

I (Bob) spoke on James 2:1-26—the need to be quick to hear and apply God's Word. This was the first time where I considered 2:1-13 in the same message with 2:14-26. It was clearer this way. Everyone was very encouraging.



Coppell Bible Fellowship

MAY 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 // COPPELL, TX

I (Bob) continued my Sunday school class on *The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible*. This month we discussed the meaning of lost, heaven, hell, repentance, and grace. We had robust discussion each week.



BOOK REVIEW

Harmony with God: A Fresh Look at Repentance



Jarmony with God: A Fresh Look at Repentance by Zane Hodges was originally published in 2001. As the title suggests, it is about the important topic of repentance. When people proclaim the gospel today, they often say that repentance is a part of that gospel. Others say that the word repentance means to change your mind about something and is the same thing as faith.

Hodges shows that both of these views are wrong. Repentance means to turn from one's sins. That involves a work, so it can have nothing to do with receiving eternal life because receiving eternal life is by grace, through faith, apart from any works.

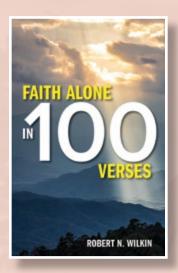
Repentance results in the avoidance of God's temporal judgments. A believer who falls into sin must repent if he wants to have harmony or be in fellowship with God. Hodges also has an excellent discussion on the role repentance played in John the Baptist's ministry to Israel.

Hodges was known for his ability to challenge Christian teaching and the way Christians have traditionally done things. This book is a great example of that ability. Even though it was published over 20 years ago, it is very relevant today. After reading this book you will notice how many people muddy the gospel presentation with the concept of repentance, and you will avoid doing it yourself!

We encourage you, in addition to buying one or more copies, to take the time to give the book a review on Amazon. People who are not aware of our ministry rely upon reviewers to gain insights into our books. A few minutes of your time might result in hundreds of people deciding to read this book.

THE BOOKSTORE



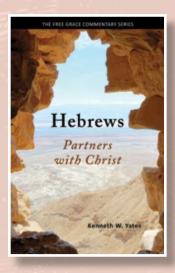


Faith Alone in One Hundred Verses

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 Softcover • 296 pages Code: fav



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 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

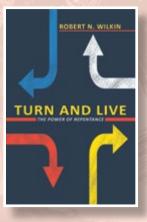


Chosen to Serve: Why Divine Election Is to Service, Not to Eternal Life

Shawn Lazar

Is Biblical election about eternal life or service to God?

USD \$18.00 Softcover • 284 pages Code: cts

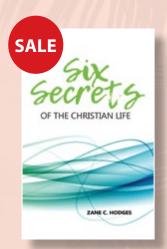


Turn and Live: The Power of Repentance

Robert N. Wilkin

What is the nature and purpose of repentance?

USD \$15.00 Softcover • 158 pages Code: tal

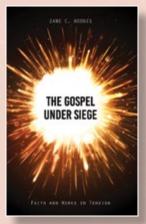


Six Secrets of the Christian Life

Zane C. Hodges

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

USD \$12.00 \$5.00 Softcover • 100 pages Code: sscl2

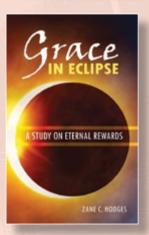


The Gospel Under Siege: Faith and **Works in Tension**

Zane C. Hodges

What is the relationship between faith and works?

USD \$16.00 Softcover • 266 pages Code: gus2



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 Softcover • 168 pages Code: gie2

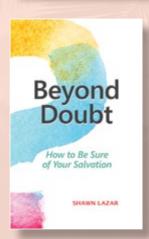


The Hungry Inherit

Zane C. Hodges

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

USD \$15.00 \$9.95 Softcover • 160 pages Code: thi

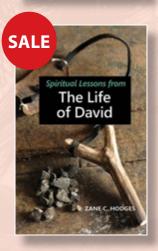


Beyond Doubt: How to Be Sure of Your Salvation

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

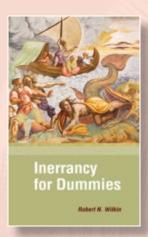
What can you learn about the spiritual life from David and Saul?

