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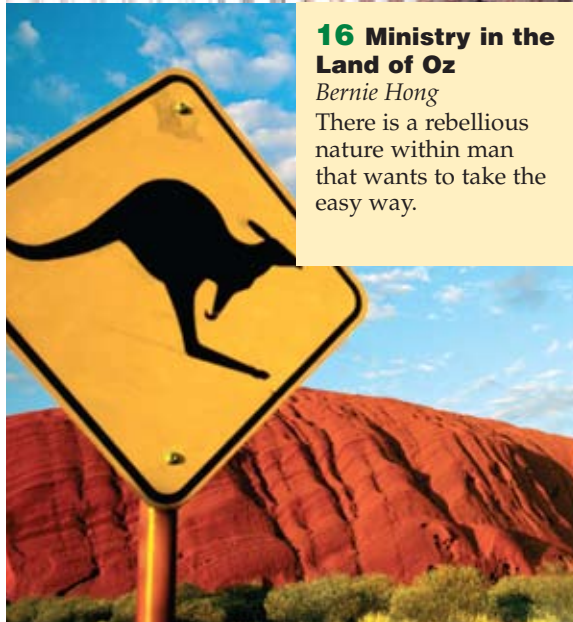
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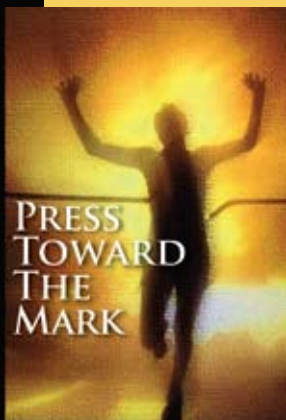
Thank you so very much for printing the article by my friend, fellow In Pursuit! Ministries and FBFI Chaplain Bob Keller.

There is a great need of Fundamental Baptist chaplains in law enforcement, but I would like to add one thing. Bob thought he was old at fifty-two. I was twenty years older than that and was just stepping down as field director of Baptist Church Planters so I could slow down as a representative when the chief of police asked me to serve as their chaplain.

I now have increased my congregation. I served the police department for four years with about forty members. I am now with the sheriff's office with almost 300 in administration, investigation, patrol, and corrections deputies. There are also between 200 to 400 inmates at any one time. It is a full-time job.

Ladies, my wife, Marie, is also a certified peace officers training and standards chaplain and works with the female inmates and deputies.

*Dr. Fred Henzler
Perry, GA*



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Who Will Be Touched by Your Trial?

John C. Vaughn

Reading through articles in this issue of *FrontLine* has been like taking a study retreat. My prayer for you is that you will have that same conviction and be led often to pause and pray for the suffering of others and for yourselves in the dangers of your own comfort and complacency, as I have. What a privilege it is to read godly and thoughtful authors, especially when you know them personally! What a blessing of mutual edification we have in *FrontLine* magazine.

Having come to Christ early in the 1970s while serving in the US Air Force in Thailand, I was deeply humbled to read accounts of the great suffering of Christians in Southeast Asia and of American Airmen who were tortured in prisons there. I remember wondering how they could possibly have survived the degradation, deprivation, and abuse. I remember seeing news reports of survivors rushing into the loving arms of family, while others limped along on crutches or were carried on stretchers. Some came home to no home at all, their wives having given up in despair. The events of those days deeply moved my heart and gave me a hunger to read the stories of survivors of painful ordeals.

The first church my wife and I attended put us in fellowship with readers. We read *Tortured for Christ* by Romanian preacher Richard Wurmbrand, founder of Voice of the Martyrs. It helped to shape our own trust, and in the years ahead led us to other biographies of those who suffered under Communism. Last year I reread a little book co-authored by former *FrontLine* editor Bob Whitmore,

now a missionary on the island of Yap. The book, *I Came Back from Bataan*, tells the story of James Donovan Gautier, who suffered at the hands of the Japanese army in the Philippines.

Hearing an illustration from this book in a sermon, a friend at church gave me a copy of a recent biography of Lt. William Farrow, a South Carolinian who piloted the last B-25 to take off from the carrier *Hornet* in Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Doolittle's April 1942 raid on the Japanese mainland. Farrow's plane ran out of fuel and crashed-landed in enemy territory. He was captured and executed by firing squad after a mock trial. His bombardier was Sergeant Jacob DeShazer, whose story I found in a little book published in the early 1950s, called *DeShazer*.

When he heard of the attack on Pearl Harbor, DeShazer had angrily declared, "They will pay for this!" After his capture, he was imprisoned for forty months, thirty-four of them in solitary confinement, where he was tortured and starved. When the Japanese guards realized their cause was lost, one of them obtained a Bible and circulated it among the prisoners. DeShazer was allowed to keep it for twenty-one days. Incredibly, he read it through six times, memorizing many verses. During that reading, he realized two life-changing truths: God offers complete forgiveness for sin, and God expects complete obedience in faith. He accepted the forgiveness of the cross and submitted in obedience to his own cross. He knew he must testify the gospel of Christ, but the only person with whom he had contact was the guard who beat him

and gave him a small bowl of thin soup and some bad-tasting tea once or twice a day. So he determined to pray for the man and to thank him for bringing his food. Eventually he learned about the guard's family and their own suffering, and he began to pray for them as well.

Released at the end of the war, DeShazer returned to Oregon and studied for the ministry, becoming a missionary to Japan. When he returned to preach there, tens of thousands turned out to hear his testimony. Thousands came to Christ hearing a man—whom one of their own had tortured—telling the story of Christ's suffering for our sins. Among them were DeShazer's guard and, notably, Captain Mitsuo Fuchida, who led the attack on Pearl Harbor. They became close friends and preached together many times. Fuchida himself became a missionary.

Hearing this story as a sermon illustration, a dear friend told me the story of a street preacher he had met in Hawaii, a veteran of the Pearl Harbor attack who had met Fuchida at the *Arizona* Memorial and despised him in his heart. Fuchida begged his forgiveness and invited him to a service where he was preaching. The life-changing power of the gospel then compelled that man to publicly proclaim it. DeShazer could not have imagined the ongoing results of his own salvation and surrender when the suffering of Christ shined into his dark cell.

Only the Lord knows who will be touched by the trust you place in Christ as you are faithful in your trial. We not only have stories to read, we have a story to tell!

The Race That Is Set Before Us

Not one among us is permitted to chart out his own race. But each one of us must “run with patience the race that is set before us.” In our day of highly competitive athletics each runner wants to make sure that the race he must run is the same as that of the other runners around him. But the believer is to be focusing on Jesus, the One who has charted our course and has run His race successfully.

This issue of *FrontLine* highlights the various races that our Lord has charted for Fundamental brethren around the world. For each of us the race must entail persecution. Peter writes for us, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.”¹ The intention of this focus is not for believers to compare or contrast their forms of persecution. Human comparison is not wise (2 Cor. 10:12). Rather, as our brethren suffer, we suffer with them. We pray for them in their tribulation, and we seek to bear their burdens. We also learn that when we suffer, we are not alone in our suffering. Jesus suffered first. All those who live godly in Christ Jesus will follow (2 Tim. 3:12; John 16:33).

Run the Race

In 1981 Bill Broadhurst entered the Pepsi Challenge, a 10,000-meter footrace in Omaha, Nebraska. The fastest participants posted times that year under thirty minutes, but none of those participants caught the headlines. It was Bill Broadhurst who captured the nation’s attention. Bill’s time? Two hours and twenty-nine minutes. Yet when Bill crossed the finish line that day, he was greeted by a roaring ovation of those who had gathered. Bill Rogers, a well-known marathoner and the winner of that year’s race, draped the first-place medallion over the shoulder of the heavily perspiring runner. What made the interest of the spectators swoon over this runner with a less-than-spectacular time? Bill had become paralyzed on the left side during a surgery just two years earlier while a doctor was attempting to repair an aneurysm. Bill would never post spectacular times, but he had to run the race. His goal was not to come in first. His goal was to finish. And his finish was spectacular.

Finishing is the goal of the believer in the race that is set out for him. The Author of the race has planned each step of the course, and His expectation is for the runner to run all the way to the finish line. This was something in which Paul could boast as he saw his finish line approaching: “I have fought a good fight, **I have finished my course**, I have kept the faith.”² The race that the Lord set before Paul was one that was to include a large share of suffering. When the Lord was giving instructions to Ananias regarding the baptism and initial discipleship of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:15–26), he indicated that Paul would suffer much for the sake of Jesus’ name. In Colossians 1:24 Paul indicates that his sufferings were a benefit to the church to “fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh.” Paul enumerates the various forms of suffering he had endured during his sojourn in 2 Corinthians 11:23–28.

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice

was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

Pauls’ race was filled with difficulty, suffering, and persecution. Your race will be filled with difficulties as well. The goal, then, is to finish the race that God has ordained for you. To compare your race with the race of others would be foolish. Believers will face varying degrees of suffering; the type and purpose of sufferings that will be a part of your race are in the hands of Him who is charting your course.

