


PETER • DID JESUS SURVIVE CRUCIFIXION? • PROVIDENTIAL DULLNESS • HONEY FOR A LIFETIME

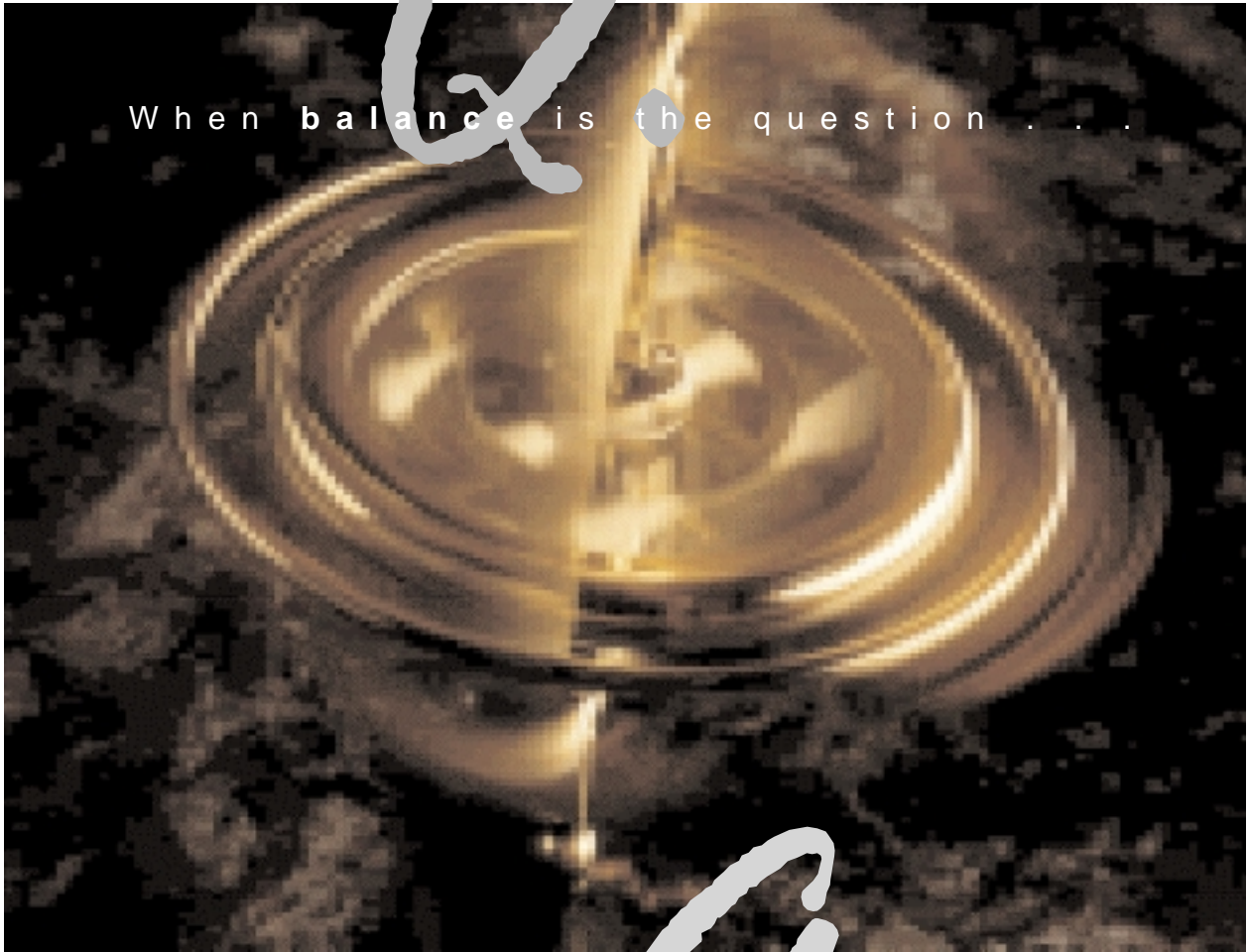
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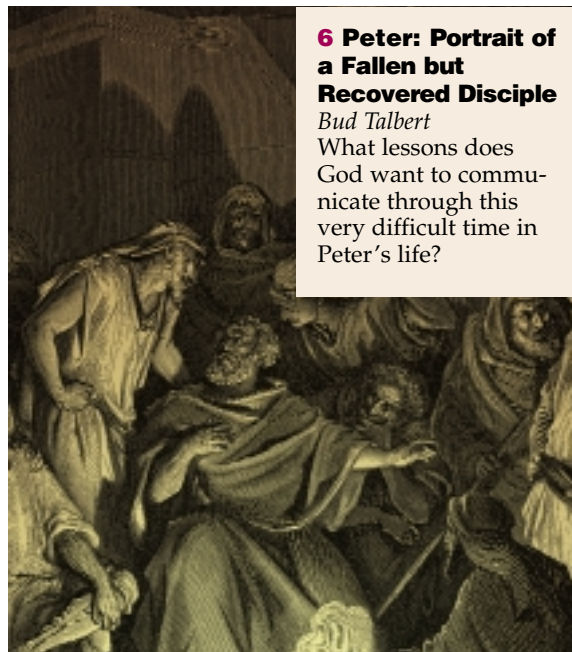
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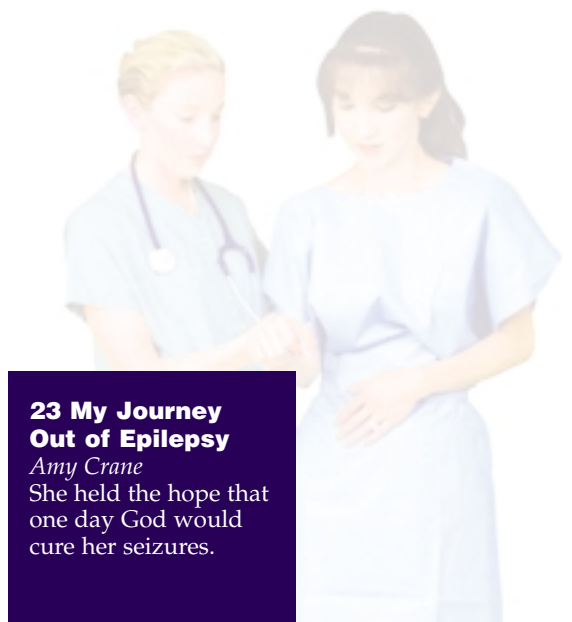
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Mail Bag

I just wanted to send a note of encouragement concerning *Frontline*. I have been a subscriber from the beginning and have found the section for pastors, "Sound Words," has been the best addition to the magazine. This edition's [Sept./Oct. 2000] article, "Rising Above Familiarity with the Sublime," by Dr. Minnick, was extremely helpful. This resource is quite helpful for Christians of any walk.

*Pastor Bob Condict
PastorRAC@aol.com*

I enjoyed your issue for September/October on music. Obviously it a very important issue and music is not amoral, but what were you trying to portray on the cover? Was the man on the left supposedly unholy because he was playing a guitar with a sleeveless shirt on and the girl on the right holy because she was singing in a choir? If so, that would seem to be an extremely judgmental attitude.

*Steve Kallhoff
Missionary in Mexico*

We are blessed by your magazine here in Cameroon.

*Tom Needham
Bamenda,
CAMEROON*

Frontline magazine is an "oasis in the desert" of Christian publications. I find so much that is helpful to me as a pastor and that which I can share with my congregation without having to apologize for certain things or resort to careful

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You may request that your letter not be published or that your name be withheld, but anonymous letters will not be accepted.



editing! Thank you for remaining faithful.
*Pastor D. Cleve Clucas
Notus, ID*

Although we receive a number of "Christian" magazines, there is none that we enjoy as much as *Frontline*. The articles are great. However, the artwork sometimes obscures the printing. . . . Thanks for a great magazine.

*Dr. Fred & Marie Henzler
fhenzler@juno.com*

Thank you for all your work. You have a wonderful magazine. God bless you. I enjoy all the time when I read this magazine because [it] is a blessing for me and my family.

*Missionary Franz
Carreón
Cochabamba, BOLIVIA*

I am grateful to be one of the many who have been encouraged through *Frontline*. I pray that you will do all that you can to keep it flowing everywhere. . . . Keep contending for the faith which was

once delivered unto us.
*Pastor Sampson George
St. Andrews, GRENADA*

We are missionaries with GFA to Cameroon. . . . We are delighted with your publication and look forward to its arrival as a source of inspiration and encouragement.

*Dr. Walter Loescher
Anderson, SC*

Thanks for a wonderful magazine! We appreciate the information you give us to keep us informed as well as the articles to inspire and teach us.

*Rev. & Mrs. C. R. Nelson
Henry, IL*

What a blessing the *Frontline* magazine has been to me. Thank you for producing such a quality Christian magazine. May our Lord bless all of you that have a part in putting this together. Keep up the good work!

*Margie Rupright
Enfield, CT*

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The Precious Blood of Christ (Part 4)

There is another reason we must see the corruption of fallen man. Only when we see man's corruption will we begin to appreciate the glorious sinlessness of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible testimony to this is crystal clear. Friends and foes alike testified to His sinless perfection, but it is from the inspired testimony of the God-breathed Scriptures that we have the completely authoritative proof of His absolute sinlessness. Consider carefully what the Bible says about Christ.

1. He "did no sin" (1 Peter 2:22).
2. He "knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21).
3. "In him is no sin" (1 John 3:5).
4. He is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26).

The Lord Jesus Christ never sinned in thought. He never sinned in deed or motive. He never sinned in word. He never sinned a sin of commission or of omission. The Bible makes it clear that He could not sin, because He was God manifested in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16), and God cannot be guilty of sin. He was not merely sinless—He was impeccably sinless. In other words, the God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, was not merely able to overcome temptation and sin, but was incapable of being overcome by temptation and sin. His own testimony was "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30).

There is a sinful nature within us that responds to Satan's temptations. But in Christ, the absolutely sinless One, there was nothing upon which Satan could take hold, nothing which could respond to his allurements.

This is the difference between the temptations of Christ and those of every other person on earth: "He was in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). "Yet without sin" means "apart from sin."

By virtue of His virgin birth, the Lord Jesus Christ was born without sin. By virtue of His impeccable Person, He lived without sin. And when he died, it was for no sin of His own. He died with the sins of the world upon Him, but no sin within Him.

"Who needeth not daily as those [Old Testament] high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's" (Heb. 7:27).

"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3).

"He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief" (Isa. 53:9, 10).

With good reason, then, is the Lord Jesus Christ called the "lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:19). His blood was untainted with Adam's sin. No guilt or corruption was transmitted to Him, in stark contrast to every other person ever born.

Therefore, His blood is "incorruptible," emphasizing its purity. But, as we shall now see, incorruptible blood emphasizes much more than that. Not only was it precious blood, but notice the permanence of the blood. The blood of Christ is indestructible blood. We already noted the word "incorruptible" as applied to the blood of Christ. His blood certainly contains no corruption. That is a great truth, but it is not all the truth con-

veyed by the description. Clearly, Christ's blood was incapable of corrupting or decaying. What does this mean?

The meaning of "incorruptible" is clearly established by the reference to Christ's body not seeing corruption.

In Psalm 16:10 we have a prophecy which was fulfilled in the Resurrection of Christ. "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

This text was quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:27, 31. He told his audience that David had not spoken of himself when uttering these words, but of Christ, and that as a prophet, he had spoken specifically "of the resurrection of Christ." The important thing for us to note is that the body of Christ did not see corruption, and this incorruption is added as a proof that it did not remain in the grave but was literally resurrected.

The same thing is said about the blood of Christ as is said about His body. It did not see corruption, nor was it possible for it to see corruption, for it was "incorruptible blood." Thus, when the blood of Christ was shed, it did not congeal and disappear into the dust of the ground. It could not, for God's Word says it is

incorruptible blood. The sands of Mt. Calvary did not soak up the precious blood of the Lamb of God. Since "incorruptible" when applied to the body of Christ refers to the Resurrection of the body, incorruptible blood can only mean that the blood of Christ was raised by the same supernatural activity.



DR. ROD BELL

PETER

PORTRAIT OF A FALLEN BUT RECOVERED DISCIPLE



Bud Talbert

Sometimes Satan surprises us and attempts to overwhelm us with a sudden onslaught of temptation. Usually, however, if we look back and examine our pattern of smaller choices and analyze our inner responses to the Lord's Word and voice, we may become aware of the process through which sin can gain a foothold before overwhelming us. Peter's denial of Christ follows this latter pattern and is recounted by the Holy Spirit to instruct the prudent how to recognize the warning signs that portend a fall and the self-assured where to find restoration when they fall.

Preparation Unheeded

Several episodes on Christ's fateful final night with His disciples reveal Peter's careless attitude toward the Lord's words directed to him. The first incident takes place in the Upper Room (Mark 14:15) during the evening Passover meal (John 13:1-15). Jesus the guest of honor, rising from the table and girding Himself with a linen cloth typically worn by a household servant, washed and dried the first disciple's feet, to the utter astonishment of the other 11. He moved from one disciple to the next, making His way around the table.

Shocked by the Lord's act of abject humility, Peter initially protests. Jesus assures Peter that he will understand after He sits back down and explains (John 13:12-15). But Peter refuses to allow the Lord to humble Himself on his behalf: "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Peter meant well. *But he was denying His Master in plain terms*, regardless of his reasoning or motive. When Jesus clarifies that Peter has no part in Him if he does not submit to the washing, Peter relents. His responses reveal a great deal about his temperament. He was passionate about the things he believed, which led to an impulsiveness and spontaneity based more on his *feelings* than on simple submission to the Lord's words.

Later the same evening when Jesus announced that He was leaving them (John 13:33), Peter asks, "Lord, whither goest thou?" Jesus answers Peter the same way He did earlier in the evening.¹ He tells His impetuous disciple: "Wait." But Peter persists: "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?" It is at this point that the Lord answers with a sober warning of Satan's desire to sift them like wheat (Luke 22:31). But Peter is ignorant of his true spiritual state. He trusts himself and his passions, and in emotional fervor he promises to stick by the Lord come prison or death (Luke 22:33) and adds, "I will lay down my life for thy sake" (John 13:37). The Lord's response is solemn and penetrating: "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." Peter believed that his faith, his loyalty, his devotion were more unshakable than His Master's stern prediction. He doesn't seem to have taken the Lord's words seriously.

Out on the Mount of Olives, Jesus again solemnly warns, "All ye shall be offended because of me this

night" (Matt. 26:31). For the third time this night Peter rejects the Lord's word as inapplicable to him: "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." For the second time, Jesus reins him in with the terrible prediction of Peter's impending denial. Peter's reply? "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." Ironically, with this very statement Peter had just denied Jesus. But all the other disciples said the same thing. They *felt* sure they would be loyal, and yet under the right provocation—in a matter of minutes—they would all forsake Him and flee for their lives.

At this contradiction, Jesus is strangely quiet. He takes Peter, James, and John further into the garden to pray with Him. Instead, they fall asleep. Jesus singles out Peter: "Simon, sleepest thou?" (Mark 14:37). Peter had promised unwavering loyalty, yet he couldn't even stay awake, much less pray with his Master.

The stillness of the night is broken by voices and torch lights. The disciples wipe sleep from their eyes just in time to see Judas leading a band of temple soldiers. The traitor kisses Jesus, and the soldiers surround Him to take Him. The disciples ask, "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" But Peter does not wait. He "stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear." He meant well. But Jesus corrects His disciple: "Put up again thy sword into his place." Confused and frightened, the disciples did just as Jesus had predicted: "all the disciples forsook him, and fled."

Peter is utterly unaware of the storm that will momentarily break upon him, unprepared for the test he is about to undergo. Indeed, he has already virtually sealed his own failure. *He has responded improperly to the Lord's words all night long*, ignoring His warnings and rejecting His instructions.

Fall

However far Peter runs at first, he stops, watching as the company disappears into the darkness. We can only imagine the confusion, shame, and disappointment he feels as they lead his Master away to what must be certain death. But love draws him on. John goes into the hall, but Peter stays in the courtyard (John 18:15-16). As Peter slides through the gate, the maid asks him, almost offhandedly (John 18:17), "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" Her question expects a negative reply: "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" How easy Satan has made it for Peter to fall! The question doesn't even come from an elder or scribe or the chief priest. It comes from an insignificant maid, a mere doorkeeper. Peter responds, almost casually, "I am not." Did his conscience register the denial?

Slipping inconspicuously beside the fire, holding his hands out to the heat, Peter hopes to hear some information of the trial. But Satan has another maid, also sitting by the fire in the small hours of this chilly morning.