USD \$10.00 \$5.00 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: ycbes You Can Be Sure! / Code: ycbs Puedes Estar Seguro / Code: ycbs-sp

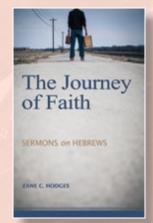


Inerrancy for Dummies

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 \$5.00 Softcover • 76 pages Code: pts

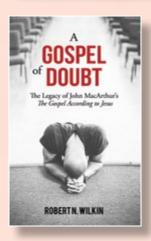


What Is the Outer Darkness?

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



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

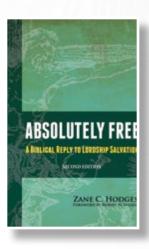
Robert N. Wilkin

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

USD \$22.00 Softcover • 305 pages Code: agd

What must you do to be saved? Here is Jesus' answer... **Evangelism Business Cards**

USD \$15.00 Box of 200 cards Code: ebc

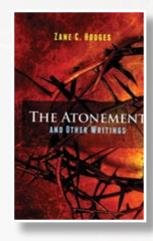


Absolutely Free: A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation

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

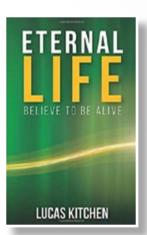


The Atonement and Other Writings

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

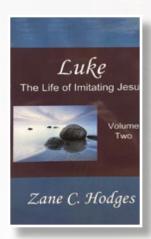


Eternal Life: Believe to Be Alive

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

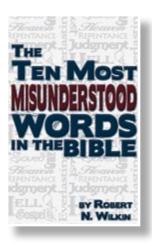


Luke: The Life of Imitating Jesus, Volume Two

Zane C. Hodges

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

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

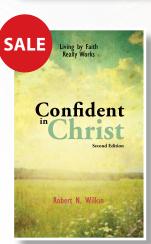


The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible

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 \$9.00 Softcover • 278 pages Code: cic2

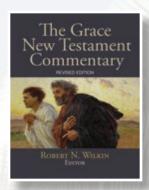


Four Views on the Role of Works at the Final Judgment

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 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 Softcover • 658 pages Code: gntc

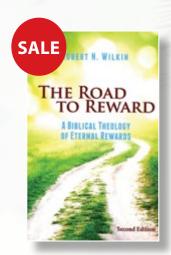


Grudem Against Grace: A Defense of Free Grace Theology

Robert N. Wilkin

Wilkin responds to Grudem's critique of Free Grace.

USD \$15.00 Softcover • 144 pages Code: gag

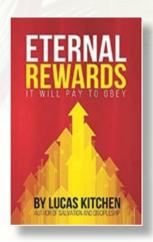


The Road to Reward (Second Edition)

Robert N. Wilkin

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

USD \$20.00 \$9.95 Softcover • 200 pages Code: rr2

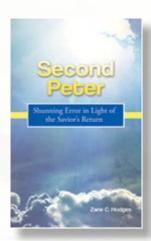


Eternal Rewards: It Will Pay to Obey

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.

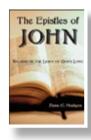
USD \$10.00 \$5.00 Softcover • 106 pages Code: 1pet



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

Read this book and find out about the woman who wrecked the world, the man who went along to get along, and the couple who played hide and seek. .

USD \$6.00 Softcover • 102 pages Code: htbs

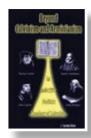


The Epistle of James

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

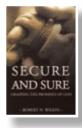


Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism

C. Gordon Olson

Defends a middle view of salvation between Calvin and Arminius.

USD \$20.00 \$14.00 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

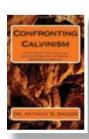


Romans: Deliverance from Wrath

Zane C. Hodges

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

USD \$24.99 Softcover • 488 pages Code: rom

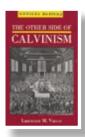


Confronting Calvinism

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

Booklist

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

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 \$5.00
- A Free Grace Primer, \$20.00
- Grace in Eclipse, \$15.00
- How to Be the Spouse God Wants You To Be, \$6.00
- The Gospel Under Siege, \$16.00
- Harmony with God, \$9.95
- Here Walks My Enemy: The Story of Luis, \$5.00 (hardcover), \$3.00 (paperback)
- The Hungry Inherit, \$15.00 \$9.95
- 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
- Power to Make War, \$8.95
- Power to Stand: An Exposition of Jude, \$9.00 \$5.00
- 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 \$5.00
- Spiritual Lessons from the Life of David, \$10.00 \$5.00
- 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

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 \$9.00
- 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
- Faith Alone in One Hundred Verses, \$18.00
- 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 \$9.95
- 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

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 September 15, 2022

Refunds / Exchanges only within 60 days of purchase date.

