

GRACE **in** FOCUS

Man's Role in **Conversion**

BELIEVE

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
(Acts 16:30-31)

Also in this issue...

Are Eternal Rewards Secure? Part 2 | Why Are Not All Believers Overcomers?
Toe Trouble on Aisle Four | The Dead Believer | Seek, and You Will Find
Healing in His Wings: The Awesome Power of Faith in Jesus Christ
Leviticus in Jeopardy | Is the Forgiveness of Sins Equivalent to Everlasting Life?

In This Issue...

Letter from the Editor Bob Wilkin	3
Seek and You Fill Find Ken Yates	4
Toe Trouble on Aisle Four Brad Daskocil	8
Why Am I a Zero-Point Calvinist Bob Wilkin	10
Is The Forgiveness of Sins Equivalent to Everlasting Life Mike Lii	12
A Book and Life in Jeopardy Marcia Hornok and Leah Gingery	16
The Dead Believer Kathryn Wright	18
Healing in His Wings: The Awesome Power of Faith in Jesus Christ Ken Pierce	22
Man's Role in Conversion is to Believe Zane C. Hodges	26

Are Eternal Rewards Secure? Part 2 Bob Wilkin	29
Bookstore	30
<i>What's Been Happening at GES?</i>	35
Why Aren't All Who Believe in Christ Overcomers? Bob Wilkin	36
The Habit of Bible Reading Ken Yates	40
Was Mark Driscoll Wrong to Make a Public Correction at the Stronger Men's Conference Kathryn Wright	42
More of <i>What's Been Happening at GES?</i>	45
Fall 2024 Online Seminary Classes	47

Editor: Robert N. Wilkin, Ph.D. Typesetting and Design: Debbie Payne.
Executive Assistant: Bethany Taylor. Order Fulfillment: Mark Gray. Director of
GES Missions: Ken Yates. GES Missions Coordinator: Kathryn Wright.

Volume 39, Number 4
© 2024 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.



Letter from the Editor

Israel has been at war since October 7th of last year.

The war in Ukraine began on February 24, 2022.

Civil disobedience, demonstrations, rioting, and looting have lasted much longer.

Sexual morality is rapidly changing. What was considered a mental illness fifty years ago is now actively promoted in many public schools.

If these things cause you to suffer in your soul, then your heart is set on God's values. That is suffering for the Lord (2 Pet 2:8). That is loving the world to come, not the present world (2 Tim 4:6-10).

We are called to lay up treasure in heaven, not on earth (Matt 6:1-21). The Lord commanded us to set our hearts on the life to come (Matt 6:19-21). So did the apostles (e.g., 2 Tim 4:6-10; 1 Pet 1:3-12; 5:1-4; 2 Pet 1:5-11; 1 John 2:28; 4:17-19).

It is sadly possible to be so earthly-minded as to be no heavenly good.

Our aim is to help our readers grow in their love for the Lord Jesus and for His soon return. We should long for the world to come when righteousness and peace will reign.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Wilkin". The signature is stylized with a large, looping "B" and a cursive "Wilkin".

Robert N. Wilkin

A full-page background image showing a person standing on a rocky outcrop with their arms outstretched, looking out over a lake and mountains. The scene is framed by trees on the left and right, with a bright sun creating a lens flare effect in the upper right. The title 'Seek and you will FIND' is overlaid in a large, black, stylized font.

Seek and you will FIND

By Ken Yates



Introduction

From time to time, I hear someone teach the strange idea that unbelievers cannot seek God. Now, left solely to mankind's devices, that would certainly be the case. But God loves and reaches out to the whole world. Because of His initiative, unbelievers can indeed seek Him.

Acts 17:27 is one of many passages that show this is true. Paul, is preaching to a group of unbelievers, and tells them that God has placed all men in their locations and times so that they “should seek” Him. God has arranged His creation so that, as Paul states, all men “might find Him.”

I don't think anybody would disagree with the notion that believers can seek God. Believers who want to know more about the Lord can seek to learn what is still lacking in their knowledge of Him. Writing about believers, the author of Hebrews says that God rewards those who diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6).

We could say that Heb 11:6 is a general principle that applies to all men and women. The person who seeks the Lord, believer or unbeliever, will find Him. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the Lord will find them.

Mark 12:35-37 records an example of both an unbeliever and a group of believers seeking the Lord. Not surprisingly, He reveals Himself to all of them. No matter who we are, we should find encouragement in this account.

An Unbeliever Seeks the Lord

Immediately before Mark 12:35-37, there is an unbeliever who comes to the Lord. He is a scribe, and the Gospel of Mark has nothing good to say about this group of men. They oppose Christ. Eventually, they will play a pivotal role in putting Him to death.

But the Lord has reached out to them. For three years He has taught in various places in Israel. He has performed many miracles, all demonstrating that He is the Christ. In Mark 12, He is teaching

in the temple. The scribes are present and can hear the things He says. As a group, they reject Him.

But this scribe is different. He reaches out to the Lord. He has listened to Jesus and concluded that He is a wise teacher of the Scriptures (12:28, 32). When Christ answers a question posed by this man, the man concurs, saying that the Scriptural truths Jesus has pointed out are more important than the sacrifices going on in the temple. Coming from a respected Jewish religious leader, that was quite a statement in light of the fact that his religion was based on those sacrifices. He admits that what Jesus has said is greater than his most cherished beliefs.

The Lord is reaching out to this man who is sincerely seeking the truth. Because of his willingness to seek the truth, Jesus tells him that he is “not far from the kingdom of God.”

The scribe began to see that the Law and its sacrifices could not give him life. He was seeking answers from the Lord. If he kept seeking, the Lord would tell him that eternal life would be his if he believed that Jesus was the Christ who would give it to him (John 20:31). The scribe was already moving in the right direction.

Our wonderful Lord continues to reach out to this man. It is another example of His wonderful grace toward all men.

More Revelation to This Unbeliever

In 12:35, the very next verse, we see that the Lord continues teaching. He is still in the temple and brings up what the scribes say about the Christ. The unbeliever who is seeking truth from Him is one of those scribes. Mark clearly connects the account of the seeking scribe with what the Lord says about the scribes as a group. The seeking scribe is still listening to what the Lord is saying.

What does He tell this scribe?

The scribe needed to know that Jesus was the Christ. He needed to know the majesty of the Christ. The Lord points out that the Christ would be a descendant of David, just as the scribes taught.

The Christ would bring in the kingdom that was promised to David. It would be an eternal kingdom.

But the Lord then quotes from Psalm 110 to show that Christ is greater than the scribes realized. Christ is David's Lord.

I wonder what this unbelieving scribe thought as he was listening to Jesus. He had already acknowledged that Jesus accurately explained the Scriptures. He had begun to realize that the Lord had more insight into spiritual things than had been afforded him by the religious traditions he was taught. As this wise Teacher explained Psalm 110:1 to him, he realized that the scribes (like himself) had misunderstood who the Christ was. Did the scribe come to realize that this Teacher was the One of whom David spoke? Did he realize that this was why He had such wisdom? Did he see that Jesus was the Son of David, who would one day bring in that eternal kingdom? Maybe he deduced that this was why He had been able to perform all the miracles he had heard about.

We have not been told how the scribe responded. But we do know a couple of things. This man was seeking the Lord. And the Lord was seeking him. We hope he continued seeking the truth from the One whom he acknowledged as a wise Teacher of God's Word. I will not be surprised if we see him in the kingdom.

But the Lord was also reaching out to other unbelievers in the temple that day. As He brought His teaching to a close, a crowd was listening to Him. Many in the crowd would have been unbelievers. Mark tells us that these people “heard Him gladly.” Undoubtedly, some, like the scribe, were looking for the truth from this Galilean Teacher. He was reaching out to them.

But unbelievers weren't the only ones who were seeking answers from the Lord. Some believers were as well. He was seeking them too.

Believers Seeking the Lord

The disciples were with Jesus when He was reaching out to the scribe. Except for Judas, they were believers. They had not only believed in Christ for eternal life, but had also made the de-

cision to follow Him. They did so in order to learn more about Him. For three years they had done just that.

But they still had much to learn! They knew He was the Christ, but they did not know the extent of His dignity and power. When He calmed the sea during a storm, they wondered how He could have done such a thing (4:41). When the Lord told them He was the Christ but that He was going to die, Peter—speaking for the whole group—rebuked Him (8:32). They thought they knew more about His destiny than He did!

To their credit, despite displaying their ignorance about the Person of the Christ, they continued following Him. One could say that they were seeking to know more about Him. They kept plugging along.

When the Lord explained Psalm 110:1 to the seeking scribe and the people in the crowd, the disciples—who also didn’t know what David had said about the Christ is Psalm 110—heard Him as well. After He had taught the people, Mark tells us that He “called His disciples to Himself” and taught them even more (12:43).

The Lord’s teaching may have caused the scribe to understand that He was the Christ who would give him eternal life—something the sacrifices in the temple could not do. But hopefully, as the disciples considered what the Lord said, they too would see Him in a different way. Of course He could calm the sea. He was God. He was more than the physical descendant and Son of David. He was David’s Lord. His words were true, even if they challenged their preconceived ideas of what the Messiah would do. When He said He would suffer and die, He knew whereof He spoke. When He told them that they would have to suffer as well if they wanted to be His disciples, they could believe Him. After all, He would soon be sitting at the right hand of God the Father in the heavens.

Conclusion

The Scriptures show us that during Christ’s earthly ministry, He met people where they were. He revealed God’s truth to people, and that revela-

tion was different depending on what each person needed.

To an unbelieving scribe who was seeking the truth, the Lord revealed that his religious traditions were ineffective in producing life and that his understanding of the Christ was defective as well. By showing His wisdom and knowledge of the Scriptures, He pointed the man to the fact that He is the Christ.

At the same time, using the same Scripture, the Lord shows the believers who were seeking to know more about Him that He was greater than even they knew. They were struggling with the idea that the One in Whom they had believed could suffer such a cruel death and that He was calling them to follow Him on that path. Psalm 110 showed them that the suffering Christ was infinite in power and glory. As believers, they should believe what He was saying to them.

No matter who we are, the Lord’s teaching in the temple that day provides us with a valuable lesson. If you have never believed in Jesus as the Christ who gives eternal life, seek the truth. I recommend that you use the Gospel of John. Read about how He interacted with various unbelievers and revealed the truth to them.

If you are a believer who wants to know more about Him, ask Him to reveal more of Himself to you in His Word. We all have a lot to learn!