Embrace the Race

The race set before you is not arbitrary. The same can be said of exercise drills designed by your coach. They were designed to build basic skills that your team needs to be successful. Each young athlete can visualize the thrill of victory, but few relish the sweat of practice—especially when that practice seems meaninglessly repetitive. But every coach knows that drills have purpose. They build the player into what the team needs. God is wiser than our

WHEN I WAS GOING THROUGH A TIME OF PERSONAL SUFFERING, GOD USED A GOOD FRIEND TO SHARE SCRIPTURE WITH ME THAT HAS CONTINUED TO HAVE IMPACT ON MY PERSONAL SEASONS OF SUFFERING....

earthly coaches. Suffering and persecution are not random, meaningless occurrences. God is building His people into what they need to become.

Suffering is a God-ordained corrective for sin. David wrote in Psalm 119:67 and 71, “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now I have kept thy word. . . . It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.” Each believer should remember that a corrective should not be confused with a penal consequence. Believers can and do face discipline that corresponds to their sin. But Jesus bore the penal consequence for all of our sins so that we would bear no condemnation. God’s correctives are not how we “pay for our sins.” Rather, they are tools that God uses to keep us from wallowing in regular failure. Paul identified that one of his forms of suffering (a thorn in the flesh) was given by God lest he should be “exalted above measure.”³ Praise God for His correctives that dissuade us from future failures.

Suffering is a God-ordained instruction in righteousness.

When I was going through a time of personal suffering, God used a good friend to share Scripture with me that has continued to have impact on my personal seasons of suffering: Romans 8:18 says, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." As my wife and I were broken over the difficulties that we were facing, we were encouraged to know God was doing something worthwhile in us. God has revealed several other truths about our suffering that indicate He is doing a good work in our lives. Paul states in 2 Corinthians 4:17, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Peter commands us to "rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."⁴ Suffering reveals our human weaknesses. Suffering strengthens our character when we respond appropriately to the chastening of God. Suffering reflects the sufferings of Christ to this generation. Suffering identifies us with our Master. Suffering removes the props of self-sufficiency. And through suffering, we find that our God is faithful. Praise God for His chastening, which instructs us in righteousness.

As we consider the suffering of our brethren around the world, our own sufferings seem insignificant. Yet to each sufferer the agony of his own suffering is great enough. It

seems as if we give little thought to the sufferings of our brothers and sisters around the world. Perhaps we believe that if we come to think of it too often, it may happen to us.

Pray for your brothers and sisters in their suffering. Help carry their loads in ways that will be recommended later in this magazine. When suffering comes to your door, consider Peter's words from his first epistle to each of us:

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.⁵

Dr. Robert A. Condict is an FBF Board Member and pastor of Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church in Baldwin, Maryland.

¹ 1 Peter 4:12ff.

² 2 Timothy 4:7.

³ 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

⁴ 1 Peter 4:13.

⁵ 1 Peter 1:6,7.

...while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father. II Chronicles 34:3

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Persecution for the Gospel's Sake

John K. Hutcheson

Last May I had the privilege of participating with Russian independent Baptist pastors in their fellowship meeting of unregistered churches. Part of the extended meeting included reports of mission activities in a Central Asian country that these Russian churches were supporting with both their intercessions and giving. In the middle of the meeting two Central Asian house church pastors flew in, whom I had met in their home country several months earlier. These two brothers gave a report of what the Lord was doing through their church-planting activities in their country, which is predominately Muslim and hostile to Christianity. After describing the difficult climate in which they were ministering, one of the pastors made this striking statement: "Don't pray for the persecution to stop because it is making us stronger. Rather, pray that we will stand strong under the persecution." That incredible statement—while quite contrary to our American Christian mindset—reveals a New Testament perspective on the Christian life and ministry. It is the same perspective that permeated the attitudes of first-century believers who were willing to suffer and die for the Savior. They were willing even to rejoice in the midst of persecution for the realization that they were considered worthy to suffer for His Name!

The story of the first-century Church is a record

of joyous evangelistic activity, of rich fellowship among believers, of people from different ethnic groups coming to Christ, of local churches being planted, and of missions throughout the known world of that day. Yet that story cannot be told without including a vital component of the early Church: persecution. In fact, the early Church was born in a climate of hostility to the gospel. Yet, far from seeking to avoid persecution, the apostles rejoiced that God would consider them to be worthy of the opportunity to participate in the fellowship of His sufferings.

The Grace-Gift of Suffering

While writing from a Roman prison cell in the midst of persecution, Paul reminded the Philippian believers that the sufferings they were undergoing were not a mistake or even a burden. Rather, it was their privilege to receive the grace-gift of suffering from the treasures of Heaven in order to experience more fully a greater measure of fellowship and intimacy with Christ (Phil. 1:29; 3:10).

However, persecution has not been a vital component of the twenty-first century American church because we have reaped the benefits of the Judeo-Christian worldview that impacted the founding of this nation. By and large we have been able to minister in this country with great freedom and to be

REMEMBERING SUFFERING SAINTS

INCLUDES ... SERIOUS

INTERCESSION ON THEIR BEHALF.

exempt from government oppression. But that has all been changing in the last fifty years with the increasing secularization of society. Ominous signs are already on the horizon that point to persecution's arrival in America through attempts to censor Christianity from the public square.

Blessed Benefits

Scripture indicates that there are blessed benefits associated with suffering for Christ's sake. One such benefit is the difference that exists between believers who are persecuted and those who are not. In countries where the gospel faces opposition, believers often demonstrate a spiritual vibrancy that is missing from our American churches, which have often been lulled to sleep amidst the affluence and ease of a consumer-driven Western culture.

We need to be shaken out of spiritual lethargy, and there are several ways in which to accomplish this. The first is by the renewing of our minds with Scripture. This will enable us to take seriously the passages in God's Word that portray the reality of persecution as a normal part of the Christian pilgrim's experience on his way to the Celestial City. It is not uncommon for those of us who have been saved for many years to read the persecution events in the book of the Acts (the threatenings, the arrests, the beatings, the martyrdoms) rather casually. It is as if those events have been so sanitized in our thinking that we view them simply as part of a nice story. We tend not take those events seriously because God intervened for everything to turn out okay in the end.

From the lives of the apostles we learn that their main goal was not self-preservation. Rather, their delight was in being faithful to their Savior, though it meant their untimely deaths. They were more interested in bearing witness to the Truth than they were in staying alive.

Furthermore, there are references in both the Pauline and the general letters to suffering saints who paid a price for proclaiming the gospel. Peter's first letter was written specifically to believers who were suffering and being oppressed for their faith in Christ. Then, of course, there is the portrayal in the Revelation of Tribulation believers who will endure great hardship and martyrdom under the government of the coming world ruler.

Raising Awareness

In our generation it is also incumbent on us to raise our awareness of what is really happening to our brothers and sisters who suffer for righteousness' sake. A realization of the high stakes under which they conduct their daily lives and do the work of the ministry makes many of our daily problems in a materialist culture seem rather small indeed. Raising awareness includes finding information from alternative news sources about the plight of believers in restricted-access nations. With the increased means of global communication at our disposal today, there are a number of places from which to glean information on what is happening to fellow believers if we are willing to take the time to

retrieve it. The writer to the Hebrew Christians told them to "remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body" (13:3). If other members of the Body are in distress and are being harassed for righteousness' sake, then we must know about it so that we can take appropriate action.

Remembering suffering saints includes, most importantly, serious intercession on their behalf. The church at Jerusalem prayed earnestly for Peter when he was put in prison, and God saw fit to release him. God's will for some suffering believers means a martyrs' death, as happened to James. For others it means that God is also glorified in their release, as happened to Peter. A modern-day example of God's deliverance was demonstrated for the Russian pastor Georgi Vins from a Soviet *gulag* a number of years ago. God saw fit to answer the persistent intercessory efforts of the His people before the Throne of Grace to bring about Pastor Vins' release. Additionally, the pressure that the US government brought to bear on the Soviet government played a part in the commutation of his sentence.

Bible-believing churches must give priority to praying for suffering believers if we are going to take God's Word seriously, if we are going to take the Body relationships seriously, and if we are going to see our great God do great things for His Name's sake. A number of churches are now taking a specific case of different persecuted believers each month and keeping them before their congregations for intercession by means of media and bulletin announcements.

The Use of Freedoms

Finally, we must use our freedoms and our voices to do advocacy work on behalf of those who have no voices of their own in countries that are hostile to Christianity. Believers in the first-century church in Jerusalem had no rights with which to appeal to Herod for Peter's release. So they exercised the spiritual weapon of prayer alone. However, since we in America have been entrusted with the freedom to practice our faith as a spiritual stewardship from God, we must exercise our freedoms on behalf of those who suffer. It is an application of the command to "do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). In our representative republic we can build relationships with our government officials who, in turn, are willing to contact heads of state in countries that persecute Christians.

I have personally seen how a letter from a US senator to the president of a predominantly Muslim country can help to keep a faithful pastor from going to prison. Though we tend to be results-oriented, we do not always know the final outcome of advocacy work in each case. For countries that are sensitive to pressure from free nations, such advocacy strategies can be effective. For countries that do not care what America thinks, such strategies accomplish little.

Ultimately, the will of God determines the outcome for persecuted believers in terms of how the Lord will be most glorified in their lives. We must make sure, however, that we are being faithful intercessors for those who have no such freedom. Then we who enjoy the freedom to practice our faith can put feet to our prayers in the appropriate situations with a view toward God's will and His ultimate glory.

John K. Hutcheson serves as Field Director for Frontline Missions International.