She examines Peter's face in the firelight, ransacking her memory for a name to put with this familiar countenance (Luke 22:56). All at once she speaks out (Matt. 26:69): "Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee." Fear grips Peter now as all eyes turn toward him. He is not inconspicuous any longer. "Woman, I know him not." To make his lie more believable, he says it loudly, gruffly insisting that he does not even know this man they call Jesus. But they are all staring. The attention must be diffused somehow. He casually rises, denies even understanding what she was talking about, and walks out onto the porch, glad for the darkness. His mind is burning with guilty fear, so much that he does not even notice the rooster crow off in the distance (Mark 14:68) as he draws in the crisp night air and sighs. What treachery must be in man's heart to make him deny even knowing One he had only hours before defended with a sword? What spiritual preparation and fortification might an hour of prayer back in the garden have afforded now?

Satan does not need an army or a company of scribes to defeat Peter. A maid or two will do. As dawn approaches, Peter is emotionally and physically drained. Leaving Peter alone for an hour to allow his guilt to vitiate his conscience (Luke 22:59), Satan prepares a final assault. Onto the scene comes a relative of Malchus who was also in Gethsemane hours earlier (John 18:26): "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" This time the question expects a positive reply. Like dogs, everyone joins in. They know now by his accent that Peter is Galilean. They are no longer simply questioning; they are confidently and repeatedly insisting that Peter is indeed a disciple of Jesus.

Peter makes a last desperate effort to save himself. He begins to curse and swear², "Man, I know not what thou sayest."

With those fateful words yet on his lips two dreadful things happened. The shrill crowing of a rooster again pierced the still morning air (Mark 14:72) and, through the window, "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (Luke 22:61). All at once he saw his treacherously weak self, abhorred it, and went out from there and wept long and bitterly, remembering with sickening dismay every sad scene, every appalling word.

Restoration

The gospel writers do not record Peter's presence at the crucifixion. How could he possibly face Him now? The last image of his blessed Lord—turning within the hall and looking straight out at him—was seared on his mind. Peter returns to the other believers after the Lord is buried in Joseph's tomb, but it is not until resurrection morning two days later that God begins to actively draw his wounded but wiser disciple back to Himself.

The women burst into the upper room early in the morning, insisting that Jesus' tomb is empty and that they have seen an angel who said that Jesus was alive (Luke 24:1–12). One word in their message rivets Peter's attention: "But go your way," the angels had told the women, "tell his disciples *and Peter* that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." Peter and John immediately departed to inspect the tomb (John 20:2–10). They did not find Him there, but the Lord found Peter as he walked alone toward home (1 Cor. 15:5). What was seen and said in that holy moment is shrouded in Scriptural silence.

The incident, however, in which Peter was drawn fully back into complete fellowship with his Master is recorded in John 21. Jesus takes this occasion by the seaside, after they had finished eating, to probe Peter's heart in front of the other disciples. The question could not have been entirely unexpected. Peter had boasted of his surpassing devotion to Christ (Matt. 26:33). Would he make the same boast now? "Simon, do you have a *sacrificial love* for me more than these [other disciples]?" Peter's reply changes the term: "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I have a *strong affection* for thee." Peter's denials had demonstrated all too clearly the deficiencies in his faith and love. It was important for Peter to see it, to acknowledge it publicly, and never to forget the treachery of self-reliance. But it is equally important for Peter to realize that he still has a divine call to fulfill, so the Lord commands Peter: "Feed my lambs."

But a threefold denial calls for a threefold repentance, so Jesus asks a second time: "Simon, do you have a *sacrificial love* for me?" He is asking because it is important that Peter comes to an honest, objective assessment of himself. Peter answers the same way as before: "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I have a *strong affection* for thee." Were these questions painful for Peter? Not more than it was for Jesus to hear Peter's denials. Jesus is only drawing out of Peter the brokenness necessary for this disciple's usefulness. That is why again the Lord follows with a command: "Feed my sheep."

Notice that the third time Jesus asks the question, *He* changes the word: "Simon, do you really have a *strong affection* for me?" This cuts Peter to his soul. But whatever Peter denied before, he cannot deny that he does indeed love Jesus. As imperfect and weak as his love may be, it is real. He appeals to Jesus' omniscience: "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I have a *strong affection* for thee." Again the command to feed Christ's people with the Word of God is repeated to focus Peter's attention on the task at hand. Jesus finishes this interview (John 21:19) by repeating to Peter one of the first things He ever said to him: "Follow me." Peter's forgiveness, restoration, and usefulness were affirmed.

*All at once he
saw his
treacherously
weak self,
abhorred it,
and went out
from there and
wept long and
bitterly . . .*

Lessons

What lessons does God want to communicate through this very difficult time in Peter's life? Why has the Holy Ghost given all this information about Peter's denials?

First, grave denials of Christ and larger failures are often the result of many little denials and refusals to obey. Arresting the small denials and refusals of God's Spirit protects the Christian against larger falls later.

Second, self-confidence is detrimental to the Christian life, modern psychology notwithstanding. Faith and confidence are to be centered on Jesus Christ—never on self. Look how far down Peter had to go in order for his self-confidence to be broken.

Third, a Christian may do bad things with good motives. Peter meant well, but he was guilty of insubordination and direct disobedience. Obedience to the Word of God is the measure of righteousness, not sincerity of motive. A thing is not right simply because the Christian means well.

Fourth, Peter seemed to respond to the Lord's warnings and commands on the basis of his feelings rather than on the facts Jesus was giving him. This is not uncommon in Christians today. The Lord clearly said that Peter would deny Him, but Peter did not *feel* that such a thing was possible. What would have been a godly response to such predictions? Humble pleadings, profound sorrow. What was Peter's response?

Fifth, let the believer be aware of Satan's sifting strategies. Instead of watching and praying that he not enter temptation, Peter slept. Let the Christian prepare by self-examination and humble repentance. Prayerful watchfulness and reliance on the Lord becomes the believer, especially during difficulty.

God is extraordinarily gracious. He takes the initiative in seeking out the fallen saint and drawing that one back to Himself. There is no place for despair in the Christian life, no matter what the offense. Correction and restoration to God's fellowship may be a painful and humbling experience, but it is necessary to restore usefulness and a process to which he should yield wholeheartedly. God sees great value in our broken hearts (Ps. 51:17; Isa. 57:15). There is service yet to be rendered for the humbled soul who can receive the Lord's forgiveness and leave a dark chapter of life covered by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Bud Talbert is pastor of Foundation Baptist Church in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

¹Notice the similarity of the expressions "Thou shalt know hereafter" and "Thou shalt follow me afterwards." Peter wanted to know *now*, and wanted to follow Him *now*.

²The term used here means that Peter was repeatedly *anathematizing* himself, i.e., calling down God's curse on himself if he were not telling the truth.

Pattern from Proverbs 31

by Sharon Rhoades

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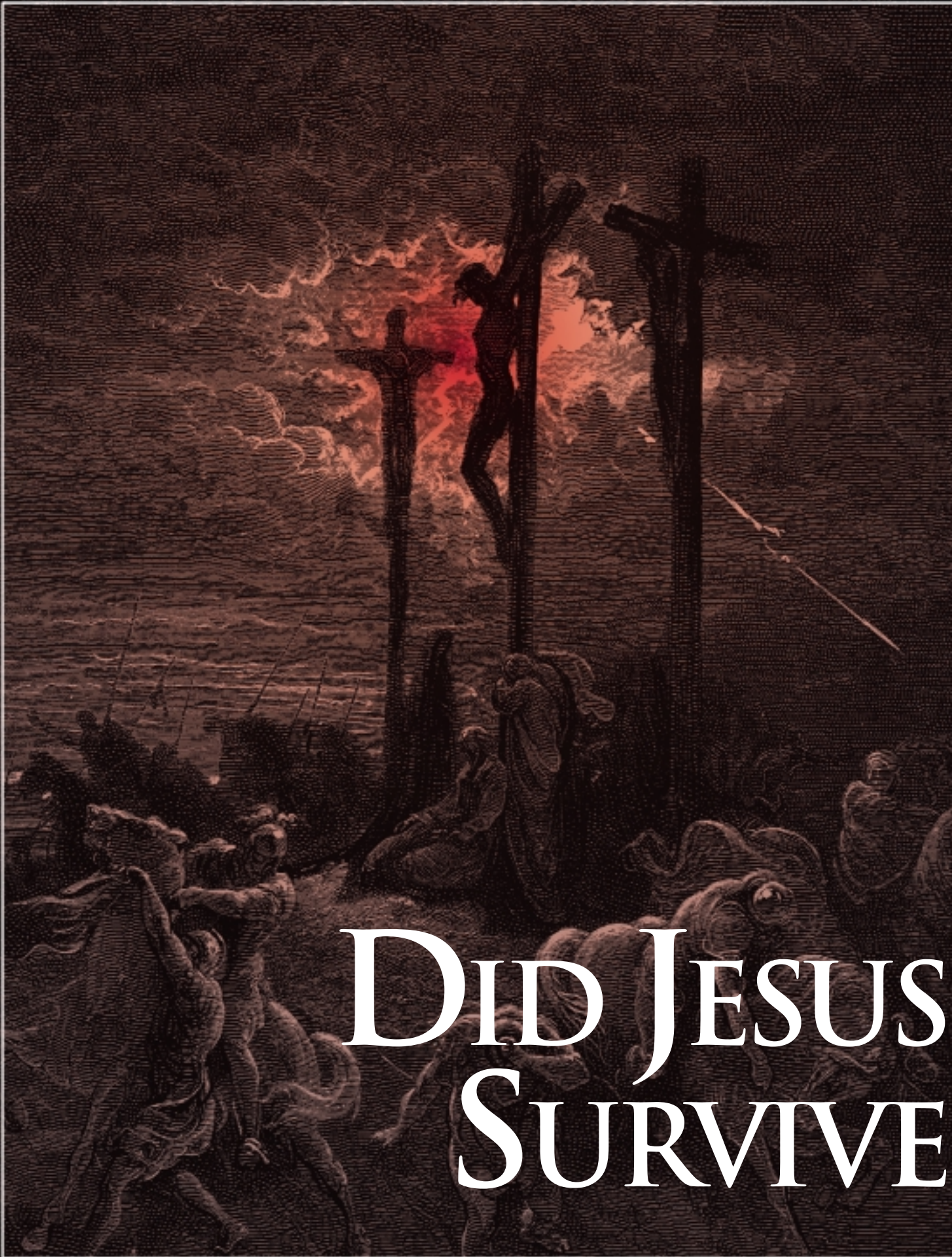
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The word of GOD to all the world



DID JESUS SURVIVE

Since the Resurrection of Christ is the central pillar of the Christian faith (1 Cor. 15:14), many skeptics have opposed its actuality as vigorously as they oppose creationism. One theory that is frequently put forth to deny the Resurrection is the suggestion that Jesus did not die on the cross but merely swooned, passing out from pain and loss of blood. Known as the "Swoon Theory," it also puts forward the possibility that Jesus was drugged into unconsciousness when someone offered him vinegar mixed with a narcotic (Matt. 27:34; Mark 15:23). Either way, He did not die on the cross, but rather passed into a state of extreme unconsciousness that seemed, to the people of those unscientific times, like true death. The theory continues that, once safely buried and out of the way, Jesus revived in the cool of the tomb and appeared to come back from the dead.

The chief problem with this hypothesis is that modern medical science has shown that Jesus could not have survived the flogging and crucifixion as described in the Gospels. The March 21, 1986, issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, one of the most prestigious medical publications in the world, investigated the crucifixion accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and determined that there is no scientific validity to the theory that Jesus survived crucifixion. After examining the minute details of the crucifixion story, the article's authors (two of whom are staff members at the world-famous Mayo Clinic) declared:

Jesus of Nazareth underwent Jewish and Roman trials, was flogged, and was sentenced to death by crucifixion. The scourging produced deep stripelike lacerations and appreciable blood loss, and it probably set the stage for hypovolemic shock, as evidenced by the fact that Jesus was too weakened to carry the crossbar (patibulum) to Golgotha. At the site of crucifixion, his wrists were nailed to the patibulum and, after the patibulum was lifted onto the upright post (stipes), his feet were nailed to the stipes. The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion was an interference with normal respirations. Accordingly, death resulted primarily from hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia. Jesus' death was ensured by

the thrust of a soldier's spear into his side. Modern medical interpretation of the historical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead when taken down from the cross (p. 1455).

At the end of their detailed, highly technical, nine-page article, these medical scholars concluded that "interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge" (p. 1463).

There is a related problem with the Swoon Theory. It assumes that, after Jesus had been flogged (Matt. 27:26), brutalized by the guards (Matt. 27:30), forced to carry His cross through the streets until He was too exhausted to go on (Luke 23:26), crucified, stabbed by a Roman spear so deeply in the rib cage that His bodily fluids gushed out (John 19:34), wrapped like a mummy in strips of cloth (John 19:40), and then laid in a tomb over which had been rolled a "great stone" (Matt. 27:60), He was somehow able to wake up after three days (without having eaten to regain His strength), unwrap Himself, push away the stone, and appear to His disciples in such perfect shape and health that they thought He was the risen, glorified Messiah. For Jesus to have been able to accomplish this superhuman feat of physical strength and medical recovery would have been almost as great a supernatural miracle as the Resurrection itself.

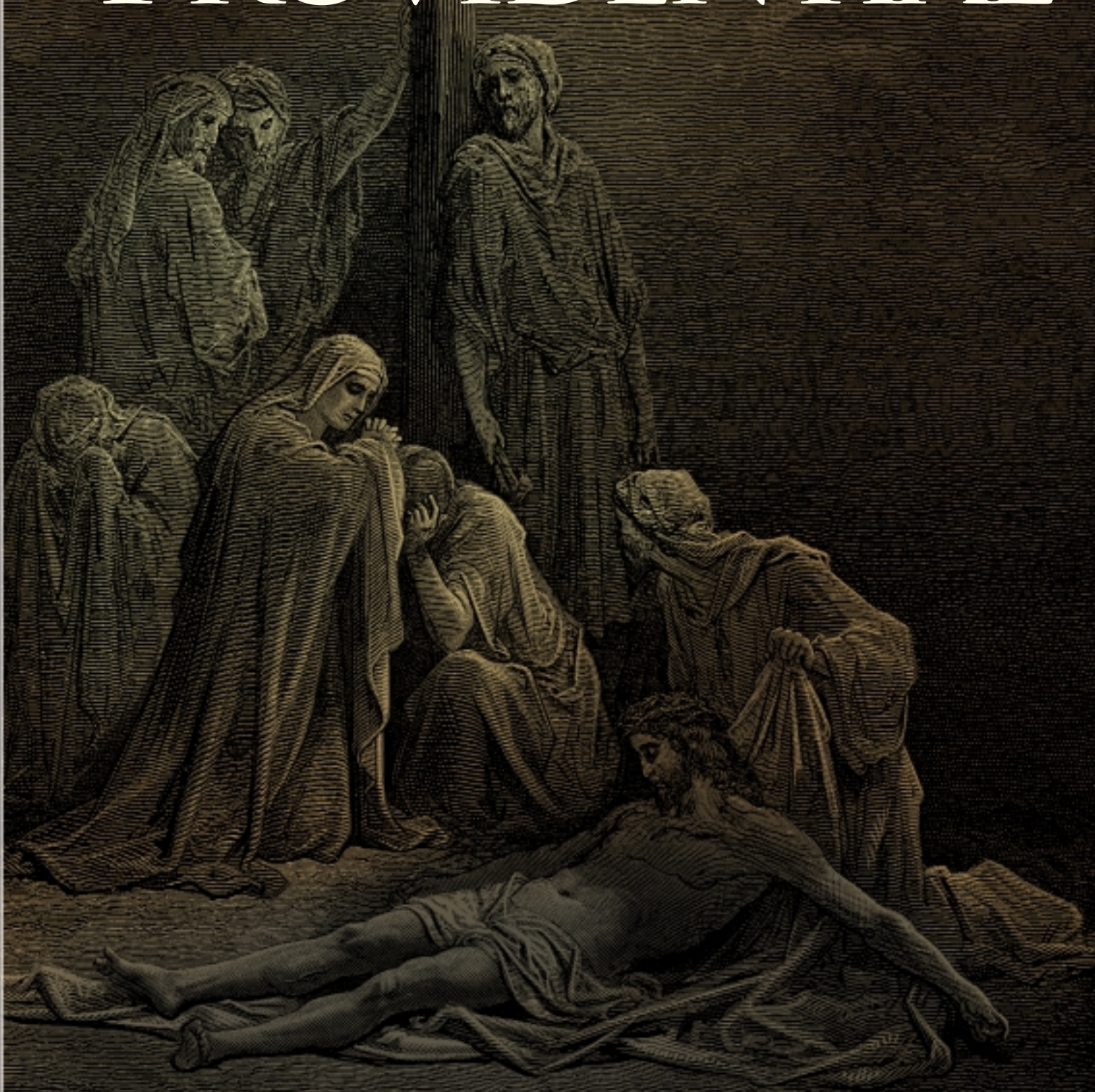
Reason dictates that the Swoon Theory has nothing to support it. The unimaginable punishments inflicted on Jesus' body by Roman brutality caused his life-functions to expire, just as the Bible says (Mark 15:37) and as modern medical science concludes. It was impossible, speaking from the purely natural realm, for an ordinary human being to have survived the torments inflicted on Jesus and then somehow be able to revive after three days and three nights in so perfect a condition that he needed no assistance "coming to" and escaping from his rock-covered tomb. Skeptics will have to search elsewhere in their ongoing attempts to deny the Resurrection.