SHIPPING ADDRESS (No PO Boxes if order is over \$30)							BILLING AD		ddress)	
	NAM	DRESS					NAME			
	ADDI					ADDRESS				
and the second	CITY						CITY S			STATE ZIP
爱证	PHO	NE					PHONE			
	EMAI	MAIL				EMAIL				
	Acct.	Acct.# (if you know it)					Acct.# (if you know it)			
METHOD OF PAYMENT	(circle on	;): Ca	ash Ched	ck Money O	Order Cr	edit Card				T
Send Check or Mor Order to:	ney	Credit	Card Info	rmation:	Visa	Mas	sterCard			
Grace Evangelical Society P.O. Box 1308		CREDIT CAR					CARD #			
Denton, TX 76202	EX				P. DATE CSC# (3 digit code)					
					NAMI	E ON C	ARD			
CODE TITLE								QTY	PRICE	AMOUNT
EVIDAC			SHIDDING I			e LIIDDIA	ic libe.		SUBTOTAL	
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					em S	\$HIPPING UPS: \$0-\$20 \$12.75 \$21-\$50 \$16.75		SHIPPING		
					;	\$51+	30%		DONATION	
\$48 per year for all o	other count	ries.							TOTAL	

Free Subscription

Would people in your chur	ch, small group, or Bible study
benefit from a free subse	cription to <i>Grace in Focus</i> ?
Then sign them up!	·
men agn mem ap:	
	<u> </u>
	_
	_
	_
	_
	-
	_

Trials Are a Normal Part of Christian Growth (James 1:12)

By Chuck Deveau

"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (Jas 1:12).



DO TRUE CHRISTIANS EVER SUFFER?

It never ceases to amaze and perplex me when I hear a professing Christian suggest that if I am suffering as a Christian, it means I must possess a deficient or defective faith. "If you just had enough faith, Chuck, you wouldn't be struggling like you are!"

Often attached to this absurd, non-biblical view of the Christian life and experience is the notion that the evidence of a "great, victorious faith" is a healthy physical body, supreme mental acuity, harmonious relationships, and plenty of money in the bank! "Just name it and claim it," they say. Or "just gab it and grab it." Unwittingly, I presume, they have reduced God to a cosmic Santa Claus.

This fanciful and Biblically false premise is founded on the ideology that God intends that physical, material prosperity come to all His children. Thus, if I am not prospering in my Christian life, I am just not "believing God enough for the blessing." My earnest encouragement to those who subscribe to such nonsense is to read or reread their Bibles. This time with honest hearts and with their eyes wide open.

I am the first to gladly admit, substantiated by our text, that the Bible comprehensively teaches us that God does bless an "enduring," faithful obedience to Him and His Word. But He *never* unequivocally promises a problem-free, fail-safe, prosperity-filled, earthly life predicated upon some "great, personal faith."

The penetrating prologue to the book of James is one of the most powerful and poignant Biblical presentations of the "divine purpose or benefits to trials, testings and temptations" that all Chris-

tians will face throughout their Christian journey (cf. Jas 1:2-18).

Notice how James begins his exposition in 1:2—"Count it or reckon it all joy, my Christian brethren, *whenever* [=not *if*] you encounter various testings or trials." How so, we ask? Why should I "count it a joy or blessing" when I find myself in hard times? At first blush, it sounds a bit masochistic to me!

Notice his answer in 1:3—"Because you should know that the testing of your *faith* produces mature endurance..." In my view and study of God's Word, the phrase "mature endurance" should be understood as the development and attainment of "Christ-like character." Jesus Christ Himself "was made, from the standpoint of His humanity, fully mature through the sufferings, testings and trials He endured culminating in the cross" (see Heb 2:10). In one sense, His personal, spiritual, moral character was forged and approved of by His Father, not in prosperity, but adversity! And so is ours!