Christian— against— Christian Persecution in Lebanon

Sunday, July 23, 2006, was supposed to be a day of celebration in Ajaltoun, a mountain town northeast of Beirut. Christ Bible Baptist Church, founded in August 1995, had been meeting for several years in the ground floor of an apartment building. The church had sacrificed to buy a plot of ground on a rocky ridge in the village, overlooking the stunning valleys of Mount Lebanon. With the partnership of Christians in the United States the church had built a beautiful edifice, and now the long-anticipated day of the building dedication had finally arrived.

A few years earlier I had made my first visit to Lebanon and was amazed at this church's vision to reach the Arab world with the gospel. I enjoyed the fellowship of one of their missionaries, Haytham, who was preparing to leave Lebanon to plant a church in Mosul, Iraq. One Sunday morning, when Haytham was on his way with his mother to the newly planted church in Mosul, a band of armed terrorists riddled his car with bullets. Left for dead, he was eventually found by friends who took him by taxi to Syria for emergency medical care. From there he was transported back to Lebanon by ambulance. On my next visit to Lebanon I visited him in the hospital. The assassination attempt had left him paralyzed from the waist down. He now serves as assistant pastor in the Lebanese church.

This is one example of the courage and resiliency of Middle Eastern Christians: they had seen the devastation of civil war in Lebanon, had lived in the perpetual chaos of political turmoil, and yet were determined to send out one of their own to a hostile land. These people, their history, their story, drew me back again and again. Now with a plane ticket in hand I was scheduled to speak at a dedication service that was not to be.

About ten days before the scheduled service, the Israeli-Hezbollah War broke out. The Israeli Air Force bombed the runways of the Beirut Rafik Hariri International Airport (renamed in honor of the former prime minister assassinated in February 2005). With the airport effectively out of commission my trip to Lebanon was canceled. A few weeks earlier the church had received warnings from the town mayor, Khalil Tabet, demanding that the church be closed, under the threat of violence. The day before the dedication the mayor authorized bulldozers to erect piles of rubble to close the road leading to the church. However, the church decided to meet that day for worship, in the midst of war and in spite of opposition from political and religious leaders. With the access roads to the church blocked, church members parked at a distance and walked to their building that Sunday, apprehensive but still unprepared for what would follow.

As the believers worshipped in their new building on that July morning a crowd began forming outside, led by the town mayor. The Christians heard cursing, threats, and then stones thrown by the angry mob against the walls and windows of the building. Pastor Raymond Abou-Mekhael went outside and was physically attacked by the mayor, who knocked off Raymond's glasses and stomped on them. This was done under the watchful eye of several policemen who stood by doing little to prevent the violence. Church members from inside the building watched this attack on their pastor with fear and yet had the presence of mind to film the aggression. The furious horde then rushed into the

church, breaking windows and stealing whatever was of value as church members helplessly stood by. The police finally intervened and ordered the attackers out of the church building. The church members were given ten minutes to evacuate the premises with the threat of further aggression. Facing the taunts and jeers of an enraged crowd they left under police protection.

How could this happen in a country that claims religious liberty and the defense of human rights? Was this the work of Islamic fanatics in a country with a majority Muslim population? Was this the work of a secular government seeking to erode religious liberty? No, not at all! It was the work of Christians, or shall we say those who operate under the name and cloak of Christ and yet are far from Him. This attack had been conceived on Saturday, July 22, when Bishop Guy Njem visited the town. During an inflammatory sermon he incited members of the town's Maronite Church¹ against the "insidious" evangelical church in their town. Fliers were posted in the town urging townspeople to gather the next morning to prevent the church from meeting in its new location. The local television station, in a Saturday evening broadcast, described the church members as Israeli agents and connected Christ Bible Baptist Church with the Jehovah's Witnesses cult. The Sunday morning sermon at the local Maronite Church, brought by the priest Paul Sfeir, warned the flock of false prophets and stirred the congregation to take immediate action against the evangelical intruders. Church members then exited the Maronite Church to attack the evangelical Baptist church. On the morning following the attack, the local newspaper published an article by Mayor Tabet and Priest Sfeir to justify their shameful actions.

One week later, on August 2, the church gathered for prayer meeting with full knowledge of possible reprisals for their perseverance. Pastor Raymond left the building to retrieve something from a car (parked at a distance since the roads were still blocked) and discovered that tires had been slashed on members' vehicles. The mayor and ten men accosted the pastor and another church member and forced their way into the church, indiscriminately hitting men and women, insensible to the terrified screams of children. The mayor ripped the church's pulpit Bible and tore down the cross. His co-criminal followers then looted the church under the eyes of police, who took no action against the thieves. The church was sealed to prevent re-entry, the power lines to the building were cut, and rubble was deposited at the entrances. The appalling attack against the "heretical" Baptists was done in the name of religion and local politics. Certainly not all the town's citizens approved of this action against the church, and not all Maronite Church members were in favor of attacking a Christian church. But a short time later a local newspaper printed a triumphant article entitled, "The Maronites of Ajaltoun Cast Out the Baptists." The persecutors' victory would be short-lived.

Outsiders might ask how this could happen in a country with a democratic government. It must be remembered that although Lebanon has elected officials, the country continues to experience political turmoil. The last few years show the fragility of this nation.² The political and religious leaders of Ajaltoun used the isolation of their region during the

Israeli-Hezbollah War of July 2006 to engage in persecuting evangelical believers. Bridges were bombed; roads became impassable. The local police were unwilling to protect the Baptists, and the military was occupied and unable to protect them. In this vacuum the persecutors of God's people seized the moment to inflict their narrow views on a peaceful minority. At the time of writing this article (December 2007) Lebanon is again gripped by one of the worst political crises since the country's long civil war, which ended in 1990. The pro-Syrian President, Emile Lahoud, left office in November, and legislators have failed to reach a consensus on a new president. Such is life in Lebanon.

Does the church merely survive persecution, or can it thrive in the midst of suffering? In this case the church has thrived. Members are still unable to use their building, which is surrounded by rubble and mounds of stones. The Maronite Catholics are putting pressure on government officials to keep the roads to the property closed. Yet Pastor Raymond says, "They think that because they have cut the road to our building and hindered us from reaching our worship place that they have shut down our church. What they ignore is that our church exists regardless of the building. We exist because we are a group of living stones under the headship of Christ. In all the troubles and the attack the church did not stop one single service." Christ Bible Baptist Church has experienced spiritual growth and God's rich blessings. The church considers it a joy to suffer, to be persecuted, and to have its members beaten for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church seeks no revenge but desires to live according to this word:

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:19-21).

Let us pray for our brothers and sisters in the Middle East who, in their minority status, often bear reproach for their confession of Christ as Savior. And let us partner with them in reaching the Arab world with the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

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¹ The Maronite Church, a member of the Eastern Catholic Churches, is autonomous from Rome but is in communion with the See of Rome.

² Recent assassinations: Feb. 2005, former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri; April 2005, Member of Parliament Bassel Fleihan; June 2005, Anti-Syria journalist Samir Kassir; June 2005, Ex-Communist leader George Hawi; Dec. 2005, Anti-Syria Member of Parliament Gebran Tueni; Nov. 2006, Industry Minister Pierre Gemayel; June 2007, Anti-Syria Member of Parliament Walid Eido; Sept. 2007, Anti-Syria Member of Parliament Antoine Ghanim; Dec. 2007: Army Gen. Francois al-Hajj.

Persecution and Opposition

As Sundays go, it was ordinary enough. With church not scheduled to begin until 11:00, there was plenty of time to help the family get ready, stoke the fire one more time, and pick up the fresh-baked bread from the local bakery. Then we would drive the ten minutes from home to church in order to get the kerosene heaters going so that everyone would be cozy for the morning service and Sunday school.

We were ministering in the Basque region of Spain. We were not operating a covert church with meetings in sub-freezing temperatures in the middle of an Eastern European forest covered with a fresh blanket of snow. We were not required to obtain any special permission in order to meet. There was no state censorship of our preaching or activities.

The morning service was a blessing that day. Each family in our little congregation of about a dozen believers went its separate way to enjoy a quiet lunch at home. The husband and wife from Romania who brought a couple of other recent immigrants to Spain from Eastern Europe had a comfortable drive of about twenty minutes. The single man who made his weekly trek of nearly three hours would eventually arrive home after doing some emailing in a local hotel lobby while he sipped a cup of coffee. And the family that had driven from France to be with us returned home with their three adorable little girls, planning to return that evening as usual.

As for us, we had just that short, ten-minute drive before we could sit down to a lunch of roast chicken and potatoes. Such was, and is, life in Western Europe. For the most part, people just go about their own business, leaving everyone else alone. It is relatively affordable. And it is comfortable.

Persecution in Jesus' Day

Life was not comfortable in Jesus' day. Jesus said that He didn't even have a place to lay His head. And He faced more than mere discomfort—Jesus was actively persecuted in many ways. He was ridiculed by the religious leaders of His own nation—by God's people! He was attacked by angry mobs. He was expelled from various places because He was so different. Jesus was reviled by His own family, and He was finally put to death.

None of this happened unexpectedly. In His Sermon on the Mount Jesus Himself announced the blessedness of those who would be persecuted for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 5:10–12). He forewarned His disciples of the certainty of their future suffering for His sake, should they remain faithful (John 15:18–21). The apostle Paul, who undoubtedly suffered more, after Christ Himself, than any other Christian (cf. 2 Cor. 11:23–27), declared to “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus” that they would suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

Persecution vs. Opposition

A simple, albeit superficial, study of persecution in the Bible reveals at least two major types. First, there is true persecution. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines “persecution” as “cruel and unfair treatment of others.”

