

ARE FUNDAMENTALISTS LEGALISTS? • PHARISEES AND FUNDAMENTALISTS • PREPARING TO SPEAK FOR GOD

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Your article [Behind the Lines] in the November/December 1998 *Frontline* hit the nail on the head. I appreciate you . . . for speaking out fearlessly and honestly about the ministry of Jerry Falwell. What you have written needed to be said, and I hope that fundamental Baptists will pay attention to it. Thank you . . . for your discernment on these issues and for an uncompromising stand in a day of accelerating apostasy.

*Pastor David Smith
Laurel, MT*

Our son . . . receives *Frontline* as a student at Northland Baptist Bible College. He noted that the May/June 1998 issue, under "What's on the Web," mentioned Kerusso Ministries, a ministry to those struggling with or touched by homosexuality. . . . I am the assistant to Michael Johnston, president of Kerusso Ministries. . . . Unlike some Exodus ministries, Kerusso approaches homosexuality from a totally Biblical basis and does not use reparative therapy in our counseling. I believe you cited the web site: www.kerusso.org. . . . We appreciate the magazine, its depth (meat) and stand.

*Annetta Small
kerussomin2@juno.com*

Having used the word 'Frontline' in an e-mail the other day, my spell check asked me if I wanted to change it to 'frothiness.' I had a good laugh at that one since *Frontline* has been any-

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thing but frothy! Thanks for your fine magazine; I especially enjoy the articles by Drs. Minnick and Simmons. My introduction to *Frontline* came when our previous pastor had a *Frontline* Sunday at church. He stated that this magazine was a rare Christian magazine he could recommend without fear of regretting it later. That got my attention, and I would certainly agree. Over the years I have become disappointed at formerly fine Christian magazines that have become theologically anemic.

*Jeff Briden
jeffrachel@juno.com*

I want to share with you a thought from a magazine over 100 years old. When I read it I thought of your own *Frontline*. The quote is from the Whitefield Magazine, named after George Whitefield. . . . "I want to do my little share in trying to keep unhealthy pennyworths of cheap literature out of doors,

and to provide, instead, something which is not only better worth the having, but which shall commend itself as being better worth the buying." No need to explain why *Frontline* came to mind.

*Gordon Lavoie
Vancouver Island*

Thank you for the continued great job of bringing the truth home! I read *Frontline* regularly and especially love Dr. Minnick's section. Keep up the good work!

*Pastor Larry Saunders
L'Anse, MI*

I just received the current issue of *Frontline*. Evidently, someone has subscribed for me, for which I am most grateful.

*Pastor Gary Small
Bellingham, WA*

Frontline is a real blessing. Here in the Dominican Republic we receive from you beams of His grace.

*Pastor Enrique Mejia
Santo Domingo*

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Timely Teaching from the Past

I felt the following article was worthy of publication in this issue of *Frontline* in light of the “carnival tactics” that are often used today to motivate people for soul-winning. Rather than being the result of outward motivation, the desire to win souls should be the inward compulsion of every Christian. We do not use people to build churches, but churches to build people. I trust this will be a blessing and challenge to you.

Godward Qualities for Soul Winning

C. H. Spurgeon

Our main business is to win souls. Just as the smith must know about horses and how to make shoes for them, so we must know about souls and how to win them for God. You must know that every workman, if he is wise, uses a tool that is likely to accomplish the task he has in mind. Certainly, the great God, the mightiest of all the workers, in His great, artistic work of soul winning, loves to have His own special tools. In the old creation, He used none but His own instruments. “He spake, and it was done” (Psalm 33:9). In the new creation, the efficient agent is still His powerful Word. He speaks through the ministry of His servants. Therefore they must be fit instruments for Him to speak through, fit instruments for Him to use for conveying His Word to the ears and hearts of men. Judge yourselves

whether God will use you.

Holiness of Character

I am sure you would say, first of all, that a man who is to be a soul winner must have holiness of character. When I listened to Mr. George Mueller, as he was preaching at Mentone, it was just such an address as might be given in Sunday school by an ordinary teacher, yet I never heard a sermon that did me more good or more richly profited my soul. He was only there in his personality as a witness to the truth, but he bore that witness in such a manner that you could not help saying, “That man not only preaches what he believes, but also what he lives.” In every word he uttered, his glorious life of faith seemed to fall upon both ear and heart. Holiness was the preacher’s force; and you may depend upon it that, if God is to bless us, our strength must lie in the same direction.

Humility of Spirit

It is an awful sight to see a proud Christian. There are few things that can give the devil more joy than this, whenever he takes his walks abroad. In the matter of soulwinning, humility makes you feel that you are nothing and nobody, and that if God gives you success in the work, you will be driven to ascribe to Him all the glory, for none of the credit for it could properly belong to you. If you do not have success, humility will lead you to blame your own folly and weakness, not God’s sovereignty. This point of the need of deep humility in a soul winner does not

need any proof; everyone can see, with half an eye, that God is not likely to bless any man much unless he is truly humble.

A Living Faith

The next essential qualification for success in the work of the Lord—and it is a vital one—is a living faith. You must have great faith in the Word of God if you are to be winners of souls to those who hear it. You must also believe in the power of that message to save people. I like to go to the pulpit feeling, “This is God’s Word that I am going to deliver in His name. It cannot return to Him void, I have asked His blessing upon it, He is bound to give it, and His purposes will be answered, whether my message is a taste of life unto life, or of death unto death to those who hear it.” The most likely instrument to do the Lord’s work is the man who expects that God will use him and who goes forth to labor in the strength of that conviction. When success comes, he is not surprised, for he was looking for it. He sowed living seed, and he expected to reap a harvest from it. He cast his bread upon the waters, and he means to search and watch until he finds it again.

Earnestness

Depend on it, you will make men understand the truth if you really want to do so; but if you are not in earnest, it is not likely that they will be. If a man were to knock at my door in the middle of the night, and when I put my head out of the window to see what was the matter, he



DR. ROD BELL

should say in a quiet, unconcerned way, "There is a fire at the back part of your house," I would have little thought of any fire and would feel inclined to empty a jug of water over him. Just imagine God sending a man into the world to try to win souls, and that is the style of his mind and the whole spirit of his life. There is no vehement agony for souls, no "Woe! Woe!" on their hearts and lips, no perfect consecration, no zeal in God's service. Dear ones, do be earnest. Put your whole soul into the work, or else give up.

Simplicity of Heart

Another qualification that is essential to soul winning is great simplicity of heart. I like to see men to whom I have said, "Here you are, earning a good salary and likely to rise to a position of influence in the world; if you give up your business and come into the college, you will very likely be a poor Baptist minister all your life." Yet they have looked up and said, "I would sooner starve and win

souls than spend my life in any other calling." With true simplicity of heart, we must seek to please God, whether men and women are pleased or not.

Complete Surrender

Lastly, there must be a complete surrender of yourself to God. A harpist will love to play on one particular harp because he knows the instrument, and the instrument also appears to know him. So, when God puts His hands upon the very strings of your being and every power within you seems to respond to the movements of His hand, you are an instrument that He can use. It is not easy to keep in that condition, to be in such a sensitive state that you receive the impression that the Holy Spirit desires to convey and are influenced by Him at once.

May God give us all these qualifications for Christ's sake! Amen.

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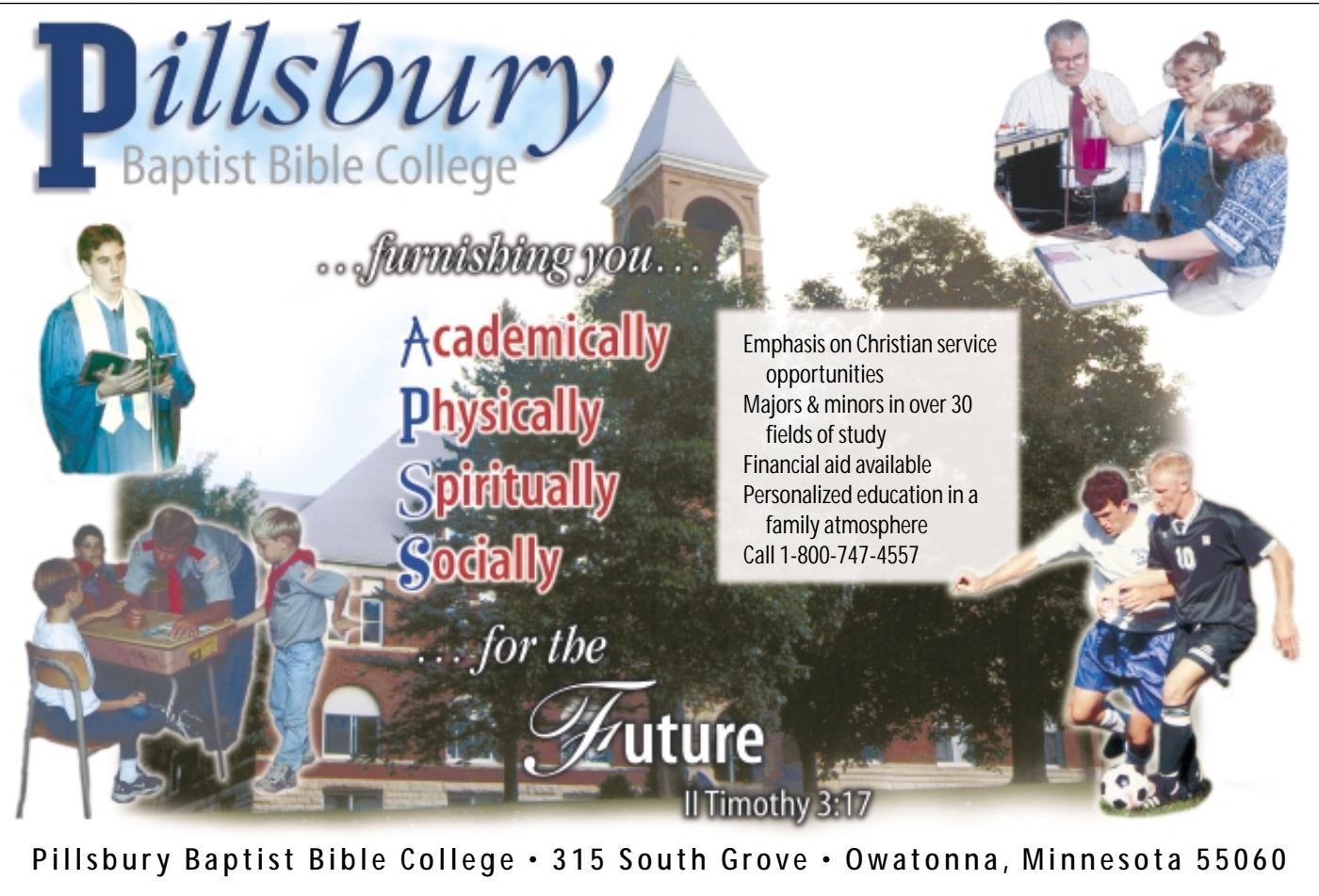
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Are Fundamentalists Legalists?

Part One

Dave Doran

We live in a day where name-calling and labeling have become the primary means of debate and argument. If you don't like a group's stand against abortion, label them "woman haters" or "fascists." If you don't like their position against homosexuality, call them "homophobes." If they believe in corporal punishment, label them child abusers. These are what I call incendiary terms. Incendiary terms or phrases are catchwords that explode upon impact, leaving mangled reputations and a cloud of smoke in their wake!

Our society has created many of these devices: discrimination, homophobia, sexism, racism, etc. Whenever a person is losing a debate or discussion over the issues, he quickly reaches into his bag and pulls out a linguistic grenade. Allegations such as "You're a homophobe" or "You're sexist" serve to put the other person on the defensive and drive the discussion away from the real issues. It is a sad and deplorable tactic used with great frequency and skill in our modern media-dominated world. Our political scene is in shambles

because of this type of meaningless name-calling.

Unfortunately, the same tactic has also been used in contemporary religious debates. In particular, the modern discussions regarding holiness and personal standards have been tainted by this tactic. Whenever the discussion of personal standards comes to the forefront, there is always someone ready to throw out the theological smoke bomb, "You're a legalist," or "That's legalism." The use of these terms automatically places one of the parties on the defensive because he has been smeared with a very broad paintbrush. Is this correct, or have the terms "legalist" and "legalism" undergone the same type of revision to which *discrimination*, *racism*, and *homophobia* have been subjected? In order to examine the answer to this question we will look at the use of these terms in Paul's day and then the modern manner in which these terms are being applied.

The Problem in Paul's Day: Actual Legalism

The clearest place to examine the problem that the apostle Paul encountered is the epistle to the Galatians.

The focus of this epistle deals directly with the problem of legalism. An examination of the Epistle reveals that the people of these churches were being enticed to follow the false teachings of men called Judaizers who desired to lead the Galatians back under the Mosaic Law. The major issues which Paul confronted were ceremonial: circumcision (5:2-4), holy days (4:10), and food regulations (2:11-14). The Judaizers were working to bring the believers slowly back under the authority of the law of Moses. It is at this point that many modern writers and preachers make the modern-day application to personal standards. They contend that the "codes of conduct" that are promoted are nothing different than what the Judaizers were doing at Galatia (Charles Swindoll, *Grace Awakening*, pp. 74ff.).

This accusation, however, misses the real issue. Paul himself recognized that the issues raised by the Judaizers were not crucial in themselves. He did not compel Gentiles to be circumcised, yet he had Timothy circumcised for the sake of ministry (Acts 16:3). Paul granted people freedom to set apart a holy day or to not set any apart (Rom. 14:5). He implied elsewhere that his practice on the food regulations was flexible (1 Cor. 9:20-21). So what is the real issue in Galatians?

The real issue in legalism cuts straight to the heart of what Paul had preached when he brought the gospel to the Galatian believers. Paul's response to the Judaizers seeks to demonstrate the seriousness of the flaws in their teaching. First, the character or nature of their message involved an essential change in the content of the gospel. They were advocating a gospel of works. They were seeking to be justified by the performance of Mosaic law deeds.

The Judaizers were teaching a gospel that Paul clearly declares is another gospel, a false gospel (1:8-9). That this is the eye of the storm is evident from Paul's statements in 2:16, 5:4, and 3:1. In each of these texts, Paul is denouncing the teaching of the Judaizers as a false gospel because it advocates justification by works of the law. The key term for Paul is *justification*. Most of us recognize that justification is the act of God in which

He declares the believer righteous and treats him as such. The point of Paul's argument in Galatians is that justification is by faith alone. The Judaizers were advocating justification by works. They were teaching that a person would be declared righteous by God if he maintained the Mosaic law code.

Second, the Judaizers' message

was deceiving the Galatians away from their original faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:1-5 most clearly addresses this aspect of the controversy and is most often quoted by modern writers as the basis for rejecting personal standards. Paul openly challenges the Galatians about their acceptance of this legalistic message. He rebukes them for being bewitched, literally to be put under a magic spell. Many have assumed that Paul shifts his argument from justification to sanctification, i.e., he now accuses them of legalism because they are trying to advance spiritually by the works of the law. Therefore, they argue, any system of standards which is intended to help someone grow spiritually is legalism. But this misses the argument that Paul makes. His point is not that they are trying to grow spiritually by the law, but that they have turned their backs on the means of their justification (faith). The questions he uses are intended to point out the contradiction between their

past experience and present course. They did not originally receive the Spirit by the works of the law, so how can they now think that they are justified by the works of the law? Paul flows right from his series of questions into a powerful exposition of the justification of Abraham by faith (3:7ff.).

Third, the outcome of the Judaizers' message was that a person who accepted it would ultimately be eternally condemned (1:8-9). This was no minor issue to the apostle. Tampering with the content of the gospel message brought his most stern rebuke and censure. Certainly this was not a matter that involved minor matters or trivial cultural issues. To accept the message of the legalists was to place oneself in a theologically heretical camp.

Fourth, the consequence of accepting the message of the Judaizers was to make the work of Christ of no effect (5:4). Paul states his case dramatically. If they rely upon the works of the law then they have severed themselves from Christ. The point here is not that they lose their salvation. Paul is setting up two mutually exclusive realms. On one hand is Christ and on the other is the Mosaic law. One cannot be in both realms at the same time. To accept the law as necessary for justification is to repudiate the sufficiency of Christ's redemptive work on the cross.

It is obvious from the sternness with which Paul attacks his opponents and their message that this is a matter of eternal consequence. To accept the message of the Judaizers was to reject the gospel of God's grace found in the redemptive work of Christ. The legalism that Paul attacked was not merely a "code of conduct" but a false gospel that called men to seek justification by the works of the Mosaic law.

The Problem in Our Day: Accused Legalism

The question that we must ask ourselves is this, "Are those who advocate personal standards teaching that this will justify them before God?" I know of no Biblical

To accept the message of the legalists was to place one self in a theologically heretical camp.

Fundamentalist who is teaching that adhering to a system of personal standards secures their justification. On the contrary, they very clearly proclaim a gospel of grace that must be received through repentant faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Then how are these allegations of legalism substantiated? What arguments are made to prove that believers who advocate the maintenance of personal standards of holy living are indeed legalists?

In the course of my study of and personal experience with those who make this charge, the allegation seems to be built on three arguments. Two of the arguments revolve around the meanings of the key terms *law* and *legalism*. The third argument deals with the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. In my opinion, the validity of the accusation of legalism by evangelicals (and some Fundamentalists) rests on the accuracy of these three arguments. In order to be equitable and to encourage honest evaluation, I will try to reproduce these arguments by quoting directly from the sources that advance them.

