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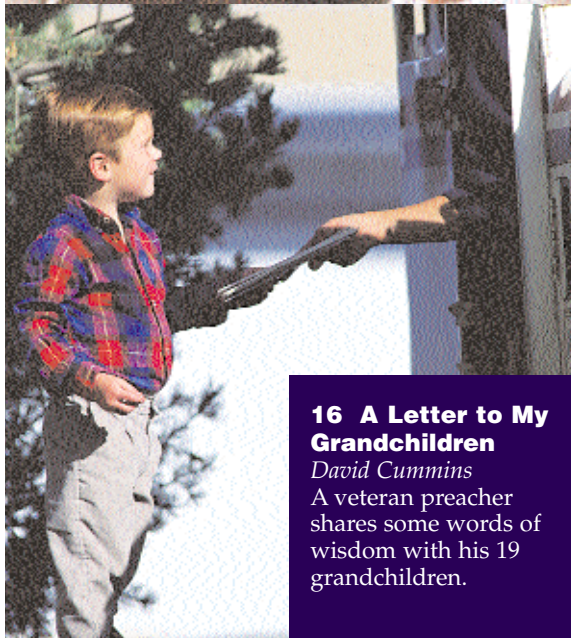
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**W**e really enjoy the magazine. When I read Phil Shuler's article I always think about the time that I heard him preach a revival service in Fruita, Colorado.

Mrs. John S. Newlon  
jsnewlon@nemonet.com

**W**e appreciate the magazine so very much, and both of us sit down as soon as it comes and read it straight through. (Well, I do have to wait my turn!) Thank you.

Edna Woodhall  
WWoodhall@aol.com

## National Meeting Report

Upwards of 600 people, among them nearly 300 paid registrants, attended the national FBF meeting held June 12-14

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at First Baptist Church in Troy, Michigan. The crowds enjoyed the Christ-honoring music, provided mostly by the host church, as well as great preaching on the conference theme, "The Supremacy of God."

Ten resolutions were passed on topics of con-

cern to fundamental Baptists and are printed on page 32.

At the FBF board meeting, Chaplain Wayne Bley reviewed the development of the chaplaincy manual, which will be up for final approval at the winter board meeting in February 2002. After final approval it will be made available to anyone interested in understanding the ministry of chaplaincy without compromise. Also at the meeting, Bob Whitmore announced his resignation from the office of Research Secretary due to his relocation to the mission field in Micronesia. At this time he will remain on the FBF board due to his continuing involvement with *Frontline*.

All of the messages from the FBF national meeting are available on CD, which includes both audio and written notes. The cost is only \$10 each and they can be ordered from First Baptist Church, 2601 John R Road, Troy, Michigan 48083, or call (248) 689-4555.

# FrontLine

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**Timothy B. Shorb, Ph. D., President**

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Due to the rapid growth of the mission, IPM needs to fill several new leadership positions. Please contact us for more information.

## The Precious Blood of Christ

(Part 6 of a message preached at the 1989 FBF National Meeting held in Schaumburg, Illinois.)

**T**he united testimony of all Scripture is that only in the blood of Jesus Christ is there divine power to bring salvation to a guilty soul. Apart from the precious blood, there is no hope for any sinner. Only the fact that God can see the blood of His Son on the soul saves that soul from wrath. In the shed blood of Christ flows all the dynamic fullness of God's grace and favor. Let us see something of the fullness of that saving power.

**Expiation:** Only the blood of Christ could pay the penalty for sin, and thus only that blood can give cleansing from sin. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). Therefore, His blood alone can cleanse away all sin. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). A sinner is cleansed by the blood.

**Satisfaction:** By His obedience and sacrifice, culminating in the sacrificial shedding of His blood, the Lord Jesus fully satisfied the just demands of the law of God. The broken law demanded death as a penalty. Thus we read, "Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6).

Christ offered a ransom for His people (Matt. 20:28), and it is an all-sufficient ransom. There is no need for added payment, for He, by the shedding of His blood, was rendered a complete satisfaction to God. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

**Propitiation:** "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood" (Rom. 3:25). The blood of Christ alone has power to satisfy God's justice and thereby extinguish the fire of divine wrath.

**Justification:** The blood of Christ is essential to this act of justifying grace. "[We are] now justified by his blood" (Rom. 5:9). On no other ground will God forgive our sin and account us as righteous in His sight. But as soon as even the foulest offender comes to Christ by faith, he is, according to Scripture, instantaneously justified on the merit of Christ's precious blood.

**Redemption:** Only through the blood of Christ can redemption be received. The Bible evidence is absolutely clear: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14; Eph. 1:7). "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . But with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:18, 19).

Unless you are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, you must remain forever guilty, and condemned—an everlasting slave to sin. But as soon as the precious blood is applied by faith to your soul you will be instantaneously set free, redeemed to God by Christ's blood (Rev. 5:9).

**Reconciliation:** Sinners need to be reconciled to God. They need to have enmity removed and a new relationship established. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. 5:19). This reconciliation was

affected through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself" (Col. 1:19–20).

"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens . . . having no hope,

and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:12, 13).

The call of the gospel is "be ye reconciled unto God" (2 Cor. 5:20). There is reconciling power in the precious blood of Christ.

**Power of Sanctification:** Like any other blessing, sanctification is received by the merits of the blood of Christ. "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12).

There is power in the precious blood of Christ to enable every Christian to live an overcoming life.

**Power of Supplication:** Believers have the right of access to the very throne of the Holy God by the blood of Christ. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw nigh with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:19–22). Approaching God must be on the grounds of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Power of Glorification:** Entrance to heaven is on the ground of the shed blood of Christ alone. The redeemed in heaven are described as "they which . . . have

washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God" (Rev. 7:14–15).

There is power in the blood of Christ—power sufficient to meet every need of a poor sinner and bring him gloriously into heaven.



DR. ROD BELL



A photograph of an older man with glasses and a young girl looking at each other. The man is on the left, wearing a suit and tie, looking down at the girl. The girl is on the right, looking up at the man. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting.

# Finishing Strong

**John Brock**

*"... Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" (Numbers 23:10b).*

Those of us who have had veteran pastors who handle the Word of God with skill, honesty, and faithfulness are truly blessed. Unfortunately, when I look back over my life, almost all of which was spent in fundamental Baptist churches, I have seen many pastors who were at one time steadfast, fundamental, separatist Baptists but who no longer take the stand which marked their early ministry. Sadly, the Biblical beliefs they once taught and for which they so valiantly fought they no longer hold. They taught me so well that I still believe in the Biblical principles and applications

that constitute the Fundamentalist ethos, which I learned while sitting at their feet. Why did they change?

All truly born-again believers want to die in the will of God. We all know the names of those in the Bible who started with promise but fizzled in the end. Great and godly men such as Noah, David, Solomon, and priests such as Eli and Samuel either fell toward the end of their lives or failed to transmit the driving purpose of their lives to the next generation. The noble sentiments expressed in the opening verse at the beginning of this article were uttered by one of the strangest individuals in the Bible—Balaam. Balaam knew the Word of God and spoke the Word of God and understood the need for God's blessing, yet he was a miserable spiritual failure.



Rather than dying the death of the righteous, he opposed Israel, promoted compromise, and was killed in a battle with Israel.

There have been too many men who sincerely wished for what Balaam wished but who ended their ministry in compromise or failure. I can understand falling to the flesh. We all struggle with the residue of our depraved nature. What puzzles me most is the number of godly pastors who “rationally” abandon an advocacy for Fundamentalism as they age. I have known several such pastors very well. Each followed a stereotypical cycle which seemed to emerge in these pastors’ lives as they matured.

### **Stage One—A Time of Standing and Battling.**

At one time, these pastors stood against sin, wickedness, and compromise. They preached convicting messages that not only stirred the heart but made the beads of perspiration appear on our foreheads as they emphasized the sinfulness of man and the holiness of God.

### **Stage Two—A Time of Maturity and Consolidation.**

Many of the fundamental pastors gained respect and reputations as thinkers, as mentors, and as scarred veterans of the battle against worldliness and ecumenical compromise with segments of the evangelical community which polluted the gospel by using worldly methods, music, and models. Younger men looked up to these warriors and used their ministry as a pattern for their own.

### **Stage Three—A Time of Fatigue and Reflection.**

As these pastors and leaders reflect on past battles and contemporary leaders, they see isolated instances of Fundamentalist errors, perhaps an externalistic emphasis by a few well-known leaders of Fundamentalism. Perhaps they even feel guilt and shame at their remembrance of the past realizing that in the midst of their correct stand their activity was unkind or cutting or was interpreted that way. They now begin to see these isolated examples of externalism as *systematic* and *typical* of Fundamentalists.

### **Stage Four—A Time of “New Light.”**

Some of these aging pastors now believe that as a Fundamentalist they need to try to “correct” the movement, i.e., provide constructive criticism from within. They have an attitude that says, “I know the Fundamentalist position is right but excesses must be stopped, criticized, or corrected.” As they speak out, they

encounter resistance and are stigmatized as being soft. It is at this point that an acceleration begins. The less militant segment of Fundamentalists within all good churches sees the pastor as a brave new champion and praises his openness while expressing their dissatisfaction with the evils of the “hardliners.” The mature and secure minister at this stage of his ministry not only appreciates the adulation of the younger, less militant group but realizes he has nothing to lose, so he inadvertently begins to characterize Fundamentalism as a monolithic movement with few enlightened thinkers and Biblicists. Tragically, the average church member in his congregation receives mostly negative statements about Fundamentalists or Fundamentalism. Little is now said in defense of holiness and standards relative to personal and/or ecclesiastical separation. All this time the pastor still maintains a good personal position, but his criticism of Fundamentalism makes many other Fundamentalist brethren, who believe

we are in a deadly battle with sin, worldliness, and compromise of holy living, uncomfortable with the “direction” of the pastor.

### **Stage Five—A Time of New Tolerance and Intolerance.**

Now the once stalwart defender of Fundamentalism begins to open up to the New Evangelical arguments. He sees Fundamentalists as producing few thought-provoking writers (which is unfortunately true) and becomes enamored with church growth advocates and incorporates ideas and methods developed by Charismatics, New Evangelicals, and critics of separatists. Doctrinal differences become minimized “as long as my people are stimulated and challenged.” Gone are the messages on the dangers of ecumenism and personal separation, and, increasingly, when he exegetes a passage on the Pharisees he equates them with Fundamentalists. Legalism and Fundamentalism are systematically linked. Contemporary Christian

music begins to enter (if it was not already there). The importance of the Christian school is diminished, and development of personal standards in young people is replaced with “making contacts.” Confrontation and preaching on worldliness are minimized. The pastor and youth director rarely, if ever, preach or challenge the congregation to abstain from movies, dancing, pre-marital physical contact between sexes, immodest dress, use of alcoholic beverages, etc. Respect for God and the assembly of the church manifests itself in casual-to-slovenly dress (tennis shoes, sandals, jeans, open-collared shirts complete with hairy chests and gold necklaces) during Sunday evening and mid-week services. Accommodation

*Great and godly men such . . . either fell toward the end of their lives or failed to transmit the driving purpose of their lives to the next generation.*

replaces confrontation. Evangelism and outreach are seen as reasons to minimize the importance of personal separation.

### Stage Six—A Time of Decline and Compromise.

While this cycle is evolving, fundamental Baptists in the congregation become increasingly uneasy. When they express concern about drift in position, dress, and deportment, they are rebuffed. Soon these previously faithful people begin to trickle away. Rather than being concerned about this trend, the pastor becomes hardened, saying, "You can't please everybody! The church is better off without these critical people." As the exodus increases, so do comments by the pastor, his staff, and his followers about "breaking out of our shell," "reaching the community," and "new freedom to minister to the unsaved." At some point there is a shrinking of the congregation, especially on Sunday evenings and Wednesday evenings. As Fundamentalists leave the church, so does the salty element which has held compromise in check, and the drift accelerates. Soon, church associations change, and the cycle is complete. In the next generation, after the present pastor is gone, the remaining weak congregation will often call a mainstream New Evangelical pastor.

### Possible Causes of Drift (other than immorality)

It may be that the chief reason that some pastors drift into compromise in the latter stages of their ministry is that their original correct position as a fundamental separatist was taken by default rather than by Biblical conviction. Perhaps they came from a fundamental church or went to a fundamental college, and their initial stand reflected continuity rather than a belief system which flowed out of a study of Scripture. Some may have been Fundamentalists because of a basically conservative nature. Conservatism is not synonymous with holiness. For example, racial segregation, pure classical economics, social Darwinism, and libertarianism are all conservative ideas without Scriptural support.

Some may even have gravitated to Fundamentalism because it was part of a popular conservative ethos. Rush Limbaugh and Dr. Laura may espouse conservative ideas, but they are poor substitutes for Biblical Christianity. Choosing to be a fundamental Baptist because it resonates with one's Biblical love of things conservative will not result in an enduring Biblicist position.

Lastly, some may have chosen Fundamentalism because of pragmatism. They may have been called to a Fundamental Baptist church and in the beginning adopted or adapted to its tradition of separatism. In addition, fundamental churches seemed to be growing.

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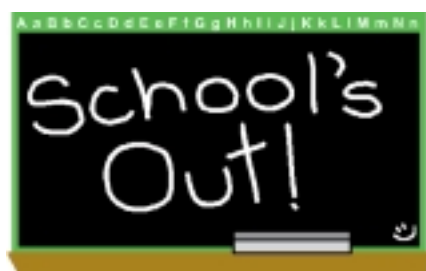
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The straight lifestyle seemed to fill a void produced by the radical '60s-'70s. People flocked to churches which took a stand against "free love," anarchy, and socialism. But when the crowds dwindled and the mainstream was no longer enamored with conservatism, some of these preachers sought solace in teachings of the church growth movement—"Where big things were happening."

## **Fostering a Life-long Ministry as a Fundamental Baptist**

To avoid drift and compromise, we must constantly be reminded that:

1. *Fundamentalist separation must flow out of a careful exegesis of Scripture*, not from copying respected leaders or from personal taste. Firm positions that are outcomes of Biblical study will result in accurate, bold confrontation and pedagogy rather than preaching someone else's convictions.

2. *Spiritual carelessness and compromise can result in a loss of ministry*. Without a "poverty of spirit" (Matthew 5), we in our mature pride begin to de-emphasize holiness and confrontation with sin and worldliness. Let us heed the tragic example of the prophet in 1 Kings 13 who, after bravely confronting Jeroboam, believed the lies of the "Brother Prophet." Sadly, after standing for righteousness and while tired and hungry, he disobeyed the admonition of God to remain separate from apostate Israel and took a meal with a "brother" prophet in Israel. Of his end it was said, "It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the LORD: therefore the LORD hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake unto him" (1 Kings 13:26). Battling can lead to both exhilaration and fatigue. One can become weary and let down one's guard and fail to recognize that compromise can lead to ruin or to congregations captured by New Evangelicalism.

3. *Pastors and their congregations are protected from the vacillation or corrections and flip-flops on issues if they avoid extremes* by developing a careful, accurate attitude toward movements and people.

4. *Most fundamental Baptist preachers and people are not unkind, unthinking, unloving, or legalists*. It is the devil's lie that causes us to abandon Biblical teaching because a few who hold that position are intemperate or unkind and are therefore disobedient to the whole counsel of God.

5. *Many New Evangelicals are bright people who love the Lord*. Yet we can never justify disobedience to Scripture based upon sincerity, personality, or a respect for the spirituality of others. King David

was used by God to deliver Israel from God's enemies. He was inspired of God to write Holy Scripture, yet Nathan the prophet had no choice but to obey God and confront David with his sin. This confrontational and obedient action brought the kind of results we should be seeking in our preaching, an awareness of sin and a penitent heart. If it is Biblical, it is right; and if it is unbiblical, it is wrong no matter who does it or why.

6. *Pastors should invest a much greater time in study and analysis of issues and movements of our day* and teach the Biblical response to congregations while being a pattern to every believer of what it means to "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21).