Another definition is “opposition.” Opposition is different in that there is not necessarily any cruelty involved, although it is “strong disagreement, with the aim of preventing something from happening.”

Another closely related definition for “opposition,” “the state of being as different as possible,” might account for some of the trials and tribulations Christians face when seeking to follow in Jesus' steps (cf. 1 Pet. 1:21). Human nature tends to view anything radically different as somehow inherently bad and therefore subject to ridicule. This may account for the absence of persecution in some places today. God's professing people have simply distanced themselves from the distinctively different nature of walking in the steps of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and have become so much like the world around them that those who might oppose them don't bother.

Opposition in Our Day

On that Sunday several years ago there were not as many of us in attendance for the evening service. Not long after the service began, it was interrupted by a growing volume of noise outside. It didn't take long for the disturbance to escalate into a gathering at the front door. Suddenly the door swung open, and there was the sound of footsteps

sprinting around the corner of the building mixed with shrieks and laughter.

This was not the first time we had experienced this kind of treatment. The children in the church neighborhood are left to themselves far too many hours each day. There are many broken homes, and what would elsewhere be considered delinquency is simply a part of life for young people. The doors of our sanctuary had been flung open previously, and it seemed like just a game to the perpetrators. This seems to be the nature of “persecution” here in Spain: it is really more opposition than true persecution.

Such opposition is clearly linked to the spiritual struggle that exists in heavenly places. The prince of the power of the air is not pleased when churches make inroads into his territory. Centuries ago Spain allowed, even instigated, the violent persecution of many Christians. Believers were tortured and killed in the name of the Inquisition. Such is not the case today. No such measures are needed, it seems, to quell the influence of God’s people here.

And yet, perhaps that is not the case. We are reminded of the situation in Daniel 10, where the angel appeared to Daniel and announced that from the first day that Daniel had prayed to God, the answer had been sent. However, it took the heavenly messenger twenty-one days to make it to

Then there was the time we were going to hold a DVBS at our church. When the day came there was actually a little group of children gathered at the front door eagerly waiting for us to get started. While we made the last few adjustments, the children suddenly disappeared! We found them flocked around a young mother. When we approached her to let her know what we had planned and to invite her to join us if she liked, she flatly refused to let them participate. What a blow! Opposition.

After prayer, we moved the DVBS outside. By the time we had finished that day’s club, all of the children who had been scattered had returned, and most had even joined in the fun and Bible time. As a bonus, the neighbors in nearby apartments had come out to their balconies to listen, and our outreach had actually doubled due to the opposition.

We have also had a parent refuse, because of our faith, to allow his son to attend an English class in which we were involved. We have been refused admittance to a couple of retirement homes in the area to present concerts prepared by visiting groups. On another occasion, when we were planning to start a regular children’s Bible club in a nearby town, the park where we had occasionally held children’s meetings was unusually empty. We finally found a woman who had ventured out to the park, and we

asked her what was going on. She told us plainly that they were not interested in having their children in such a Bible club. Most recently, we were refused when requesting the use of a local culture hall for an exposition of Bibles and a presentation of the history of the Bible in Spain.

WHILE PERSECUTION PER SE IS NOT COMMON HERE, THE OPPOSITION IS REAL. THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER OCCASIONS WHEN IT WAS VERY CLEAR TO US THAT THE ENEMY WAS NOT PLEASED WITH OUR ACTIVITIES AND WAS ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN OPPOSING GOD’S WORK.

A Biblical Response

Daniel in order to deliver the reply. How would we face such opposition today? We who get bent out of shape if our e-mail is not answered the same day, or even within the hour! May God open our eyes to our softness and to our irreverent view of Christian suffering and Biblical persecution and opposition. The passage in Daniel 10 states in verse 13 that “the prince of the kingdom of Persia *withstood*” the angelic messenger. That was a case of satanic opposition! This was a spiritual battle raging in the heavens because one man was mourning (v. 2) and fasting (v. 3) for three full weeks (v. 2b). Is it possible that we face relatively little opposition today because we face the floor in prayer relatively little as well?

Other Examples

While persecution per se is not common here, the opposition is real. There have been other occasions when it was very clear to us that the enemy was not pleased with our activities and was actively involved in opposing God’s work. Early on, after we had lived here for only a year or two, our landlady told us that a relative of hers had warned her about our being some kind of “big-time-TV-evangelists” out to get people’s money!

At present, open persecution is not rampant here in Spain, but the opposition is real. How are we to deal with such trials and tribulations? Returning once again to Daniel 10, in verse 19 we are told what God wants us to realize in times of opposition. First, He wants us to recognize His love. Daniel was addressed as one “greatly beloved.” Certainly none today would put himself in the same category as God’s beloved prophet, but we must remember that all believers are “accepted in the beloved” in Christ (Eph. 1:6). Take heart, beloved sufferer of opposition or persecution! God’s love is real for those who are “in Christ.”

Second, we must refuse to fear. Daniel was told to “fear not.” Fear reveals a lack of trust. How can we fear when He who will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5b) is near? Third, God would have us rest in peace. This play on words should not go unnoticed. It may be that the persecution will cost us our lives. Daniel’s friends had declared as much when they were presented with the options of the fiery furnace or bowing to the image of the pagan king, Nebuchadnezzar. They were perfectly at rest, confident in God’s faithful care when they stated that “our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery

furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Dan. 3: 17, 18). Happy the man who lives in such a way that should his time come to die, he has no arrangements to make, nothing to take care of, because he rests in peace.

Fourth, we need to receive strength from God. In the Lord's strength, mountains can be moved by faith, and "they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run,

and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:31).

Last, Daniel responded, saying "Let my lord speak." It is imperative to renew our confidence in God's Word. It is God's Word that "is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword" (Heb. 4:12). God will sustain His children when they are tried. May the Lord find us faithful when persecution and opposition rise up against us.

Roger Bergman and his family have been in a church-planting ministry in the Basque region of Spain since 1991, serving under WWNTB Mission, Kings Mountain, North Carolina.



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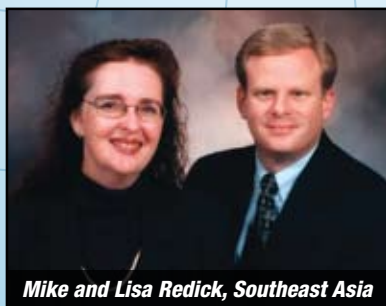
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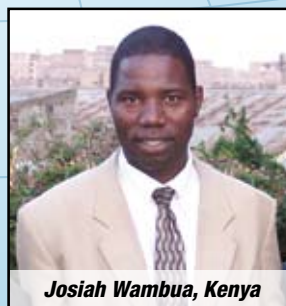
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Ministry in the Land of Oz



On some ancient maps Australia was known as *Terra Australis del Espiritu Santu*—the Great South Land of the Holy Spirit. It was known on other ancient maps as *Terra Australis Incognita*—the Unknown South Land. Today we know it as the island continent, the Land Down Under, and, to the Aussie, “Oz.” But this land of 21 million people is not the great spiritual oasis one might think when you think of the Great South Land of the Holy Spirit. Except for its coastal fringe, it is a dry, barren land, described in a portion of the Australian poem, “My Country,” by Dorothea MacKellar.

I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror—
The wide brown land for me!

Laboring in this vast land since 1974 has taught me that Australia is a dry and barren spiritual wasteland. Though there may be denominational churches throughout the land, there is an underlying rot and decay that have eaten away at the soul of the nation.

Starting out as a British penal colony (Botany Bay) in 1788, Australia was colonized by many British, Scottish, and Irish settlers coming here to make their fortunes. With the convicts and the settlers came their profanities and their religions and philosophies. But eventually out of this mix came forth a nation built through the hard work and courage of the Australians. Churches and denominations steadily followed the British, Scottish, and Irish settlers.

Some History

A nation that has sent its forces to fight in the Boer War in Africa, the First World War, the Second World War, the Korean War, the Malayan Conflict, the Viet Nam War, and presently in East Timor, Afghanistan, and Iraq, Australia has lived with the sacrifices necessary to make people free.

In the 1950s, following major wars, there was a consciousness of God, even a semblance of reverence. There used to be very high standards and moral values in this nation, but that is not the case today. The decline is attributed to many things, but first and foremost the blame must be laid at the door of the church groups when one considers the compromises and concessions that have been made to go down the paths of Modernism, Liberalism, Neo-orthodoxy, and Neo-Evangelicalism. And you would be amazed at the Fundamentalists today around our world, Australia and America included, who are using the same language, terminology, arguments, and definitions (maybe even the dictionaries) of these old enemies of the years gone by.

But getting back to the point—there are two other main factors that have led to the nation’s spiritual decline, hurt the cause of Christ, and hindered the winning of the lost: the Ecumenical and Charismatic movements. Right now, these are the main stumbling blocks that we have to deal

with. Even when we win people to Christ, there is still that old Ecumenical habit that many will fall back on or into. It is no wonder we lose converts to these movements, even though we give strong doctrinal teaching against them. The rebellious nature within man wants to take the easy way, and such compromise is the easy way for some, even though it goes against the truth of Scripture.

