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I find *Frontline* very inspirational and thought-provoking.

*Ernest Nye
Roscommon, MI*

Many times, in the last several years, have I heard the laments of the older generation of Fundamentalists concerning the "flight to New Evangelicalism" by the younger generation of Fundamentalists. I suggest that articles such as Dr. Vaughn's ["Behind the Lines," March/April 2002] are a contributing factor to this flight. . . . Unfortunately, those in Fundamentalism who are honestly wrestling through the translation issue are not helped by your article—you've just poisoned the well even further. I suppose thinking believers will just have to turn to John MacArthur or some other evangelical one more time because clear, informed, well-thought-out answers are hard to come by here on this side of the fence.

*Rev. Daniel P. McGhee
Lake Orion, MI*

John Vaughn's article "The Fear of Man Bringeth a Snare" (March/April 2002) as an attempt to tie Islam's

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You may request that your letter not be published or that your name be withheld, but anonymous letters will not be accepted.

"fear of man" with the current (and important) discussion within Fundamentalism is oversimplified (at best) and distorted (at worst). . . . Nevertheless, . . . having had contact with your ministry [I have] an utmost respect for you and your work in Greenville and are thankful for a spirit of open dialogue on the issues facing Fundamentalism.

*Aric A. Manore
Lake Orion, MI*

We especially appreciated the article "Our Christian Movie Rating System" by Cynthia Blake Simmons. We would like permission to make 12–15 copies of the article to use in our ministry here. Recently questions have developed among our people concerning this issue, and we believe this article may be helpful in giving them a better under-

standing of the biblical principles involved. We are missionaries with Independent Faith Mission and are engaged in church planting here in Sudbury, Ontario.

*Perry Wright
CANADA*

First let me thank you for a fine magazine. As soon as I get it, I read it from cover to cover. I was interested in further info on the FrontLine Clubs I was reading about on page 18 of the May/June 2002 issue. Could you please e-mail me how I can get more info?

*Charles Perryman
Crown Point, IN*

Please see an important announcement about FrontLine Clubs in "On the Home Front" on page 19.

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Charting the Course: Knowing Who We Are

This issue of *FrontLine* includes a number of articles on Old Testament characters. Let me continue to share thoughts from the message “Charting the Course” which I encourage you to get and read. (See “On the Home Front” for details). In that message, I began by remembering some dear men of God who were with us in the early days: Dr. Myron B. Cedarholm, Dr. Archie Weniger, Dr. Arno Weniger, Dr. Wayne Van Gelderen, and Dr. Monroe Parker. These great men of God have gone on to their reward. We miss them.

The Old Testament provides examples for New Testament believers, and these men set an example for the next generation. Charting the course for the future is a lot easier when we check the charts of the old sailors who learned long ago where hazards lay hidden beneath the surface. That’s why we met together to revive the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship over 25 years ago. The name of our fellowship is the key to its history and the hope for its future; we are the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship. Yes, we’re now international, but that just means we are doing the same thing overseas that we’ve been doing right here in the United States.

We are Fundamental. Fundamentalism consists of a core of beliefs that are essential to the historic Christian faith. There can be no disagreement on the fundamentals. We believe that God has spoken through His inerrant, infallible, verbally inspired Scriptures—the Old and New Testaments—in the original writings. Every other fundamental truth depends on that one for its Scriptural foundation. The personal agendas of a number of critics of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship apparently include the persistent

attempt to convince others that we do not believe that truth. But every resolution we have ever passed on the subject, which can quickly be checked on our website, affirms that truth.

Fundamentalists believe in Creation by the direct act of God, the incarnation and Virgin Birth, the substitutionary, vicarious atonement, the bodily Resurrection and Second Coming of Christ, the new birth through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, and the resurrection of the saints to eternal life and the ungodly to final judgment and eternal death. But Fundamentalists don’t just believe these truths; they live by them. Fundamentalists expose and separate from all ecclesiastical denial of that faith, compromise with error, and unrepentant disobedience. We “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.” We believe whatever the Bible says is so, and judge all things by the Bible, and are judged only by the Bible.

Let me underscore something here. The fundamentals are not for sale—no compromise, no deviation, no surrender. **THEY’RE NOT FOR SALE!**

We are Baptists. We know there are Fundamentalists that are not Baptists and Baptists that are not Fundamentalists. We are both; this is a BAPTIST fellowship. Our Baptist forefathers went to jail or lost their lives for the great Baptist distinctives. Here is an easy way to remember what they are:

B—the **Bible** is our only authority

A—the **autonomy** of the local church

P—the **perseverance** of the saints

T—there are **two** offices: pastor and deacon

I—the **individual** priesthood of the believer

S—the **separation** of church and state

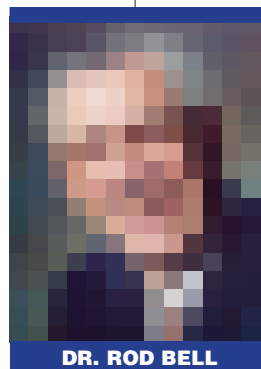
T—there are **two** ordinances: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper

The fundamentals are not for sale because we are Fundamentalists. These distinctives are not for sale because we are Baptists. We won’t move. There is no deviation, no compromise, no surrender. **THEY’RE NOT FOR SALE!**

We are a Fellowship. We are drawn together because of our commitment to the Fundamentals and because we are Baptists. This “like precious faith” is the basis of our fellowship. We fellowship around these great doctrines, around this great core of beliefs, and our fellowship is in obedience to these beliefs. “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” The Fellowship is a fellowship of individuals, not an association of churches. There is a lot of difference in these two things. If someone wants to have a fellowship or association of churches, that’s their business, but that is not what we are.

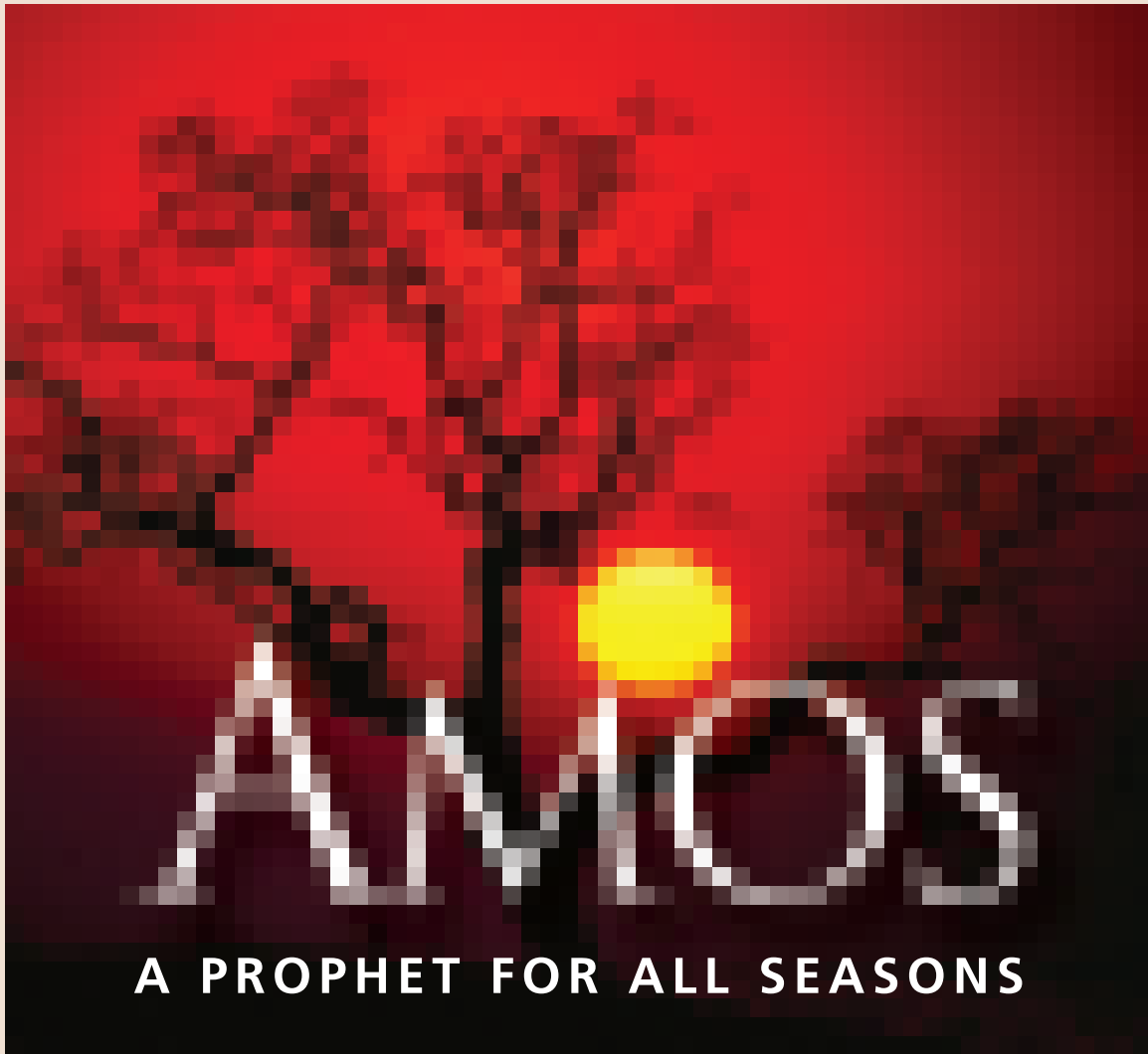
There is no ecclesiastical authority on earth above the local church. No bishop, no superintendent, no pope. Anyone who presumes to hold such authority is an imposter. I have a lot more to say about the fellowship principle, but for now, let’s leave it at this. We will never infringe upon the auton-

omy of the local church in any way. We will not dictate to local churches or undermine them. We will not back down from the earnestly contending for the faith, but we will not presume authority over the local church on matters of personal interpretation. We are a fellowship—a fundamental, Baptist fellowship.



DR. ROD BELL

Layton Talbert



A PROPHET FOR ALL SEASONS

Whatever things were written aforetime were written for our learning . . . and they are written for our admonition" (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11). If theology is "the queen of the sciences," then history is the heir apparent. It is no accident that God has given the lion's share of His revelation to man not in the form of poetry or prophecy or epistle, but in the form of historical narrative. History is a God-given tool designed not merely to inform but to instruct. The person bored by history is like a man too disinterested to bother with a will entitling him to enormous wealth.

Despite the social, cultural, and theological chasms between ancient Israel and modern America, many chapters from Israel's history parallel our own. There is a simple reason for this. Times change, but human nature does not.

This is the unwritten truth underlying the anonymous cliché that those who fail to learn from history are destined to repeat it (or Hegel's even more pessimistic observation, "The only thing we learn from history is that we do not learn from history").

One such chapter comes from the heyday of the northern kingdom of Israel under the reign of a king named Jeroboam II, and under the ministry of a prophet named Amos.

Amos in Israel

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Wealth, abundance, ease, and security sat across the table from pride, presumption, and profligacy. Jeroboam II has been called "the greatest of all the kings of northern Israel"—but he has not been called the best. He reigned a total

of 41 years (793–753 B.C.). Yet his entire rule is contracted into the span of a mere seven verses (2 Kings 14:23–29), a synopsis as surprising in its details as it is in its brevity.

By this point in the historical record, the attentive reader of the Books of Kings will have become wearily familiar with the predictable wickedness of each successive ruler of the northern kingdom of Israel. Launched by this king's namesake (Jeroboam I) in defiance of the demands of the Davidic heir (Rehoboam) some 140 years earlier, the breakaway northern kingdom went only from bad to worse in every meaningful index of leading indicators—socially, morally, spiritually. Their political and economic fortunes, on the other hand, roller-coastered. That is where Jeroboam II comes in.

Only a few years before Jeroboam II ascended the throne, Israel's international standing was downright embarrassing. Syria had militarily decimated them. Under his grandfather, Jehoahaz, Israel could field a paltry 10,000 foot soldiers, 50 cavalry, and a mere ten chariots (2 Kings 13:7)! Under the governance of Jeroboam II—and through the surprisingly gracious intervening providence of God—all that changed.

His biography begins repetitiously enough. Jeroboam II “did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD” according to “all the sins of Jeroboam” (2 Kings 14:24). Yet he was the first to restore the borders of northern Israel to their Davidic-Solomonic proportions. How did he manage this? The only explanation is that it was accomplished “according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spoke by the hand of his servant, Jonah.”

Jonah? In fulfillment of some unrecorded pronouncement of God through this prophet, God graciously extended the domain of His erring people. What prompted this pronouncement and providential intervention from the Lord on behalf of so undeserving a nation? “The Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter” and “saved them by the hand of Jeroboam” (2 Kings 14:26–27).

Old Testament scholar Walter Kaiser notes that Jeroboam II “was able to take a nation that was just about ready to die and turn it into one of the great powers of his day.” With that God-given territorial expansion came all the side-benefits of conquest: wealth, power, prestige, prosperity. Indeed, Kaiser adds, “the wealth and economic turnaround were so dramatic that it became a matter of concern for the prophets,” who quickly found themselves having to rebuke the arrogance and oppression that arose so suddenly out of their newfound prosperity.

The prophet who figures most prominently in this time is Amos. The same God who so graciously prospered His afflicted people gave to Amos a message which minced no words in addressing their arrogant ingratitude. In unadorned English it reads less like picturesque poetry and more like a sermon from John the Baptist:

*The same God
who so
graciously
prospered His
afflicted people
gave to Amos a
message which
minced no
words . . .*

Woe to those who lounge upon ivory beds, and stretch themselves out on their couches, and gorge themselves on lambs from the flock and stall-fattened calves; who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp . . . who drink wine by the bowlful and luxuriate themselves with the finest perfumes and lotions—but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph! Therefore they shall now be among the first of those to go into slavery, and the partying of those who laze around will come to an end. The Lord God has sworn by Himself. . . . “I

hate the arrogance of Israel . . . and I will deliver up the city and everything in it (to their enemies)” (Amos 6:4–8, paraphrase).

This was no idle threat. Amos prophesied near the end of Jeroboam II's reign. In less than a generation, Israel was wiped clean like a dish by the ravaging armies of Assyria and carried into slavery. But what was Israel's response to such preaching at the time? In the vision of the plumbline (Amos 7), God promises through Amos that “the sanctuaries of Israel will be devastated, and I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”

Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent word to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you right here in the territory of Israel; the country is not able to bear his treasonous rantings. For Amos has said this: ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword and Israel will go into exile away from his land.’” And Amaziah said to Amos, “Go, you prophet, flee away to the land of Judah; eat bread there and prophesy there. But never prophesy at Bethel again, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.”

Then Amos answered Amaziah, “I was neither reared nor trained as a prophet; I am a farmer of sheep and sycamore trees. But the LORD took me from tending the flock, and the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’ Now, therefore, you will hear the word of the LORD. You say, ‘Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not preach against the house of Isaac.’ Therefore the LORD says this: ‘Your wife will become a harlot in the city, and your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword, and your land will be divided up and parceled out to others. You yourself will die in an unclean land, and Israel will indeed be exiled into slavery away from its land’” (Amos 7:9–17, paraphrase).

Such a response as Amaziah's to the word of the Lord, after all He had done, does not bode well for Israel—or anyone else. When Israel rewarded God-given prosperity with impudence, the end was officially in sight.

Amos in America

It is the best of times, it is the worst of times. Wealth, abundance, and ease sit across the table from pride, presumption, and profligacy. All the indexes of leading indicators that matter to most people are high. The economy is bouncing back.

Technology continues to advance by leaps and bounds, providing us with more and faster conveniences.

As a nation, we continue to reap the benefits of God's blessings on our God-honoring ancestors. Not all our founding fathers were Christians, but even the Deists among them often had a more God-fearing and God-honoring spirit than many of their nominally Christian descendants today. With all our divine blessing, Americans have grown arrogant, ungrateful, and presumptuous of the abundance we have inherited from the hand of a good God. And we have forgotten that the good God is also a holy God.

We idolize pleasure, obsessively pursue entertainment, and leisurely gorge on what in any previous age—and even in most nations of the world today—would be considered delicacies. We, like Israel, are not grieved over the spiritual ruin that prosperity and plenty—grasped after with greedy and ungrateful hands—have spawned in our generation. The ruinous moral and spiritual bankruptcy of our age scarcely receives any notice.

The abuse and oppression that attended Israel's presumption in prosperity has infected America. Various forms of oppression and sin—pornography, pedophilia, homosexuality, abortion—are no longer merely tolerated, but officially sanctioned, publicly defended, and legislatively protected. National leaders—some professing themselves to be Christians—lie with impunity and commit adultery without shame.

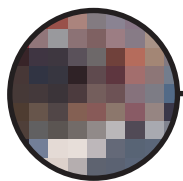
The nation's rejection of all our best arguments against the moral, psychological, and physical dangers

of premarital sex, or the heinous horror of abortion, or any of the other profligacies of our generation, is not out of a lack of knowledge or understanding. It is not the result of bad public relations on our part. They comprehend the arguments, they understand the issues, and they knowingly and willfully reject God's view. Like Amaziah, they reply, "Go, flee away to your church and prophesy there. We don't want to hear any more from you."