I am amazed by the shallow reasoning and thinking of many Fundamentalists related to questionable worldly activities. Each pastor should be able to write a Sunday school lesson or develop principle-based messages on Biblical positions related to:

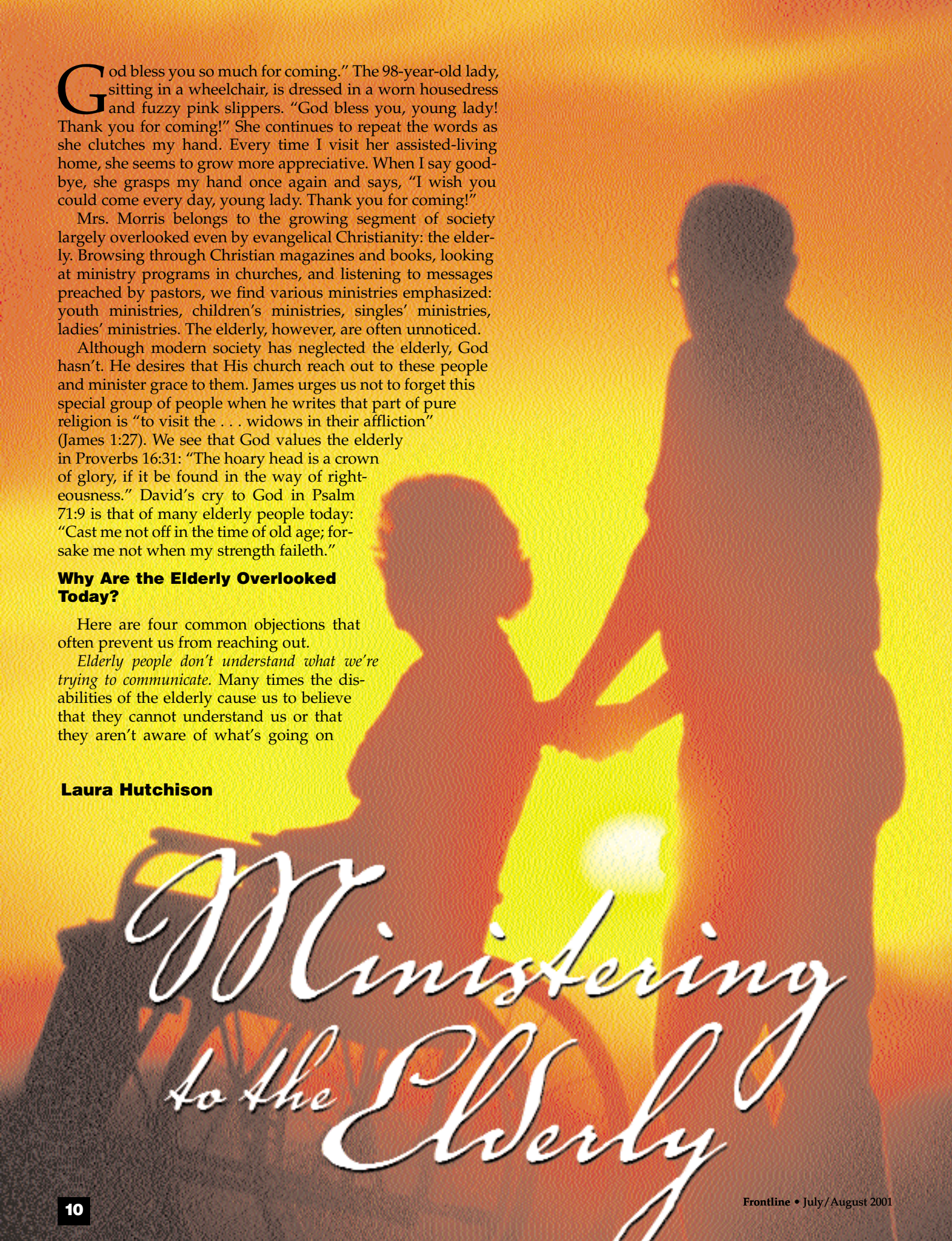
1. Music
2. Dancing
3. Movies and videos
4. Smoking, obesity
5. Promise Keepers
6. ECT, NCC, New Evangelicalism, ecumenical evangelicalism, etc.
7. Gambling
8. Abortion
9. Premarital sexual activity and sensuality in behavior and dress

If members of Bible-believing churches should wonder *why* these things are wrong, the reasons given must be Biblical. Evidence on the character of the activities must be accurate, and principles related to Christian living must be articulated clearly, forcefully, and unequivocally. We must not only identify issues of the day which violate Scripture or its clearly taught principles, but we must also transmit our research and reasoning to congregations so that abstinence from weakening practices or unbiblical actions can be reinforced by parents, Christian school teachers, and the youth workers. The pastor in effect becomes the lead teacher to "faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (1 Tim. 2:2).

Endurance of a ministry and congregational fidelity to the Word of God should be a goal of each fundamental Baptist pastor. The surest way to achieve such an end is to develop practices and positions from a careful, personal study of the Scripture, keeping a careful, wary eye out for strategies (wiles) that the devil would suggest in order to increase our ministry at the cost of diluting the blessing of God.

Dr. John Brock is Vice President of Academic Affairs at Maranatha Baptist Bible College in Watertown, Wisconsin.





God bless you so much for coming." The 98-year-old lady, sitting in a wheelchair, is dressed in a worn housedress and fuzzy pink slippers. "God bless you, young lady! Thank you for coming!" She continues to repeat the words as she clutches my hand. Every time I visit her assisted-living home, she seems to grow more appreciative. When I say goodbye, she grasps my hand once again and says, "I wish you could come every day, young lady. Thank you for coming!"

Mrs. Morris belongs to the growing segment of society largely overlooked even by evangelical Christianity: the elderly. Browsing through Christian magazines and books, looking at ministry programs in churches, and listening to messages preached by pastors, we find various ministries emphasized: youth ministries, children's ministries, singles' ministries, ladies' ministries. The elderly, however, are often unnoticed.

Although modern society has neglected the elderly, God hasn't. He desires that His church reach out to these people and minister grace to them. James urges us not to forget this special group of people when he writes that part of pure religion is "to visit the . . . widows in their affliction" (James 1:27). We see that God values the elderly in Proverbs 16:31: "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." David's cry to God in Psalm 71:9 is that of many elderly people today: "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth."

### **Why Are the Elderly Overlooked Today?**

Here are four common objections that often prevent us from reaching out.

*Elderly people don't understand what we're trying to communicate.* Many times the disabilities of the elderly cause us to believe that they cannot understand us or that they aren't aware of what's going on

**Laura Hutchison**

# *Ministering to the Elderly*



around them. Although for some elderly people this may be true, the majority are well aware of their surroundings and are capable of communicating with others. Another lady at the assisted care-home I visit is a testimony to this fact. The day after her 100th birthday she told me how much she enjoyed a message she had recently heard and how God used it to encourage her.

Even those who have mental disabilities can be helped and comforted. Another one of the ladies I visit, who has some mental problems, always enjoys talking and being with others. While I can't discuss theology with her, I can encourage her and make her life a little happier just by taking time to visit with her.

*Elderly people aren't quick to respond.* As with any ministry, we want to see the results of our efforts. We want to know that what we're doing is having an effect. Ministry to the elderly does require patience, but if we're faithful we will eventually see results. After two years of visiting the assisted care home once a week, I had the joy of seeing one of the residents saved.

*Elderly people don't have much potential.* Often we fall into the thinking that since elderly people don't have much of their lives left, they can't be productive for Christ. The unintentional extension of this idea is that since elderly people can't be as productive as younger people, it's not worth the effort to minister to them. Elderly people, however, can have a big impact. Consider the grandfather of one of my friends. For years his daughter, who was the only one in the family who knew Christ at the time, prayed for his salvation. Although during 16 years of her unceasing prayer he stubbornly refused to accept Christ, gradually he softened and was saved. His testimony then caused several other members of the family to realize the truth of Christ and come to know Him.

*We can't relate to them.* Often elderly people seem different from us—since they've lived most of their lives during a time unfamiliar to us, they seem detached from modern life. We think that we can't relate to them. But spending time with elderly people reveals that they aren't much different from us and that, in fact, we can build meaningful and rewarding relationships with them. One of the elderly people at the assisted living home, Mary Jane, is always exclaiming over the way things have changed over the years. But she's fascinated by the changes and wants to talk about them—she wants to know about my life and is eager to tell me about hers.

### **What Are Some Rewards of Ministering to the Elderly?**

Reaching out to the elderly is a rewarding ministry. What are some of the benefits we receive from taking time to get involved in the lives of these people?

*We are encouraged.* I can't count the times I've gone to minister to an elderly person and have come away

encouraged by his or her love for God. Elderly people have gained a lot of wisdom from their many years of living. They have so much to teach us if we will only take time to learn from them.

*We realize the blessings we have.* When I start getting a critical spirit or becoming discontent with what I have, many times I find the solution in visiting with an elderly person. Realizing that so many people have much less than I do makes me more thankful for what I have. Because many of the elderly people I talk to are happy despite their circumstances, I realize that I can have joy no matter what my situation is.

*God blesses ministry.* The familiar saying "you reap what you sow" is just as true in this ministry as in any other. God rewards us greatly not only in heaven but also here on earth as we share His love with others. Recently, as I was coming back from the assisted-living home, I was overwhelmed with God's love and care for us. Listening to the testimonies of so many of the elderly people had made me realize in a new way the truth that "His mercies are new every morning." The time and effort I expended were more than worth the blessing of this reminder.

### **What Are Some Practical Ways We Can Minister to the Elderly?**

How can we minister to these people? What are some practical ways we can reach out?

*Hold them up.* We know that prayer is vital for any ministry. Timothy urges us that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1). We can't forget the importance of prayer. Andrew Murray said, "Beware, in your prayer, above everything, of limiting God, not only by unbelief, but also by fancying that you know what He can do."

*Hold their hands.* There are two aspects to helping the elderly: personal contact and provision for their needs. James captures the essence of ministry when he instructs us to "visit" them. Many times elderly people enjoy nothing more than contact with other people. In addition, because elderly people experience the physical limitations that result from aging, they are often unable to do the things they need to do. In these areas, we can be a help and encouragement. What are some practical ideas for meeting these needs?

- *Read to them.* Because their eyesight is diminishing, many elderly people can no longer read. Elderly Christians particularly like having Bible passages read to them.

- *Take them out.* Those who can no longer drive appreciate being taken to the places they need to go, such as church, shopping, or running errands. They also enjoy being taken somewhere special as a treat, like out to eat.

Although  
modern  
society has  
neglected  
the elderly,  
God hasn't.



• *Send them cards.* Cards make people feel special and loved. Knowing someone is thinking of them encourages everyone.

• *Bring them food.* Most elderly people find cooking difficult. Occasionally providing food for them gives them a needed rest.

• *Do work around the house for them or run errands for them.* Volunteering to do work around the house or running errands is a great help to the elderly, especially because many of them would otherwise have to hire someone to do the work for them.

• *Provide tapes for them to listen to.* Those who can't get out very much especially enjoy listening to sermon or inspirational tapes.

• *Bring them small gifts.* Everyone loves to be surprised by gifts. Flowers, stuffed animals, or other creative ideas are always a good way to brighten an elderly person's day.

Ministering to the elderly is a vital, rewarding ministry that God emphasizes in His Word. By overcoming incorrect thought patterns, realizing the benefits of ministry, and reaching out in practical ways, we can have a meaningful ministry to the elderly that will enrich not only them but also us as well.

Laura Hutchison leads a nursing home ministry in Greenville, South Carolina, where she is a student at Bob Jones University.

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# A Psalm for Old Age

Only the most farsighted among us make any preparation at all for old age," writes Janie B. Cheaney, "and then it tends to be financial and physical, not emotional and spiritual." Yet, she adds, "Old age is certain for most of us." An aging D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones observed, "We do not give enough time to death and to our going on. It is a very strange thing this: the *one* certainty, yet we do not think about it." As we move ever more rapidly toward the inevitable, we would all like to grow old well and die quickly. No one *plans* on suffering or lingering. "But ultimately," Cheaney concludes, "it's not my decision. If the Sovereign Lord chooses not to honor my plans, how shall I honor His? If He wishes to loosen my grip on life by crippling my body, or even my mind, how will I take it?"

The subheading to Psalm 71 in my King James Bible reads "A Prayer for Old Age." Naturally, then, when I read verse one—"In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion"—my thoughts immediately ran to my 77-year-old mother-in-law, who has lived with us for five years. She has Alzheimer's.

I was puzzled by this verse. *She has definitely been "put to confusion,"* I thought. Then I discovered the phrase "put to confusion" refers to humiliation or public disgrace, the kind of bewilderment and embarrassment "when matters turn out contrary to one's expectations." That is why the same word is often translated to be "ashamed" or "put to shame."

The psalmist (David? It sounds like David, an aging David, especially when you compare the opening of Psalm 71 with the opening of Psalm 31, a Davidic psalm.) prayed that he would never be put to shame because he had placed his trust in the Lord. Mom was gloriously saved and transformed 26 years ago, during the time that her husband of 25 years was divorcing her. Her life so changed that within two years, three of her four children (the youngest of whom was 15) also came to the Lord. The fourth later came to know the Lord as well. Even while her life as she had



**Esther Talbert**

always known it crumbled around her, her consistent testimony was one of joy and delight in her new found Lord and of generous love and kindness to others. To me, she was an ideal mother-in-law. No, she was never put to shame, because she did put her trust in the Lord.

"Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth" (Ps. 71:9). Has God turned His back on Mom in her old age by abandoning her to the ravages of Alzheimer's? Has He forgotten her by allowing her mind to slip away? The only answer of both faith and experience is no. God is, indeed, very much in control of Mom's mind and condition.

Alzheimer's is the disease that breaks the hearts of loved ones looking on even as it painlessly fractures the mind of the victim. Gone from her mind is the pain of her divorce that she carried with her for more than two decades. She is confused often, to be sure. But God has not forsaken her, and we are privileged to be some of those through whom God cares for her. She wants only to be shown the way and reassured of someone's presence. As Bill French poignantly penned,

We crave but this—the warm, unhurried hand,  
The steady heart, the understanding eye,  
The love that holds, nor cowers in the blast.  
Come, sup with us at Age's barren table,  
And share our ashes. Stay your hasty flight.  
For we are those whose minds have faded dim.

"Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come" (Ps. 71:18). As a nursing instructor cherished by her students (of whom I was one), Mom imparted to her young charges far more than nursing skills. To many she was a surrogate mother and spiritual counselor who showed the strength and sweetness, the love and faithfulness of the Lord. Now God is using her to show His strength and power—perfected through weakness—to my husband



and me, and to any who will take the time to care and observe.

There is a reason God leaves the elderly and infirm among us, and it is often not for *their* benefit but for *ours*. If we are not too busy and self-absorbed, we may learn the qualities of Christ that we lack and that He desires to mold in us, the transformation of character He intends to accomplish in *us*, by confronting us with their presence and needs. By the time something like Alzheimer's strikes, God is about done with His earthly work in someone like Mom. "Why, then, does He leave someone to linger like that?" we wonder. His earthly work in Mom is done, but much of His earthly work in *us* and others, *through Mom*, is just beginning. He strengthens us daily to love and care for her. In the gentle rebuke of His mercy, He is molding and changing us—revealing our selfishness, reminding of our own startlingly short allotment of youth and health and life, unfolding His fifth commandment in new ways. Only as I myself am moldable will God's power, in my turn, shine through me to "this generation and . . . to every one that is to come."

"Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee! Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me" (Ps. 71:19, 20). God is *righteous* in His choice of Alzheimer's for Mom. He is, in fact, the One who has caused her to see "great and sore troubles" in her days. If it is an accident beyond His control, He is not God. If He sent it but it is not righteous, He is not God. Why do we always question God when "bad" things happen to us, but not when good things do? Do we deserve only the good? Job didn't think so (Job 1:21; 2:10). The more penetrating question is, do we deserve *any* of the good?

"Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side. . . . My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed" (Ps. 71:20, 21, 23). Biblical hope is confident anticipation rooted in God's revelation. When Mom is finally called home by her loving Lord and Savior, all the "great and sore troubles" will

vanish like a puff of smoke in a sudden wind. The Lord who shepherded her through this earthly life and laid her body in the depths of the earth will again raise her body—refashioned and forever healed of all ills—out of those depths, and set her on high with Him in everlasting comfort, where she will rejoice in His wisdom and grace and have again a keen mind and fervent heart with which to show forth the praises of her God.

In that eternal day, everything time-bound and earthly will pale into insignificance.

Esther Talbert is a freelance writer who lives in Travelers Rest, South Carolina.

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*There is a King worthy of loyalty*

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# Grandfather

**M**y grandfather turned 99 on 9/9/99. In 2000 he reached the century mark. For the comparatively brief span of my life, he has embodied all anyone could wish in a grandfather.

Many of my earliest memories are of him. He has been the most industrious, hard-working man I have ever known. His musty workshop cast an early spell on me, and our visits to his home always included prolonged adventures of discovery there. He seemed to know everything and could do almost anything. He built houses by himself. He could make a delicious meatloaf casserole in his iron skillet out of ingredients that would have made Robinson Crusoe proud.

His diligence manifested itself in every area. I remember astutely studying his face and being mesmerized by the ever-present tiny flecks of paint that dotted his brow. I loved playing with his hands and pinching the skin together to watch with fascination as the wrinkles remained in place.

He knew how to make an impression on a kid. Maybe that was why a word from him was always sufficient—particularly a word of needed rebuke. When I was with him, I always wanted to be a grown up. I wanted to do what he did, talk like he talked, work like he worked, and even look like he looked. I even experimented with trying to clear my throat like he did—only I happened to be in my reading circle in kindergarten at the time. My teacher did not fully appreciate my simple explanation, “Well, that’s how my grandfather does it.”

Instinctively, I knew my grandfather was trustworthy. Everyone trusted him. Our frequent Sunday trips to the bank to drop off the church deposit bag told me that.