We know that there will be apostasy and rejection of truth and that there will be a falling away from the faith and that men will turn away their ears from the truth and will be turned unto fables (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 4:2–4). We are at that point right now. We are obligated to expose these things in order to exhort, edify, educate, and encourage believers. As Paul told Timothy, “Preach the Word.” If this had been done forty or fifty years ago, maybe it would have slowed down the rate of decay and rot.

Social Ills

But, as it was in many other nations, when the music of rebellion hit here in the 1950s and ‘60s, it accelerated the rot and the cancer that had set in. With all this came the drugs, immoral sex (spurred on by the miniskirt and the introduction of the contraceptive pill), and the hippies. It was a moral and spiritual disaster from which Australia has never recovered.

Many other obstacles must be recognized and dealt with, such as the Feminist Movement, the Peace Movement, Animal Rights Activists, and, of course, Gay Rights Activists. These have huge influence, even becoming a part of some religious denominations.

State and federal government legislation is also hobbling missionaries as they try to preach the gospel and establish churches here—especially legislation that tries to silence preaching against homosexuality/sodomy, against the heresies of Islam, and against other cults such as Mormonism and Jehovah’s Witnesses. There are many traveling around this country parroting what is being said in Britain, Canada, and the USA about the preaching of the Bible being “hate speech.” Hello! We’d better wake up! The Devil is trying to have us silenced!

Two preachers have already been prosecuted here in Victoria for vilifying Islam, and the biggest name is secular radio here, John Laws (not a Christian), has been prosecuted for vilifying homosexuals. And there is more to come.

Australian parents (both Christian and non-Christian) have been prosecuted and lost their children to welfare agencies and foster care because they spanked—not abused, but simply spanked—their children. So this issue puts us at odds with the various government agencies when we are preaching about Scriptural child discipline.

Though we must never stop preaching what we preach, we must be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, prepared for and expecting the unexpected. I speak this from experience. Back in 1987 someone turned us in for spanking our children and for not having them in the school system. (We were homeschooling them.) Sure enough, one day the government agencies were knocking on our door

investigating us and our religious beliefs and practices. God has been good—we were investigated but never prosecuted. We did take the government to task on radio, from the pulpit, and by confronting the ministers in charge of those agencies.

Blessed Liberty

All thanks go to God for the liberty we have had preaching the gospel in the midst of all the hindrances, hobbles, and harassments. The State (Queensland) Police service has given us permits to preach on the streets and give out gospel tracts since 1982. We were given (yes, given) six-and-a-half years preaching the gospel on secular community radio, without restrictions, up to three times per week. I’m sure the Lord worked that out for us.

And since 2001 we have had free access and liberty at two public schools to teach the Word of God to classes ranging from grade one through grade seven. We teach 180–200 kids weekly with their teachers also present. We are allowed to answer the questions the kids ask us in class. What great opportunities to answer so many different

ALL THANKS GO TO GOD FOR THE LIBERTY WE HAVE HAD PREACHING THE GOSPEL IN THE MIDST OF ALL THE HINDRANCES, HOBBOLES, AND HARASSMENTS.

questions. Now, these classes are not something we take lightly, and for these we praise the Lord!

Missionaries and pastors are preaching God’s Word in Australia, though there are very few of us, and God is going to honor that because He promised He would give the increase from the seed that is sown. We know of many who have been saved, but there are many others who have been saved whom we don’t know about and won’t know about until the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Applying God’s Word

Romans 1:16: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” We must always remember the authority of God’s Word and never be ashamed of it, for it will not return void. It is the power of God to save souls and change lives.

First Thessalonians 2:4: “But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.” We must never compromise or make concessions regarding God’s Word just to please men.

And finally, we should always stay awake, stand alert, and sound the alarms, for the enemy is on the prowl: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8).

Bernie Hong has been a missionary to Australia for over thirty-three years. He pastors Foundations Baptist Church in Mackay, Queensland.



Behind the Barbed Wire in Russia

To say that Christians in Russia suffered persecution during most of the twentieth century would be a monumental understatement. A major goal of the Soviet Union was to strangle out the church and to create a society devoid of religion—"the opiate of the people," as Karl Marx called it.

Even before the October Revolution of 1917, Baptists faced persecution under Russian Orthodox czars. Nikita Voronin (1840–1905)—the first Russian to adopt the title "Baptist"—was targeted for special punishment and twice shipped away for years of internal exile. The same fate awaited Martin Kalveit, the German preacher who baptized Voronin.¹ Those reprisals provided foreshadowing for decades of oppression to come.

How many believers in the USSR experienced prison, labor camp, or a martyr's death for their faith in the Lord? In his book *Oblako Svidetelei Khristovyx* [*Cloud of Christ's Witnesses*], author Leonid Kovalenko writes, "We cite facts received from reliable sources concerning the quantity of repressed brothers and sisters in a few cities in the 1930s and 1940s . . . ; from this it's possible to conclude that the number of repressed ECB [Evangelical Christian Baptists] in the 1930s and 1940s was thousands and thousands."²

Russian preacher and author Georgi Vins (exiled to the US in 1979) presented more specific figures. Writing only about the 1930s, the years in which his father was executed, Vins stated, "In that decade, 25,000 Baptist pastors and preachers were arrested in the USSR. Of that number, 22,000 were shot or died in prison camps. In dire circumstances, they preserved faithfulness to God. . . ."³

In January 2008 Dr. Michael Bourdeaux of Keston Institute (a major resource center concerning religion in Communist lands) wrote, "During the 1920s and '30s virtually all churches closed in the Soviet Union, leaving perhaps about 100 Orthodox churches and one Catholic church open. There were probably no Protestant churches open at all, though their life continued underground. . . . Among the 30 million (??) who died in Stalin's purges, how many were religious prisoners? No one knows."⁴

Christians in the USSR suffered other forms of oppression as well. Discrimination included slander, public mockery, being barred from institutions of higher learning, and limited job opportunities. Well into the 1980s, police sprang surprise raids to search Christian homes for Bibles.

Even schoolchildren were not exempt. Men and women reared in Christian families still tell of days when they were summoned to the front of a classroom or an auditorium and asked, "Do you believe in God?" or "Are you a Baptist?"

When a child replied, "Yes," teachers led the other students in laughing and humiliating them.

But statistics are impersonal. Readers easily gloss over them. So, to "bring alive" the plight that Russia's believers suffered, let's take a close-up look at just one case.

A Lifelong Decision

Even as a child Peter Rumachik (born 1931) saw that life for Christians wasn't easy in his country. Seeing his mother's firm faith in God, he decided that someday he would follow Christ—but not until he was fifty or sixty years old.

Then, when Peter was eighteen, the suicide of a friend shocked him. He realized that he needed a reason to live. Three months later, while walking through a frozen forest, he knelt in the snow. There he repented of his sins and asked God to cleanse his heart. At the same time, he determined to serve God for the rest of his life even though he knew that believers were sometimes arrested as criminals.

In 1953 Peter married a Christian girl named Luba. Two years later, he was ordained to ministry in the city of Dyedovsk, a Moscow suburb. When Joseph Stalin died and Nikita Krushchev took leadership of the nation, persecution temporarily halted. So in 1956 Peter, Luba, and several Christian men started a house church.

"Many thirsty souls listened to the gospel and accepted Christ," he recalls. "This was the first experience we had had in planting a church. No one taught us how to do it, but God through His Holy Spirit showed us how to proceed, how to live, how to portray Christ and His salvation in our actions and words."

Arrested

Even though the believers met in private homes, Peter's activities didn't escape the notice of police. In 1961 they arrested him and other church leaders.

"The church essentially met underground," Peter explains. "Police units would burst into services held in private homes, forcefully take people out, and throw them into the back of trucks. Then they would take them and drop them off on some uninhabited road in the forest some thirty to fifty kilometers outside the city."

As punishment for his religious activities, Peter was sentenced to five years of exile in a remote Siberian village.

"All during the trip while I was being shipped to distant Siberia, I was praying that the Lord would send me to precisely that place where in His consideration I would be needed."

God answered. In Peter's place of exile, he discovered a small group of elderly Christian women who hadn't had a

pastor in eleven years.

"Brother Peter," they said, "the fact that you're here is an answer to our prayers."

Peter saw confirmation that his arrest was by God's permission. He and the elderly women began praying and worshipping together. By the time Peter's term of exile ended, he left behind a vibrant village church.

More Prisons . . .

Back home with his family, Peter resumed preaching God's Word. His "stubbornness" earned the wrath of Communist authorities. Again and again Peter was arrested and shipped away, either to prisons or to labor camps.

Prison officials were infuriated that Peter prayed, sang hymns, and shared his faith with convicts. One warden threatened, "If you don't stop praying to God, then we'll keep you in prison for the rest of your life!"

However, Peter states, "I decided that even if the Lord allowed me to spend my entire life suffering for His name in prison—even if I should die there in jail—then I wanted all of that to bring glory to Him."

He confesses that his health often deteriorated and that he frequently reached the end of his physical strength. But he doesn't credit his survival to his own stamina. Rather, he notes that each time the challenges were greatest, God intervened.

Miserable Moments and Blessings

In the Perm Prison, the administration ordered Peter to cease praying. When he didn't obey, he was summoned to the commander's office.