I know this does not sound very inviting. But it is honest, and it is realistic. Just as our Lord's love for His Father and His endurance in doing His Father's will brought Him God's "approbation" and great eternal reward, so also does our love for Christ and our faithful endurance through all that life throws at us invite our Lord's "approval," and, both now and forever, the "crown of life." The reward our Lord promises us who, from a heart of love for Him, endure the trials, testings, and temptations associated with our earthly Christian life, is in the form of an eternal experience likened to the thrill of winning the gold medal at the recent Olympic Games.

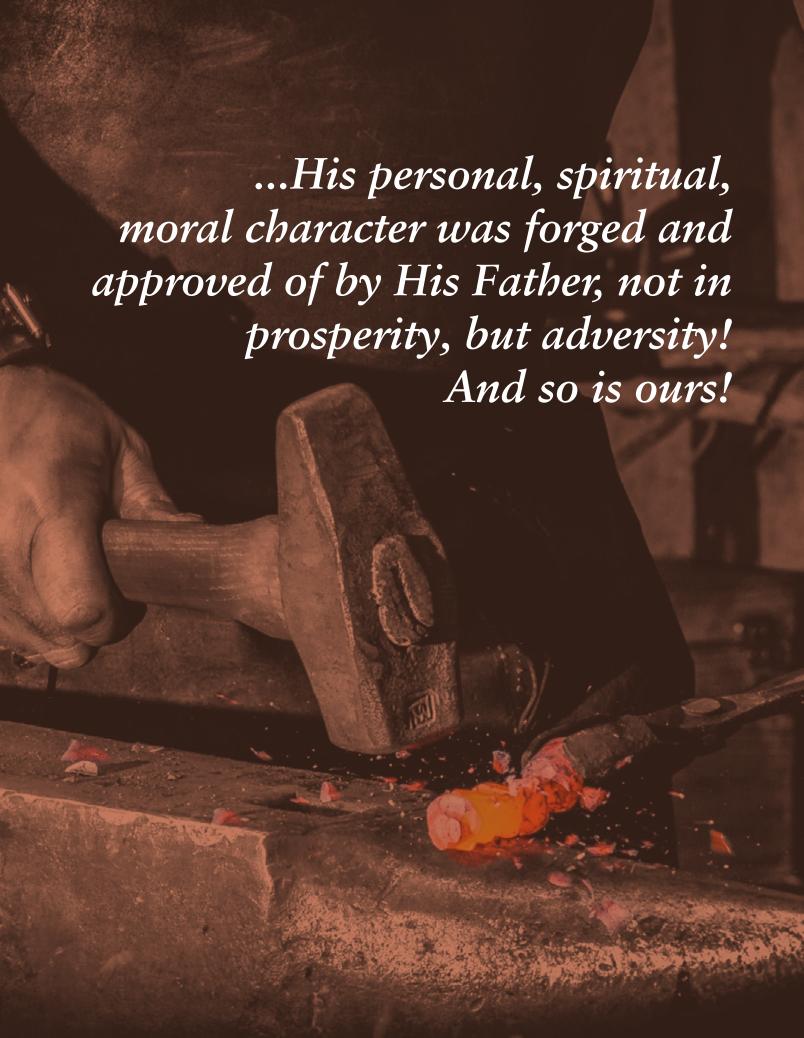
In reality, "great faith" is an enduring fidelity that encounters the variegated, unavoidable "trials" of Christian life and experience and doesn't give up because it is empowered by a love for Jesus Christ and the shared eternal life experience He desires to have with us once our own personal "race of faith" is ended and we humbly kneel in His presence. We may experience a foretaste of the "crown of life" now, but the full-orbed experience awaits the coming of the King!

In 1980 I ran my first and only marathon. I trained for it arduously. It was a personal test of my "endurance" and resolve to complete the full 26.2 miles. There were moments when I was very tempted to quit. The last six miles were brutal. But when I crossed the finish line, I was met by many family members and friends waiting to share their "approval" and congratulations. I will never forget the excitement of this "coronating experience of life."

Indeed "pain can lead to great gain."



Chuck Deveau is the host of "The Things That Matter" radio broadcast on KRAQ 100.1 FM, Remnant Radio, Sundays at 8:00 a.m. PST. He also serves with Men of Messiah ministries located in La Quinta, Ca.