He has always shown a faithful love of the Bible. I’ve seen him adjust his work schedule to be able to hear Vernon McGee preach through the Bible over the radio. I have watched him labor to read his large-print Bible through a magnifying glass. I have heard him ask perceptive questions that stumped preachers. He simply wanted to know the Bible.

Until very recently, he seemed ageless.

I have marveled at him the same way I have seen him marvel at modern technology. I was as awed watching him roof houses at 88 years old or pouring concrete at 90, as he is awed every time we go to the airport in Amarillo, Texas. He will study a large jet from inside the terminal and quietly exclaim, “It’s

too heavy—it won’t make it,” when he full well knows it will fly. He just has not quite fathomed the principles of aviation in his head—yet.

Other than the many memories of my grandfather, I own two things from him that are priceless. He wrote me letters several years ago after I spent a summer with him. For a few short pages, he let me see inside his heart in a way I never had before. The words he penned in his large, scrawling script opened my eyes to a new reality. My epitome-of-a-man grandfather had a tender heart.

Even more precious than the letters is a recording I have of him. Scratched in blue ink on the tape label is his name, H. A. Burnett. On the homemade recording are hymns sung as a testimony to the most important Person in his life. One day when he was alone, his heart overflowing with love for his God, he pulled out a hymnal and a tiny recorder and began to sing. Reading the words through a magnifying glass, he savored his relationship with God.

The joy my grandfather has in expressing his faith through hymns captures the essence of his life and epitomizes the greatest legacy that he has bequeathed to his three children, ten grandchildren, and 18 great-grandchildren. When I hear him sing, I know why the world always seemed right to me as a little boy when he was around. His favorite hymn, “Jesus Is All the World to Me,” was included on the recording. The 100 years of his life are succinctly summed up in that title. He understood Jesus’ question “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”—and its answer. My grandfather was taught by Christ to count the cost, and he learned that Christ is worth more than all the world. Thankfully the Lord brought my grandfather to that conclusion early in life and gave him the opportunity through the years to grow more and more settled in it.

The recording also includes “Shall We Gather at the River.” When I hear him singing it, I rejoice that it is not only my grandfather’s desire to be with saints who are now with the Lord, but it is an invitation for me to follow him down a path that he has proven true and that leads him home to the love of his life—Jesus Christ.

Dr. Robert D. Vincent is associate pastor at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina.



# A Letter to My Grandchildren

In the year of our Lord 2001

To my dear grandchildren,

My heart is heavy as I write this epistle to you. I realize that some of you doubtless think of me as an “old man,” and that thus I cannot properly evaluate current events. How I wish that were true. If I could awaken and realize that it was only a nightmare, I would be thrilled, but such is not the case.

Though I have passed the allotted threescore years and ten, my mind is still alert, and I do possess the mental ability to realize that society today is experiencing a rapidly accelerating slide into the abyss of the cesspool of iniquity! As I write, I am ministering in the Rocky Mountain region. I have driven through the beautiful Glenwood Canyon and realized that just a slight earth tremor could set off an avalanche of tons of crushing rock that would destroy everything in its pathway. As I travel onward to eternity, it is as though I am traversing in just such a moral canyon, but the earthquake of immorality has begun to trigger the falling rocks of debauchery, and society is being crushed by the

moral collapse from the former honorable system of decency that had been based upon God’s Word. I cringe as I think that, if the Lord tarries, you, my posterity, will live to see even more hideous results as American standards become more and more like those of Sodom and Gomorrah.

There was a day when in hushed tones folk spoke of the infiltration of moral decline among genuine believers. I well remember supervising the program of a fine camp for an entire summer. That provided me the opportunity of seeking to reach two incorrigible teenage sons of a pastor. My best efforts with them were to no avail. I did not witness any spiritual progress, and I was greatly puzzled as to the reason for the sullen attitude of the young men. I continued to wonder at their response for years. And then, my very being was shaken when their dad’s sin came to light. Their pastor-dad had been hiding pornography in a safe, but his sons had somehow discovered the combination of the safe. They had unearthed his secret, and then had analyzed his Christianity as a farce. The result was understandable: they wanted nothing to do with his meaningless faith. In those days such tragedies were rare, but a proliferation of sin among “men of the cloth” has begun to echo

into a crescendo as case after case is reported.

Pastors, missionaries, and evangelists have fallen. I am not speaking of professional “show people” such as Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker or Jimmy Swaggart, but of humble servants of God. The foremost cause of their fall has been pornography. One such “victim” confessed that he had been introduced by his mother to pornography at the age of eight, and she had continued to provide him with the purulent poison through his teen years! How I praise God for the godly pattern each of you has observed in the lives of your parents! You have a goodly heritage, and how you ought to praise the Lord for it!

Many of the recent cases of moral failure of which I am aware have involved the Internet. Wives from apparent happy homes have suddenly bolted to be with men whom they first met in a “chat room.” Husbands have been hooked on pornography via the Internet, and in time their deviant minds have led them to seek to experience in reality what they have long fantasized. How heartbreaking it is to witness over and over again the despair and ruination that has come because of such Satan-inspired activities.

The Lord has graciously honored Nana and me with 19 grandchildren. It is our prayer that each of you will serve the Lord to the best of your God-given abilities. We have long prayed that He would call some from our offspring to be pastors, missionaries, evangelists or godly wives for Christian servants. To this point, we have thrilled to see spiritual response in the lives of those who are of the age to hear and heed the voice of the Holy Spirit. I know that your father/pastors have warned you, our grandsons, of the dangers of pornography, and I know that your mothers have challenged you, our granddaughters, to save all of your love for a God-given partner. But as a concerned grandpa, I wanted to bare my heart to each of you concerning what I observe as an epidemic that can destroy your lives.

Please read on, and accept these words as though I were sitting across the desk from you.

First of all, you must realize that you are not immune from Satan’s attack. You have been honored of God to be born in a home where righteousness is exalted. You have a godly parents, but that does not mean you cannot fall to the sins of the flesh. Every child of God needs to remind himself that depravity is inherited, and grace is not!

Secondly, I know that all of you, as you have come of age, have pledged to your parents that you would keep yourselves morally pure. Most of you wear a ring that was given you by your mom and dad as a token of the pledge that you have mutually made, and I am thrilled with this commitment. Job too entered into a great contract when he said: “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?” (Job 31:1). But please realize that it is still true that “in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18). It is vital that you pray and trust yourself to the keeping of the Holy Spirit as you seek to protect that wonderful quality of moral purity! Save all your love for your God-given mate who will become the fulfiller and completer of your life!

Thirdly, you will be in the minority, but don’t let that

deter you from doing what is right.

Joseph and Daniel were surely young men of the minority, but they dared to be different and to live above the standards of their times. Their names have endured, and to us today they are heroes. Both were separated from parents who could have strengthened their resolve to live above the moral morass of the world about them. They lived prior to the days of the infilling of the Holy Spirit, and yet they sought the Lord, and He gave them victory. Surely He who is no respecter of persons will do that for you as well.

Last of all, let me address this particular matter especially to you, my grandsons. It is the “eye gate” that Satan often uses, especially with men. Achan testified concerning his plunge into sin: “When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them.” Simply summarizing what he said, it was “I saw; I coveted; I took.” And of David, though he was a man after God’s own heart, this testimony is given: “And from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.” Of course, his tragic fall into sin caused a domino effect of judgments upon him and his family.

Many other Biblical cases could be cited concerning the introduction of sin through the eye gate. In these days of scantily dressed females and godless and perverted advertising, you must determine by the grace of God that you will not allow your mind to be contaminated or controlled by such images. But how is it possible to withstand such temptations?

You must discipline yourself to flee youthful lusts. This is done by keeping a schedule that is filled with activities that are productive and that keep your mind and thoughts on things that are wholesome and pure. Of course, we must walk closely with the Lord. Such a walk will include great emphasis on the living Word of God. When our Savior was tested by the devil, His defense was the use of various swords from the arsenal of the Word of God! David said, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee.” Again we read: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.”

I am encouraged in knowing that you young men are working on Scripture memorization. Let me urge you as well to meditate upon God’s wonderfully transforming Word. The Holy Spirit, who indwells you, will take the Scripture that you have hidden in your heart and fortify you with it. Surely He is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before His throne.

Nana and I are praying for each of you that none of you shall fail to accomplish God’s wonderful will in your life, for only then will you experience that peace and joy which is full of glory.

Love,  
Papa Cummins

Dr. David Cummins is Deputation Director of Baptist World Mission in Decatur, Alabama.



# Marks of Maturity

Gene Gurganus

Is not the desperate need of the church of Jesus Christ mature men—men who will lead both the church and their families in such a way that God will be glorified and men will be edified? Mature men are characterized by godly living resulting from making right decisions. A mature man can be identified by five distinctive traits.

## 1. Diet

Newborns thrive on milk, and baby Christians certainly need the milk of the Word. However, if young Christians are to become strong and overcome the Wicked One, the Word of God must be ingested and digested (1 John 2:14). Baby Christians are unskilled in matters of righteousness. God wants them to feed on the Word in order to grow in grace and knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18). Babies do not know what is good for them. Most of them would prefer chocolate fudge over spinach any day! A mark of maturity is to be able to distinguish between that which is harmful and that which is beneficial. The Psalmist says, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes” (Ps. 101:3). A mature Christian has progressed from milk to meat. A working knowledge of the Word of God assures the ability to acquire facts, analyze issues, and apply Biblical principles to life’s problems (Heb. 5:14).

## 2. Discernment

Right diet leads to keen discernment. Children are easy prey for child molesters because they can easily be deceived. A mark of maturity is accepting that which is true and rejecting that which is false. We are to be wise in the things of heaven and simple in the things of hell. Many Christians are led away by false teachers because they often teach truth but insidiously insert deadly error. Rat poison is 90 percent wholesome food mixed with ten percent poison. The messengers of Satan are deceitful workers, transforming themselves into angels of light (2 Cor. 11:13). Discernment trained by the Word of God protects us from deception. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20).

## 3. Duty

Children have virtually no sense of duty or responsibility. Basically they are selfish and enjoy only that which pleases them. Maturity brings a heightened sense of responsibility. “We then that are strong [mature] ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves” (Rom. 15:1). A mark of maturity is to

accept personal responsibility and to perform that responsibility “as unto the Lord.” To put it bluntly, immature Christians are shirkers, and mature Christians are workers.

## 4. Discipline

One of the great marks of maturity is discipline. Had Joseph been an undisciplined man, he would have fallen prey to the temptation of Potiphar’s wife. He had his value system right. He saw adultery as a great wickedness against God. In the first chapter of Daniel, we are amazed at the maturity of four teenage boys. Daniel displayed discipline when he said, “I will not defile myself with the king’s meat and the king’s wine.” Daniel’s purpose of heart came from godly discipline. Paul addressed discipline in 1 Corinthians 9:25–27. Discipline equals restraint. He kept his body under restraint. Energy under control builds; energy unchecked wrecks havoc. Failure to control passions takes away the privilege of public service and results in disapproval and disqualification.

## 5. Devotion

Devotion characterizes a person living close to God. A spiritual person is one whose life is devoted to God. “Devote” means to consecrate or consign over, to give up wholly. Nearly everyone is devoted to one thing or another. Many are devoted to the TV set and give huge blocks of time to it. Others are devoted to fishing and hunting. No sacrifice is too great! Loss of sleep and bitter cold are not sacrifice but opportunity to the faithful hunter.

Personally, I have a desire that people know me as one devoted to God. I will give myself to worshipping God. I will adoringly respond to all that God is and all that He has done, is doing, and will do. I will stockpile His Word in my heart that I might not sin against Him. I will give myself to the will of God. I will not be unwise, but will seek to understand what the will of the Lord is. I will give myself to the work of God. I will be a true disciple of my Lord Jesus Christ. I will be a faithful, loving husband, father, and grandfather. I will be a good neighbor and citizen. I will be a good church member and do all I can to promote its program in the world.

Only mature believers can accomplish these noble ambitions. As Hebrews 6:1 exhorts, “Let us go unto perfection [maturity].”

Dr. Gene Gurganus is the author of five books and is the Southeastern Representative for the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism. He lives in Taylors, South Carolina.



## FBF NEWS AND EVENTS

Bob Whitmore, Managing Editor

### New FBF and *Frontline* E-mail Address

Please note that the e-mail address for *Frontline* and the FBF has been changed to [frontline@mindspring.com](mailto:frontline@mindspring.com). The old address, [FBFLINE@aol.com](mailto:FBFLINE@aol.com), is no longer in service.

### FBF Directory Available

The 2001–2002 FBF Directory is now available. Copies have been mailed to all FBF members. Non-members who would like to purchase a directory for \$12 plus \$1 postage may do so by calling 1-800-376-6856.

### FBF Web Site Still Down

The mid-March fire at the FBF web site's location was more serious than we first thought. We had hoped that it would be up long before now, but at this writing it is still under con

struction. We are doing all that we can to bring it back online, and we thank you for your patience and prayers.

### Changes at the Home Office

The FBF/*Frontline* database is now in the capable hands of Mrs. Carol Robbins, so in the future please direct all questions about membership and subscriptions to her at the FBF Home Office. My wife, Polly, and I will be relocating to Yap, Micronesia, in mid-August to serve as missionaries, but I will continue to be involved in the editorial aspects of *Frontline* and will remain on the FBF board. Continue to send editorial materials to the current *Frontline* addresses so they can be forwarded to me.

### 2001 Meetings

#### October 1

Northeast Region  
Trinity Baptist Church  
80 Clinton Street  
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(603) 225-3999

#### October 30

Mid-America Region  
Bethel Baptist Church  
200 N. Roselle Road  
Schaumburg, IL 60194  
(847) 885-3230

#### October 8-9

Satellite Meeting  
Grace Baptist Church  
Box 333  
East Flat Rock, NC 28726  
(828) 692-4312

#### November 8-9

Northern California Region  
Calvary Baptist Church  
1900 Highland Avenue  
Hollister, CA 95023  
(831) 636-9733

Family  
Oriented

Balanced  
Beliefs

Baptist  
Convictions

Local Church  
Structured

Dr. Michael D. Sproul, *President*

Dr. Dave Sproul, *General Director*

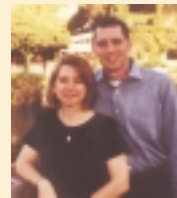
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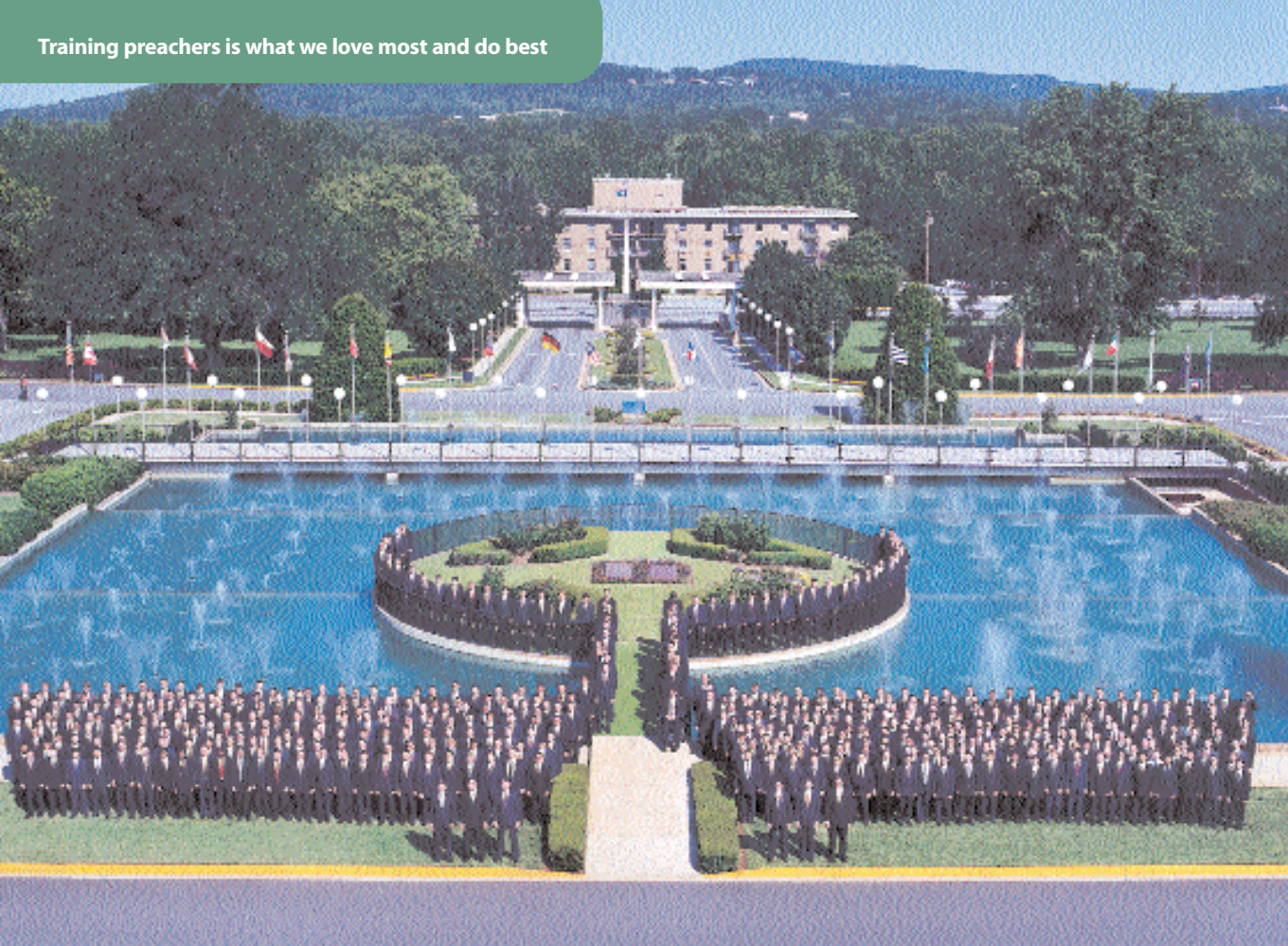


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**—Nathan Morgan, '00  
Bible grad**



# SOUND WORDS

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

## First Partaker

### WHY DESPAIR?

"Oh," but you ask, "why not despair? Surely, if anyone has a right to it, I do. Who would not if he were me?"