"Because you prayed today in direct disobedience to the administration, we're going to put you in the 'hole,'" the commander announced.

Peter dreaded the frigid punishment cell, but God foiled the commander's plans. The main boilers for the prison broke down, and it was winter. Peter and another prisoner were the only ones with experience repairing boilers. So instead of punishing him for praying, the lieutenant commander assigned him to boiler repairs.

"I praised God, for I had clearly seen His hand. These people had intended to kill me off in a cold isolation cell, but here God had dropped the temperature to take out the boilers, so the tables were turned."

Sometimes convicts questioned why he was in prison. If God is real, wasn't He powerful enough to protect Peter?



February 1987—Family and friends met Peter at the train station when he returned from his fifth prison sentence. Sadly, untold numbers of families of arrested believers never saw their loved ones alive again.

He replied, "I'm here to serve the Lord. . . . God has brought me along this path so that you might be able to hear about God while I'm here in prison."

Sometimes a prisoner—or a guard—would listen as the imprisoned pastor explained the gospel. And so, even in dank, gloomy cells, souls surrendered to the Savior, including at least one murderer and a kingpin among the convicts.

Unexpected Freedom

On February 6, 1987, Peter Rumachik returned home from his fifth prison sentence. All together, he spent over eighteen years in bonds for his Lord.

Now seventy-six, Peter still preaches, wins souls, and seeks to edify younger believers. Under the auspices of Baptist International Evangelistic Ministries (BIEM), he has traveled numerous times to the US, where he has shared his testimony in Fundamental Baptist churches and challenged American believers to stand firm for God. In 2004 he addressed the FBFI's Northern California Fellowship at Lucerne Christian Camp.

Since 1990 the church in Dyedovsk that he helped plant has been sending out trained men and women to establish churches in other communities.

Summarizing his thoughts concerning all the changes and new opportunities for evangelism is easy for the soft-spoken preacher: "Praise be to our Lord for all things! Alleluia, amen."

Rick Barry formerly served as Assistant to Georgi Vins and Administrative Vice President of Russian Gospel Ministries. Today he is Director of Church Planting Ministries at BIEM. In July 2007 BJU Press released his WWII novel, *Gunner's Run*.

¹ For a detailed account on N. Voronin, the origin of Baptist churches in Russia, and early persecution of Baptist believers, see the September/October 2002 *FrontLine* article "The First Russian Baptists," by Rick Barry, pp. 9–10.

² Kovalenko, Leonid. *Oblako svidetelei Khristovyx dlya narodov Rossii v XIX–XX vekakh*. Sacramento: Self-published, 1996, p. 9 [translated from the Russian].

³ Vins, Georgi. "Sixty Years Later—the Rest of the Story," *The Russian Gospel Messenger*, November/December 1995, Russian Gospel Ministries, p. 2.

⁴ Bourdeaux, Michael. Personal letter to the author concerning figures on persecution in the USSR. January 9, 2008.

DIGGING DEEPER

Would you like to learn more about the life of persecuted believers during Soviet times? Peter Rumachik's inspiring life story is available in his book, *A Path Not Lined with Roses*. To

order a copy, send \$15 to Baptist International Evangelistic Ministries, P.O. Box 707, Danville, IN 46122-0707. Proceeds go toward planting new churches in Russia.

On the Home Front

FBFI NEWS AND EVENTS

2008 Meetings

March 10-11, 2008

Mid-Atlantic Regional Fellowship
Bible Baptist Church
412 Old Washington Pike
Pittsburgh, PA 15106
412.276.7717

March 17-19, 2008

Northwest Regional Fellowship
First Baptist Church
1105 N Road 36
Pasco, WA 99301
509.547.5814

April 7-8, 2008

South Regional Fellowship
Morningside Baptist Church
1115 Pelham Road
Greenville, SC 29615
864.297.7890

April 25-26, 2008

Mid-America Regional Fellowship
Pillsbury Baptist Bible College
315 S Grove Avenue
Owatonna, MN 55060
507.451.2710

June 10-12, 2008

88th Annual Fellowship
Bethel Baptist Church
754 E Rockhill Road
Sellersville, PA 18960
215.536.9200

July 28-30, 2008

Alaska Regional Fellowship
Pioneer Baptist Church
3391 Old Richardson Highway
North Pole, AK 99705
907.488.4829
akfbf@earthlink.net

September 13, 2008

Mid-Atlantic Leadership Conference
Calvary Baptist Church
2000 Broad Ave
Findlay, OH 45840
419.422.6842

October 11, 2008

Mid-America Leadership Conference
Bethel Baptist Church
200 N Roselle Road
Schaumburg, IL 60194
847.885.3230

October 20-21, 2008

New Mexico Regional Fellowship
Northwest Baptist Church
402 San Clemente NW
Albuquerque, NM 87107
505.344.5544

South Central Regional Fellowship
Stony Point Baptist Church
7938 Barnett Ave
Kansas City, KS 66112
913.299.4774

November 10-11, 2008

Southern California Regional Fellowship
Camp Ironwood
49191 Cherokee Rd.
Newberry Springs, CA 92365
760.257.3503

November 13-14, 2008

Northern California Regional Fellowship
Castlepoint Ministries (Camp Lucerne)
3700 Country Club Dr.
PO Box 487, Lucerne, CA 95458
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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

Good Water from an Old Well

No doubt there are thousands of religious books that were hugely profitable in their time but are seldom read today. One runs across them on the shelves of used book stores. But when you pull them down for a curious look, you're too often put off by allusions to events long forgotten, quotations from authors unfamiliar, and (to us) stilted expressions and tediously long sentences. These are impediments enough to make us sigh and return these dubious treasures to their shelves without a further glance.

The regrettable thing, however, is that some of these works treat really timeless truths with a rare insight seldom found in contemporary authors on the same subjects. Sad to say, Christian writers of the past seem often to have been more widely read, more thoughtfully analytical about what they read, and better able to express themselves logically and stylistically about it than most who write today. Perhaps they were simply better educated.

Over the years I've enjoyed and profited from resurrecting forgotten titles. Reading them is a little bit like picking blackberries. All of the previously mentioned snags that lurk in them give one reading them the feeling of wading about in a bramble, but the fruit is uncommonly good. One example.

Few pastors probably know the name R. W. Dale (1829–95). He's one of the many ministers I've been referring to whose influence was immense in his own day but whose memory has faded to almost nothing in our own. Dale pastored Carr's Lane Church in Birmingham, England, ascended to leadership in his denomination, and was even influential in British politics.

From the Carr's Lane pulpit Dale preached doctrinal sermons, some of which

were subsequently printed in series that until relatively recent times continued to be widely read (*The Atonement*, *The Ten Commandments*, *Ephesians*, *James*, etc.). An older preacher said to Dale one day, *I hear you are preaching doctrinal sermons at Carr's Lane. They will not stand it.* Dale replied, *They will have to stand it.*

Not only did his people stand it, they loved it, and Dale went on to pastor the church for thirty-six years. He wasn't entirely orthodox, but he did love the Lord and the gospel. He had his church sing a resurrection hymn every Sunday morning in order to remind his people that they were worshipping a living Lord. The practice stemmed from a vivid experience he had while preparing an Easter sermon. The truth of Christ's physical resurrection gripped him with such transforming power that he jumped up from his desk and began pacing his room exclaiming aloud, *Christ is living! Christ is living!*

Perhaps the one thing Dale left of permanent value is a series on preaching he delivered at Yale College in 1877. It certainly hasn't benefited from its colorless title, *Nine Lectures on Preaching*. Though much of it is dated or superseded by contemporary works, it nevertheless remains somewhat of a classic in the field. I'd like to resurrect for this column a small portion of his eighth lecture, entitled "Pastoral Preaching." I beg forgiveness of any who may own the entire book and compare my edited version of this chapter with the original. I'm taking liberties with it, for sure. For instance, the subheadings are my own, not Dale's. Occasionally I've substituted a word for one of his that is outdated and sure to be misunderstood. Worst of all, out of the over forty pages I'm giving only a few. But perhaps my license will ensure a wider reading. I trust that Dale would approve.

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

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Establishing Right Relations between Preacher and People

I trust that you will enter upon your ministry with a right conception of the relations between yourselves and your people. I shall not be so discourteous as to suppose that it is necessary to warn you against the grosser kinds of ministerial selfishness; but I trust that you will always remember that ministers exist for churches—not churches for ministers.

There is a certain measure of respect due from the people to their pastor; you are most likely to receive it if you do not claim it; you will never receive it at all if you forget that there is a certain measure of respect due from the pastor to the people. There is an authority belonging to the man who holds the ministerial office—an authority hard to define, but the recognition of which is essential to the peace of the church and to its vigorous

Have we any reason to believe that even intelligent Christian men and women read the Scriptures intelligently? Do not many excellent persons seem to suppose that if they read a chapter in the Bible, whether they understand it or not, they have performed a religious duty, and are certain to receive religious benefit?

action. This authority will be most frankly and loyally conceded if you do not ostentatiously assert it. It will be refused if you do not habitually recognize the authority belonging to the church.