Stephen Caesar is currently pursuing his master's degree in anthropology/archaeology at Harvard University. He is the author of the e-book *The Bible Encounters Modern Science*, available at www.1stbooks.com. Creationist articles by Caesar can be accessed at www.creationism.org/caesar/.

Stephen Caesar

CRUCIFIXION?

PROVIDENTIAL



DULLNESS

Layton Talbert

An Easter Meditation

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record three occasions on which the Lord Jesus explicitly forewarned his disciples of His approaching betrayal, death, and resurrection.

The first occasion prompted Peter's rebuke of the Lord and the Lord's rebuke in reply (Matt.16; Mark 8; Luke 9). Soon after, the Lord repeated the prediction (Matt.17; Mark 9; Luke 9). With the stinging rebuke of Peter still fresh in their minds, it is no wonder that, though the disciples "did not understand" His statement and "were deeply grieved," nonetheless "they were afraid to ask him."

Their lack of understanding at this point is not particularly mystifying. "Their views of a reigning Messiah made His words utterly enigmatical to them" (Hiebert). But on this second occasion, Luke alone adds some remarkable terminology when he records that the Lord's statement "was hid [concealed] from them," literally "in order that they should not perceive it." *Was hidden?* By whom? *In order that they should not perceive it?* Why? The grammatical force of the verbs unmistakably implies that "they were not allowed to understand the saying" (Alfred Plummer).

The third occasion (Luke 18:31-34) is even more puzzling. After Jesus again explicitly spelled out His approaching death and resurrection, Luke pens a three-fold statement of the disciples' utter incomprehension of Christ's unambiguous prediction: (1) they did not understand these things, (2) this saying was hidden from them, and (3) they did not know these things.

Which word did they not understand? Who was hiding these clear predictions from their comprehension? Most commentators appeal to the context of the parallel passages in Matthew (20:20-28) and Mark (10:35-45) to support their explanation that the disciples were simply distracted by the anticipation of their part in the glory of an earthly kingdom. Their preoccupation with the earthly and physical made them

insensitive to spiritual truth.

But that explanation is not fully satisfying here for two reasons. First, Luke himself does not offer that context to help explain his unusual remarks. Second, even that explanation does not adequately account for the full grammatical force of these three expressions of incomprehension piled on top of one another.

**Why would the
Lord reveal some-
thing so crucial
yet, at the same
time, "hide" it
from the very ones
to whom He was
revealing it?**

So what does this statement of the disciples' incomprehension of the Lord's clear words mean? Luke later offers the key that helps unlock what is going on here. In Luke 24 he records that, after His Resurrection, Christ showed Himself to the disciples and said "These are the words which I spoke unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written . . . concerning me." It was at that precise moment that Christ Himself finally "*opened* their understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures" that "it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day" (24:44-46).

How is it that Jesus' own disciples, who heard such predictions repeatedly, did not understand or remember them, yet Jesus' enemies *did* understand and remember them (Matt. 27:62)? The inspired phraseology of the text indicates that the disciples failed to comprehend this truth because even while Christ was revealing it to them, it was simultaneously being "hidden from them." By whom? By the Lord Himself! Only the Lord, then, could remove that dullness and incomprehension—which is exactly what Luke says happened! Clearly, it was *Christ Himself* who was suspending their understanding even while He was revealing predictive truth to them. And it was Christ alone who could then open their understanding to finally comprehend the truth they had previously heard. But why?

Why would the Lord reveal something so crucial yet, at the same time, "hide" it from the very ones to

whom He was revealing it? Plummer suggests a partial answer when he observes that the disciples' "dulness was providential and it became a security to the church for the truth of the resurrection." The words and deeds of Christ's enemies who remembered supplies the rest of the answer.

The Lord revealed yet hid this from the disciples *to ensure that they would do nothing to cast any suspicion on the authenticity of the Resurrection*. Any confident anticipation of the Resurrection on their part could be misconstrued as casting some suspicion on the disappearance of the body. In spite of Christ's repeated and unambiguous prediction that He would rise from the dead the third day, *none* of His followers actually expected or anticipated such an event. So Plummer again correctly notes that "the theory that they believed [in the Resurrection] because they *expected* Him to rise again is against all the evidence."

Yet, it was not "hidden" from the enemies of Christ. *They understood and remembered*. How? And why? God not only prevented the disciples, through this "providential dullness," from doing anything that might compromise the integrity of the Resurrection. But God also actually employed the unbelief and hostility (and understanding and memory) of His own enemies to *help establish and validate the authenticity of the Resurrection*. By securing the tomb and setting the guard (Matt. 27:62-66), and by having to concoct such an implausible alibi (Matt. 28:11-15), God's enemies actually *helped* Him validate the certainty of the very truths they themselves rejected (see Ps. 76:10). With all the precautions taken by His enemies to keep Him in the grave, there could be no other explanation than that He really had risen from the dead! It was a divine master-stroke.

One final note of illustration and personal application. John Owen, the brilliant theologian who relished the simple but powerful preaching of the unlearned John Bunyan, once warned:

For a man solemnly to undertake the interpretation of any portion of Scripture without invocation of God, to be taught and instructed by his Spirit, is a high provocation of him; nor shall I expect the discovery of

truth from any one who thus proudly engages in a work so much above his ability.

This episode of "providential dullness" underscores the truth that God Himself holds the gift of comprehending even what He plainly reveals in the Word. He is free to hide from us, for His own reasons, even the most obvious of Biblical truths. Without His illumination, we are prone to error, to insensitivity, to dullness. May He help us never to become confident in our ability to decipher eternal, spiritual, God-given truth but, beyond the sacred page, to seek Him.

Dr. Layton Talbert is a *Frontline* Contributing Editor who lives in Travelers Rest, South Carolina.

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Ionela was seven. She was just beginning to get her permanent teeth. She had been adopted along with a younger boy by an older couple, Cornelia and her husband Petru. There was also an older, grown daughter in the family. Cornelia and Petru loved both Ionela and the boy. To provide for the family needs, Petru had taken work in Israel and had been away from home and out of the country for many weeks.

On Thursday morning, Ionela walked to school as she regularly did. And after school, she walked toward home, accompanied by a boy who lived nearby. As they walked, Ionela had a pencil in her hand and was playing with it. The boy decided to tease her a bit and grabbed the pencil away. He threw it down on the sidewalk a few steps back where they had just walked.

Ionela turned and hurried to pick up the pencil, stepping into the path of a truck backing (perhaps too hurriedly) out of a driveway. The driver had seen the children, and had waited for them to pass out of sight beyond a house wall, but he had no way of knowing that Ionela would suddenly dart back into his path, trying to retrieve her pencil.

The impact of the truck knocked Ionela several feet. Her head hit the pavement, causing a severe concussion and immediate unconsciousness. Her life ebbed away in a few brief minutes. She was pronounced dead at the scene, but her lifeless body was taken to the local hospital so that the coroner could officially register the cause of death, a thing required in cases of all but “natural” death.

The badly bruised body of Ionela was taken home and lovingly prepared for the wake that Friday evening and the funeral to follow on Saturday afternoon. Her bloody and soiled clothing was removed and replaced with a colorful pair of new stockings and white shoes, a pink skirt, a clean white blouse, and a red sweater she had probably never before worn. The blood was washed off her face, her long brown hair was combed back, and her best hair pins were used to hold it in place. The blue and purple bruises on both sides of her head were readily visible, as well as a sizable dark blue knot in the middle of her high forehead. Her long eyelashes were prominent over her eyes now closed in death.

Her newly clothed body was gently placed in her small wooden casket. A white linen cloth lined the casket and was draped over the sides. Beside Ionela were placed three inexpensive dolls that had no doubt been among her favorite toys. The casket was placed on a table in the middle of the cottage’s compact sitting room.

Friday evening at 8:15, the wake began. More than 50 relatives, neighbors, and friends crowded into the room, spilling into the adjacent short hallway and out into the courtyard. The close quarters and low ceiling soon made the room uncomfortably warm. Several hymns were sung. The

American preacher visiting in town spoke from John 14:1–6. In the presence of death, the human heart yearns for the consolations of God’s promises. The Romanian pastor translated, and spoke as well.

Saturday afternoon, well before three, a large and rapidly expanding crowd assembled in and outside the small house. The sky was bright and the sun was warm. By three o’clock, the house and yard were choked with people. Nearly all of the women were attired in long black dresses, with heads covered. Schoolchildren came, all with bundles of spring flowers in their hands to offer in tribute to their school-mate—daffodils of all sorts, red tulips, branches of blooming yellow forsythia, leafy new growths of lilac, and more. The children’s choir from Ionela’s church, numbering perhaps 30, dressed crisply in white shirts and blouses with black or dark blue slacks and skirts, also bore flower bundles. There were, besides, teachers from the school and the members of the church fanfara (a brass band totaling eight to ten players this day), which would play at the house during the procession and again at the graveside.

After a brief private service in the house, the preachers conducted the body to a place prepared for it in the yard. Straddled across two common stools, the open casket was soon surrounded by inquisitive children and knowing adults.

The aged deacon led the diverse congregation in a couple of hymns, lining out the verses for those who

did not know the words or have hymnbooks. Penned-up turkeys gobbled and strutted at the side of the house. No one but the American preacher seemed to notice.

The American preacher spoke first. As the apostle commanded, he sought to comfort those who mourned with the blessed hope of Christ’s return, as recorded in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. He spoke of the fear of death that faces those without the knowledge of Christ, but the hope and consolation for those “in Christ.” He concluded his remarks after about 20 minutes. The Romanian pastor again served as translator. Next the Romanian pastor spoke. His remarks focused on the daughter of Jairus (Luke 8:40–56), but there would be no resurrection this day. The need for personal faith in Christ was emphasized by both who spoke.

During the outside service, the casket was crowded about by dozens of curious and puzzled children, some as young as five or six. Such a strange experience: all the funerals they had attended before were for old people—grandparents, great uncles and great aunts, aged neighbors—but never before had they seen one so young in death. Halfway through the preaching, the children began to lay their flower bundles in the casket with Ionela. (They would later be retrieved and carried to the cemetery.) She was soon surrounded by a sea of color.

The horse-drawn hearse was just outside the entrance to

Ionela:

A Child’s Death in Romania

Doug Kutilek

the yard. The driver was an antique, white-haired man. The team consisted of two horses, one black and one white. The glass-sided hearse was black and had painted on either side the solemn Scripture admonitions "Prepare to meet thy God" and "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found." Did anyone but the American preacher notice?

The casket, still open for view, was placed in the hearse and secured for the two-kilometer journey to the cemetery. The children's church choir led the procession, followed by the fanfara, then men from the church, the preachers, and the aged deacon. Next came the hearse, followed by the immediate family and the assembled mourners. From front to back, the somber group stretched a full 200 meters and more, the hearse being almost exactly in the middle. Slowly the assemblage moved and the band played its mournful dirges.

The route to the cemetery took the entourage directly past the spot where the grievous accident occurred. A young man from the church showed the preachers and the deacon the still-visible stains of Ionela's blood on the pavement. As the hearse passed the place, the uncontrolled sobs of the mother were heard. Daily she will pass this spot, and daily she will grieve anew.

Though long and slow, the walk was not unpleasant. The cherry, plum, and peach trees were awash in blossoms white and pink, and they gently perfumed the air. The yellow forsythia, the white and gold of daffodils, the red tulips and the blues and yellows of other flowers almost . . . almost . . . distracted the mind. But no. There was something incongruous about such a funeral in springtime. In autumn, perhaps. In the gloom and cold of deep winter, naturally. But not on such a day as this.

Along the way, most people stopped their activities and stood in respect. Women leaned out of house windows, and men stood in doorways. Some shed tears of sorrow.

The procession went up a long hill, a hill crowned with a long-used cemetery. The first grave inside the wall was that of a five-year-old boy—evidence of another funeral that had come too early.

About midway across the cemetery was the open grave, dug earlier in the day or perhaps the day before in the sticky, wet clay. The excavated soil was piled on both sides

of the grave. The wooden poles on which the casket was to rest spanned the opening from dirt mound to dirt mound. The much-used ropes by which the casket would finally be lowered also spanned the grave. The American preacher spoke a few more words, this time based on Jesus' words about receiving the kingdom of God like a child (Luke 18:15–17). After these words, a final hymn and a final band number, the white cloth which lined the casket and cascaded over the sides was drawn up over the small, lifeless form. The domed wooden lid, which listed the occupant's name and age, was slid into place and the iron nails which were to secure it were driven into the wood. The ropes were held securely, the poles were slid back, and the casket descended, carrying the body of Ionela to its resting place until the resurrection of the righteous. The casket was then showered with the children's flower bundles, along with coins from a few superstitious adults who believe the coins will help the deceased in the afterlife.

A few individuals threw clods of dirt onto the casket; then the grave diggers used their hoes to pull dirt quickly and efficiently back into the grave. The grieving mother was overcome with sorrow and collapsed in a faint. Women close by caught her and supported her; the aged deacon, a retired physician, attended to her.

The crowd dispersed, most on foot, most to the usual routine of life. But not the family. A familiar voice, a precious smile, a treasured hug had been suddenly stolen away. Not today, not tomorrow, indeed really not ever will there be "routine." Every time there is an empty place at the table, every night the empty bed is seen, every time that terrible place of death is passed, every time the laughter of children is heard outside, every time the flowers of spring return to gladden the earth, there will be a reminder, and every time there will be sorrow. But not the sorrow of those "who have no hope." Christ has promised, and Christ will fulfill His promise. He has prepared a place. And He will come again. The dead in Christ shall rise. Ionela shall rise. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Comfort one another with these words."

Doug Kutilek is a commuting missionary to Romania based in Wichita, Kansas.

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He thought about her even as he nodded and pretended he was listening. Then he caught himself, realizing that his nod was a lie, and apologized. "Sorry, I don't know where my mind is this morning," he told Jerry, first counselee of the day. "I don't think I've heard a single word you've said."

The young man sitting across from him just smiled and shrugged. "That's okay, Pastor Tom," he said. "I'm sure you have a lot on your mind—I mean, being the senior pastor and all. It's amazing that you get anything done with so many phone calls and people wanting to see you."

Pastor Tom didn't tell the young man that the number of phone calls that morning was fewer than normal. He had been up since 5:30 with barely a cup of coffee and a chocolate donut to pacify his morning hunger. His first meeting had been at 7:30 with his pastoral staff to discuss the new budget and other miscellaneous details associated with managing the Christian school and day care center. At precisely 8:15, his secretary had forwarded the call from Pastor George Stapleton, whose associate pastor had recently fallen into immorality; the call had mostly entailed letting Pastor Stapleton cry on his shoulder for a while.

The ringing telephone snapped Pastor Tom back to his office and the young student sitting across from his desk. He answered the call. It was his secretary, setting up another counseling appointment for that afternoon. After he hung up, he smiled at the young man who had been waiting patiently for his advice.

"I'm sorry," he said. "Now where we?"

"Basically, I'm not sure what to do," the young man said. "I think God might be calling me to preach, but He's also given me a strong love for painting that I've had since I was little. My parents want me to be an artist, but I'd like to preach too."

Pastor Tom was used to the questions. At least a couple times each week someone came into his office asking about the mystery of God's will.

"Thank you, Pastor Tom," Jerry said after their talk was over. "You don't know how much I appreciate your taking the time to talk to me about this. It means a great deal to me. But I've been curious. Where do you go when you need counseling?"

Pastor Tom stared at him. "Sorry?"

Jerry shrugged. "I mean, you probably need somebody to share your problems with too—that is, if you have problems."

Pastor Tom smiled. "I'm a sinner just like you, Jerry. I most certainly have problems."

After Jerry was gone, Pastor Tom settled back into his chair and thought about the problem that had been occupying his mind all morning: his wife, Lisa. Their relationship had been strained ever since he brought up the topic of having another child. Six months ago, their last child, Alyssa, had died only days after her birth due to a mysterious chemical imbalance in her blood. He suspected that Lisa was afraid the medical problem would reoccur should they try to have another child. But what could he do? Every time he had

approached her and tried to remind her of God's sovereignty in their lives, she turned away, her mind consumed by the tragedy of little Alyssa's death. Jerry was right. He needed to talk to someone about this, but who? He knew he wouldn't feel comfortable discussing it with any of his assistant pastors, and discussing it with his secretary would hardly be appropriate. If his father was still alive, he would certainly have gone to him.

As Pastor Tom scanned the framed portraits lining his desk, he instantly knew who he needed to see. *Yes, Lord*, he thought, his eyes straying out the window. Then he called his secretary and canceled his afternoon meetings.

"You're not sick, are you?" Her voice sounded concerned. "There's a flu going around."