Well, there are many who have known your pain. "I am the subject of depressions of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever get to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to," said Charles Haddon Spurgeon to his people in 1866 when his ministry was actually at its peak. Out of the same gloomy experiences John Henry Jowett protested to a friend, "You seem to imagine that I have no ups and downs. By no means! I am often perfectly wretched and everything appears most murky." David Livingstone's father-in-law, Robert Moffatt drooped over the absence of results on his pioneer mission field of South Africa. "Our labours might be compared to the attempts of . . . a husbandman labouring to transform the surface of a granite rock into arable land," he grieved. And Adoniram Judson actually dug a grave in the Burmese jungle where he sat for days on end, musing morbidly on death. "God is to me the Great Unknown," he mourned. "I believe in him, but I find him not."

I appreciate the candid humanness of these revered heroes. They testify to being touched with the feeling of my infirmities. But sometimes I need something sterner than their sympathy. Many years ago I found and grew from two wonderfully bracing chapters on ministerial depression in a little book titled *Quiet Hints to Growing Preachers*. The book was written by Charles Jefferson, pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle in New York City from 1898–1937. Nearly 40 years in a city church is time enough to know intimately every sort of ministerial depression. It's no wonder then that

Jefferson, though unfortunately not a Fundamentalist, could nevertheless write so insightfully of certain ministerial fundamentals. Here then, with just slight editing, is Jefferson's challenge to the minister in despair. But prepare for a stiffening exhortation. There's no sad wiping-our-eyes commiseration here. My prayer in reissuing Jefferson's stout tonic in this form is that the Lord will Himself use it to put heart back into at least one despairing brother.

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

A wide reader of ministerial biography has declared that "a gently complaining and fatigued spirit is that in which evangelical divines are very apt to pass their days." If this be true we have found an explanation of many a pulpit failure. For no man can be masterful as teacher or leader whose spirit is either plaintive or fatigued. The message of the preacher is glad tidings of great joy, and unless there is joy in the herald his message will have a broken wing. Whatever else a minister may be, he must be pre-eminently a man of good cheer. His presence must be a constant exhortation, "Rejoice, again I say unto you, Rejoice!"

### The Character of Ministerial Depression: Complaint

But who has not known ministers whose voice and face seemed to be always saying, "Let us cry!" Such a man goes about shutting up all the Eastern windows which look toward the sun. In his presence the singing swallows become silent and the brooks of morning dry up. Those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death find no deliverance in him for he is in darkness himself. He abides not in the light because there is no

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light in him.

It is surprising how many ministers live in a petulant and peevish mood. Even men who are able to carry a serene exterior are often found on closer contact to be morbid and glum. Life is going hard with them. Things are all wrong. They are not appreciated. Church affairs are in a snarl. The world has not treated them fairly. And so in private they bleed and pout and whine.

The age gives such men no end of trouble. It is a materialistic, sordid age and they wear themselves out shrieking, "The time is out of joint!" The world has grown indifferent to spiritual voices, and as it rushes to destruction the poor preacher looks helplessly on and blubbers. But why these tears? Ours is not the only materialistic age. When was there an age since the great flood that was not more materialistic than this one? The apostles grappled with a generation more sodden far and brutish than the one now on the stage, and not a whimper escaped from one of them. Preachers are not ordained to preach to golden ages but to ages of stone and bronze and iron. A minister sometimes gets the impression that his town is wicked above all others. Its inertia and stupidity first sadden him and

more desirous of preaching the gospel in the world's darkest center, the godless metropolis of the Roman empire. Paul said, "I must also see Rome." Our faint-hearted modern brothers wail, "This place is wicked, I must get out of it." O what a fall this is, my brethren!

### **A Common Cause of Ministerial Depression: Criticism**

Sometimes it is not the world in general but a man's own sphere of influence which causes him to wince and quail. A newspaper gets on his track and misreports him. His sermons are garbled and his actions are misjudged, and the mangled son of thunder goes about bleeding at every pore. A man too thin-skinned to stand newspaper criticism is not a fit man to lead the Lord's army. A newspaper is frequently the most unprincipled and merciless of antagonists, and when controlled by men who are hostile to the church it may make the clergyman the target for continuous abuse; but a minister who is wise will never enter into a controversy with a newspaper. To be beaten with a few stinging sentences is not so painful as to be beaten with a Roman scourge, and it was after being whipped with a Roman scourge that Paul and Silas sang. If a minister cannot sing after being trounced by the most merciless reporter who ever poured bad blood into ink, he should get out of the pulpit and seek a position where thin skin is not a hindrance to duty.

Or the anonymous coward instead of attacking him in a newspaper may stab him through the mail. Two or three anonymous letters will cause some men to swell up as though they had been bitten by tarantulas. For days afterward they smart and moan, and try they never so hard to hold it back, more or less of their hurt feeling trickles into their next Sunday's discourses.

The criticism may not be written but spoken. It may float through the atmosphere in the shape of poisonous rumors. A set of liars by attending strictly to business can fill an entire community with hints of their personality, and a minister who is disposed to take notice of every word spoken against him will be kept in a state of chronic resentment.

Men may resist him not only by their words but by their actions. This opposition may come from members of his own church. All Christians are called to be saints, but in many of them the saintship has not passed beyond the germinal stages. Even church officials may surpass the heathen Chinese for ways that are dark and tricks that are vain, and the luckless preacher repeatedly outwitted and imposed upon by men whose moral development is as yet embryonic may have such a budget of wrongs to talk about that these wrongs are more frequently on his lips than the truths in which he is supposed to live. Nothing is more nau-

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***The world has grown indifferent to spiritual voices, and as it rushes to destruction the poor preacher looks helplessly on and blubbers.***

then make him mad. He rails at it. He cuffs it as though it were a wayward child. In a town of greater intelligence his work, he thinks, would receive a more generous recognition!

But is not such complaining unmanly? All places are wicked. Men who live in great cities are ready to confess that the devil has made the city his headquarters; but men who live in little country towns declare that towns are even worse than the cities. Sodom and Gomorrah lurk under the thin crust of civilization everywhere. A man engaged in religious work soon discovers that the world is possessed of seven devils. But this discovery should not dash or damp him. If humanity were clothed and in its right mind the occupation of the preacher would be gone. It is because men have lost their way that a guide is needed. It is because men are sick unto death that God has raised up physicians. They that are whole have no need of a physician. The more godless a community the greater need of a man of God to work in it. Saul of Tarsus was not daunted by the rottenness of the cities of Asia. Their squalor and wretchedness made him all the



seating than a grown baby forever dwelling on his wrongs. A minister who constantly appeals for sympathy is a minister whom everybody wants to get away from. One instinctively shrinks from the man who as soon as he gets you alone proceeds to take off the poultices with which he has bandaged his soul that you may see how badly he has been hurt.

How can a man who snivels preach the gospel? Clouds and darkness are round most men and it is the preacher's business to let the sunlight in. A congregation needs nothing so much as sun. Melancholy is a disease both contagious and deadly. One man may poison with the virus of his despondency an entire community.

Therefore, O man of God, quit your pining. Stop your moping. Put an end to your brooding. Get out of the slough of despond. Cut down your cypresses and willows. Burn up your sermons with sobs in them. "Be converted." "Be not afraid." "Be of good cheer." "Rejoice and be exceeding glad." This is the language of Christ and his apostles.

### **Ministerial Depression: Its Creation and Cure**

But what about the overcast of depression that so frequently shuts the sunlight out of a minister's soul? Its prime causes are often three: nerve exhaustion, protracted delays, unfounded expectations.

(1) A minister is subjected to an incessant nervous strain. As executive officer he is harassed by the details and friction of church administration. As pastor he is in constant contact with the sorrowing and the sick. The poor also are always with him. He knows as few men do how the other half lives. Numberless needy men and women slip up to him in the crowd and by their touch draw virtue from him. It is often with a dizzy head and a sick heart that he goes into the pulpit Sunday morning to make a still heavier draft upon his vital forces.

The world does not know how great a tax upon a sensitive man an earnest sermon is. No man can vitalize other men without devitalizing himself. Sermons that heal and lift have in them the red blood of the preacher's heart. He may save others, himself he cannot save. It is cruel, says London's greatest preacher, to ask a man to preach twice in one day. Only men to whom preaching is the shedding of blood can understand so bold a saying. It was physical exhaustion which cast Elijah under a juniper tree and drew from his heroic lips the unmanly cry "It is enough!" The tree has a crowd still under it suffering from a like exhaustion.

But a man who lives under a juniper tree cannot preach Gospel sermons. The tree will affect the quality of his voice. A juniper tree voice is an abomination to God and man. It will also control

his choice of subjects. He will select themes which give large room for lamentations. Even jubilant texts he will drag through the mire of his gloom. No matter what tune he attempts he will play it with the tremolo stop. Whatever sermonic gold is cast into the fire will come out a calf and a sick calf at that. A disheartened man takes the heart out of everybody else. Unless he is resisted he will drag the whole parish under his juniper tree.

Such a man needs food for the nerves. Let him get out into God's out-of-doors. Men like trees live largely on air. Red corpuscles in the blood save one from the malady of seeing all things blue. A preacher must get away from his work one day in seven. Who is he that he thinks he can tread presumptuously upon the fourth commandment without paying the penalty? He should rest one month out of every twelve. If his church will not grant him this he should take it. No man can wear in the pulpit for forty years without periodic seasons

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for recuperation and repairs. There are men now fishing who catch no fish because they have never taken time to mend their nets. If a man makes a practice of preaching through his vacations, verily he has his explanations—and his reward.

(2) Sometimes the despondency is the result of accumulated disappointments. The very finest spirits are often broken by the experiences through which a minister is called upon to pass. Every true workman wants to see results of his labor, but in the spiritual world tangible results are not always immediately forthcoming. If a man can see of the travail of his soul he will be satisfied, but it is hard to work by faith. The preacher does his best but the world does not budge. He preaches truth but hearts are locked and barred against it. Some men grow worse under his preaching, and even from the best of soil there come forth but puny and tardy harvests. For awhile he bears up under these cutting disappointments but at last his spirit flags and he falls headlong into a hopelessly

dejected mood. By his voice and temper the world can see that he is a defeated and disheartened man.

Unless he gets out of this pit he is lost. Let him go to the New Testament and master the seed-law of the kingdom. Let him study the parable of the soils, a parable with worlds of consolation for preachers who are discouraged. Let him refresh himself with the thought that even when the seed

heard him gladly." People who quote the Scripture ought to find out first what the Scripture means.

On the day on which Jesus upset the Pharisees and discomfited the Scribes the common people, so Mark says, listened with delight. Of course they did. The Scribes and Pharisees were their hereditary foes. To see such snobs and pedants rolled headlong in the dust was to the common people an experience quite delicious. The words of Jesus were applauded with hilarity and glee. But outside of a few forlorn and forsaken sinners to whom Jesus' kindness was overmastering, what classes of people listened to him gladly when he was pressing upon the conscience high conceptions or arduous duties.

The next time someone gravely quotes, "the common people heard him gladly," ask him, when? Certainly not in Nazareth for they tried to kill him there. Not in Capernaum for they deserted him there. Not in Jerusalem for they cried, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Not on the cross for they wagged their heads and derided him. It is a monstrous perversion of the facts to say that the common people of Palestine accepted gladly the teaching of the Son of God. If they did why did he utter woes upon Bethsaida and Capernaum and Chorazin, cities filled with common people, and why did he sob, "O Jerusalem, how oft would I, but you would not!" And how did it happen that after three years of as hard work as a perfect man with perfect methods could do, assisted by twelve apostles and seventy heralds, he left at death a little company of only six hundred converts drawn from the millions of the common people in the midst of whom he had done his mighty works? The common people rejected both Jesus and his teachings nineteen hundred years ago and their temper has never changed.

Let no man then delude himself with the foolish expectation that the world is going to rush to hear him preach. The world has found Jesus out. It knows now that He is a teacher of high ideals and uncomfortable commandments, whose disciples must not expect to be above their master and whose servants must be as their Lord. The New Testament makes it clear as light that we preachers shall have tribulation. If we live godly in Christ Jesus we must suffer persecution. We are sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Unless we take up our cross daily we cannot be his disciples. If we are wise, we will accept this as our lot, not despondingly but with exceeding joy, desiring always that we may know Christ and his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means we may attain unto the resurrection of the dead. ☞

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is perfect and the sowing is faultless the harvest is often scanty or choked, and that from at least one variety of soil there can be no harvest at all. Let him ponder the parable of the harvest coming gradually, and rejoice in the assurance that the full corn is coming though his wistful eyes may see no more than tiny blades. The processes of spiritual development are slow but they are as orderly and certain as are the processes by which the universe has come to its present estate. It is a great thing to believe with one's heart and mind and strength that every bit of work done for God with patient hands and faithful heart is certain to bring forth some day, somehow, abundant harvests to his glory. No minister of Christ should rest content until this faith is his.

(3) Many a man has been cast down by unreasonable expectations, and these expectations in numerous cases have been aroused by mistaken reading of the Scriptures. It is frequently asserted that if men will only preach the Gospel the crowds will flock to hear them, and as proof of this a sentence of St. Mark is quoted, "the common people



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



# Bring . . . the Books

*The Quest for Meekness and Quietness of Spirit*  
by Matthew Henry

Matthew Henry is a familiar name to most preachers due to his extensive *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Less familiar are his other literary contributions and his own life story. He was born the second son of a preacher (Philip Henry) in Salop, England, on October 18, 1662. At the age of ten he contracted a lingering fever that almost took his life; he points to this event as the turning point when he came to Christ. He accepted his first pastorate in 1687. At the age of 50 he accepted a call to a small church near London in the parish of Hackney—partly to have the time and literary resources available to complete his commentary (which has never since been out of print)—and passed away two years later in 1714 at the age of 52.

Two noteworthy works are *The Pleasantness of a Religious Life* and *The Quest for Meekness and Quietness of Spirit*, both reprinted by Soli Deo Gloria (Morgan, PA). A fuller version of his works has been reprinted by Baker in a two-volume edition of *The Works of Matthew Henry*.

*The Quest for Meekness and Quietness of Spirit* deals with a topic that is essential to any effective and lasting ministry. A minister must himself be teachable and sensitive to the Lord. This teachableness or “submissive pliability” is at the heart of what Henry describes as a quest for “meekness and quietness of spirit.” Through this, God crafts His servant for the greater good of His people.

Meekness and quietness are internal virtues that must be beyond mere outward action. They are cultivated and grown in the soil of a man’s soul. This will never be accomplished by mere external discipline or determination but comes about by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit.

The God with whom we have to do demands the heart, looks at the principle, and requires truth in the inward parts, not only in the duties of his own immediate worship, that those be done in the Spirit, but also in the duty we owe to our neighbor, that that also be done with a pure heart and without dissimulation.

“Meekness” is the right submission of our soul toward God and others, and “quietness” the atmosphere of the soul in which the submission is carried out. We are to be meek and quiet first toward God. This kind of meekness is “the silent submission of the soul” both to the Word God and to the works or providence of God toward us.

Meekness softens the wax, that it may receive the impression of the seal, whether it be ‘for doctrine or reproof, for correction or instruction in righteousness.’ It opens the ear to discipline, silences objections, and suppresses the risings of the carnal mind against the word, consenting all things to be ‘right’ even when they give the greatest check to flesh and blood.


Meekness must be demonstrated not only in our relationship to God but also in our relationship with others. Understanding how meekness will direct and curb our anger when others injure or disappoint us is of inestimable value to anyone in a position of spiritual authority over others.

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

Let meekness stand sentinel, and upon the advance of a provocation let us examine who it is that we are about to be angry with, and for what. What are the merits of the cause, wherein lay the offence, and what was the nature and tendency of it? What are likely to be the consequences of our resentments, and what harm will it be if we stifle them, and let them go no further? Such as these are the interrogatories which meekness would put to the soul.