This is no mere diatribe aimed at the unregenerate. American Christianity has become spiritually segregationist. Seeking "separate but equal" worldliness, we have grown preoccupied with the pursuit of "sanctified" pleasure, entertainment, leisure, convenience, popularity, wealth, and health. When questioned about whether our priorities and pursuits are Biblically appropriate, we point to all the external manifestations of God's blessing around us as proof that God is, indeed, happy with us. The assumption that "gain is godliness" (1 Tim. 6:5b)—that prosperity and blessing apparently indicate God's approval and evidence that we must be more godly than we supposed—is a mark of arrogant and ungodly thinking (1 Tim. 6:4, 5a).

The message of Amos is a timeless call to the humbling and grateful realization that every blessing we enjoy falls undeserved from the gracious hand of a good and holy God—a call to Biblical values and priorities, and a call to belief in the certainty of God's Word and in the reality of God's rule over this world.

Dr. Layton Talbert is a Frontline Contributing Editor and faculty member at Bob Jones Memorial Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina.



jealousy for God's glory

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Rev. Doug Threlfall
South Korea

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Keith E. Gephart



In the account of King Josiah found in 2 Kings 22 and 23, the Scriptures show us the end result of empty values. They also show us the way back to more solid ground. Josiah himself manifested a different relationship to truth at various stages of his life.

The story begins with Josiah's childhood. He was only eight years of age when he became king of the southern kingdom, Judah (2 Kings 22:1). What kind of a kingdom did young Josiah inherit? Was his job easy or difficult? The context of 2 Kings shows us that Josiah inherited shame, a weak throne, a crumbling kingdom, a debased national religion, and a fearful threat of judgment. Things were in a mess—and he had the task of straightening them out. In light of all this we

may wonder how this king can be called “the king who walked in truth.”

Truth Blurred and Lost

In the first stage of Josiah's life, truth was blurred and lost in the nation and in his own heart and mind; pluralism was in place. A thorough understanding of the circumstances would require a survey of the entire history of the nation of Israel/Israel-Judah, but we will restrict our analysis to Josiah's immediate family.

Josiah was the grandson of Manasseh (2 Kings 21:6–9; 23:26–27), the most wicked and worthless king in Judah's history (2 Kings 21:1). He also was very young when he came to power, and his reign was the longest of any king of the southern kingdom. If he had been

righteous, he could have been a potent influence for righteousness in Judah.

Manasseh was not following the example of a bad father, for Hezekiah had been one of the most godly kings in Judah. The apostasy led by Manasseh was so pervasive and so extended that later reforms could not save the nation from divine judgment. Second Kings 23:26, 27 show that the Lord would not turn “from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal.”

Was Josiah’s father any better? Unfortunately, no. His father was Amon (2 Kings 21:19–22), who “did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh did. And he walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them: And he forsook the LORD God of his fathers, and walked not in the way of the LORD.” Chaos resulted from all this. “And the servants of Amon conspired against him, and slew the king in his own house. And the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead” (2 Kings 21:23, 24).

We cannot be sure of the motives of those who killed Amon, but one thing is sure: those who killed the conspirators were not dissatisfied with the status quo. They took Josiah and made him king—a king who was to continue in the mold of his predecessors. Josiah had a wicked grandfather and wicked father, wicked priests, and wicked people. He was but a child and had no chance to improve his spiritual heritage. Truth truly was blurred and lost.

During the first eight years of his reign things continued as before. However, when he was 16, still a youth, “he began to seek after the God of David his father” (2 Chron. 34:3). Then at the age of 20, in the twelfth year of his reign, “he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images and the molten images.”

The Truth of Conscience

What was the basis of Josiah’s initial reform measures (see 2 Chron. 34:3, 4)? It was not the Word of God, the authoritative teachings of Scriptures. The reform measures were an attempt to please God by human good works.

These reform measures of Josiah continued through his eighteenth year (2 Kings 22:3–7). At the age of 26 Josiah decided to do a major work of repair on the temple of the Lord. Josiah was doing some very good things. He evidently wanted to impress the Almighty; he may have wanted to impress his mother; he certainly wanted to pacify his conscience.

The Truth of Revelation

The “truth” that Josiah was following was not the truth of divine revelation. While Josiah continued his manmade

reformation in the process of cleansing and repairing the temple, Hilkiah the scribe made an amazing discovery: “And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.” Shaphan decided that this amazing discovery needed to be brought to the attention of king Josiah.

Evidently, the apostasy of Manasseh and of Amon was so thorough that the existing copies of the Scriptures had practically disappeared. It is likely that Josiah had never seen a copy of the Word of God; he had certainly neither read it nor followed its teachings in his life.

Shaphan the scribe brought the message to Josiah: “Thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that do

the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD.” Then, while giving the king this report of the work progress, he mentioned the discovery of the book. “And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book.” The delivery of the book to Josiah was by far the most important thing ever done by Shaphan.

Shaphan proceeded to read the book before the king. The reading of the Word of God for the first time had a profound impact upon Josiah. He had never heard anything like it before! The effects of the Word upon the king were manifold.

1. *Genuine repentance.* “When the king had heard the words of the book of the law . . . he rent his clothes.” This action expressed horror and remorse, a sign of

Josiah’s genuine repentance. He recognized the nation’s sin against God and knew Judah was in deep trouble.

2. *Seeking God.* The king commanded his servants: “Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that: is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book; to do according unto all that which is written concerning us” (2 Kings 22:12, 13). Therefore, they sent to Huldah the prophetess. Notice that Josiah recognized God’s anger with Judah and its leaders because they had not obeyed the teachings of the book. Huldah’s reply to the messengers affirmed the certainty of punishment based on the words of the book (2 Kings 22:15–17). Josiah, however, would receive mercy from the Lord and would not live to see the fulfillment of the Lord’s judgment upon the nation (22:18–20). “Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord . . . and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD.” The Lord still looks for those who will seek Him with a tender and humble heart.

3. *Reading God’s Word to the people.* The king recognized that he could not truly reform the nation apart from the Word of God. The same book which had so miraculously wrought repentance in his heart would work on the hearts of the people. Therefore, “the king sent, and they gathered

*The reading
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unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD."

Josiah included every class of the nation, including leaders, elders, priests, prophets, the common people, the socially important and the unimportant. He gathered people from all parts of the land. Josiah wanted this to be a true reformation, divinely empowered. People still need the authoritative Word of God in order to experience genuine conversion and revival.

4. *Making a covenant with the people.* Josiah realized that it is not hearers of the Word who are acceptable to God, but doers (cf. James 1:22). Therefore, he entered into a covenant with the people before God: "And the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the LORD to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant." Their covenant to "walk after the LORD" is the same as "walking in truth," for it involves the keeping of commandments, testimonies, and statutes. This was no half-hearted covenant which Josiah sought to enforce on the nation, for they pledged to obey the Lord "with all their heart and all their soul." Their goal was to fulfill the words written in the book.

5. *Changing behavior patterns.* The true evidence of faithfulness to the covenant relationship would be seen in changed behavior. *Old* sinful and disobedient life patterns must go; *new* God-pleasing patterns of life must begin. Josiah was earnest in his reforms and insured that they were scriptural. Previously, he had not known how to bring reform, how extensive to make reforms, or what to include in them. Guided by Scripture, he included all forms of idolatry—even removing the high places dedicated to Yahweh, not just those devoted to false gods.

He realized that a purely negative revival was no revival at all. Therefore, he led in a genuine Passover celebration (2 Chronicles 35:1–18). This Passover was so spectacular in its observation that we are told "there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet" (35:18).

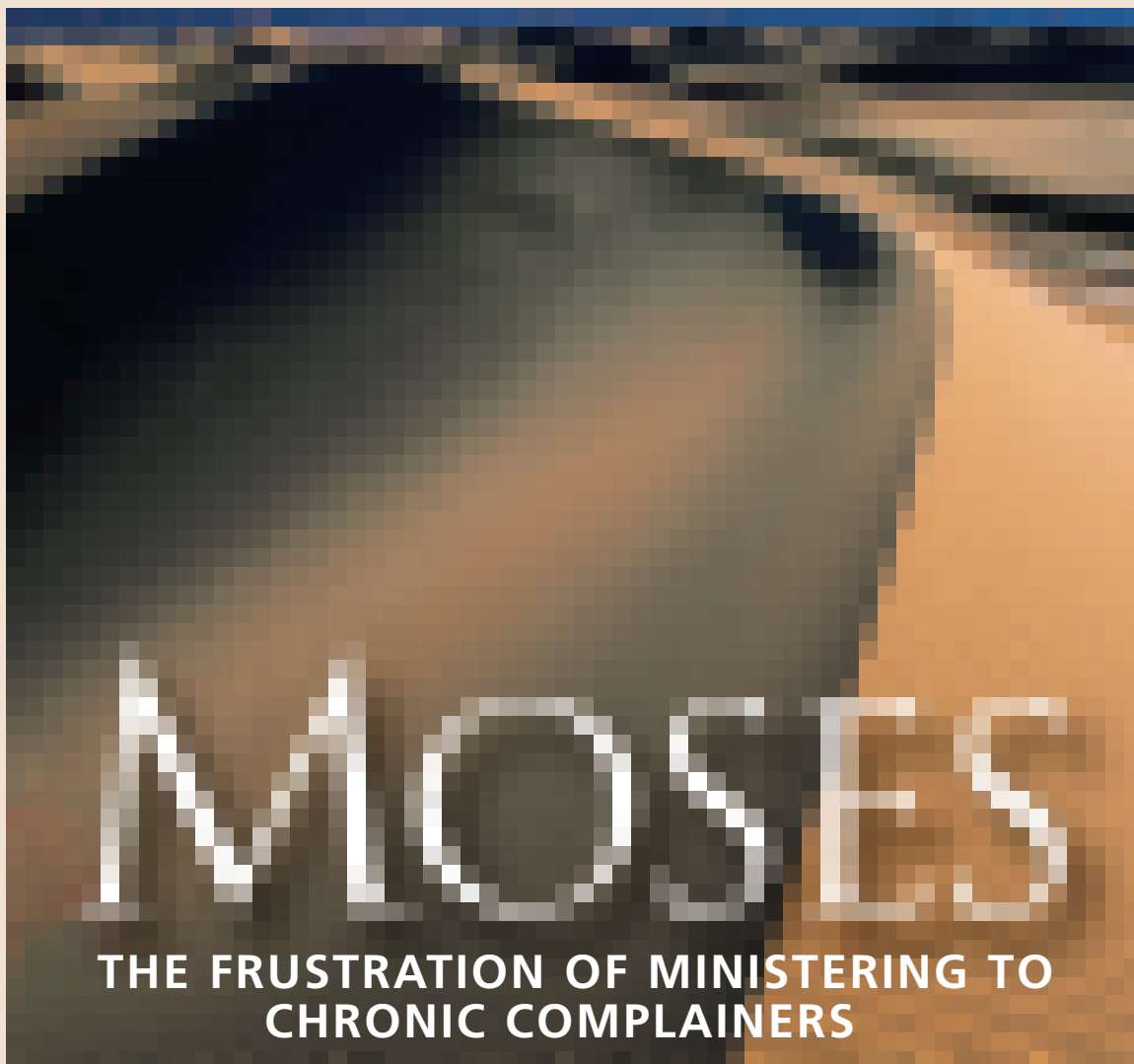
The truth of revelation brought about a life-changing revival of religion for Josiah and the nation of Judah. "And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him" (2 Kings 23:25). How was Josiah enabled to turn to the Lord with all his heart, all his soul, and all his might? It was the revelation of the Word of God that made the difference.

The same is true today. It is only when we read and respond rightly to the Book—that is, walk in the *truth*—that we are able to please God.

Dr. Keith E. Gephart is a professor at International Baptist College in Tempe, Arizona.



Randy Fox



Numbers 11:15 says, “And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.” It is surprising to realize these words came from Moses, the epitome of strength and steadfastness. Here he buckles before our eyes. This is the man who turned down wealth, riches, and power in Egypt, choosing “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. 11:25). This is the man who stood before powerful Pharaoh and performed the miracles that brought the great nation of Egypt to its knees. Through Moses God freed an entire nation of slaves, parted the Red Sea, and overthrew an army. Moses was a strong, godly man raised up

for this moment. What does it take to bring such a man to such a prayer?

The Cause of Moses’ Despondency

What the army of Pharaoh could not do, a group of complaining people did: they defeated Moses. There is nothing that can bring a person lower than to hear constant complaining from the people he is serving—especially if they are God’s people. We expect it from the world, but not from those who have tasted and seen that the Lord is good (Ps. 34:8). A stark revelation to every person newly placed in a position of spiritual leadership is that God’s people do not always respond with love, gratitude, and appreciation! You would think that the Israelites would be so thrilled with their deliverance from

Egypt that they would be immune to bickering. Gratitude, however, has the tendency to die very quickly.

People often express their complaining in a strange form of nostalgia. The Israelites remembered their past far better than it was. They forgot that they were slaves in bondage to a cruel people (Exod. 1:13–16) and chose to remember only the variety of food that they had enjoyed. They chose not only a fanciful perspective of the past and but also a cynical viewpoint of the present. They failed to acknowledge the daily miracles such as the miraculous provision of manna, the guiding cloud, the pillar of fire, and the hope of the Promised Land. Complainers always pine for former times and forget that they were not happy then either.

A former church, pastor, job, or circumstance that was once the source of their affliction suddenly becomes the object of their affection. A selective memory provides people with excuses to complain about the present.

The leader must remember that changed circumstances will never satisfy the complainer. The Scriptures record the persistent nature of the Israelites' murmuring. The people complained before the Red Sea (Exod. 14:12), but God delivered them. Three days after the Red Sea they complained about the lack of water, and God gave them water (Exod. 15:22–24). In the wilderness of Sin they complained about lack of food, and God provided quail (Exod. 16:1, 2).

At Rephidim, they grumbled again about lack of water and God again, gave them water (Exod. 17:1ff). In each case the cause of the murmuring was remedied, but the complaining always came back. A complainer needs a change of heart, not a change in circumstances. The real problem is his discontent with the way God has ordered his life—with God Himself. Until people realize that the problem is in their hearts, they will never overcome their complaining. Those who refuse to see themselves as the source of the problem must find someone else to blame. They usually blame their leader.

The Crushing of Moses' Spirit

"Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?" (Num. 11:11).

This time the complaining was more than Moses could bear. Moses turned to God and asked, "Why hast thou afflicted thy servant?" His choice to suffer with the children of Israel was a deliberate one (Heb. 11:24–26), but he now felt that God was being hard on His servant. While we cannot deny that Moses' circumstances were difficult, he was now accusing God of something that is never true. The Lord is never "hard" on His servants. His yoke is easy and the burden is light (Matt. 11:30). To believe that God is harsh is to add a greater burden to the difficulty. Upon closer examination we will find that Moses' burden was far more self-imposed than he

thought.

"Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?" (Num. 11:12).

Moses felt like a frustrated nursemaid trying to pacify a roomful of crying infants. To some degree Moses was right. The people allowed their immaturity to control them. It is disheartening when you think someone you have discipled is reaching maturity to observe him saying or doing something that shows he has not progressed. These people were concerned about their lack of meat when they should have been grateful to God for His innumerable blessings.

But this complaint also reveals that much of Moses' despair lay in Moses himself. He had developed a wrong perspective of his ministry. God never intended Moses to placate the cries of infants. Moses was trying to do the impossible: to satisfy the demands of chronic complainers. The Lord never asked Moses to pacify these people, but to lead them. Moses is suffering from a self-imposed burden: "And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee" (Num. 11:15). Moses certainly did the right thing when he brought his frustration to the throne of grace. But rather than answering Moses' request for death, the Lord brought Moses out of his despondency and put him back in the

ministry.

The Course for Moses' Restoration

"I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me" (Num. 11:14). When Moses acknowledged his inability to meet the Israelites' demands, he made the first step to solving the problem. Whenever we assume a responsibility that is not ours, the end is despair. How many ministers groan when they feel unable to satisfy the varied demands of a complaining congregation. These Israelites could not be satisfied—not even with God.

Moses needed to find fellowship. "Gather unto me seventy men from the elders of Israel" (Num. 11:16). Fellowship is often the last thing we want when we are discouraged. But it is that very isolation that exaggerates negative feelings. It is not that personal prayer and Bible reading are insufficient, but the Lord often sends comfort through other people to correct the "I can do it all myself" attitude. Even great men cannot do it all themselves, nor can they operate in isolation. Certainly New Testament teaching on the church as a body with members ministering to one another applies to spiritual leaders as well. Bearing a burden alone is hard. God knew that Moses needed help.

Moses needed to discard self-imposed burdens. "They shall bear the burden of the people with thee" (Num. 11:17). Much of his depression came from the simple fact

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that he was trying to do too much. This tendency of Moses had surfaced before (Exod. 18:13, 17-19). Sometimes a leader must try harder and pray for perseverance and strength, but there are times when we must examine whether or not we are trying to do more than what God intends for us to do. Delegating our duties can help greatly. But what do you do when there is no one to whom you can delegate responsibility? In that case, decide what must be left undone! Sometimes there are burdens or responsibilities that we impose ourselves that should be discarded or at least put off until the Lord provides someone else to help.