The Meaning of the Law

It would seem obvious that the meaning of the term *law* as the apostle Paul uses it has significant impact on this debate. However, this does not guarantee that its Biblical and contextual meaning will always be considered as the arguments against legalism are being constructed. As one reads the arguments of those who reject the modern tendency toward legalism, the word *law* is used as a synonym for the words *rules* and *regulations*. For example, John MacArthur writes that the believer does not “need the governmental system of law to guide him in his new life. . . . In fact, the more a believer attempts to force himself to live by rules and regulations, no matter how lofty they may be, the more he stifles the work of the Holy Spirit” (MacArthur, *Galatians*, p. 152). This seems harmless enough until the next step is taken; namely, the words *rules* and *regulations* are then transformed into lists of do’s

and don’ts (cf. Swindoll, *Grace Awakening*, p. 132).

It is at precisely at this point that their logical argument is constructed. If we were to state it in the form of a logical syllogism, it would be as follows:

Major Premise:
Believers are free from the law.

Minor Premise:
The law is a set of rules (a list of do’s and don’ts).

Conclusion:
Believers are therefore free from rules (lists of do’s and don’ts).

On the surface this seems to be a strong case against a system of standards, which they would call rules and regulations. However, the strength of any logical syllogism is dependent on the validity of its major and minor premises. This first syllogism fails at that very point—the validity of its premises. First, this argument fails to recognize that Paul was specifically addressing the Mosaic law, not law as a principle. The goal of the Judaizers was to pull the believers back under the law of Moses, not just any system of regulations. It must be remembered that the Mosaic law was the covenantal constitution of the nation of Israel. Paul taught that the law was given 430 years after the promise to Abraham (Gal. 3:17), and that before Moses there was no law (Rom. 5:13–14). These statements clearly indicate that Paul uses the term *law* chiefly as a designation for the Mosaic law. The New Testament is clear that a dispensational shift has occurred that eliminated the division between Jew and Gentile (Gal. 3:28). The elimination of this national distinction is one of the major reasons Paul attacked the teachings of the Judaizers and their determination to impose the Mosaic law upon Gentiles.

The second critical flaw of this first syllogism flows out of the first; namely, that to say we are not under the law (i.e., Mosaic law) is not equivalent to saying that we are not under

any law. Surprisingly, this crucial distinction is often overlooked. The logic used in the syllogism above contradicts the clear teaching of the New Testament. Paul, the champion of those who use this syllogism, describes himself as “not without law” (1 Cor. 9:21) and even calls the Galatians to “fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). Paul’s message is that the NT believer is not under obligation to the Mosaic system of law as a code of conduct. Douglas Moo summarizes Paul’s teaching very well:

It is true that Paul proclaimed Christians to be free from the law. But what law was he referring to? Even a casual reading of Paul’s letters shows that he used the word law to refer to the Mosaic law, that particular body of commands given to Israel at the time of the ratification of the Sinaitic covenant (*Renewing Your Mind in a Secular World*, pp. 147–148).

The syllogism is flawed because it fails to recognize that the rule of life for the believer in this dispensation is the teaching and commands of the NT. Church saints are under the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2), the royal law (Jas. 2:8), the perfect law of liberty (Jas. 1:25), and the new commandment of Christ (John 13:34). “Therefore, it is vital to recognize that the believers’ freedom is from the law, not all law. Believers must meet God’s demands in a new context, but God’s demands they are” (*Renewing Your Mind in a Secular World*, p. 148). Just as the Mosaic Law was never intended to be a system by which men are justified, the commands of the NT are not intended as a means of justification. God gives us authoritative direction for our lives as believers.

In the next issue of *Frontline*, Dr. Doran discusses the meaning of legalism and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in Part 2 of “Are Fundamentalists Legalists?”

Dr. Dave Doran is pastor of Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, Michigan, and chancellor of Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary.

Pharisees and Fundamentalists

Layton Talbert

What is the difference between a Fundamentalist and a Pharisee? The two are implicit synonyms in many minds, as it has become increasingly popular to equate modern Fundamentalism with ancient Pharisaism. It is a serious charge—too serious to be lightly dismissed. Oversensitivity to criticism is a mark of immaturity and insecurity. Likewise, an unwillingness for sober self-examination is a mark of arrogance; it betrays a forgetfulness that we are, at our best, sinners.

The charge of Pharisaism generally focuses on one or more of these areas: (1) separatism, (2) legalism, (3) self-righteousness, or (4) hypocrisy. We do ourselves and the cause of Fundamentalism a disservice not to investigate the charge and, in the process, our own hearts.

Are Fundamentalists Pharisees? Sometimes, yes. Is Fundamentalism the modern equivalent of Pharisaism? No one who understands both historical Pharisaism and modern Fundamentalism can accurately make that assertion without, ironically, betraying his own Pharisaical tendencies. Pharisaism is an equal-opportunity vice. New Evangelicals and even liberals are hardly immune to it. First, however, it will be helpful to define the terms more closely—and accurately.

Like Puritanism, “Pharisaism” has been carefully crafted by critics to conjure up certain negative images that are not always grounded in historical accuracy. A “puritan” (as the term is popularly misused) is a dull, austere, straight-laced, severe, narrow-minded, arrogant prude. Any honest student of history knows this is a grossly inaccurate caricature of historical Puritans.

“Pharisee” has become a synonym for a self-righteous, censorious hypocrite. Much of that association comes from their behavior in the Gospels. But they were not always that way, nor were all of them that way. A look at the historical Pharisees yields some surprising discoveries. It is a matter of historical record that Pharisaism had noble and godly roots reaching back into the intertestamental period. They were not always as they appear in the Gospels.

The Pharisees’ Problems

Fundamentalists are called Pharisees for their separatist stance. (“Pharisee” means one who was “separated.”) But did you know that Jesus never criticized Pharisees for their separatism? What He criticized was their self-righteous attitude of superiority in their separatism. To whatever degree we possess a self-righteous

contempt for others (whether sinners or compromising believers), to that degree we become, in fact, Pharisees.

Fundamentalists are also called Pharisees for their insistence on a careful observance of the words and demands and standards of Scripture. This is usually described by critics as “legalism” or “obscurantism.” But did you know that Jesus never criticized the Pharisees for their scrupulous attention to the details of the law? Even in His rebuke he said, “these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matt. 23:23). What He condemned was the hypocrisy and externalism of their observance. If we are honest with ourselves, it is easier to fall into this trap than we would care to admit. To whatever degree our observance of the Scripture is hypocritical and externalistic, to that degree we become, in fact, Pharisees.

A brief survey of the infamous Woes pronounced by Jesus on the Pharisees in Matthew 23 reveals that hypocrisy can take many different forms: a double standard (23:3–4); ostentation (23:5); self-promotion (23:6–7); pretension (23:14); skewed values (23:16–22); misplaced priorities (23:23–24); and externalism (23:25–28). In a bitterly ironic twist, they professed veneration for the very prophets their own fathers had slain, adorning their tombs and insisting that they would have obeyed the prophets—all the while plotting to do the very same thing to this Prophet, their Messiah (23:29–31). As J. C. Ryle bluntly observed, “they liked dead saints better than living ones.” We can easily be guilty of a similar inconsistency. To the degree that our personal standards and practices are laced with any of these forms of hypocrisy, to that degree we become Pharisees.

Pharisees and Tradition

A major flaw in Pharisaism was the exaltation of the “Moral Law”—that is, the traditional interpretations and applications passed down from previous generations of rabbis and scribes. The Pharisees insisted that these traditional interpretations and applications of the law—which were originally intended to help make the law more practical and understandable for people—were of equal authority to the written law itself. To disobey the human applications and explanations and traditions that grew up around the law was to disobey God’s law itself.

It is important to note that the original intent of these “additions” was good and noble. The Pharisees’ goal was not to make the law burdensome, but to explain and

interpret the ancient law in such a way as to make it immediately applicable and practicable for the average Jew. The problem came when the Pharisees insisted that all their specific cultural applications and traditional interpretations carried the same weight of authority as the written law of God. That is what made the law burdensome.

Jesus confronted this very error in Matthew 15:1–9. The Pharisees wanted to know why Jesus' disciples ate without observing the ceremonial washings prescribed by their traditions. (In Luke 11:38 they directed the same criticism at Jesus personally.) Jesus answered by asking why they undermined the commandments of God by their traditions. The example He cited indicated that they would have no problem with a man who defrauded his needy parents by claiming that his goods were devoted to God and hence not available to meet their need. By their traditional interpretation and application of vows and things devoted to God, they undermined the law of God Himself regarding one's obligation to honor his parents. In the parallel passage (Mark 7:1–13), Jesus adds, "And many such like things do ye."

For what, specifically, does Christ fault them? For observing tradition or holding it to be important? No. Did He condemn them for their observance of the washing ritual? He did not. His rebuke is twofold: (1) allowing tradition alone to prejudice one's view and attitude toward others (hence the Pharisees' prejudice against Jesus' disciples), and (2) affirming or defending a tradition in any way that undermines or contradicts a text. But remember, Pharisaism did not start out this way! An originally genuine and scrupulous attention to the Scriptures developed these tendencies over decades. The careful attention to the Scripture was not at fault, but the unchecked tendencies of fallen human nature. A key component and crucial flaw of later Pharisaism (as it appears in the Gospels) was the exaltation of Tradition at the expense, or even contradiction, of Text. How can we be guilty of such offenses?

Modern Examples of Pharisaism

Imagine a teenager living in a single-parent home in need of his financial help. (I became a Christian under such a circumstance.) He has a job, but in his zeal this teen decides he needs to devote half of his money to the church and save the other half for Christian college. He may have made a vow to this effect, or even been counseled by someone in the church that he ought to do this as a display of faith and devotion to the Lord. But if, in the process, he is neglecting the needs of his own household, he is not displaying faith—he's denying it (1 Tim. 5:8). By inordinately exalting a personal application of one text he has undercut another explicit text (1 Tim. 5:4, as well as the same one Jesus cited from the Decalogue).

Here's another teenager. (Something about teens aptly illustrates the essential spiritual immaturity of Pharisaism.) This teen is newly converted. He hears exhortations from the pulpit and others that God's people are not to forsake the assembling of themselves together (Heb. 10:25). This means, he is told dogmatically, that if the church doors are open, he ought to be there—Sunday

school, Sunday morning, Sunday evening, Wednesday night, youth activities. Now suppose this teen's parents are not too happy with this new-found enthusiasm. As unbelievers, they are already inherently antagonistic; but they especially resent this new time-consuming "interest" and decide to limit him to Sunday morning services. Dad wants him home with the family Sunday night and Wednesday night. What's he to do? Fellowship is important, right? Even a matter of obedience, right? Suppose he asks his pastor what he should do, and the pastor (this ought to make us cringe) says, "Son, you've got to make a choice. God says not to forsake the assembling of the believers. Are you going to obey God or man?"

What a horrible predicament to put a young person in! But what an example of the very characteristic of Pharisaism Jesus condemned. Look carefully. Does Hebrews 10:25 say anything about Sunday school, Sunday morning, Sunday evening, Wednesday evening, or youth activities? Would it be right for the preacher to insist on "whenever the doors are open" and, on the basis of a specific, cultural, traditional application of a text, force that teen to make a choice that will actually cause him to break the fifth commandment of God and, in the process, present a poor testimony to his unsaved parents? Or would it be right for the teen to hide behind the exhortation of Hebrews 10 as an excuse for breaking the command of Exodus 20? There is a way to fulfill both. But when we insist on following an application of one text at the expense of disobeying the clear statement of another, we begin to look uncomfortably like Pharisees. (Do not misunderstand; a voluntary choice to absent yourself from services for selfish reasons is, by definition, "forsaking the assembling of yourselves together.")

An excessive application of separation to the point of isolation and insulation from the unbelievers around you can undermine your obedience to be salt and light and a witness. Or applying separation to the point of ignoring a compromised brother in genuine need can contradict Christ's explicit command to believers to love one another. (That is why Paul reminds us that even a disobedient brother is still a brother, not an enemy.)

We can become Pharisaic (in any of its manifestations: externalism, hypocrisy, ostentation, self-righteousness, misplaced emphases, or skewed values), emphasizing Tradition over Text, about issues relating to personal practices such as daily devotions, dress or hair standards, Christmas or Easter observance. We can become Pharisaic, emphasizing Tradition over Text, about doctrinal or positional matters such as the version debate, church polity, denominational names, details of eschatology, or traditional dispensational distinctives. The point is not whether the positions themselves are right or wrong. Pharisaism is less about specific positions than it is about the manner or spirit with which one holds those positions. It is entirely possible—indeed, Biblically incumbent—to maintain our genuinely held convictions in a firm but charitable way, not allowing our applications to prejudice our view and attitude toward others, and not affirming or defending a tradition in any way that undermines or contradicts a text.

Keys to Avoiding Pharisaism

It is a sadly ironic outgrowth of our own depravity that the very things we mean to be expressions of our devotion and dedication to the Lord—no matter how sincerely held—can become idols and distractions. That is not because those tokens or standards are wrong; it is because of the deceitfulness of our own hearts and our susceptibility to impure motives, external focus, and imbalance in emphasis. Our souls, if not carefully tended, are subject to a spiritual second law of thermodynamics.

Here are some keys for avoiding an encroaching Pharisaism:

- Maintain a tough Biblical evaluation of yourself and your motives in all things.
- Maintain a charitable Biblical evaluation of others and their motives.
- Guard against a self-righteous attitude and a hypocritical observance.
- Guard against a preoccupation with externals over or at the expense of internals.
- Maintain the distinction between applications/interpretations and the changeless truth upon which they are based, that is, between Tradition and Text.

The manner and spirit in which you hold a position—especially a traditional application—is just as important as the position itself. It is worth pondering whether we would

react with surprise at some of the things Jesus or His disciples might do today that might contradict our own traditions or applications. Before you answer with too much self-assurance, remember that Jesus surprised and, on occasion, scandalized not only the unbelieving religious leaders of His day, but genuine seekers such as Nicodemus, great believers such as John the Baptist, and even his own disciples and followers. Are there areas where He would point out our contradiction of Scripture by our traditions or positions? The narratives of the Bible testify repeatedly that God can overlook a lot of external flaws (He has to in all of us) if He has someone's heart. But it is difficult, even for God, to use someone with all the right positions who has a Pharisee's heart. We do not have to choose between the two.

Charles Pfeiffer accurately assesses the peril of Pharisaism:

The degeneracy of Pharisaism serves as a warning to those who take a stand for separation from evil. . . . Pharisaism began well, and its perversion is a constant reminder that self-complacency and spiritual pride are temptations to which the pious are particularly susceptible.

May God help us not to forsake our pursuit of purity, but to remember that purity is first and foremost an inward virtue. Virtue that is only external becomes the vice of Pharisaism.

Dr. Layton Talbert is a *Frontline* contributing editor living in Travelers Rest, South Carolina.

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Preparing to Speak for God

Richard Flanders

“And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them” (Ezek. 3:4).

Nearly every Christian will have an opportunity to speak for God in one situation or another. Even those without a special calling to the professional ministry will be asked to give a talk to a congregation or a youth group, or to teach the Bible or give devotions before a group. We all ought to know how to prepare to speak for God. The Bible says, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any many minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Pet. 4:11).

We ought to look for opportunities to minister in Jesus’ name, especially by the spoken word. We ought to speak as God’s representatives and trust in the Lord to work through us.

The Bible has many stories about people whom God called to speak to some group or individual. I believe that the man whose story is the most helpful in showing us how to prepare to speak is Ezekiel. The story of his call is found in chapters 1–3 of his book. Read those

chapters, and see these six steps in preparing to speak for God.

1. Realize that, with God’s help, you can do it!

Notice carefully the words of Ezekiel 2:1–2: “And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.”

Chapter 1 describes an amazing vision God gave Ezekiel in the land of Babylon. At the end of the chapter, this man is on his face, bowing before the glory of the Lord. Now God’s voice comes and says, “Stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee.” Before Ezekiel could do anything, the Holy Spirit entered into Ezekiel and set him on his feet so that he heard God. What the Lord commanded Ezekiel to do, the Holy Spirit caused him to do! In the vision, Ezekiel had seen “living creatures” and “wheels.” What they were is the subject of another study, but one aspect of the vision applies to what happened to Ezekiel. The Bible says, “Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went” (Ezek. 1:20).

It was the Spirit of God who caused things to happen! So it will be with you. What God calls you to do, the Spirit will enable you to do. Don’t turn down an opportunity to speak. Don’t miss a chance to give a testimony

or say a word of witness. Whatever the Lord tells you to do, just try to do it and trust in the Spirit to empower you. Always have your confidence in the Spirit, and not in your flesh, even if the call is simply to “stand upon thy feet.”

2. Don't be afraid.

Ezekiel was told not to fear his listeners. “Be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house” (Ezek. 2:6).

Verses 3 through 8 of Ezekiel 2 dwell upon the fear factor. Ezekiel's congregation would give him something to fear, humanly speaking. They were “rebellious” against God, and even “impudent” and “stiffhearted” (verses 3 and 4). They would attack him with “their words” and with “their looks” (verse 6). He was going to feel as if he was living among “briers and thorns” and “among scorpions,” but he still was not to be afraid (verse 6). God's Word was to be preached to them in the power of the Holy Spirit “whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear” (verse 5). “Yet shall [they] know that there hath been a prophet among them” (verse 5). With an important mission such as this, the prophet must not be stymied by fear! If you know that God has sent you to say a certain thing, you can lose your fear!

3. Feed upon the Word.

Chapter 2 ends and chapter 3 begins with Ezekiel eating a scroll of Scripture. “Son of man, eat that thou findest” (Ezek. 3:1).

Of course, Ezekiel was still experiencing a vision, but the significance of this scroll-eating is not to be missed (2:9–3:11). We must feed on the Word of God for ourselves in order to be ready to give it to others.

Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears. And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith

the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (Ezek. 3:10–11).

Read the Bible every day for your own spiritual nourishment. “Desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). It is from God's work in your own life through His Word that He gives you the ability to meet needs in the lives of others. Preachers should study the Bible for the benefit of their souls more than for the preparation of their sermons. In personal Bible study you will glean truths and texts that God wants you to expound to others. Take down notes on your daily Scripture reading. Keep written records of Biblical themes you think might be used in the future to formulate sermons or devotional messages.

4. Get alone with the Lord until His hand comes upon you.

Read carefully in Ezekiel 3:12–14 about what happened next to the prophet. He had another amazing experience with the Spirit of God. He says that God's Spirit “took me up” and then “took me away,” and “the hand of the Lord was strong upon me.” When the Spirit moved him away to Tel-abib, Ezekiel says, “I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit.” God had done something in the prophet's heart that must happen to anyone before he can speak effectively for God. The Lord brought Ezekiel to the place in his heart and mind where he felt the same about the message as God felt about it! God was angry with His rebellious people. The message was to be one of warning. It was to be full of “lamentations, and mourning, and woe” (2:10). Now Ezekiel could feel the wickedness of the people's rebellion and the justice of God's punishment upon them.

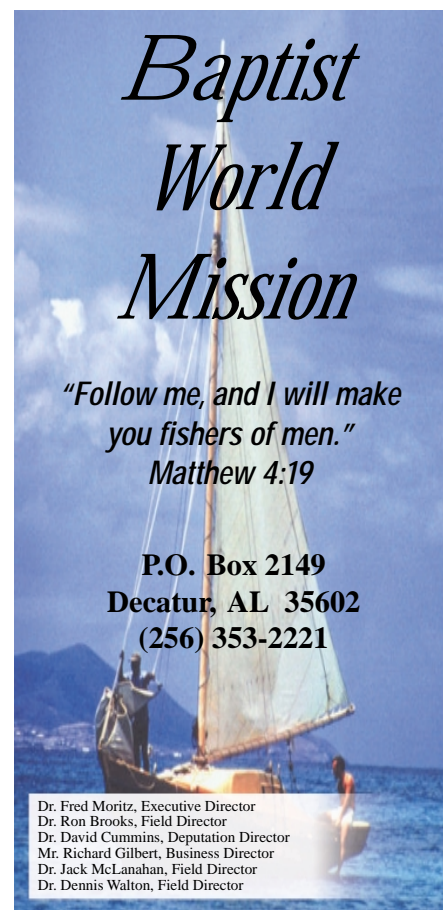
When a speaker comes before a group sure that he has a message from God to deliver, and if that speaker feels strongly about that message and about getting it across the way God wants it delivered, he or she will be a good and effective messenger. Whatever you do, before you speak, stay alone with God in prayer until the hand of the Lord comes

upon you in regard to delivering God's message. Prepare your notes, but prepare your heart also.

5. Sit where they sit.

Ezekiel seemed ready to speak to the people, but he was not. Verse 15 of chapter 3 tells us about something else that must happen before we are ready to speak for God. “Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.”

These people at Tel-abib were the ones who were to hear Ezekiel preach first. Before he was ready to deliver a message, the prophet needed to sit where his audience sat. Compassion is a vital element in effective speaking. Know where your listeners are. Know why they are there. Get an idea what it will be like for them to hear your message. Yes, these were bad people. God had called them rebels, transgressors, impudent, and hardhearted. But Ezekiel was made of flesh too and was subject, as we all are, to their temptations and weaknesses. If he “sat where they sat” for seven days,



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he would learn something he needed to know before he addressed them in the name of the Lord. The prophet was "astonished" by what he learned in those vital days. The heat of his spirit was balanced with the compassion of his heart.

Sometimes when I am to talk in a children's meeting, I go early and walk into the room on my knees, not in a posture of prayer, but as a way of seeing the room and the podium from the viewpoint of a little child. Sometimes on a Sunday morning, before anyone has arrived at the church, I will sit on the back row to reflect upon what it will be like to be where some of my congregation will be as they hear me preach. Never speak out of zeal unchecked by compassion. Meditate on the state of your hearers and put yourself in their place for a while.

6. Realize your responsibility.

Ezekiel 3:16-21 presents us with the awful responsibility of representing God and speaking for Him. You have probably read these verses before, but it would be good for you to read them

again. The man who speaks for God is a "watchman," according to this passage, and he has a great responsibility to the people he is supposed to protect. If a watchman on the wall of a city sees danger coming, he must sound a warning. The Lord's watchman is told, "Hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me."

When we find in God's Word matters that people around us should know, it is our duty to tell them. Since sinners are condemned to hell unless they turn to Christ, we who know this are duty-bound to warn them! The one who speaks for God must stand before people with a powerful sense of the responsibility on his shoulders. The destiny of souls and the direction of lives are at stake. He must not refrain his lips out of fear of offense.

The speaker who follows Ezekiel's example will be effective. God will make you an effective bearer of His message if you will prepare properly to speak for Him.

Dr. Richard Flanders is pastor of Juniata Baptist Church in Vassar, Michigan.

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The Wise Use of Money

Steven Owen

Money. We use it every day. We spend a large percentage of our lives acquiring it. It is a power tool that can make our lives more comfortable or do us much harm in its misuse. And many Americans are misusing it. Bankruptcies are at an all-time high. Seventy percent of all divorces cite financial problems as the reason. Many marriages, although they remain intact, suffer turmoil because of financial problems.

Even our children suffer because of its misuse. Some suffer from having too much money; others from not enough. Many people (even Christians) have neglected their souls in the pursuit of money.

The wonderful truth is that God does not want His children in financial misery. "By humility [i.e., a teachable spirit] and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life" (Prov. 22:4). Christ has taught us in His book of wisdom for daily living, Proverbs, how we should handle our money. Some 100 of Proverbs' 898 verses are devoted to the wise use of money. When you consider that the "love chapter" of the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13, is just 13 verses, and

that the "faith chapter," Hebrews 11, is 40 verses, then you will realize that this issue of wise money management is a concern for godly people.

Proverbs contains seven principles concerning the wise use of money.

1. Give to the Lord.

"Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (3:9-10).

This principle is listed first for two reasons: it is the first mention of money in the book, and, most importantly, it is the foremost financial lesson to be learned. Jesus Christ must have first place in our lives, and this is evidenced by our purse. Our God requires "the firstfruits" (Exod. 22:29-30). Before we pay anyone else, even ourselves, we must give to God. This is the first lesson of faith. Giving to the Lord first is to be practiced from "all [our] increase." No part of our income is to be exempted.

When we pay God first, we accomplish two goals: First, we glorify God. "Honour" is the same Hebrew word for "glorify." Second, we demonstrate

that we are trusting in the Lord with all of our hearts (Prov. 3:5-6).

How much should we give? Some object that tithing is strictly for those under the law, but the principle of tithing is far older than the law. Abraham tithed (Gen. 14:20) 430 years before the giving of the law. Jesus concurred that tithing was legitimate (Luke 11:42), when in other places He abrogated the practices of the law, such as temple worship (John 4:20-24) and the dietary laws (Mark 7:18-19). The Lord also received freewill gifts, called "heave offerings," over and above the tithe.

As with all of God's commands, there is a blessing in obedience. The blessing is financial sufficiency. "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Prov. 3:10). I have met many believers in deep financial distress, and almost to a man, they were non-tithers. He that withholds the tithe not only robs God (Mal. 3:8)—he robs himself!

2. Pay debts on time.

"Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee" (3:27-28).

Paying our debts on time must be a priority. This principle refers to making our payments on or before the due date. Unfortunately, many believers do not have this as a priority in their lives. Their credit and their testimony are not the only things that suffer from this practice. When we do not make every effort to pay our debts in a timely fashion, we are not living according to the law of love, loving our neighbors as ourselves. Certainly we want our own paycheck on payday. Disobedience in this area leads not to financial prosperity, but to poverty (11:24).

3. Give to the needy.

"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself" (11:24-25).

We live in a day where the govern-

ment has usurped from the church the responsibility of caring for the poor. Because the government has tried to take the place of God in the lives of the poor, many believers have ceased in some degree from this practice. But this principle is still our responsibility. It is a sin not to be responsive to the needs of the poor (14:21). However, if we are faithful in giving to the poor, we are simply lending to the Lord (19:17)! Our God always repays His debts.

4. Hate illicit gain.

"Treasures of wickedness profit nothing; but righteousness delivereth from death" (10:2).

I once worked in a grocery store that received 60 cases of expensive meat by a warehouse mistake. We were not billed for them. The store owner rejoiced that he had received this "free money." He would not allow the items to be returned. For believers, illicit gain is a type of stealing. Proverbs mentions several types of illicit gain to be avoided: criminal acts (10:2); lying to procure gain (20:17); taking bribes (17:23); cheating (11:1); fraud (13:11); violence (1:10-15); price gouging (11:26); and taking unfair advantage of the poor (14:31).

We are reminded that illicit gain does not profit (28:8) because the greedy man has a way of being caught in his own devices (11:6). Illicit gain also carries the high cost of God's judgment (17:5), and even the loss of our own family (15:27).

5. Avoid surety for others.

"My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth" (6:1-2).

Suretyship is more commonly called "co-signing." It is a contract whereby one party becomes responsible for another's debts or obligations in the event of a default. God warns us to avoid this trap (6:2). It is a very risky practice (11:15) because many people who need a co-signer eventually default. The Lord says this practice is unwise (17:18) because we risk reducing ourselves to poverty (22:26-27). The Lord warns us not to be collateral for strangers (20:16) or even friends (6:1-2). If we have fallen

into this practice, the Lord warns us to immediately have our name removed from being responsible for another's debts (6:1-5).

6. Avoid borrowing.

"The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender" (22:7).

Easy credit is the norm today, but it was not always this way. Until the 1920s banks followed the Biblical principle of no more than 7 years of debt. Even home loans could not exceed 7 years. Today, people can borrow for 7 years for a car, and many go 40 years in debt for a house. People are thus forced to pay 3 or 4 times for their homes in interest. And Americans are much more materialistic. The attitude has become, "Why wait?"

Our Lord warns that debt becomes a type of slavery. Slaves do not have freedom to do as they wish. The banks often force decisions upon borrowers for the bank's own safety or profit. Debtors often find that they cannot change jobs, embark on new careers, or even move to another locale, simply because they cannot afford it.

Christ, not a lending institution, is to be our Master. Let us keep ourselves free that we may serve Him better. While borrowing may not be sin, God has provided a way to keep ourselves free. Proverbs 6:6-8 teaches us to save our money for projected expenses. For example, we should set aside some money for a vehicle against the time when our current vehicle will fail. Saving money for needs is wise.

7. Be content.

"He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him" (Prov. 28:22).

What does "hasteth to be rich" mean? The

word "rich" is translated in 3:9 "substance." It refers to anything of value. In other words, God says we must be content with our economic standing in life. This is certainly a foreign idea to the American culture of the '90s.

1 Timothy 6:6-10 tells us that we should be content with food, clothing, and shelter. In other words, whatever it takes to keep us alive is the standard of living with which we should be content. How different is God's standard from ours! Americans live in the richest country in the world, yet with all these things we are not happier. Instead, we are miserable. Our marriages are suffering. We are losing our children. We are tired, but we must go back to work to get ahead. How much better to be content with lesser things!

If we will make these seven principles a priority in our lives, the Lord will supply all of our needs (Matt. 6:33). He does a much better job than we can do ourselves, and we will experience the freedom and blessing and joy of walking with Christ.

Steven Owen is pastor of Liberty Baptist Church in Monroe, Wisconsin.

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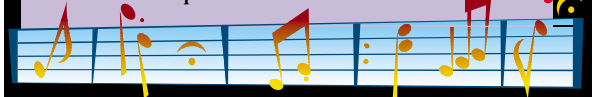
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“I am he that **liveth**, and was **dead**; and, behold, I am **alive** forever more.” (Rev. 1:18)

The apostle Paul states the gospel succinctly in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4: “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

At the crucifixion the disciples were scattered, fearful, and hopeless. What, then, reassembled this small group of fearful men into the mighty evangelists that spread the gospel of Jesus Christ not only in Jerusalem and Judea but throughout the known world? The event that initiated this transformation was the resurrection.

The very existence of the Christian church rests upon the fact that Christ rose from the dead. In his commentary on Luke, Norval Geldenhuys states, “It is historically and psychologically impossible that the followers of Jesus, who at His crucifixion were so completely despondent and perplexed, would within a few weeks thereafter enter the world (as they did) with such unheard-of joy, power

and devotion, if it had not been for the fact that He had risen from the dead.” “As a matter of fact,” adds G. Campbell Morgan, “the most powerful incentive to witness was the seeing of Christ after resurrection, as when He arrested Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus.”

Concerning Jesus Christ our Lord the Scriptures state that He is “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name” (Rom. 1:4–5). The resurrection is central to everything we believe, yet it usually receives attention only once a year.

Christianity sends missionaries because of the resurrection. The command to go into all the world stems from this great truth that Jesus Christ is risen! The Biblical connection between the resurrection and evangelistic passion is striking.

The Gospel of Matthew records that because of His



resurrection (28:1-17), all authority in heaven and earth has been committed to the risen Christ (28:18). "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (28:19).

The Gospel of Mark recounts that the risen Christ "appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (16:14-15).

The Gospel of Luke, narrating the same occasion, elaborates that "opened he . . . their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things" (24:45-48).

The Gospel of John details the same resurrection evening—the risen Christ appeared to the assembled disciples and, displaying the marks of the crucifixion-death He had victoriously overcome, said to them, "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (20:19-21).

The Book of Acts chronicles that Christ "shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," and then commissioned His disciples to be "witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem,

and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (1:3, 8).

After Peter healed the lame man in Acts 3, he addressed the men of Israel saying, "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses" (verses 14 and 15). On another occasion as the spokesman for the apostles, Peter said, "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted. . . . And we are his witnesses of these things" (Acts 5:29-32).

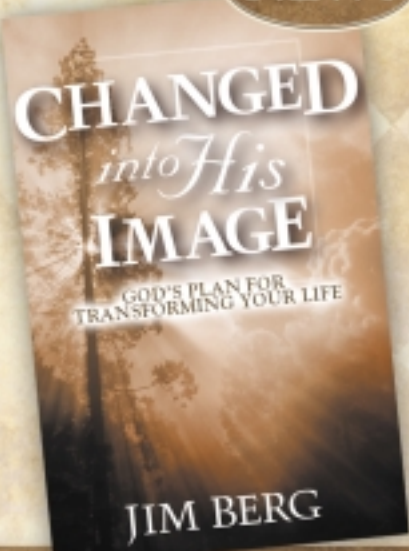
This is the thrust of the gospel that we carry to all nations: Jesus Christ, who died for the sins of the world, has risen victorious over death. We can say, with the apostle Paul, that in Christ there is no condemnation (sentence of execution), for "it is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34).

"Here then indeed is faith's firm foundation, its assured anchorage," said G. Campbell Morgan. "By that empty grave man knows that sin is put away, and the infinite value of the Atonement is at his disposal." Let the fact of the resurrection fill us with all boldness as we set forth the Word of Life to a lost and dying world; for the tomb is empty and our Savior lives!

Steve Hafler is on deputation to Kenya, East Africa, under Gospel Fellowship Association Missions.

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FBF Web Site Update

Frontline Online is now available at the redesigned FBF web site—www.fbf.org. The articles in the last issue were posted at *Frontline* Online about two weeks before the printed version was mailed. If you are a current subscriber and would like a passcode to access recent issues, contact us at FBFLINE@aol.com. Articles from back issues are available to anyone visiting the site, and more are being posted as time allows.

More information will soon be added to the FBF pages as well, including historical information and resolutions from years past. We hope to make the web site a valuable resource for fundamental Baptists.

Your Manuscripts Wanted!

Frontline is always interested in receiving manuscripts, especially practical non-fiction and seasonal material. If you would like to submit an article for publication, we encourage you first to get a copy of our "Guidelines for Writers." It's free for the asking, so call, write, or e-mail your request!

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July 5–9

National Meeting

in conjunction with the
World Congress of Fundamentalists
Bob Jones University
Box 34555
Greenville, SC 29614
(864) 242-5100, ext. 3120

October 4–5

Northeast Regional

Trinity Baptist Church
80 Clinton Street
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October 11–15

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If you know of other FBF meetings not listed here, please contact us so we can announce them in an upcoming issue.

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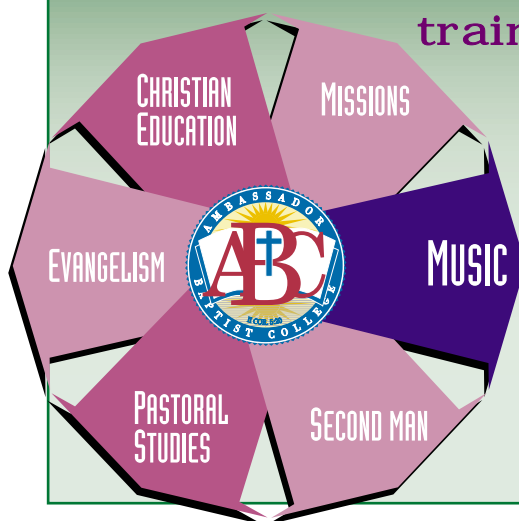
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SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

First Partaker

The Patience of Joseph Caryl

You have heard of the patience of Job (James 5:11). But have you heard of the patience of Joseph Caryl? With the exception of the Book of Job's anonymous author, Caryl may have been its foremost authority ever. He ought to have been. His series on the book, ending in 1666, spanned a stretch of more than 24 years!