Among the benefits of developing meekness and quietness of spirit is the credibility that comes to a life so lived. Henry includes some powerful scriptural admonitions as to how we are to apply these truths to the meekness and quietness of our own soul. How do you personally give others reproof? How do you receive correction or rebuke? How do you state your positions or opinions to others? How do you handle or treat the gainsayer or critic? These are penetrating questions which demand honest answers and soul scrutiny.

Merely to acknowledge the truths explicated or to rejoice in their beauty is not enough—they demand deep change, and on this account the book is discomfiting and disquieting! I found myself constantly putting the book down because I had “read enough for now,” until I had the courage to pick it up and renew the quest. As Henry exhorts,

let all that would not be self-condemned practise what they praise. And as there is nothing in which it will easier appear whether I have prevailed or no; this tree will soon be known by its fruits; so many are the circumstances of almost every day which call for the exercise of this grace that our profiting therein will quickly appear to ourselves, and to all with whom we converse. Our meekness and quietness is more obvious, and falls more directly under a trial and observation, than our love to God and our faith in Christ, and other graces, the exercise whereof lies more immediately between God and our own souls. 

Dr. Sam Horn is Executive Vice President of Northland Baptist Bible College in Dunbar, Wisconsin.

*"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage . . . but ye have received the Spirit of adoption" (Romans 8:15).*

In Romans 8:14–17 Paul is introducing us to one of the great but sometimes neglected metaphors for the Christian's relationship to God. Here he describes the Christian as adopted into the family of God. In regeneration God gives us new spiritual life within. In justification God gives us right legal standing before him. But in adoption God makes us members of his family. Therefore, the Biblical teaching on adoption focuses much more on the personal relationships that salvation gives us with God and with his people. Paul could hardly have chosen a better term than "adoption" to characterize the peace and security believers have. The doctrine is exclusively Pauline, and he used the term five times (Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5).

Most cultures had some practice akin to adoption. Moses, a slave, was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter in Egypt. The Nuzi tablets reveal a custom whereby a childless couple could adopt a son who would serve them in life and be their heir in death. Hebrew laws did not include one which concerned adoption, and the Greek word for adoption does not occur in the Septuagint. This was probably due to the law of Levirate marriage, which provided a way for a family to have heirs to inherit the family property.

Adoption was a common aspect of Greco-Roman life, and this is the background of the New Testament concept. Childless couples would often adopt a son who then became their heir. Even if the adopted son had living biological parents, they had no more claim over him after the adoption had taken place. Often parents were willing to let their sons be adopted by another family if it meant a better lot in life.

It is only when we understand how serious and complicated Roman adoption was that we understand the depth of meaning in Romans 8:14–17. William Barclay (The Letter to the Romans in *The Daily Study Bible*, pp. 109–112) offers historical insight into this Roman practice. Roman adoption was rendered serious by the *patria potestas*, the father's absolute power over his family, including even the power of life and death. A Roman son, no matter how old he was, was still under the absolute control and possession of his father.

In adoption a person had to pass from one *patria potestas* to another, out of the possession and control of one father into the equally absolute possession and

control of another. This involved two steps. The first was known as *mancipatio*, a symbolic sale. Three times the symbolism of a sale was carried out. Twice the father symbolically sold his son, and twice he bought him back; the third time he would not buy him back, showing that the *patria potestas* was broken. After the sale was the ceremony called the *vindicatio*, whereby the adopting father went to the Roman magistrates and presented a legal case for the transference of the adoptee to his *patria potestas*. The adoption was now completed.

The ramifications of adoption are most significant for the picture Paul is presenting in Romans 8:15. (1) The adopted person lost all rights in his old family and gained all the rights of a fully legitimate son in his new family (cf. Eph. 2:3); he got a new father. (2) It followed that he became heir to his new father's estate. Even if other sons were born afterwards, who were real blood relations, it did not affect his rights; he was co-heir with them. (3) The old life of the adopted person was completely wiped out; he was regarded as a new person entering a new life. Adoption meant the cancellation of any legal debts and freedom from all former relationships. For the Christian this has particular significance to the Law (cf. Gal. 4:5). (4) In the eyes of the law the adopted person was literally and absolutely the son of the new father.

But in Romans 8:16–17 Paul uses still another picture from Roman adoption. The adoption ceremony was carried out in the presence of seven witnesses. Suppose that the adopting father died and there arose some dispute about the right of the adopted son to the inheritance. One or more of the seven witnesses could step forward and bear witness that the adoption was genuine. Thus the right of the adopted person was guaranteed and he entered into his inheritance. In 8:16, Paul is saying that it is the Holy Spirit Himself who is the witness to our adoption into the family of God.

Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, used the picture of adoption into the family of God. Once we were "children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3) and "children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2; 5:6); but God, in His mercy, has brought us into absolute possession of Himself. The old life has no more rights over us; God now has absolute right. The past is canceled, the debts of the past are wiped away, and we have begun a new life. In addition, we are heirs of all the riches of God (8:17a) and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ (8:17b).

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



Think with me for a moment about Paul, who made tents to help support himself in his church-planting ministry (Acts 18:1–3). We can imagine him as he receives an order for a tent. He lays out the rough camel-hair cloth, with which tents were then made, and places a pattern over it, or else carefully marks out the lines to be cut for the various pieces of the tent. He must be careful to cut the material straight. If the pieces are not properly cut, they will leave gaps and potential leaks in the tent. They will not fit together properly when sewn.

Paul applies the importance of cutting straight seams in tent cloth as he writes to Timothy about his handling of the Scriptures. Incipient Gnosticism is appearing in Asia, and the Scriptures are being distorted by false teachers. Some are denying the reality of Christ's bodily resurrection and thus bringing a catastrophe to the faith of believers. Paul commands Timothy to be diligent as God's laborer. He says: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Timothy must "rightly divide" or "cut straight" with the Word of God so he will not be ashamed before God. To cut straight with the Word of Truth is to teach it rightly, expound it soundly, and preach it fearlessly.

This letter, being Paul's last before his imminent death (2 Tim. 4:6), conveys a sense of intensity and urgency. This passage of Scripture is particularly intense. The aged preacher, who has faithfully served as a mentor to his young protégé, instructs him concerning the Lord's work. Paul's instructions take the form of seven imperative commands. He says:

1. "Put them in remembrance" (v. 14).
2. "Study" or "give diligence" (v. 15).
3. "Shun" or "avoid" (v. 16).
4. "Depart" (v. 19).
5. "Flee" (v. 22).
6. "Follow" (v. 22).
7. "Avoid" (v. 23).

This is a more important passage of Scripture than we often realize. Verses 24–26 stand with 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:7–9 as passages that describe what a preacher "must" be in his life and conduct. These are absolute, nonnegotiable requirements for one who serves in the ministry. *The preacher of God's Word is to diligently "cut straight" with the Word of Truth in his ministry and life so that he receives God's approval.*

### Cutting Straight in Separation (2 Timothy 2:14–19)

#### The Commands to Separation

Five of the seven imperatives in this urgent passage relate directly to separation from bad doctrine and/or sin. Paul says: **remind them** not to strive about profitless words (v. 14); **avoid** profane chatter (v. 16); **depart** from iniquity (v. 19); **flee** youthful lusts (v. 22), and **shun** foolish and ignorant questions (v. 23).

#### The Objects of Separation

Scripture not only commands us to separation, but it identifies those from whom we are to separate. Paul lists teachers of false doctrine (v. 17); false doctrine itself (v. 18); and youthful lusts, or personal sins (v. 22). Note that the false doctrine Paul names in this passage concerns the resurrection (v. 18). It is important to note that immediately after he names false doctrine and before he names youthful lusts, he commands "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (v. 19). We can only conclude that the false doctrine is as evil as the personal sin.

#### The Reason for Separation

Through the apostle, the Holy Spirit lists four reasons for separation from the iniquity of false doctrine and sinful lusts. Those reasons are:

False doctrine subverts those who hear it (v. 14). This is a strong word. It is the Greek word from which our English word "catastrophe" comes. Erroneous doctrine can destroy God's people.

False doctrine increases ungodliness (v. 16). It promotes that which is in rebellion to God.

False doctrine spreads as a disease (literally, gangrene) if not opposed (v. 17).

False doctrine produces strife (v. 23).

We have seen false doctrine do its deadly work in our world today. The list is too long to name here, but think of the divisiveness and harm to Christians caused by the false teaching of the Charismatic movement. Various New Evangelicals have caused great confusion and division with the teachings on the bodily resurrection of Christ, the "Openness of God" theology, questions about the Biblical doctrine of hell, and even the way of salvation. When the doctrine is contrary to Scripture, we, like Timothy, must separate from

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

*Charles Spurgeon*

it and avoid it. We must protect the people we serve and to whom we minister.

## **Cutting Straight in Service (2 Timothy 2:20, 21)**

Paul begins this part of his discussion with an illustration. All sorts of utensils are required to operate a large household. He contrasts the value and preciousness of these vessels. Some were made of silver or gold. Others were made of wood and earth. The precious vessels were carefully kept and preserved. The other vessels could be used and discarded when worn out. My mother had some beautiful china that my father gave her when they were married. She kept it in a lovely oak cabinet with glass doors. We rarely used that china, and mother handled it with the utmost care when she used it. In our home we also had several plastic wastebaskets of differing sizes. They were used without much regard for preserving them. When they were damaged, we simply replaced them. Paul says, "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (v. 21). We should seek to be vessels of honor so our Master can use us.

### **The Master of Our Service**

The word "master" is the word *despotes*. From it we get our English word "despot." It originally meant "owner," or "possessor," and was used first in the sphere of domestic rule. The master of a household ruled unconditionally in the household, much as Joseph must have ruled in Potiphar's house. The word came to be used of Macedonian kings and then of the Roman emperor. In Roman history the Jews would rather suffer death than confess the emperor as their "master." The word was eventually used in the pejorative when used of kings, as the word is used today. In the New Testament the word is used of a slave owner (1 Tim. 6:1); of God as the "master of the house" (2 Tim. 2:21); of God as the prophet's master in control of his life span (Luke 2:29); and of Jesus as the Lord whom the apostates deny (2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 4).

### **The Meaning of Our Service**

As those who handle the Word of Truth, we are not our own captains, but rather slaves of the Savior who is our absolute Master. We must confess with Simeon that the God whose Word we minister is Master of everything about us, even our days on earth! Jesus is our Master. We belong to Him because He bought us, and we must recognize Him as complete Master of our lives. The ministry is not ours. God has given us the privilege and grace of ministry (2 Cor. 5:18; Eph. 3:8). Jesus

bought the churches we serve with His blood (Acts 20:28). We who preach must always labor with the awareness that we are servants of the One who is absolute Master. We gladly submit to His lordship and serve as His servants. This submission to Christ distinguishes us from the apostates who hate and deny His lordship. Jesus must be Lord of the preacher's life! If we will obey Him by departing from iniquity, He will use us as vessels in His hand.

## **Cutting Straight in Spirit (2 Timothy 2:24–26)**

### **A Forbidden Spirit**

Even though servants of the Lord must expose and avoid false doctrine, even naming those who propound it (2 Tim. 2:17), they "must not strive" (v. 24). Those who cut straight with the Word of Truth will practice Biblical separation without any rancor or bitterness.

### **A Required Spirit**

Paul describes a spiritual temper that is absolutely necessary in the servant of the Lord who cuts straight with the Word. He must be:

Gentle—with a sense of equity and fairness.

Apt to teach—able to instruct men in the truth, even those in error.


Patient—with evil. The word is used only here in the New Testament. He does not condone evil, but is patient in opposing it as distinct from the striving and bitterness forbidden in verse 24.

Meek—submitted to God, revealing a total lack of occupation with himself.

### **A Focused Spirit**

The servant of the Lord exhibits a godly, Biblical spirit because he is focused on a clear purpose. This is a separatist passage, but the Lord's servant seeks first to instruct those who have fallen into false doctrine and oppose themselves. His hope is for the God-given repentance and recovery of those who have fallen into the snare of the devil (vv. 25, 26).

Scripture demands our separation from false teachers and false doctrine in obedience to God. Scripture also demands a proper spirit from the servants of the Lord in our obedient separation. It is possible for us to be obedient in our separation and disobedient in our spirit. May God convict us and correct us if that is so.

As preachers of the Word we must be diligent to "cut straight" with the Word of Truth in our ministries and lives so as to have God's approval. This means we must "cut straight" or rightly divide the Word of Truth in our separation, our service, and our spirit. Christ must be the master of our lives and ministries. 



Two weeks ago my dad was still at home talking and eating and doing most things for himself. Now he was in the hospital, and we were being forced to think about things that heretofore had been merely philosophical.

It's hard to be sure when we noticed that Daddy was having trouble remembering things. He was still working his full-time job when he was 72. Then we got calls from friends at the plant—they were concerned about Daddy's forgetfulness. Consequently we encouraged him to retire, using his age as the justification.

At age 75 his sister had succumbed to this disease that Nancy Reagan calls the "long good-bye." So we judiciously avoided using the term *Alzheimer's*, trying to spare either our feelings or his.

If one is otherwise healthy, there are drugs that help stem the progression of the disease. Other drugs in the testing stages also hold promise. However, after many years of smoking cigarettes, Daddy's general health was not good, which ruled him out as a candidate for any experimental therapies. He had finally quit smoking, but emphysema was now a full-time partner, reducing his breathing capabilities dramatically.

As a family we waited and watched the progression of the memory loss. The drama was turned up a notch when I saw him driving one day and followed him to see where he was going. He was about three miles from home and had gotten lost. We never did convince him that he could no longer drive, so we hid the keys. Later we had his license revoked. Frankly, we should have taken this action much sooner. A physician advising us three years earlier had said by all means to stop him from driving: "One day he won't come home." We were fortunate in that regard because I saw him on the day he reached his driving milestone.

My mother took the verbal abuse that often accompanies the long good-bye. The anger Dad experienced is common to the disease. He was convinced that he was as capable as ever. It took my mother a very long time to reach a perspective that allowed her to receive the verbal abuse without taking it too personally.

In fundamental ways my dad was a great and good man. He loved our family to a fault and lived the life publicly and privately of a Christian man. Throughout much of his life he worked two jobs just to stay ahead of the financial requirements of supporting a family of five. When my sisters and I married and had children of our own, Dad was a doting grandfather.

Now Dad was in a hospital bed, this time for three-and-a-half consecutive weeks, and his options were becoming

fewer and fewer. Pneumonia had caused the diseased lungs and heart nearly to kill him; he was rescued from the edge of death by the good work of an EMS squad. When they entered the house that morning at 6:00 a.m. they asked if there were a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) statement.

It should be noted that DNR is an individual circumstance—families do not love their dads any less because they choose DNR. As a family, we had talked about the policy and decided that Daddy should be resuscitated if possible and to evaluate this circumstance over time.

After a week in a nursing home, Daddy went back to the hospital. One morning my sister, mother, and I were by Dad's bed talking about his condition. He was sleeping 18-plus hours a day, had a peg in his stomach for feeding, a pic in his arm for IVs, and needed his diaper changed often because of an intestinal disorder. He did not talk audibly any longer, and when he was awake he stared into that other world of forgotten faces and forgotten places.

All of us took some consolation when he smiled at us, but none of us had a clue as to what

he was thinking. My sister said that we were going to have to make some hard decisions. Intervening to shorten the dying process was anathema to my thinking, and I believed my sister's conversation was headed in that direction. I did not want to consider that maybe it was time for us to place a DNR form over our father's bed.

As a Christian, I believe the Bible, which says that the human heart, mine included, is desperately wicked. Our wills and actions are so depraved that God Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ had to pay our sin penalty on the cross. It was that morning when I asked the question, "Why don't you just get a gun and shoot him?" In that moment I demonstrated the essence of my being and how I would act all the time if it were not for the Lord's governance. I apologized to my mother and my sister. My sister did not love my dad any less because she did not want to see his death occur more gradually.

Today in America we have a dilemma: we have the ability to extend life for years for people who may not care to spend years in a hospital or nursing home bed not knowing who or where they are. A "living will"—in which a family member leaves clear instructions regarding prolonging his life—has relieved some of the burden for the families when the Lord allows such circumstances to occur.

We faced many questions as children of a man who *did not leave instructions*. What is the right thing to do? How do we advise our mother? Do we remove the feeding tube and allow him to drift off into eternity? Do we keep him

# The Long Good-Bye

Mike Fair

## Dr. James E. Singleton with the Lord

*"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psa. 116:15).*

On Friday, July 13th, Dr. James E. Singleton, 73, went to be with the Lord. A memorial service was held at Tri-City Baptist Church in Tempe, Arizona, on the evening of July 17th.

Born on Aug. 30, 1927, Dr. Singleton moved his family to Tempe in 1969 to found the Tri-City Baptist Church, where he pastored for 30 years. He also founded the Tri-City Christian Academy, Christian Schools of Arizona, International Baptist College, and International Baptist Missions.