Let's Make Every Month Free Grace Pride Month (Romans 1:16)

By Ken Yates

INTRODUCTION

Month. It is a time when we are called upon to recognize the contributions that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer citizens have made in our country. We are to support them as they express their pride in their lifestyles. The month will be filled with events honoring them across the country. There is even a special multi-colored flag used in the celebrations. The flag will be prominently displayed in many of our most successful businesses, our government buildings, and during athletic contests. Mountains of merchandise will be sold with the colors of the flag and its logo on them. It will be practically impossible to avoid what will be going on in this regard.

All of this began in 1999 when President Bill Clinton declared June to be *Gay and Lesbian Pride Month*. Then from 2009 to 2016, President Barack Obama declared June *LGBT Pride Month*. President Biden declared June *LGBTQ+Pride Month* in 2021.

Almost everybody in this country is able to remember a time, not very long ago at all, when these kinds of things would be unthinkable. Even though that is the case, those who feel uncomfortable or strange about these activities will be made to feel that they are the ones who are out of step. Some will even be called derogatory names if they do not "share the pride." There will be a strong social pressure for everyone to express pride in how far we have come in our attitudes towards these lifestyles.

The Bible, however, tells us it is healthy to feel uncomfortable about these developments.

PRIDE IN SINFUL ACTIVITIES IS NOT TO BE CELEBRATED

In Romans 1, Paul speaks about homosexual practices in his day (Rom 1:26-27). He even goes on to explain that there are those who take pride in them. These people engage in these acts and encourage others to do the same (1:32). But Paul does not share the high opinion of such things held by many in the society in which he lived.

He saw such things as a perversion of the created order. They were degrading to those involved in them. Such activities were destructive to those individuals and to society itself. Even though he observed many of the same things we see today, one wonders what he would have thought about a society devoting a whole month to publicly honor them. My guess is that he never saw a flag glorifying what he describes as degrading activities waving over homes, businesses, and athletic events. I sometimes wonder how the world of the first century pagan Roman Empire compares to the sexual climate of the United States today.

I believe Paul would have been a little taken aback if he lived today and observed what is happening. The pride promoted concerning these activities is even pushed upon young children in our

schools. The innocence of these vulnerable little ones is being attacked.

It should be noted that Paul does not stop with homosexuality when he discusses the sins that were prevalent in his world. People were also proud of their heterosexual sins outside of marriage and were proud of their greed, their arrogance, their gossiping, and jealousies, just to name a few.

The idea that a whole month would be set aside to honor homosexual sins would have been just as strange to Paul as having

a month designated to celebrate those who are addicted to pornography. Imagine a month in which we celebrated all adulterers. Try to imagine a flag of many different colors which promoted the idea that we could express our greed and jealousies towards others in many different ways. To make matters worse, all of these destructive things would be encouraged and applauded. It is appropriate to look at such scenarios and wonder

what in the world is going on when a society rejoices over certain sins Paul describes in Romans 1.

It would take Paul some time to let all this sink in. He would not approve, but he would realize that such is the nature of man in his flesh. What man celebrates is not what honors God. Paul would agree with those who do not applaud what is going on and feel uncomfortable about it. He would not join in with showing pride in these things.

Many are familiar with Paul's view of these sinful activities. However, most are not aware that he was proud of something else. He mentions it right before he discusses homosexuality and the other sins he lists in Romans 1. He would not wave a rainbow-colored flag and proclaim

The idea that a whole month would be set aside to honor homosexual sins would have been just as strange to Paul as having a month designated to celebrate those who are addicted to pornography.

the pride people are told to feel during LGBTQ+ Pride Month. But he did take pride in proclaiming another message.

PAUL'S GOOD NEWS

Even though Paul looked at the world in which he lived and observed many things going on that were destructive, he had some really great news. As is well known, the Greek word for "gospel" means "good news." Paul said he had a gospel to declare.

What is more, he says that he is not ashamed of this good news (Rom 1:16). Everybody who studies Romans agrees that this is a figure of speech. Paul uses a negative to state a positive. When he says he is not ashamed of it, he is using an understatement. It means he is extremely proud of it. If he could, he would make a flag out of it, wave it around, and put it on top of every building he could find.

There is a contrast here, of course. Man, in his flesh, is proud of his sinful activities, whatever they may be. We are certainly seeing that during the month of June. Paul, however, says as believers in Jesus Christ, we should not be proud of

such things, but we should be proud of the good news we have to share because of the Lord.

But what is that good news?