Whether Caryl or his listeners exercised the most patience is debatable. The 424 messages evidently drew hearers, however, for in the final years of the series his "church so much increased, that at his death he left 136 communicants" (a large attendance in days of persecution). Surprisingly, even reading the sermons has not proven necessarily exhausting. Under his signature, C. H. Spurgeon wrote on the fly-leaf of the third volume from his own set, "Caryl is not a line too long for me," and in *Commenting and Commentaries* testified, "He gives us much, but none too much."

Unfortunately, Joseph Caryl's series is seldom sampled today due to its size and exceeding rarity. I heard once of a 12-volume set available from a London bookseller for right around \$3,000, but being at that time remarkably short of \$3,000, I regretfully left the good man with both his books and his price.

Were I a wealthy man, however, I might underwrite some publisher's putting Caryl back in print. Few could read it all, of course, but many earnest men might profitably consult its unique help on almost any conceivable Biblical theme for, as Spurgeon noted, "in the course of his expounding he has illus-

trated a very large portion of the whole Bible with great clearness and power." The 12 volumes could be comfortably reset (not abridged, please!) into five or six, and provided that the topical indexes with which Caryl

concluded each volume were carefully collated, his rich remarks on any subject would be affordably and handily accessible.

But one of my chief interests (were I a wealthy and publishing man) would be in providing the people of God with what Spurgeon again called a "deeply devotional and spiritual" interpretation of both their personal and national trials from one who spoke about such things out of profound experience for more than 20 years. Consider that during that time, Joseph Caryl was eyewitness to a civil war sparked by the arrogance of a tyrannical king. He was also one of the distinguished divines chosen for the Westminster Assembly that produced the Westminster Catechisms. Then, following Charles I's execution for high treason, Caryl played an influential part in Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth (he and John Owen were Oliver Cromwell's personal choices for chaplains to accompany him during his campaign to subdue the Scots). Finally, following Cromwell's death and the nation's vehement reaction against the Commonwealth's righteous policies, Caryl, like 2,000 other English pastors, was ejected from his ministry for refusing to sign the Act of Uniformity.

The background then, to Joseph Caryl's 24 years in Job, is not the imbalance of a man obsessed with a quirk. It is the tumultuous life of a shepherd of souls who felt deeply his responsibility to lead his people through troubled times. Job was the truly fitting guide, not for a day, nor for a single trial, but for a lifetime of such troubles.

Through the kind courtesy of William Jewell College it was my privilege recently to spend several days in the Spurgeon Collection housed there in the

The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits (2 Tim. 2:6)

Inside

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Windows—Themed sermon illustrations7

Charles F. Curry Library. Among the over 6,000 volumes is Spurgeon's 12-volume set of Caryl's patient preaching through Job. Perhaps the story behind it is for such a time as this. I want to tell it, as much as possible, in Caryl's own words.

Why Job?

Born into London gentility in 1602 and "reared with manners polished by good breeding," Joseph Caryl began his ministry near Exeter at 25. Even at this early age he aligned himself with the Puritan party within the Church of England. Over a long lifetime's ministry he attained such stature among nonconformists that in the summer after his death the church chose the famous theologian and Oxford educator, John Owen, for its next pastor.

When Caryl began his sermons on Job in 1642, the English Civil War was beginning. He was, at the time, "Preacher to the Honorable Society of Lincolnes-Inne," and felt heavily his responsibility to encourage a people wracked daily with calamity. Meditating on the three conditions of Job—his prosperity, troubles,

"This Book," he went on to point out, "was purposely written that we through patience and comfort of this Scripture might have hope." And then in conclusion he testified, "Nor do I doubt, but that the Providence of God . . . directed my thoughts to this Book, as (not only profitable for all times, but) specially seasonable for these times."

and restoration—Caryl saw a striking parallel to his nation's history. "The Book of Job," he wrote in the preface to his first volume, "bears the image of these times, and presents us with a resemblance of the past, present, and (much hoped for) future condition of this nation. . . . We are the greatest, and lately were the most flourishing nation of all the nations. . . . But we (herein unlike to Job) have ill-required the Lord. . . . And God in justice, hath put a sword into the hands of unjust men, men skillful to destroy. . . . Yet there is hope . . . concerning this thing, yea I believe there is mercy in and from all these evils."

"This Book," he went on to point out, "was purposely written that we through patience and comfort of this Scripture might have hope." And then in conclusion he testified, "Nor do I doubt, but that the Providence of God (without which a sparrow falls not to the ground) directed my thoughts to this Book, as (not only profitable for all times, but) specially seasonable for these times."

The times to which Caryl was referring were remarkably like our own. The Church of England,

like modern evangelicalism, was notoriously worldly. "Our provocations have been many, and our backslidings have been multiplied," he lamented. At the same time, 17th-century Englishmen, like 20th-century Americans, writhed under unjust civil government which turned a blind eye to rulers living arrogantly above the law. Caryl interpreted this to be the Lord's chastening: "Our sins have put a sword into the hand of God, and God in justice, hath put a sword into the hands of unjust men, men skillful to destroy."

What's the Point?

Although drawing this parallel between Job and England's history, Caryl studiously avoided "spiritualizing" Job's experiences in order to force national applications. In fact, what he desired was something far more pastoral.

Caryl's congregation resembled conservative assemblies today in that its membership consisted largely of men and women dedicated to Scripturally purifying every aspect of English life. Such people were called Puritans. But even such circumspect people are never entirely untouched when God chastens an entire society at once. So Caryl was burdened that his suffering people not react bitterly by murmuring against or charging the Lord foolishly.

The concerned pastor chose James 5:10–11 as his series' theme verses, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job." It was Caryl's prayer that this emphasis would be "a help to our patience, in bearing these afflictions upon the land, a help to our faith in believing, and to our hope in waiting for the salvation of the Lord." "The main and principle subject of the Book" he explained, "is contained in one verse of the 34th Psalm, 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of all.'"

Rightly Dividing the Word of God

Those not well-acquainted with Puritan preaching may assume that it sacrificed exegetical accuracy for the sake of practical application. This was certainly not true of Caryl's preaching. His work is marked by a thoroughly literal, historical, grammatical exegesis of the text. For instance, though many before him interpreted Job as an extended parable, he held that the book recorded actual history because of its use of proper names for people and places. And when it came to using the Biblical languages, Caryl excelled. In fact, he actually contributed to an English-Greek Lexicon. In the Hebrew text he appears equally at home, as evidenced by his frequent, insightful explanations of its words and grammar.

This historical, grammatical exegesis restrained dogmatizing upon uncertain points. For instance, after a

thorough investigation into Job's authorship, he wrote:

It is very uncertain who was the writer of this Book . . . and whatsoever can be said concerning it, is grounded but upon very light conjecture. And therefore, where the Scripture is silent, it can be of no great use for us to speak, especially seeing there is so much spoken as will find us work, and be of use for us.

One wishes today's expositors would more studiously practice such caution when they encounter matters on which Scripture is silent.

Another instructive example is his handling of the notoriously difficult question of the identity of leviathan. After over four pages of discussing learned opinions he cautiously postured himself with those who held the mysterious creature to be a whale. The example is in his rigid refusal to doubt the scientific accuracy of the account merely because he could not explain it. My heart leaps to his unshakable confidence in God's Word. The only thing "questionable" he wrote, is "what that creature is." But "it be an unquestionable truth," he asserted, "and to be received, and to be as the matter of an historical faith, because God hath said it, that there is a living creature in the compass of nature, exactly answering every particular in the following description of Leviathan."

Exemplary as his exegesis is, Caryl's greatest pattern for preachers is in his insistence that those who handle the Word must be Spirit-instructed. An especially valuable section of some 20 pages can only be briefly encapsulated in a few statements here. He speaks of Job's words about "an interpreter" sent from God (33:23), and solemnly issues the caution that so unfortunately seems to be learned only from bitter experience: "Natural parts and human learning, arts and languages may give us an understanding of the tenor and literal meaning of the law of God; but none of these can open our eyes to behold the wonders of the Law, much less the wonders and mysteries of the Gospel. The opening of our eyes to behold these spiritual wonders is the Lord's work." And then, dividing asunder the joints and marrow of Bible teachers, he thrusts to the heart of the issue: "Tis possible for one to have learning in divine things, and not to be divinely taught."

Beyond this, Caryl's most pressing burden was that his people not be content merely to hear his expositions. "I had rather know five words of Scripture by my own practice and experience," he testified, "than ten thousand words of Scripture, yea than the whole Scripture, by the bare exposition of another." "And therefore let the words of Christ by these verbal explications, dwell richly in your understandings in all wisdom," he admonished his hearers. "Add the comment of works to this comment of words," he exhorted them, "and an exposition by your lives to this exposition by our labours. Surely if you do not,

these exercises will be costly indeed, and will come to a deep account against you before the Lord."

The Sufferings of Saints

By Caryl's analysis, the Book of Job consists of a dialogue between eight speakers making 32 speeches (God speaking four times, Satan twice, Job's wife once, Job thirteen times, Eliphaz thrice, Bildad thrice, Zophar twice, and Elihu four times). They are made during three periods in Job's life; the time of his happy condition (externally and internally), then during his calamity, and lastly, during his restitution.

Most importantly, the speeches pose and debate two deeply troubling questions. The first Caryl raised in his church by asking "whether it doth consist with the Justice and goodness of God to afflict a righteous and sincere person, to strip him naked, to take away all his outward comforts . . . and that it should go well with those that are evil?" This issue Caryl viewed as the "one great debate, the main question throughout the Book."

Why does God seem to ignore the cries of His suffering saints? Is this just or good? When his preaching reached Job 19:7, "Behold I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard," Caryl offered several answers.

God often waits to deliver His people, "that they may be more fit to receive deliverance. Many cry out of wrong, who are not yet fit to be righted. Deliverances may be our undoing if we are not prepared to receive deliverance."

Sometimes "the Lord doth not deliver presently from the wrong and oppression of the wicked, because some wicked men have not yet done wrong nor oppressed enough, and are therefore suffered to do more wrong to others, that themselves may be more fit for ruin. They must fill up the measure of their sin."

Caryl insightfully pointed out that not all graces are eternal. Some can only be exercised here, now, and in trials. These he called "suffering graces." Among them he named "the grace of faith, of meekness, of self-denial, and of patience." Before growing impatient, suffering saints ought also to remember and repent of "how oft He hath cried, and they have not minded Him."

The Greatest Trial

The first ten volumes of Caryl's sermons introduce him on their title pages as "Preacher to the Honorable Society of Lincolnes-Inne." But volumes XI and XII refer to him simply as "Joseph Caryl, Minister of the Gospel." And whereas previously the sermons had been sold openly "at the sign of the Guilded Horshoe in the Old Bayly," or "by Thomas Parkhurst at his Shope at the three Crownes against the great Conduit at the lower end of Cheap-side," or "at the Gold Lyon in Duck-lane near Smithfield," the 11th volume seems to have been available only privately from one "M. Simmons . . . at her house in Aldersgate-Street."

These changes reflect Caryl's loss of his church in October of 1662. Two thousand English ministers, including Joseph Caryl, aged 60, refused to sign the notorious Act of Uniformity. By so doing these godly pastors lost their pulpits, their congregations, and their livelihoods. Richard Baxter, another ejected minister, recorded, "Many hundreds of them with their wives and children had neither house nor bread. Though they were as frugal as possible they could hardly live. In many cases their income scarcely provided bread and cheese."

The ejected pastor gathered what few would risk fines or imprisonment to meet in a house church and pointed them to their solemn duty. "Let us also be sure to stick to the commandments of God," he exhorted from Job 35:14, "for we may rest assured, God will stick to his promises. To keep command-

God often waits to deliver His people, "that they may be more fit to receive deliverance. Many cry out of wrong, who are not yet fit to be righted. Deliverances may be our undoing if we are not prepared to receive deliverance."

ments is our work. To keep promises is God's work. We fail much in our work. God will not fail at all in his work: to believe this, is the highest and truest work of faith."

It was not Caryl's habit to rail upon his adversaries, but while expounding God's answer to Job out of the whirlwind (38:1), he encouraged his people with the suggestion as to why the Lord chose to speak out of such a medium. "Surely," Caryl said, it was "that Job might see that he was but as a feather, even like a rolling thing, or thistle-down, before the Whirl-wind. And questionless, all the wicked in the world, who condemn the Word of God preached by his Ministers, will be blown away by it as thistle-down or a rolling thing before the Whirl-wind of the Lord's fierce anger and displeasure."

Ironically (perhaps prophetically?), these words were probably written within just a year of the Great Fire of London that burnt 13,200 houses, St. Paul's Cathedral, 87 churches, and cost an estimated 10 million British pounds at a time when the City of London's entire annual income was barely 12,000

pounds. Caryl had once referred to Amos 3:6, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?", and assured his people "Every evil or affliction or trouble is said to be the Lord's doing, because it cannot be done without the Lord." There is no question, then, to whom Caryl and his people attributed the devastation of the Great Fire.

But to Joseph Caryl, ejected nonconformist minister, the greatest hope was not the destruction of his enemies. It was the vindication of his preaching. The preface to volume XII is dated May 10, 1666 (just four months before the Great Fire). His thoughts dwell on the final chapter of Job, especially God's words to Job's antagonists, "Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath."


"To hear this gracious determination from the mouth of the supreme and infallible moderator of all controversies," Caryl wrote, "was (without controversy) a thousand times more pleasing and satisfactory to Job's spirit, not only than the double cattle, which the Lord gave him, but, than if the Lord had given him all the cattle upon a thousand hills. The Lord shews himself very pitiful and of tender mercy, when he puts an end to the controversies of his servants, by vindicating their credit, and making it appear, that they have spoken of him, and of his ways, the thing that is right, or more rightly than their opposers and reproachers." Every preacher waits for just such a tender vindication from the Lord.

The End

Joseph Caryl did not live to see his preaching vindicated. God willed that he die as he had lived, in the patience of hope. Caryl accepted the mission. An eyewitness wrote of his last illness, "His sickness, though painful [was] borne with patience and joy in believing. He lived his sermons."

He lived his sermons. What higher commendation could people give their preacher? They beheld 24 years of preaching climax in a few days of dying and testified that right to the end, crossing the last deep river, he lived his sermons!

The patient Puritan died in 1673, in his own home, with a company of sorrowing friends gathered round the bed. "He did at last desire his friends to forbear speaking to him, that so he might retire in himself," one of them wrote in recalling the scene. These last minutes "he spent in prayer; oftentimes lifting up his hands a little; and at last, his friends finding his hands not to move, drew near and perceived he was silently departing from them."

You have heard of the patience of Joseph Caryl. His patient preaching, living, and dying ring with the same admonition he gave his people through 24 years of preaching: "Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience." 



Dr. Mark Minnick is the pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, where he has served on the pastoral staff since 1980. He speaks frequently in churches and at conferences across the nation and ministers regularly on mission fields around the world.

Bring . . . the Books

To the Golden Shore

Adoniram Judson's classic biography, *To the Golden Shore*, is a must-read for every servant of the Lord. Biographer Courtney Anderson captures the joy of his commissioning, the struggle Judson endured to get to the field with its many detours, the red tape with government officials and mission administration, the pleas of family to stay in America, the pain of separation from friends, the anguish of burying a baby in Burma, the thrill of his first convert after six years of ministry among the heathen, the pitiful state of Judson in prison for nearly two years, the agony of his wife's failing health, his two years of severe depression following his wife's death, and the warm welcome upon his return to America for his only furlough, after 32 years of ministry.

Judson's father, a conservative Congregational pastor, sensed his son's spiritual need and sent him to Brown College. There young Adoniram became friends with Jacob Eames, a persuasive man of intellect and wit. Eames "converted" Judson to deism. Upon graduating valedictorian of his class, Adoniram returned home long enough to announce his departure for New York City. There the prodigal son saw the world firsthand.

Disillusioned with the world yet driven away from God, Judson was searching, still wondering what to do with his life. He boarded at an inn one evening, where the only available room was next to a dying man. Judson stirred restlessly all night, kept awake by the moans of the dying man and the footsteps of attendants throughout the night. His mind turned to spiritual matters but he shrugged them off, ashamed of what his friend Eames might think if he knew he was contemplating spiritual things. As he left the next morning, Judson asked about the man in the adjacent room. Yes he died, Judson was told. The poor man's name? Jacob Eames! And Adoniram Judson faced no better fate. He rode his horse home and within six weeks began his new life in Christ.

Judson left for India with three others and their wives—the first foreign missionaries from America. Knowing he must debate the issue of baptism with William Carey when he arrived, he took the time on the voyage aboard the *Caravan* to study the matter carefully. What he discovered was that he was wrong and Carey was right. Upon arrival in Serampore and meeting with Carey, Judson was baptized and thus became the first Baptist American missionary. His friend, Luther Rice, went through the same doctrinal struggle and was also baptized. Knowing they could no longer take support from the Congregational churches, it was agreed that Rice would return to America and establish a Baptist mission while Judson carried on the

field work.


God overruled much human counsel to the contrary and led Judson to Burma. His arrival fulfilled a lifelong dream to minister to the poor Burmese, who had never heard the gospel. Landing without an acquaintance in the country, Judson set up house and began immediately to learn the language, eventually composing a tract in Burmese to help him in his ministry of evangelism. He wrote:

*" . . . when
thou comest,
bring with thee
. . . the books"
(2 Tim. 4:13)*

The teacher who composed this writing, seeing the great evil which is coming on the Burmans, left his own country from compassion, and from an immense distance has arrived by ship to this, the country of Burma. He desires neither fame nor riches. Offering and gifts he seeks not. The disciples of Christ in his own country, moved with compassion for the Burmans, making offering sufficient for his use. He has no other motive but this: Being a disciple of Christ, and therefore seeking the good of others as his own, he has come, and is laboring that the Burmans may be saved from the dreadful punishment of hell, and enjoy the happiness of heaven.