One thing is sure: If you seek Him, you will find Him. He will find you. Such a search will be rewarded in ways we cannot imagine. ■



Ken Yates is a retired Army chaplain (Lt. Col). He has many theological degrees, including a Ph.D. from D.T.S. in New Testament. He leads the GES international ministry, cohosts the daily podcast, and assists Bob in all aspects of the GES ministry. His new book, *Elisabeth*, is a powerful testimony to the power of God manifested in a Christ-centered family. He and his wife, Pam, live in Columbia, SC.



Toe Trouble on Aisle Four!

By Brad Doscocil

Being a patient in the hospital is a helpless feeling. As I write this, I am in the hospital being treated for numerous injuries. The most severe injury is an infection in my right foot and the fourth toe of my right foot.

As a patient, I am dependent on the attending physicians. The nurses and staff carry out the physicians' orders, including blood tests, ultrasound exams, MRIs, and the administration of medicines and food.

Physicians examine data and make diagnoses and treatment recommendations. It is essential that they tell the truth about my injuries and treatment options.

Not every diagnosis is made immediately. It takes time to gather data and analyze the evidence, including changes in the data as treatment occurs. So, diagnoses take time and do not happen all at once. Often, our understanding of God's Word



happens in the same way. It is like peeling back an onion!

Based on a physical examination, a tissue sample, and an X-ray, the podiatrist diagnosed my toe as being infected down to the bone. An MRI later confirmed this diagnosis.


Based on this evidence, the podiatrist presented two surgical options regarding the infected toe. One approach was to try to save the toe. This would involve scraping away all visible infection from the bone and tissue. However, this approach would inevitably leave some bacteria behind, which could later grow and cause additional infection and potentially greater loss. Another obstacle was the deterioration of the toe's skin, which would impede the ability to sew up the wound.

The other option was to amputate the toe. This procedure provided the most excellent assurance that infection would not return.

After hearing the medical evidence and looking at my toe, I believed her. I knew her assessment was correct. The podiatrist told me the truth and presented the evidence. Now I can only count to nineteen!¹

We are all sinners and helpless before God. We are injured, yet we often overlook this fact. But God always tells us the truth! His Word is truth (John 17:17). Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). God gives us truth to guide us. He gives us evidence to convince us to believe Him, just as the podiatrist gave me medical evidence.

JESUS
the way the truth the life

God is infinitely more trustworthy than a physician because He is perfect. So, we should always believe what He says, even when His message is unpleasant. 



Brad Daskocil is a CPA in Long Beach, CA, and the Chairman of the GES Board.

¹Brad left out the fact that he had a dangerous blood clot in his left knee and that he had two different infections in his right foot, even after the amputation of his fourth toe. He was in the hospital for two weeks. This was a very serious situation.



Why Am I a Five-Point Calvinist?

By Bob Wilkin

Total depravity

Unconditional election

Limited atonement

Irresistible grace

Perseverance of the saints

Recently, I recorded a seven-minute YouTube video with the same title. It is available to view on the Grace Evangelical Society YouTube channel.

When I graduated from DTS in 1982, I called myself a Calvinist. I considered myself a three-pointer.

I've come to realize that all five points are a unit. You believe either all five or none. Of course, some people give different meanings to the points to reach an agreement, but that's cheating.

TULIP summarizes the five points: Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, and the Perseverance of the saints.

Here is how Calvinists define those points:

Total depravity. Humans are like cadavers. They cannot respond to God. They cannot believe in Christ. Regeneration must precede faith.

Unconditional election. In eternity past, God elected or chose those who would be saved. That election is based on nothing in the ones chosen. He chose about one to two percent of all of humanity. The rest cannot be saved.

Limited atonement. Christ died for only the elect. Only the elect are savable. The ninety-eight percent He didn't die for are not savable. They're doomed from conception.

Irresistible grace. God draws only the elect, and the elect cannot resist His drawing and His grace.

Perseverance of the saints. The elect, and only the elect, will persevere in faith and good works until death. Eternal security (the preservation of the saints) applies only to believers who persevere. Believers who do not persevere will be eternally condemned.

Here is my response to the five points:

T = We are sinners, but we can respond to God.

U = Election is to service, not to eternal destiny.

L = Christ died for the world, making all savable.

I = Humans can resist God's grace.

P = Perseverance is not guaranteed and isn't required for preservation. It is a condition for ruling with Christ.

John 3:16-18 (as well as many other passages in John and throughout the Bible) contradicts Calvinism in these ways:

Contra T: Anyone can believe in Christ.

Contra U: No election to everlasting life is mentioned or implied.


Contra L: God sent Christ to die for the sins of the whole world.

Contra I: God is drawing all, and those who resist for their whole lives (never coming to faith in Christ) will be eternally condemned.

Contra P: Eternal security is true, independent of perseverance.

I'm concerned for Calvinists because they lack assurance of their eternal destinies. They do not know if they are elect, if Christ died for them, or if they will persevere. They go through life on a quest for assurance that can never be realized. Only when they die will they know whether they were elected or not.

You don't need to be a Calvinist or an Arminian. You can be a Biblicist. You can believe and follow God's Word where it takes you. Be like the Bereans who searched the Scriptures (Acts 17:11).

Keep grace in focus. 



Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He and Sharon live in Highland Village, TX. He has racewalked ten marathons.



IS THE
FORGIVENESS
OF SINS
EQUIVALENT TO
EVERLASTING
LIFE?

BY MIKE LII



I. Introduction: Evangelism Based on the Forgiveness of Sins

Have you ever heard the gospel presented as follows: “Believe in Jesus so that all your sins—past, present, and future—will be forgiven.” This kind of gospel presentation tells one to believe in Jesus for “the forgiveness of sins.”

Is a gospel presentation that focuses solely on the forgiveness of sins enough if it doesn't lead the listener to understand the concept of believing in Jesus for everlasting life? For instance, could someone believe that Jesus has forgiven all their sins (even those they haven't committed yet) but not know where they will spend eternity when they die? The answer to this question is complex and hinges on how one defines *everlasting life* and *forgiveness of sins*.

II. The Central Message in the Gospel of John Is Everlasting Life

The purpose of the Gospel of John is to lead a person to believe in Jesus for everlasting life (John 20:30-31; 11:25-26). The terms *everlasting life*, *eternal life*, and *live forever* are used repeatedly in John's Gospel (e.g., John 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:47, 58; 10:28). The core concept of everlasting life is apparent in the term itself. It is called *life*, indicating that upon death, one's destiny is in a wonderful place with Jesus and His people. And it is called *everlasting*, indicating that this life with Jesus lasts forever, is guaranteed and irrevocable, and can therefore never be lost.

Everlasting life is the permanent solution to our death problem. Recall Jesus' comforting words to Martha after the death of her brother, Lazarus:

Jesus said to her [Martha], “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world” (John 11:25-27).

In light of her brother’s death, Jesus’ words comforted Martha. He made two promises regarding any person who believes that Jesus is Christ, the Son of God. He promised that even if that person dies, he shall live. He further promised that, in another sense, that person would never die. To believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is to believe Jesus’ promise to give everlasting life to everyone who believes in Him for that life.

Jesus’ conversation with Martha after Lazarus’s death gives us the essential understanding of everlasting life: Everlasting life means that death is not the end for the one who has believed in Jesus. Every believer in Jesus will live with Him in a wonderful place forever.

This essential understanding was reinforced when, immediately after being on the verge of killing himself, the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, “What must I do to be saved?” His eternal destiny was foremost on his mind (Acts 16:27-31).

III. What Is the Forgiveness of Sins?

What is the significance of sins having been forgiven? When believers have known, unconfessed sins in their lives, they need forgiveness from God because these sins act as a barrier to the believer’s fellowship with God. *Forgiveness of sins* means that this barrier has been removed.

Believers have everlasting life that can never be lost, and that reality is unaffected by sin in a believer’s life. But while in their mortal, sinful bodies, believers’ experience of fellowship with God may be lost by unconfessed, and therefore unforgiven, sins. Unforgiven sins result in broken fellowship with God. When a believer confesses his known sins, God forgives all the believer’s sins. This for-

giveness removes any barrier that a believer may have in his relationship with God, and fellowship between the believer and God is restored (1 John 1:9). One day, when they are no longer in their sinful flesh (and thus no longer able to sin), believers will experience a complete and everlasting forgiveness. Until then, believers will sin and will need ongoing forgiveness in order to resume fellowship with God.

At the initial moment of belief in Jesus for everlasting life, a believer also receives the forgiveness of sins and is immediately in fellowship with God (Acts 10:43). However, this initial forgiveness experienced at the moment of the new birth, is not once-and-for-all as a believer will need ongoing forgiveness from God whenever one’s sin in his life is revealed.

Ongoing forgiveness of sins is dependent upon ongoing confession of sins, which is a work. If one presents forgiveness of sins as the saving message, he must then go on to explain how eternal life relates to Bible passages in which ongoing forgiveness is conditioned upon works (Acts 2:38; Matthew 18:21-35; 1 John 1:9). To mistakenly present these passages as describing a once-and-for-all forgiveness will confuse the listener, leading him into thinking that works such as being baptized, forgiving others, and confessing sins are required for salvation.

IV. Is Belief in Jesus for Forgiveness of Sins the Same as Belief in Him for Everlasting Life?

Forgiveness concerns the state of our current personal relationship with God. It does not answer the question of what happens when one dies. Since forgiveness and everlasting life are two different blessings, it is possible to believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of past, present, and future sins and yet be unsure of one’s eternal destiny. In other words, a person can believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins but yet not believe in Him for everlasting life.ⁱ

If one evangelizes by discussing the forgiveness of sins, he must explain that the believer in Jesus



receives irrevocable everlasting life the moment he believes in Him.

V. Is Forgiveness Found in the Gospel of John?

It is quite telling that the Gospel of John never presents the saving message as “He who believes in Me has the forgiveness of sins.” Only one verse in John uses the word *forgive*. John 20:23 states: “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

Note that this single use of *forgiveness* speaks of forgiveness *given by men*, not *by God*. The Gospel of John is the sole book in the Bible with the explicit purpose of leading people to believe in Jesus for everlasting life. The Gospel of John never records Jesus evangelizing by telling people they need forgiveness of sins. Instead, Jesus focused on their need for everlasting life (John 4:10), which only comes from believing in Him for that life.