More recently he initiated the publication of a fundamental newsletter, *The Whetstone*, and he contributed articles to

*Frontline* and many other Christian periodicals. He was a longtime executive board member of the FBFI and served as the Southwest Regional Moderator. Dr. Singleton was a popular conference speaker, and he traveled worldwide preaching the gospel.

Before going to Arizona, Dr. Singleton pastored in Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio, and Michigan. He was a graduate of Bob Jones University and Southeastern Theological Seminary, and he had been awarded honorary doctor's degrees from several Christian institutions.

Dr. Singleton's ministry exemplified a balance in preaching, pastoring, church planting, missions, counseling, writing, and leadership in Christian organizations. He was valiant for the Lord, and his leadership and example will be sorely missed by all who knew him.



sedated so that the discomfort of intubations and tube feeding are of no consequence? Do we just keep doing this until his heart simply stops beating? We finally realized that not resuscitating Daddy at the end was not in conflict with Biblical teaching in terms of what is right.

I am learning that *not taking heroic measures* and the steps to euthanasia outlined by the Hemlock Society are not inextricably linked. I have also learned that life issues are more complicated than any trite clichés might indicate.

Was Hitler right when he suggested that there is such an idea as those who are unworthy of life? I am sure he was wrong as we think of abortion-on-demand and euthanasia. Yet tough questions remain.

If heroic measures are taken to sustain the life of a young person—and they should be—why should not heroic measure be taken to sustain and prolong the life of the elderly? Is age the measure of worth? Is an arbitrary definition of the quality of life the final arbiter for who lives and who dies?

How about the one in the bed who has no one standing by except the attending medical personnel? Are they to make the decision to "pull the plug"? Is "wantedness" and the relative costs of these procedures the measure that is used to determine who dies?

The Bible says to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. However, Christians do not rush off to end it all when faced with sure death. We must approach dying in such a way as not to embrace the enemy, but neither should we damage the name of the Lord in an all-out scramble to avoid the inevitable.

God created and creates life. Genesis 2:7 says that God breathed into man the breath of life. The taking of a human life should be God-ordained as well. Biblical principles apply in these circumstances, but they can only be discovered through diligent study of God's Word, meditation on these principles, and wisdom from God.

The Lord graciously took Daddy home two days after the family met for prayer and gave him over as completely as we knew how to the keeping of the Lord. Daddy died a peaceful death with his family gathered around his bed. With the argument about tube feeding raging in corridors around the country, Dad's body simply refused to accept any nutrition. It was important that we try to give him palliative care, and we did. None of us wanted to prolong our father's suffering; in fact, we asked for and he received morphine to neutralize any pain his body might have incurred during suction or feeding times. It was even more important that we do right because our dad was God's child.

Now part of my dad's legacy is the time and the events that he gave us to help examine these important issues about life as it comes to an end. We are praying with other Christians to find a solution to these issues and to find relief from dementia-related diseases. Dementia robs posterity of the insights of our elders. I am grateful to the legion of scientists who are doing God's work to unravel the maze that creates the "long good-bye."

Mike Fair is a long-time member of the South Carolina state legislature and is an active member of Faith Baptist Church in Taylors.



## Seniors: The Disenfranchised

**Richard A. Johnson**

**W**e are living in an age of “extended longevity.” During the greater part of human history, only one in ten people lived to the age of 65. Today, eight in ten zoom past that birthday. Older adults have become the fastest-growing segment of our nation’s population. By 2080, the people living to 100 years of age is projected to increase by a factor of 75. Senior adults worldwide now number upwards of 600 million.

As we look across the American church scene, we can see that the church’s outreach focus is youth-oriented. Most physical and monetary effort is spent trying to reach the youth. Granted, the youth need to be reached with the gospel that can change their lives. But in the process of reaching the youth, senior adults are being disenfranchised from the very churches that they have given their lives to build. In a study of 500 churches, research found that eight of ten churches had youth directors (volunteer or paid), while only one in 95 had a senior adult director! All effort was geared toward the youth, while senior adults were being neglected.

Many American churches are experiencing a shift in the area of music. The music often used today is not geared towards the senior adult, but toward the young. The senior adults, however, remember the old-fashioned preaching and the old-fashioned music that blessed them as they worshipped. Thus senior adults become disenfranchised from the church because nothing resembles what they knew in the past. The ancient landmarks have been torn down and replaced with new ones that drive them away from the house of God instead of into it.

I have maintained in my 25-plus years in the ministry that senior adults are always the backbone and stability of the church. They are an irreplaceable resource for the church. They are settled and strong in what they believe and what is the right direction for the church. I have had numerous senior adults relate to me that they do not feel part of the church anymore, that they are no longer important, because all of the emphasis is being put upon youth. Quantity, not quality, rules the day.

The Word of God, however, points out that due respect is to be given to the elder segment of society. Paul instructs the older women to “teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Titus 2:4, 5). Solomon instructs the next generation, “Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set” (Prov. 22:28). The greatest gift the next generation can receive from their elders is the gift of wisdom. To cut out of our churches this source of wisdom could endanger our future.

In their book *Catch the Age Wave*, authors Win Arn and Charles Arn give a comparison between youth and senior adults:

(1) Only one in ten participants in the average church youth group will be an active member of the same church ten years later.

(2) The youth department typically requires resources (time, effort, money, people) of a church, rather than being a source of resources for the church.

(3) The loyalty of young people to a particular church is usually shallow. If/when a successful youth pastor leaves and is not immediately replaced, the youth leave as well.

In comparison, look at senior adults:

(1) Senior adults have more time available for volunteer activities, including church ministries.

(2) Senior adults typically have the largest amount of discretionary funds of any age group and financially support the causes and institutions they believe in.

(3) Senior adults tend to be less transient and stay in the same church for longer periods of time.

Can churches continue to neglect this valuable commodity and resource? If we disenfranchise such a valuable group from our churches, our ministries will suffer the loss, not only of their wisdom gained through experience, but also of their stability and spiritual strength.

Richard A. Johnson is pastor of Scripture Baptist Church in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

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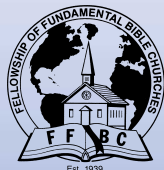
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Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face. —Victor Hugo

A saint is never consciously a saint; a saint is consciously dependent on God. —Oswald Chambers

I remember two things: that I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Savior. —John Newton

The tongue is the rudder of our ship. —Sir Thomas Fuller

If you don't learn to laugh at trouble, you won't have anything to laugh at when you're old. —Ed Howe

Once conform, once do what others do because they do it, and a kind of lethargy steals over all the fine sense of the soul. —Michel de Montaigne

If you ever want to get across an idea, wrap it up in a person. —Ralph Bunche

Nothing is more dangerous than an idea, when a man has only one idea. —Alain

Who overcomes by force overcomes but half his foe. —Unknown

The custom of sinning takes away the sense of it; the course of the world takes away the shame of it. —John Owen

George Washington, as a boy, was ignorant of the commonest accomplishments of youth; he could not even lie. —Mark Twain

It is a secret worth knowing that lawyers rarely go to law. —Moses Crowell

If I were a girl, I'd despair. The supply of good women far exceeds that of the men who deserve them. —Robert Graves

Public schools are the nurseries of all vice and immorality. —Henry Fielding

There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americans. —Theodore Roosevelt

Will America go down in history as the country which defeated collectivism in the 20th century and then became collectivist itself in the 21st century? —Doug Bandow

Absence of occupation is not rest. A mind quite vacant is a mind distress'd. —William Cowper

What, after all, is a diplomat but someone who knows better than to speak too much truth to power? —Paul Greenberg

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

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# What Are We Teaching Our Young Women?

**Gayle Thompson**

**T**itus 2:3–5 gives to us women, both the young and the “aged,” God’s priorities for our lives. As I look around in our Christian circles, it appears to me that we older women have not upheld this teaching. We have let our young women be enticed by the way the women of the world view marriage and careers. We don’t need any more teaching on stress management or how to fix a dinner for five in less than ten minutes after we get home from work. We need more teaching on being content in what the Lord has allowed in our lives.

I speak from firsthand experience on the subject of women working outside the home. Before I was saved in 1992, I worked for a large computer company. I made a very substantial income with very good benefits, but I was sometimes away from home 12 to 14 hours a day. It grieves my heart to look back on my selfishness. My job and my needs took priority in my life. I had no energy or time for my husband or my son. I maintained such a tight schedule that I couldn’t let anyone or anything get me off track. Mine was a self-centered lifestyle that the world calls “upwardly mobile.” It is very destructive for the family. After the Lord saved me, my husband and I both realized that my place was in the home. It was a wise decision for us to make, and we were never happier.

I am concerned about what are we are teaching our Christian young women. Are we teaching them to be content with what Paul says in Titus: “to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed”? As I see it, we are failing in this area. We seem to be allowing our young women to pursue the pattern of the women of the world. So many Christian couples are sending their children off to day care so they can pursue their careers. Whatever happened to sacrificing material things while your children are

young? Clothes, expensive homes, cars, prestigious jobs, vacation homes—is this what we are teaching our young Christian women to pursue? Why do young Christian couples feel the need to “keep up” with the way the couples of the world live?

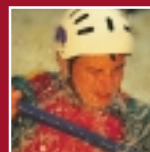
I agree that our young women need to go to college to get an education. They need to be able to support themselves if the Lord allows them to stay single. And there are cases in which the wife or mother has to work outside the home to help support the family—being a widow, I have to work to support my son and myself. There may be other circumstances that require a mother to seek employment. But I see Christian women putting their careers above what the Lord has ordained for their lives, looking more and more like the women of the world I left behind when Jesus saved me. It shouldn’t be like that. We have bought into the lifestyle of the women of the world. We are letting our young women acquire the desires of the world. We need to be careful not to make the world and its ways more attractive than living a life that is pleasing to God. We need to get back to teaching our young women what Paul has taught us in the book of Titus.

We need to teach our young women to please God with their lives and not to please themselves. Let’s protect our daughters from that way of life. Let’s bring them back to pursuing God’s way of being a wife and mother *first*. Proverbs 31:27–31 sets the example: “She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.”

Gayle Thompson is employed at radio station WMUU and attends Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina.

*We need to be careful not to make the world and its ways more attractive than living a life that is pleasing to God.*





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## Repentance: Lost, Strayed, or Stolen? (Part 1)

**Phil Shuler**

On God's side the only foundation for forgiveness is the shed blood of Jesus Christ. But for man's part, the only basis for salvation is repentance! Repentance is the master link in the chain that binds the soul to God. Repentance is the doorway through which man must enter if he is to walk the straight and narrow. Repentance is the strong cord that must be woven into the fabric of our lives, without which all other Christian graces unravel. Christ has declared to all men for all time: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

The world presses upon us a host of prerequisites. Milk comes before meat. The alphabet must precede Plato and Aristotle. Grade school is preliminary to high school and college. Many a husband has discovered that burnt toast is the prerequisite of buttered rolls, and scorched carrots precedes in time the baked ham with raisin gravy! And God has His grand prerequisite to salvation. It is repentance.

If repentance were smallpox, few of the brethren would catch it, so carefully do they avoid it. The world has voted it out of the pulpit and off the platform, and a man-pleasing clergy has obliged by casting it out of bounds. Granted, it is not a pretty melody to carnal ears to be told that there is no salvation without a turning from sin. It is one pill that God takes no pains to coat with sugar. It is a bitter preachment; a sharp and cutting admonition. But its prime importance must never be slighted, for God's revelation abounds with its expediency, as God forces upon the human race this indispensable "must!"

In the Old Testament the subject takes second place only to the message of the coming Messiah. Who can discount the fervent appeal of Isaiah, "Let the wicked forsake his ways"; or the impassioned plea of Jeremiah, "Amend your ways and your doings"; or the awful warning of Ezekiel, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Without exception the prophets based the message of hope upon a forsaking of sin!

John the Baptist was born in an era of spiritual apathy, when temple worship had relinquished the weighty things of the law for the lighter functions of form and ceremony. God honored His old-fashioned message to this new-fashioned age as he preached repentance before every crowd and in every circle. Because John carried his message into the palace before a wicked king and queen,

he lost his head. But Jesus said that there was no greater one born than John!

Christ Himself, who came to earth to bear glad tidings, would pave no easier road for man to travel than the avenue of repentance. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" was His command. Emphatically He stated His inability to save man *in* his sins; but with vehement certainty He declared His power to save man *from* his sins. The fact was plainly appreciated by the disciples, who went everywhere and "preached that men should repent."

The 40-day resurrection ministry was a time of extensive instruction in all things pertaining to the Kingdom. Out of this seminary was born the staunch conviction with which the apostles spoke forth God's terms. Peter's instructions at Pentecost to those who inquired the way to God were, "Repent and be baptized." Paul's assertion to the Athenians was no less emphatic, "Now commandeth he all men everywhere to repent."

Those apostles championed a pure gospel; a gospel that was the power of God unto salvation to all that believed. We would better salute those Christians and return to their message, used of God to pluck brands from the burning and save the lost from hell!

My wife and I moved from southern California a few years ago to be near our children and our work in evangelism. In my ministry on the west coast, I saw the stand of many churches on the doctrine of repentance. My father fought from his pulpit the Hollywood movie industry, alerting us young people constantly of the virus of compromise that Hollywood emitted. I see very little of that kind of preaching today. There is out-and-out gambling going on in many churches today, with bingo and raffles that teach our youth that there is no longer sin in such practice. And as the pulpits of America defuse sin in practices that go against the commandments of God, then suddenly there is no need for repentance! Public opinion has taken the place of "Thus saith the Lord." No wonder abortions almost equal childbirths in many areas of our land. I fear that the doctrine of repentance has been dropped from the vocabulary of many "ministers" who occupy the pulpits over this land.

Dr. Phil Shuler is an evangelist based in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. He can be contacted at [philshuler@juno.com](mailto:philshuler@juno.com).

## MEN WHO QUESTIONED GOD:

**O**ur recent explorations in the Book of Job lead naturally to a more topical consideration for this column. It is, an issue that rears its head repeatedly throughout the dialogue between Job and his companions.

Why do the wicked prosper? And why do “bad things” happen to “good people”? These questions are not new. Nor is asking them necessarily a sign of unbelief or even weak faith. A feeble faith timidly tiptoes around hard questions, afraid of what answers it might uncover. An honest and confident faith is unafraid to ask hard questions, to confront perplexities, and even to voice its consternation—respectfully, but frankly and even passionately.

God values frankness. Only when we are utterly honest with ourselves and with God (what a foolish waste of time and privilege to be otherwise with an omniscient Father!) can He begin to minister to the questions simmering below the surface of our Christian propriety. But questioning the anomalies of faith can lead us astray if we do not consciously settle our spirits and moor our minds to the final authority of the answers—and non-answers—of God’s Word.

God does not despise honest questions nor shy away from hard ones. He is a God of truth with nothing to hide—other than mysteries He has chosen not yet to reveal. But is it possible to “weary” an omnipotent God? Apparently yes, at least in a figurative way. When His people demonstrate a settled unwillingness to be governed by faith, opting instead to be swayed by sight, the complaints produced by their skewed perspective wear God out.<sup>1</sup> This is the spirit that Malachi 2:17 and 3:13–15 address. But we will come to that.

### Questioning Saints

First, it is important and encouraging to note the number and variety of godly men who have echoed these kinds of honest questions in the ear of a patient God. These men are not defiant or doubtful; still less are they agnostics or unbelievers. They are earnest saints unafraid to pose honest questions. Significantly, bound up in each question is a settled affirmation of faith in God’s character. It is within that context that they then question some circumstance or experience that seems to contradict what they believe God to be. Only then do they find peace, and an answer that satisfies them—even if it doesn’t fully resolve the present apparent discrepancy.

#### Job

*Affirmation:* God is sovereign and can do anything He wants (e.g., Job 9:4, 12; 12:9ff.).

*Question:* But why do the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer (Job 21:7–34)?

In other words, granted, God can do anything He

wants. But why would He want to do *this*? Doesn’t it contradict what He is supposed to be like?

This is a frequent observation on Job’s part, and a key point in disproving his friends’ assumption that his suffering proves that he has sinned.

*Answer:* God is unquestionably sovereign, yet unfailingly just in all His ways (Job 38:1–4, 40:3–5; 40:7–8, 42:2).

God’s answer simply but forcefully reaffirms Job’s original understanding and belief.

We don’t need new truth or novel answers; we need to anchor our responses in what we know from God’s Word to be so.

*Resolution:* I believe and submit to that truth (Job 42:1–6).

It is important to recognize that Job’s reply in 42:2 is not an affirmation of God’s omnipotence. No one ever questions God’s omnipotence in the dialogues. Rather, it is a confession and expression of his submission to God’s freedom and sovereignty—“You can do anything You choose, and no one can keep You from doing anything You think or purpose.”

The truth Job already knew theoretically in his head he now comes to understand and submit to in his heart.

#### Asaph

*Affirmation:* God is good to the righteous (Ps. 73:1).