Certainly a better guiding principle for our missionaries today could not be found. Judson later expressed concern about missionaries who look at their ministry with a short-term view: "The motto of every missionary, whether preacher, printer, or schoolmaster, ought to be 'Devoted for life.'"

Anderson exposes Judson for who he was—a man of clay who loved God and was totally dedicated to serve Him. Judson was somewhat impetuous and sometimes insensitive, but disciplined and dedicated. He experienced a serious bout of depression, but God infused His grace, granted complete victory, and Judson continued to be mightily used of the Lord. He constantly placed himself under God's spiritual microscope and frankly acknowledged his weaknesses.

Wide and deep was the range of Judson's experiences. Let me encourage every missionary and preacher to dive into this biography. Judson began our Baptist missionary heritage and "with the gladness of a boy bounding away from his school" approached the Golden Shore! 

Dr. Mark Simmons is the pastor of Marquette Manor Baptist Church in Downers Grove, Illinois. He has ministered as a church planter and senior pastor since earning his Ph.D. from Bob Jones University in 1981.



The theme of the Book of Romans is bound up with the dynamic concept of “righteousness” (first mentioned in 1:17). The Greek word, or one of its derivatives (such as *righteous*, *justify*, or *justification*), occurs 66 times in this epistle, 65 of which are located in the first ten chapters. Romans 1–10, then, is heavily freighted with this one concept. What exactly is “righteousness”?

“Righteousness” is often confused with other virtues such as holiness, godliness, or sinlessness. Although interrelated, these terms have respective distinctions. One passage illustrating the distinctive character of

expressed in different words, such as “conforming to a standard.” That definition is right on target, provided that I understand that the standard is something to which I am bound or obligated.

Probably the most striking Scriptural confirmation that Biblical righteousness is “meeting my obligation” is Job’s lengthy personal defense in Job 31. He begins with a plea to be “weighed in an even balance” (v. 6). The word “even” is the Hebrew word “righteous,” the same word translated “just” back in Leviticus 19:36. So Job is pleading to be evaluated by a righteous scale.


He then invites an investigation of every relationship in his life: his relationship to his wife (vv. 7–12), his servants (vv. 13–15), the poor, orphaned, and disadvantaged (vv. 16–23), his possessions (vv. 24–25), nature (vv. 26–28), his enemies (vv. 29–30), his own transgressions against God (vv. 33–37), and even his land (vv. 38–40). Of each relationship he says, in effect, “If I have failed in my obligation, then let such-and-such a calamity happen to me.”

Job is inviting this kind of scrutiny and even reciting his obligation in each case because he is certain that no one can level any just accusation against him. He has met his obligations in every area. The upshot of it is, “So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes” (32:1).

This concept—meeting one’s obligations—dominates the Book of Romans. In fact, the entire epistle divides into two developments of this theme.

- I. Righteousness Obtained (chapters 1–11)
- II. Righteousness Practiced (chapters 12–16)

Our standard, our obligation in order to be “just [righteous] before God” is to be a “doer of the law” (Rom. 2:13). But no one, “no not one,” has ever met all of his obligations to God and man (3:10). And no one, by even the most assiduous lifelong attempt to meet perfectly all of the obligations of the law, will ever hear God pronounce him righteous on that basis (3:21). But now, by faith in Jesus Christ, who met perfectly all of the obligations of the law in our place, a righteous standing before God is available to sinners (3:21ff.). This is the message of the Book of Romans.

It should not take long for anyone truly aware of his own sinfulness, but beginning to grasp even the edges of this blessed concept, to be profoundly thankful for the flawless active and passive obedience of the only sinless one, the Lord Jesus Christ, our righteousness (Jer. 23:6). 

—Dr. Mark Minnick

*Rightly
dividing
the Word
of Truth
(2 Tim. 2:15)*

How is “righteousness” defined, then? Most simply, it is “meeting my obligations.” Sometimes it is expressed in different words, such as “conforming to a standard.”

righteousness is Leviticus 19:35–36, where God demands that merchants have “just” (the Hebrew word for “righteous”) scales in commercial transactions. Can you imagine a “holy” coffee scale? Or what would a “godly” yardstick look like? “Holy” and “godly” are not appropriate descriptions of such measuring devices, but “righteous” is. Why?

“Righteousness” occurs in commercial contexts because it denotes a standard that always involves (1) at least two parties (man and man, man and God, or even a man and his dog! Proverbs 12:10) and (2) a certain kind of relationship between them. What kind of relationship?

Suppose you enter a supermarket and navigate your way to the produce aisle. There, beautifully displayed, are boxes of large, red-ripe strawberries. The next piece of information your eyes search for is the price, and you read “Strawberries, 99 cents/lb.” All right, are you prepared to accept that? “Accept what?” you ask. That arrangement—that obligation. If you pick up a box of those berries and intend to walk out the door with them, you have accepted an obligation to pay 99 cents per pound for them. By the same token, the store is obligated. Their end of the arrangement is to give you a full 16 ounces of berries for every 99 cents you pay. But if the store’s scale registers 1 lb. when there are only 15 ounces of strawberries, then it has failed to meet the arrangement to which the store obligated itself on the sign.

How is “righteousness” defined, then? Most simply, it is “meeting my obligations.” Sometimes it is

Suffering is one of the main avenues by which God brings revival. Perhaps no one understood this concept more than the apostle Paul. His writings are full of references to God's power entering through the pathway of pain. In 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, he mentions his "thorn in the flesh," a physical infirmity. He prays for God to remove it, but the Lord intends instead to use it! His suffering experience would be a way to manifest God's power and grace. The key for Paul was in his response. We must follow Paul's example if we too would experience revival through suffering.

Admitting the Sting

"A thorn in the flesh" (v. 7). Paul was never too embarrassed or too proud to admit that he suffered. Spurgeon had on his bedroom wall a plaque inscribed with Isaiah 48:10: "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." He wrote, "It is no mean thing to be chosen of God. God's choice makes chosen men choice men. . . . We are chosen, not in the palace, but in the furnace. In the furnace, beauty is marred, fashion is destroyed, strength is melted, glory is consumed; yet here eternal love reveals its secrets and declares its choice" (W. Wiersbe, *Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching and Preachers*, 223).

Suffering is an affliction that comes through some plight or evil, causing a struggle within the body, mind, or emotions. Paul listed a variety of ways in which believers suffer: infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses. Suffering is a part of the Christian experience (1 Pet. 5:10). Vance Havner observed that of the 318 delegates who attended the Council at Nicea in the 4th century, fewer than 12 had not lost an eye or a hand or did not limp on a leg lamed by torture for their Christian faith.

A young woman overwhelmed with sorrow because of the loss of her son sought help from a Chinese sage. He told her, "I will be able to help you if you will bring to me some mustard seed obtained from a home that has never had any sorrow."

Eagerly, the sorrowing mother began her search. In every home she visited however, there had been sorrow and some homes had lost loved ones. Returning to the sage, she exclaimed, "How selfish I have been! Sorrow is common to all!"

"Ah, you have learned a valuable lesson, and now you are prepared to sympathize with others" (Walter B. Knight, *More of Knight's Timely Illustrations*, 298).

Accepting the Suffering

"There was given to me" (v. 7). Paul accepted the origin of his trial as something permitted by God.

There are times when God Himself prepares and sends the suffering, as with Jonah (1:4, 17; 4:7, 8). But whether God prepares it or permits it, it is still from the Lord! He designs the trials in order to make the servant. John Henry Jowett said, "The gospel of a broken heart demands the ministry of a bleeding heart. We can never heal the hurts that we do not feel" (Knight, 297).

Paul accepted the opportunity of his trial as a means of greater breaking. God brings pressure to bear upon us in order to bring us to the end of ourselves and to reveal our need of the Lord. The key to how it affects us is our response. While in Pakistan, Frank and Billie Wilcox lost their six-month-old baby. An old Punjabi man who heard of their grief came to comfort them. "A tragedy like this is similar to being plunged into boiling water," he explained. "If you are an egg, your affliction will make you hard-boiled and unresponsive. If you are a potato, you will emerge soft and pliable, resilient and adaptable." Billie wrote, "It may sound funny, but there have been times when I have prayed, 'O, Lord, let me be a potato'" (*Guideposts Magazine*).

Paul also saw his suffering as a means of greater blessing. Paul was able to hear God's voice in a new, fresh way. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (vv. 8, 9). When our lives become stale God sends trials. Like orange juice in

"To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, 'A window shalt thou make in the ark.'"

Charles Spurgeon

Paul accepted the opportunity of his trial as a means of greater breaking. God brings pressure to bear upon us in order to bring us to the end of ourselves and to reveal our need of the Lord.

the morning needs a good shaking, we need God to shake us so that we can receive fresh insights out of God's Word. Special portions from Scripture soon take on new life!

Let me introduce you to my very good friends. They

live in a huge, 66-room house. Every room is uniquely decorated and has its own special beauty. I love to spend time in all of them, but the one room I visit the most is where my close friends live. One hundred and fifty of them dwell in this largest room in the house. You'll notice right away that my friends are very different from one another. Some are very small while others are very large. Their personalities are all unique, yet they have gotten along with each other in perfect harmony for the last 3,000 years. They are all very wealthy and willing to offer you their riches whenever you take time to be with them. What's so wonderful is that they do so much for me! You never need to see a psychologist or take Prozac when you've got friends like these. It doesn't matter which friend I go to see, for they are always available. Their wisdom is

Paul also knew that suffering would be a means to future glory. Suffering and glory are partners! "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

deep, and their help is solid. I never leave without their comforting my heart, inspiring my faith, guiding my steps, and enlightening my mind. And they are not picky as to whom they choose to befriend. They will embrace anyone who will invest the time to be with them. Their name? The Psalms.

Appreciating the Suffering


"Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities" (vs. 9). Paul embraced suffering as a cause of blessing and boasting! Trials are like silver and gold; therefore, we should be good stewards of our sufferings. Don't waste your trials. Receive every dividend they want to pay you. Paul knew that suffering would be a means to greater usefulness, "that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

In 1874, at the age of 42, Hudson Taylor was home in England on furlough from China. He had come to recruit workers for the China Inland Mission. During this time, he slipped and fell off a ladder while disembarking from a boat. Over the next few weeks, he developed a gradual paralysis in his lower back. He was confined to a bed with no certain hope that he would ever stand and walk.

All of this came in the prime of his life and ministry. New opportunities were opening in China, and the churches in England were experiencing great blessing. Taylor had a choice: he could make his room of confinement either a prison or an opportunity. Because of his response, his room of suffering became the headquarters for the largest growth of the mission. Between the posts at the foot of his bed hung a map of China. Taylor used prayer to make the difference in China. While lying in bed, he sent out a public appeal for 18 pioneer evangelists to go into unopened provinces and preach Christ to the 150 million Chinese. What he normally would have tried to accomplish by urgent appeals to men, he accomplished through prayer. For five months, he stayed in bed and declared it to be one of the happiest times of his life. He learned to wait on the Lord, to pray, and to rejoice.

Years later when someone remarked to him that God had prospered the CIM and given him great honor, he replied: "I do not look upon it that way. Do you know I sometimes think God must have been looking for someone small enough and weak enough for Him to use, so that all the glory might be His, and that he found me" (Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission*, Vol. II, p. 263-268).

Paul also knew that suffering would be a means to future glory. Suffering and glory are partners! "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

The Galeras volcano in Colombia, South America, erupted suddenly in January 1993. One week later, geologist Dr. Fraser Goff was sampling gas vents in a canyon west of the volcano summit. The guide who was with him jokingly said, "Do you want to look at some gold?" Dr. Goff picked up some of the rocks and later cut them into thin slices. He found that the rocks, in fact, contained quite a bit of gold! The naked eye could see tiny golden nuggets in the slices. This was the first time scientists had detected visible gold particles in an active volcano. More than a year later, Dr. Goff announced that the Galeros volcano, which remained active, was spewing more than a pound of gold each day and depositing 45 pounds of gold a year into the rock lining in crater. He explained that magma from inside the earth has many components, including gold, and estimated a ten-foot wide gold vein at the base of the volcano. The pressure of our fiery trials down here in life will bring forth gold not only now, but in the life to come (*Contemporary Illustrations for Preachers, Teachers, and Writers*, 269). 

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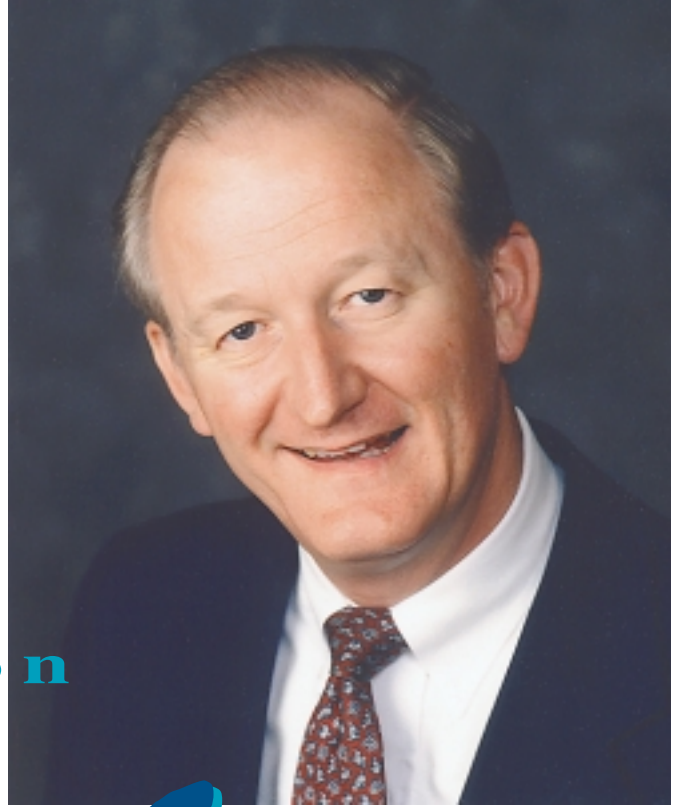
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The Family that Eats Together

Anita L. Fordyce

Writers who propose family dinners are painting fuzzy word pictures of kids and parents and grandparents sitting around a pot roast, trading happy talk and recalling golden family moments," jabbed a local newspaper columnist.

While many are suggesting that families return to the traditional family dinner (making time to eat together), he suggested that it just isn't possible in the '90s. He claimed that most families are too busy with their individual interests and activities to have a sane meal together.

A recent survey of graduate students at the University of Chicago didn't agree. The family dinnertime—eating together—was important to them. These students said that through conversation with the family at mealtimes, they got most of their ideas about morality, values, and religion. It seemed that no matter what the circumstances in their lives, gathering with their families as cohesive units at least once a day had made a difference.

Many have discovered that terrible homesickness sets in for college students about 5:00 each afternoon. These students are often missing the family dinner-time gathering. Even some adults admit to wanting to call parents about the time they get home from work. Why? Because that was the usual time the family gathered around the table. That was the sharing time. The family that eats together on a regular basis will find the family dinnertime a time of both physical nourishment and spiritual refreshment.

Another survey found that in the industrialized nations the top three percent of student academic achievers had one common factor in all their lives: they spent at least one hour a week at the dinner table with their families.

Therefore, for those who are God's children, it can be stated that mealtimes can make an eternal difference. The practice of having all the family eat together for at least one meal a day, preferably dinner time, should begin as soon as possible. Even newborns should be brought close to the family table at mealtimes.

Toddlers should be included in the family conversation as soon as they can sit in a high chair, even if they only babble. Talking to them as their vocabulary begins to develop allows them to feel a part of the conversation. When they understand, ask them questions they can answer. Tell them stories at the dinner table and teach them to join in family prayers, if only for seconds. Children who have been included in the

dinner conversation time will feel free to talk about their lives, needs, and deepest questions.

Parents should insist that, as much as possible, dinnertime be uninterrupted time. It is wise to make it a practice not to answer the phone during the evening meal unless a matter of urgency is pending. Dinnertime is one of the best times to let the answering machine pick up the calls.

Conversation at mealtime is the place to reinforce family history. Parents should tell the "when I was your age" stories and also remind children of special memories which they can associate with—times your family had together. It is also the place to find out what your children are learning in school and what they are thinking about. Good conversation comes easily with a meal.