VI. Conclusion: Do Not Forget Everlasting Life

The initial forgiveness of sins and resultant fellowship with God when we first believe in Jesus is

a tremendous blessing. However, the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life are not equivalents. When evangelizing, we may want to tell someone about the blessings of forgiveness and fellowship. But, like Jesus in the Gospel of John, let us emphasize the gift He gives to those who believe in Him: everlasting life. 🙏



Mike Lii is a finance attorney. He and his wife, Letitia, a member of the GES board, and their son, Payton, live in Dallas and serve at Vista Ridge Bible Fellowship in Lewisville, Texas. Mike and Letitia also run the Zane Hodges Library online (zanehodges.org).

¹Editor's note: I met such a person at a Bible church conference at which I was speaking. She was persuaded that by believing in Jesus, all of her sins, even future ones, were forgiven. However, she believed that if she fell away morally or doctrinally, she would lose her salvation. While some people who believe in total forgiveness are convinced they are eternally secure, others are not. If someone evangelizes using this method, he must stress that the believer is saved once and for all. It would be worth asking, “If a person who believed in Jesus later became an immoral person and died out of fellowship with God, where would he go?” If the person said, “He’d go to hell,” then you know he did not understand the promise of irrevocable life/salvation.

A Book and Life in Jeopardy!

By Marcia Hornok and Leah Gingery

In November, 2023, we sat around the dinner table with our adult children and spouses and reviewed our “Praise Notebooks” for the year. Holding our youngest daughter’s hand, her husband said somewhat drolly, “Highlight for January—my wife didn’t die. Highlight for February—Leah still didn’t die. March—Leah is still alive.” Each of us had listed the same praises to God for Leah’s survival during those months..

Paramedics had carried Leah unconscious out of her bedroom the day after Christmas. During 38 days in the hospital, she fought Meningitis and sepsis, brain abscesses, and blood clots throughout her body. Since her spleen¹ had been removed at age five due to chronic anemia, her medical team was challenged by this special case.

Friends and Christian organizations across the country were praying for her. Ken Yates’ book *Elisabeth*,² about his daughter’s life and death, comforted and instructed me. Especially his chapter about the “if-onlys.” If only we had realized Leah had more than the flu, which was going through our family at the time. If only the ER her husband had taken her to initially had become alarmed by her high white cell count instead of sending her home. Ken’s book assured me we could trust God’s wisdom and love even when the outcome is not what we desire.

THE OTHER THREAT

In Leah’s case, something else besides her life was threatened. Not only could a Lt. Colonel in the Air Force lose his beloved wife of 11 years, not only

could his three children, ages 8 months, 4, and 6 become motherless, but the Christian book Leah was writing could terminate 60 pages short of completion.

Leah has a Master’s Degree in Biblical Exegesis and was writing a Bible study for women about the book of Leviticus.³ During her marriage, she had suffered four miscarriages, which drove her to an intense consideration of what the Bible says about conception, childbirth, and bodily discharges, including miscarriages. She became convinced God made provisions for those things, and other women would benefit by discovering for themselves how Leviticus addressed them. She crafted what she learned into questions, permeated by her Free Grace perspective, to make Leviticus practical and meaningful for women.

Now Leah’s book was in jeopardy. Her doctors talked about “brain damage due to multiple abscesses.” Would she lose the intelligence and insights needed to finish this ministry? Was she in a battle with the powers of darkness who opposed her book?

In the hospital, she suffered muscle and bone pain, but her cognition began its gradual return. She recalled how God gave Israel procedures to handle sin, disease, death and decay, which are not the way things are supposed to be. Leviticus foreshadows how Christ perfectly embodied the offerings and feasts, priesthood, ritual and moral laws, and Day of Atonement. His sacrificial death not only atoned for the sins of the world, but Jesus will one day put an end to the physical destruction plaguing creation since the Fall. Including diseases like meningitis.

THE OUTCOME

In God's mercy, Leah left the hospital on IV antibiotics in her jugular vein (the only access not occluded by clots). With infusions twice a day for two more months and shots for the blood clots, God eliminated the diseases that threatened her life. When she resumed writing, she realized the last chapter she had finished before getting sick was Leviticus 21, which put restrictions on priests with disabilities. She had written, "Was God mean? Am I even allowed to ask that question? Why are the crippled, blind, and disfigured banned from serving at the altar or behind the veil? Aren't they the ones who need to be there the most?"

She led her readers to discern that the Tabernacle/Temple was God's glimpse of heaven on earth—His dwelling. No imperfections were allowed in His presence. "Physical defects represented earthly limitations that are non-existent in heaven. It is a reminder to those who suffer physically that life will not always be this way. One day they will receive a new body in an eternal heavenly home." Her last question in this lesson was, "Do you suffer from a chronic illness, pain or a physical disability? How does Jesus give you hope? How are you using that struggle to minister to others?"

Now, several months later, her own answer to that question had changed. Meningitis had left her deaf in one ear and taken 70% of her hearing in the other, while leaving her with screaming (not just ringing) in the ears. Sepsis had so weakened her that she doubted she could rehab enough to ever run another marathon.⁴

However, God's grace abounded even more. Although she has struggled with fertility, God blessed her with a surprise pregnancy. Anna Lea (*meaning grace in weakness*) was born near the end of 2023, and shows no ill health due to Leah's medical treatments and tests.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

God's truth will always be opposed from many sources. Perhaps no organization knows this better than the Grace Evangelical Society. We are not large and famous like organizations that distribute false doctrines around the world, but God will

preserve the solid teaching of His Word. The Free Grace perspective has waxed and waned throughout Church history, and is often threatened by human frailty, but it will not fail.

Whether or not Satan was interfering with Leah's book we cannot know, but I suspect he hates God's Word examined exegetically and contextually, making the clear distinction between becoming a believer and growing as one. So necessary is this perspective, that when someone is struggling with a problem or sin, we shouldn't immediately question, "Are you sure you're saved?" Instead we inquire about their walk with the Lord. Leviticus states seven times that we are to be holy (sanctified) because God is holy. The Bible is more about sanctification than salvation, as those in the Free Grace camp confirm.

While not the most popular view, and despite opposition, we must not grow weary in faithfully teaching these truths. God will keep allowing his Word, clearly taught, to prevail. ■



Marcia is Ken's grateful wife, serving with him in Utah where he pastored for 39 years and they raised six children. Now they enjoy 13 grandkids. Her latest work is a guilt-free Bible study of Proverbs 31.

[1] The spleen is one of the body's few defenses against bacterial infections like meningitis.

[2] *Elisabeth: Christ's Medal of Honor Recipient* by Ken Yates, available through Grace Evangelical Society and Amazon.

[3] *Leviticus: The Splendor of Holiness*, 290 pages, takes women on a nine-week study through Leviticus, discovering the richness of Christ's life and death provided for us and our response to fellowship with Him in holy living.

[4] Editor's note: This comment seems out of place to anyone except someone who has completed multiple marathons. (I've completed eleven, though I can only racewalk at super slow speed.) Leah's Dad, Ken Hornok, completed eight marathons before his knee gave out. I don't know how many Leah has done. But I hope that she's able to complete some more. Most of all, I hope she finishes the Christian race and hears the Lord Jesus Christ say, "Well done, good servant."



THE Dead BELIEVER

BY KATHRYN WRIGHT

Introduction

Many words and expressions fall under the category of “Christianese.” The way believers talk and the stock phrases we use to describe Biblical truth are often so rote that they become like a second language. Often, however, these sayings are rooted, not in Biblical terminology, but in our traditions. This is not always a bad thing, but it is important that we distinguish between Biblical terms and man-made expressions. Our words matter, and we sometimes elevate our pet expressions above the Bible text. Unfortunately, this can influence the way we interpret Scripture.

For example, the word *dead* in a Bible text automatically conjures up certain concepts in the minds of most Evangelicals. This is partially due to the commonly used phrase, *spiritually dead*. For many, these words carry significant theological meaning. It might surprise many Evangelicals to learn that this phrase never occurs in the Bible. Nevertheless, it is so commonly used in churches, commentaries, and theological discussions, that many assume it does.

Since it has become a part of our Christian language, it might be helpful to take a closer look at it.

THE DEAD UNBELIEVER

What does *spiritually dead* mean, and is it a Biblical concept? Most define the unbeliever as being *spiritually dead*. These are people who have not yet received eternal life and thus are headed to the lake of fire. Indeed, the Bible does describe the unbeliever as *dead*. For example, in Eph 2:1-2, unbelievers are described as “dead in their trespasses and sins.” John also describes the Great White Throne judgment as dealing exclusively with the judgment of the *dead* (Rev 20:12-15). These are unbelievers; their names are not found in the Book of Life. A contrast is made between the dead and those found in the Book of Life. However, even in this context, the term *dead* refers to those who are still physically in the grave until they are brought before the Lord. They are *dead* in the sense that they were not raised with those who were resurrected (v. 5). It is not necessarily inappropriate to say that the unbeliever is dead if, by that, we mean that he doesn’t possess eternal life. That said, this is not always the meaning of *dead*, even when describing unbelievers.

This raises the question: Does the Bible use the term *dead* only about the unregenerate? I would like to offer three examples of the Bible’s using *dead* to refer to believers.

THE DEAD SON

In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, found in Luke 15:11-32, the word *dead* is used to describe the lost son before he returns home. The father, while speaking to the older son, states:

“It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was **dead** and is alive again, and was lost and is found” (Luke 15:32).

This parable, so often mistakenly used in evangelism, is actually directed toward believers. It deals with the need for a sinning child/believer to repent of their sins and return home. In other words, this parable deals with discipleship truths. The prodigal son was always a son, even when he



was living with the pigs. Thus, the father’s reference to his son’s being dead cannot mean that he is unregenerate. The father speaks of an experiential death resulting from the son’s being out of fellowship with him. The son had squandered his inheritance, came to be in want, and was living in squalor.

This pictures the experience of a believer who is not abiding with the Father. It is an experience full of ruin. Unrepentant believers are metaphorically walking in death when they are not abiding with the Father.

THE DEAD WIDOW

In Chapter 5 of Paul’s first letter to Timothy, the apostle makes this statement regarding certain widows:

“But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.” 1 Tim 5:6

This is a curious statement. Immediately preceding this, the apostle has described godly widows who trust in the Lord and pray daily. They are to be financially supported by the church. By contrast, the widows who are living in pleasure are excluded from receiving aid. The phrase *lives in pleasure* describes a person who lives a self-indulgent lifestyle.