IT IS MORE THAN SIMPLY GOING TO HEAVEN

When most people see the word "gospel" in the Bible, they automatically think it means what is necessary for a person to "go to heaven when he dies." But it almost always means something else. In the book of Romans, it is the good news that in Christ, God has given us the power to live godly lives. This is available to all who have believed in Jesus Christ for eternal life. They are declared righteous by God because of that faith. The Lord has given them the Holy Spirit, and through that Spirit they no longer are enslaved to the power of sin or their flesh.



All of this is supported by Free Grace Theology. Eternal life is a free gift that can never be lost and is given at the moment of faith. We come just as we are. Anyone, including LGBTQ+ folks, can be born again simply by believing in Jesus for that free gift. We are not saved by self-reformation. We are saved by grace through faith apart from works (Eph 2:8-9).

But the believer receives so much more than the mere guarantee of eternal security. Through the Spirit we have been set free to serve the Lord. If we do, not only will we be in the kingdom of God, but we will also be greatly rewarded when the kingdom comes. This will include reigning with Christ when He comes again (Rom 8:17).

This is the message of which Paul was proud. He refers to it as containing the very power of God. That power is available to every believer, enabling him to live in a godly manner. Paul wanted those in Rome to know about these wonderful truths.

THE WORLD'S MIXED-UP VALUES

How sad it must have been for Paul to have this message of God's power and grace, a message he was so proud to announce, be ignored by most people in the world in which he lived. But even sadder was the realization that those in the world were proud of the sin that dominated their lives.

Those sins were contrary to the created order and brought destruction. Paul's message brought eternal life and eternal rewards and enriched the lives of those who believed and acted upon the words he taught. Paul looked around and saw people who were enslaved to their sinful lusts, while he proclaimed a message that would set them free.

CONCLUSION

A flag is a representation of an idea. All around us in the month of June we will see a flag that expresses pride over something that should cause those carrying it anything but pride. The ideas connected with that flag do not build up. They tear down.

But Free Grace Theology is something we can be proud of. It is good and beneficial to those who hear and believe it. Wouldn't it be great if the world heard and understood? They could even make some kind of flag representing the wonderful ideas contained in the message. They could plant that flag on every building and in every business.

Of course, that will never happen.

But we can take pride in that good news. Jesus offers eternal life as a free gift through faith. For those who believe, the very power of God dwells within them. They do not have to serve the sinful lusts of their flesh. They can live by the power of Christ as they wait for His soon return.

That is not a message just for June. For those of us who have heard, understood, and believe that message, let us be proud of it. We may not have or even need a colorful flag, but let us realize that every month is Free Frace Theology Pride Month.



Ken Yates retired as a Lt. Col. from the Army after 20 years as a chaplain. He and his wife, Pam, live in Columbia, SC, but will soon move to Indianapolis to be around their grandkids. Ken leads the GES international ministry.



By Bob Wilkin

J. D. asks an important question:

Did the

I became a believer in Free Grace two years ago, but my family still believes in Lordship Salvation and goes to a Lordship Salvation church. Their pastor said that when Jesus is talking to the woman at the well and calls her out about having five husbands, and the current man she is with is not her husband, He is telling her that she must first get rid of her sin in her life before she can receive everlasting life. I just wanted to know your opinion and a good way to properly explain what Jesus is trying to say. Thanks, and keep up the good work. God bless.

Context, Context, Context,

Nothing in John 4:1-26 suggests that the Lord Jesus was saying that the woman at the well had to repent to have everlasting life. He never used the word *repent*. Nor did He tell her that she needs to "first get rid of her sin in her life before she can receive everlasting life." He did not tell her that she needed to stop living in sin in order to have everlasting life.

The reason He mentioned that she was living with a man who was not her husband is clear in context. He already told her that "the gift of God" (John 4:10) is "everlasting life" (John 4:14). But He had yet to tell her, "who it is who says to you..." (John 4:10). He needed to reveal to her that He is the Christ, the Messiah, who has the authority to give everlasting life. He did that by revealing her past and present.

Notice that she knows Messiah is coming and how to identify Him: "I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When He comes, *He will tell us all things*'" (John 4:25, italics added). He then says, "I who speak to you am He" (John 4:26).