One of your first objects should be to secure the confidence of your people. They will get very little good from your preaching unless they trust you. You and they are to work together; mutual trust is indispensable if you are to work together happily. To secure their confidence it is not enough that you deserve it. There are some young ministers who are upright, unselfish, chivalrous, devout, loyal to Christ, and who yet put a severe strain on the generosity of their congregations. They thoughtlessly and wantonly provoke suspicion. So far as the substance of their creed is concerned, it is precisely identical with the creed of the people to whom they are preaching. But the form is different; and by their incessant attacks on what they suppose to be the unsatisfactory form in which the truth is commonly held, they create the impression that they reject the truth itself. This is sheer folly. The result is that they surround themselves with an atmosphere of distrust. Even if, in connection with the central and fundamental truths of the Christian faith, many of their people hold what they believe to be pernicious errors, they will act

wisely if, before attacking the errors, they have placed their own loyalty to the truth beyond suspicion.

Instructional Preaching

In England there is an impression that modern sermons are generally defective in the element of instruction. If so, I think that the fault lies with the churches themselves as well as with the preachers. If there is to be teaching in the pulpit, there must be intellectual activity in the pew; and there are some good Christian people who have yet to learn that they ought to serve God not only “with the spirit” but “with the understanding also.” One Sunday morning when I was a lad, I heard an excellent minister offer the prayer that God would grant the congregation during that day “intellectual repose,” and I am inclined to think that very many of the people silently said *Amen*.

Have we any reason to believe that even intelligent Christian men and women read the Scriptures intelligently? Do not many excellent persons seem to suppose that if they read a chapter in the Bible, whether they understand it or not, they have performed a religious duty, and are certain to receive religious benefit? In the Epistles, and even in the Gospels—to say nothing of the Old Testament prophecies—are there not many words, many phrases, whole sentences, long paragraphs, to which people who have been reading the Bible all their lives attach no meaning at all? When they are reading chapters with which they are most familiar, do they not come to crevasse after crevasse, over which they leap as best they can. And yet these very people have been listening twice a week for thirty or forty or fifty years to the discourses of men whose function is to explain, illustrate and enforce the contents of Holy Scripture.

When I began my ministry it was my custom to preach expository sermons, in which I carefully explained and illustrated, clause by clause, verse by verse by verse, a group of chapters or a complete book of Holy Scripture. Of late I have adopted what seems to me a better method.

In the earlier part of the service I read a dozen or twenty verses of the book I am expounding, beginning, of course, where I left off on the previous Sunday, and often prefacing the reading with a brief summary of what has gone before. Sometimes I venture to make a change in the translation, if I am quite sure that the translation is inaccurate, or that the change will make the meaning plainer or more vivid. If there are any sentences which are at all obscure, I give brief explanatory comments. When the whole passage is clear and intelligible, I read it without explanatory comments, for to explain what requires no explanation will perplex people instead of instructing them. Even in this case I often fasten on a particular verse or a particular phrase, to show how it annihilates some common error, or strengthens the evidence of some great truth, or rebukes some sin, or suggests a solemn or pathetic motive to the exercise of some Christian virtue.

The text of the sermon is selected from the passage

which I have read. If the passage is a consecutive argument in support of any doctrine, or an exhortation to the discharge of a moral or religious duty, or the expression of any sentiment or emotion—this doctrine, duty, emotion, or sentiment is generally the subject of the sermon. If the passage treats of a succession of truths or duties it is sometimes my endeavor to show how they are related to each other; sometimes I take one of them and leave the rest.

Occasionally the sermon consists of a review of the contents of three or four chapters which have been read on previous Sundays. Sometimes when I have finished a book I have given a summary of the whole of it. I have found that a summary of the Epistle to the Galatians was quite as exciting as a fiery pamphlet on some question of modern party politics.

The advantages of this method of exposition over that which I used to follow seem to me to be very great. It is possible to get over the ground more rapidly. It also seems to me more effective. Our practice of preaching from texts has accustomed people to try what they can discover in single sentences, and even single phrases of the Bible, and to disregard the general current and structure of the argument or history. The minute exposition of clause after clause will confirm their evil habit. They seem to think that the best way to get a right conception of the Rhine, or of the Falls of Niagara, is to examine separate drops of the water under a microscope. The expository method which I have followed for some years past is likely, I think, to lead people to read the Bible as they read other books, and to look not merely at separate thoughts and fragments of separate thoughts.

Nurturing the Spiritual Life of a Church

As a pastor you will be very much more than a teacher. You will have to cultivate the religious life of your people. This will be one of your gravest duties, and it will be one that ought to occasion the most anxious thoughts.

Your sermons, your prayers, your conversation with your people will largely determine the color and complexion of their religious character. The truths upon which you preach most frequently, the advice which you give to your congregation about the culture of devout affections and the formation of moral and spiritual habits, the characteristic elements and prevailing spirit of your public prayers, must powerfully affect for good or evil the growth of their religious life.

Would it not be wise to study the principal types of the spiritual life as they are represented in the few great devotional books which have won their way to the very hearts of Christian men? I refer to such books as . . .

[Editor's note: Dale here recommends titles still considered classics, such as Augustine's Confessions, Richard Baxter's The Saints' Everlasting Rest, John Bunyan's Grace Abounding and Pilgrim's Progress, and John Owen's Spiritual-Mindedness. Others he recommends have fallen almost completely out of common recognition

or are of doubtful orthodoxy. But his recommending a pastor's studying church history's great devotional literature, even that with which he doesn't agree, is an outstanding principle. Examples of titles that he didn't include, but which have proven to retain the universal appeal to God's people he has in mind, would be works such as Andrew Bonar's Diary and Life, Robert Murray McCheyne's Memoir and Remains, several of A. W. Tozer's works, E. M. Bounds' Power through Prayer, and Spurgeon's sermons.]

If there are any books of the same popular [e.g., "contemporary"] kind which have exerted a similar influence on the religious life of the churches of this country, these too should receive your careful attention. Their popularity is a proof that they represent the religious ideal which fascinated the popular mind, and that their writers were in the main stream of the popular life and sympathies.

Your sermons, your prayers, your conversation with your people will largely determine the color and complexion of their religious character. The truths upon which you preach most frequently, the advice which you give to your congregation about the culture of devout affections and the formation of moral and spiritual habits, the characteristic elements and prevailing spirit of your public prayers, must powerfully affect for good or evil the growth of their religious life.

Among the considerations which books like these would suggest, will be the different results produced by the different degrees of prominence which have been given at different times to particular elements of the Christian creed. You will be led to investigate the true limits within which self-examination should be confined, and the evils which the soul suffers from habitual introversion. You will consider how far asceticism is a legitimate and healthy aid to Christian living—that is, how far we may attempt to escape from sin by avoiding the occasions of sin, and how far we should trust for safety to the victorious power of the higher life of the soul, or, rather to the victorious power of the Spirit of Christ. You will consider to what extent conflicting theological systems such as Calvinism and Arminianism have received a practical verification from their effects on the spiritual life.

These studies will give depth and earnestness to

your own religious earnestness. They will save you, in the temper and spirit of your religious life, from that which in the intellectual life has been called Provincialism. They will protect you from being mastered and fascinated by writers and preachers who from time to time produce a very powerful impression by the exhibition of isolated aspects of spiritual truth which, because they are isolated, have many of the effects of the worst and most pernicious errors.

These studies will have a most important relation to your preaching. They will enrich your knowledge of the laws, the perils, and the triumphs of the spiritual life, and they will do something to prevent you from treating the spiritual life of your people unwisely.

Let your congregation have the “Bread of Life.” Instead of merely complaining to them of the absence of brotherly kindness, preach sermons which are likely to make them more vividly conscious that they are brethren in Christ.

There are, I believe, few congregations in which some persons may not be found whose religious nature has received serious and permanent injury from the very intensity of earnestness with which they have endeavored to translate into practice false ideals of Christian character, of the nature of holiness, and artificial methods of spiritual discipline. These unhappy people are likely to enter into the kingdom of heaven halt and maimed through the lack of larger spiritual wisdom on the part of their religious teachers. Our work lies with the soul of man in its Divine relations, and we shall not do our work intelligently and effectively unless we give a considerable measure of time and thought to the investigation of the various phases which the spiritual life has assumed in the history of Christendom.


It is hardly necessary for me to remind you that for the Divine ideal of Christian character our ultimate authority is the New Testament. You will study, both for your own sake and for the sake of your people, the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is at once the law and the promise of Christian perfection; and you will endeavor so to preach that your people shall “abide” in Him by faith, by love and by loyal obedience to His commandments. You will also endeavor to reconstruct for yourselves the conception of the Christian character which is suggested by the precepts, the prayers, the thanksgiv-

ings, and the incidental disclosures of the personal life of the apostles, in the epistles of the New Testament.

We ought not to take it for granted that most Christian people know what they ought to be. Some important elements seem to be suppressed in the common ideal of Christian perfection. Take a single illustration. In St. Paul’s account of “the fruits of the Spirit,” he gives the first place to Love, and we acknowledge that a Christian man who has an unloving, ungenerous, unkindly heart is hardly a Christian at all. But he gives the second place to Joy, and it is my impression that there are many of us who seldom think of Joy as a necessary and indispensable element in our conception of a saint. We ask God to forgive us for our evil thoughts and evil temper, but rarely, if ever, ask Him to forgive us for our sadness. Joy is regarded as a happy accident of the Christian life, an ornament and a luxury, rather than a duty. We forget that we are commanded to “rejoice evermore.” It should be one of the objects of our ministry to deepen and heighten the joy of Christian hearts, as well as to strengthen reverence for God’s authority and to increase the fervor of zeal for His glory.