Mounce comments:

“In contrast to the godly widow, who is alone and has set her hope on God (v 5), those widows who live not for God but for pleasure, who even though they are physically alive, are *spiritually dead* (a “living corpse”)... should not be supported by the church.” (Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, p. 282; emphasis added.)

Mounce uses the phrase *spiritually dead* to describe this widow and sees her as unregenerate. Towner would agree with this interpretation, saying:

“This widow’s glamorous outward appearance paradoxically conceals a profound state of *inward spiritual death*. Implicitly, in contrast to the real widow, this woman, *whose membership in the church is uncertain*, should receive no support from the church, nor should she expect any.” (Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, p. 342: emphasis added.)

While the apostle uses the term *dead*, the assumption that this refers to a *spiritually dead* unbeliever (one who does not have eternal life) is

unsupported. Once again, it should be noted that the apostle doesn’t use this phrase. It is interpolated due to tradition.

Furthermore, the apostle is dealing with financial aid within the church. The assertion that the worldly widow’s membership in the church is in question cannot be supported. Paul never questions her membership. He doesn’t even suggest that the local church excommunicate such a widow. The issue is the woman’s lifestyle, not her regeneration. In developing their interpretations, Mounce and Towner seem unaware of the possibility that believers can live for pleasure (Luke 8:14; 2 Tim 4:10).

Paul is saying that godly widows in the church should be supported, while self-indulgent widows in the church should not. That the latter group is still within the church body is not in question. The issue is whether they should be given financial aid. This is a discussion about support, not about identifying their status as recipients of eternal life.

The woman Paul describes is one who, in her experience, is dead. Like the prodigal son, the believing widow who squanders money and fulfills fleshly desires is one who, in her experience, walks in death.

THE DEAD APOSTLE

A third example of a believer’s being described as *dead* is found in another of Paul’s epistles. This time, Paul describes his own experience. In Rom 7:9, Paul states:

I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and **I died**.

Once again, tradition often comes into play in interpreting this passage. Due to his description of being *dead*, many assume that Paul is describing his life before salvation. Many commentators assume that Paul is referring to his “spiritual death” prior to coming to faith in Jesus for eternal life. We see here how our

traditional use of terminology can impact our interpretation of God's Word.

This common interpretation is contextually inconsistent. Paul first asserts that he *was alive once*. This is not a transformation from death to life, which would describe an unbeliever's coming to faith (John 5:24). It is the opposite. Paul is describing a transition from life to death. Specifically, he is discussing what happened to him as a believer who fell into legalism.

In Romans 7, Paul has been dealing with the role of the Law in his Christian experience. He sought to live the Christian life by the Law and failed. Once he attempted to live by the Law, he experientially died in his legalism,

Hodges comments:

"The material in 7:1-25 is therefore personal material that Paul draws from his own experience with the law. Moreover, as the content of this experience clearly shows, this must necessarily have been *his Christian experience with the law, not the experience of his unregenerate days*...It is also an example of the reluctance in some quarters to take at face

value the NT testimony about the struggles and failures of real-life Christian experience." (Hodges, *Romans: Deliverance from God's Wrath*, p. 192; emphasis added).


In summary, just as the prodigal son and the self-indulgent widow were experientially walking in death, the legalistic believer also experiences death in his Christian life. This is true even though he has eternal life.

Conclusion

We can learn several lessons from this study.

First, the meaning of Biblical words must be determined by their context. Bob Wilkin wrote a book, *The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible*, addressing this issue. It is available from the GES bookstore. Words like saved, judgment, and dead require the Bible student to seek their meaning from the context and not assume that a word's meaning is the same throughout the Bible.

Second, our traditions can cause us to pigeon-hole Biblical words and terms. Assumptions are made without considering surrounding factors. We must be open to the possibility that the traditional understanding of words can be wrong. We should be willing to set aside our tradition when evidence of such an error is shown.

Finally, this study discusses the danger of adding words to the text. Since the phrases *spiritual death* or *spiritually dead* never occur in the Bible, they should be used with care. If we use them, we must explain what we mean. Hopefully, this article demonstrates that we can confuse people if we don't. 



Kathryn Wright and her husband, Dewey, live in Columbia, SC. She is the GES missions coordinator, women's conference speaker, writer, and Zoom teacher.



Healing in His Wings:

The Awesome
Power of
FAITH
in
Jesus Christ

By Ken Pierce





The story of the woman with an issue of blood testifies convincingly to both the awesome power of faith placed in Jesus Christ and the importance of taking Him at His word. Unfortunately, some story elements may escape twenty-first-century readers less familiar than she was with the *Tanakh* (the *Torah*—Law, the *Neve'im*—Prophets, and the *Ketuvim*—Writings—aka, the Old Testament).

Matthew, Mark, and Luke each include an account of a woman who had suffered for many years and then found miraculous healing during an encounter with Jesus Christ. The encounter was miraculous not only because of her faith but also because of the One in whom she placed that faith—and her reason for doing so.

Though the account is brief, several points about the woman can be discerned. First, this woman knew God's Word. She had been well taught and was convinced that God would honor His Word, including every prophetic promise concerning His Anointed One. Furthermore—and crucially—her knowledge of revealed Scripture had convinced her that *Yeshua* (Jesus), an itinerant rabbi from Nazareth, was the promised Messiah. Fusing those two convictions, she saw an opportunity.

In those days, a Jewish woman with a chronic issue of blood suffered virtual exile, even while continuing to live within Jewish society. The To-

rah stated that her condition made her ritually impure and unclean (Lev 12:1-7; 15:25-33). Through no fault of her own, she was excluded from temple life, the centerpiece of first-century Judaism. Mark and Luke note that her condition had persisted for twelve years (Mark 5:25; Luke 8:43), a number full of symbolic meaning for Israel. For this lady of great faith, the suffering must have been great. However, her condition, positioned her to fulfill an extraordinary purpose: affirming Jesus of Nazareth's identity as Israel's Messiah to any who knew a few key passages of Scripture.

When she was healed, Jesus told her, "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well" (Matt 9:22). But what specifically had she believed? Contrary to popular Christian teaching, "having faith" in and of itself carries no merit. The merit lies in the object of one's faith.

The woman had heard about the itinerant Galilean Rabbi named *Yeshua*. She probably heard that He was a master of the *Tanakh*—a teacher and prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15; 34:10) who knew not just the letter but the very heart of Scripture. Moreover, the news was out that He had healed a man full of leprosy (Matt 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16). On top of that, she may have heard reports that Jesus forgave and healed a paralytic (Matt 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26), enabling him to get up and walk. She might also have heard a report that He healed a man disabled for nearly forty years (John 5:5-9), as well as a man with a withered hand (Matt 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11). As she weighed the reports, she realized that Jesus was ticking off the scriptural "calling cards" of Messiah—trademarks and bona fides the prophets predicted so that Israel might recognize and authenticate the Messiah when, at last, He came.

The Synoptic accounts clearly show that the woman became persuaded, based on her knowledge of Scripture, that Jesus was Israel's anointed Savior-King. The record further indicates that she believed God would honor His Holy Word (cf. Ps



138:2). When she heard that Jesus was in Capernaum, she put her faith into action. She realized that this was her golden opportunity.

Though she likely knew it well before setting out on her mission, one may imagine her meditating on one particular verse from the Prophets: “But to you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves” (Mal 4:2). When most twenty-first-century believers read the phrase “healing in His wings,” they probably take it as a metaphor, or perhaps think of Jesus in glory, having been outfitted with a pair of wings like angels. Both understandings miss the mark.

In Mal 4:2, the Hebrew word translated “wings” is *kanaph* (Strong’s 3671), a word most often referring to wings of birds (e.g., Gen 1:21; Exod 19:4), or to angelic creatures (Exod 37:9; Isa 6:2; Ezek 1:6). In the Torah, however, this same word is used for the corners of *tzitzit*, the fringes Jewish men were to affix to the corners of their prayer shawls. The key passage is found in Num 15:38: “Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels (*tzitzit*) on the corners (*kanaph* – literally, “the wings”) of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners (*kanaph*).”

Putting these two *Tanakh* passages together – one from the Law, one from the Prophets (cf. Luke

24:44-45; John 5:39)–reveals something about the Messiah’s prayer shawl. According to Malachi, Messiah could be readily authenticated because those who touched the corner tassels of His garment (i.e., the wings of His prayer shawl) would find healing (cf. Matt 14:35-36). Thus, because the woman believed Jesus was the Messiah of whom the Law and the Prophets testified, and because of her faith that God would honor every detail in His Word, she acted. The rest, as the saying goes, is history.

When Jesus felt power go out of Him (Mark 5:30; Luke 8:46), He realized that someone in the crowd had identified Him as Messiah. He knew they had appropriated a healing miracle based on their faith in the Law and the Prophets concerning Him, connecting that faith to Him personally. To believe God’s Word is to believe in Jesus Christ (Rom 10:14-17). This woman had done both. First, she believed in God’s Word. Because she had done so, she also became convinced that Jesus was Israel’s long-awaited Messiah. Persuaded as to His identity, she sought Him out, she reached out her hand, and she accessed the prophesied healing that resided in His wings (Num 15:38; Mal 4:2). At that moment, her faith identified her to Jesus as a daughter who belonged to His kingdom (Matt 9:22a; cf. John 1:12; 1 John 3:1). And at that moment, her faith had made her well indeed. ■



Ken Pierce is a retired Navy intelligence officer with combat service in Panama, the former Yugoslavia, and Iraq. Ken studied Biblical Hebrew and Archaeology at the Jerusalem Center for Biblical Studies. After retiring from active duty, he worked as a civil servant at U.S. Strategic Command, Offutt AFB, NE, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Office of Naval Intelligence. In Nebraska, Ken pastored a small Bible church. Now retired, he leads a lively men’s Bible Study using Zane Hodges’ commentary on Romans, occasionally fills the pulpit for his and other pastors in NE Florida, and is contributing to a forthcoming GES commentary on the Tanakh (Old Testament). He and his wife Ana Maria recently celebrated thirty-eight years of marriage.

Voice from the Past...

Man's Role in Conversion*

By Zane C. Hodges



Man's role in conversion is to **BELIEVE**

The answer to the jailor's classic question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" is still the same, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:30-31; italics added).

What must man *do*? He must *believe*.

But *can* he believe? Today, many give a negative answer to this question. Man, they say, is constitutionally incapable of faith since he is totally dead in sins. This answer, however, overplays the metaphor of deadness.