She leaves her waterpot behind. Many commentators think that the waterpot symbolizes the old works-salvation religion, the water that was not living. She then goes to town and tells the men about the Man who gave her living water: "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" (John 4:29, italics added). Notice the words in italics.

Comparing that with verse 25, we see that she is saying that Jesus is the Christ. Possibly the reason she does not come out and boldly say that is because she was a woman of low reputation.

The Lord Jesus used His omniscience to lead this woman to faith in Him. If you compare John 4:1-26 with John 20:31, you see that she believed *that Jesus is the Christ*, the one who guarantees everlasting life to all who believe in Him for it.

J. D.'s family is sitting under a pastor who read his theology into the John 4 exchange between Jesus and the woman at the well. He did not allow the text to speak.

One final point. Let's say that the pastor's interpretation were correct and that we need to "get rid of the sin in our lives before we can receive eternal life." How do we do that? If the woman stopped living with her boyfriend, or if she married him, that would stop ongoing sin *in that area*, but it would not get rid of her past sins in that regard. Nor would it stop other ongoing sins in her life like jealousy, envy, outbursts of anger, etc. Wouldn't she need to deal with all her sins, including past sins?

How would a person today know which sins he had to stop doing before he could be born again? Does a person have to stop getting drunk and high on drugs? Does he have to stop stealing things? Does he have to stop verbally abusing his wife and kids? Does he have to stop driving in such a way that he endangers all those around him on the road? Does he need to start going to church, giving money for the poor, loving his wife as Christ loves the church, and avoiding all the other sins of omission? Why just pick out one sin?

And how does anyone atone for his past sins? If the blood of Christ is not enough to deal with our sin problem, then we need to take care of that ourselves. If His blood is enough to deal with our past sins, then it is also enough to deal with all our future sins as well.

May our beliefs come from God's Word, not from tradition or from what we think is most reasonable. If the way we interpret a passage does not fit the passage, then we need to allow God's Word to tell us what to believe, rather than telling it what it ought to say!

Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He lives in Highland Village, TX, with his wife of 46 years, Sharon. He is an avid race walker and marathon walker.

Clothed with Humility (1 Peter 5:5-11)

By Shawn Lazar

Humility is not a favorite virtue, especially in American culture. We much prefer pride, self-aggrandizement, and the ruthless promotion of our personal "brand."

But that is not how Christianity works. Someone said we have an "upside-down spirituality." I agree. That is part of the pattern and offense of the cross. As Harold Senkbeil wrote, "The cross is offensive. It grates on us that God would achieve his highest purpose through lowly degradation" (Senkbeil, *Christ and Calamity*, p. 46). But that is the way God achieves His purposes. God works through the lowly and humble way of the cross. For example, Peter says that instead of being prideful, we're called to submit:

Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders (v 5a).

I am not sure I have ever heard this passage taught in church. I think it is because our church life is so thin, and people are too easily offended. When we hear about submission, it rubs us the wrong way, and it is very easy to choose to attend a less demanding church. So this message does not get preached very much.

However, it is necessary to a healthy church life.

Please note—Peter is not discussing whether these elders are in the right or the wrong, whether they are wise or foolish, prudent or greedy, or whether they deserve your submission. That is not the issue here. This is about what *you* should do, i.e., submit yourself.

Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble" (v 5b).

The issue of submission will probably come up in the context of a conflict. You will have a disagreement with your elders about something, and in that moment, you will not feel like submitting. It is easy to go along with decisions with which you agree, but when things are headed in the wrong direction and you think you know better, you want to argue for your point of view. In those fights, you want to show that God is on *your* side. But Peter says that if you really want God to be on your side, then humble yourself. Instead of clothing yourself with self-justifying arguments,



God will resist you either way, and then you'll have both the elders and the Lord against you. That is a losing scenario!

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time (v 6).

When you humbly submit yourself to your elders, you are really humbling yourself "under the mighty hand of God." You might feel like you've surrendered to a fallible human authority. But take a divine perspective on this issue. What

to God so He can do things His way. The expression about God's mighty hand refers to His ability to deliver His people. In other words, in submitting yourself, you are trusting God to act for you in that situation and to deliver you from it. That does not mean you will be getting your way. It means you will be getting God's way in God's time. His priority is your priority. So you humble yourself under His hand, and by doing that, "He may exalt you in due time." That is, instead of fighting tooth and nail for your "due" and trying to lift yourself by your bootstraps, let God do the lifting for you.

casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you (v7).