"I'm fine. I just need to make a visit that I've been putting off for some time. It will probably take all afternoon."

Within ten minutes, he was away from the city and following gravel roads into the sticks. He turned off the air conditioning and rolled down the driver's side window, letting the wind tousle his hair. It felt good to get away. It felt good to smell the familiar smells. He didn't understand why he had put this visit off for so long. Their talks always cleared his head and brought him back to the simple logic of a child. He knew by the time his visit was over he would have the answer to his problem.

The Counselor

Adam Blumer

The house hadn't changed much. After parking, he followed the brick sidewalk to the front door, where a woman with a wide, sincere smile greeted him. "Hello, Pastor Tom. It's been a while, hasn't it?"

He ducked his head apologetically. "Too long."

She led him into a large living room where half a dozen senior citizens were watching *Wheel of Fortune*. "Why don't you just wait here for a moment," she said. "Let me tell her you're here."

When the woman returned, she led Pastor Tom down the hallway to a door. She knocked twice, then opened the door to a simple bedroom with two matching beds and dressers. A small, shriveled woman with wispy gray hair and bespectacled blue eyes sat in the corner rocking chair, a large display-size Bible spread open on her knee.

"Thomas!" she exclaimed, her face alive with joy. "What a



wonderful surprise."

Feeling like a little boy, Pastor Tom leaned over the rocking chair and gave his counselor a gentle squeeze. "How are you, Mom?" he asked.

"I'm just praising the Lord," she said with gusto and motioned toward one of the beds. "Marlene is gone with her nephew for the weekend, so I've got the place all to myself. Praise the Lord! I get a break from her snoring for a few days."

Pastor Tom glanced around the room and recalled the cavernous five-bedroom house that had been his childhood home. The old place had been sold, all the furniture auctioned off, to finance his mother's care in the nursing home. Though this room seemed small and cramped in comparison, his mother didn't seem to mind. After he took a seat, she shared the latest family news, showing him Janelle's senior portrait and the latest snapshots of Bill's baby.

"Janelle is going into missionary nursing, you know," she said proudly. "Isn't that wonderful? And you were so worried about her pursuing that modeling nonsense."

"Me worried? I seem to recall that you were the one who suggested we drive down there and drag her out of that college."

She chuckled softly but didn't refute his version of the story. Inserting a small dried rose leaf to mark her place, she closed the immense Bible and studied him questioning.

"You usually come on Saturdays and bring Lisa along. Is there something you need to talk about?"

Pastor Tom could have been five years old again. He felt as though he had been transported to one of the stools in the old

kitchen, several chocolate chip cookies spread out on the Formica counter top before him. He told her about his problem with Lisa. He withheld not a single detail that might shed further light on the problem or its potential solution. Instantly, he forgot the nursing home: the antiseptic hallways, the institutional draperies and furniture. He was sitting in that old kitchen again, feeding not only on Mom's famous cookies but also on her adept advice. When little Isaac Jensen socked him in the nose during third grade, she had been there. When he gave his tenth-grade speech on creationism to a classroom full of evolutionists, she had been there. She had tirelessly attended every play, every basketball game, every Christmas musical. She had washed his basketball jerseys, the clothes he packed away for Bible college, the shirt he wore to his father's funeral. She had made a quilt as a wedding present, knitted baby booties for his first child, cross-stitched a pillow for his first home. She knew him better than anyone.

When he was finished, she smiled and patted his knee. "Well, of course Lisa is scared. Any woman who considers having a child and isn't scared has a problem. Thomas, it will all come out in the wash. You just go home and wrap that woman in your arms. It always worked for your father."

Pastor Tom sighed and smiled at her. Her solutions were always so simple. And they rarely didn't work. "I love you, Mom," he said.

Her eyes were misty. "I love you too, Son." She winked at him. "You need advice? You know where to find me."

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

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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

Honing a Sermon to a Razor Edge

Years ago, a preacher was supplying the pulpit of a country church. After several weeks, one lady in the congregation exclaimed, "I love your sermons! I can always tell what you're preaching about!" My friend, whose messages this woman was complimenting, picked up on the implied complaint: this was a saint who had endured some pretty aimless preaching in the past.

Pointless preaching blunts the Spirit's sword. That's inexcusable, since even the naked Word of God alone is "sharper than any twoedged sword" (Heb. 4:12). That statement is not just a striking metaphor. It describes Scripture's precise character when thrust by the Spirit into the inner man. A single verse of quoted Scripture has often been a stroke sharp enough to pierce a hardened sinner's heart and bring him shattered to his knees. So it was for the workman who came to Christ after nothing more than overhearing C. H. Spurgeon testing the acoustics of London's vast Crystal Palace by crying out in a loud voice, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

But God intends that preaching give even further advantage to the already keen edge of His Word. It does this in a number of ways. It unsheathes the text from the scabbard of its context so that its point flashes brightly in the initial interpretation. It then aims that point intentionally at the hearer's heart. Accurate explanation thrusts it unerringly and adds the cutting edge that sustains and deepens its penetration. Illustration and application thrust it skillfully again and again. And all the while the preacher's fervor wields

the whole blade with the power of sanctified personality, adding forcefulness to pointedness. That's what the Lord desires that our preaching do. How then are sermons honed to that razor edge?

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

Fundamental Principles for Preaching

There are two sermon preparation principles that must be understood before we can even begin thinking about sharpening the sermon. The first is the crucial contribution of our text's theme. Think of it this way: if the text (and the sermon proclaiming it) is a blade, then the theme is the blade's sharp central point. Finding and using this theme penetratingly, then, is strategic in determining the precision with which a sermon pierces. This fact could not be overstated. The sermon theme—the one conspicuous, pointed thing we're preaching about—is the critical factor for a sermon's effectiveness. This will become vividly apparent as we proceed, but this fundamental ought to be reviewed every time we prepare a message. Discovering and wielding the text's own theme is the decisive element that determines the sharpness with which a sermon cuts.

The second principle which must be grasped is this: if the sermon theme is the piercing point of the blade, then the sermon's major divisions are the sharpened blade-edge that facilitates the incision. If the divisions, then, do not continue the same cut begun by the point, the sermon will not pierce deeply. I speak "as a man" here, since we all understand that the Spirit of God sometimes moves powerfully through even the poorest of preaching. Most preachers discover quickly, however, that it is generally their sanctified best that the Spirit uses most.

Here, then, are two foundational sermon preparation principles: (1) the sermon theme is the piercing point of the text's blade, and (2) the sermon's major divisions

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are the sharpened edge of the text's blade that continues the cut. Once we have grasped these two principles, we're prepared to talk about "honing." There are only two ways of honing: hermeneutically and homiletically. Understanding and applying these "whetstones" is what the rest of this column is about.

Honing the Sermon Hermeneutically

"Herman who?" somebody asks. Just for clarity's sake let's dredge up a working definition from seminary days. Hermeneutics is the science of correctly interpreting a Biblical text. It focuses specifically upon understanding the original author's thoughts within their immediate context. How can this science, generally confined to the hours spent in the study, be used at the very hour of our preaching to give a sermon a cutting edge? There are two ways.

Explain the theme from the text. First, we hermeneutically hone a sermon's edge by exposing the theme exegetically within the text before actually announcing it sermonically within the message. In other words, we can use a portion of our sermon introduction to talk the people through at least part of the contextual development of the text and the interpretational process by which we ourselves discovered the text's theme.

Pointless preaching blunts the Spirit's sword. That's inexcusable, since even the naked Word of God alone is "sharper than any twoedged sword" (Heb. 4:12). That statement is not just a striking metaphor. It describes Scripture's precise character when thrust by the Spirit into the inner man.

Here's the reasoning behind this approach. A major factor in whether our hearers take preaching seriously is whether they are persuaded that God, not the preacher, is talking (1 Thess. 2:13). That persuasion should begin with our justifying the sermon's theme hermeneutically. Most people, even the lost, are astute enough to know whether or not they think our point is the text's point. A little bit of exegetical clarification shows them that it is. It flashes the point before their eyes explanatorily. The sermon therefore begins with a hermeneutically sharpened point.

I'd like to talk through an example, but we'll need to be looking at our Bibles in order for the explanations to be clear. If you'd be willing to take a moment to get your Bible, we'll think through a text just like I'm suggesting that we do with our people in a service.

Open your Bible to Romans 12 and look at some of the most familiar verses in the New Testament. Our people can quote them. They have heard many sermons on them. But do they actually know what their point is? Let's see.

Look at verses 1 and 2. Who or what is the primary thing these verses are talking about? Paul is beseeching us to do something. What is it? Whatever it is . . . that's his point.

Initially we might say that his point is "present your bodies a living sacrifice." But then we notice that verse 2 contains two further commands: "be not conformed" and "be ye transformed." So now it looks like Paul is beseeching us to do three things. But a theme, by definition, is not several things but the primary thing. So, what is the primary thing Paul is communicating through these three commands?

Look at verse 1 again. What about the words "which is your reasonable service?" We've not considered them yet. How does this phrase relate to the three verbs? Our translation relates it to "present your bodies" with the italicized words "*which is*" as though "reasonable service" is renaming the command. It is. But it probably relates to the second and third commands in the same way. In other words—our "reasonable service" is being defined by three activities, not merely one. "Reasonable Service," therefore, is probably the point Paul was writing about in these verses.

That brief explanation takes one to two minutes to talk through in a live setting where you wait a few seconds to get a verbal response to your questions. The questions, by the way, are critical to getting the people to think with you. Let them answer before you continue. If they don't, rephrase the questions, but don't move on in your explanation until the majority of your folks can come up with the answers themselves after actually discovering them in the text. This is the secret to making a text really come alive—make the people look at it and answer key questions about it until they themselves get its theme figured out. There's a world of difference between our telling them what the theme is and their discovering it for themselves.

Obviously, you've thought through much more exegesis than you're sharing publicly. For instance, you've had to consider the possibility that the two further commands of verse 2 are subpoints of "present your bodies." The passage would be saying then, "Present your body," and the way to do that is twofold: (1) be not conformed, and (2) be transformed. Some congregations will include well-taught people who have thought of that possibility and who will want to hear you address it. So the amount of time and detail you give to this aspect of displaying the theme within the text will differ from church to church. But the principle stands either way: you can sharpen the theme hermeneutically by, first of all, exposing it exegetically within the text before actually announcing it sermonically within the message.

State the theme in the words of the text. That brings us to the second way to sharpen a theme hermeneutically.

Attempt, in so far as possible, to state the sermon's theme in the text's own wording. Contemporary homiletical advice counsels against this approach. I understand these writers' concern. They place a high value on freshness, advertising, and relevance. But I would maintain that accuracy, clarity, and authority take precedence. And one way of achieving these greater goals is to let the text's wording stand.

This does not mean, however, that you merely state the obvious. This is where careful hermeneutics comes in again. For instance, let's return to "reasonable service." That's accurate. It's clear. And talking the audience through its discovery heightens its authority. But there's more here to be uncovered that will also actually help achieve those secondary goals of freshness, advertising, and relevance.

A careful check of the good lexicons indicates that "service" is a term for priestly "worship." "Reasonable" may actually mean "spiritual." But here it probably refers, like our word "rational," to something that makes good sense in view of the facts. In this context, since chapter 12 opens with "I beseech you, therefore," the facts consist of Romans' first 11 chapters. In other words, "I beseech you in view of the facts just explained in the last 11 chapters."

Now if we use words like "worship" and "rational" (or even "making good sense"), we're not only stating the theme in the text's own wording, but we're infusing those words with the fresh Scriptural meaning that is itself an advertisement that there is something coming which the audience may not already know. In addition, in this case, we've actually hit upon a topic that is a buzzword among contemporary Christians—"worship." It's been lying there in Romans 12:1 all this time, but it was your exegetical work that uncovered it for your people right before their eyes. Now, when you conclude with them that the theme of these verses is "Rational Worship" (and actually, you can make a strong contextual case for its being the theme for the entirety of chapters 12-16), they are much more likely to feel the keen authority of the theme—and more likely to be interested in it as well.

Of course, you can tweak the wording even further and still be stating your theme in the text's own words. For instance, "Scripturally Sensible Worship" includes the contextual nuance of the "therefore" which points back to Romans 1-11. Or, a less elevated statement which is still in keeping with the text's own words might be "Worship That Makes Scriptural Sense." Want to put it into a proposition? Both "Let's Worship Reasonably" or "We Ought to Worship Reasonably" will work, depending on whether you want the proposition to be hortatory or obligatory.

Regardless of our final statement of the theme, my point is that the text's own words ought to be preferred before contemporary considerations in order to hone our theme to a razor edge hermeneutically. So far we've applied the hermeneutical whetstone to the text's theme only. But take the same approach to exposing

the text's major divisions and subdivisions and see if your people don't feel like their understanding increases dramatically.

Honing the Sermon Homiletically

Why are some sermons hard to follow, even after their theme is clearly announced? One reason is that sometimes they do not develop that exact theme. Remember that if the sermon theme is the point of the blade, then the sermon's main points are the edge that continues the cut. If the sermon does not continue the same cut begun by the point, the sermon will not pierce deeply. Let's look at some examples of themes and main points. Rate each main point as (1) razor sharp, (2) sharp, (3) dull, or (4) not even on the same blade!

Theme: Christian Living Involves Agony

I. There Are Many Trials in the Christian Life

II. It Is Agony to Resist Sin

III. There Are Still Many Blessings to Being a Christian

IV. Agony Accompanies Intercessory Prayer

How did you rate each point? I would call the first dull (meaning, not "uninteresting" but "uncutting"). Admittedly, it does relate to the general subject area of "Christian living." And "agony" and "many trials" are both negative aspects of that general subject area. So, it's possible to make a case for "many trials in the Christian life" being a development of the "agony" of "Christian living." But I'm having to reason that out. It isn't crystal clear in the point itself. To illustrate what's needed, look at the second point ("It Is Agony to Resist Sin"). That statement requires no second thoughts in order to see its immediate development of the theme. I would rate it at least sharp (though it could be restated to be even sharper). What's the difference between it and the first point? The difference is that the second point incorporates the unique emphasis of the theme.

Let's talk about that for a moment. Sharp sermon themes are not merely one-word subjects—like "prayer," "devotion," "Scripture," or "worship." Nor are they broad categories like "Christian living." Sharp themes narrow broad subjects to unique emphases. They do this by adding additional words that carve out only one slice of the major subject. We preach, therefore, not about "sin," but about "committing sin," or "committing willful sin" or "the consequences of committing willful sin." Notice how every new word added to the general subject limits it even further and therefore confines your sermon to dealing with an even smaller aspect of it. That smaller aspect is the unique emphasis of the sermon.

For instance, in the first example we are announcing that our sermon will be, not merely about sin, but more specifically, about committing it. "Committing" sin is the unique emphasis that I'm announcing this sermon will develop. In the second example we are announcing an even narrower emphasis: not merely committing sin,

but doing so willfully. Now “willfully” is the unique emphasis which has captured the listener’s interest. In the third example we are announcing that our sermon will be not merely about committing sin willfully, but the consequences for doing so. Now the listener is expecting to hear a sermon about consequences if he sins willfully.

We sometimes think that our sermon construction is tight and logical if every major point has something to

before the listener through the use of a well-placed “Its” in each point. And the third point is now placed last, so that the message concludes with a positive encouragement. By the way, the English word agony comes from a Greek noun (*agōn*) and verb (*agonizōmai*) which are used a total of 13 times in the New Testament. In fact, they are used to describe every aspect of the Christian life, beginning with entrance into it (Luke 13:24). I once used these references as the texts for a Wednesday evening series titled “Life is an Agony.” (Someone jokingly said afterwards that Wednesday nights became the agony!)

Let’s take one more example.

Theme: The Power of Prayer

I. Prayer Was the Consistent Practice of Our Lord

II. There Are Unspeakable Blessings in Seeing God Answer Prayer

III. Prayer’s Power Is Directly Proportionate to Its Scripturalness

What’s the general subject area this time? What is the unique emphasis? Actually, this theme could be taken in either of two directions. The general subject area here might be power and the limiting focus might be prayer. Or the subject area might be prayer and the limiting focus might be its power. The main points themselves would have to tell us which way the theme is cutting. Unfortunately, in this case they don’t. They turn both ways. The first emphasizes prayer not power, whereas the third emphasizes power not prayer. And the second deals with a completely different emphasis about prayer, namely, seeing God answer prayer.

If this speaker intended for his general subject area to be prayer and his unique emphasis to be its power, he needs to restate the points. He might even do well to restate the theme.

Theme: Prayer’s Power


I. Is Seen in the Consistent Practice of Our Lord

II. Is Experienced When We Receive Answers from Our Father

III. Is Directly Proportionate to Its Scripturalness.

Conclusion

One of our former presidents (I believe it was Herbert Hoover) was asked by his wife what the sermon one Sunday morning had been about. “Sin,” Hoover replied. “Well, what did the preacher say about it?” his wife pressed further, to which the president is reported to have grumped, “He’s against it!”