In addressing the Ephesian Christians, Paul reminds them that they were once "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1). But Paul pushes beyond the limits of the metaphor in the very next verse. He writes: "in which you once *walked*" (Eph 2:2; italics added). Can a dead man *walk*? On a literal level, obviously not! On a literal level, if I say, "That man is *dead* in the mud and filth of his own back yard," I cannot go on to say, "He is *walking* in the mud and filth of his own back yard." That would be a transparent contradiction.

The expression "dead in trespasses and sins" can be explained by a parallel statement in Eph 4:18 where Paul describes unsaved people as "alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Unsaved men are dead in the sense that they do not have God's kind of life (eternal life) and thus do not know God on a personal level. This is certainly confirmed by John 17:3, "and this is eternal life; that they may *know* You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (italics added). Eternal life brings the *knowledge* of God (*see the discussion of 2 Cor 4:4, 6 in the last issue*). Those who have never known God at all are *dead* toward God.

But it is wrong to push this metaphor to an unbiblical extent. Deadness towards God signals one's need of God's life (eternal life). But, like all figures of speech, this figure cannot be pressed beyond its basic biblical application. In other words, the fact that man is "dead in trespasses and sins" tells us nothing about such issues as "free will" or man's "capacity to believe." Those who think that it does, are guilty of forcing the metaphor into a framework it was never intended to fit.

In fact, God holds man responsible for *not believing*. The Lord Jesus said, "He who believes in Him [the Son] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, *because he has not believed* in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18; italics added).

If God condemns men for *not believing*, and men have *no capacity* whatsoever to believe, then the justice of God is called into question. How can a man be held responsible for what he is incapable of doing? On that basis, why could not God cast babies who die in infancy into hell? Why not also the mentally impaired? When man's capacity to believe is totally denied, what is left behind is a horrible, even monstrous, conception of God.

Such is the penalty for wrongly pressing a metaphor beyond its proper parameters!

Of course, we are *not* saying that men can come to God without *any* divine assistance *at all*. As we pointed out in the July-August 1993 issue, God has a revelatory role in conversion (2 Cor 4:6). No conversion occurs until God breaks through the blindness induced by Satan and enlightens the heart with His truth. But where this enlightenment has occurred, it may be said to the believer that "flesh

and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven” (Matt 16:17).

Thus the Bible does not say that man is *constitutionally incapable* of faith, only that faith cannot occur without divine illumination. In every realm of life, man cannot believe in what he regards as untrue. Only when he realizes the truth of any matter, only then does he believe it. The ability to believe things, we should say, is a capacity that man possesses, just like he possesses the ability to think or to speak. Only “ignorance of the truth” or “deception about the truth” stand in the way of man believing the Gospel. (As pointed out last time, Satan knows this and acts accordingly: 2 Cor 4:4.) But once a man realizes the truth of any matter, at the moment of realization he has believed it.

Consequently, saving faith occurs when it dawns on our hearts that Jesus Christ saves us forever the moment we believe that He does. (See John 11:25-27; John 20:30-31; 1 John 5:1.)

What then is the bottom line? Two things.

(1) Man has the capacity to believe and is held responsible if he does not do so.

(2) Man’s faith can only occur in response to divine illumination.

Therefore, what should unsaved men be doing? They should be seeking the God who is revealed in creation (Rom 1:20-21). Since God rewards those who diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6), the search for God will lead to an examination of the claims of Christ. This, in turn, will lead to salvation truth since Jesus affirmed, “If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority” (John 7:17).

Paul’s statement that “there is none who seeks after God” (Rom 3:11) may seem to contradict this, but it doesn’t. This famous text does not say that man *cannot* seek God! He can and should seek God (Acts 17:26-27)! But he *doesn’t* (unprompted by the Spirit) and, therefore, is responsible for not doing so.

Man’s failure to believe, therefore, is something for which he can be held accountable by his Judge.

If he had sought the truth, he would have found the truth!

But those who *do* find the truth are *drawn* to it, and thus *taught*, by God. The Savior declared:

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, “And they shall all be taught by God.” Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me” (John 6:44-46, *italics added*).

As we evangelize men, we can become part of this drawing/ teaching process until God illuminates the unsaved heart so that a response of faith results. But let us remember, even though God uses us in this process, it is still God—not us—who commands the light to shine into man’s darkness (2 Cor 4:6). It is *God* who saves the lost! ■



Zane Hodges taught New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary for 27 years, authored over a dozen books, and was passionate about the grace of God.

*This article was originally published in the September/October 1993 issue of *Grace in Focus*. It is online at faithalone.org.

The Bible does
not say that man
is *constitutionally*
incapable of faith,
only that faith cannot
occur without divine
illumination.

Are Eternal Rewards Secure? Part 2

By Bob Wilkin

In Part 1, we saw that there are two types of rewards: instant winners and perseverance prizes. Instant winners are secure the moment they are earned. Perseverance prizes are only secure once one finishes the race (2 Tim 4:6-8).

There are two related questions we will address in this article. Will we give our rewards back to the Lord (Rev 4:10)? And will rewards only be for the Millennium?

I remember watching a video put out by DTS on eschatology. In one segment, Drs. Walvoord, Ryrie, and Pentecost were talking about eternal rewards. They concluded the discussion by saying that we will give back to the Lord any rewards we receive at the Judgment Seat of Christ (the Bema). They pointed to Rev 4:10. There would be no lasting rewards.

Revelation 4:9-10 does not refer to the Bema. It refers to an ongoing event that occurs in heaven. You can find an article by me on that passage at our website.

We know we can't give back our rewards because Scripture calls them imperishable (1 Cor 9:25) and that which cannot be lost or destroyed (Matt 6:19-21).

No. We will not give our rewards back to the Lord.

But will our rewards only last for a thousand years?

Many Dispensationalists suggest that ruling with Christ and the other perseverance prizes will be for the Millennium only. The perseverance prizes will cease when the kingdom moves to the New Earth (Revelation 21-22). However, we read about perseverance prizes in Revelation 21-22. See Rev 21:7; 22:12-14, 19.

Paul said that the crown of rulership would be an imperishable crown (1 Cor 9:25). While a thousand years is a long time now, in the eternal kingdom, it will be like one of our days now (2 Pet 3:8).

Any rewards won, instant winners, and perseverance prizes will be secure. They will be enjoyed forever. Of course, these rewards will not merely enhance our lives. They will give us the ability to glorify the Lord Jesus more. And since we were created to glorify Him, the more we do that, the more joy we will experience.

Yes. Eternal rewards are secure once they are won.

Keep your eyes on what Scripture calls the prize (1 Cor 9:25; Phil 3:14). He's coming again soon. Will we be found faithful (1 Cor 4:2)? If we are, many wonderful perseverance prizes will be ours forever. ■



Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He and Sharon live in Highland Village, TX. He has racewalked ten marathons.

¹ <https://faithalone.org/blog/will-we-give-back-our-rewards/>.

THE BOOKSTORE

40% off
retail on bulk
orders of
10+ copies

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



SALE

Faith Alone in One Hundred Verses

Robert N. Wilkin

Written in a devotional style, this book guides the reader through the overwhelming evidence for salvation by faith alone.

USD \$15.00 \$10.00
Softcover • 296 pages
Code: fav



SALE

Hebrews: Partners with Christ

Kenneth W. Yates

This verse-by-verse commentary explains how Hebrews encourages believers to persevere so they will rule with Christ in His kingdom.

USD \$20.00 \$15.00
Softcover • 244 pages
Code: hpwc

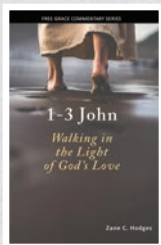


Is Calvinism Biblical? Let the Scriptures Decide

Robert N. Wilkin

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

USD \$10.00
Softcover • 166 pages
Code: icb

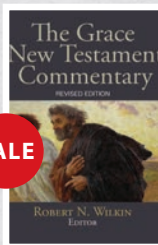


The Epistles of John

Zane C. Hodges

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

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 273 pages
Code: 1-3john



SALE

The Grace New Testament Commentary (Revised Edition)

Ed. Robert N. Wilkin

This one-volume edition has hundreds of corrections and includes Zane Hodges's *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*.

USD \$35.00 \$25.00
Softcover • 658 pages
Code: gntc

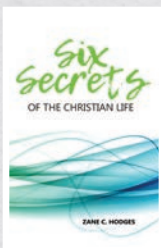


Turn and Live: The Power of Repentance

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 \$6.00
Softcover • 100 pages
Code: sslcl



SALE

The Gospel Under Siege: Faith and Works in Tension

Zane C. Hodges

What is the relationship between faith and works?

USD \$15.00 \$10.00
Softcover • 266 pages
Code: gus2



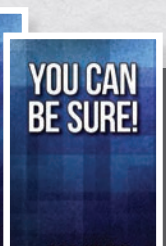
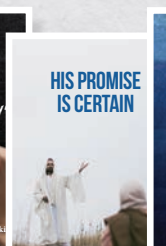
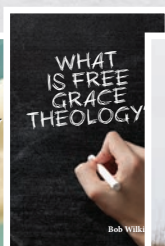
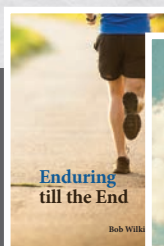
NEW

1 & 2 Peter and Jude Commentary

Zane C. Hodges

Encouraging, enlightening, and energizing commentaries on eternal rewards.

USD \$22.00
Softcover • 254 pages
Code: 12petjd



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: ychs

Puedes Estar Seguro / Code: ychs-sp

Individually \$0.25/EACH -OR- Pack of 25 \$5.00 (\$0.20/EACH)



The Gospel of John Study Guide

Robert N. Wilkin

Focused free grace Bible study guide on the Gospel of John.

USD \$10.00

Student Guide • 114 pages

Teacher's Guide • 88 pages

Code: gojs / gojt



Current Issues in Inerrancy

Robert N. Wilkin

Wilkin explains "true inerrancy" and how to resolve alleged discrepancies in the Bible.

USD \$8.00

Softcover • 70 pages

Code: cii



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 clear up Scriptures that seem to teach salvation by works.

USD \$15.00

Softcover • 174 pages

Code: tt



The Gospel Is Still Under Siege

Robert N. Wilkin

Know how to defend the gospel against all assaults.

USD \$15.00

Softcover • 145 pages

Code: gsu



What Is the Outer Darkness?