The Hebrew can be translated either “Truly, good to Israel is God” or “Only good to Israel is God”—i.e., everything He does or allows is from a good God for a good purpose. In that sense, this is a sister passage to the more famous Romans 8:28.

The emphasis on a “clean heart” focuses attention on the inward as opposed to external appearances, “for the psalm will show the relative unimportance of circumstances in comparison with attitudes” (Kidner).

*Question:* But why do the wicked prosper while I, a righteous man, suffer (Ps. 73:2–16)?

Asaph is remarkably honest (“refreshingly frank” says Kidner) in admitting the reason for his agitated state of mind. He was just plain envious of the prosperity of the wicked! Not only did it bother him personally, but it did not make sense theologically. God is supposed to judge such people; why doesn’t He?

*Answer:* This life is not all there is (Ps. 73:17–22).

In the presence of God, his perspective was readjusted to reality. This is the triumph of faith over sight, of worship over worry.

“The light breaks in as he turns to God Himself, and to Him as an object not of speculation, but of worship” (Kidner).

Moreover, he sees how utterly foolish and beastlike his former attitude was, with its envy and fretting and



# Confronting the Anomalies of Faith and Life

skewed reasoning.

*Resolution:* God is my portion and joy and confidence; I will draw near to Him and put my trust in Him (Ps. 73:23–28).

Note the submission of sight to faith in God's words ("counsel," Ps. 73:24).

Note the reassessment of priorities and values—inward, lasting, spiritual satisfaction trumps outward, temporal "prosperity" (Ps. 73:25–27).

## Solomon

*Affirmation:* Despite the apparent security of the wicked, it will be well with those who fear God (Eccl. 8:12–13).

Note, he does not contradict himself here. Though a sinner's days may *be prolonged* (by God, 8:12), he can do nothing himself to prolong his own days (8:13).

*Question:* But why is it that what ought to happen to the righteous happens to the wicked, and what ought to happen to the wicked happens to the righteous (Eccl. 8:14)?

This is "vanity"—an unsatisfying reality, "a frustrating enigma."<sup>2</sup>

*Answer & Resolution:* Despite appearances, God is still on the throne, God is just, and God will bring all men and every work to account (Eccl. 12:13–14).

## Jeremiah

*Affirmation:* You are righteous, O Lord . . . but let me ask You something about Your justice (Jer. 12:1).

*Question:* Why do You allow the wicked among your own people to prosper and be happy (Jer. 12:1–2)?

*Answer:* God will deal with unrighteousness in His own way and time (Jer. 12:7ff).

This passage employs what is called a prophetic use of the perfect tense. Though God describes it as having happened (so certain is it), it hasn't happened yet; but God is preparing to give His people over to her enemies. Who is that? See below.

## Habakkuk

*Question:* Why do You allow iniquity and violence to abound unchecked even among Your own people (Hab. 1:2–4)?

*Answer:* God will deal with unrighteousness among His people in His own way and time; He will chastise them with their enemies, the Babylonians (Hab. 1:3ff.).

*Affirmation:* But You, God, are everlastingly holy and pure (Hab. 1:12–13).

*Question:* How could You possibly prosper such wicked pagans over Your own people (Hab. 1:13–17)?

*Answer:* God will deal with *their* wickedness in His own way and time as well; in the mean time, the just ones within that evil context will live by their faith (Hab. 2:4).

*Resolution:* Regardless of circumstances and appearances, I will rejoice in what I know God to be (Hab. 3:17–19).

## Summary

All these godly men, starting from an affirmation of their faith in what they correctly believed God to be, asked, "If God is good and just, why are things like this?" In each case they affirmed their faith in the goodness and justice of God, yet questioned how their circumstances could be explained, given that fact. They are wrestling with the disparity between creed and circumstances—between what they know God to be, and the experiences around them that seem to contradict that. And in every case, *the answer lies not in some divinely given explanation or new revelation, but in adjusting their thoughts to God's, their values to God's, their perspective to God's, and quietly resubmitting their questions to what they already knew to be true, to the simple assurances of God's Word.*

## When Questioning Turns Malignant

The problem with Malachi's audience is that their questions and doubts, rather than being clipped by a settled confidence in God's Word, had gone to seed. They had stopped wrestling, and had surrendered their faith to the appearances. Having abandoned their affirmation in the face of their circumstances, they concluded, "If things are like this, God must not be good and just after all. He seems to be *pleased* with evildoers and to *delight* in them. Where is the God of justice? What has it profited us to believe and keep God's Word? It looks to us as if the proud are blessed by God and the wicked are exalted by Him!" (Mal. 2:17, 3:13–15).

What was the problem? While they were so focused on external appearances, their faith had slipped its moorings and drifted off into a sea of bitterness, doubt and confusion. *They had allowed appearances to shape their view of God, rather than allowing their view of God—molded and confirmed by His Word—to shape their view of their circumstances.*

That's the essence of walking by sight, not by faith. Without faith, we cannot please God. And without faith, you and I will always be dumbfounded and frustrated by appearances. God brings this very central issue to forefront when He reaffirms His changeless nature and unchangeable character (Mal. 3:6).

<sup>1</sup> The word "weary" (Mal. 2:17), usually translated "labor," denotes being worn out physically, emotionally, or mentally.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Robert V. McCabe of Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary uses this latter expression, "a frustrating enigma" to capture the idea behind "vanity" in Ecclesiastes.

# 2001 Standing Resolutions

Following is the first half of the standing resolutions presented at the 81st Annual National Meeting June 12–14, 2001, at the First Baptist Church of Troy, Troy, Michigan:

## 01.1 Concerning Baptist World Mission

On Sept. 15, 2001, Baptist World Mission will mark its 40th anniversary. The FBF recalls the close fellowship our two organizations have enjoyed over the years. In 1961, calls came from around the country to convene a meeting at the old Marquette Manor Baptist Church at 60th and California on the south side of Chicago. Among those who called for this meeting were Drs. Ed Nelson and Wayne Van Gelderen Sr. of the Conservative Baptist Fellowship from Colorado, and Drs. Monroe Parker, Ernest Pickering, and Richard V. Clearwaters from Minnesota. The FBF convened the meeting, where a provisional organization was formed and two or three committees were set up. By early 1962, a constitution was drafted, a board was elected, and George Mensik was appointed as the first missionary. Although there has been no organic relationship between the FBF and BWM, the roots of these two organizations are the same, and the fraternal relationship has been a blessing to both. The FBF commends BWM on its 40th anniversary for its continued stand for the fundamentals of the Faith, for its separatist stand, and its wide influence for the cause of Christ around the world.

## 01.2 Concerning AWANA:

Having passed resolutions in the past regarding our concern for the direction of AWANA and having appealed for relief from the compromised position of having to join an association with disobedient brethren in order to use the AWANA materials, the FBF recognizes the effort to resolve this problem by ending the requirement for membership and charter fees to purchase materials. We are concerned, however, that

although under the new arrangement local churches will be able to purchase the materials without placing their ministries under the aegis of the AWANA organization, this accommodation of independent local churches will likely increase the misuse of orthodox materials by those who misrepresent their ministries as agreeing with the doctrinal position represented in AWANA publications. While there is increased recognition from AWANA of the autonomy of the local church, there is now decreased accountability from AWANA to local churches in maintaining doctrinal purity. We call on AWANA to guard against any deviation from orthodoxy and accommodation to the Charismatic movement and the National Council of Churches in particular. We further call on fundamental churches to separate themselves from any AWANA-related camps, youth activities, Bible quizzing, and “Olympics” that put them into direct religious union with New Evangelicals and other forms of compromise.

## 01.3 On the Ethical Implications of the Human Genome Project

The FBF recognizes the immense medical potential represented by the information in the human genome sequence. We recognize further that genomic information is emerging in a profound moral and ethical vacuum. We encourage mature Christians with appropriate technical training to participate in the discussion of what is Biblically proper in “genomics-based health care.” For the present, we declare that while gene therapy may be the most effective medical intervention for children and adults suffering from serious genetic defects, gene therapy on germ cells (egg and sperm) involves unacceptable risks for future generations. We also urge a moratorium on human gene patenting. Finally, we believe that using genetic information to discriminate against individuals, including the unborn, is morally repugnant.

## 01.4 Regarding President George W. Bush

The Fundamental Baptist Fellowship international commends U.S. President George W. Bush for his courageous Christian viewpoints, in stark contrast to his predecessor. The men and women of the FBF are united in their support for this God-fearing man and vow their prayerful support for his cabinet and the Congress with whom he will work. We pray that he will promote laws that enable God’s people to lead quiet and peaceable lives. We pray that he will succeed in enacting policies that protect the traditional family, unborn children, newborns, and all those who are dependent on others for their daily needs. We also pray that the Lord would close the mouths of those who would seek to destroy him and the values he upholds. We pledge ourselves to pray for both wisdom and strength for the President as he seeks to serve our country as a steward of God’s authority.

## 01.5 Regarding Schismatic “Brethren”

In light of the public attacks and false accusations upon the FBF, its leaders, and other like-minded Fundamentalist institutions regarding their respective positions on the text of Scripture and translations, we reaffirm that within the historic orthodox doctrine of Bibliology these are matters of soul-liberty and should not be a test of fellowship for Fundamentalists. Since not all professors or pastors have expertise in the field of textual studies, disagreements regarding text or translation should be resolved by honest discussion as opposed to libelous contention. Those who repeatedly attempt to unnecessarily divide Fundamentalists over this issue and refuse to repent should be regarded as schismatics who must be rejected as the Word of God instructs (Romans 16:17–18; Titus 3:9–11; 1 Corinthians 3:10–17).

(Continued next issue)



## Conference on Revival

Seven fundamental evangelists will be preaching on God's promises for revival August 13–17, 2001, at Burge Terrace Baptist Church in Indianapolis. Taking part are evangelists Ron Comfort, Morris Gleiser, John Goetsch, David Jaspers, Steve Pettit, Bill Rice, and John Van Gelderen. For more information contact Dr. Rick Flanders at (989) 823-7848 or Dr. David Pennington at (317) 862-6109.

## A Victory for Graduation Prayer

The Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta has upheld the rights of students to pray during graduation ceremonies. The court ruled 8-4 that the Duval County School Board (Florida) policy of allowing students to deliver graduation messages, which may include prayer, is indeed constitutional and does not violate the so-called separation of church and state. This case arose in 1993 when the school board instituted a policy giving students the opportunity to bring a message at the beginning and/or end of the graduation ceremony. The board said if the graduating seniors chose to present a message, the senior class could elect a student to voluntarily give that message, whether it be secular or sacred. (Liberty Alliance, 5/17/2001)

## "Anti-Discrimination" Statute Targets Bible Verses

In New York City, two Staten Island billboards have been removed by the city because they quote Leviticus 18:22, which reads: "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable." The city is removing the billboards because of a New York "anti-discrimination" ordinance, Administrative Code, Section 8-101, which prohibits "bias-related violence or harassment" against homosexuals or other groups. The billboards were paid for by Rev. Kristopher Okwedy of Keyword Ministries. (TVC News, 5/21/2001)

## Milwaukee Rejects Same-Sex Benefits

Milwaukee Common Council on May 8 rejected a request by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees union to include benefits for same-sex partners in the city's employee benefits package, according to a CNSNews.com report. In recent years, cities including New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco have approved benefits for same-sex domestic partners. (Baptist Press, 5/14/2001)

## Homosexuals More Likely to Molest

Social researcher Dr. Judith Reisman says in her

study "Crafting Gay Children" that the incidence of homosexuals molesting children is 40 times greater than the number of heterosexuals who molest children. In a 1991 population study by the Department of Commerce, statistics showed that 8 million girls were abused by age 18 by heterosexual men—a ratio of 1 victim to 11 adult men. However, 6–8 million boys were abused by age 18 by 1–2 million adult homosexuals—a ratio of 3–5 victims for every homosexual adult male. (TVC News, 6/1/2001)

## Baptists Disagree on Homosexuals

The Alliance of Baptists has requested that the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship drop its new "organizational value" forbidding direct funding of groups that affirm homosexual relationships. Both groups formed out of opposition to the conservative direction of the Southern Baptist Convention. The Alliance has a stated position welcoming and affirming gays while the Fellowship's new stance has been described as "welcoming but not affirming." (Christian News, 6/5/2001)

## HIV Spreading at an Alarming Rate

A government survey reports that 4.4 percent of homosexual and bisexual men ages 23 to 29 are newly infected each year

with HIV. A United Nations report states that HIV has infected 58 million people around the world since 1981. Of these, 22 million have died. The brunt of the problem is in Africa, where more than 25 million people are infected. (World, 6/16/2001)

## How Do I Get to Lowe's?

A group called "Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays" offered, as a Father's Day promotion, \$25 Home Depot gift certificates to anyone giving them a \$100 contribution. (Home Depot made a \$2,500 grant to PFLAG in the form of 100 \$25 gift certificates.) "The Father's Day promotion is a demonstration of Home Depot's inclusive spirit," said PFLAG executive director Kirsten Kingdon. Home Depot's vice president of community affairs, Suzanne Apple, added, "[The promotion is] a great opportunity for Home Depot to support PFLAG's work in building stronger families, a cornerstone of our community involvement program." (The Federalist, 6/8/2001)

## Court: Unborn Baby Is a Person

The Arkansas Supreme Court ruled in May that an unborn baby is a "person" under state law. In its decision the court cited a 1999 state "fetal protection" law, which says that an unborn viable fetus is deserving of protection as a person. The

case involved the December 13, 1995, death of Evangeline Aka and her unborn son who both died during induced labor. (*TVC News*, 5/21/2001)

### **Alcohol Continues to Kill**

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) reports that in the most recent year for available statistics (1998), 2,104 teens died in traffic accidents in which the driver was using alcohol. That's about six kids each day. The Department of Justice reports that in the same year, other drugs claimed the lives of 15,973 kids. (*The Federalist*, 4/24/2001)

### **Supreme Court Rules Against Medical Marijuana**

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously May 14 that there is no exemption to the federal ban on marijuana distribution even for patients who claim it is medically necessary. The ruling went against an Oakland, California, marijuana club that had distributed the illegal substance under a state law allowing seriously ill patients and those who primarily care for them to possess and manufacture marijuana for medical reasons with a doctor's recommendation. (Baptist Press, 5/14/2001)

### **Shoot Up with a Friend**

A San Francisco TV station reported recently that the city health department is posting signs that say: "Fix with a friend. Prevent Heroin Overdoses. Don't shoot anyone." Dr. Josh Bamberger

## **NOTABLE QUOTES**

**T**he government taxes you when you bring home a paycheck. It taxes you when you make a phone call. It taxes you when you turn on a light. It taxes you when you sell a stock. It taxes you when you fill your car with gas. It taxes you when you ride a plane. It taxes you when you get married. Then it taxes you when you die. This is taxu-al insanity and it must end.—Rep. J. C. Watts

**W**e have a President who stole the presidency through family ties, arrogance and intimidation, employing Republican operatives to exercise the tactics of voter fraud by disenfranchising thousands of blacks, elderly Jews and other minorities. . . . Not only is he poisoning our air and water by withdrawing his promise to enforce emissions standards and arsenic regulations, but he's poisoning our political system as well. . . . Don't forget that the "wise men and women" of the Supreme Court installed the President they wanted in the White House, ignoring the will of the people. In my view, that was a "Supreme Coup."—Barbra Steisand

**I**ndeed, nothing seems to offend champions of "diversity" so much as ideas different from their own.—Paul Greenberg

**L**iberals can never just make a principled argument. It has to be Bambi against Hitler.—Ann Coulter

**S**ocieties throughout history have manufactured festivities to worship their gods. American [Leftists], for instance, observe Earth Day.—Tony Snow

**I**ndeed, if I understand this global-warming business correctly, the danger is that the waters will rise and drown the whole of Massachusetts, New York City, Long Island, the California coast and a few big cities on the Great Lakes—in other words, every Democratic enclave will be wiped out leaving only the solid Republican heartland. Politically speaking, for conservatives there's no downside to global warming.—Mark Steyn

**W**e may indeed believe that He would not allow His Word to be seriously corrupted, or any part of it essential to man's salvation to be lost or obscured; but the differences between the rival types of text is not one of doctrine. No fundamental point of doctrine rests upon a disputed reading: and the truths of Christianity are as certainly expressed in the text of Westcott and Hort as in that of Stephanus.—Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, *Handbook of the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (1901), p. 271

with the city health department says the signs are justified because many heroin addicts shoot up while they're alone. The city's solution is to encourage drug addicts to make it a group affair so if one overdoses, the others can call 911. (*TVC News*, 5/21/2001)

### **Environmentalism Class Parallels Wiccan Practices**

Fourth graders at the Port Huron School District in Michigan were scheduled to attend a three-day field trip to attend an environmental program called Earthkeepers. The value of this field trip has been called into question by parents who believe that the program includes portions that resemble many of the teachings of Wicca and American Indian religions. Because Earthkeepers is a trademarked curriculum used in Michigan, as well as 30 other states and worldwide, any changes to eliminate the objectionable material would be illegal. Even though parents may have their children opt out of the field trip, many believe the curriculum brings pagan religious ideas into the classroom under the guise of teaching children to appreciate the environment. (*K-House eNews*, 5/15/2001)