Moses needed to trust God to deal with the complainers. "Therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat . . . until it come out of your nostrils and it be loathsome unto you, because that ye have despised the Lord which is among you" (Num. 11:18, 20). The Lord was in charge of the menu; therefore He took personal offense at the people's complaint. We might be surprised at the way He responds to those who murmur. Psalm 106:15a records that "He gave them their request." Sometimes the Lord gives complainers what they want, but this is a form of judgment. The only way to teach them the emptiness of their request is to give them so much it comes out of their nostrils. Though the complainers may interpret this as an "answer to prayer," it is a sign of His displeasure. The psalmist concludes, He "sent leanness into their soul"

(106:15). The point is that leaders must let God deal with those who constantly complain. We may have the responsibilities of reproving, rebuking, and exhorting them, but beyond that we will never be able to satisfy them. They will always murmur again. We must let God deal with them, since He has no trouble showing His displeasure (Num. 11:33).

Moses needed to return to the ministry. "And say thou unto the people . . ." (Num. 11:18). Perhaps leaving the ministry looks like an attractive alternative to a person struggling with discouragement. At least if we could avoid ministering to people who complain, we might find some relief. Wherever there are people, however, there will be complaints. Instead of giving Moses a new group of people to work with, the Lord sent Moses back to minister to these same grumblers, but with one very important reminder. The people may have rejected Moses' leadership, but the Lord had not. Moses' calling as the Lord's spokesman and leader of the Israelites had not changed because of their complaints or dissatisfaction with his leadership. He was still God's man for these people.

If discouragement has thrown you off, you must "get back on the horse" and try again. We must persevere in the place of God's will, for it is being out of the will of God that is the true cause of all despair.

Randy Fox is pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Corona, California.

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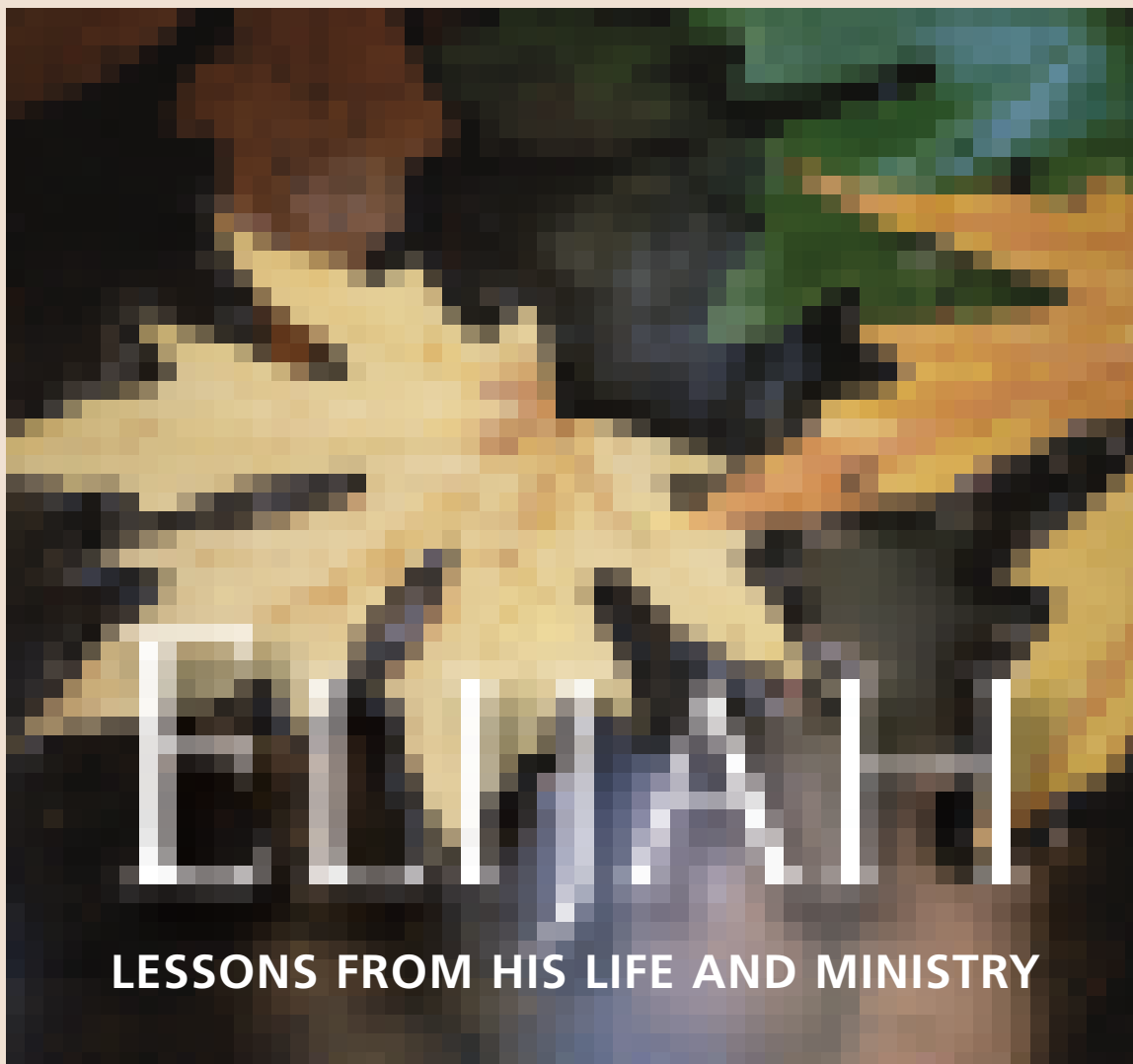
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Joel Tetreau



Over the last decade I have had the privilege of ministering in Arizona, Michigan, Minnesota, and now back again in Arizona. What I have discovered is that while each ministry and minister is unique, and while the cultural setting may vary from region to region, we are all very similar in the way discouragement attacks us. The Bible, however, has the answer to discouragement and depression. Using the life and ministry of Elijah as a “case study,” we can glean principles that can be applied to our lives today.

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah experienced a great victory on Mount Carmel. After this victory, God sent rain and helped Elijah win a “foot race” to Jezreel against the chariot of Ahab. It seems clear from the text that Elijah was experiencing

victory in his life and ministry. However, in chapter 19, there is a major change. Our victorious, triumphant Elijah becomes fearful, depressed, and despondent. I believe the following to be contributing factors to Elijah’s depression.

1. *Elijah went through a major life and ministry change.* Elijah was entering a new phase of prophetic ministry—that of preparing the next major spiritual leader, Elisha. This marked the beginning of the end of Elijah’s ministry. Counselors (both Christian and secular) suggest that people are most susceptible to discouragement during these “life transitions.”

2. *Elijah suffered through a major disappointment.* It seems from these chapters that Elijah expected Israel to turn back to Jehovah. Not

only did that not happen, Jezebel was after his life! This illustrates the fear and disappointment of some in the ministry today, when pastors feel like failures on Monday morning, or when teachers feel unappreciated because they do not get a needed salary increase when others in the church ministry do. Disappointments often propel us into self-pity and discouragement.

3. *Elijah suffered from physical exhaustion.* Elijah's journey began on Mount Carmel. After his victory, he ran all the way to "the entrance of Jezreel." After hearing that the queen had put out a death warrant on him, he continued his journey all the way to Beer-sheba where he dropped off his servant and then ran 15 more miles (a day's journey) into the middle of the Negev desert, found a tree, and collapsed. He had travelled more than 80 miles in about a day and a half. Running for his life, he became physically exhausted. We also get tired, and as a result feel discouraged as we impose unreasonable expectations on ourselves. We may get frustrated if our ministries are progressing as quickly as we think they should. Working to the point of exhaustion may sometimes be required, but it brings danger with it.

4. *Elijah suffered from emotional exhaustion.* The ministry is taxing. Anyone who counsels or helps others in crises knows that ministry burns energy. Elijah had spent an entire day in spiritual battle, expending physical, mental and emotional energy. All God-honoring ministry includes spiritual warfare. Paul proclaimed in Ephesians 6:12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against . . . powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." When you labor in this kind of ministry, there is an emotional drain that takes place.

5. *Elijah suffered from personal isolation.* First Kings 19:4, tells us the prophet was all alone. Having left his servant in Beer-sheba, Elijah pondered his solitary stand for Jehovah. His personal isolation led him to believe he was spiritually isolated. Wrong thinking about separation can lead to isolation, which is disobedience to the command in Hebrews 10:25 to maintain fellowship with others. We are not a spiritual "Army of One." We must not only be dependable to others, we must at times depend on others ourselves.

6. *Elijah suffered from fear.* The contributing factors above left Elijah vulnerable to fear. This great man of faith had been fed at the brook Cherith, had encouraged the widow of Zarephath to "fear not," and had challenged the 450

prophets of Baal. He was no spiritual weakling. He had seen God's supernatural hand of deliverance. Yet he fled from a woman who gave an oath to the "gods" who had proved helpless when fighting against Jehovah. Elijah's frame of mind blinded him to the obvious impotence of Jezebel and her gods.

When we suffer from the discouragement of Elijah we must take hope in the God of Elijah so that we can have the kind of victory he had. Three key areas should be considered.

1. *Elijah found relief from depression in the physical realm.* The first thing God allowed Elijah to do was to get some rest. When the angel awakened Elijah he gave him bread. Lack of sleep and poor eating habits are cited by counselors as contributing factors to depression that must be



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addressed. These healthy adjustments to his schedule were reinforced with an improved pace of ministry activity. In renewed strength, Elijah went 40 days and 40 nights to Mount Horeb (about 200 miles south of Beersheba). This was a long trip for sure, but was made at a much more reasonable pace than that first 80-mile dash at the beginning of chapter 19! Physical needs require proper rest, nourishment, and a reasonable pace in our lives and ministries.

2. *Elijah found relief in the spiritual realm.* In a fit of desperation, Elijah had prayed for relief. His request was misguided and self-centered, but he was honest with God about his pain. It wasn't an exemplary prayer, but at least he was talking to the One who could help! Through prayer, he was taking the first step toward spiritual renewal. Depression is often a resistance of Holy Spirit conviction of sin. David told us in Ps. 66:18 that sin blocks fellowship with the Lord and separates us from God. The answer to unconfessed sin is prayer. The answer to anxiety is thanksgiving and prayer. Spiritual relief begins with prayer.

In addition to prayer, Elijah found relief in the "the word of the Lord." Elijah came to the Sinai range (vs. 9) and found a cave. As he lodged there, "the word of the Lord came to him." After unburdening his heart about his disappointment in God's people and even in God himself, Elijah finally heard the Lord in a "still small voice." Humbling himself, he was faced with God's convicting question, "What are you doing here?" This was a reminder that he still had work for Elijah to do. His fearful flight had taken him away from this work.

The prophet felt tired, fearful, and alone in the face of those who hated both himself and God, but the Lord's answer is comforting. It is so descriptive of God's character that we find it used in Romans 11, in

Paul's explanation that some of the house of Abraham had not deserted God. Elijah was instructed to anoint Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha. Be encouraged to remember that through these men, the Lord completed the destruction of the Baal worshipers that Elijah had begun. God reminded his discouraged servant that he was not alone; 7,000 had not bowed the knee to Baal.

Christian workers often feel they are all alone. But you are not alone! God is with you! Others have gone on faithfully in the face of similar discouragements, and God was faithful in getting them through. God will be faithful to you. He will not fail you. He will accomplish his purpose in a way that is best for you and consistent with His sovereign will. God is both the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:1, 2). Because of Him, we can and must go on, for in going on in faith, even in the face of discouragement and depression, we have the privilege to be witnesses and partakers in God's great work of deliverance.

3. *Elijah found relief in the realm of fellowship.* In the chapters that follow, we see Elijah discipling Elisha, and Elisha becoming a special source of encouragement to Elijah. As he ministered to Elisha, Elisha ministered unto him. Elisha served and encouraged Elijah. In the same way, it is important for those of us who serve others to allow God and others the occasion of serving and ministering to us. God created us all with the need for fellowship.

When you're tired and feel like Elijah in 1 Kings 19, remember the words of Elisha in 2 Kings 6:16, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Praise God, we serve a Lord who says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee (Heb. 13:5)."

Joel Tetreau is pastor of Southeast Valley Baptist Church in Chandler, Arizona, and an instructor at International Baptist College in Tempe, Arizona.

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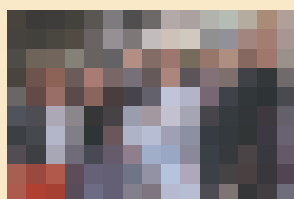
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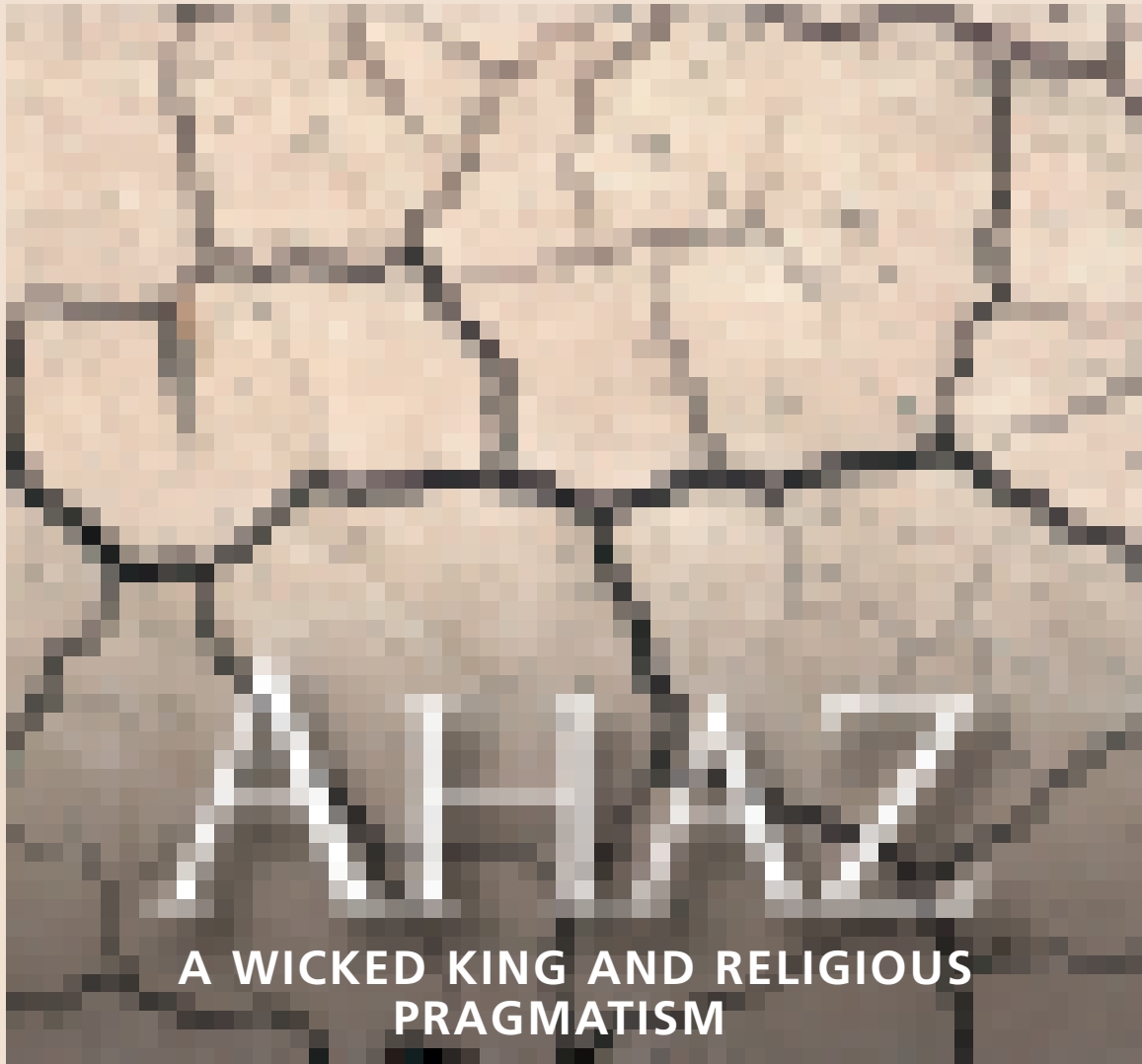
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A WICKED KING AND RELIGIOUS PRAGMATISM

One of Judah's wicked kings was Ahaz. His notorious history is found in 2 Chronicles 28 and in 2 Kings 16. We can learn how religious pragmatism works by a consideration of Ahaz's use of it. And we should do so, for such pragmatism is alive and well, even among those who call themselves evangelicals and Fundamentalists.

"And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the lord: this is that king Ahaz. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore I will sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel" (2 Chron 28:22-23).

While it is true that evangelicals and Fundamentalists have not stooped as low as Ahaz, we must admit that the pragmatic spirit has about overcome evangelicalism. And Fundamentalists are not immune to this disease of the soul. Consider Ahaz's statement, "Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me." Many in our day have said to themselves, "Because the principles of religious pragmatism help some grow larger ministries, I will follow those principles, that they may help me."

Religious pragmatism has brought the use of Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) instead of traditional, reverent, doctrinally sound music because it appeals to the younger generation. Pragmatists don't really care if CCM is good music or not, so long as it helps them reach their goals.

Pragmatism has caused many churches to turn away from doctrinal preaching and teaching. We live in a society infected with relativism; therefore, doctrine does not appeal to many. They want to make up their own beliefs, rather than be told what Scripture has to say on a topic. Pragmatists are quite willing to accommodate these relativists in order to get them to attend their services. Therefore, such churches are filled with those who are ignorant of the fundamental truths of Christianity. They are Biblically illiterate. Sound doctrine is foreign to them.