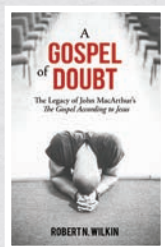
Zane C. Hodges with Robert N. Wilkin

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

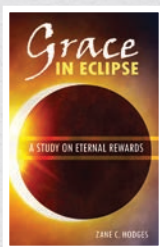
Robert N. Wilkin

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

USD \$15.00

Softcover • 305 pages

Code: agd



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

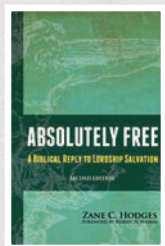
Zane C. Hodges

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

USD \$10.00

Softcover • 160 pages

Code: thi



Absolutely Free: A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation

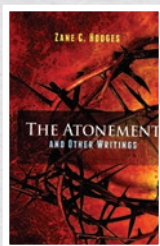
Zane C. Hodges

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

USD \$15.00

Softcover • 272 pages

Code: af2



The Atonement and Other Writings

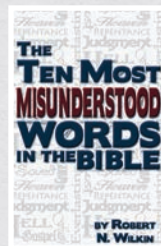
Zane C. Hodges

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

USD \$10.00

Softcover • 116 pages

Code: atm



The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible

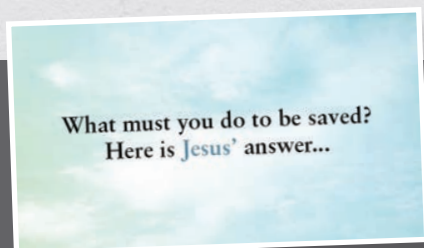
Robert N. Wilkin

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

USD \$15.00

Softcover • 221 pages

Code: ten



Available in Spanish too!

Evangelism Business Cards

USD \$15.00

Box of 200 cards

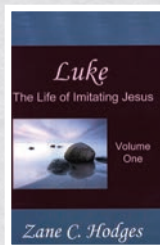
Code: ebc



Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

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

USD \$18.50 (Renewal)
USD \$10.00 (New or gift subscriptions)
 Code: jotges

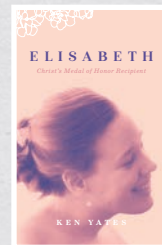


Luke: The Life of Imitating Jesus

Zane C. Hodges

Expository message through the Gospel of Luke.

USD \$5.00
Vol 1 • 72 pages
Vol 2 • 101 pages
 Code: lk1 / lk2

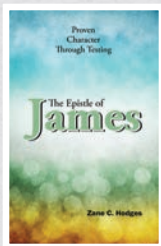


Elisabeth: Christ's Medal of Honor Recipient

Ken Yates

Ken writes of the impact Elisabeth's life and death had upon him.

USD \$12.00
Softcover • 151 pages
 Code: eli

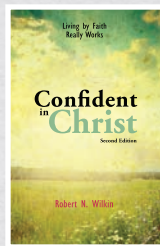


The Epistle of James

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 \$10.00
Softcover • 128 pages
 Code: jas



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 \$15.00
Softcover • 278 pages
 Code: cic2

Books Available in Spanish

El Evangelio Bajo Sitio
 (Hodges, \$2.00 until we reprint)

Elisabeth: Receptora de la medalla de honor de Cristo (Yates, \$12.00)

Seguridad Eterna (Ken White, \$4.00).

We expect to add several books in Spanish each year.



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 \$22.00
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 \$25.00
Softcover • 488 pages
 Code: rom

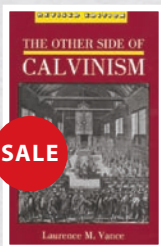


Secure and Sure

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 \$10.00
Softcover • 252 pages
 Code: sas



The Other Side of Calvinism

Laurence M. Vance

Historical and critical Biblical analysis of the philosophical speculations and theological implications of Calvinism

USD \$30.00 \$25.00
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 \$10.00
Softcover • 133 pages
 Code: hwg

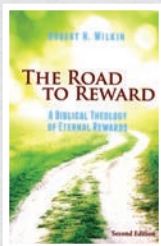


Confronting Calvinism

Anthony B. Badger

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

USD \$25.00 \$20.00
Softcover • 397 pages
 Code: cc



The Road to Reward (Second Edition)

Robert N. Wilkin

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

USD \$10.00
Softcover • 200 pages
 Code: rr2



Faith in His Name

Zane Hodges

Though only through John 6:21, this commentary on John's opening chapters by Zane Hodges is a must-have. Fantastic insights.

USD \$10.00
Softcover • 147 pages
 Code: fhn



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

Booklist

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

- \$18.50 (renewal) / \$10.00 (new or gift subscription)
Multi-year options available on website.

The Grace New Testament Commentary

- Revised Edition, \$35.00

Anthony B. Badger

- *Confronting Calvinism*, ~~\$25.00~~ **\$20.00**
- *Free Grace Theology on Trial*, \$25.00

Steve Elkins

- *The Roman Road Revisited: New Vistas on the Road to Resurrection Living* (2nd ed.), \$15.00
- *Keys to Kingdom Greatness: An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*, \$20.00

Zane Hodges

- *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, \$22.00 **NEW!**
- *Absolutely Free* (2nd ed.), \$15.00
- *The Atonement and Other Writings*, \$10.00
- *The Epistle of James*, \$10.00
- *The Epistles of John*, \$15.00
- *Faith in His Name: John*, \$10.00
- *A Free Grace Primer*, ~~\$22.00~~ **\$20.00**
- *Grace in Eclipse*, \$15.00
- *The Gospel Under Siege*, ~~\$15.00~~ **\$10.00**
- *Harmony with God*, \$10.00
- *Here Walks My Enemy: The Story of Luis*, \$5.00 (hardcover), \$3.00 (paperback)
- *How to Be the Spouse God Wants You To Be*, \$6.00
- *The Hungry Inherit*, \$10.00
- *Jesus, God's Prophet*, \$6.00
- *The Journey of Faith: Sermons on Hebrews*, ~~\$15.00~~ **\$10.00**
- *Luke* (Vol 1), ~~\$9.00~~ **\$5.00**
- *Luke* (Vol 2), ~~\$9.00~~ **\$5.00**
- *Power to Make War*, \$9.00
- *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*, \$25.00
- *Six Secrets of the Christian Life*, \$6.00
- *Spiritual Lessons from the Life of David*, \$10.00
- *Tough Texts: Did Jesus Teach Salvation by Works?*, \$15.00
- *What Is the Outer Darkness?*, ~~\$14.00~~ **\$6.00**

Shawn C. Lazar

- *Beyond Doubt: How to Be Sure*, \$15.00
- *Chosen to Serve: Election Is to Service*, \$20.00

Bill Lee

- *Grace Recovered*, \$10.00

Laurence Vance

- *The Other Side of Calvinism*, ~~\$30.00~~ **\$25.00**

Bob Wilkin

- *Confident in Christ* (2nd ed.), \$15.00
- *Current Issues in Inerrancy*, \$8.00
- *The Gospel of John Study Guide*, \$10.00 **NEW!**
- *The Gospel of John Teacher's Guide*, \$10.00 **NEW!**
- *The Gospel Is Still Under Siege*, \$15.00
- *A Gospel of Doubt: The Legacy of John MacArthur's The Gospel According to Jesus*, \$15.00
- *Faith Alone in One Hundred Verses*, ~~\$15.00~~ **\$10.00**
- *Grudem Against Grace: A Defense of FGT*, \$15.00
- *Is Calvinism Biblical?*, \$10.00
- *The Road to Reward* (2nd ed.), \$10.00
- *Secure and Sure*, \$10.00
- *The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible*, \$15.00
- *Turn and Live: The Power of Repentance*, \$15.00

Kenneth W. Yates

- *Elisabeth: Christ's Medal of Honor Recipient*, \$12.00
- *Hebrews: Partners with Christ*, ~~\$20.00~~ **\$15.00**

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 from 7/1/24 to 8/31/24.
Refunds / Exchanges only within 60 days of purchase date.



SHIPPING ADDRESS

(No PO Boxes if order is over \$30)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

Acct.# (if you know it) _____

BILLING ADDRESS

(If different from Shipping Address)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

Acct.# (if you know it) _____

METHOD OF PAYMENT (circle one): Cash Check Money Order Credit Card

Send Check or
Money Order to:
Grace Evangelical Society
P.O. Box 1308
Denton, TX 76202

Credit Card Information: Visa MasterCard

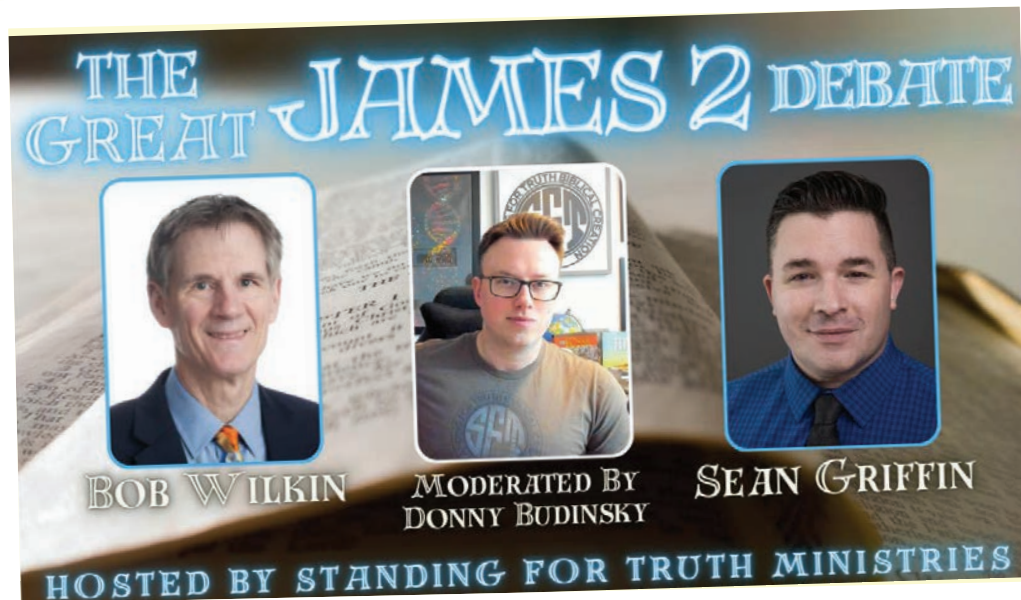
CREDIT CARD # _____

EXP. DATE _____ CSC# (3 digit code) _____

NAME ON CARD _____

CODE	TITLE	QTY	PRICE	AMOUNT
EXTRAS				SUBTOTAL
Extra copies of this magazine are available for \$1/ea, while supplies last. Call for cost of shipping and handling. Foreign subscription prices are \$40 per year to Canada, and \$60 per year for all other countries.				
SHIPPING USPS (U.S. Addresses)				SHIPPING
FREE on all orders of \$10 or more.				
UNDER \$10:				
\$4.00 first item.				
\$2.50 for second item.				
SHIPPING UPS:				DISCOUNT for REVIEW*
\$0-\$20 \$12.75				
\$21-\$50 \$16.75				DONATION
\$51+ 30%				
* \$5 off. Max of one discount per order. Book I reviewed and when it appeared on Amazon: _____				TOTAL

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT GES?