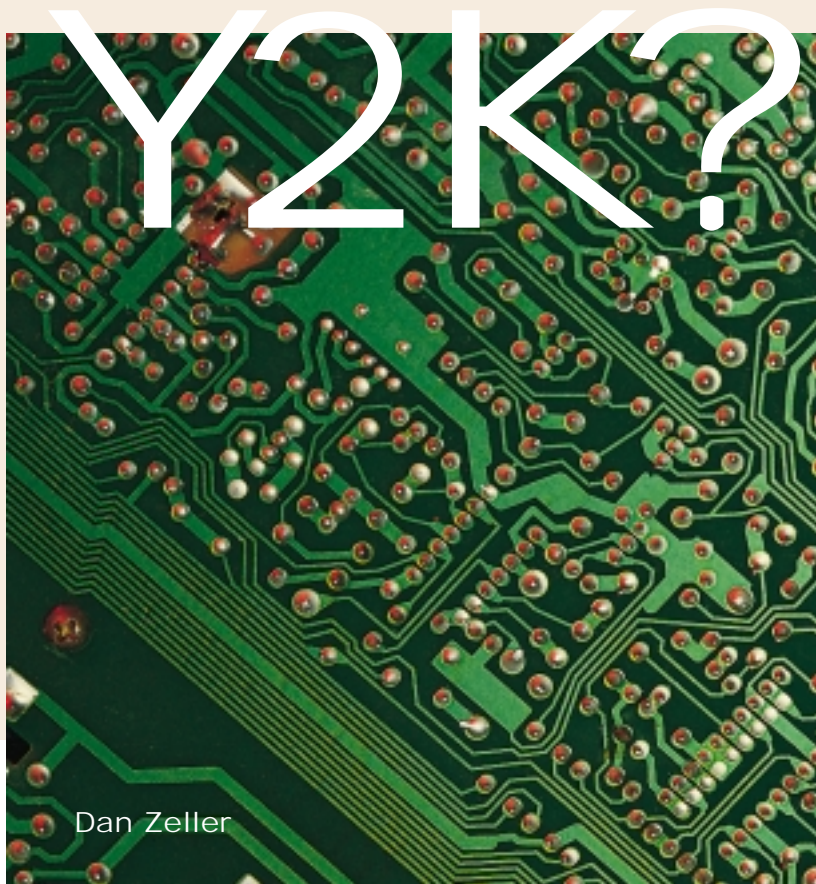
Children learn manners at the family table. Parents should insist that siblings be courteous and considerate of each other. By having the table set nicely for special occasions and by using tablecloths and napkins, children also learn the value of traditions and celebrations. Sunday meals are a great place to allow this practice. Don't save the best china for guests only. Throughout Scripture, anytime guests came into the house, the family immediately invited them and included them in a meal. By having special dinner times for our family, we prepare our children to learn how to welcome guests and to have the social graces for these special times.

After dinner is often a good time to have family devotions. Many times the dinner conversation can easily lead into that devotion time. It is also a good time to rehearse Bible memory verses. No matter what, though, as you gather your family around the table, you create memories that cannot be made any other way.

The family mealtime gives the opportunity for the family to be knit together in love and fellowship. Eating together may be the only way to preserve our family's having a Christian heritage into the next generation. When a Christian family eats together, they "make [God's] name to be remembered in all generations" (Psa. 45:17). Mealtimes are one of the best places for a family to rehearse the Lord's blessings and to see and accept the reality of the living Christ. The facts lend strong support to the idea that the family that eats together—at least once a day—has a greater chance of staying together.

Anita L. Fordyce is a freelance writer living in Quakertown, Pennsylvania.

What Should We Do About



Almost everyone has heard of the Y2K bug, perhaps more that they care to. What started out as a short-sighted attempt to conserve computer memory has become one of the most misunderstood and feared things to sweep the country and the world in recent months. How will we likely be affected? How long will it last? How should we respond? Having reasonable answers to these questions, particularly the last, is important to us as believers.

While the crisis is very real, I suspect it has been blown out of proportion by well-meaning but misinformed people. For example, one commentator I heard claims that the situation is entirely hopeless because of the enormity of the body of source code that needs to be examined. Hundreds of millions of lines of software source code, this person asserts, must be examined line by line, and there are only at most several thousand qualified specialists to examine them.

Now stop and think for a moment. This statement betrays a critical lack of qualification to address the subject. Anyone who understands the workings of a computer also understands that one good programmer who knows what he is looking for can examine millions of lines of code in an afternoon. He can simply instruct the computer itself to conduct the search, set it in motion, and head down the hall for a package of crackers and a soft drink.

Already there are several software packages that have sprung up to test desktop PCs, and an army of analysts has begun the assault on the mainframes that run our government, utilities, and corporations. Perhaps more difficult, however, may be the millions of embedded computers that control everything from the behavior of your clothes dryer to the workings of the electrical substation that brings power to your neighborhood. Fortunately, the vast majority of these controllers are entirely oblivious of

the current date, and most are simple systems that are often much easier to correct or work around than a corporate data server.

So what can we expect for New Year's Day?

Might we see missiles mistakenly launched against North Korea? Will prison cell doors all across the nation magically spring open at the stroke of midnight? Uh . . . no. Not likely at all. It is likely, however, that some areas may face temporary power outages. It is likely that the smooth flow of goods to store shelves may be interrupted for a time. It is possible that some of the investments made by our financial institutions in other countries may be held up for a while, in turn holding up our investments. There really is no way of knowing. Until every computer-controlled system is tested, we can only guess as to what the day will hold. One thing is sure: every computer-controlled system will be tested—either before January 1, 2000, or precisely at it! In either case, the rush to correct problems will ensue. And problems will be corrected! Be sure that as long as there is money to be made correcting Y2K problems, someone out there will be tap-tap-tapping on a keyboard somewhere.

How long will it last? There is no way of knowing. I suspect that critical data systems will be corrected in a matter of days or a few weeks. Power grid and telecommunication problems will probably be corrected in about the same amount of time as is required after a hurricane or ice storm cripples a system.

So how do we prepare? Keep back some cash each month to avoid running the bank in November and December. Be ready to survive from a few days to a few weeks without power. This may mean that you need to

invest in a kerosene heater and some oil lamps. Have enough food in your pantry to last a few weeks. If you have a gas grill, be sure your tank is full. Fill your cars at the gas station sometime after Christmas. These are all pretty common sense things. You might consider a generator, but you will also have to stockpile fuel for it. If you would have no other need for such a device, it would likely not be the best decision for you.

It is sad to hear stories about people who have lost all reason. Some have concluded that their best move is to stockpile ammunition. To what end? To shoot hungry people who might come to take their food? Somehow this does not seem to be a Christ-honoring motive. You may very well have an extraordinary opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ to others by sharing what you were able to lay up. Perhaps your church would consider storing up provisions for those who will be in need.

Another reaction has been to sell assets and stockpile gold or silver. Precious metals may be a good investment in an economic collapse, but if such action betrays a confidence in material wealth, your trust is misplaced. Know this: the sovereign God of heaven can devalue gold and silver as surely as He can devalue any

paper currency. Doubt it? Check 2 Kings 6 in which Samaria was in famine under siege. The value of silver—not Federal Reserve Notes, but silver—was expressed in what part of a cab of dove dung it could purchase.

Proverbs 18:10 tells us the name of the Lord is a strong tower in which we are safe. Proverbs 21:31 tells us that safety is of the Lord. Consider the widow of Zarephath. Trusting God, she had what amounted to an infinite supply of meal and oil. Think of that—an infinite supply. As children of the King, we all have access to such a storehouse. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). Our trust and confidence ought to be in God. It is He who will sustain us, not gold. It is He who will protect us, not any amount of armament.

The Y2K crisis will come and go just as every other crisis in world history has. Only our God remains unchanged. The care for His people in the midst of disaster presents Him no challenge. He does not

sweat about the future. Flee to Him for security. Go to Him for provision. Only when our confidence is in God are we secure.

Dan Zeller is an industrial software engineer residing in Simpsonville, South Carolina.

It is sad to
hear stories
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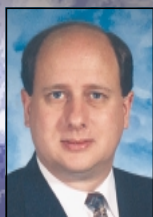
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The Evangelist and His Ministry

Phil Shuler

Enough books have been written about the earthly ministry of our Lord to fill the average library, but the ministry of Christ beyond His death, burial, and resurrection can be pretty well summed up in John 16:7-11. In John 14:16 Christ explains why He must ascend unto His father, but he promises to send “another comforter”—the Holy Spirit. To those who heard this statement, joy must have ensued, for the word “another” means “one of the same kind.”

It is interesting that Christ used that word. He could have said “a powerful, wise, just comforter,” but instead He chose to say “one just like Me”! Christ then explains what the Spirit’s ministry will be in 16:7-11, the key verse being verse 8. The Holy Spirit’s ministry is actually a continuation of the ministry of Christ when He was on this earth. He reproved the world of sin, He will reprove the world of righteousness, and He will reprove the world of judgment.

Through the Holy Spirit’s power and leadership, the evangelist has the very same ministry. He is not invited to a church to show off his ability to entertain or to please a crowd by soft preaching. The evangelist must hit sin hard! The congregation should be reminded that it was sin that put Christ on the cross. God cannot look upon sin. That is why, as Christ hung upon the cross, He turned His back on His own Son and shrouded this earth in the darkest noonday it has ever witnessed. God hates sin! He does not pass over sin lightly as we do. He saw to it, in His Word, that neither morality, ability, philanthropy, nor any good work of man can erase sin from God’s ledger. He also saw to it, in His divine purpose, that the blood of His only begotten Son could and would cleanse those who put their trust in Him.

If I see a real difference between the evangelism of our day and that of the 1950s, it has to be the declining emphasis upon sin. We have tamed it down today. We seem to be coming to the place where we are more willing to tolerate “minor” sins in our churches, forgetting that those seemingly insignificant sins soon grow to gigantic size! The evangelist needs to speak out against this trend.

It seems the more progressive the world becomes, the less time the Christian has for his Lord. We have the computer and the Internet. Golf and games come first, while devotions are somewhere back in the pack. Sports occupy our thinking, while our neighbor goes without a Christian witness. We ask our audience to witness, have devotions, etc., and when some ignore the request, we go to something else. The evangelist has the ministry of correction at all times and by all means should forcefully declare such conduct as sin! Some thin-skinned Christians complain, but the evangelist goes away

knowing that he has not compromised his commission.

The evangelist follows his Lord by reproving the world of righteousness. One of the main themes of the Bible is that a righteous God wants His children to be righteous. Public opinion will never change this. Although kings and presidents many times ignore the doctrine of righteousness, God does not, and we had better not!

My father once told me that his father warned him of a very wicked age ahead. Dad said he never thought sin would be more rampant than in his day. I have told my children the same thing, and they have told theirs. It gets no better, folks. If you want a reminder of the imminent coming of Christ for His church, read the newspaper!

The third aspect of the evangelist’s ministry is to reprove the world of judgment. For the life of me, I do not see how this part of the ministry has been so unused. We should not only preach on the Great White Throne judgment, when the lost shall be condemned to hell, but we should also preach on the judgment for every Christian—when we too will stand before Christ. If we would emphasize to Christians that all saved people are still responsible for their deeds in the flesh and that they will have to answer to Christ for those deeds, we would leave behind a far different congregation for the pastor to shepherd.

Dr. Phil Shuler is an evangelist residing in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. Since 1946 he has served churches throughout America.

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Mark Sidwell, *The Dividing Line: Understanding and Applying Biblical Separation* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1998). 200 pages.

Why another book on separation? Author Mark Sidwell (who also edited Fred Moritz's *Be Ye Holy*) anticipates this question. His goal is "to supplement, not to supplant, other studies." The author's aim and spirit is perhaps best expressed when he professes,

I wholeheartedly believe that of all contemporary religious movements, Fundamentalism most closely follows the biblical pattern for separation. But I am more concerned that readers practice separation in a biblical manner than I am whether they bear the label "Fundamentalist."

The Dividing Line is, in the very best sense of the term, a primer for understanding and applying the Biblical doctrine of separation.

At its roots, the essence of Biblical separation "is that Christians should strive to be free from sin." Christ died to free us from sin, and His purpose in sanctifying and ultimately glorifying us is to deliver us from sin. Understanding separation as a theological manifestation and practical outworking of our salvation and sanctification throws the whole discussion into an entirely different light. Suddenly, "the issues involved in Biblical separation are not minor ones." Separation is not a matter of petty disputes over external practices and associations; it is about the divine intention of the ages to present to Himself a spotless bride and to conform a race of redeemed men and women to the image of Jesus Christ. Since sanctification is theologically rooted in soteriology, and "since separation is a part of the doctrine of sanctification, then the goal of separation is to become more like Christ."

Chapter 2 ("Separation in Theological Context") constitutes the book's theological heart—and one of its most distinctive contributions to the discussion of separation. Critics of separation frequently define the terms of the debate as holiness versus love. As long as we enter the debate on those terms and allow that dichotomy to stand unchallenged, we will never rightly understand nor properly practice Biblical separation: "Do holiness and love 'moderate' one another so that we do not go to an extreme in either direction? In other words, does love require us to be less holy than we might like and holiness require us to be less loving than we might like?"

Holiness and love are not antithetical ideals that we must balance against each other, or between which we must choose. When we rightly understand the Biblical concept of both holiness and love, "then we can see that we must place no limit on either." Too often, Christians on both sides of the debate react to a misconception, a caricature, of either holiness or love: "Just as holiness is often misperceived as a fastidious

preoccupation with external details to the neglect of inner character, love is often misperceived as a feeling of goodwill and an unconditional affirmative attitude toward all people as they are."

Holiness is, by definition, separateness, "uniqueness, 'differentness.'" Biblical "holiness begins in the heart . . . but . . . never ends in the heart." Likewise, Biblical "love is a disposition to act in the highest interest of the loved one, regardless of the cost to the one who loves." Contrary to popular notions, "emotion is a negotiable component" of Biblical love, but "self-sacrificial commitment is not."

Chapters 3–5 mark the expositional heart of the book, as the author unfolds the Biblical passages that counsel and command separation from the world (chapter 3), from false teachers (chapter 4), and from disobedient brethren (chapter 5). According to these passages, "separation is not optional but absolutely necessary when circumstances demand it. It is simply a matter of obeying the Word of God." In addition, they demonstrate that separation is not a second-class dogma fabricated by pugnacious Fundamentalists. "Separation . . . is not an obscure teaching dragged out of some forgotten corner. It runs through the whole of God's Word."

Chapters 6–11 unveil the historical heart of the book, as the author traces the development of Fundamentalism, liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, New Evangelicalism, the Charismatic movement, and Roman Catholicism—and relates each of these to the issue and practice of separation. His chapters on Fundamentalism and New Evangelicalism in particular are sterling, striking a balance of careful (but not tedious) historical documentation, even-keeled evaluation, and kind but candid observations. These final six chapters effectively, fairly, and sensibly put the whole debate over separatism into very clear 20th-century perspective.

Sidwell does not speak in a vacuum. Church historian that he is, he is widely and well-read, and has done his homework thoroughly. He frequently and thoughtfully engages critics of separatism, and his work is profusely documented.

The Dividing Line is both an instructive presentation and a persuasive apologetic for the doctrine of separation. Sidwell explains the Biblical basis of separation without being either technical or condescending, defends the doctrine without being defensive, and addresses the topic in a fair-minded and measured style. The author's content, tone, and even-handed approach to the sensitive but Scriptural issue of separation make *The Dividing Line* not only a valuable addition for the Fundamentalist, but a helpful and informative volume particularly suitable for those on the fringes of Fundamentalism and beyond who may be uninformed or curious but open to considering the Biblical roots of separation.

Neutral men are the devil's allies.

—Edwin Chapin

The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who, in a period of moral crisis, maintained their neutrality.

—Dante Alighieri

An optimist is a guy who has never had much experience.

—Don Marquis

Better the child should cry than the father.

—German proverb

Pain is no evil, unless it conquers us.

—Charles Kingsley

There's only one thing worse than a flooded basement, and that's a flooded attic.

—Unknown

America has more things than any other nation in the world, and more books on how to find happiness.

—W. E. Sangster

Poetry is the language in which man explores his own amazement.

—Christopher Fry

Pleasure is our greatest evil or our greatest good.

—Alexander Pope

If my testimony makes anyone wish to emulate me, it is a mistaken testimony; it is not a witness to Jesus.

—Oswald Chambers

Temptation: the fiend at my elbow.

—William Shakespeare

Even asses know straw is better than gold.

—Herodotus

Man is but a reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed.

—Blaise Pascal

Music is almost all we have of heaven on earth.

—Joseph Addison

When the will is ready, the feet are light.

—George Herbert

When people are bewildered, they tend to become gullible.

—Calvin Coolidge

I sometimes wonder what the Ten Commandments would have looked like if Moses had to run them through a Democratic legislature.

—Ronald Reagan

As long as you can still be disappointed, you are still young.

—Sarah Churchill

True eloquence consists in saying all that should be said, not all that could be said.

—Francois, Duc De La Rochefoucauld

Preach nothing down but the devil, nothing up but the Christ.

—Charles Haddon Spurgeon

We are not diplomats but prophets, and our message is not a compromise but an ultimatum.

—A. W. Tozer

A sin is two sins when it is defended.

—Henry Smith

Truth is always the strongest argument.

—Sophocles

All I want is a little more than I'll ever have.

—seen on a bumper sticker

The fate of republican government is indissolubly bound up with the fate of the Christian religion, and a people who reject its holy faith will find themselves the slaves to their own evil passions and of arbitrary power.

—Lewis Cass



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Sermon and Song: A Vital Duet

Kurt Woetzel

Does your church have a “good spirit” about it? That question has a measure of Scriptural basis. Christ said, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23). One of the practical functions and purposes of music in the church is to set the spirit. And that spirit, which can be brought about by the character of the music, must mirror the truth that is being proclaimed from the pulpit.

The body of believers that engages in this kind of duet, truth in word and in sound (music), then experiences a purpose-driven unity that is rare in the Christian community. Agreement on music fosters a temperament for harmony in all aspects of church life. The resulting impact on the overall personality of a body of believers is much greater than we realize or can fully understand. What a marvelous prospect and promise at the end of that verse: “. . . the Father seeketh such to worship him.” It is no wonder that the Lord’s presence is real when the Word is clearly preached and the music matches the Word in dignity, beauty, and message.

Conversely, music that does not match the dignity, beauty, and message of the Word preaches a philosophy contrary to what is declared from the pulpit; this causes confusion and division. When major differences of music philosophy exist in a congregation, tension and disagreement are on the surface at every service. When significant style changes become the norm from one Sunday to the next in order to accommodate equally those who desire a pop sound as well as those who prefer more traditional music, one group is always alienated and even annoyed. Music preferences are boldly and firmly expressed even by those who seldom offer opinions on other matters. If two can’t “walk together” unless they agree (Amos 3:3), how then can they wor-

ship together?