That’s a good start, as far as it goes. But if we want our people to see the general subjects and the specific emphases of God’s Word more clearly than that, we will need to invest the time and labor to hone our sermons, both hermeneutically and homiletically, to a razor edge. 

A single verse of quoted Scripture has often been a stroke sharp enough to pierce a hardened sinner’s heart and bring him shattered to his knees.

do with the general subject area of our theme. That’s like thinking that you can shave as well with the thick top ridge of a barber’s razor as you can with the sharply honed edge. The general subject area of a sermon is the thick part of the blade. Every qualifying word you add to it—like “committing,” “willfully,” or “consequences”—thins that thick part down to a more sharply honed edge. In order for the sermon to cut, you must use that edge rather than flipping the blade upside down to the thick ridge of its general subject.

Look back, for instance, at the third sermon point in the sample sermon outline above (“There Are Still Many Blessings to Being a Christian”). Again, this is a case of the point relating to the major subject—being a Christian—but it turns you away from the specific emphasis of agony to something else about Christian living. I would rate it a 4 on the suggested scale above. The fourth point (“Agony Accompanies Intercessory Prayer”) is sharp, but could be stated in such a way that the edge is even keener. Let me show you what I mean. Let’s restate those four points so that they unmistakably continue the same cut begun by the theme.

Theme: Christian Living Involves Agony

I. It Is Agony to Endure Its Many Trials

II. It Is Agony to Resist Its Many Temptations

III. It Is Agony to Engage in Its Intercessory Prayers

IV. Yet Its Agony Is Accompanied by Many Blessings

In this case, each point picks up and repeats the emphatic word of the theme (“agony”) and, with it, cuts through into an area of the general subject (Christian living). Even that general subject is kept



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Bring . . . the Books

The Life and Ministry of George Whitefield

George Whitefield was a servant-leader who patterned his life and ministry after the example of the Lord Himself, the model Servant-Leader. Perhaps the most challenging and compelling account of his life is Arnold Dallimore's two-volume *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the 18th Century Revival* (rpr. 1995, Banner of Truth). Each volume is nearly 600 pages, but Dallimore's presentation is enthralling.

Beyond introducing the reader to Whitefield and his ministry, Dallimore attempts to engage the reader in the passion and desire for the spirit of genuine revival that captured Whitefield. This biography is as much about revival as it is about Whitefield. Dallimore confesses that

this book goes forth with a mission. It is written with the profound conviction that the paramount need of the twentieth century is a mighty evangelical revival such as that which was experienced two hundred years ago. Thus, I have sought to show what were the doctrines used of God in the eighteenth-century Revival, and to display the extraordinary fervour which characterized the men whom God raised up in that blessed work (16).

Whitefield attributed his passion for learning to his mother's firm commitment to his education. His father died when George was only two years of age. After several years of self-education while helping his mother work the family inn, George was offered the opportunity to enter Oxford as a "servitor" who attended to all the needs of wealthier students. At Oxford Whitefield honed his ability to think critically and exegetically. His dual commitments to diligent study and hard work were applied to the Scriptures as well as to the classics and rendered Whitefield a man "mighty in the Scriptures."

In the midst of the moral laxity that pervaded Oxford during his student years, George became acquainted with a group of young men who shared his passion and commitment to God. Known as Methodists, their leaders, Charles and John Wesley, soon invited young George to join the group they called the "holy club." George eagerly engaged himself in the strict spiritual disciplines practiced by the members of the club, which included rising early each day and having lengthy devotions. The group strove for a self-discipline that left no moment wasted throughout the day. At nightfall they wrote a diary that enabled them to scrutinize their actions and condemn any fault in themselves which might be uncovered.

Whitefield came to know Christ as personal Savior during his Oxford years and preached his first sermon on June 27, 1736. He embarked on a public ministry that brought great glory to God, great blessing to men, and great personal cost to him. From the very early days of his ministry, Whitefield was known as a powerful


preacher. Benjamin Franklin heard him regularly and commented on his preaching:

Every accent, every emphasis, every modulation of voice, was so perfectly well turned and well placed, that, without being interested in the subject, one could not help being pleased with the discourse; a pleasure of much the same kind with that received from an excellent piece of music (116).

Although Franklin frequently heard the gospel preached by Whitefield and had intimate discourse with him regarding the status of his own soul, sadly, he never accepted the terms plainly set forth in Whitefield's preaching. However, countless thousands did come to know the saving power of Whitefield's gospel. Sleepless nights were spent in spiritual ministry to those who had been "awakened" to their need by his preaching. Nor was he picky about where he would preach, for when he was disallowed from the pulpits in the parish, he would take to the fields and declare that the world was his parish.

Whitefield was seemingly devoid of "human aim or personal ambition." Dallimore recounts the lengthy and difficult relationship between Whitefield and the Wesley brothers. The details of this relationship gleaned from personal correspondence between these men indicate the deep rifts and petty jealousies on the part of the Wesleys toward Whitefield. His spirit of love and support to the Wesleys is seen in several letters that have been preserved by Dallimore. Whitefield constantly gave as much ground as he could without compromising doctrine. In several private letters, he appealed to John to seek mutual ground where peace and unity might be maintained, but to no avail. Even after the unavoidable separation occurred, he maintained a loving and prayerful spirit toward the Wesleys. He modeled true servant leadership in that at great personal cost he stood obedient to his divine authority while attempting to influence others to do the same.

Whitefield was not interested in comfort or ease of ministry. He crossed the ocean on at least four occasions in order to reach the Indian tribes in Georgia. All he gained personally from his great evangelistic campaigns and from the sale of his sermons would go to support the orphanages that were started in America under his leadership.

Spurgeon confessed, "Often as I have read his life, I am conscious of distinct quickening whenever I turn to it. . . . My own model, if I may have such a thing in due subordination to my Lord, is George Whitefield; but with unequal footsteps must I follow in his glorious track" (II, 534). 

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

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Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

An article in a practical journal correlated “vision” in Proverbs 29:18 with setting long-range goals (“Clearing Your Vision,” *Leadership* 12 [Spring 1991]: 120–24). The interpretation of “vision” as long-range goals is one of the more popular ways of explaining this well-known verse. Another prevalent interpretation connects “vision” with evangelism and the verb “perish” with rejecting the gospel: we need an evangelistic vision, for people are perishing.

While both interpretations reflect Biblical truth taught in other Biblical texts, they are not in harmony with the last half of the verse. This proverb sets up a contrast between the positive results of obedience to the law and the negative results from having a lack of “vision.” This is to say that, on the one hand, by keeping God’s authoritative law one experiences blessing (v. 18b) but, on the other, by failing to have something equally authoritative (“vision”) one receives the obverse of blessing (v. 18a).

Another significant problem for the first interpretation above is the fact that the Hebrew term translated “vision” is never applied to an individual setting long-range goals. In connection with the second interpretation above, the Hebrew term translated “perish” is not translated as such anywhere else in the Old Testament. The interpretation of this verse hinges on these two terms. How are these terms to be explained? And how is the verse to be interpreted?

The word “vision” is a translation of a Hebrew noun (*hazon*). This noun is used 35 times in the Old Testament. It is related to a verb (*hazah*) which means to “see” or to “receive by revelation.” The latter rendering of the verb is used of a prophet having a “vision,” *hazon* (Isa. 1:1; Ezek. 12:27). To understand how this term is used, we need to consider the content of what was received. When God initially spoke to Samuel in 1 Samuel 3:1, the text indicates that “the word of the LORD” was rare because visions (*hazon*) were uncommon. In Psalm 89:19 God spoke to his people in a “vision” (*hazon*). This term is also used as a title for some Old Testament prophetic books (“The vision of . . .”), such as Isaiah (1:1), Obadiah (1:1), and Nahum (1:1). These books have been recorded as “the word of the LORD.”


A few have misinterpreted this Biblical data and correlated “vision” with one’s spiritual understanding. According to this interpretation, since God filtered

His visionary material through a prophet’s intellectual and spiritual capacities, “vision” is equated with “spiritual discernment” (J. Vernon McGee, “Proverbs,” in *Thru the Bible*, vol. 3, p. 97).

This presumably provides a sense of authority for anticipating the future and, by application, being able to set long-range goals or to accomplish great evangelistic campaigns.

If, however, the Hebrew use of “vision” emphasizes the prophet’s receiving the “word of the LORD,” then the term does not refer to spiritual illumination but to divine revelation. The vision is the means through which God gave His revelation to His prophets. Consequently, the content of the “vision” (*hazon*) is fundamentally distinct from some popular interpretations of its meaning in Proverbs 29:18. This term refers to special revelation and should be understood as a vision that contains a prophetic word from God, a “revelation.” This understanding makes “vision” appropriately parallel with “law” in the second half of this verse.

The Hebrew word translated “perish” in Proverbs 29:18 appears 16 times in the Old Testament and is derived from a verb (*para’*) which generally means to “let go” or “let loose.” The meaning “perish” is highly unlikely; the Hebrew word is never translated this way anywhere else in the Old Testament. It is used of uncovering (letting loose) one’s head when a turban is removed as a sign of mourning in Leviticus 10:6 and 21:10. In Exodus 32:25 the Israelites are described as unrestrained (or “naked” as rendered in the KJV) in the sense that their moral restraints were removed; they threw off all their moral constraint when Moses was on Mount Sinai. This passage may be the background for Proverbs 29:18. This would suggest that the nuance for this use of the verb is a letting loose, a removal of moral restraints.

This proverb should consequently be understood to mean that where there is no revelation, people cast off moral restraints; however, when people obey God’s word, they are blessed. “Where there is no revelation, the people are unrestrained: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” This verse has tremendous theological and practical significance for our day. It reflects a direct correlation in the Old Testament between the people’s moral condition and their relation to the open declaration and submission to God’s special revelation. Likewise, our moral state has a direct correlation with our continual commitment to properly understanding and applying the truths of God’s special revelation, the Bible. 

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

The Destruction of a Nation

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:1-7).

The recently elected president and both political parties have focused attention on the need to improve education. Though they all recognize the danger of the lack of knowledge, few are aware that God warned that lack of specific knowledge brought destruction to Israel. Even fewer recognize the same pattern in our land. No serious reader of the Bible can escape the striking similarity between the decline and destruction of the Hebrew nation and present direction of the American nation.

When Israel entered the Promised Land they had experienced enough tyranny. It was the king who “knew not Joseph” nor Joseph’s God who brought the oppression and slavery that made them willing to embark on, what seemed to the natural mind, an unreasonable journey. They had only the promise of God and the leadership of God’s spokesman. As long as Israel followed the law of God they needed no king. They had no central government. The unit of government was the family and the local community.

But when they forgot God and His blessings and “every man did that which was right in his own eyes,” they wanted a king in order to be like other nations. God permitted that arrangement, and as long as those kings walked with God they enjoyed the blessings of God. But soon, being like other nations was more than having a king. That likeness to other nations soon brought in pagan gods, a culture contrary to the Word of God, and gross immorality. The failure of their leaders to follow God brought the suffering of high taxation, loss of freedom, tyranny, enslavement by their own government, drought, foreign domination, and eventual invasion and destruction.

Early settlers of the United States came because they wanted freedom to worship, to own land, to escape the bondage of an oppressive financial system, to live under the laws of God, to escape military domination. As long as they honored God, they needed no dominating central government. They enjoyed the blessing of God as no other since Israel under David and Solomon. The governmental units were the family and the local community. When this nation turned from honoring God and His morality, it started down the road that leads to destruction.

The Lack of Knowledge of God

People Lack Knowledge of God’s Identity

Contemporary Americans have the same problem as the Pharaoh of the Exodus. “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice? . . . I know not the LORD. . . .” (Ex.5:2). They want a religion that does not identify one God but recognizes a multiplicity of gods.

Representatives of 125 world religions assembled in Chicago for the 1993 Parliament of World Religions. An eyewitness described the scene: “A liberal Presbyterian professor in his long black robe; a Buddhist priest in his orange one; a Catholic cardinal in his royal purple splendor; the high priestess of the goddess Isis in her white robe and pointed headdress—all stood together in celebration of their spiritual unity” (Peter R. Jones, “Gospel Truth—Pagan Lies,” www.spirit-wars.com, 1999).

Many environmental activists abandon recognition of the Most High and promote the worship of nature, the environment, and mother earth. They follow those of the past “who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator” (Rom 1:25).

One wonders, “When Americans see ‘In God We Trust’ on our money, to which ‘god’ do they think it refers?” When George Barna reports, “Atheists are a thing of the past. Ninety-seven per cent of Americans believe in God,” one questions, “Which God?” (This and subsequent references to George Barna are excerpted from Barna Reports Online, Barna Research Group.)

People Lack Knowledge of God’s Nature

Under the guise of charismatic Christianity, the God of the Bible has been redefined and reduced to the god (gods) of Eastern mysticism. Hindu and Buddhist concepts dominate popular thinking even though their proponents deny and are often unaware of their source. Their ideas often influence Bible believers.

The “Faith Theology” movement reduces God to the level of man and exalts man to the level of a god. Kenneth Copeland, the media star of the movement, presents a finite God of human proportions. According to Copeland, God is someone “very much like you and me.” He gives him a height of 6’2” or 6’3”, a weight of about 200 pounds, and a hand span of nine inches (Kenneth Copeland, “Spirit, Soul and Body I” [tape], side 1).

People Lack Knowledge of God’s Character

Of the 97 percent of Americans who believe in God, according to Barna, “ninety percent of these believe God loves them.” Today’s popular view of God limits Him to that one aspect of His character. God’s holiness, righteous demands, and judgment are unknown in much of post-modern religion. Spurgeon noted a similar phenomenon over a century ago as a “downgrade” of religion swept England:

By some means or other, first the ministers, and

“To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, ‘A window shalt thou make in the ark.’”

Charles Spurgeon

then the Churches, got on “the down grade,” and in some cases, the descent was rapid, and in all, very disastrous. . . . [Ministers] commonly became less earnest and less simple in their preaching . . . and dwelt more on the moral teachings of the New Testament, than on the great central truths of revelation. Natural theology frequently took the place which the great truths of the gospel ought to have held, and the sermons became more and more Christ’s [love]. Corresponding results in the character and life, first of the preachers and then of the people, were only too plainly apparent (C. H. Spurgeon. “Downgrade,” *Sword and Trowel*, March 1887).

The Lack of Knowledge of God’s Word

Barna’s research also found that “Americans are very opinionated on matters of faith. . . . [Eighty-five percent] consider their religious faith very important to their life, and generally feel strongly about their religious beliefs.”

Yet these and other surveys demonstrate a marked ignorance of the Bible of which people are unaware.

Overall, 60% of all adults agree that “the Bible is totally accurate in all that it teaches.” Yet, people’s knowledge of the content actually taught in the Bible leaves much to be desired. . . . One of the most startling findings was that only 3 of the 1002 adults interviewed—less than three-tenths of one percent—had both a firm and biblically consistent opinion for all 14 of the items [surveyed]. . . . In one recent survey we found that almost nine out of ten adults believe they know all of the basic teachings of Christianity very well. But when you explore what they think the Bible actually teaches, as we did in this study, many theological inconsistencies and inaccuracies emerge. Unfortunately, correcting people’s mistaken assumptions about Bible content is made nearly impossible by their self-assurance about their beliefs. Even if they are exposed to good Bible teaching they typically fail to absorb that input because they think they already know it all. Changing the errant theological positions of millions of Americans is a very tough assignment.

Public ignorance of and opposition to Bible knowledge is illustrated by letters to editors similar to this one:

Should public schools teach the Bible? Good heavens, no! . . . biblical history is simply not up to today’s standard for historiography: How many teachers would be able to handle the cruelties; bad treatment of women; mass killings allegedly ordered, committed, or approved by God; discrepancies and contradictions in the Scriptures; and the vulgarity, sex, and preposterous passages in the Bible? Bible study is best left to preachers and Sunday school teachers who are already experts in sanitizing it (*The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, Saturday, March 11, 2000).

Such ignorance of the Bible’s true teaching led two

German lawyers to write German Family Minister Christine Bergmann asking her to officially classify the Bible as dangerous for children because of its violent content. The Holy Book contains passages of “a gruesomeness difficult to exceed” which are glorified as the will of God, Bavarian lawyers Christian Sailer and Gert-Joachim Hetzel said in their submission to the minister on behalf of “some parents of minors.” It preaches genocide, racism, enmity towards Jews, gruesome executions for adulterers and homosexuals, the murder of one’s own children and many other perversities. The book should therefore be kept on the “not for children” list so long as the “bloodthirsty and human rights-violating passages” were not removed (Independent Online, www.iol.co.za/html/frame_news.php, August 1, 2000).

As long as people remain ignorant of the Bible’s actual teaching, public attitudes toward God’s Word will be shaped by such ideas. This lack of knowledge can only lead to destruction.