Bob debated Sean Griffin on the Standing for Truth online platform. Donny Budinsky was the moderator.



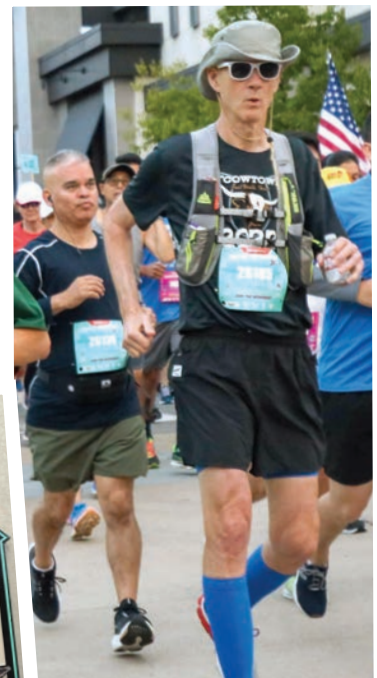
Portland Regional - David, Ken, and Kathryn with Steve and Trudi Bils, Anthony Young, Sam Raj, and Matt Toupin



Portland Regional Conferees



Irving Marathon 2024 Finisher Medal




Bob at the start of the March 30, 2024 Irving Marathon

Why Aren't All Who Believe in Christ Overcomers?

By Bob Wilkin





Many people
who've watched
my YouTube
videos on
assurance and
eternal security
have asked me
to explain how
we can be sure
of our eternal
security if we're
not sure we'll be
overcomers. They
also wonder if
1 John 5:4-5
teaches that all
believers are
overcomers.

An Overcomer Is Victorious

The word *overcomer* is from the Greek verb *nikaō*. The noun form is *nike*, the Greek goddess of victory.

Nikaō is used twenty-eight times in the NT. It refers to those who are victorious in conflict.

For example, the Lord Jesus said, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33; see also Rev 17:14).

Synonyms would be *victor*, *winner*, *conqueror*, *vanquisher*, and *champion*.

The Lord Jesus is the ultimate Overcomer.

The Apostle Paul was not sure he would overcome (1 Cor 9:27).

No believer can be sure he will overcome.

God Is Testing Us to See Whether We Will Overcome

He tests us through three powerful enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. The flesh is the inner desire to sin. Some call this the OSN, the old sin nature.

We are not puppets with God pulling the strings.

The reason He tests us is to determine who will rule with His Son in the life to come.

The Warning Passages Prove That Victory Is Not Certain in the Christian Life

Both Calvinists and Arminians agree that perseverance is not guaranteed. They wrongly think that the issue is kingdom entrance and that failure means you are bound for the lake of fire. While that is not true, they are right that failure is possible. There is no promise that all believers will be victorious.

Assurance of Eternal Security Is Not a Hindrance to Victory

Assurance of everlasting life should produce a profound sense of gratitude. Gratitude is highly motivating.

Fear of failure motivates us to succeed, not to fail. Who wants to fail and reap the consequences? Many negative things can happen to the eternally secure person in this life.

Knowing that Christ will judge us at the Bema shows that assurance does not hinder perseverance. Knowing that I’m eternally secure motivates me to strive for the prize of ruling with Christ (1 Cor 9:24-27). I long for His approval and praise.

Knowing that my life impacts those close to me, whether positively or negatively, shows that assurance does not hinder perseverance. If I overcome, I bless those around me. If not, I don’t. Being eternally secure doesn’t change that.

1 John 5:4-5 Doesn’t Say That All Believers Are Overcomers

Scripture can’t contradict Scripture. Whatever 1 John 5:4-5 means, it doesn’t contradict all the warning passages.

There are two ways to understand how 1 John 5:4-5 relates to Revelation 2–3.

First, Revelation 2–3 looks at *the experience* of believers, and 1 John 5:4-5 looks at *the position* of believers. All believers are overcomers positionally, but not in their experience.

Second, both passages look at the experience of believers. 1 John 5:4-5 looks at the experience of believers *as long as they live by faith*, and so does Revelation 2–3.

1 John 5:4-5 does not mean that all believers overcome in their experience!

Conclusion


I ran track for one year in high school and one year in college, but I never won a race—not once.

Over the last thirty years, I’ve competed in races ranging from 800 meters to marathons. I’ve never won a race.

I’ve completed ten marathons. In a sense, just finishing a marathon makes you an overcomer. I have ten finisher’s medals from marathons.

The author of Hebrews challenged us to run with endurance the race that is set before us (Heb 12:2). At the end of his life Paul said, “I have finished the race” (2 Tim 4:6). If we persevere in faith and good works, we’ll be overcomers.

Eternal security is ours, whether we finish the Christian race or not. You don’t have to finish well to go to heaven when you die.

A full-page background image showing the lower legs and feet of a person running on a paved road. The road has a yellow dashed line down the center and stretches towards a horizon under a dramatic, cloudy sky at sunset or sunrise. The runner is wearing black shorts, white socks, and running shoes.

Run with endurance the race that is set before us. (Heb 12:2)

As long as we continue to believe Jesus' promise of everlasting life, we remain sure of our eternal destiny with Him.

However, *assurance of victory* in the Christian life is not possible. *We cannot be sure that we will persevere.*

We long to hear the Lord Jesus say, "Well done, good servant." We strive to receive that commendation. But as with any contest, we don't know whether we'll succeed. We need to run the race that is set before us with endurance. ■



Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He and Sharon live in Highland Village, TX.

The Habit of Bible Reading

By Ken Yates



I think many readers of this blog can relate to my church background. The churches I attended when growing up did not really teach the Bible. I never heard a sermon in which the speaker looked at the context and explained the meaning of the verses that were read. Once the Bible passage for that particular Sunday was read, you could put your Bible away. The speaker would then speak about how bad sin was, the need to get people to attend church or Sunday school, politics, how our culture was anti-God, or what was going on with local sports teams. Invariably, there would be a call to walk the aisle and give your heart to Jesus. My wife had a very similar background.

After we were married, my wife and I, due to various circumstances, attended a church that explained the passage that was read. In the bulletin you received upon entering the sanctuary, it even gave out an outline of the verses to follow. This was jarring. We had never heard that the books of Bible were written to actual people and that the verses were addressing specific problems. The speaker even talked about what certain Greek words meant. We didn't even know our New Testament was translated from Greek, so what was he talking about Greek for? The preacher didn't even have an altar call.

What did we think? We didn't like it. It was strange. We couldn't put our finger on it, but we decided it wasn't for us. Maybe it was just because it wasn't our tradition. Maybe it seemed too academic. But we left there saying we needed to look for a church that was more to our liking.

Fortunately, because of other events, we returned to that church. After a month or so of listening to the sermons, we fell in love with what we heard. We would discuss the passage on the way home and with folks we worked with. We got into the habit of reading a passage and trying to determine what it actually meant. We got into the habit of expecting that at church as well.

This went on for the next two years. Those two years solidified the habit of studying the Scriptures. Then, because of the military, we moved. We went back to our home state for two months as we prepared to move to Texas. My wife was hugely pregnant. The first Sunday back home, I attended one of our old churches. She was not able to go because she was feeling sick.

Even though I should have known what I would experience, what I heard was shocking. I was jarred just as much as I had been when I first heard an exegetical sermon. I had gotten used to the preacher's explaining the text to me. It had become a habit. I had forgotten what it was like in my younger days, but this Sunday was just like the good old days. A certain passage was read, then the speaker spent the rest of the sermon saying that the next Sunday was going to be "Sunday school high attendance Sunday" and that we should invite all our friends so that we could meet our goal of beating the numbers from last year. Obviously, the verses we had read had nothing to do with the topic. We could have read any verses in the NT. The Scriptures were not the focus. In fact, they were irrelevant.

I went home and told my wife what I experienced. But she had fallen into the same habit that I had and couldn't comprehend what I was saying. The next Sunday, she was feeling better, and we got into the car to go to church. As I was pulling out of the driveway, she said, "Wait, I forgot my Bible. I have to go get it." I told her, "You won't need it." She was eight months pregnant, and I didn't want her to get it, and I didn't want to waste my

"I can't go to church without my Bible!"

time going back into the house to get it for her. But she absolutely insisted, saying, "I can't go to church without my Bible!" I told her, "You won't need it." But I went in and got it for her. I must admit I was irritated that she made me do so.

Of course, she found out that I was speaking the truth in love. During the service, she was just as shocked as I had been the week before. In one of the few times in our married life, she said, "You were right." Then she added, "I didn't need my Bible." I said, "I told you so" (but only in my mind).

As I said, I know many of you can relate to this story. But there is a vital lesson for us. Let us all become people who fall deeply into the habit of studying the Bible, of looking at the verses and trying to accurately determine what the Spirit of God is saying in those words. May it become such a habit that it jars us when we hear the Bible used in any other way. ■



Ken Yates is a retired Army chaplain (Lt. Col). He has many theological degrees, including a Ph.D. from D.T.S. in New Testament. He leads the GES international ministry, cohosts the daily podcast, and assists Bob in all aspects of the GES ministry. His new book, *Elisabeth*, is a powerful testimony to the power of God manifested in a Christ-centered family. He and his wife, Pam, live in Columbia, SC.

Was Mark Driscoll Wrong to Make a Public Correction at the Stronger Men's Conference?

By Kathryn Wright



At a recent men's conference in Springfield, Missouri, Mark Driscoll, the well-known former pastor of Mars Hill, was booted off stage during his guest speaking appearance. The "Stronger Men's Conference" was hosted by the James River Church, pastored by John Lindell. The conference aimed to equip men to "live out God's vision for manhood." To open the event, a leather-trousered performer tore off his shirt, swallowed a sword, and climbed a pole on the stage.