Your conflict with your elders is probably stressing you out. It might be keeping you up at night as you turn the situation over repeatedly in your head. You think about what people said and did and wonder about all the different ways you should have responded, and you obsessively wonder, "How will this all turn out?" But part of

Even though submission and humility seem like signs of weakness in the eyes of the world, they are how God can strengthen you.

humbling yourself under God's hand means casting those worries upon God. Frankly, the problem is too big for you. You don't see all the moving pieces or understand how they fit together, so give your cares over to God. All of them. He has big hands. He can carry them. And more than that, God cares for you. I wish I could convey to you how much He cares. You are full of anxieties, and they seem like the most important thing in the world at the moment. God sees how you struggle and wants you to transfer those concerns over to Him. That can be as simple as saying aloud, "Lord, take this from me!" Or "Lord, I am trusting you with this problem!" Make the conscious decision to relate your situation to Christ, in faith giving your problem over to God.

Peter goes on to explain that there is a spiritual warfare component to submitting to your elders and humbling yourself before God:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (v 8).

All those church conflicts between you and the elders create opportunities for the devil to do his work. Like a hungry lion seeking to devour his prey, the devil can persuade a church to "bite and devour each other" (Gal 5:15). He would

like nothing more than to see elders and younger people at each other's throats. Divisiveness is one of the chief sins of church life, and we are constantly warned against it: "Note those who cause division...and avoid them...Reject a divisive man... Now I plead with you, brethren...that there be no divisions among you" (Rom 16:17; Titus 3:10; 1 Cor 1:10). Submitting to your elders and clothing yourself with humility is a necessary

step to avoid division and devouring. It is also a way to resist the devil:

Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world (v 9).

We are called to resist the devil, both individually and as a church body, and submission and humility are part of that spiritual resistance.

Of course, submitting yourself is not the path to a trouble-free life. It may still end up with you suffering, in which case, Peter reminds you that you are not alone. Christians around the world are suffering in the same way. But thank God, suffering does *not* have the last word in your life:

But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen (vv 10-11).

Peter says that after "you have suffered a while," God, who shows grace to the humble, can use your submission to "perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you."

He can *perfect* you in the sense of bringing you to spiritual maturity.

God can *establish* you, so that you become a more stable believer, instead of being tossed to and fro by your anxieties and interpersonal conflicts.

Even though submission and humility seem like signs of weakness in the eyes of the world, they are how God can *strengthen* you.

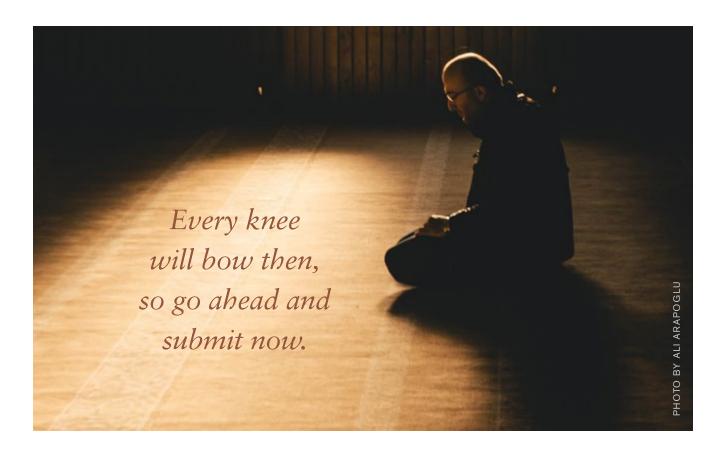
And God can use this to *settle* you, to make you stand even more firmly in place to resist the devil's schemes, instead of being susceptible to division and being devoured by the devil.

In other words, your real enemies are not your elders but are pride, division, and the devil. And your real hope is not in winning your argument and being proven right, but in His glory and dominion, which will last forever.

Every knee will bow then, so go ahead and submit now.



Shawn Lazar is Director of Publications for Grace Evangelical Society. He is happily married to Abby and tries to impart a Christ-centered worldview to his three children.



NONPROFIT US POSTAGE

ABERDEEN, SD PERMIT #200 **PAID**

Grace Evangelical Society

P.O. Box 1308

Denton, TX 76202

Believe in Him for Life

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