Many churches have recognized this problem and offer a “solution” in the form of two distinctly different services within the same church—one service with a traditional sound and another with contemporary music. In the first service, the music is generated by an organ, a piano, perhaps a choir, and is led by a song leader or choir director. The response to this kind of music is primarily cerebral,

yet the music also appeals to the spirit and the emotions. The responsibility and direction of this sound are under one leader. In the typical contemporary service the music is produced and led by a worship team with guitars, synthesizers, and an array of drums. This music is group-led, and the response is primarily visceral and emotional.

The sound as well as the leadership model of the two services are as different as the people who attend each service. In essence, from one church emerges two distinct churches. They are unlike not only in sound but also in sensibility. These two ministries, under the same roof, not only disagree in music but also differ enormously in message. The world understands the difference. Many Christians, however, in an effort to attract the world, fail to grasp this great contradiction.

Music in the believer’s life is not intended for physical impact, as the world desires it; rather, it strives for spiritual influence in order that truth in word and sound may render a marvelous duet that proclaims a pure message. May the following verse become reality in our churches as we offer the sacrifice of praise unto the Lord: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4).

Kurt Woetzel is the music director at Trinity Baptist Church in Concord, New Hampshire.

All Scripture,” Paul asserted (at a time when most of it was Old Testament), “is profitable” to instruct and equip the New Testament believer (2 Timothy 3:16–17). “For whatsoever things were written aforetime,” he elsewhere explained, “were written for our learning” (Rom. 15:4). “They are,” in fact, “written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [ages] are come” (1 Cor. 10:11).

Why should the Christian be conversant in the history of Israel? The short answer is that it forms a large part of God’s revelation to man—not only the reliable revelation of a record of ancient history, but a timeless revelation of human nature and experience, and of God Himself. Paul argued, under inspiration, that God has preserved the record of His dealings with His ancient people for the instruction, edification, exhortation, and warning of His contemporary people in any given age. Need we any further incentive?

But the Old Testament can be difficult, its customs foreign, its chronology confusing, its language sometimes strange, its names nearly unpronounceable, and its point often obscure. Perhaps this is nowhere truer than in the historical narratives recounting the rise and fall of Israel’s monarchy. Hopefully the forthcoming series will help overcome some of these hurdles.

The Historical Setting

Chronologically, 1 Samuel actually opens in the midst of Judges 13:1, after the birth of Samson (Jud. 13) but prior to the judgeship of Samson (Judges 14–16; ca. 1104–1084 B.C.). The birth of Samuel probably occurred about 1124–1115 B.C.

Here is the historical setting in outline form:

Samuel Ministers at the Tabernacle (2–3)

Hannah’s song after the birth and dedication of Samuel (2:1–11)

Priest Eli’s evil sons described (2:12–17)

Contrast with Samuel (2:18–21)

Priest Eli rebukes his sons (2:22–25)

Contrast with Samuel (2:26)

Man of God warns Eli of judgment on his sons and his house (2:27–36)

Contrast with Samuel (3:1a)

God’s first communication to Samuel:

Judgment on Eli’s sons and house (3:1b–18)

Contrast with Samuel (3:19–4:1a)

Humiliation of Israel (4–6)

Philistines defeat Israel at Aphek (1104 B.C.): Ark captured, Eli’s sons slain (4:1b–11)

Eli dies, Ichabod born (4:12–22)

Ark in Philistia (5:1–12)

Ark returned to Israel (6:1–21)

[20-year judgeship of Samson begins about this time]

Rise & Judgeship of Samuel (7)

Ark remains in Kiriath-jearim 20 years

[Samson’s Judgeship, 1104–1084 B.C.] (7:1–2)

Samuel calls Israel to repent and return to the Lord (7:3–6)

Israel (God) defeats Philistines at Mizpeh [1084 B.C.] (7:7–12)

40-year Philistine oppression ends (7:13–14; cf. Jud. 13:1)

Samuel judges Israel [1084–1051 B.C.] (7:15–17)

Israel Demands a King (8)

Samuel appoints his sons as judges (8:1–2), but they are corrupt (8:3)

Elders of Israel request Samuel to appoint a king (8:4–5)

Samuel prays and God answers (8:6–9)

Samuel warns of the nature of kingship (8:10–18)

Israel insists on a king anyway (8:19–20)

Samuel again confers with God and concedes (8:21–22)

Conditions Moving Israel Toward Monarchy

- Corruption of Samuel’s sons, Joel and Abijah
- Tribal disunity, lack of national solidarity, displayed in Judges
- Spiritual degeneration evidenced in Judges
- Continuing threat from surrounding nations
 - Philistines (west)
 - Ammonites (east)
 - Arameans (north)
 - Previous expressions of desire for monarchy (Jud. 8:22; Jud. 9)

Differences Between “King” and “Judge”

- National leadership and identity, as opposed to tribal/regional leadership of judges
- Undisputed and supreme authority (1 Sam. 8:11–14, 16, 17)
- Ability to tax (8:15, 17)
- Legislative ability
- Dynastic succession

THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL'S MONARCHY

Part 1—Transition to Monarchy (1 Samuel 1-8)

Factors in Israel's Desire for a Monarchy

- Recognition of Samuel's stature and authority (8:4)
- Realization of Samuel's eventual departure (8:5)
- Rejection of Samuel's corrupt sons (8:5)
- Request for his replacement with "a king to judge" (8:5, 20)
- Desire to be "like all the nations" (8:5, 20)
- Desire for military unity and security (8:20)
- Unwillingness to heed God's warning or to request/wait on God's timing (8:19-20)

The Concept of a Jewish Monarchy

Monarchy was not, in itself, anti-theocratic or non-theocratic. (Note: Theocracy means government by God.)

Some have asserted that by insisting on a monarchy, Israel was trading a higher form of government—a theocracy—for a lower form—a monarchy (e.g., Leon Wood, *The United Monarchy*, 21, 28; Charles Pfeiffer, *Outline of OT History*, 60). This overstates the case and overlooks some important points. The theocracy of Israel was never a direct rule of God without any human intermediary. "The theocracy has always been mediated through an appointed human agent [Moses, Joshua, and the judges]. The monarchy, therefore, is neither nontheocratic nor antitheocratic. . . . [M]onarchy itself no more violates the theocratic principle than judgeship" (Motyer, "OT History," *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, I, 267). However, Israel's request was motivated by an "antitheocratic spirit" (Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 190; 1 Sam. 8:7).

Theocratic judgeship prepared the people for theocratic monarchy.

The "judgeship was designed to lead [Israel] to monarchy" (Motyer, *ibid.*). As the history of the judges progresses, the Book of Judges sounds an insistent theme, significant for its four-fold repetition: "there was no king in Israel (but every man did that which was right in his own eyes)" (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25; cf. Ruth 1:1). In the context of spiritual idolatry, religious confusion, moral degradation, tribal disunity, and civil strife, the repeated appearance of this theme—clearly a negative comment—implies a growing need for a national leader to correct these ills and sets the stage for the events early in 1 Samuel.

Monarchy was long anticipated and planned for by God Himself.

"Kingship, far from being antithetical to the purposes of God for Israel, was fundamental to His salvific design" (Merrill, 190). From the promise that Abraham would father kings (Gen. 17:6, 16), to the reaffirmation of the same promise to Jacob (Gen. 35:11), to the prophetic reference to

Judah's scepter (Gen. 49:10), to the Mosaic regulations for kingship (Deut. 17:14-20), the progression of revelation up to this point in history indicates that monarchy was always a goal toward which God was moving His people. Even the prophetic prayer of Hannah after the birth and dedication of Samuel makes a clear reference to a coming monarchy (1 Sam. 2:10). The Messianic significance of David and his line is hardly a sudden and unplanned development in the plan of God. Monarchy was coming, but timing is as integral to God's will as the event itself.

Israel's monarchy was unique among the nations.

"Although one of the motivations in the demand for a king was conformity to the customs of neighboring peoples, kingship in Israel was unique in the ancient world. . . . The law of God was higher than any man, and the king was expected to respect and obey it. [Note Samuel's warning to people and king alike, 1 Sam. 12.] This was not only a pious idealism but a practical reality. When Saul presumed to offer sacrifice, when David took Uriah's wife, and when Ahab seized Naboth's vineyard, judgment was pronounced and executed. The marvel is not that kings in Israel sinned, but that they recognized the right of a Nathan to point the finger of accusation and say, 'Thou art the man!'" (Pfeiffer, *ibid.*).

In other words, the theocracy was still fully intact; it simply functioned in a different form. God never relinquished His right to rule over His people and continued to choose and anoint, establish and remove Israel's kings. Evidence of the ongoing theocracy permeates the records of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles.

Conclusion

The undisputed wrongness of Israel's demand for a king does not mean that monarchy itself was wrong or sinful, even for them. The Scripture itself reveals a clear undercurrent that God's intent all along was to institute a monarchy. The wrongness of Israel's demand at that time lay in the fact that (1) it was a demand, not a request, which refused to consider any alternative or objections to the contrary; (2) it was motivated by the desire to be like the other nations, when their distinctiveness from the nations was God's intent and ought to have been their glory and ambition; and, (3) it refused to consider that timing is an integral part of God's will. (Only 10 years after Saul became king [1051 B.C.], David was born!) Even though what we want or pursue may be reasonable, arguably necessary, and even, in the end, God's will, we—like Israel—can by our attitude rebel against God's rule over our affairs and His right to choose the timing. When we do, we may get not only what we want, but more than we bargained for.



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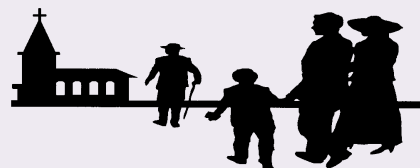
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The New Speaker of the House

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, David Hastert, identifies himself as an evangelical Protestant. He is a 1964 graduate of Wheaton College. His votes have earned him perfect ratings from many business and conservative groups, including the Christian Coalition, and zeros from labor unions and other liberal groups, including the ACLU. Although he has been a reliable vote for the so-called religious right, he is not an outspoken ideologue. (*World*, 1/9/99)

Southern Baptist Church May Be Expelled

On November 15, 1998, the Wake Forest Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, voted to petition God to bless "all loving, committed, and exclusive relationships between two people." The statement represented a compromise between those in the congregation who desire to approve of same-sex ceremonies and those who are opposed to the same. The church's pastors, Richard Groves and Ms. Lynn Rhoades, told the press they believe the statement gives them the right to officiate at homosexual "ceremonies." The church meets in the chapel at Wake Forest University, which is supported by funds from the Southern Baptist Convention-affiliated Baptist Convention of North Carolina. The president of the Baptist State

Convention of North Carolina told the press that the statement might result in the church's expulsion from the convention. (Fundamental Baptist News Service, 11/18/98)

Woman Called to Pastor SBC Church

Jule Pennington-Russell was called last year to pastor Calvary Church in Waco, Texas. She is believed to be the first female senior pastor of a church affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas. About 75 women serve as pastors in Southern Baptist churches. (*What in the World!* Vol. 24, No. 5) Last November, about 150 conservative Southern Baptist churches split from the more "moderate" Baptist General Convention to form their own organization.

Report on Dr. Carl McIntire

The Board of Directors of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions passed a resolution on September 22, 1998, to express their "appreciation to Dr. Carl McIntire for his 64 years of untiring dedication and unflinching loyalty to the testimony and worldwide ministry of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions. We lament the fact of his resigning from the Board of Directors of this mission agency, that is, for disagreeing with the actions of the Board Meeting of May 12, 1998. . . ." The resolution

went on to make many kind and laudatory statements about Dr. McIntire. Other reports have less charitable. A January 6 report by John Elliott accuses McIntire of splitting the Bible Presbyterian Church (Collingswood Synod). "After refusing to accept an offer of retirement," the report says, "92-year-old Dr. Carl McIntire has left the Bible Presbyterian Church (Collingswood Synod)—BPC (CS). He is holding Sunday services at his home in Collingswood, New Jersey. The Presbytery of the BPC (CS) has declared the pulpit vacant because McIntire left the denomination. McIntire claims he has been illegally kicked out and vows to take the Presbytery to court."

Amy Grant Separated from Husband

Contemporary Christian and pop music superstar Amy Grant and husband Gary Chapman have separated after 16 years of marriage. The pair has not filed for divorce, though their split has long been rumored in the Christian music industry. (*Christian News*, 1/11/99)

Billy Graham's Universalism

In a May 31, 1997, interview with Dr. Robert Schuller, Dr. Billy Graham said: "I think that everybody that loves Christ, whether they're conscious of it or not, they're members of the body of Christ. . . . And that's what God is doing today. He's calling

people out of the world for His name, whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world, or the non-believing world, they are members of the body of Christ because they've been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus, but they know in their hearts that they need something they don't have, and they turn to the only light they have, and I think that they are saved and that they're going to be with us in heaven."

Schuller then said, "What I hear you saying is that it's possible for Jesus Christ to come into human hearts and soul and life even if they've been born in darkness and have never had exposure to the Bible. Is that a correct interpretation of what you're saying?"

Graham replied: "Yes it is, because I believe that I've met people in various parts of the world in tribal situations that . . . have never seen a Bible or heard about a Bible and never heard of Jesus, but they've believed in their hearts that there is a God, and they've tried to live a life that was quite apart from the surrounding community in which they lived." (*Foundation*, November-December 1998, and *Christian News*, 11/30/98)

Liberal Hate Speech

On *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, actor Alec Baldwin, one of Hollywood's most vocal leftists, declared, "If we were living in another

country, what we, all of us together, would [do is] go down to Washington and stone Henry Hyde to death—stone him to death! Then we would go to his house, and we'd kill the family, kill the children." NBC and Baldwin later said he was only joking. Mr. Hyde, who received a series of death threats since the beginning of the debates to impeach President Clinton, didn't think it was funny. Hyde responded, "I heard about it, and I'm sickened by it." (*The Falwell Fax*, 12/18/98)

Methodists Divided Over Homosexuality

More than 1200 people attended the January 16 "marriage" in Sacramento, California, of two women in their 60s, both high lay leaders in the United Methodist Church. All together, 72 clergy from the California-Nevada regional UMC conference, including 24 women, plus 20 others listed as "in absentia," took part. They were joined by six ministers from other UMC conferences, plus 52 more in absentia, in a mass rebellion against the UMC ban against same-sex unions. "Not a single official of the church has stood up and said, 'This does not represent United Methodist polity and tradition,'" declared John Sheppard, a UMC pastor in nearby Yuba City and a leader in the conference's conservative Evangelical Renewal Fellowship. (*World*, 1/30/99)

Legalization of Polygamy Promoted

The Women's Religious Liberties Union is urging Utah governor Mike Leavitt and the legislature to provide legal support for polygamy. The group was encouraged recently when Leavitt sug-

NOTABLE QUOTES

You should never put yourself in a position where people do not trust your word. When people are not trusted, their words, I notice, merely drift about without force in themselves and without inspiring confidence in others.

Xenophon, from The Persian Expedition

When the general is morally weak and his discipline not strict . . . the army is in disorder.

Sun Tzu, from The Art of War

Honesty is not so much a credit as an absolute prerequisite to efficient service to the public. Unless a man is honest we have no right to keep him in public life, it matters not how brilliant his capacity, it hardly matters how great his power of doing good service on certain lines may be. . . . Liar is just as ugly a word as thief, because it implies the presence of just as ugly a sin in one case as in the other.

Theodore Roosevelt, quoted in Outlook magazine, May 12, 1900

To lie is to break trust. The more you break trust, the more breaking trust become part of your character. In every tough spot, your first impulse is to cheat. . . . Something else happens when you lie all the time: You begin to lose track of when you're lying and when you're not. You are lost in a maze of your making, in only fitful contact with reality, unable to see the difference between how things are and how you said they were.

J. Budziszewski, professor of government and philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin

Character founded this nation. Character built this nation. And character has sustained this nation through wars, economic upheavals, and social injustice. Sadly, no other virtue has come under such withering attack. We are now told character does not matter anymore. We are told as long as the economy is healthy and America is at peace, character is neither critical nor relevant. This argument—which is simply a restating of "the end justifies the means"—has created a new and disturbing dichotomy: the difference between so-called public character and private character.

Mark L. Earley, Attorney General of Virginia

If you have weak little anemic ballads that don't tell anything about the word and ways of God, how do you expect your young people to grow up strong in the Lord?