When Driscoll took the stage, he commented on the performer and called out the inappropriate behavior. As Driscoll was making his comments, Pastor Lindell interrupted, telling Driscoll, "You're

done." After Driscoll left the stage, Lindell cited Matt 18:15, which states:

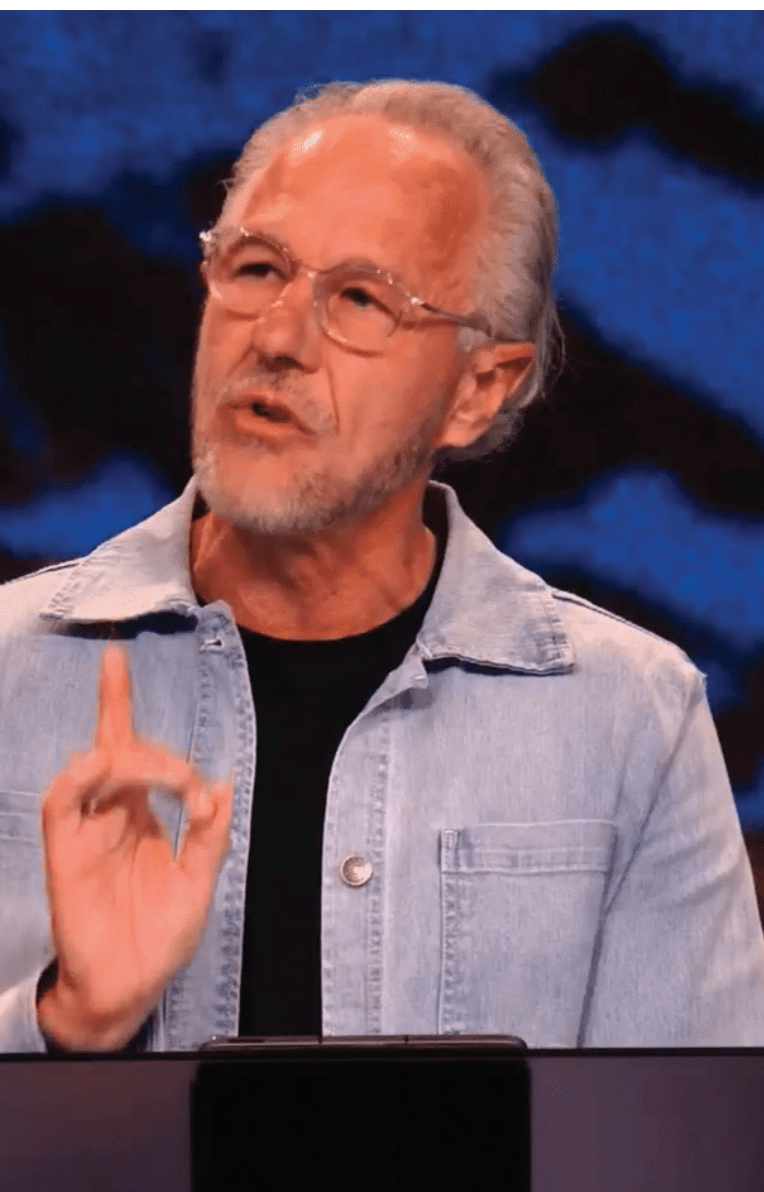
Moreover, if your brother sins **against you**, go and tell him his fault between you and him **alone**. If he hears you, you have gained your brother (emphasis added).

He believed that verse shows Driscoll was wrong to voice his objection publicly. He should have gone to the leadership privately. Much could be said about Mark Driscoll, John Lindell, and this men's conference. Driscoll is no stranger to controversy, leaving his former church under a cloud of allegations. In addition, the performer was objectively inappropriate for a Bible conference, and the planning leadership should have known better.

However, there is a broader discussion worth having regarding the application of Matt 18:15 to this situation. Many echo the words of Lindell, saying that when an issue comes up in the church it should always be taken care of privately. Believers who publicly rebuke other believers or even acknowledge a disagreement in a public setting are often called out for unloving behavior. Some will even claim it was an attack or a form of gossip. But is this true? Is it always wrong to publicly renounce sin and to rebuke those in the church who support it?

In Gal 2:11-16, the Apostle Paul discusses a time when he had to rebuke the Apostle Peter. Peter had been excluding Gentiles by separating himself from them when eating. To make matters worse, he had caused others to follow his example, including Barnabas, who was carried away by the hypocrisy (vv 11-13). Peter's actions were on public display and were causing others to sin.

It should also be noted that Peter was disingenuous by eating with the Gentiles at times and then separating himself at other times. That even the godliest of leaders can fall into such two-faced and manipulative behavior should not come as a surprise. In v 14, Paul specifically notes that in Peter's actions there was a failure to be straightforward about the truth. Therefore, Paul rebuked the apostle "**before them all**" (v 14). Due to Peter's behav-



ior and public misconduct, Paul's public display of disapproval (and rebuke) was necessary.

Two distinctions should be noted between these two passages. First, in Matthew 18, the sin was committed directly against a brother. The church is not publicly aware, directly impacted, or participating in the sinful activity committed. In that situation, the sin was directed toward a specific individual. Therefore, that individual should go to the sinning brother in private.

In Paul's example, there was no direct sin toward him, and Peter didn't sin against Paul the individual. In short, Matt 18:15 doesn't apply and is, therefore, not a method that covers all situations involving church discipline or disputes.

The second distinction that should be noted between these passages is that Peter's misbehavior was done in a public setting. In addition, it was causing others to fall into sin. It undermined the teachings of the apostles. When there is a public offense that impacts sound doctrine and the believing community, not only is a public rebuke justified—it is necessary (1 Cor 5:1-6). If Paul had gone to Peter privately and the issue had never been renounced publicly, the church community would have had no definitive resolution, and the behavior and false teaching could have continued to spread throughout the church.

When it comes to sound doctrine and the well-being of the church community, a private meeting is not applicable. Any claims to a private meeting are made void when the offense has a corporate impact. Such claims often deflect the real issue. Sadly, many of our leaders have used the misapplication of Matt 18:15 to gaslight believers into not rebuking sin and false teachings.

Of course, public rebuke (and private rebuke) should be done with humility and the knowledge that we, like Peter, are all capable of falling into sin. ■■■



Kathryn Wright and her husband, Dewey, live in Columbia, SC. She is the GES missions coordinator, women's conference speaker, writer, and Zoom teacher.

¹Editor's note: For more information, see "Driscoll-Lindell Controversy Far From Over" at <https://ministrywatch.com/driscoll-lindell-controversy-far-from-over/>. Last accessed May 16, 2024.

Sadly, many of our leaders have used the misapplication of Matt 18:15 to gaslight believers into not rebuking sin and false teachings.

More of

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT GES?

Manuela Mazzei holding the newly translated "The Hungry Inherit" in Italian.



Ken and Kathryn having lunch with interpreters and Pastor David, before the regional conference in Italy this May.

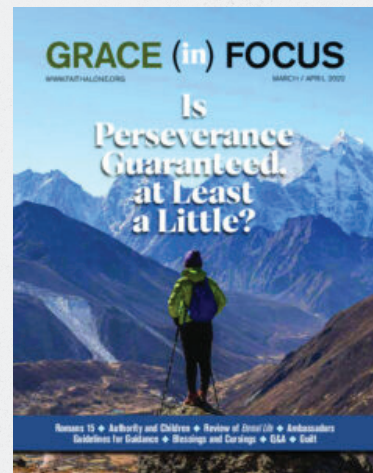
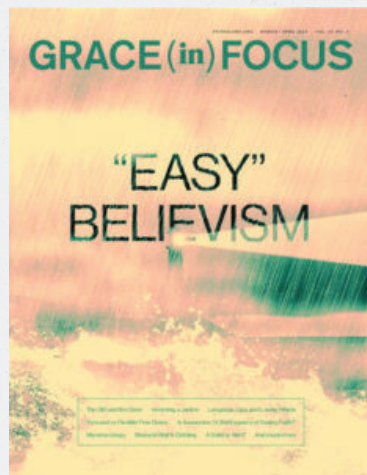
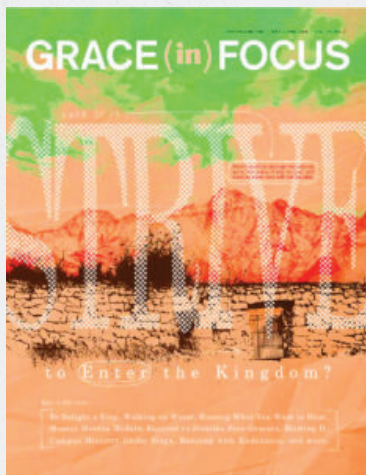


Sandy, Bob, Samuel & Arch at the GES 2024 National Conference in Denton, TX



Steve Elkins packed a breakout session on eternal rewards at the GES 2024 National Conference in Denton, TX.

Sign up for a FREE subscription to *Grace in Focus* Magazine!



[FAITHALONE.ORG/GRACE-IN-FOCUS](https://faithalone.org/grace-in-focus)

FALL 2024

ONLINE SEMINARY CLASSES

WHEN: Aug. 19 - Nov. 11 (12 weeks) for all classes except NT Greek 101 & 103 are Aug. 5 - Nov. 11

APPLICATION DEADLINE: July 29

HOW: Go to GESSeminary.org for further information and to apply/register

WHERE: Wherever your laptop takes you (with internet connection).

COST: Free if you maintain a 3.0 gpa (paid by GES partners)

CLASSES OFFERED THIS SEMESTER:

TH	101	Soteriology
BIB	104	Eternal Rewards
NT	101	NT Greek Elements
NT	103	Greek Exegesis of 1-3 John
BIB	105	Hermeneutics
BIB	101	Old Testament Survey 1
PM	101	Introduction to Pastoral Ministry
TH	103	Theology Proper/Christology/Pneumatology

Professors Include: Ken Yates, Tony Badger, Bob Wilkin, Philippe Sterling and More!

GESSeminary.ORG 

NONPROFIT
US POSTAGE
PAID
ABERDEEN, SD
PERMIT #200

Grace Evangelical Society

P.O. Box 1308

Denton, TX 76202

Believe in Him for Life

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

GES National Conference

CAMP COPASS | DENTON, TX | MAY 20-23, 2024