### **Sharpton Wrong About Christian Persecution**

Rev. Al Sharpton returned from a fact-finding trip to the Sudan earlier this year. According to Voice of the Martyrs (VOM), while Sharpton spoke out against slavery, he was "notably



silent on the issue of Christians being persecuted by the Islamic government of northern Sudan." According to Sharpton, "This is not about Muslims vs. Christians. This is about right vs. wrong." VOM disagrees with his assessment. "We are pleased to see Rev. Sharpton raising public awareness about the situation in Sudan," said Todd Nettleton, a VOM spokesman. "But it is disappointing that he is not telling the whole story. He is not telling the story of people attacked and persecuted solely because they choose to follow Christ instead of becoming Muslims." (*TVC News*, 5/3/2001)

### **Southern Baptist Liberalism**

Journal entries by a former student at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond describe the seminary as a home to liberal theological and political convictions outside the norm of most Southern Baptist churches. Noting that faculty and students often criticized Southern Baptist seminaries for trying to close the minds of students and indoctrinating them with denominational beliefs, former student John Ippolito found the BTSR community to be intolerant of traditional, conservative views on Scripture. Ippolito's journal, kept as a class assignment reflecting on his experiences at BTSR

between the fall of 1996 and the end of 1998, appears in the April edition of the *Baptist Banner* and can be viewed on the Internet at [www.thebaptistbanner.com](http://www.thebaptistbanner.com). (Baptist Press, 5/22/2001)

### **Liberal Denominations Suffer Membership Declines**

The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA) has announced that last year it suffered its worst decline in membership since 1994. The liberal denomination dropped 34,871 members to 2.53 million, the *Louisville Courier-Journal* reported. The number of churches also fell to 11,178 after the denomination lost 38 congregations. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 5/4/2001) The United Church of Christ lost 131 churches between 1996 and 1999. Church people are upset with the denomination's support of abortion, homosexuals as pastors, and attacks on the authority and inerrancy of the Bible. (*Baptist Bulletin*, June 2001)

### **Methodists Concerned**

Concerned Methodists are calling for changes in a recently published supplemental hymnal that contains songs that use inclusive language concerning God. One song is entitled "Mothering God, You Gave Me Birth." (*Baptist Bulletin*, May 2001)

### **Missionary Couple Among Kidnapped Tourists**

A New Tribes Mission (NTM) missionary couple were among 20 tourists and foreigners forcibly taken from the Dos Palmas Island resort in the Philippines May 27th. Authorities disclosed that three Americans were among the 17 guests abducted. They were identified as Martin Burnham and his wife Gracia of Wichita, Kansas, and Guillermo Sobero of Corona, California. The Burnhams, both children of missionaries, have served in the Philippines with NTM since 1986 and had arrived at the Dos Palmas resort off the east coast of Palawan only the night before to celebrate their 18th wedding anniversary. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 5/29/2001)

### **Missionaries Face Expulsion From India**

The widow of slain Australian missionary Graham Staines may be forced to leave India under immigration rules aimed at limiting the stay of foreign missionaries. The visa of Gladys Staines, 49, whose husband and two young sons were murdered in the eastern state of Orissa two years ago, expires in August, and government officials have made it clear they do not intend to renew it. Also, her plans to build a leprosy hospital in memory of her husband have hit a roadblock, and

the state government is trying to repossess the leprosy home where the couple worked. Friends are applying pressure through Australian diplomatic channels to extend her stay in India, which has been her home since 1981. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 5/29/2001)

### **Britain's Ban on Religious Broadcasting**

The British government has excluded independent Christian broadcasters from a forum on the future of religious broadcasting in the country, where a ban on national religious broadcasting has been in place for the past ten years. "If the ban is not lifted, Christians in the UK will never be able to listen to the national radio of their choice," said United Christian Broadcasters director Gareth Littler. "At UCB we are speechless, both in disappointment and in the stark reality of being unable to broadcast Christian music to those who wish to hear it. We hope and pray that the government will stop banning Christians and instead start listening to them." (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 5/17/2001)

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

## Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother

**P**lease pardon the personal tone of this column. If it encourages just one person facing the agonizing decision of what to do with an ailing parent, it will have been worth it. A year ago my wife Brenda and I reached a real milestone. Yes, we celebrated our 32nd year of marriage, but that wasn't the milestone I'm writing about. For the first time in 19 of those years we no longer had one of our parents to care for.

It started in 1981. Brenda and our daughter Becky were three years into their recovery from life-threatening burns in a house fire in 1978. Our second son was a year old, and Brenda's mother, suffering from emphysema, needed help. She came for what would become an eight-year stay. After that, we found ourselves making numerous trips to Florida to help Brenda's father and stepmother who were not only caring for his elderly mother, who was bedridden with Alzheimer's until the age of 94, but who were in declining health themselves.

When my father went to heaven in 1992, my brother and sister and I realized that our mother was in the early stages of Alzheimer's. We set up a room for her in each of our homes furnished with her own things. She spent time with each of us on a rotating schedule for about seven years until she could no longer travel. Her remaining days were spent in our home until a broken hip quickly brought the end.

After Brenda's grandmother passed away, we persuaded her father and stepmother to move into an apartment we had built in our new home for those who needed

our help. They were only with us about a year and a half until Dad's health was so broken that he had to be in the hospital for the last few weeks of his life.

Many of our readers are acquainted with the story of our fire and the long road to recovery mentioned above. You may know about the school for disabled children that God raised up as a result. You may not know that while Brenda and Becky were in and out of the hospital for years—Becky had surgery more than 60 times—that we had a third son who grew up with ailing grandparents.

Joe saw first hand the commitment it takes to care for those who cannot take care of themselves. Before he left home and got married, Dan helped his grandfather in sacrificial ways too sensitive to mention. Brenda gave nearly two decades of her life caring for parents and in-laws. Our church supported us and helped us as we tried to do what we believed God wanted us to do for those who needed us. But what is important is not what we did for them, it is what God did for us.

Among other things, while Brenda's mother was with us, He saved her. He brought us closer to our brothers and sisters than we had ever been. The continuing fellowship is priceless. We know that many families cannot and should not take on the responsibility we did. Many questioned us about the wisdom of taking on so much when we already had a church and five children who needed us, especially when one

of those children had unusual and special needs. But the brokenness God brought for those who had to have help wouldn't allow us to turn away the others. For us, there was no option; we never questioned whether it was God's will for us. God had clearly called us to something out of the ordinary. By His grace, He used these challenges to show us the self-reliance with which we resisted Him in so many areas of our lives. He gave us more than we could bear so we would learn to depend on Him. Again and again, he brought us to the end of ourselves so we could come to the beginning of real fellowship with Him.

After my mother's funeral, Joe told us, "You know, if Grandma hadn't come to live with us I never really would have known her." Our oldest daughter, Debbie, a pastor's wife in Michigan, did the work of an adult since she was in junior high, but she is a stronger woman for it. Our children, all adults now, are not perfect, but there is a tenderness in them that I admire. Becky knows that she has siblings who will stand by her and help her if she should need them when Brenda and I are not here to help in the future.

From this perspective, may I encourage you to do what you can to honor your father and mother in what you do for them and how you live after they are gone. You may be wondering about what you can do for them, but have you considered what the Lord may want to do for you?



DR. JOHN C. VAUGHN



# What's on the Web

Bob Whitmore

When I began this column three years ago, using the Internet was still relatively new for many of us. We all had some vague idea that a lot of information was available, but it was difficult to find. My purpose was to sift through the huge volume of web sites on the 'Net and try to find some useful, interesting, and practical sources of information for our readers. I will soon be moving to the island of Yap, Micronesia, a place where unlimited Internet access for a flat fee is unavailable; therefore, this will probably be my last "What's on the Web" column. And since this is likely my last shot, I want to clean out my files and give you as many useful web sites as I can.

But first, I want to tell you something about our future place of ministry. We found a wealth of information on the web. For facts and figures, see the CIA's "World Fact Book" web site ([www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/fm.html](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/fm.html)). Yap is part of the Federated States of Micronesia, so the FSM government site ([www.fsmgov.com](http://www.fsmgov.com)) also contains much helpful information. One more highly informative site is geared to tourism ([www.visit-fsm.org](http://www.visit-fsm.org)). A word of caution about other Micronesia web sites: many contain photos of people immodestly dressed.

Now, on to the files. In my first few columns I reviewed only three or four sites per column. But as I became aware of more and more good web sites, some columns mentioned a dozen or more. The following will be mostly a listing so I can give you as many as possible.

Home schooling: Christian Interactive Network has a Christian Homeschool Forum. It has resources, book reviews, and more. You'll find it at [www.gocin.com/homeschool](http://www.gocin.com/homeschool). Another site, [www.rsts.net](http://www.rsts.net), has similar information, links, lists of home school friendly colleges, and other resources.

Legal issues: The American Center for Law and Justice ([www.aclj.org](http://www.aclj.org)) has current information on legal cases involving Christians around the nation.

Heresies: Walter Martin's Religious InfoNet ([www.waltermartin.org](http://www.waltermartin.org)) has a large library of articles on cults, especially Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses, and apologetics. Psychoheresy Awareness Ministries' web site ([www.psychoheresy-aware.org](http://www.psychoheresy-aware.org)) includes position papers, information about books, and a free newsletter. Biblical Discernment Ministries is unusual in that all of the materials on its site are not copyrighted and therefore can be legally copied and reproduced. The site features a downloadable "notebook" that includes information on cults and psychology, the New Age movement, exposés, book reviews, and other useful material. You'll find it at [www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/](http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/). Another interesting site along these same lines is Reason of the Hope (<http://reason-of-the-hope.com>).

Pornography: The Victims of Pornography site ([www.victimsof-pornography.org](http://www.victimsof-pornography.org)) will be helpful to those either dealing with this sin or counseling others who have problems.

Creationism: The big three are Answers in Genesis ([www.answersingenesis.org](http://www.answersingenesis.org)), Creation Research Society ([www.creationresearch.org](http://www.creationresearch.org)), and The Institute for Creation Research ([www.icr.org](http://www.icr.org)). There are many other worthy creationist sites, but to save space I suggest you see the extensive list of web sites on the Revolution Against Evolution site ([www.rae.org/revevlnk.html](http://www.rae.org/revevlnk.html)).

The Lord has given us a wonderful tool in the Internet, and I trust that you will continue to use it responsibly. And as you access information seen in this column, I hope you will remember to pray for Bob and Polly Whitmore as we serve the Lord in the western Pacific.

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# BOOK REVIEW

## *Blinded by Might*

Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson, *Blinded by Might* (Zondervan, 1999, 282 pages).

reviewed by James E. Singleton

The subtitle of the book indicates the authors' basis thesis: "Can the Religious Right Save America?" Thomas and Dobson have had close contact and an insiders' view of the Religious Right. When Jerry Falwell founded the Moral Majority in 1979 to counter the moral crisis in America, he was joined in the battle the next year by the authors.

The argument is that despite many years of political involvement and the expenditure of vast sums of monies, the agenda of the Religious Right has failed to make any impact on the moral slide of the nation. Their early optimism for the ability of political activism has faded, and they no longer believe that politics and the passing of laws is able to solve the moral problems of society.

While affirming the theological beliefs of classic Christian doctrine and conservative beliefs concerning abortion, pornography, and drugs, the social maladies of the day are seen not as causes but reflections of what is really wrong with America (p. 9). Denying that their call is to retreat or surrender, the solution to current problems is conceived as lying in another agenda (p. 10). Rather than repainting the house, the foundations need to be repaired (p. 143).

Becoming part of the Moral Majority in 1980 at the time of Reagan's election, Dobson and Thomas argue that little of what the Religious Right set out to do has been accomplished in the last 20 years (p. 23). This futility was demonstrated when President Clinton was inaugurated and signed executive orders that liberalized rules against homosexuals in the military and repealed the abortion restrictions imposed under Presidents Reagan and Bush (p. 26).

The charge is made that the Fundamentalist movement, which started as a response to theological liberalism, degenerated into a political agenda (p. 31). Historically Fundamentalism is traced through the Scopes evolution trial (1925), the conflict with higher criticism from Europe and antisupernaturalism regarding the miracles of the Bible. Battered, bruised, and failing to rid the religious structures of theological liberalism, Fundamentalists separated and spent the next several decades building their own subcultures (pp. 34–35).

They emerged from their cocoon only upon the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision which made abortion on demand available in all 50 states. This convinced Christians who had been isolated from the political arena that they should and must be involved in the political arena (p. 42). The Reagan-Bush landslide in 1980 was widely attributed to the efforts of the Moral Majority and the Religious Right (p. 40).

In 1988, Ed Hindson and Thomas wrote a book entitled

*The Seduction of Power: Preachers, Politics and the Media* in which they pointed out the weaknesses in the Moral Majority, such as lack of a long-term vision, the need of a theological basis for involvement, the proper use of power, and the need for financial integrity and accountability (p. 45).

The third chapter is entitled "Seduction of Power" (p. 49) and shows how spiritual integrity is often compromised in order to secure access to power (p. 51). Falwell's silence on Reagan's appointment of Sandra Day O'Connor (Arizona), who had a questionable record on abortion, is given as an example of this (p. 59). Reagan is said to have called Falwell and asked him to back off from any criticism, and Falwell's response was that he trusted Reagan. Another example of the seduction of power is how fundraising is used in the Religious Right to manipulate. This is detailed with examples given of misuse of methods by Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell.

Using the temperance movement as an example, the fallacy of transforming society by passing another law is examined negatively (pp. 65ff.). Dobson, a native of Northern Ireland, uses Ian Paisley as an example of "crossing the line" and displaying a lack of love in his battles in Ulster (p. 78).

Dealing with what the Bible says about religion and politics, the point is made that government's purpose is an ordered society in contrast with the Christian whose godly life attracts unbelievers (p. 108). The God-ordained responsibility of Christians to government involves prayers for government leaders, submission, honor, and the paying of taxes (pp. 102–113).

Chapter nine details Thomas's conflict with James Dobson, whom he views as too political. Using the title of Dobson's popular radio program, Thomas says that the broadcaster should "focus on the family, not on politics" (pp. 117–128). Since culture is not changed by the flawed methods of the Religious Right, the authors conclude that if politics and laws could change individuals that God would be unnecessary (p. 143).

The acknowledgement is made that Christians do have certain obligations as citizens of a temporal and temporary kingdom. These would include intelligent voting, praying for those in places of authority, watching officials after their election, writing letters to papers, and investing ourselves in the lives of others (pp. 175–82).

The conclusion is that religious conservatives cannot save America. God alone can do it as His people get out of the way.

There seems to be a degree of ambivalence in the book. While Thomas will allow no voter registration drives in his book or distribution of any voters' guides, he seems not to want to stray too far from the necessity of the Christian's role in politics and government. Yet he has been shaken by the paucity of results governmentally by the Religious Right and some of the aberrations in



fundraising methods. These observations are valid.

Also, the authors see correctly the dangers of power and influence when divorced from the gospel and the servanthood of Christ. Absolute power *does* corrupt absolutely. Examples abound where otherwise good men have been corrupted and destroyed by their association with power brokers. The third temptation of Christ in the wilderness was the promise that He could have all the kingdoms of the earth if He would only bow down and worship Satan. The Lord successfully resisted this temptation. So must we in our battle for the culture.

The danger in wrapping Christ and the gospel message in the flag of a particular political party inevitably results in the distortion of the gospel and the failure to be able to communicate with a segment of the populace. The Word of God must be free to critique (Heb. 4:12) any religious movement. The evils and idolatry of Constantianism (4th century A.D.), when church and state were married, can easily be replicated in our time. The authors correctly show that there is no "Christian" position on every polit-

ical issue (p. 161). Churches cannot speak monolithically on secular issues on which committed Christians differ.

While churches should not become lobbying agents for the government, individual Christians should be involved in the political process since a full-orbed world-and-life view necessitates engagement in the cultural wars of the day.

This book should drive Fundamentalists into a new study of the Christian and government with the development of a theological and philosophical basis for involvement. Existing in one of the most politically and morally corrupt societies in history, the early church made a profound impact. We must rediscover that dynamic and apply it in our day. The key is not creating an evangelical subculture and an isolationism in which we fail to interact with other cultures, or the type of interaction that neglects a theological basis while attempting to change culture. Either of these is a recipe for disaster.

Dr. James E. Singleton was the FBF Southwest Regional Moderator. He went to be with the Lord on July 13.

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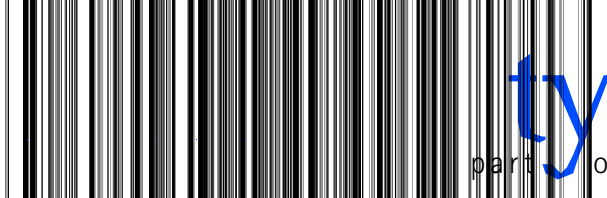
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