Pragmatists also accommodate moral relativism. They do not clearly present the moral absolutes of Holy Scripture, except perhaps on those points that are absolutely fundamental to Christianity. And the reason is the same: telling people how they should live does not produce big churches. Just as doctrinally weak preaching results in ignorance of sound doctrine, so morally weak preaching has its effect: it produces church-goers whose lives are not noticeably different from their secular neighbors.

For example, the Bible very plainly teaches that homosexuality is a sin. That is the only honest interpretation of the relevant verses in Romans 1. They give no hint that homosexuality might be acceptable or something a person is legitimately predisposed to do. Perverse behavior is a sinful choice. Since we live in a society that has rejected the Scriptural view of homosexuality, pragmatists accommodate these individuals in order to keep them attending their church services.

The Bible is equally clear and dogmatic that premarital and extramarital sex is always wrong. But religious pragmatists do not preach this because they do not want to drive away the guilty who might be in attendance. They often shy away from the Biblical view of divorce and remarriage for the same reason. They know that to do so will involve them in a controversy that would almost certainly hinder them from reaching their attendance and offering goals or just because they want to avoid the unpleasantness of the controversy.

Religious pragmatists will not tell their congregations that Catholicism and the Masonic Lodge are anti-Christian organizations. This is too narrowminded for this enlightened age, they reason, and it only turns people away from the church. Thus, silence and tolerance are the norm. Pragmatists might condemn drunkenness, but they most likely will not oppose social drinking or gambling, for to do so is to appear out-of-date and to offend some they are trying to attract.

Pragmatists sometimes don't insist on church membership, for we live in a time when many simply do not want to be formally committed to the church. Pragmatists do not object to ecumenicalism. Or, if they do, they are careful not to name those who advocate it, such as Billy Graham. To point out that he has caused great harm to Christianity is too costly. Pragmatists will not be dogmatic about baptism and the Lord's supper. They give the impression that immersion, sprinkling, or pouring are equally valid "baptisms." They won't insist on baptizing only those old

enough to understand the meaning of baptism. Nor does it make much difference to them if baptism and the Lord's supper are considered to be sacraments or symbols. What counts is what is acceptable to the crowd. Pragmatists will not teach their congregations that applause is not appropriate for church services, nor will they say that one should not wear immodest clothing to church.

Today's religious pragmatism is based on the same principle that guided wicked king Ahaz, who said, "Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me." Many say to themselves, "Pragmatism has helped others grow larger ministries. Therefore, I will sacrifice the doctrinal and moral absolutes of the Bible on the altar of expediency. Pragmatism works for others; it will work for me."

Unfortunately, pragmatists have not considered the outcome of Ahaz's actions. 2 Chronicles 28:23 says, "But they (the Syrian gods) were the ruin of him, and of all Israel." They do not realize that the pragmatic spirit blurs the distinction between Christianity and the world, robbing professing Christians of a clear-cut testimony for Christ. They do not understand that it has prevented the clear presenta-

tion of Bible doctrine, something vital to evangelism. Nor do they know that pragmatism is a trap from which it is difficult to escape. The price of renouncing pragmatism is great, but it is cheaper than the ruin to which such a course is sure to lead.

In his book *God Tells the Man Who Cares*, A. W. Tozer wrote of pragmatism that the "weakness of all this is its tragic short-sightedness. It never takes a long view of religious activity, indeed it dare not do so, but goes fully on believing that because it works it is both good and true. It is satisfied with present success and

shakes off any suggestion that it may go up in smoke in the day of Christ."

As one fairly familiar with the contemporary religious scene, I say without hesitation that a part, a very large part, of the activities carried on today in evangelical circles are not only influenced by pragmatism but almost completely controlled by it. Religious methodology is geared to it; youth meetings constantly glorify it; conventions are dominated by and alive with it.

We too, must beware. What shall we do to break its power over us? The answer is simple. We must acknowledge the right of Jesus Christ to control the activities of His church. The New Testament contains full instructions, not only about what we are to believe but what we are to do and how we are to go about doing it. Any deviation from those instructions is a denial of the Lordship of Christ.

The answer is simple, but it is not easy, for it requires that we obey God rather than man, and that always brings down the wrath of the religious majority. It is not a question of knowing what to do; we can easily learn that from the Scriptures. It is a question of whether or not we have the courage to do it.

Bruce Oyen is pastor of Fellowship Baptist Church in Miles City, Montana.

... pragmatism is a trap from which it is difficult to escape.

Changes in the Home Office

Long-time Managing Editor, Bob Whitmore, has been serving in Yap, a small island in the Western Pacific, as a missionary for nearly a year. He and his wife, Polly, have two adult sons, Bobby, a graduate of Bob Jones University and current medical student at the University of South Carolina, and Joe, a student at Bob Jones University. Tentmakers who went to the mission field to help church planting missionaries Paul and Sherry Zimmer, the Whitmores have seen their many responsibilities continue to expand.

Polly is a teacher in the local high school where she has daily opportunities to witness. Bob has worked as a first aid instructor on the island, as an advisor for the local newspaper, a teacher at the local college, and in many other ways to assist the missionary outreach. Of course, he has done an outstanding job as the managing editor of *FrontLine*, collecting, editing, and compiling articles for the various issues and working with the editor and graphic designer by e-mail. But the realities of publishing here at home and the need for Brother Whitmore's greater involvement with the ministry in Yap have brought changes in the Home Office.

Beginning with the next issue of *FrontLine* you will see a new name on the masthead. Rev. Tim Locke has been a contributor to *FrontLine*, and by the time you get this issue, he will have relocated to Taylors to begin the transition to Managing Editor. There will necessarily be some rearrangement in the FBFI Home Office and shuffling of duties. Please pray for us as these changes take place, and thank you in advance for your patience. There are some things you can do to help.

First, we ask pastors to prayerfully

consider the worthy missions investment of supporting the Whitmores on the field, since they will soon have to replace the small income Bro. Bob has earned as Managing Editor. Then, keep submitting articles for future use in *FrontLine*. Sometimes it may seem like authors have lost their articles forever, but we file them by subject to use in upcoming issues, sometimes many months in the future. And again, pray. Many of our authors and proofreaders, the editor, and others, do this as a ministry, receiving no compensation at all. We depend on your contributions of articles and financial support, and above all, your prayers.

New Prices for Frontline Subscriptions and FBFI Dues

One-year *Frontline* subscriptions are \$19.95, annual FBFI memberships are \$35, and directories are \$15.

9-11 Anniversary Service In NYC

On September 13th, Pastor Matt Recker and the Heritage Baptist Church of New York City will host a special anniversary service called "Beyond 9-11: Strength for Toubled Times." The meeting will take place at The Covenant House, 346 W. 17th St. and 9th Ave., at 7:30 p.m. There will be special music, and Mark Rizzo, founder of Freedom Flyer Ministries will preach. There is still room for church groups who would like to attend. Outreach into the police precincts and fire departments will provide ministry opportunities for those who can come early.

Dr. Jim Berg has written a wonderful little book that will be ideal for use with this event. *When Trouble Comes*

presents four simple truths that every one facing a crisis needs to know. Perhaps your church would like to help get these books into the hands of those who will be invited to this meeting in NYC, or you may even want to have them for an anniversary event at your own church. No doubt there will be considerable media attention to the anniversary of the attack; our entire nation will have it on their minds and many will be open to the strategic presentation of the gospel in this book.

Other resources available for a 9-11 anniversary service in your own church include the video made last fall, "The Gospel at Ground Zero," and Matt Recker's new book, *Behold the City*. For additional information contact the following:

Heritage Baptist Church
PO Box 7925
New York, NY 10116
212.633.0382
hbcnyc@integrityonline11.com

To order *Behold the City* or *When Trouble Comes* contact BJU Press directly at 1-800-845-5731.

FrontLine Clubs Update

"We have received many calls in the Home Office for additional information about the new *FrontLine* Clubs children's program. The curriculum is still under development and will not be released until the fall of 2003. It will continue to be edited and revised until the fall of 2005, when it will be available for general use. If you are interested in receiving monthly e-mail updates on the program with suggestions on how to make an effective transition to *FrontLine* Clubs, e-mail the Home Office at info@fbfi.org with 'add me to the *FrontLine* Update List' in the subject line."

SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

"Dear Companion"— A Husband's Loving Tribute

Much has been written to direct and inspire the life of the minister, but there is little complementary reading available for his wife. There are, however, a few choice biographies of women married to ministers or missionaries that have been the Lord's channels of blessing to many pastors' wives. *The Three Mrs. Judsons*, by Arabella Stuart, comes immediately to mind, as does Charles Ray's *Mrs. C. H. Spurgeon* and Elizabeth Dodd's interesting but less inspiring treatment of Jonathan Edwards's wife, Sarah, entitled *Marriage to a Difficult Man*. I should mention also Faith Cook's biographical sketches of Sarah Wesley in *Sound of Trumpets*, of Harriet Newell, Elizabeth Boston, and Martha Nelson in *Seeing the Invisible*, and of Susannah Spurgeon, Catherine Boston, and Margaret Baxter in *Singing in the Fire*. Mrs. Cook's treatments are factual, warmly anecdotal, and spiritually sensitive. Your wife will thank you many times over for putting them in her hands.

Another title that I wish were not now out of print is J. I. Packer's work on Richard Baxter's wife, Margaret (*A Grief Sanctified*). Packer draws largely from Baxter's own character study of his wife, penned lovingly after her death and published in 1681 under the title *A Breviate of the Life of Margaret*.

I first laid eyes on this moving tribute several years ago during a visit to Dr. Williams's Library on Red Cross Street in London. Daniel Williams, a wealthy 17th-century dissenting minister, made it his business to obtain and preserve the original copies of Puritan sermons, letters, books, and other historical papers

belonging to their authors. At his death this private collection was large and of great value. His will, therefore, provided for its being overseen by trustees in a public library to be funded out of his estate. Among the collection's remarkable holdings is Baxter's *Breviate*.

Having set aside an afternoon for researching at the library, I settled down into a chair with the life of Margaret Baxter and was immediately transported back into an era of bitter wars, merciless persecution, unavoidable sufferings of every sort, and uncommon faithfulness to Christ. The library did not then photocopy but allowed penciling (and only with pencils) notes. Those I brought back had to satisfy until last year, when my church utterly overwhelmed me with an anniversary gift of a number of first-edition works, among which was, *unbelievably*, a 1681 copy of the *Breviate*. Such things should be shared for the blessing of Christians everywhere. So especially for the inspiration of our wives, here is a brief introduction to Margaret Baxter (1636–81), the generous, determined, truly godly wife of Richard Baxter, 17th-century nonconformist pastor, author, and sufferer for Christ's cause.

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

A Newly Converted Bride

Barely 18, vain, addicted to romance novels and glittering clothes, Margaret Charlton could barely disguise her initial aversion to Richard Baxter's poor but earnest congregation when she and her widowed mother came to the town of Kidderminster, in England's shire of Worcester. She did, however, respect good ministers, and upon hearing a sermon on conversion at Oxford by Henry Hickman she began seriously praying, exchanged her romance novels for spiritual literature, and took to writing what she called *self-judging* papers.

"I have a spirit tending only to selfishness and sin," she confessed, "none more uncharitable, proud and

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ensorious than I. The flesh prevaieth with me against the Spirit.”

But Baxter’s searching preaching, combined with a respiratory illness that nearly took Margaret’s life, brought salvation. A lengthy testimony of thanksgiving for her physical and spiritual deliverances ends, “April 10. On Thursday night at twelve of the clock; a day and night never to be forgotten by the least of all God’s mercies, yea less than the least, Thy unworthy, unthankful, hard-hearted creature, M. Charlton.”

That same year (1660) saw Baxter moving away to London. Margaret was understandably deeply attached to her middle-aged pastor. To herself she wrote, “I have now cause of sorrow for parting with my dear friend, my father, my pastor. He is by Providence called away, and going a long journey. What the Lord will do with him, I cannot foresee. It may be he is preparing some great mercy for us and for his praise.”

Whether either she or Baxter suspected her growing affection is unclear. Their letters from this period are entirely occupied with her seeking and his giving pastoral counsel. But almost inevitably Margaret and her

rooms, to keep them as clean as their trenchers (wooden bowls and plates) and dishes, and so much ado about cleanliness and trifles, was a sinful eccentricity and expense of servants’ time, who might that while have been reading some good book. But she that was otherwise bred had somewhat other thoughts.

These are the things of which newlyweds’ “adjustments” are made! In time, however, Baxter realized that he was no fit judge of such things and left them all to her discretion.

Her Works Praise Her

Though initially misunderstanding of her attention to earthly affairs at home, Baxter delighted over his wife’s utter selflessness about material things. Margaret’s mother had left her daughter a comfortable inheritance, from which Baxter, in a prenuptial agreement, insisted he himself should have no benefit lest he be accused of marrying for money. Margaret consented. But all their married lives she looked out for the poor, so generously in fact, that occasionally she borrowed money in order to do charitable good. Not only did she feed and clothe the needy, but “if she could hire the poor to hear God’s Word . . . or to read good serious practical books . . . it answered her end and desire, and many an hundred books hath she given to those ends.” Baxter’s observation was that “she lived a far more contented life in our mean condition . . . than she would have done had I been a Bishop, and she had had many thousand pounds more at her dispose.”

In addition, Margaret used the income from her estate to furnish her husband with rooms in which to preach. Sometimes she rented them, oftentimes paid for their repairs, and sometimes paid to have them constructed. Her heart was also moved over the plight of poor, untaught children.

She set up a school to teach some poor children to read, and the Catechism freely; and thereby also relieved a poor, honest man that taught them, who hath a wife and many children, and no other maintenance of his own. And she would fain have set up more, had she had money. For this she begged awhile of her good friends, but they quickly gave over, and she paid him mostly of her own, six pounds a year, until her death.

In addition, after her husband’s ejection, Margaret opened their home to any who would come to be instructed by him. The impoverished, uneducated people responded by filling the largest room in the Baxters’ modest house, and Margaret loved to have it so. Her heart was set on their conversion. “She was earnestly desirous of the winning of souls, and of the utmost improvement of mine and other men’s labours to that end.” The poor people who helped her about

Margaret opened their home to any who would come to be instructed by him. The impoverished, uneducated people responded by filling the largest room in the Baxters’ modest house, and Margaret loved to have it so. Her heart was set on their conversion.

widowed mother followed their former pastor to London. Shortly thereafter Margaret’s mother died. That, combined with Baxter’s impending official ejection from the Church of England in the fall of 1662, so altered affairs for both of them that their marriage in September came almost as a matter of course, despite the yawning gap between their ages (he 47, she just 26). Until her death of breast cancer at 55, Margaret distinguished herself as a devout and domestically practical wife. Baxter testified, “We lived in inviolated love, and mutual complacency, sensible of the benefit of mutual help. These near nineteen years I know not that ever we had any breach in point of love, or point of interest.”

However, like most who have been bachelors for awhile, Baxter’s conception of proper household arrangements was undeveloped.

I had been bred among plain, lower-class people, and I thought that so much washing of stairs and

the house were a special burden.

She had an earnest desire of the conversion and salvation of her servants, and was greatly troubled that so many of them (though tolerable in their work) went away ignorant, or strange to true godliness as they came. And such as were truly converted with us she loved as children.

In Trials Oft

Marriage to a nonconformist minister was, at best, insecure. Most of the time it was a pinching trial. Yet Margaret “abhorred a worldly, mercenary mind in a minister of Christ, and was a sharp censurer of all that for gain, or honour, or worldly ends, would stretch their consciences to any thing that they thought God forbade.”

Perhaps the worst of it for a wife was that, like the vast majority of the ejected ministers of the last third of the 17th century, Baxter had no certain dwelling. Time and again they were forced to uproot. “She easily bare it all,” her grateful husband testified. Once, when “I was carried to the common jail for teaching,” he wrote, “she cheerfully went with me into prison; she brought her best bed thither and did much to remove the removeable inconveniences of the prison. I think she had scarce ever a pleasanter time in her life than while she was with me there.”

On another occasion they could not find even the smallest place of their own in which to live. Baxter recalled,

We could have no house but part of a poor farmer’s, where the chimneys so extremely smoked as greatly annoyed her health; for it was a very hard winter, and the coal smoke so filled the room that we were all day sat in that it was as a cloud, and we were even suffocated with the stink. And she had ever a great straitness of the lungs that could not bear smoke or closeness. This was the greatest bodily suffering that her outward condition put her to.

This was just the half of it. There were also cruel fines that robbed the poor ministers of what little goods they possessed. Margaret was equal to it all. “When warrants were out to distrain of my goods for fines for my preaching, she did without any repining encourage me to undergo the loss.” Thus, her own meager household utensils, furnishings, furniture and whatnot she let go. But her husband’s precious books were another thing. These “she did herself take the trouble of removing and hiding awhile.” Subsequently, these losses counted so little to her that her husband testified that “if she did but think I had the least fear, or self-saving by fleshly wisdom, in shrinking from my undertaken work, it was so great a trouble to her that she could not hide it (who could too much hide many others).”