Paige Patterson, president of the Southern Baptist Convention

gested in a speech that polygamy may be protected by the First Amendment. An estimated 30,000 polygamists live in the western U.S. (*Baptist Bulletin*, December 1998)

Judge Strikes Down Library's Internet Restrictions

In an early court battle over restrictions of Internet use in public libraries, a federal judge has struck down a Virginia county's policy for filtering sexually explicit materials from computer terminals used by the general public. The federal judge, Leonie M. Brinkema of Alexandria, Virginia, herself a former librarian, made the ruling—without a trial—in a case filed by People for the American Way and later joined by the American Civil Liberties Union. (*Maranatha NewsWatch*, 12/9/98)

A Friend of the Porn Industry

"President Clinton is a total supporter of the industry, and he's always been on our team," David Schlessinger of the hard-core Vivid Videos told *TV Guide*. "It's not that Clinton has been outwardly supportive of the adult industry, but rather that he hasn't tried to quash it the way Republicans did back in the 1980s" (*Insight*, 12/14/98, in *What in the World!* Vol. 25, No. 1)

Disney Opposes Child Pornography Legislation

A bill to protect minors from online pornography faced opposition in the last congressional session from the Walt Disney Company. Disney reportedly felt that the bill would affect their plans to market online the violent and sexually graphic

R-rated movies produced by its subsidiaries (Touchstone, Miramax, and Hollywood Pictures). (*AFA Journal*, January 1999)

CCM Star Inspired by Secular Rock

Michael W. Smith, who has sold more than six million albums and taken home 11 Dove Awards, says he would not consider himself a Christian artist. He says that he makes the kind of records anyone would make if he were equally inspired by the Beatles, Elton John, and Jesus. (*What in the World!* Vol. 24, Number 11)

Pope Criticizes "Bible-only" Thinking

Pope John Paul's encyclical letter released last fall issued a warning against the idea that rational knowledge has little value for faith. "One currently widespread symptom" of the problem, he said, is what he labels "biblicism," which he defines as the tendency "to make the reading and exegesis of Sacred Scripture the sole criterion of truth." (*Dallas Morning News*, 10/31/98, in *Christian News*, 11/23/98)

Mennonites and Catholics Open Dialogue

Meeting for the first time to discuss the cause of their long-standing separation, Mennonites and Roman Catholics opened formal dialogue October 14-18 in Strasbourg, France. The meeting, sponsored by the Mennonite World Conference and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, was titled "Toward a

Healing of Memories." The Mennonite World Conference News Service announced that the goal was to "emphasize reconciliation rather than doctrinal differences." (Fundamental Baptist News Service, 12/26/98)

Baptist Pastor Arrested

The Rev. Paul Norwalt, pastor of Merrimack Baptist Temple, was arrested and taken to jail for refusing to register his tiny church school with the state. Norwalt had skipped numerous court appearances. After his arrest he told Judge George Manias he operates a ministry, not a school, and that he answers to God, not the state. (Associated Press, in *Christian News*, 12/28/98)

Landlords Can Act on Religious Beliefs

In a surprise decision, a federal appeals court ruled January 14 that landlords may refuse to rent to unmarried couples if they believe their religion requires it. The U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that the religious freedom of two landlords in Anchorage, Alaska, would suffer a "substantial burden" if city and state housing discrimination laws were enforced against them. (*Maranatha NewsWatch*, 1/24/99)

Pros and Cons

According to *Pros and Cons: The Criminals Who Play in the NFL*, some 21 percent of professional football players have been arrested or indicted for crimes ranging from rape and assault to carrying a weapon without a permit and possession of

marijuana. "When an individual has demonstrated a pattern of run-ins with the law related to violence or drugs, he should not be permitted to earn hundreds of thousands or dollars, carry the mantle of a role model, and have the license to further disregard the law," the book contends. (*World*, 12/19/98)

Fellowship Tract League Reaches Milestone

Fellowship Tract League, a ministry of Fellowship Baptist Church in Lebanon, Ohio, recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. Since its beginning in 1978, FTL has grown from a one-room operation in the church basement to a 16,300 square-foot printing facility capable of producing 2 million tracts per day. All buildings and equipment are debt-free. FTL tracts are now available in 50 languages. Since its beginning, the ministry has shipped more than 1.8 billion tracts.

"Prophet's Chamber" Directory

In the Old Testament, through the widow of Zarephath God provided Elijah sustenance, shelter, and opportunity to minister. Likewise, God used the Shunammite woman to minister to the needs of His servant Elisha (2 Kings 4:8-11). Today, God supplies the needs of His servants by giving various "windows of opportunity" to His saints. Eagle Heights Baptist Church, for instance, has found the "window" of the prophet's chamber (or guest house) to be a satisfying ministry, both for those who use it and for the church itself.

A multilevel dwelling on church property, the Eagle's Nest provides private lodging for several families simultaneously. Over the years, many have found encouragement, comfort, rest, renewal, refuge, fellowship, love, and blessing after wending their way to this particular window of hospitality. Excerpts from the guest book express it this way:

"Thank you for allowing the Lord to use you all to meet the needs—both physical and spiritual—of our family."

"Our time here has been not only a great learning experience but also very refreshing! We needed it! We enjoyed the fellowship with all the church. We were genuinely blessed by each of you."

Perhaps your church has a similar outreach—a prophet's chamber, a guest home, a place where God can, as He did with Elisha, direct His nomadic servants to find residence, rest, and refreshment. If so, and if you are interested in acquainting missionaries, evangelists, and others with your ministry, we are in the process of compiling a list of available guest homes for this express purpose. Please send information to:

Eagle Heights Baptist Church

5600 N. Brighton
Kansas City, MO 64119
(816) 454-7410
Fax (816) 454-7420

This news is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship.

Winter Is Past

It seems like everyone loves spring. We can say with the Shulamite in the Song of Solomon, "For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come." What a blessing is this illustration of the resurrection. Even a relatively mild winter brings its drab lifelessness across the landscape in a soggy, somber season that most enjoy seeing end. Even the unbeliever is uplifted by the hope implied in spring even though he may not know about (or believe if he does) that essential element of the gospel—the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

He may explain that Christianity is just one of the major world religions, appropriate for Christians as Islam is for Arabs. He may be completely satisfied with psychological solutions to his emotional struggles, or comfortable in the warmth of his wealth. But within his unbelieving heart he longs for eternal life. We are warned by worldly wisdom to watch out for wintertime "blues" and the languor that comes with less light. Shorter days see shorter tempers and longer periods of depression. But then the world renews itself. The leaves appear, and the birds return. Indeed, "hope springs eternal."

But not for the unbeliever in Christ—not ultimately. Will the politically correct pluralism that allows the Christian his Christ, the Moslem his Mohammed, or the Buddhist his Buddha allow the atheist his arrogance? Probably, for to such a mind heaven is not real; it is only a nice possibility. The popular view allows

everyone we like to go to heaven, while the truly evil—those who really offend us—to suffer some kind of hell.

Everyone must come to grips with the resurrection. No other religions claim it, nor do they need it, being rooted in the effort of man. Christianity stands alone as the gospel of grace. It is not some sentimental suggestion of better days

ahead that is written into the constitution of the Creation, it is "Christ in us, the hope of glory." Sentiment doesn't save, and there is no righteousness in religiousness. There may be "many roads to Rome," but there is only one road to heaven. We still hear, "I believe Jesus was a

good man," or "He certainly was a teacher sent from God." No. He was who He claimed to be, or He was a liar—and He claimed to be God.

He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Either that is true and He is the only way of salvation, rendering every alternative a deception that damns its followers, or it is a lie. If a lie, then Christianity cannot be accepted as one of many alternatives. It must be opposed or altered. The enemies of Christ realize this. Christianity is becoming increasingly despised because it accepts no alternatives. It is Christ and salvation, or self-help and damnation.

At the heart of toleration is the demand for toleration of ourselves. "I will allow you to believe whatever you choose, but you must allow me the

same." Paul told the Romans that the creation taught them the truth, as it teaches us. If the Lord tarries, there will be a springtime for everyone, but without a submissive faith in the salvation available through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, there will be no resurrection from sin and death.

God established the seasons as both a reminder and a restraint. The rainbow was "a token of a covenant" that He would never destroy the earth by another worldwide flood, and the seasons were a part of that covenant. "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." The cycles are secure, as we are in the sovereignty of God. Though men reject God, they must accept His limitations on their labors "under the sun." The psalmist sang, "Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter."

As the springtime resurrection gives us hope, the cold reality of winter keeps us honest. Not in futility do we till our gardens, groom our lawns, and lure the hummingbirds to the windows of our homes. These are proper. The summer fruits of seedtime efforts are rightfully enjoyed. But the harvest here is always followed by the hastening of winter. It

will be back. In eternity, it won't be so. As the Shulamite's springtime reverie was followed by her lover's invitation, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away," so will ours some day. When the seasons here are over, there remains for the Christian a day when truly "winter is past."

Christianity stands alone as the gospel of grace. . . . It is "Christ in us, the hope of glory."



DR. JOHN C. VAUGHN

What's on the Web

Bob Whitmore

Because this is the time of year we celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, all of the web sites mentioned in this column have to do with Easter. Perhaps none are fundamental, most are Lutheran, and one is even secular, but I think you'll find something of interest at every one.

The first one we'll consider is the Interactive Passion History, located at www.geocities.com/~dolorosa. Sponsored by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the site allows you to "follow along with the disciples as they witness the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. . . . You will be able to choose your own paths, examine more closely some of the scenery, and even hold (imaginary) conversations with some of the other people present (both fictional and historical)."

If you need some ammunition for those who question the Biblical account of the Resurrection, you'll find it at the ChristianAnswers.Net page dealing with the Resurrection (www.christiananswers.net/easter.html). Articles there answer questions such as, "Did Jesus Really Die?" "Is the Resurrection a Myth?" and "Were the Witnesses Hallucinating?" There are other articles on this apologetics-oriented site on archaeology, the Jesus Seminar, the PBS series *Frontline: From Jesus to Christ, the First Christians*, and even the "Significance of Easter for the Church of Latter-Day Saints." All articles that I read were written from a conservative, orthodox viewpoint.

Most of us have little understanding of the details of crucifixion and the actual physical sufferings of our Savior. For a deeper appreciation of

the cost of our salvation, read the medical description of Christ's suffering at <http://netnet.net/~messiah/cruc.html>, yet another Lutheran site.

Easter in Cyberspace: A Christian Perspective (www.njwebworks.com/easter/) is a hodge-podge of links to other Easter sites. Some information on Easter-related graphics and images may be useful for church papers or bulletins, but the links are sponsored by organizations ranging from the theologically conservative to liberal.

Maranatha Baptist Church in Grimes, Iowa, has an interesting page on its web site with articles, comments, and photos about Easter events. The URL is a long one: www.maranathabaptist.org/easter/hp-coll.html.

And finally, for all of you mathematicians, there is www.assa.org.au/edm.html. This site is sponsored by the Astronomical Society of South Australia (no kidding!). If you ever wondered how the Easter date is determined, you'll find the answer at this site. It discusses the two ways that the Easter date is calculated—Orthodox churches celebrate their Easter on the basis of the Julian calendar, while most of the rest of Christendom uses the newer Gregorian calendar. It goes on to explain how to find Easter Sunday dates with your calculator, but to me that much math is downright depressing. Besides, it lists Easter Sunday dates from the year 1700 through 2299!

Have a favorite web site? Drop me a note at FBFLINE@aol.com, and perhaps we can discuss it in a future column.

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The Last Convert

Adam Blumer

So what does he look like?" Dawn asked. Without being invited inside, the single mother who lived next door slammed the screen door and made a beeline for Kalli's computer. "Come on, Kalli. You know I've been dying to see his pictures."

As she showed Sergio's handsome portraits on his web site, Kalli Thoreau was pleased to hear Dawn's enthusiastic whistles.

"Well, I gotta go." Dawn glanced at her watch. "Let me know what happens." Her eyes narrowed. "And be careful. I hear there are plenty of predators on the Internet who like to stalk lonely young women like you."

"Who says I'm lonely?" Kalli called at Dawn's retreating back. Actually, she knew very little about the tanned foreigner she had met in an Internet chat room. But his romantic e-mail had a way of silencing her questions.

Kalli jumped when she heard someone knocking on the screen door's frame. A woman with sparkling blue eyes smiled warmly at Kalli through the screen door. "I'm sorry to disturb you, but are you a single mother?"

Kalli nodded. "Yes, I am." The woman was tall and thin with brown bobbed hair. She wore a navy dress with matching white collar, cuffs, and braided belt. Her strong resemblance to Kalli's mother was uncanny.

"My name is Wendy Oliver." When Wendy smiled, her whole face seemed to light up. "I used to be a single mother too. I had four kids, and let me tell you: they were a real handful. I turned to cigarettes and liquor. I even tried drugs, and they almost killed me. But then I found Jesus Christ."

Oh boy! Here we go, Kalli thought. Memories of her mother dragging her to Sunday school were as pungent as Wendy Oliver's perfume. "Look, I don't need religion," Kalli said. "If that's why you're here, you're wasting your time."

"No, dear. Not religion but a relationship."

"A relationship with God, right?"

"That's right."

Kalli's lips tightened. "You tell me how I can have a relationship with somebody I can't see, and I've got some land to sell you on Mars." She laughed. "That's not the kind of relationship I need. I think you should go."

"Please don't turn me away." Wendy sounded urgent. "Don't you see? You're my last one. I can tell that you need Jesus just as badly as I did 20 years ago. Don't you want to hear how Jesus can help you too?"

"Not particularly. Look, I have laundry to do."

"Well, if you don't want to talk, could you at least read something for me?"

Kalli accepted the tract. On the cover was a breathtaking vista of a field of wildflowers above the calligraphic words, "Consider the Lilies."

"I know it's hard to understand, but what I'm saying

will make more sense if you read that and think about it," Wendy assured her. "Will you do that for me, honey?"

After Wendy left, Kalli balled up the tract and threw it in the trash.

That afternoon, after delivering the trailer court mail, Kalli greeted her daughters, Arial and Jasmine, at the bus stop. The girls excitedly showed Kalli the pictures they had colored on the way home. One picture depicted a hill with three crosses on top. The second picture showed an empty tomb with a large round stone rolled away.

"Who gave you these?" Kalli demanded.

"A lady we met at school today," replied Jasmine, the eldest. "She helped us on the bus and said we could color these on the way home. Aren't they pretty?"

Kalli tightening her grip on their hands. "How many times have I told you not to talk to strangers?"

Arial looked up plaintively. "But she said she was your friend."

After the girls were in bed, Kalli fished the tract out of the trash, smoothed it, and read it from beginning to end.

The next morning, after seeing the girls to their bus, Kalli found Wendy Oliver waiting for her at the trailer. "Hello, Kalli," Wendy said with a quiet smile. "Did you read the tract I gave you yesterday?"

Kalli didn't try to hide the coldness she felt. "I teach my girls not to talk to strangers. You had no right giving them those pictures yesterday without my consent."

Wendy looked sheepish. "I'm sorry. I guess I should have asked you first, but I didn't think it would do any harm. You have beautiful daughters. They look very much like you."

"I'm sorry, but I have work to do." Turning, Kalli stormed into the trailer and slammed the door before Wendy could get a word in.

Two days passed without another visit from Wendy Oliver. One afternoon, Kalli headed to the post office to pick up the trailer park's mail. "Sorry, Kalli," replied the postmistress. "Wendy Oliver is delivering your mail today."

"Wendy Oliver!" Kalli stared at her. "What do you mean?"

"Wendy said you needed a day off. Don't worry, you'll be paid as usual. Wendy said she wouldn't accept payment for doing your work."

Why would Wendy deliver the mail for me? Kalli asked herself on the way home. What does she want?

Motivated by that thought, Kalli quickened her step, hoping to find Wendy along the mail route. Then Kalli saw something that made a sliver of ice slide down her spine.

Wendy lay in a heap beside the road. The mail bag had fallen beside her, and the remainder of the day's mail lay strewn across the road, scattered by the wind. Kalli

rushed to Wendy's side. The woman's lips were intensely blue, her glassy eyes raised to the sky, her hands clutched to her chest.

"My heart," Wendy whispered. "Need—pills." Kalli searched Wendy's pockets, her purse, the mailbag—but no pills. When Kalli rose to find a phone, Wendy's hand clamped around Kalli's wrist. "Don't—go."

Kalli searched Wendy's face. "Why did you do it, Wendy? Tell me."

The veins in Wendy's forehead were as blue as her eyes. "I wanted you—to see Jesus—in me."

A passerby called 911. Within minutes an ambulance arrived, and paramedics wheeled Wendy inside. Thinking Kalli was a family member, the paramedics rushed her inside too. The doctor at the hospital thought she was Wendy's daughter.

"No, I'm just . . . a friend," Kalli faltered.

The doctor's eyes were evasive. "I'm sorry to tell you this, but Wendy passed away about five minutes ago. Do you know how I can contact her family?"

Returning to the trailer, Kalli felt too numb to cry. The doctor's words replayed in her mind. "Wendy had a very serious heart condition, and I'm sure she was aware of that. I don't know why she was exerting herself. She must have known it could cost her her life."

Moments before the paramedics rushed her away, Wendy had pushed something into Kalli's hand. It was a business card for Women Alone Ministries. Wendy was listed as its founder and director. Below Wendy's name was listed a web site address.

Curious, Kalli booted up her computer and browsed to Wendy's Internet web site. At the bottom of its home page, she found navigation buttons and went to Wendy's biographical sketch. Kalli started when the computer downloaded a stunning portrait of Wendy's smiling face.

"I'm so glad you visited my web site today," the letter beside the portrait said. Kalli scanned the words. "My husband abandoned me 20 years ago for another woman. . . . I raised our four children on my own . . . fought depression . . . tried drugs . . . attempted to take my life on two separate occasions . . . found Jesus Christ. Since then, I've dedicated myself to show the love of Jesus Christ to other single women like me. There is hope. His name is Jesus."

Finding Wendy's prayer requests page, Kalli read in stunned silence. "Please pray for a single mother named Kalli," Wendy had written. "Like other single mothers, she doesn't realize that Jesus can fill the void in her life if she would only open her heart to Him. I believe Kalli will be my last

convert before Jesus takes me home to glory."

Last convert? Kalli remembered Wendy's words at the screen door. "Please don't turn me away," Wendy had said. "Don't you see? You're my last one."

Numbly, Kalli read Wendy's tract again, this time understanding what Wendy had meant. The message made sense to her now that she had seen the love of Jesus in Wendy. The loving words at her screen door. The well-intentioned pictures for the girls to color. The sacrificial mail delivery. Had Wendy realized her sacrifice? Kalli didn't know. What she did know was that, like Wendy, Jesus Christ had given His life for her, and she wanted a relationship with Him more than anything she had ever wanted before.

Later, Kalli found Wendy's e-mail address and typed a message: "To whom it may concern: My name is Kalli Thoreau, and I am Wendy Oliver's last convert."

Adam Blumer works in the publications department at Northland Baptist Bible College in Dunbar, Wisconsin.

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