Lack of Knowledge of God’s Worship

Contemporary professing Christians have forgotten, or never learned, what constitutes true worship. An emphasis on worshipping “in spirit” frequently ignores the second requirement, “in truth” (John 4:23, 24). “In spirit” has been redefined as an emotional experience. A giant sign along Interstate 85 north of Spartanburg, South Carolina, urges, “Come Experience Jesus.” Another along Interstate 20 east of Conyers, Georgia, advertises “The Church in the Now.”

Many churches no longer call their music directors Ministers of Music but Ministers of Worship. Seminaries have changed the designation of church music to “worship.” Praise is viewed as participation in exuberant, emotional, physically expressive music. Prayer, Bible reading, Bible exposition, and proclamation of the gospel are relegated to a minor role in the service. Church auditoriums become “worship centers,” and church buildings become Christian centers or fellowship centers. Contemporary “worship” often minimizes preaching of the Word.

Lack of Knowledge of God’s Will

Barna observed, “With all this spirituality, one would expect social harmony and moral excellence. Strangely, the very opposite is the case! . . . A lot of people attend church services, but relatively few have a deep commitment to their church, to personal ministry and to spiritual maturity. People hear a lot of religious teaching and buy millions of religious books, but there is as much theological confusion as understanding.”

“Spiritual” America has become a world leader in pornography, juvenile crime, abortion, divorce, cohabitation, adultery, family breakdown, radical feminism, and militant homosexuality. In contrast to the contemporary lifestyle, God, in passages such as Galatians 1:4, Ephesians 6:6, and 1 Thessalonians 4:3, sets forth His will for moral cleanliness. If so many people believe in God, why do we see such social and personal disintegration? 

Honey for a Lifetime from a Moment of Pain

Robert D. Vincent

My screams brought my mother hurtling out the front door of our home in Orange Park, Florida. From the volume of noise I was producing she no doubt suspected that I was on the verge of severe injury, or worse, that the injury had already taken place. By the time she reached me, I had hollered, jumped, and pranced around our carport passionately enough to surpass an Indian's best effort to bring on rain. For the first time in my life, I was the unsuspecting victim of a bee sting. Today, when I recall the stinging pain underneath my right shoulder blade, I still shudder. Since that day my limited knowledge of bees has always been punctuated with the memories of the pain they can cause, especially for a four-year-old boy.

That moment in time is etched indelibly into my memory. The most significant part of the memory, however, is not the bee sting, but the events immediately following. After my mother rushed out of the house to rescue me from what I was convinced was a "near death" experience, she quickly realized that I needed some tender care . . . and a dose of reality. Taking me into the house, she doctored my wound, all the while listening to my cries and intense accusations about the meanness of the bee. While I blubbered and stewed, she just loved me by salving the wound. After the intensity of my cries abated, she steered me into the living room to sit down on the couch. She pulled a children's encyclopedia from the shelf and turned to the section about bees. My warped and stunted conclusion about bees soon broadened to at least allow for the possibility that bees existed for purposes other than simply lurking in bushes or under the eaves of houses, waiting expectantly for the opportunity to zap little boys who happened by. Bees actually had some order and

purpose to their existence of which I had been ignorant. In fact, God Himself was the very one responsible for designing bees with the ability to sting. While I secretly delighted to learn that some bees die after using their stingers, I did have to admit my view of bees had changed.

Looking back on the event, I now see that the major character in the story was not the bee. It was not even me. It was Mom. Framing the mental picture of that painful incident is the response of my mother. That bee did me a favor that day. He was the cameraman that gave me a picture of my mother—a kind of picture that has come into better focus in my own parenting years. Time has enhanced the picture rather than causing it to fade. Out of the pain of the moment, my mother extracted honey whose sweetness I have tasted for more than 30 years.

Many other memories of my mother have filled the intervening decades, and so many of them reinforce something I began to learn about my mom that day. She patiently listened, willingly cared, and when necessary, carefully inserted the truth to redirect my thinking. And though my mom will always be in a class by herself, I have come to realize that many other mothers share the heart that my mother habitually displayed. Mothers are one of the primary instruments God uses to lovingly open little hearts to Truth that might otherwise be disbelieved.

A mother's words, uttered pleadingly in prayer to God or lovingly to a little child—how mighty a key to a child's heart! Surely there is just cause to rise up and call her blessed (Prov. 31:28)!

Robert D. Vincent is an assistant pastor at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina.

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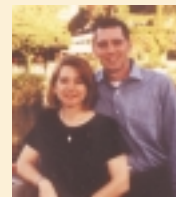
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Throughout my early childhood, I feared those moments of darkness that struck unexpectedly several times a week. Unknown to me at that time, I had epilepsy, a disorder of the central nervous system.

I clearly remember the anxiety I experienced when I felt a heat rush go through my body and all that was around me dissipated from my vision. In the midst of my child play, I felt my life close in on me as fear trembled within my soul. As a result of my spells, I went to my knees and awoke with the accompanying thought, *Am I going to die?* In the midst of my deepest fears, I prayed and asked God to preserve my life. Underlying my pleasant yet quiet personality was emotional turmoil that remained for several years.

To treat my epilepsy, my neurologist prescribed three medications for me. In spite of my taking many medications, my seizures reoccurred week after week, year after year. At age eight, I began searching for an answer to the mystery of my epilepsy. I altered my diet, looked for cause-and-effect relationships between what I ate and the timing of my seizures, and read pamphlets about seizures. Deep in my heart I held the hope that *one day* God would cure my seizures.

But years passed, and I continued having seizures that left me feeling exhausted and prevented me from participating in originally planned activities. Every time I left the neurologist's office, I felt discouraged knowing that I would probably remain on medication and continue having seizures for the rest of my life.

After 13 years of school, I graduated from high school with my class and entered college to study to be an elementary school teacher. Aside from not having my driver's license and still experiencing one to three seizures a week, I studied several hours and made above average grades. I still held hope in my heart that *one day* I would be cured of my epilepsy, that which had caused me emotional struggles throughout my childhood and young adult life.

Before transferring to a four-year college where I would complete my degree program, I received a phone call from the receptionist at my neurologist's office asking me to come in for an appointment. I anticipated hearing that the doctor again wanted to increase my medication.

While I waited for the day of my appointment to

arrive, I became discouraged after having multiple seizures that were the result of studying many hours and contending with the ordinary stressful circumstances of college. Doubt swept over me as I thought about all of the classes that I needed to take in order to graduate.

The day of my appointment, my neurologist asked me the routine questions about my seizure frequency and the side effects of my medication. Then he presented to me an opportunity that I thought I would never hear. "Amy," he said, "you have the type of seizures that are not controllable by medication. However, your seizures are located in the part of the brain that is the most operable." I listened with amazement.

"If you are interested, I want to refer you to a clinic that can run several medical tests on you to determine if you are a candidate for brain surgery." *My life's dream to become seizure-free might become a reality*, I thought to myself.

Having allowed God to be in control of my life and my health, I had peace within my heart that the decision to have brain surgery had already been made. After undergoing an MRI, a PET scan, an angiogram, and psychological testing, I learned that I was an excellent candidate for brain surgery. My lifelong prayer to be cured would soon be answered. All I needed was faith and courage to undergo the surgery where my brain would be operated on by a highly trained surgeon.

As I completed my last year of undergraduate studies and waited for my surgery to be scheduled for the summer after graduation, the intensity of my seizures increased due to the medication I was taking. One morning while I was in the college dorm preparing for another day of classes, I felt the onset of an aura. The next thing I knew I awoke on the floor, and my left arm was shaking involuntary. I had experienced a grand mal seizure, the second one I had experienced within a year. The reality of my condition struck me. I feared going to classes knowing that I could have another grand mal seizure at any moment throughout the day.

My desire to have brain surgery increased as I

My Journey Out of Epilepsy

Amy Crane

experienced an increase in seizures, and consequently, emotional turmoil. Although I knew that there were risks of losing part of my vision or speech by having the surgery, I remained at peace about my decision. The only way to end the emotional and physical struggle in my life was to have the damaged part of my brain removed.

After college graduation, I prepared for the big day. Hopes of gaining a new life radiated in my heart in the days before my surgery. When I left for Cleveland, Ohio, in the middle of June, I took with me the hope that in a matter of days my life would be changed for the better. I had the assurance that God was with me just as He had been when I was a child and had feared for my very life.

The morning of my surgery, I awoke knowing that in a matter of hours I would be under complete anesthesia with my life being sustained by the medical professionals, but ultimately by God. After four-and-a-half hours of brain surgery, I awoke with a headache and the knowledge that God was with me throughout the entire surgical procedure. Four days

later, I walked out of the Cleveland Clinic with a scar on the side of my head and a smile that reflected my thankfulness and gratitude for life.

As I recovered from my surgery, I began to heal both physically and emotionally. With faith in God and determination to have victory over my epilepsy, I fulfilled my childhood dream to *one day* be cured of my seizures.

In 1999, I received my Master's in Special Education. Currently I am a teacher in Greenville, South Carolina, where I instruct emotionally handicapped students in a public school. Having experienced the heartache and the victory, I now have a deeper understanding of why God allowed me to endure to triumph over epilepsy. Each day as I live a normal life, I thank God for walking with me through the dark valleys of death—for He was right beside me. Daily He gives me the strength to live life to the fullest.

Amy E. Crane is the author of *Rejoice in the Light: A Woman's Journey Out of the Mystery of Epilepsy*, which can be ordered from Agape Publishing, P.O. Box 4203, Greenville, South Carolina 29608. For more information, send e-mail to agapepublishing@juno.com.

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Truth needs no flowers of speech. —Alexander Pope

I know that people do not want to be alone with God, but if your longing heart ever finds the living water, it will be alone.

—A. W. Tozer

The test of every religious, political or educational system is the man that it forms.

—H. F. Arniel

God aims at satisfying justice in the eternal damnation of sinners.

—Jonathan Edwards

The spirit of man, which God inspired, cannot together perish with this corporeal clod.

—John Milton

Faith is the refusal to panic. —Martin Lloyd-Jones

A cynic is a person who knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing.

—Unknown

The only people who like change are babies with bad diapers.

—Marlene Wilson

The world is horribly disordered and out of joint; it must come under omnipotent surgery before we can expect health.

—Billy Sunday

The absent are always in the wrong. —English Proverb

Weak persons cannot be sincere.

—Francois De La Rochefoucauld

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

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There is more power in the open hand than in the clenched fist.

—Hardware News

There is no rogue like to the godly rogue.

—Thomas Fuller

Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil's reach as humility.

—Jonathan Edwards

Ignorance is the mark of the heathen; knowledge is the mark of the true church; and conceit is the mark of the heretics.

—Clement of Alexandria

Birthdays are nice, but too many of them will kill you!

—Unknown

A man who treats his wife like a thoroughbred will never end up with an old nag.

—an old cowboy

Divine grace was never slow.

—George Herbert

It is only great souls that know how much glory there is in being good.

—Sophocles

Real friendship is shown in times of trouble; prosperity is full of friends.

—Abraham Kuyper

Compiled by Dr. David Atkinson, pastor of Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer, Indiana.

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Spring Cleaning

Pam Freeman

Some homemakers look forward to it; others dread it. When our family moved into a new home the week before Christmas, the thought of being able to wait till spring to clean gave me a sense of relief. It was already a busy time of the year, and with the additional work of moving I was eager to get settled in our home so we could have some quality family time over the holidays. I prioritized the cleaning jobs into two groups: "must-do-now" and "wait-until-spring." The cleaning of the many windows in our home was easily classified under the wait list. The weather was cold and the thought of opening windows to clean was unappealing. With so many necessary items to attend to after the move, I was content to ignore the list and take comfort in the fact that spring was a long while off. Bright sunlight permeating through the large floor-length windows in our living room, however, often disrupted my contentment. I could see just how dirty the windows were, and they were a frequent reminder that cleaning still needed to be done.

While waiting for spring to arrive, God's Word drove home a spiritual truth to me. One Sunday morning in March our pastor preached on the significance of the Old Testament feasts. The following morning I wanted to go over the list again to help fix them in my mind. As I looked up the verses he mentioned, truths about the Feast of Unleavened Bread stood out to me as never before.

In preparation for Israel's exodus from Egypt, on the fourteenth day of Abib, God ordained that the Passover Feast be celebrated. At twilight, an unblemished male lamb was to be killed and its blood applied to the lintel and two doorposts of the house. The flesh of the lamb was to be roasted and eaten later that night along with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. At midnight, when the Lord struck the firstborn in every house throughout the land of Egypt, He passed over the Israelite houses protected by the blood of the sacrificed lamb. The Lord instituted the Feast of Unleavened Bread to be celebrated annually in conjunction with the Passover. Beginning on the day the Passover lamb was killed, the Israelites were not to eat leavened bread for seven days. He wanted them never to forget that they had left in haste and were thrust out by His mighty arm.

That was all familiar to me, but other details were not. The stipulation that "no leavened bread be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters" (Exod. 13:7) impressed me as if I had never read it before. On the day before the Passover Feast an Israelite had to light a candle, search his house

ceremonially for leaven, and cast out every last bit. It was not enough that he could not eat it—his house had to be completely free of it. I was curious to find out the reason for such a thorough cleaning. It was during this search that I discovered in more than one commentary that this search practiced each Abib 14 was the origin of spring cleaning!

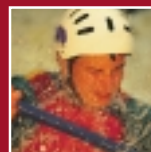
As with so many other traditions, I had accepted the idea of spring cleaning without ever questioning its origin. Now that I have this new awareness of the tradition, does it mean that I begin spring cleaning on Abib 14? Of course not. But as the law is the schoolmaster to lead us to Christ, the spiritual implications taught by these verses were too clear not to appreciate.

Throughout the Bible leaven and its fermentation often implies a process of corruption, a corruption from which believers are freed. For Paul writes (even to the Corinthians!) that, in fact, "ye are unleavened" (1 Cor. 5:7). "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us," he concludes, slain that our lives might be completely free from sin and all its corrupting influences. Just as the Israelites were to see to it that every bit of leaven was thrown out and left behind in Egypt when they began a new life following the Lord, our experience of redemption is to prompt our separation from sin and the living of a holy life.

These are truths of which most Christians are well aware. We are all thankful to be free from the penalty of sin. But the Feast of Unleavened Bread was an annual reminder to the Israelites, and we must regularly ask ourselves, do we equally desire to rid our lives of sin and live a holy life that is pleasing to God? If we do not want to be saved from all that would corrupt our lives, can we honestly say we are interested in the benefits of His death? Are we willing to put away a single, perhaps small, sin that may later grow to corrupt the entire life?

I have come to a fresh realization that spring cleaning is not enough! Any housekeeper realizes that her home becomes dirty almost as soon as she cleans it. Daily cleaning is needed. That fact is equally true on the spiritual level, but if we indeed have been made "unleavened" as the Scripture states by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, then let us do what Paul admonished. "Let us keep the feast . . . with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Let thoughts of spring cleaning be a reminder to keep our lives pure and consecrated to the Lord.

Pam Freeman is a freelance writer living in Greenville, South Carolina.



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Phil Shuler

And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. (Isa. 58:11, 12)

My wife and I read this beautiful Scripture this morning as we had our devotions from C. H. Spurgeon's *Morning and Evening*. These verses seemed to unlock the room of blessings and fill this gloomy winter's day with the bright warm sunshine of God's marvelous grace! I write this just two days before my 76th birthday, and as I thought upon the phrase, "And the Lord shall guide thee continually," my mind was flooded with precious memories—such as my three-plus years in the Navy during WWII, as we landed Marines on nine beachheads in three areas of the south Pacific. The first landing I shall remember as long as I live. The night before was warm, so I strung my hammock topside and swung with the movement of the ship, looking into a sky packed with stars. But my mind was on the upcoming battle and the potential danger for our ship and crew. That night I asked God to protect me, for I had been called to preach years before and knew that I must have God's protection in order to meet my preaching appointments in the future. A sweet peace almost overwhelmed me that night and has remained with me throughout my entire ministry.

At the war's end, God kept His promise and led me to Bob Jones University and allowed me to school under the ministry of Dr. Bob Jones Sr., the greatest evangelist I have ever met. Under his ministry, God laid on my heart the need of servicing the smaller churches, and in 1951, while training with my brother Jack, God called me into single-church evangelism, holding 12 weeks a year open for churches under 50 in membership. The itinerary grew slowly, but again, God kept His Word and "guided me continually." When Debbie, our first daughter, was born, God increased our income through our love offerings to compensate for the added expenses and repeated this act of faithfulness when Julie joined the family.

In 1958, the church of my youth, Trinity Methodist Church, received a pastor who was a rank modernist. My father had pastored that church for 36 years, but was retired by the Methodist Church at age 72. I had found Christ in that church. I met and later married my wife,

Marie, in that church. I had memorized Scripture and the songs in the hymnal in that church. But when this traitor to the Scriptures stood in that pulpit and rejected the doctrines of hell, the Second Coming of Christ, and Christ's virgin birth, I found myself slowly standing to my feet and heard myself tell Marie to follow me with the baby, Julie, as I picked Debbie up and started toward the altar of the church.