Warts and All

Magnifying God’s grace in his wife’s life meant writing candidly of her imperfections. Two in particular were a special concern to Baxter. Temperamentally, Margaret was “of too timorous and tender a nature.” By this Baxter was referring to what he called her “diseased fearfulness.” It was the “great infirmity which tyrannized over her . . . against which she had little more free will or power” than a man against an illness. “Anything that had suddenness, noise, or fierceness in it” upset her—like the slamming of a door, a violent argument, bad news, or the threat of illness.

There were, to be sure, reasons for Margaret’s acute apprehensions. Nearly her entire life was shot through by calamity. Her home had been stormed by soldiers while she was just a girl. They plundered it all, set part of it on fire, killed some of the household, and then stripped the very clothing from those they spared. The sickness that nearly took her life before conversion remained a dreaded shadow. Then there had been fires near her lodgings, a near collapse of the floor of an upper gallery under the great weight of people while

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Baxter was preaching on one occasion, the friendless state in which she was left after her mother’s death, the plague of 1664–65, the great fire of 1666, and her husband’s constant illnesses. She was also afflicted with dreams of fires and murders. Small wonder, given her times.

For our encouragement and learning, this natural timidity displays that Margaret’s fearlessness before persecution was not simply the courage of a bold spirit. It was, Baxter wrote, “an evidence of the power of grace that so timorous a person . . . was more fearless of persecution, imprisonment, or losses and poverty thereby, than I or any that I remember to have known.”

Margaret’s other conspicuous fault was her expectation that the revered minister which she had married should be sinlessly perfect—well, nearly so!

Oft I told her that I never understood Solomon’s words, Ecclesiastes 7:16, but by the exposition of

her case—Be not righteous overmuch. . . . The nature of true religion, holiness, obedience, and all duty to God and man was printed in her conceptions, in so distinct and clear a character as made her endeavors and expectations constantly to look at greater exactness than I and such as I could reach. She was very desirous that we should all have lived in a constancy of devotion and a blameless innocence . . . for I was apt to be over-careless in my speech and too backward in my duty, and she was always endeavoring to bring me to greater wariness and strictness in both. If I spoke rashly or sharply, it offended her; if I behaved (as I was apt) with too much neglect of ceremony or humble compliment to any, she would modestly tell me of it; if my very looks seemed not pleasant, she would have me amend them . . . if I forgot any week to catechize my servants and familiarly instruct them personally (besides my ordinary family duties), she was troubled at my remissness.

Her way was to oblige them by all the love, kindness, and bounty that she was able, and to bear with them year after year while there was hope, and at last not to desert them, but still use them so as she thought was most likely at least to keep them in a state of hope.

Baxter was not complaining. Quite the opposite. In fact, after her death it troubled him that he had often quoted to her that verse about being “not righteous overmuch.” He even reproached himself that he was “seldomer in secret prayer” with his wife “than she desired,” even though it was due, in large part, to the fact that he was so often confined to bed in illness that “writings, preachings and other public duty did wholly take up those few hours of the day when I had out of my bed.”

Margaret, no doubt, pushed her husband harder than was fitting. Baxter wrote, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, that through her marriage to him she learned that “grace doth stand with more faultiness than she had imagined.” And yet, Baxter admitted (no doubt from conscience that consented to all that she

required), “even in this respect she was the meekest helper that I could have had in the world (that ever I was acquainted with).” And, interestingly, she was surprisingly long-suffering with others, especially those upon whom her husband found it necessary to practice church discipline.


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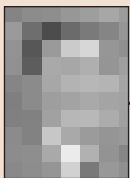
Weary and Worn

Her husband’s troubles, care of the poor, and conscientious life all cost Margaret dearly. She consoled herself, however, with the thought that “if she was but in a condition in which God’s service was costly to her, it would make her know whether she were sincere or not.” But looking back after her final illness, Baxter reflected that perhaps her conscientious intensity contributed to her untimely death. “She set her head and heart so intensely upon doing good that her head and body would hardly bear it. Her knife was too keen,” he observed, “and cut the sheath.”

All her life Margaret had suffered from migraines two or three days out of every two weeks. In addition, she labored under a chronic respiratory inflammation. For several years she complained of pain in one of her breasts, a symptom she took to be the evidence of cancer. Various home remedies (a spoonful of powdered ginger every morning, a strict diet of thin chocolate milk and a little bit of meat, and tincture of amber) did little to relieve her. In fact, the amber, Baxter suspected, was what threw her into a delirium from which she never quite recovered. Though physicians did all within their power, Margaret grew increasingly ill over a 12-day period beginning June 3, 1681. Right to the end she desired her faithful pastor—now husband of so many eventful years—to pray and read or sing various Psalms to her. The last words that she spoke were, “My God, help me! Lord, have mercy upon me!”

“She near nineteen years lived with me,” Baxter wrote, “a cheerful, wise, and a very useful life, in constant love and peace and concord, excepting our differing opinions about trivial occurrences, or our disputing or differing mode of talk.”

The grieving spouse, now aged 66, buried his wife’s beloved form in the ruins of Christ’s Church (seriously damaged by the great fire) in her own mother’s grave. Ten years later Baxter followed her into the Lord’s presence. A great company of grieving ministers and friends tenderly laid his remains to rest next his wife’s in the damaged chancel of Christ Church. No trace of the graves remains today, a busy street having been paved right over them. But thanks to her husband’s affectionate printed tribute, Margaret’s works still praise her. 



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Bring . . . the Books

Caring for the Flock of God—The Life and Ministry of Andrew Bonar

Many biographies of well-known pastors of yesteryear yield great spiritual treasure and provide personal spiritual stimulus. The little-known biography of Andrew Bonar subtitled *The Good Pastor* proved to be yet another repository of great blessing. Written in 1895 by his daughter, Marjory Bonar, this work was reprinted in 1999 by Ambassador Press.

Bonar was born to Christian parents in Edinburgh in 1810. He lost his father at age 11 and as a result developed a lifelong deep bond with his older brothers. He came to know Christ at the age of 20, shortly before beginning his theological training. His first pastorate was in the little village of Collace where he ministered for 18 years. He was instrumental in the great Revival of 1839–40, and shortly after this time of spiritual renewal he, along with 400 other worthy pastors, separated from the Established Church of Scotland to form the Free Church in the great Disruption of 1843. He married in 1848 and fathered five children. Mrs. Bonar died in 1864 leaving him to raise his children alone—he never remarried. In 1856 he left his little flock in Collace and assumed the pastorate of a larger ministry in Glasgow where he remained until his “jubilee” in 1888. He ministered with Moody in the Northfield conferences held near Chicago when he was well into his 70s. Bonar died peacefully in his sleep on December 30, 1892, at 82 years of age.

Bonar is as well-known for his writing ability as for his preaching and pastoral ministry. He wrote a commentary on Leviticus and a smaller work titled *Christ and His Church in the Book of Psalms* both of which were highly commended by his London contemporary, C. H. Spurgeon. Bonar is best known, however, for his biography of the life and ministry of his best friend, Robert Murray M’Cheyne. So powerful was this work that scores of people over the years have come to a saving knowledge of the Lord as a result of reading it. Many of them made their conversion known to Bonar during his lifetime.

Bonar’s true call and chief love was the pastorate. When he arrived at his first church in Collace, there were six believing families in the whole parish. After almost two decades under his ministry, Collace had been deeply stirred by God. One villager gave this testimony at Bonar’s Jubilee in 1888: “When you came among us in 1839, Collace, as regards spiritual life, was comparatively a desert. When you left, it was like a watered garden—a field that the Lord has blessed. The effects of your faithful testimony remain to this day, both in living souls and in the social and religious habits of the people.”

As Bonar’s fame expanded, he was constantly barraged with calls to larger and more influential works. His

responses to such invitations reveal his great love for the small and obscure place where God had placed him. His resolute disinterest in ministerial wandering is refreshingly different from that of many modern ministers. It is no surprise that his ministry was both deep and lasting.

One is not surprised to learn that Bonar, as a minister of the Free Church, practiced infant baptism. Nevertheless, he used these occasions to remind the parents of the urgency of their responsibility to bring their child to a saving knowledge of Christ. “Remember, parents, to tell your children that on the day of baptism they were presented to the Three Persons, and the water was meant to be a sign and seal that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit offered salvation to them. Ask them, have you accepted the gift offered?” He added on another occasion, “How solemn it is for you to look on that child and wonder, ‘will that head ever wear a crown of glory? And will these lips ever sing His praises? And will these eyes ever see the King in his beauty?’”

As the moderator of the Free Church in 1878, Bonar gave his assessment of the generation that followed him.

We need not be very much surprised that those young “sons of the prophets” are rather prone to question the positive conclusions of older men. . . . There were schools, if not colleges at Bethel and Jericho: and you may remember how the youthful disciples there, not satisfied in regard to Elijah’s translation, insisted that fifty of the best and most gifted of their number should go and search hill and valley for themselves. Again and again did the prophet assure them that it would prove only a waste of time and labor; and when at length he yielded and they went forth with all the confidence of youth, how did it end? They came back to report that the old prophet was right after all. No doubt he smiled with mild satisfaction as he reminded them, “Did I not say unto you, Go not!”

“See,” Bonar said, “that your last days are your best days.” One of the last entries in his diary was as follows, “I have been thinking tonight that perhaps my next great undertaking may be this: appearing at the judgment seat of Christ, when I give an account of my trading with my talents.” That day came on December 30, 1892, when, if historical appearances count for anything, he most certainly heard “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

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

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

“When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept” (John 11:33–35).

In this passage John presents the response of Jesus Christ to the anguish of human sorrow. His friend Lazarus had died. Christ arrived in Bethany four days later while the mourning of family and friends was still going on. After an extended conversation with Martha along the roadside about resurrection, Christ awaited the arrival of Mary. Although Mary’s initial words to Him (v. 32) are virtually identical to Martha’s first statement (v. 21), Christ’s response was quite different. As verse 33 indicates, the sight of Mary weeping with uncontrollable grief (along with the weeping of the Jews who followed her) provoked a highly unusual and somewhat surprising emotional reaction from Christ.

John portrays that reaction with three verbs: Christ “groaned,” “was troubled,” and “wept.” The last is both the most familiar and the least troublesome. It is understandable that Christ would weep in sympathy when others weep. Indeed, He wept on at least one other occasion (Luke 19:41–44). The other two verbs, however, go beyond mere sympathy and seem to attribute to Christ elements of weakness, distress, and even helplessness. Is it possible that the Son of God was so moved by the profound expression of grief that He was overcome with emotion and joined in the loud, bitter wailing of public mourning? Did He fall victim to the confusion and sorrow of the moment, momentarily losing control of His emotions and giving way to despair Himself? Surely such suggestions are incompatible with what we know about our Savior, but how can we reconcile these puzzling descriptions with Christ’s usual calm control in every circumstance?


The key to understanding this problem is a closer look at the words themselves. The first verb (“groaned”) translates a form of the Greek word *embrimaomai*, a strong term that elsewhere consistently conveys anger, indignation, or outrage. In some extrabiblical literature it is even used for the snorting of a horse about to charge into battle. In John 11, however, there does not seem to be any audible sound associated with Christ’s anger. The phrase “in the spirit” (dative of sphere) indicates that something happened internally (that is, within Himself). Rather than experiencing anything like weakness or fear, Christ became enraged (ingressive aorist). But what prompted this sudden wrath? Certainly He was not angry with Mary and her friends. Their faith was lacking, but indignation toward bereaved mourners in their time of grief is unthinkable. A more like-

ly object of Christ’s rage is the cause of their deep sorrow: sin, death, and ultimately Satan himself, who was “a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44). Christ was filled with anger that these terrible enemies had brought such pain and loss to those He loved.

This leads us to the next verb in verse 33: Christ “was troubled” (literally, He troubled or agitated Himself). This is not something that happened to Christ, but something He did as a result of His rage (the Greek verb is active, not passive). Rather than indicating an additional emotional experience, this word describes a firm resolve to do something. Having seen firsthand the devastation caused by sin, Christ stirred Himself to action. The enemy has had his way long enough. Christ uttered His next words (“Where have ye laid him?”) with a voice not weakened by despair but strengthened with a fierce determination to engage the enemy in battle.

This brings us to the third verb, which reveals that while He marched toward the battleground, “Jesus wept.” Here again the vocabulary word is significant. Mary and the other mourners are also said to weep, but they were wailing with loud sobs over an extended period of time (present tense of *klaio*). John uses a different word to portray Christ’s weeping (*dakruo*), which simply means to shed tears. Christ did not stop along the road to participate in their mourning with sobs and bitter cries. For Him, mourning would have been entirely inappropriate, especially since He already knew Lazarus’ death would be temporary. Instead, filled with rage as He marched toward the tomb, tears trickled down His cheeks. The Jews were correct to conclude that the tears pointed to His love for Lazarus (and his family). John, however, tells us that as Christ approached the tomb He was once again “groaning in himself.” That is, the same wrath that earlier had moved Christ to action was still the driving force leading Him to battle and on to victory.

Rather than portraying weakness and distress, John presents Christ as confident, powerful, and in full control of both His emotions and the situation. B. B. Warfield provides an excellent summary (*The Person and Work of Christ*, p. 117):

Tears of sympathy may fill his eyes, but this is incidental. His soul is held by rage: and he advances to the tomb, in Calvin’s words again, “as a champion who prepares for conflict.” The raising of Lazarus thus becomes, not an isolated marvel, but . . . a decisive instance and open symbol of Jesus’ conquest of death and hell. What John does for us in this particular statement is to uncover to us the heart of Jesus, as he wins for us our salvation. Not in cold unconcern, but in flaming wrath against the foe, Jesus smites in our behalf. 

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

When one enters the Christian life through belief and trust in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior, he also enters into the arena of conflict and competition. The Christian life is by its nature competitive. The old life prior to conversion has been shed, and the believer now stands on God's side, prepared for conflict. Our opponent is Satan, who ever stands as a "roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8) and his army of fallen angels. The apostle Paul describes the nature of this conflict in Ephesians 6:10–12.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Competition, or the lack of it, is not a choice for the believer. In various aspects of life, we choose to compete or not compete; but not so in a life lived in Christ. The forces of competition are there every day, and the believer, to be successful and victorious, has no choice but to compete at the highest spiritual level.

David was but a lad when the giant Goliath, the hero of the Philistines, defied the God of Israel and challenged any Israelite to fight him. David took up the challenge, slew the giant, and brought victory to the people of God. Victory came when David accepted the challenge of competition.

Believers too have "Goliaths" that challenge them every day—adversities, heartaches, discouragement, physical suffering, and opposition from an ungodly world. All of these test our wills to meet them head-on and compete for victory.

Dr. Bob Jones Sr. used to say, "The test of your character is what it takes to stop you." This is a statement of success in competitively meeting life's challenges head-on.

The Reformer Martin Luther, who led the revolt against the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the 16th century, knew the rigors of conflict and competition. He courageously nailed the 95 theses of protest on the door of Wittenberg Church, and before his trial at the Diet of Worms refused to recant his beliefs based on *sola scriptura*.

The competitive spirit of Luther led to a sweeping revolt against the heresies of Rome and ushered in the Protestant Reformation.

Vince Lombardi was coach of the Green Bay Packers in the 1960s. During Lombardi's coaching tenure in Green Bay, the Packers won the Super Bowl twice and reached the elite status of professional football. Lombardi was known for his tough competitive spirit

that produced a winning football team. He not only knew how to coach, but he knew also how to inspire his players on the gridiron. His adherence to toughness and the work ethic were the hallmarks of his success. Here are several of his famous maxims:

The harder you work, the harder it is to surrender.

Success demands singleness of purpose.

The will to excel and the will to win, they endure.

How does one achieve success in battle? I believe it is essential that battles are won primarily in the hearts of men. Men respond to leadership in a most remarkable way, and once you have won the heart, they will follow you anywhere.

Andrew Jackson, the seventh president of the United States, was a strong competitor in war and in his presidency. The story is told that the boyhood friends of Jackson could not understand how he became a famous general and president of the United States, while others with greater talent never succeeded. Said one, "Why, Jim Brown, who lived right down the pike from Andy, not only was smart, but could throw Andy three times out of four—but look where Andy is now."

Responded another, "How did there happen to be a fourth time? Usually, it is three times and out, isn't it?"

"Sure, but not so with Andy. He would never admit he was beat. He would never stay throwed. So, by and by, Jim Brown would get tired, and the fourth time Andrew Jackson would throw him, and be the victor."

The moral of this account is, no matter how many times you are throwed *don't stay throwed!* Sometimes, the Devil "decks" believers to put us out of commission or cause us to quit. God wants us to get off the deck and go on serving Christ. If Satan throws you, *don't stay throwed*.

Competition is not always winning, but it is always competing. Competition is not failure, but failure to compete is failure. Babe Ruth struck out 1,330 times, a record of futility unapproached by any other player in the history of baseball; but that is not what we remember about Babe Ruth. His 714 home runs completely obliterate the 1,330 strikeouts. He failed often as a batter, but he stands alone in baseball immortality. Failure to Babe Ruth was only a stepping-stone to the successes he achieved on the baseball diamond.

The WW II years of 1941–45 brought our nation into conflict with the Nazis of Germany. Western civilization and our way of life were threatened by the dreams of

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

Charles Spurgeon

world conquest of Adolf Hitler. Ironically, the inspiration for victory received by all the Allies was from the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, who said,

If you will not fight for right when you can easily win without bloodshed, if you will not fight when your victory will be sure and not too costly, you may come to the moment when you will have to fight with all the odds against you, and only a precarious chance of survival. There may be even a worse fate. You may have to fight when there is no hope of victory, because it is better to perish than to live as slaves.

C. T. Studd of Scotland was captain of the English cricket team and an all-England cricketer. He was a fierce competitor. He became one of the most used of God's missionaries in the early 1900s. He opened the Congo to the gospel and had thousands of converts. C. T. Studd said,

I cannot tell you what joy it gave me to bring the first soul to the Lord Jesus Christ. I have tasted almost all the pleasures that this world can give. I do not suppose that there is one I have not experienced, but I can tell you pleasures were nothing compared to the joy that the saving of that one soul gave me. Formerly, I had as much love for cricket as any man could have, but when the Lord came into my heart, I found I had something infinitely better than cricket. My heart was no longer in the game. I wanted to win souls for the Lord.

Cricket had been Studd's life, but now Christ was his life. The energy and competitive nature that caused him to excel in cricket were now turned to blazing trails for Christ in the far distant mission fields. God does not call every athlete who is saved into His work, but many are called. One reason is the competitive spirit they have developed in athletics; the desire to go into conflict and bear the scars of battle; the determination to "stay the course," never surrendering when the odds of winning are against them. These traits were certainly exemplified in the life of the missionary evangelist C. T. Studd.

When a believer steps out for Christ to live a life dedicated to Him, there is only one direction to pursue, and that is forward. All bridges are burned behind him as he begins the trek of a Christ-centered life. There is no turning back. This is the nature of the new life in Christ. The following illustration is from the life of the emperor Napoleon Bonaparte.

The day was done for the troops of Napoleon. The general called for his little bugle boy as his army faced annihilation. The emperor said, "Boy, go up there on that yonder hill and blow 'retreat.'" "Sir," said the boy, "I don't know how to blow 'retreat.'"

Said Napoleon, "Son, our army is doomed unless we retreat." So the boy went up, but he didn't know how to blow 'retreat'; and so, he blew CHARGE! CHARGE! CHARGE! That army heard, roused themselves, and turned retreat into victory.

Imminent defeat in the life of the believer in Christ is often turned into victory by godly perseverance and undeterred faith.

Though the nature of the Christian life is competitive, the undergirding strength is the character of Christ in the life of the believer. Though the conflict may be fierce, we must engage in the conflict in the gentleness of Christ. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient" (2 Tim. 2:24).

This truth is illustrated in the book *Wooden: A Lifetime of Observations On and Off the Court*. Coach John Wooden won ten championships in basketball at UCLA from 1964–75. John Wooden was raised in a Bible-reading Christian home in Martinsville, Indiana. His life was centered on three criteria: family, values, and virtue. Coach Wooden said concerning gentleness, "There is nothing stronger than gentleness." He gave the following true-to-life illustration:

My dad, Joshua Wooden, was a strong man in one sense, but a gentle man. While he could lift heavy things men half his age couldn't lift, he would also read poetry to us each night after a day working in the fields raising corn, hay, wheat, tomatoes, and watermelons. We had a team of mules named Jack and Kate on our farm. "Kate" would often get stubborn and lie down on me when I was plowing. I couldn't get her up no matter how roughly I treated her. Dad would see my predicament and walk across the field until he was close enough to say, 'Kate.' Then she would get up and start working again. He never touched her in anger. It took me a long time to understand that even a stubborn mule responds to gentleness.

The apostle Paul was knowledgeable of the ancient Greek Olympics, as in Scripture he describes competition in the Christian life to the Olympic Games: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they [the athletes] do it to obtain a corruptible crown [garland]; but we an incorruptible" (1 Cor. 9:24, 25).

Paul did run the race for Christ, and he ran well. At the conclusion of his life, Paul gives to us the finality of this race in 2 Timothy 4:6, 7: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course (race), I have kept the faith."

It is incumbent upon believers today to offer themselves to God on the altar of sacrifice, to run the race for God, and to keep strong in the faith. Through adversity and conflict will emerge a life well lived and a crown well won. ☞

Dr. Walter Kirk, past Southeast Regional Moderator of the FBFI and cofounder of Baptist Home Missions, Inc., in Efland, North Carolina, is pastor of University Baptist Church in Durham, North Carolina.



Thirteen Answers

Gil Fremont

How should Christian leaders relate to secular leaders?

Chuck Colson wrote in *Kingdoms in Conflict* about his days in the Nixon White House and described how easy it was to manipulate conservative religious leaders by inviting them to meet with the president, then stroking them with vague promises and reassurances. It was a sure way to get the support of conservative churches. A leading evangelist was asked in a 1995 interview why he did

not point out offenses against God to a president to whom he had access. He replied that God had not called him to deal with those issues, but to preach the gospel and offer prayer support.

Many Christians feel betrayed by these men who seem to have traded the prophet's mission for worldly prestige, but none of this is new. Second Chronicles 18 records a similar situation. The nation of Israel was ruled by wicked king Ahab, who wanted to wage a war but needed the cooperation and material assistance of Jehoshaphat, the

godly ruler of Judah. Jehoshaphat came to Samaria, and committed himself and the lives of his soldiers to help Ahab even after a dramatic warning by a true prophet of God. Jehoshaphat ignored the warning and nearly died. Ahab ignored the warning and actually died.

There are three types of religious character represented in this story: the ungodly man, the compromised man, and the godly man. Each of these men made decisions on the basis of his character, and each man's character holds lessons for us today.

Ahab almost seems a caricature of the ungodly man, but we know he was a real, flesh-and-blood, historical king. He shows us how calloused, self-centered, and illogical the unregenerate heart can be. In the history before 2 Chronicles 18, we find that Ahab was a whiner (1 Kings 21:4-6), that he was covetous (1 Kings 21:1-4), that he blamed others for the consequences of his own actions (1 Kings 18:17, 18), that he was dominated by his wife (1 Kings 21:25), that he was willing to do anything to get his desires (1 Kings 21:1-16), that he was foolish in foreign affairs (1 Kings 20:31-43), that he was resentful of people who tried to rebuke him (1 Kings 21:20), and that he was sold on doing evil (1 Kings 21: 20, 25, 26).

In this story we find him intent to involve his country in an unnecessary war and to get the endorsement and assistance of a conservative religious leader. He used flattery and lavish attention to make Jehoshaphat feel wanted and needed. He had a staff that was skilled in propaganda and communication, arrogant in self-anointed authority (2 Chron. 18:5, 9-11, 23). As Ahab listened to his 400 false prophets telling him what he wanted to hear, he was fully aware that they were lying. When Micaiah repeated their false counsel Ahab was angered at the mockery but knew the truth. His personal enmity toward Elijah (1 Kings 21:20) was directed toward Micaiah. By silencing the messenger, he hoped to ignore the message.

By threatening the prophet, he seems to have hoped that the prophet would recant and change by his own power Ahab's doom (2 Chron. 18:25, 26). That same wrong-headedness is seen in the reactions of unsaved politicians today and in the liberal media's hysterical misrepresentations of the statements of Christian leaders. They

want the prophet of God to protect them from the judgment of God for what they have already decided to do.

Ahab rightly accused Micaiah of being negative (2 Chron. 18:17). God Himself had sent the lying spirit to deceive Ahab, and decreed that the spirit would succeed. God caused the king's deception because He intended to destroy him. Ahab was so blinded that even when Micaiah explained the God-given deception, he still rushed headlong to judgment. When threatening failed to change the words of the prophet, Ahab tried to outsmart God by dressing as a common soldier and putting

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Jehoshaphat out front as a decoy, counting on the compromised Jehoshaphat's astounding lack of discernment. But Ahab was unable to thwart God's judgment as it came on the point of an arrow shot at random.

We wonder that God waited so long to bring Ahab low, even showing mercy on him at one point for halfhearted repentance (1 Kings 21:27–29). Ahab was truly a wicked man bound for destruction. That is a hard thing for 21st-century America to grasp with its ingrained optimism and liberal indoctrination about the goodness of man. Bible believers say they don't accept that view of man, but the difficulty compromised evangelicals have in recognizing the committed hostility of those in public life suggests that many do. Just as there are ungodly men, there are compromised men like Jehoshaphat, the inscrutable dupe.

He had a record of righteousness, and the first verse in 2 Chronicles 18 tells us that he had "riches and honour in abundance." In other words, he had no needs and everyone's admiration. From our perspective, it is difficult to understand what motivated him to agree to risk his life for a rascal who openly intended to use him. Jehoshaphat had nothing to gain and nearly everything to lose, but after being invited to dine at the capital (the Samaritan equivalent of the White House) with the top politician, he practically gave his soul in gratitude for that attention. Jehoshaphat just seemed to be getting in the way of God's judgment, like a tourist wandering into a nuclear test site.

The most baffling thing about his decision to cooperate with God's enemy is that he agreed to dress as a decoy for a man targeted for death by the omnipotent God even after hearing the true prophet's message of doom.

Perhaps he saw it as a witnessing opportunity? His initial request that Ahab seek God's guidance (2 Chron. 18:6) would have been a good start if he had followed through, demanding that Ahab be accountable to God's Word, or staunchly defending Micaiah. But he seemed more concerned about offending the ungodly than he was about defending God's servant. He watched the righteous stand alone, and still allied himself with God's enemy.

Was Jehoshaphat a good man? In some ways he was. God commended him for leading the people of Judah to righteousness. But in 19:1–3, God sent a prophet to Jehoshaphat to say that God's wrath rested on him for his part in trying to help Ahab. The lesson is clear: it is possible for a highly respected, godly leader to be dead wrong in his associations and political dealings. Even someone worthy to be commended for all time in God's Word, someone who led in national revival, was not above a rebuke for sinful foolishness, for putting the feelings of

the wicked above the Word of the Lord. The compromised man will become an ungodly man.

What about Micaiah, the truly godly man? His kind will make enemies just by being honest, and he may suffer physically for it (2 Chron. 26). Pastors in San Francisco have seen the wrath of the ungodly directed against their families and churches because of their open opposition to homosexuality. Certain pro-lifers have been jailed simply for showing politicians the "blobs of tissue" killed by abortion.

Jesus said, "Woe to you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets."

Preachers still seek to avoid the ill treatment promised by the apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:12: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." They avoid the whole counsel of God, treading lightly around the sins of those they hope to influence. Micaiah was counted by Ahab as a personal enemy with a negative message. We find him grimly promising that he'll say what God says, then suddenly saying what Ahab wants to hear. Perhaps he was so thoroughly disgusted with what he had seen that he resorted to sarcasm. In any case, Ahab instantly recognized Micaiah's words (the very same words he had just eagerly accepted from the 400 false prophets) as false prophecy, and angrily demanded the truth. So Micaiah gave him the unvarnished truth, and Ahab got

angry. So did Zedekiah, the false prophet, who struck Micaiah and rebuked him for daring to say he actually spoke for God. What a great example of the contemporary liberal clergy's attitude toward the man who dares to say, "Thus saith the Lord!"

Can you imagine Micaiah's frustration? He was ordered to prophesy, but warned to be nice, then attacked for lying and ordered to be truthful, then condemned to death for the truth! What then should a godly preacher say to a godless politician? Whatever God says. No platitudes, no prayer for God's blessing on the designs of the wicked, but the cold, hard truth of God's judgment on the sins of the political leader to whom he has access. That's the clear lesson from God.

Ahab went to his inescapable doom. Micaiah went back to prison for the sake of God's Word. And what about Jehoshaphat? He was left with riches and honor in abundance, but for his compromise with the ungodly, for his silence in the face of sin, God's wrath remained on his head. And that is what remains on any man of God who neglects the opportunity to rebuke wickedness wherever it may be found.

Gil Fremont teaches at Bob Jones Junior High in Greenville, South Carolina.

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Stones of Witness, by Dr. Stewart Custer
236 pages, full color, \$49.95, BJU Press
Reviewed by John C. Vaughn

In recent years, due to the disruption of war and violence, it has become almost impossible to tour the Holy Land and gain the benefit of seeing first hand the many sights that bring the Bible to life. Those who have had the privilege of such a tour know the blessing of having a mental picture of the land as you read the Bible. But, now there is a wonderful resource for personal and church use that will provide an armchair tour without the danger.

Dr. Stewart Custer, longtime chairman of the Division of Bible at Bob Jones University and currently the pastor of Trinity Bible Church in Greer, South Carolina, whose other works include *A Treasury of New Testament Synonyms*, *Tools for Preaching and Teaching the Bible*, *The Stars Speak: Astronomy in the Bible*, and *Witness to Christ: A Commentary on Acts*, has completed a new book, *Stones of Witness* that is a "must have." This heavy, hardback book is a tour of the Bible Lands in a binding.

The brief commentary that identifies the pictures is enlightening and entertaining. You are literally taken on a tour through 635 color photographs arranged in sections

and identified by map segments. It is more than a perfect coffee-table book for the Christian home. Those who have taken a tour of Israel will find it far more convenient when talking to friends or family about your trip than photo albums, trays of slides, or (as is the case with many of us) the boxes of disorganized photos and trinkets. Those who have not, or may never take a tour of Israel and surrounding areas, will enjoy this book far more than the atlases you may have seen.

It would make a useful Sunday school study or reference work for the pastor. It comes at a hefty price, but it is worth every penny. It would make a perfect gift for your pastor or teacher. A bonus that will allow groups of any size to share the wonders of the Holy Land in a fellowship, classroom, or auditorium is a companion interactive CD-ROM with all 635 photos! You will treasure this book.

You may, at first, marvel at the outstanding quality of the photography. But if you know the author, as you continue through the book you will find yourself nodding and smiling with the realization, "Well, of course he would be a great photographer." Maybe you have heard a story told about Dr. Custer. When asked if there was anything he couldn't do, he replied, "Well, I don't sew very well." Don't believe it. As a tentmaker, Paul could. Dr. Custer probably can too.



*Jesus Christ, the ultimate Servant, made Himself of no reputation.
Kneeling as a slave before house guests,
He "poureth water into a bason,
and began to wash the disciples' feet,
and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded" (John 13:5).*

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The greatness of a man's power is the measure of his surrender. —William Booth

If there were universal salvation, there would be universal repentance. —John Duncan

My neighbor is such a hypochondriac that he filled his waterbed with chicken soup. —Unknown

Conceal a flaw, and the world will imagine the worst. —Martial

To teach is to learn twice. —Joseph Joubert

Without a shepherd, sheep are not a flock. —Russian proverb

There are many that hover about the palace, and yet do not speak with the Prince. —Thomas Manton

Tact is the ability to describe others as they see themselves. —Abraham Lincoln

All you are unable to give possesses you. —Andre Gide

When liberty destroys order, the hunger for order will destroy liberty. —Will Durant

Peace won by compromise is usually a short-lived achievement. —Winfield Scott

Miracles serve not to convert, but to condemn. —Blaise Pascal

The manna which the children of Israel kept till morning bred worms and stank: idle grace would soon become active corruption. —Charles Spurgeon

Our help is in the name of the Lord, but our fears are in the name of man. —William Greenhill

He that lives to forever, never fears dying. —William Penn

Television is an invention that permits you to be entertained in your living room by people you wouldn't have in your home. —David Frost

The income tax has made more liars out of the American people than golf has. —Will Rogers

Nothing is so permanent as a temporary government program. —Milton Friedman

We are so tolerant that, increasingly, we cannot tolerate any views that challenge our tolerance. —Michael Kelly

Trouble is only opportunity in work clothes. —Henry J. Kaiser

Moderation in war is imbecility. —Admiral John Fisher

Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents which, in prosperous circumstances, would have lain dormant. —Horace



I SAID I WAS A SEMINARIAN,
NOT A VEGETARIAN.

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

A-Maizing Thoughts

Mary Lynn Bushong

There is a quality to the air in the south after a thunderstorm. The humidity wraps you like a warm, damp blanket, stifling any and all inclination to work. We had such a day recently, and I was prepared to stay in my cool air-conditioned home until . . . until my youngest son David rushed into the house huffing and puffing.

"Mom," he gasped, "a bunch of your corn has been knocked down in the garden!"

I groaned inwardly and hauled myself out of my chair. I'd better go and inspect the damage. I come from a long line of gardeners and farmers. It's an interest fostered and encouraged by my parents, which I try to pass along to my own kids.

The wall of heat and moisture buffeted me as soon as I stepped out the door. Looking over at the garden patch I could see a whole row of five-foot-tall stalks lying on the ground. They were not yet in tassel but would be soon. If it were just that row, it wouldn't be too bad, I thought. The further I walked though, the more fallen sections I saw and the more discouraged I became. Fully one-quarter of my plants were lying flat on the ground. The only thing left to do, was to get in there and start picking them up again.

I slowly worked my way down the rows, lifting each stalk and propping it in place with more soil before moving on to the next one. It was hot and wet there and soon my glasses were splattered with sweat, yet it was a good time to think. It occurred to me that when storms come into our lives, some people are knocked flat while others seem unfazed. If left where it is, the corn will try to pick itself up, but the stem is left low and twisted. But when I picked them up and propped them in place, the stems stayed straight.

When people try to depend on themselves to fix their problems, they are like the corn left by itself. They might be able to straighten up somewhat, but they never yield the same fruit, and their lives are more strongly influenced by the fall than anything else. If they allowed God to prop them up again so they rested in His strength, their lives would remain straight and they would bear good fruit.