I told my new pastor to get my letter out of the files of the church and mail it to me, for I knew God did not want me to stay under that type of ministry! There's that verse again, folks. "The Lord shall guide thee continually." He did, to Denver, where we got into a solid fundamental church (Beth Eden Baptist Church) where our children grew up with their future husbands and where God enlarged our ministry. It was while we were in Denver that God finally filled in our ministry with every third meeting a small, needy church. Today, we have more small churches than we have weeks for.

Verse 12 continues, "And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in." This is an age of compromise. Once a great number of churches stood tall and declared that sin was sin, demanded obedience from God's people, and warned of the wiles of the Devil. Today the majority of churches have turned from sound doctrine to what is popular. Churches that were once known for their worship music today attract their crowds with barroom music. When churches stoop so low as to have "contemporary" and "traditional" services on the same morning, then those "churches" have reached a new low in their communities, and, to be honest with the community, should drop the word *church* from their names.

I thank God that He gave me such a wife as Marie. And I am so thankful that He gave me two fine sons-in-law who pastor their churches with the same standards that I have used in my ministry of evangelism these 54 years. We, as a family, are attempting to repair the breach, to restore the paths, to raise up the foundations of many generations. I feel we are close to being in the last generation, my friends. What we do, we must do quickly. Do not let Satan defeat you, for He that is within you is greater than all of Satan's power. God bless you in the first year of the new millennium.

Dr. Phil Shuler is an evangelist based in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. You can contact him by sending e-mail to philshuler@juno.com.

THE BOOK OF JOB: FINDING

Job is not a static, neatly organized textbook of doctrine. Nor is it an anthology of isolated sacred sayings (though it is used that way, often out of context). It is wisdom literature, a common literary genre in the ancient Near East that takes different forms. Proverbial wisdom literature crystallizes general observations and doctrinal absolutes into directive principles for everyday living (Proverbs). "Speculative" or experimental wisdom literature takes the form of extended discourses that wrestle with the exceptions to the principles, with how to explain and apply those principles in the face of the anomalies and problems of real-life situations (Job and Ecclesiastes). As such, Job is a progressive, organic whole—an unfolding biographical drama that reveals the growth and maturity of the title character. But what is its theme?

Theme of Job: Suffering?

The first word that comes to mind when most people think of Job is "suffering." But not all suffering is the same. Scripture discusses at least four kinds of suffering:

Persecution—"undeserved" suffering inflicted by people and allowed by God (1 Peter 4:14, 16).

Punishment—deserved suffering inflicted by people for a just cause (1 Peter 4:15).

Chastisement—deserved suffering inflicted by God, sometimes through people (Lamentations).

Adversity—suffering allowed by God that is not only "undeserved" but not even understood (Job).

Variations on a Theme

A variety of purposes and thematic centers for the Book of Job have been suggested: to address the "problem of suffering" (why the righteous suffer, or, why bad things happen to good people); to present a theodicy (a defense of God's justice despite the existence of evil); to show the maintenance of faith in the midst of suffering; to discredit retribution theology (the idea that all calamity is traceable to acts of sin); to emphasize the incomprehensibility of God's ways to men; to put man in his proper place in relation to God; to demonstrate the basis of the relationship between God and man.

All of these themes have some merit. They all recognize legitimate and often major aspects of the story. The problem is that each latches on to one segment of the book, often at the expense of other sections. But the last comes the closest.

Illustrations

The Arena: Although the story clearly revolves around the issue and experience of suffering, the suffering is only the arena for communicating much bigger and broader spiritual truths. The deeper issues at stake in the arena of suffering center on the basis of man's relationship to God, and the sovereignty, justice, goodness, and self-revelation of God. *These are the major spiritual issues that are played out on the field, in the arena, of suffering in the book of Job.*

The Catalyst: Remember learning about catalysts in high school chemistry? A catalyst is a substance that initiates or modifies the interaction between certain elements (a chemical reaction) *without becoming involved in the reaction or being consumed or changed in the process.* In more general terms, a catalyst is something that precipitates a process or event, *especially without being itself directly involved in or changed by that process or event.* The story of Job begins with God and man in a crucible, but it is difficult to see the basis and interaction of this relationship until the catalyst of suffering is poured in and sets the interplay of all these issues in motion. But the suffering itself remains unchanged until God removes it after all the issues in this relationship have been resolved. *Suffering is the catalyst that initiates the interaction between the fundamental spiritual issues involved in the relationship between God and man.*

What Is the Theme, Then?

Stated broadly, *the book of Job displays the terms and dynamics of the relationship between God and man.* This statement is specific enough to narrow our view of what the book is all about and why it's in our Bible, and broad enough to accommodate the variety of issues raised in the book: spiritual warfare, response to adversity and suffering, the basis of the divine-human relationship, the nature of interaction within that relationship, and how the injustices of life in a fallen world impinge on the character of God.

Job's major question, which punctuates the discourses some twenty times, is "why?" All he wants to understand is how his relationship to God, and God's relationship to justice, could produce such circumstances. But it is a question God never directly answers. The book itself doesn't focus on *why* Job suffers, but on *how* he suffers, what he thinks and what he (and his friends, and all readers) need to learn—not so much about suffering, but about God.

The story of Job is a theological synopsis of the relationship between God and man. It is an incarnation—a fleshing

GOD BEYOND THE SUFFERING (PART TWO)

out—of some of the most crucial, central issues at stake in man's earthbound relationship to his heavenly God. Of course, Job can teach us a great deal about suffering. But the real message of the book goes far deeper than that. Reason for suffering is the unanswered issue; response to suffering is the surface issue; relationship to God is the deeper issue—the foundation of that relationship and the dynamics (interaction) of that relationship, especially in the face of circumstances which contradict our theology and challenge that relationship.

If you want a chapter and verse to validate the assertion that the focal point, the book's thematic center, is not suffering *per se* but man's relationship to God, consider Job 1:9. This is the blasting cap of the entire book; without it there is no story, no point. Suffering enters merely as the tool to test the validity of God's assessment of Job and the genuineness of Job's relationship to God.

Corroborative Voices

"In earlier days of dealing with the book, I described [its purpose] as 'the problem of pain.' I think that may abide, but if it presents the problem of pain, it does not afford any solution of the problem" (G. Campbell Morgan, *The Answers of Jesus to Job*, 7-8).

"If you had asked me when I began my study what the Book of Job was about, I would have been quick to respond. *Job? Everybody knows what Job is about. It's the Bible's most complete treatment of the problem of suffering. Its about terrible grief and bewildering pain.* . . . I now believe I misread the book—or, more accurately, didn't take into account the entire book. Despite the fact that all but a few pages of Job deal with the problem of pain, I am coming to the conclusion that Job is not really about the problem of pain. . . . Job is not 'about' suffering; it merely uses such ingredients in its larger story, which concerns even more important questions, cosmic questions. Seen as a whole, Job is primarily about *faith* in its starkest form. . . . The point of the book is not suffering: Where is God when it hurts? The prologue deal[s] with that issue. The point is faith: Where is Job when it hurts? How is he responding? To understand the Book of Job, I must begin there" (Philip Yancey, *Disappointment with God: Questions Nobody Asks Aloud*, 162-64).

"What is the message of the Book of Job? If the popular idea that the Book of Job is primarily about suffering is correct, then we must conclude that the book is a failure. No

real answer is given to the question of why the righteous suffer. The problem of suffering is discussed at length, but this is not the primary theme of the book. Rather, suffering is a channel through which the basic issue is brought to the fore. The real problem discussed by Job and his friends is the question of man's relationship to God. . . . The Book of Job raises the question of innocent suffering as a genuinely relevant issue to discuss the whole nature of the relationship between God and man. Why the righteous suffer is discussed to show how a man can truly relate to God" (David M. Howard, *How Come, God?* 22).*

"It is this writer's belief that the purpose of the Book of Job is to show that the proper relationship between God and man is based solely on the sovereign grace of God and man's response of faith and submissive trust. . . . This statement of purpose involves the assumption that the relationship between God and man is the basic problem of the book. Although there are several subthemes which have been cited by scholars as the main theme, it is the belief of this writer that only the basis of the proper relationship between God and man sufficiently encompasses these subthemes and qualifies, therefore, as the central focus of the book. . . . Thus Job's suffering as an innocent party was not the main focus but was introduced only as a means of isolating and intensifying the question of the basis of man's relationship to God. . . . That this is true is demonstrated by the fact that the main problem of the book was posed before suffering entered the scene and was resolved before Job's suffering was removed" (Greg Parsons, "The Structure and Purpose of the Book of Job," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138 [April-June 1981]: 139-57).

While the story of Job clearly revolves around the experience of suffering, suffering is *not* the primary theme or reason for the book. Suffering is the arena for communicating larger spiritual truths, the catalyst that sparks a crisis that rivets the reader's attention on Job's—and our—relationship to God. Undeniably, Job contains much instruction regarding *how* to suffer (though very little about *why* we suffer). Nevertheless, as reflected repeatedly throughout the book's dialogue, the deeper issues at stake in the arena of suffering center on the basis and nature of man's relationship to God, and the nature and character of God Himself.

* David Howard, Elizabeth Elliot's brother, was a friend and brother-in-law of the martyred Jim Elliot.



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No Prayer at Army-Navy Game

The Army-Navy football game last fall got underway without a century-old tradition—a prayer delivered by a service academy chaplain. West Point and the Naval Academy deferred to a Supreme Court ruling that prayer at high school football games violated the separation of church and state. (*Federalist Digest*, 12/15/2000)

Merry Holiday?

The city council of Little Rock, Arkansas, voted to change the name of its traditional December parade—always known as the Christmas parade—to the now politically correct title “Holiday parade.” The word “Christmas” was too religious and might offend non-religious people or people of other faiths, city officials thought, so they changed the name. Some school districts in Georgia have instructed their teachers not to refer to “Christmas break” because that is too specifically Christian and might offend somebody. It is now to be called “winter break.” This kind of thing is happening all over the country. (*AFA Action Alert*, 12/21/2000)

Appeals Court Rejects School Vouchers

A panel of the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in

Cincinnati voted 2-1 to uphold a lower-court opinion striking down a Cleveland school voucher program. The court ruled the program is a violation of the separation of church and state, because most of the private schools in which vouchers are used are religious ones. (Baptist Press, 12/13/2000)

Our Tax Dollars at Work

The Capital Research Center reports that Leftist groups, including the Feminist Majority Foundation, NAACP, National Education Association, NOW Legal Defense & Education Fund, and Planned Parenthood—all of which opposed the nomination of Attorney General John Ashcroft—received \$150 million in government funding in the last two years. (*Federalist Digest*, 1/19/2001)

Buffet and Gates Support Abortion

Bill Gates showed his dedication to population control with an \$8.8 million donation to the International Planned Parenthood Federation. The move was announced just days after Gates met with billionaire Warren Buffet for a card game at the Omaha Bridge Club. Buffet has poured millions toward abortion and birth control, and the Microsoft co-founder has followed. (*World*, 12/23/2000)

Police Officer Faces Inquiry

The Traverse City (Michigan) Human Rights Commission has requested an investigation of comments by David Leach, a patrol officer who has been with the department for almost 30 years. Leach led a protest against a city decision to post rainbow-colored stickers symbolizing homosexual advocacy on municipal vehicles, CNSNews.com reported January 11. City Manager Richard Lewis said he would comply with the nine-member commission’s request to see if the officer violated anti-discrimination policy by criticizing the sticker. The saga began December 19 when the city decided to spend \$2,000 to purchase 10,000 rainbow-colored stickers, which would be placed on all city-owned vehicles, including police cars. The stickers featured a rainbow background symbolizing gay pride and the words: “We Are Traverse City.” (Baptist Press, 1/11/2001)

Psychiatrist Changes His Mind about Homosexuality

Dr. Robert Spitzer, the chief of biometrics research at Columbia University, has changed his mind and now says he believes that homosexuals can change. Spitzer, a well-known and highly influential psychiatrist, was a key figure in the American Psychiatric Association’s

1973 decision to remove homosexuality from its official list of mental health disorders. (*Baptist Bulletin*, January 2001)

Duke Allows Homosexual Unions

Duke University, which is affiliated with the United Methodist Church (UMC), has announced that it will allow homosexual unions at Duke Chapel. The UMC officially prohibits same-sex ceremonies, but Duke maintains that its famous gothic chapel is a “university facility” and not tied to the UMC. Unitarians, United Church of Christ members, and some Baptists want to conduct same-sex ceremonies at the chapel. (*World*, 1/16/2000)

Los Angeles Cuts Ties with Boy Scouts

The Los Angeles city council voted on November 28, 2000, to cut the city’s ties with the Boy Scouts of America, saying the group’s exclusion of homosexuals and atheists was discriminatory. Last June the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Scouts had the right to set its own moral code and espouse its own viewpoint. (*Christian News*, 12/11/2000)

Georgia Southern Baptists Split

The Georgia Baptist Convention and the North American Mission Board have announced plans to withdraw funding from

the Atlanta Baptist Association following the association's decision to remain in fellowship with two homosexual-affirming churches. The association voted January 30 to defeat a motion to dismiss Oakhurst Baptist Church and Virginia-Highland Baptist Church. The state convention withdrew fellowship from both churches in 1999 for "affirming, approving, and endorsing homosexual behavior." Both churches deny homosexuality is a sin, allow practicing homosexuals to hold positions of church leadership, and affirm same-sex blessings. (Baptist Press, 2/7/2001)

Baptist Group Joins NCC

The Alliance of Baptists, a liberal group that formed in opposition to the conservative direction of the Southern Baptist Convention, has become the 36th member communion of the National Council of Churches. Stan Hastey, executive director of the 60,000-member organization, said that the Alliance belongs in the ecumenical NCC because it is committed to historical Baptist principles and inclusivity. (*Christian News*, 11/27/2000)

Mormonism Fastest Growing Religion

Mormonism is the fastest-growing religion in American history, according to a study by *U.S. News & World Report*. The magazine says that if present trends continue, Mormons may number 265 million around the world by 2080. This growth is attributed to an aggressive missions program. Last year the cult sent out nearly 60,000 missionaries to 120 countries,

NOTABLE QUOTES

My trade of journalism is sodden these days with practitioners who seem incapable of admiring others or anything.—Roger Rosenblatt

Many religious persons have a dread of controversy, and wish truth stated without any reference to those who hold the opposite errors. Controversy and a bad spirit are in their estimation synonymous terms; and strenuously to oppose what is wrong is considered as contrary to Christian meekness. Those who hold this opinion seem to overlook what every page of the New Testament lays before us. In all the history of our Lord Jesus Christ, we never find Him out of controversy.—Robert Haldane, 1847

Political correctness gets in the way of all too many things in this country of ours. I am not a subscriber of political correctness by any means, shape or form. The pendulum has swung too far. The Framers did not intend surely for a totally secular society to be forced on the populace by government policy. [This] new sort of intolerance about religion I find most disturbing. It has become the thing we don't talk about, because it is not politically correct. So many of us are driven into a closet.—elder Democrat Sen. Robert Byrd.