The bent stalks didn't just affect their own fruit, but also the fruit of the plants around them. If the

stalks were not able to straighten up, the pollen from the tassels would be too close to the ground and could not help to pollinate the rest of the crop. So many times, people allow themselves to do wrong, thinking that they won't affect anyone else around them. But like the sweet corn, everything they do or don't do affects all those around them.

As I slowly worked up and down the rows, I was amazed at the patterns of fallen plants. The row would all be tall and straight, then one or two would be fallen over. The strong plants around them could be used to hold them steady after they were propped. Stronger Christians can help those in difficulty the same way. Many times the Lord brings people to mind or puts them in our path. Maybe we are to minister to them, maybe they are to minister to us. Many times it is a combination of the two.

It occurred to me that thinking about the analogies between corn and people might be one of the reasons God had allowed the corn to be flattened in the first place. If I were in the house where I was comfortable, most of this would never have come to mind. I would have missed a time of sweet communion that has since given me much food for thought. What started out as work became a time when I considered how everyday things can reflect our relationship with Him. I have wondered since if that is the reason God allows trials to come into our lives. They may be for just a moment or they might last longer. Perhaps He wants to get our attention, to change our thoughts from complaining about circumstances to delighting in His will.

You can't tell before a storm which part of a field will be flattened. It's the same with people. We don't know when our lives will suddenly spiral out of our control, but we can trust God always to have things in His control. He goes through the garden of our lives, propping us up if we will let Him, and giving us opportunities to grow a stronger root system of faith in Him, bearing fruit in our Christian lives and being a blessing to those around us.

We truly have an a-maizing God!

Mary Lynn Bushong is a freelance writer living in Greer, South Carolina.

Stickability

Phil Shuler

Not only was my father a great preacher of a large downtown church in Los Angeles, but he also was a country farmer of Southern origin who loved to coin new words that reflected his early childhood. One of those words was *stickability*—the ability to stay with a thing until you finally get it right. Dad not only used the term—he was the personification of it. He stuck to a thing until he got it done.

As I travel from church to church in my 54th year of evangelism, I have noticed that the progressive churches, the ones that are growing, are the churches whose pastors have been there 15 years or longer. Their services are well attended, a good group goes out on visitation, and the attendance at prayer meeting and Sunday evening services are nearly equal. I was in such a church not too long ago, and I questioned the pastor as to his success. I remembered holding him a meeting some 25 or so years ago when his church membership numbered about 35. I remembered coming back three years later to five times that original crowd. I will return this year to that same church to preach in an auditorium that seats over 2000.

In questioning the pastor, I have come to the same conclusion that Paul did in 1 Corinthians 7:20: "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." This pastor had extreme difficulties when he started this church. He had been an assistant in another church where the deacons were snipping at the pastor. He saw pressure firsthand. He watched that pastor almost destroyed, and in disgust he resigned, determined to build a work somewhere else. God had laid it on his heart, so God would provide. God allowed him to go through court cases over his little school, to spend thousands of dollars on lawyer fees, to be put in jail for allowing the printed rules of his school to be carried out. Through this tribulation, he watched a strong, firm foundation of solid Christian families grow in determination to raise their children right. Out of this came a fine Christian college that is teaching boys and girls the ministry of Christ. How did he do it? His answer, in essence, was the same as Paul's admonition: "Let every man

abide in the same calling wherein he was called." This pastor stuck with it. He had stickability!

I want to encourage you young preachers who are taking your first pastorates to plan on staying until God forces you out! If God called you to a church, He must want you to work there. Go to it! Borrow brains wherever you can, but be sure everything is filtered through the Scriptures. Work carefully in training and discipling your deacons. Don't allow money to sway your judgment.

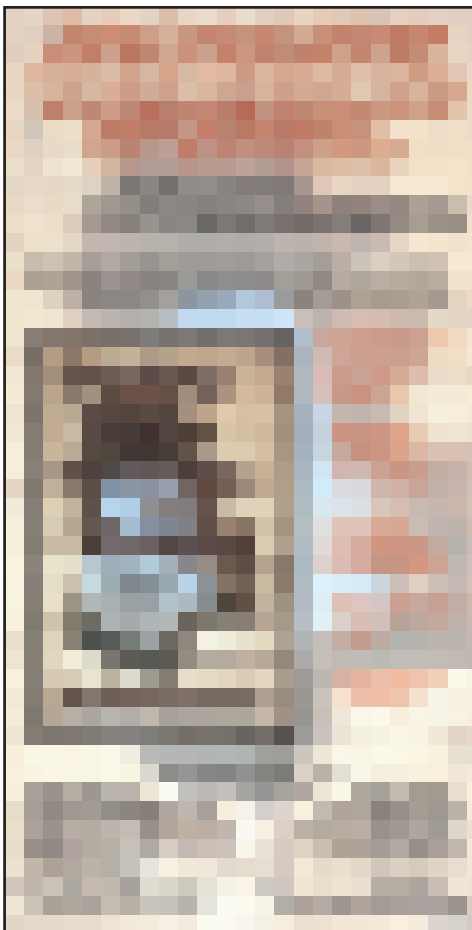
There have been some excellent, godly millionaires who have made fine deacons, and there have been some that have killed the church! Select on the basis of 1 Timothy 3, which teaches that the qualifications of a deacon are almost exactly similar to that of a pastor. Until you can hire a youth pastor, spend much time with your young people. Pick the most spiritual adult couple to be their sponsor. I thank God so much for Leland Whittiker, who was our youth director in Dad's church where I grew up. He wore out set after set of tires carting some of us

home after Friday Night Club. I lived 23 miles from Dad's church, but Leland saw to it that I got home safely. He is home in heaven now, but I daresay his reward will probably outdo mine!

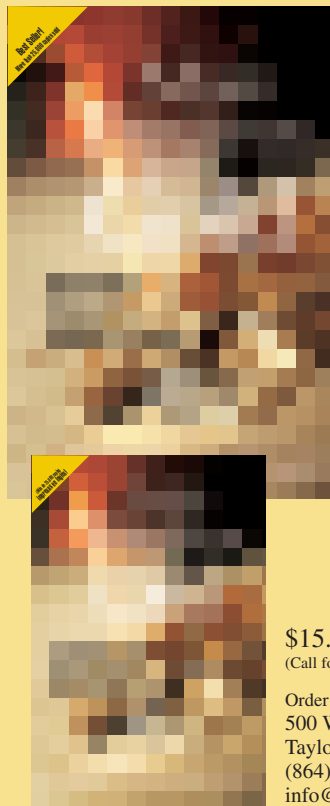
I was holding a meeting in Oregon, near a town called Florence. Dad had a summer cottage on a lake near that town, and I was asked to preach for a small church in Florence. The pastor was a graduate of a small Methodist school, and for the life of me I could not connect with that man. I remember coming back to Dad's cabin after the two Sunday services and Dad asking me how things went. I told him of the reluctance of the pastor to pray with me for an unsaved man. The pastor told me that the man had committed the unpardonable sin and was past saving! Dad smiled and said, "Keep shooting in the hole, son. If there's anything there, it's bound to come out." I did, and it did. We had a great revival in that church. Young men, demonstrate some stickability!

Dr. Phil Shuler is an evangelist based in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. He can be reached at philshuler@juno.com.

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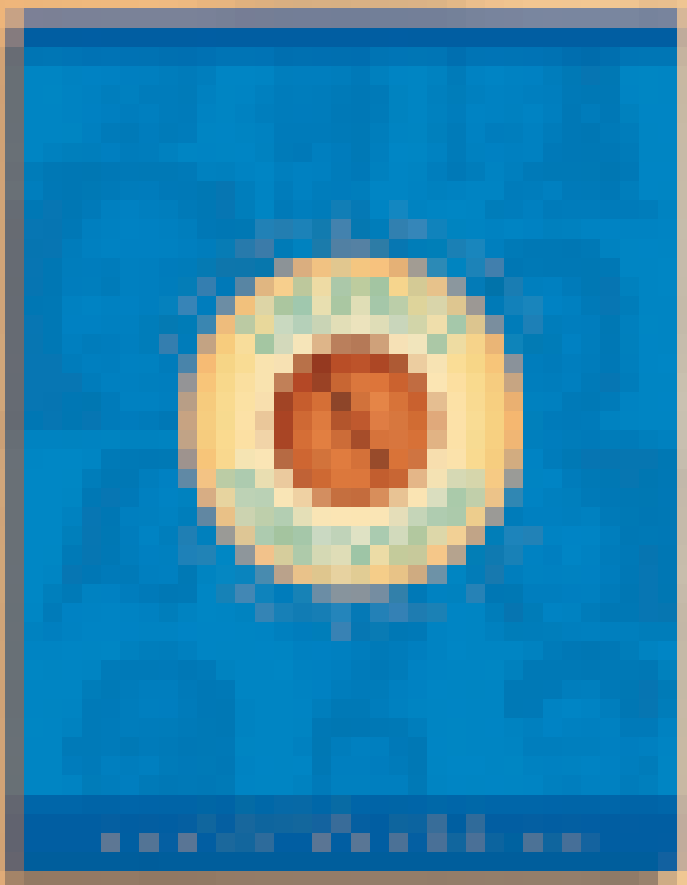
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The Gospel of Mark is Everyman's Gospel. Brief, direct, readable, breathlessly action-packed; yet it is also often the most graphic of the four Gospels in its inclusion of vivid details left unmentioned by the others. The late D. Edmond Hiebert observed that

the contents of Mark's gospel make it eminently suited for Gentiles. It does not have the strong Jewish-Christian coloring which characterizes Matthew. It does not presuppose a comprehensive knowledge of the OT on the part of its readers. . . . The author of this gospel had well learned that the gospel of Jesus Christ was for all mankind.

Hardly a condensed recapitulation of the other Gospels, Mark's own distinctive personality, perspective, and emphases make a unique contribution to this four-chambered heart of the Bible that is the Gospel record.

Authorship

John Mark is a notable and colorful figure in the NT.

- He is identified as "John whose surname was Mark" (Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37, 39).
- Peter went to Mark's mother's house in Jerusalem after his miraculous release from prison (Acts 12:12).
- He was cousin to Barnabas (Col. 4:10).
- He was the companion of Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 12:25; 13:5), but deserted the mission trip early on (Acts 13:13).
- His desertion later caused a sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:38-40).
- He later proved himself a commendable and dependable co-laborer, even to Paul (Philemon 24; 2 Tim. 4:11).
- A unique mentoring relationship apparently developed between Peter and Mark, two men who knew failure from painful personal experience (1 Pet. 5:13).

Ancient sources agree that the primary source and influence for Mark's Gospel was Peter.

- Papias (A.D. 140) calls Mark "the interpreter of Peter."
- Justin Martyr (ca. A.D. 150) calls Mark's Gospel "the memoirs of Peter" and indicates that Mark composed his Gospel while in Rome.
- Irenaeus (ca. A.D. 185) affirms that much of the content of Mark's Gospel was drawn from Peter's preaching.

Peter's influence on Mark's Gospel is remarkably reflected in the parallel between Peter's words to Cornelius in Acts 10:37-38 and the opening of Mark's Gospel. There Peter refers to the testimony of Jesus "which was published throughout all Judea, and began [Mark 1:1-3] from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached [Mark 1:4-8]; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with

the Holy [Spirit] and with power [Mark 1:9-13]; who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him [Mark 1:14ff]."

Audience

Mark's Gospel was "well suited to appeal to the practical Romans, for whom, evidently, it was originally written" (Hiebert)—particularly Roman Gentiles.

- Mark quotes only once from the OT (1:2, 3), but notes that Jesus often quoted the OT (4:12; 7:6, 7; 9:48; 11:17; 12:10, 11, 36; 13:24, 25; 14:27).
- Mark uses Aramaic terms (which would be familiar to Jewish readers), but translates them for the obvious benefit of a Gentile audience (3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 10:46; 14:36; 15:22, 34).
- Mark frequently explains Jewish customs for the same reason (7:3, 4; 14:12; 15:42).
- Mark often transliterates Latin expressions into Greek (5:9; 6:27; 12:15, 42; 15:16, 39) and, on occasion, betrays a Latin construction underlying his Greek phraseology (3:6; 14:65; 15:15; see Wessell, *EBC*, 8:612).
- Mark identifies Simon of Cyrene as "the father of Rufus" as an apparent link to someone who would be well-known to the Roman church (cf. Rom. 16:13).

Function

Mark's "thematic title"—"The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (1:1) is *explicitly annunciatory* (i.e., "This is how the good news all started"). The word "gospel" means "good news" throughout the NT—that is, the message of salvation/deliverance through Christ. The term "gospel" is never used in the NT to designate a book as a "gospel." Its appearance at the head of Mark's Gospel, however, probably contributed to its adaptation (by about A.D. 150) as a technical term to refer to the first four books of the NT. Some think that the "title" in 1:1 refers only to 1:1-8. However, the whole emphasis and focus of Mark's book is this "gospel," as evidenced by his use of the word *euangelion* ("gospel") eight times throughout the book (1:1, 14, 15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9; 16:15). Cf. Matt. four times; Luke and John none.

Content

Several features make Mark's Gospel unique.

- Mark includes no genealogy, birth, or infancy narratives.
- Mark opens with Jesus' adult life and ministry.
- Mark *de-emphasizes* Christ's *verbal* ministry, by *abbreviating* the content of Christ's teaching ministry.
 - Discourses—Mark includes only one of the five Synoptic discourses (brief version of Olivet Discourse).
 - Parables—only nine of the 47 Synoptic parables (two of these are found only in Mark.)

GOD'S SERVANT TO THE WORLD

■ Mark *emphasizes* Christ's *active* ministry in two ways:

- He highlights the *activity* of Christ's *teaching ministry*. (I.e., even though Mark includes very little of the content of Jesus' teaching ministry, he frequently notes how busy Jesus was teaching.)
 - Mark includes 36 references to Christ's teaching activity [with words such as *teach*, *teacher*, *teaching*, *Rabbi*, *Rabboni*]. This is a notably pervasive pattern in light of the brevity of Mark and in comparison to the same terms in the other longer Gospels (Matt. 26 times; Luke 32 times; John 26 times).
 - Mark uses the verb *kerusso* ("to preach") 14 times (cf. Matt. nine times; Luke nine times; John zero times).
- He highlights the *activity* of Christ's *miracle ministry*.
 - Mark includes 19 of the 29 Synoptic miracles (65 percent of the total number of miracles recorded in the Synoptics; and two of these are found *only* in Mark).
 - By comparison, Matthew records 24 of the 29 Synoptic miracles (83 percent), but the equally lengthy Luke includes only 16 of the 29 Synoptic miracles (55 percent).
- He highlights the *activity* of Christ's *general ministry*. (I.e., Mark repeatedly emphasizes how constantly busy Jesus was throughout His ministry.)
 - He uses *euthus* ("immediately" or "straightway") 42 times, contributing to the almost breathless style of this Gospel (cf. Matt. 18 times; Luke eight times; John seven times).
 - He uses *archomai* ("to begin") 11 times in connection with Christ or the spreading of news about Him (1:1, 45; 4:1; 5:20; 6:2, 7, 34; 8:31; 10:32; 11:15; 12:1; 13:5). Cf. Matt. four times; Luke nine times.
 - Mark *alone* records (*twice*) that Christ was so busy that there was no time to eat (3:20; 6:31).
 - Mark employs the historical present tense (using the present tense to describe a past event) some 150 times, giving "his readers the impression of listening to an on-the-spot report" (Wessell).

"The primary stress is upon the deeds of Jesus. It vividly portrays the fact that Christ's work was continuous, persistent, and strenuous. He was incessantly busy" (Hiebert). The Gospel of Mark, adds Edward Panosian, "is predominantly the story of Divine action in the midst of a sinful world."

Theme

The popular view is that Mark presents Christ as Servant. However, verbs and nouns for "serving" and "service" are virtually nonexistent in Mark. In fact, the *only* reference to Christ in such terms is 10:45, usually cited as the book's theme verse. The common impression

that Mark emphasizes Christ as Servant, then, must be based on something other than explicit, vocabularic evidence within the text itself.

Rather, the theme of servanthood is rooted more in the implication and general impression created by Mark's selection of content and structural style. The points listed above indicating Mark's emphasis on Christ's active ministry create an unmistakable impression that is consistent with the expression of Mark 10:35. It is not unlike the artistic difference between realism and impressionism. In one you see the theme clearly marked in the concrete detail; in the other, explicit detail gives way to a stylistic approach that creates an overall impression of the subject and the emotion behind it. Matthew is, artistically speaking, a "realistic" literary portrayal of Christ as King. Mark is more of an "impressionistic" presentation of Christ as Servant.

Sub-Themes

Several specific recurring subthemes are unique to Mark's Gospel.