One of the biggest mistakes humans make is to believe that there is only one way. Actually, there are many diverse paths leading to what you call God.—Oprah Winfrey

We may look up to Armies for our Defense, but Virtue is our best Security. It is not possible that any State should long remain free, where Virtue is not supremely honored.—Samuel Adams

The most successful revolutions aren't those that are celebrated with parades and banners, drums and trumpets, cannons and fireworks. The really successful revolutions are those that occur quietly, unnoticed, uncommemorated. We don't celebrate the day the United States Constitution was destroyed; it didn't happen on a specific date, and most Americans still don't realize it happened at all. We don't say the Constitution has ceased to exist; we merely say that it's a "living document." But it amounts to the same thing.—Joseph Sobran

For all the present sensitivity over correctness, we seem to have lost our sense of shame as a society. Nothing seems to embarrass us; nothing shocks us anymore.—Gen. Colin Powell

where they won 306,000 converts. (*Baptist Bulletin*, January 2001)

Catholics Are Majority in Congress

Roman Catholics still dominate the U.S. Congress, according to the latest survey conducted by Americans for Religious Liberty. The survey found 150 Catholics in Congress—91 Democrats and 59 Republicans. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 1/23/2001)

Evangelicals and Seventh-day Adventists to Meet

A planned series of meetings between Adventist leaders and representatives for the World Evangelical Fellowship is intended to foster understanding between the two groups, according to Adventist News Service. "We want to move beyond the false stereotypes to see where we agree and disagree, and to explore areas where we could mutually benefit by working together," said Bert Beach, the director of inter-church relations for the Seventh-day Adventist church. (*Christian News*, 11/27/2000)

Indonesian Persecution Becoming More Violent

Thousands of Christians are fleeing the Moluccas Islands in eastern Indonesia due to renewed violence in the ongoing Muslim-Christian clashes. Reports of the murder of Christians who refused to convert to Islam have prompted frightened Christians to submit to forced conversions. Nearly 8,000 people have been killed since the beginning of 1999. Christians have risked their lives to leave the islands in overcrowded boats. Islam is the dominant religion in

Indonesia; however, the Moluccas have been primarily Protestant Christian. These Christian communities were established by the Dutch spice traders who settled in the islands in the late 16th century. (*K-House eNews*, 2/6/2001)

Egyptian Court Convicts Four of 96

An Egyptian court convicted just four of 96 defendants on trial for murder, looting, and inciting violence in connection with the New Year's Muslim-Christian clashes last year. Twenty-one Christians died in the violence that erupted January 2, 2000, after an argument between a Muslim customer and a Coptic Christian shopkeeper in el-Kusheh, 275 miles south of Cairo. Of the four Muslims convicted, the harshest punishment was a ten-year sentence for accidental homicide and illegal possession of a weapon. (*K-House eNews*, 2/6/2001)

Violence Against Churches

The Christmas holiday prompted the bombings of churches in Yemen, Tajikistan, and Indonesia. Seventeen were killed by the blast in Jakarta, Indonesia. The bombings, while probably unrelated, were all reportedly carried out by Islamic extremists. (*K-House eNews*, 1/2/2001)

Christian Conversions Criticized

The Dalai Lama, the exiled leader of Tibetan Buddhists and a Nobel peace prize winner, joined Hindu leaders in

condemning the Muslim and Christian practice of actively seeking converts after a January 18 meeting with leaders of the World Hindu Council in India. "Whether Hindu or Muslim or Christian, whoever tries to convert, it's wrong, not good," the Dalai Lama said. The council is an influential group that criticizes Christians and Muslims and aims to make multi-religious India into a Hindu state. (Baptist Press, 1/29/2001)

Baptists Facing "Genocide" in Myanmar

A sizeable Christian community among the Karen people group in Myanmar (formerly Burma) is facing abuse at the hands of the country's military regime, according to Newsroom-Online, an Internet news service based in London. Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) sent a team to Myanmar in November to document abuse claims. CSW cited "widespread use of forced labor, involuntary relocation, military offensives against civilians, threats and intimidation, and destruction of crops and livestock," based on firsthand testimonies of refugees in Thailand, trips into the Burmese jungle, and evidence from recent military defectors. CSW reported many living in the jungle with temporary shelter, insufficient food, and virtually no medical care, according to the Newsroom-Online news story. Among the Karen are an estimated 10,000 baptized believers who are

Baptists and an overall Baptist community of 50,000, according to 1999 figures reported by the Baptist World Alliance. About 30 percent of the Karen people and most of their leadership are Christian, partly as a result of British and American missionary activity in the 19th century, according to the London-based human rights group Jubilee Campaign. (Baptist Press, 1/9/2001)

Chinese Government Destroys Church Before Christmas

In the southeastern Chinese village of Zhong, a group of Communist Party and government officials showed up and declared the recently built church illegal because it operated outside the control of China's state-run religious organizations. The congregation's organ and audio system were seized and then, as the police stood guard, the officials destroyed the little church with sledgehammers. "I don't know what we're going to do for Christmas now. It's a dangerous time. They say we can't even gather in someone's house, but we'll still do it. We have faith in Jesus," said a congregational leader. (*International Herald Tribune*, 12/19/2000)

Seminary Training in China

No preaching, no prayers, and no hymns—those are the restrictions Chinese officials recently imposed on campus meetings at Nanjing Seminary, the most prestigious of China's licensed Protestant

theological training centers. Last year a core of long-time faculty were fired for opposing theological liberalism in the school's teaching program and for non-conformity to its Marxist leanings. The seminary has 170 students, with ten times that many applicants. (*World*, 1/27/2001)

Senator Exhorts India to Protect Christians

Visiting U.S. Senator Arlen Specter expressed concern over attacks on Christians in India and said New Delhi is not doing enough to contain the attacks. The Internet news site CNSNews.com reported on the senator's comments after meeting with Indian officials January 4. Indian officials are concerned that further attacks on the country's Christian minority could affect the recently improving relations with the United States. The group Human Rights Watch says the past two years have witnessed more incidents of violence against the Christian community in India than in all the years since independence in 1947. In 2000, India witnessed about 100 reported attacks on Christians and their institutions, according to figures published by the Indian government. Christians make up just 2.5 percent of India's nearly 1 billion mostly Hindu population. (Baptist Press, 1/5/2001)

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

The Credibility of the Resurrection

R. A. Torrey called the resurrection of Jesus Christ “the cornerstone of Christian doctrine, the Gibraltar of Christian evidence, the Waterloo of liberalism.” And so it is.

There are 11 recorded physical appearances of the risen Christ, making the Resurrection a well-established fact of history. Those who hold to the idea that He was merely a good man, martyred by jealous religious leaders who could not command His popularity, are hard pressed to explain the Resurrection. Was he raised to show how proud the Heavenly Father was of His noble martyrdom? Was it a statement that here was a man who was too good to leave in the grave? Failure to recognize the meaning of His death means failure to understand the meaning of His Resurrection. He died to pay the penalty of our sin; He was raised to prove that He did.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is fundamental to Christianity; its acceptance is part of saving faith. “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom. 10:9). This requires no blind faith, but honest acknowledgement of fact. The credibility of the witnesses to the Resurrection of Christ is seen not only “in their number and variety but also (in) the essential harmony of their reports, the absence of all motive to falsehood, and their self-sacrificing devotion to the gospel that based itself upon the resurrection.”¹

The risen Lord appeared first to Mary (Mark 16:9–11) to introduce Himself to one receptive heart. He appeared next to the two Marys (Matt. 28:1–10) who were then sent

by an angel to report to the disciples, but met by the Lord, to confirm by two witnesses this supernatural event. Then He appeared to Peter (Luke 24:34, 1 Cor. 15:5), we are not told where, to provide a single, expert witness. Above the desk where I study is a print of the beloved painting of Christ on the road to Emmaus, opening the Scriptures to two of the disciples—His fourth appearance to witnesses (Luke 24:13–31).

Like Mary, these men were not believed at first (Mark 16:12–13), but the risen Lord laid for them a verifiable, rational basis for belief in the Resurrection from the Scriptures. After this report we no longer have a mere experience; we have a doctrine. The fifth appearance was to the ten disciples (Luke 24:36–48), where the Lord verified the reports they had heard by personal experience. The appearance to the 11, with Thomas then present (John 20:24–31), followed.

These two events confirm the value of a personal experience with Christ. The ten were offered the opportunity to see and touch Him and thought the experience too wonderful to believe (Luke 24:41). Thomas’s insistence on similar personal experience demonstrates the fact that belief in the risen Christ is a function of the will (John 20:25). He next appeared to the disciples by the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1,24) to lay the foundation of the Great Commission.

His eighth recorded appearance was before a congregation of over 500 (1 Cor. 15:6), perhaps to strengthen the assembly. His ninth appearance was to James (1 Cor. 15:7),

perhaps to demonstrate that he would lead them thereafter through a pastor. He then appeared to the apostles at His ascension (Acts 1:3–8) to proclaim the Great Commission, and to Paul (1 Cor. 15:8), who revealed the doctrines of the local church and heard Him speak on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3–4). If we count the appearance in a vision to John on the Isle of Patmos (Revelation 1:9ff), there are 12.

In the chapter that lists the qualifications for its leaders, 1 Timothy 3 records the truth of which the local church is the “pillar and ground.” “God was manifest in the flesh (the incarnation), justified in the Spirit (the Resurrection), seen of angels (witnesses!), preached unto the Gentiles (through the Great Commission), believed on in the world (as He will be today when this doctrine is preached), received up into glory (from whence He appeared to John, who told us what is ahead).

From His first appearance to one receptive heart, through increasingly credible and larger groups of witnesses, explaining from the Old Testament the Scriptural basis for the credibility of the Resurrection, the Lord Jesus clearly is seen to have been physically raised from the dead. These eyewitness accounts are recorded in more verifiable ancient manuscripts than are other accepted facts of history, and are available for

critique and comparison in the preserved Word of God we hold in our hands. The Resurrection may be rejected by an evil heart of unbelief, but not through a lack of credible evidence.

¹ From the New Unger’s Bible Dictionary, Moody Press, 1988.



DR. JOHN C. VAUGHN

What's on the Web

Bob Whitmore

In a recent column (November/December 2000) I mentioned the Bible Atlas Maps web site, which has free downloadable Bible maps. Since that time I have discovered another. Free Bible Maps is a part of a larger site, so it too has a long URL—www.execulink.com/~wblank/mapad003.htm. Here you'll find a list of nearly 50 maps—maps of different ancient empires and different time periods, Bible towns and regions, Paul's missionary journeys, and many other Bible-related themes. These maps are in a different format from those at Bible Atlas Maps, and they simply appear as color art on the different pages. There is probably a way to save and incorporate them into a software application, but I have neither the expertise nor software to do it. Nevertheless, the maps can be printed and are interesting for study purposes.

I am thankful that someone sent me the address for the Student Global Impact (SGI—www.studentglobalimpact.com) web site. This is a great site promoting missions to young people. What is SGI? It's "a developing network of student mission groups" to "facilitate a venue by which students can feel the pulse of God's heartbeat for the nations and regulate their own hearts to beat in time with God's." On SGI's board are a couple of FBF board members, along with several other well-known fundamental Baptists, among them seminary presidents and pastors, a missionary, and an evangelist. I especially like the pages listing resources, links, and trips. Among the resources are missions-related articles, publications, and books. The Links button lists a number fundamental mission boards' web sites, and the Trips button can be used to get a list of mission

trips to any part of the world.

The Guide to Web Evangelism web site lists "detailed resources for online Christian gospel outreach." From the home page I printed out 16 pages of information. Little or none of it is from a Fundamentalist perspective, but much of the information is very useful and practical for those wishing to use the Internet as an evangelism tool. If you are planning your own web site, this site would be well worth your time. You'll find it at www.gospelcom.net/guide/web-evangelism.html.

Finding used and out-of-print books can be a problem, but a friend in California recently sent me some web sites that can help. One is The Archives Bookshop (www.archives-bookshop.com). It has more than 50,000 volumes in stock, with a wide selection of religious books, among them some "antiquarian and collectables." Two other well-known publishers sell used books on their web sites. Baker Book House (www.baker-books.com) offers used and out-of-print books and damaged books at deep discounts. Kregel Christian Books and Resources (www.gospelcom.net/kregel) lists more than 200,000 used books, many of them now out of print.

One more site we want to mention is Dramatic Difference Publications (www.dramaticdifference.com), "a fundamental drama/music resource ministry established to provide the local church with Christ-honoring programs." The mover behind this site is Sandi Zimmerman Rebert, the wife of FBF member and pastor Brian Rebert in Farmington, Maine. If you are looking for a play to perform for your church or Christian school, this would be a good place to start.

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The National Center For Biblical Jurisprudence

VISION

- ★ Our vision is to be a National Center uniquely equipped and dedicated to the teaching of Biblical, historical and constitutional principles of jurisprudence.

MISSION

- ★ The mission of the National Center For Biblical Jurisprudence is to glorify God and advance the Christian faith by providing a moral and ethical compass for those who serve our Nation in areas of law enforcement, judiciary, correctional and legislative branches of government.

PURPOSE

- ★ To exalt the Savior of all mankind, Jesus Christ the Lord.
- ★ To encounter the Criminal Justice System with His glorious

Gospel and immutable principles of law from the Scriptures.

- ★ To equip students of law, the administrators and officers of criminal justice with Biblical, historical and constitutional skills, knowledge and character as they function as God's ordained ministers of justice.
- ★ To encourage Christians and all American citizens to submit to, pray for, and support law enforcement in all levels of our constitutional republic.
- ★ To engage contemporary Freudian and evolutionary philosophies that have rendered our criminal justice system ineffective in combating crime, finding closure for its' victims and strengthening this Nation's law enforcement personnel.

Finally . . .

- ★ A National Center that integrates a Biblical, historical and legal viewpoint to our Nation's Criminal Justice System.
- ★ A National Center providing a moral and ethical compass for those who serve our Nation in areas of law enforcement, judiciary, correctional and legislative branches of government.
- ★ A National Center uniquely equipped and dedicated to the teaching of Biblical, historical and constitutional principles of jurisprudence.
- ★ A National Center that will provide Christian lawyers and students of law with materials and position papers showing the relationship between the case laws of Exodus and the common law—Biblical ethics—Biblical basis for authority and top public policy issues.
- ★ A National Criminal Justice Training Academy that will provide the most up-to-date , professional training offered to men and women of law enforcement. Also, operating year round, offering certified chaplaincy training classes to certify and place pastors and theological students into all areas of the Criminal Justice System at the federal, state and local levels.

The Problem . . .

CORRECTIONS

- ★ 80% of all inmates released today will return in one year.
- ★ Prisons and jails are overcrowded 100–150% of their rated capacity.
- ★ The average age of an incarcerated felon is 20 years old and dropping.

- ★ Children ages 8–17 commit more class X felonies (violent crimes) of rape, murder, arson, armed robbery and aggravated battery.
- ★ We cannot build prisons fast enough to house the ever growing violent criminal.

COURTS & THE JUDICIARY

- ★ In many cases across America the innocent (victims) are condemned and the guilty (offenders) are acquitted.
- ★ Utilitarianism (what is useful for the moment) is the rule of law. The Constitution is interpreted as an evolving document. There is little or no Biblical Justice of retribution, restoration and restorative public trust in the justice system.
- ★ Politics, Freudian place blaming, and social constructs have replaced truth and justice.

POLICE

- ★ One officer is killed in the line of duty every 36 hours.
- ★ One officer commits suicide every 22 hours.
- ★ Highest rates of Stress, heart attacks, strokes, broken homes.
- ★ Expected to be a legal actor in handling crime while seeing their honorable service as “non-effective” due to the increasing demands of protocols and public opinion swings.

The Answer . . .

A RETURN TO AN HISTORICAL, BIBLICAL, AND CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATION

University of Maryland political science experts studied statements made by, and documents written by the 55 men who gathered together in Philadelphia, in their decisions for our Nation’s freedoms paperwork. They have attributed that 95% of these could be taken right from the Bible—God’s Word is the bedrock of Western civilization and America’s freedom.

George Washington once stated:

“It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.”

William Blackstone, a great legal mind of the late 1700’s taught that **all law is absolute**.

What we need is an approach to interpreting the Word of God that is not only immutable but irrefutable in its’ presentation.

What is needed in the interpreting of our Constitution is strict constructionism. **It means what it says.**

We need a generation of people who know the truth and will choose to follow God. There is no President, Congress or Supreme Court who will bring this Nation back to its foundations.

Our mission in the formation of the **National Center For Biblical Jurisprudence** is to reach the peoples of the criminal justice system with the Gospel, and to teach them Biblical social skills that will build character and thereby change evil conduct.



National Center for Biblical Jurisprudence



Phase II



Phase III – Two Dormitories



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1. **Greg Allison**—Pastor, Bible Baptist Church; Durham, NC
2. **Tom Coleman**—Pastor, Calvary Independent Baptist Church; Huntingdon, PA
3. **Drew Conley**—Associate Pastor, Hampton Park Baptist Church; Greenville, SC
4. **Dan Davey**—Pastor, Colonial Baptist Church; Virginia Beach, VA
5. **Bob Emberley**—Pastor, Mountain View Bible Church; Dublin, NH
6. **Ken Endean**—Pastor, Cornerstone Baptist Church; Scarborough, ME
7. **Mark Felber**—Pastor, Victory Baptist Church; Whiteland, IN
8. **Graham Foran**—Missionary & Church Planter, Brazil
9. **Randy Fox**—Pastor, Faith Baptist Church & Heritage Bible Church; Orange & San Bernardino, CA
10. **Cary Grant**—Evangelist, Mount Calvary Baptist Church; Archdale, NC
11. **Mike Harding**—Pastor, First Baptist Church; Troy, MI
12. **Hal Hightower**—Pastor, Tabernacle Baptist Church; Lebanon, MO
13. **David Innes, Sr.**—Pastor, Hamilton Square Baptist Church; San Francisco, CA
14. **Greg Kaminski**—Pastor, Westside Baptist Church; Eugene, OR
15. **Ken Keltner**—Associate Pastor, Tri-City Baptist Church; Westminster, CO
16. **Mike Knight**—Associate Pastor, Bible Baptist Church; Matthews, NC
17. **Juan Moreno**—Pastor, First Baptist Church; Lake Orion, MI
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19. **Mike Privett**—Pastor, Faith Baptist Church; Williamsburg, VA
20. **Randy Shaylor**—Pastor, Antioch Baptist Church; Riverdale, GA
21. **Dave Stertzbach**—Pastor, Trinity Baptist Church; Williston, VT
22. **Lloyd Streeter**—Pastor, First Baptist Church; LaSalle, IL
23. **Roger Vogel**—Pastor, Berean Bible Church; Dublin, OH
24. **Dave Whitcomb**—Pastor, Community Baptist Church; Greer, SC

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