- *Helplessness of those to whom Jesus ministered*. A careful study of a harmony of the Gospels reveals details unique to Mark that underscore the utter helplessness of the men (5:1–20), women (5:25–34) and children (9:14–17) to whom Jesus ministered (cf. 4:26–28; 6:34).
- *Emotional reactions of Jesus*. The following emotional depictions are unique to Mark's account of these events: compassion (1:41; 10:21; 12:34); indignation (10:14); grief (3:5); amazement (6:6); sighing (7:34; 8:12).
- *Failure of disciples*. "[I]n comparison to the other gospel accounts Mark usually depicted the disciples in a rather unflattering light" (Lowery). This bears the fingerprints of Peter's influence, as an emphasis to which he would be particularly sensitive, and one which believers may find particularly encouraging. Expressions unique to Mark's accounts include the explanation that the disciples did not understand about the loaves (6:52); the phrase "hardness of heart" used twice of the disciples (6:52; 8:17); the only two-stage miracle (8:22–26), an apparent picture of the progressive development of the disciples' faith; the question, "Do you still have faith?" (4:40); the plea, "I believe; help my unbelief" (9:24).

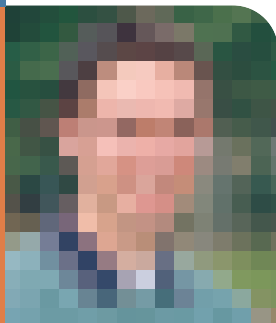
The Passion/Resurrection narrative climaxes the Gospel and dominates the entire final third of the book (Mark 10–16). Peter's close association with this Gospel explains his frequent epistolary references to the sufferings of Christ, not only for their soteriological value but also as an example and encouragement to us in our sufferings (1 Pet. 1:11; 2:21–24; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1). Logical value but also as an example and encouragement to us in our sufferings (1 Pet. 1:11; 2:21–24; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1).



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“The Soulwinning Conference was a blessing and challenge to me in many ways. One particular phrase from the conference that stuck in my mind is to ‘have souls on my eyeballs.’ I took that phrase with me to Africa over Christmas break, asking the Lord to put ‘souls on my eyeballs,’ to keep my focus on the lost.”

**–Josh Rice,
senior Bible major**



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Cardinal Speaks at Wheaton College

Wheaton College welcomed Cardinal Francis George of Chicago's Archdiocese in April during a conference about relations between Catholics and Evangelical Christians. "I think this is a first," said conference organizer Dennis Okholm, a theology professor at Wheaton College, noting this is the first time a Catholic cardinal has visited campus. "It's kind of history-making for Wheaton." Okholm acknowledged some conservative Christians may not be thrilled with the idea of opening a dialogue with Catholics. But Okholm said clarifying the differences helps people appreciate one another without having to agree. "We've always tried to lead the pack. Wheaton, for better or for worse, is a leader in the Evangelical world," he said. Other theologians speaking at the conference included James I. Packer and Richard John Neuhaus. (*Chicago Daily Herald*, 4/6/2002)

Ohio Bible Fellowship on Bible Text Issue

Rev. John Ashbrook (OBF Visitor) writes: "The Bible text issue has become a divisive force in fundamentalism. . . . We in the Ohio Bible Fellowship are grieved at the way this issue has divided fundamentalism. Every school which trains pastors must deal with this issue. In its

teaching it must express its own conviction on the biblical text. However, we hope that our schools will beware of an emphasis which divides and makes it impossible for true, but differing, brethren to work together." (*Calvary Contender*, May 2002)

Pat Robertson's Racehorse

Religious broadcaster Pat Robertson, who has spent a considerable number of years on television handicapping the sins of others and prophesying their destruction, owns a racehorse, according to a Cal Thomas column. "I don't bet and I don't gamble," Mr. Robertson told *New York Times* sports reporter Bill Finley. "I just enjoy watching horses running and performing." Mr. Robertson invested \$520,000 in his horse, named "Mr. Pat." (*Washington Times*, 4/29/2002) On May 10, Baptist Press reported that Robertson was giving in to pressure and would divest himself of horse racing interests following criticism from supporters who questioned the religious broadcaster's involvement in a sport that promotes gambling.

Riplinger's Bible Dictionary

The following is exactly as it appeared in "The Editor's Notes," page 2, Church Bus News, Jan.-Mar. 2002: Yesterday, I [Dr. Walter S. Beebe] talked with Dr. G.

A. Riplinger and asked her to give me input on something. *What is the difference between putting in written form (a new translation) the simplified or explained words, and the pastor or teacher looking up specific words, to pass on definitions to the flock? It then becomes a credibility issue, who do you believe?* I have at least 12 lexicons (Greek-English dictionaries, e.g. *Thayer's*) in my library. If I wanted to expand on a word for a sermon's sake, I usually go to my *Textus Receptus Interlinear*, and see which word was used in the Greek of the KJV and then look it up in a lexicon (sometimes in my classical Greek dictionary, the usage of Greek in the Greek plays of the pre-1600s era.) All of that is a lot of work and takes a lot of time. And, few people will have the library to accomplish that task.

Dr. Riplinger suggests you use, what she calls, the "built-in Bible dictionary." You take the word in question, look for sounds that match other words, look up the same word used elsewhere in Scripture and see how it was used. I said, "Give me an example. How about 'charity'?" The up-daters are always trying to change that one to 'love.'" I think there are 27 usages in the Bible where "Charity" is the word translated. She pointed out that the word "Charity" has several similar sounds found in other words.

There is the "ch", the "r" and the "t". (*chrt*, close to Christ!) In each usage the word refers to Christians with Christians! So by using the "built-in dictionary" you find the definition, something between Christians!

Attacks on Boy Scouts Shifting Focus

The Raleigh, North Carolina, Triangle United Way is stripping member agency status (and hence funding) from the region's Occoneechee Council of Boy Scouts of America over the council's refusal to guarantee the inclusion of homosexual Scout applicants. This is the latest BSA council affected by United Way cutouts, though this instance marks a striking new distinction. Instead of cutting funding based on BSA's ban on homosexual Scout leaders, the decision is based ostensibly on a refusal to include homosexuals as Scouts. In other words, supporting homosexual leadership of young boys does not resonate as well as it did prior to the homosexual pedophilia crisis in the Catholic Church. So the focus is now shifting to the inclusion of homosexual Scout applicants. (*The Federalist*, 4/26/2002)

Punitive Damages Levied Against Church

First Baptist Church of Columbiana, Alabama, will pay \$950,000 to the

family of Terry White, a 16-year-old boy who drowned May 31, 2000, while on a missions trip with the church. A Baldwin County jury reached the verdict April 3. The jury found that the church should be sued for punitive damages in a wrongful death suit issued by White's parents, Norman and Quilla White. The Whites claimed that if the church had had a life-guard on duty at the camp the death would not have happened. The parents sued the church for \$2 million, but were granted \$950,000. "I feel that two tragedies have occurred," said Mike Miller, the church's pastor. "The first one was a terrible accident May 31, 2000, that rendered a tragic loss of life. The second was on April 3, 2002, when the jury rendered the verdict." (Baptist Press, 4/18/2002)

Supreme Court to Consider RICO Applications

The U.S. Supreme Court has announced it will review a federal appeals court decision that upheld a lower court's opinion that the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) applies to the protest activities of pro-lifers at abortion clinics. The court is expected to hear oral arguments in the case in the next term, which begins in October. Pro-life activists welcomed the court's announcement. "The court has an opportunity to remove a cloud that has been hanging over those who wish to express their opposition to abortion in a peaceful and

NOTABLE QUOTES

I have a great deal of difficulty with the idea of the ideal man. As far as I'm concerned, men are the product of a damaged gene.—Feminist Germaine Greer

I do think that it is sometimes appropriate to kill a human infant. For me, the relevant question is, what makes it so seriously wrong to take a life? Those of you who are not vegetarians are responsible for taking a life every time you eat. Species is no more relevant than race in making these judgments.—Princeton "bioethicist" Peter Singer

Those who say that all cultures are equal never explain why the results of those cultures are so grossly unequal. When some cultures have achieved much greater prosperity, better health, longer life, more advanced technology, more stable government, and greater personal safety than others, has all this been just coincidence? Moreover, people from other cultures are constantly migrating to these cultures, which fashionable dogmas say are no better than any other.—Thomas Sowell

This war has been launched against the United States of America. It is a spiritual attack. It is an attack that was created in the mind and heart of Satan. It is a demonically inspired attack. It is not just the selfish ambitions of an egotistical leader. It is not just someone wanting to hold on to power. This is nothing more than a satanically inspired attack against America created by demonic powers through the perverted minds of terrorists.—Senator James M. Inhofe (R-Oklahoma)

We have done a great many programs about gays and lesbians. We hope that we've opened some minds—and if they're not open, we just don't care anymore.—ABC's Barbara Walters, accepting a GLAAD [Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation] Media Award for a 20/20 feature touting gays as parents.

It's a curious irony . . . that the same Court who takes pains to protect children from the "adverse effects" of prayer and religion in schools wasn't compelled to protect them from pornography and sexual predators. Under the guise of "artistry" and "academia" America has excused countless immoral pursuits.—Ken Connor

nonviolent manner," said Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice. "It is clear that a federal statute designed for drug dealers and organized crime has been misapplied and used as a powerful weapon to silence the pro-life message." (Baptist Press, 4/24/2002)

Discrimination Against Christian Coach

When California's Stanford University went recruiting for a new football coach, Nebraska Assistant Coach Ron Brown got an interview, but not much else. Stanford Assistant Athletic Director Alan Glenn explained that the problem was that Brown is a dedicated Christian, which "was definitely something that had to be considered. We're a very diverse community with a diverse alumni. Anything that would stand out that much is something that has to be looked at." Brown responded, "If I'd been discriminated against for being Black, they never would have told me that. They had no problem telling me it was because of my Christian beliefs." (*The Federalist*, 5/8/2002)

NEA and Gays Attack Christianity

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) is making significant inroads into public school systems with its new campaign to normalize homosexuality among children. This includes pro-homosexual dramas for elementary students featuring

homosexual children, and a classroom curriculum supported by the NEA. This curriculum designates religious beliefs against homosexuality as "homophobia" and "false." Another example of this perversity contends that middle schoolers "should have the freedom to explore our sexual orientation and find our own unique expression of lesbian, bisexual, gay, straight, or any combination of these." GLSEN's aim of introducing and normalizing deviant sexuality to children at an increasingly younger age seems to know no bounds, as strategies are in place to "set the tone for nontraditional gender role play" for preschoolers. (*The Federalist*, 5/10/2002)

EEOC to Sue NEA

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is preparing a suit against the NEA and its state affiliates to force them to stop harassing members who disagree with the NEA's Leftist agenda. In most states, teachers are forced to join the NEA, and their dues are then used to support Leftist candidates and causes. Those teachers who categorized themselves as "religious objectors" in order to withhold the use of their dues for purposes contrary to their faith have been the subject of various procedural forms of harassment. "The NEA union's illegal scheme is intended to

force teachers of faith to shut up and pay up," said Stefan Gleason, vice president of the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation. "The EEOC's action further underscores that the nation's largest teacher union is systematically persecuting people of faith." (*The Federalist*, 5/24/2002)

Student Victorious over School Board

A former California high school valedictorian settled his lawsuit against his old school for \$59,000. In 1999, Oroville High School barred Jason Niemeyer from delivering a graduation speech mentioning Jesus Christ, or a revision that was merely "religious," and then barred him from the ceremony entirely—so he sued for violation of his First Amendment rights. The school decided to settle when the case was about to go to the jury. (*The Federalist*, 5/3/2002)

Alcohol's Toll on College Students

An estimated 1,400 college students are killed every year in alcohol-related accidents, according to a study that researchers call the most comprehensive look ever at the consequences of student drinking. The researchers say the figures show that college drinking needs to be seen as a major health concern. The study by the federally supported Task

Force on College Drinking estimated that drinking by college students contributes to 500,000 injuries and 70,000 cases of sexual assault or date rape. Also, 400,000 students between 18 and 24 years old reported having had unprotected sex as a result of drinking. A Harvard School of Public Health survey released in March reported that more students are abstaining from alcohol, but levels of binge drinking—having at least four or five drinks at a sitting—are the same as in the early 1990s. The new report was one of 24 studies commissioned by the task force of college presidents, scientists, and students convened by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (FoxNews.com, 4/9/2002)

Muslim Scholar Glorifies Suicide Operations

A renowned Muslim scholar, Sheik Youssef al-Qaradawi, said Arab leaders stopping their people from going to holy war against Israel were "sinners," while Palestinian suicide operations were the "highest form of jihad." Entering an Arab world debate on whether suicide bombings are justified in Islam, he said such operations "are the highest form of jihad [holy war] . . . and considering them terrorism is rejected." Asked about state leaders who prevent their citizens from going to war, he told reporters, "I

say this is not allowed and they are sinners." "We should announce that jihad has become a religious duty for the [Islamic] nation," al-Qaradawi told a conference organized by Al-Azhar, the highest religious authority in the mainstream Sunni sect of Islam. Religious leaders, scholars and politicians from more than 25 countries attended. (Associated Press, 4/16/2002)

European Law Could Ban Distribution of Old Testament

A proposed European Union law against racism could ban some children's stories and "would probably cover the distribution of the Old Testament," said British legislator Lord Richard Scott. As an independent Law Lord, Scott is part of a special subgroup of Britain's upper chamber of Parliament with expertise on legal matters. The Law Lords also serve as a final court of appeal for certain judicial cases. Lord Scott said that offenses of racism and xenophobia under the EU law needed to be made "much more specific." "If any member state creates offences on these lines . . . we in this country would be expected to extradite the accused under a [universal] European arrest warrant," he said. (CNSNews.com, 4/24/2002)

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Calvary Baptist Tabernacle
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October 28–29

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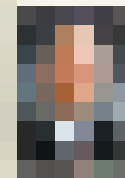
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There Are No Unique or Hopeless Problems

Greatly discouraged believers are usually those facing problems that have them bewildered. The attitude that says, "No one has ever been through anything like this," or "It's hopeless; there is absolutely nothing I can do!" compounds the pain of overwhelming circumstances. The value of the Old Testament to the Christian is not only in the marvelous way it prepares us to know and love Christ, but in its provision of examples for our encouragement. The major divisions of the Old Testament include the Law, the History, and the Prophets. There is, of course, a large section of Poetry, but this too is part of the history of the Hebrews.

The Law leaves us hungry for a Perfect Priest—One who can offer a truly acceptable sacrifice for our sins. The History leaves us thirsty for a Perfect King—One who can lead us and love us into loyalty that never diminishes. The Prophets leave us longing for a Perfect Prophet—One who not only tells us how to live and what is ahead, but actually empowers us to live in the confident expectation of what is ahead. The last words of the last verse, of the last chapter, of the last book of the Old Testament are "a curse." The Old Testament is the "bad news."

Then there is a blank page that represents 400 years of somber silence. But on the very next page we meet that Perfect Prophet, Priest, and King—the God of heaven in human flesh. Thus the hearts of men

are prepared to recognize Him and receive Him as their Savior. This is the "good news"—the "gospel" of Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the details of these great Old Testament books are the stories of a multitude of characters, old and young, wise and foolish, good examples and bad. Their choices and the consequences of them are laid out for all to read. The unvarnished truth of human strength and weakness is revealed, and the lessons are

timeless. We read in 1 Corinthians 10:11, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." The invitation is obvious: "Read—heed!"

The benefits of these lessons are both priceless and obvious when taken as the infallible revelation of God, and their practical benefit is not left unidentified.

The next verse says, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Read the story of the wisest man who ever lived (Solomon) and be humbled by his folly, or the story of the strongest man who ever lived (Samson) and understand his weakness. The meekest man (Moses) dishonored God in his anger. King David, the man after God's own heart, was conquered by the lusts of his own flesh. Abraham, another fallen man, "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

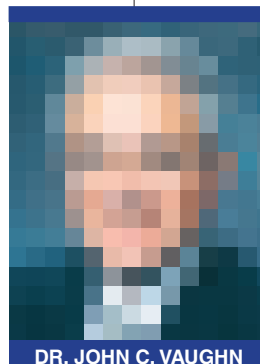
The roll call of human humility in Hebrews 11 reveals the faith of our fathers. They were not perfect, but they had faith in the perfect plan of salvation.

The roll call of human humility in Hebrews 11 reveals the faith of our fathers. They were not perfect, but they had faith in the perfect plan of salvation. Studying these characters will build your own character and prepare you for the truth of the next verse: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." There are no unique problems. There are no hopeless problems.

It may not feel like that is true, but God says it is. No problem you will ever face is unique; any test you must endure is "common to man." There are nearly seven billion people alive today, and probably billions who have lived before. A billion is 1000 million. It is not even logical that your problem is unique. It is certainly not Scriptural. It is not possible for you to have a problem that God has not given you the answer to in His Word.

Nor is it possible for you to have a hopeless problem. Why? Because "God is faithful" not to allow it. He will not allow you to be tested beyond your ability to do right. You have the promise of Scripture that you will never, ever, be placed in a circumstance where the only alternative you have is to sin.

You may be without hope for a time, but your problem is not hopeless. Romans 15:4 makes it clear, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."



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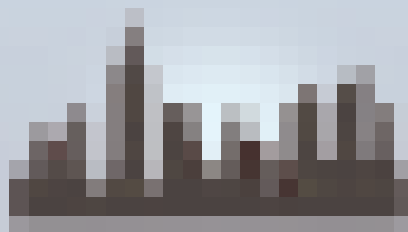
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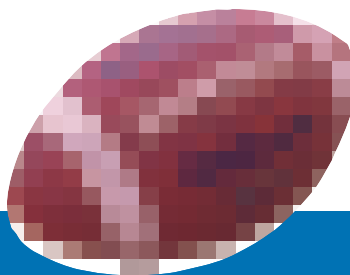
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