In trying to cultivate Christian perfection, we must not satisfy ourselves with censuring people for being imperfect. You will not do much towards sanctifying your people by scolding them. Perpetual fault-finding does no good: it is bad for children, bad for servants, and it is bad for churches. It is mere indolence, and it is sometimes ill-temper, which leads a minister to indulge in perpetual condemnation. Nor will you do much if you merely tell people over and over again that they ought to be better. Men are not to be worried into goodness. Many preachers give their congregation all medicine and no food. The medicine may be excellent of its kind, admirable if prescribed occasionally. But medicine, week after week, all the year round; medicine Sunday morning at eleven, and every Sunday evening at half-past six; medicine again at the prayer meeting on Wednesday—ugh!—it is intolerable. It is pernicious as well as offensive. It is enough to ruin the health of the most vigorous church.

Let your congregation have the “Bread of Life.” Instead of merely complaining to them of the absence of brotherly kindness, preach sermons which are likely to make them more vividly conscious that they are brethren in Christ. Instead of satisfying yourself with finding fault with them for their want of zeal, ask how you can stimulate it. Speak sharp words occasionally in condemnation of covetousness, but return again and again to those parts of the gospel which inspire generosity.

Deplore, if you must, the inconstancy of many Christian people in right-doing, the languor of their spiritual affections, their indifference to the supreme objects of the Christian life; but remember that mere lamentations will work no deliverance for them. You must consider by what truths, by what method and spirit of teaching, you can develop among them all the energetic forces and all the noble excellences of Christian character. 

Mark Minnick is pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, where he has served on the pastoral staff since 1980.

Bring . . . the Books

The Life and Song of Fanny Crosby

This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long! The refrain to “Blessed Assurance,” one of the most loved hymns in English hymnody, captures the life story of the hymn’s author, Fanny Crosby. The words also serve as the title to a delightful sketch of her life and ministry written by her close friend and minister, S. Travena Jackson. First published in 1915 within months of Fanny Crosby’s death, it was reprinted by Ambassador Publications in 1995. My copy is a reprint from 2001.

Fanny was born on March 24, 1820, in Putman County, New York. Her first year of life was marked by two severe trials that would ultimately prove to be the soil that produced the rich harvest of hymns—some 9000 in all. She lost her eyesight when she was just six weeks old, and her father died shortly before her first birthday. Due to the influence and positive encouragement of a godly mother, however, Fanny learned to see these physical losses as part of God’s good and gracious plan. She commented to her biographer, “Soon I learned what other children possessed, but I made up my mind to store away a little jewel in my heart which I call Content. This has been the comfort of my whole life. When I was eight years of age I wrote:

O what a happy soul am I!
Although I cannot see,
I am resolved that in this world
Contented I will be.”

She came to Christ as a young girl through the influence of her grandmother, who read the Scripture to her for hours on end. At the age of fifteen she enrolled at the New York Institute for the Blind and upon graduation enjoyed a lengthy teaching ministry at her alma mater. There she met a fellow student who was also blind, Alexander Van Alstyne, whom she married in 1858. They had a child who died in infancy. After forty-four years of marriage, Alexander died in 1902.

In 1868 her hymn “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior” brought her national acclaim as a hymnwriter when it came to the attention of Ira Sankey. Her powerful lyrics couched in a simple writing style “connected” with people in the pews, and before long Fanny Crosby’s hymns were being sung by congregations around the world.

She would often delight listeners by recounting stories about her hymns and the way God chose to use them for His glory. The story she repeatedly recounted about her hymn “Rescuing

the Perishing” is a powerful example.

Many of my hymns were written after experiences in New York mission work. This one was thus written. I was addressing a large company of working men one hot summer evening, when the thought kept forcing itself on my mind that some mother’s boy must be rescued that night or not at all. So I made a pressing plea that if there were a boy present who had wandered from his mother’s home and teaching, he would come to me at the close of the service. A young man of eighteen came forward and said, “Did you mean me? I promised my mother to meet her in heaven, but as I am now living that will be impossible.” We prayed for him and he finally arose with a new light in his eyes and exclaimed in triumph: “Now I can meet my mother in heaven, for I have found God.”

The hymn for which she is best remembered is “Blessed Assurance.” Written in 1873, the lyrics summarize her ninety-five years of life and ministry on this earth before joining her Savior in Heaven on February 12, 1915. Her biographer noted five outstanding characteristics of her life: diligent industry, a wonderful memory, outstanding unselfishness, unfailing joyousness, and unfailing sympathy. These were the qualities God would use to shape her life and to bring to His Body a rich treasure of spiritual songs and hymns.

In an age when many are looking for fresh music to touch the heart and stir the soul, a look back to the music produced by this choice instrument of God might prove to be a rich source of blessing. ☞

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

Dr. Sam Horn is Vice President of Ministerial Training and Dean of Graduate Studies at Northland Baptist Bible College in Dunbar, Wisconsin. He also serves as senior pastor of Brookside Baptist Church in Brookfield.

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Straight Cuts

The Peace of God—Colossians 3:15

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful (Colossians 3:15).

This text is often used as a guideline for personal decision-making: the peace of Christ, it is said, helps you find God's will. Support for this is found in the fact that the word translated "rule" can mean to act as a judge, arbitrator, or umpire. Since peace can act as an umpire, we are to set out the options under consideration and let peace decide for us. Which choice leaves a deep and abiding peace in our hearts? Once the "umpire" has made the call, it's not uncommon for people to explain their decision with the words, "I have peace about this."

There can be no doubt that God supplies internal peace for the believer on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1) and that God's peace is promised to those who seek Him in prayer (Phil. 4:7, 8). But does Colossians 3:15 teach us that God's peace is to serve as the umpire as we seek to determine God's will? I would contend that it does, but not in the way it is normally applied. The issue at stake in this verse of Scripture is how believers relate to one another, not how an individual believer navigates the choices of God's will for his or her life. The peace of this text is peace between believers, not within each believer.

The key to understanding this text is the portion that is most often overlooked. The words "to the which also ye are called in one body" clearly show that this text is about the assembly of believers. What else could "called in one body" mean? It doesn't make sense to treat this as addressing individuals as individuals—do some people have more than one body? The body to which Paul refers is the body of believers, so the rule of peace is over the body of believers. This theme is a fairly common one in Paul's letters to the churches. He urged the Romans to "follow after the things which make for peace" (Rom. 14:19). He urged the Corinthians to "live in peace" (2 Cor. 13:11) and the Thessalonians to "be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thess. 5:13). One of the marks of walking worthy of our calling is "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Paul's concern for peace among the believers, no doubt, was rooted in the fact that "God is not the author of confusion, but of

peace, as in all churches of the saints" (1 Cor. 14:33).

In fact, the word "called" in this text highlights the importance of peace in the fellowship of believers. Paul is referring to the work of God by which He called them out

of the world and into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 1:24; Rom. 8:28–30). God's call to salvation was also His call into fellowship with the body of Christ. In the words of Ephesians 2, Christ established peace not only between God and man, but among the redeemed. Since this is our calling, it must also be our commitment!

The proper understanding and application of this text, then, has to do with how believers relate to each other within the fellowship of the body. The result of individual believers pursuing peace should be an assembly of believers living in peace. More directly, the peace of Christ is to serve as umpire, to act as judge or arbiter among believers. When potential for disharmony or conflict arises, believers submitting to the peace of Christ will overcome it and chase it out of the fellowship. The penetrating question for us must be, "What will make for God-honoring, mutually edifying peace?"

The Bible is clear that there are times when we cannot make peace—if God and His Word are being dishonored, then we must be willing to "contend for the faith" (Jude 3). But, sadly, it seems that often congregational peace is broken over personal issues more than doctrinal ones. People want a "piece" of something or someone, not "peace" with them!

If individual believers are resting in their restored relationship with God through Jesus Christ, then they will not fight selfishly among themselves. When believers understand that God's will for the body of believers is that peace rule, then they will gladly yield themselves in service to others. Should God's peace control our decisions? Yes, but not in some internally subjective way. It should control our decisions as the goal toward which our lives are aimed—honoring and cultivating the peace that God has established through Jesus Christ. Is this always possible? Not till Heaven! But, until then, our goal should be, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom 12:18). Colossians 3:15 gives us a practical guide for how to do this—let the peace of God be the deciding factor in our relationships. ☞

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

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

Windows

Fatal Attraction: What Entertainment Is Doing to Our Youth

In 1985 author and educator Neil Postman wrote the book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. In his opening paragraphs Postman states that “at different times in our history, different cities have been the focal point of a radiating American spirit.” For example, he points out that before the American Revolution “Boston was the center of a political radicalism that ignited a shot heard round the world. . . . In the early twentieth century, Chicago, the city of big shoulders and heavy winds, came to symbolize the industrial energy and dynamism of America. . . . Today, we must look to the city of Las Vegas, Nevada, as a metaphor of our national character and aspiration. . . . For Las Vegas is a city entirely devoted to the idea of entertainment, and as such proclaims the spirit of a culture in which all public discourse increasingly takes the form of entertainment. Our politics, religion, news, athletics, education and commerce have been transformed into congenial adjuncts of show business, largely without protest or even much popular notice. The result is that we are a people on the verge of amusing ourselves to death.”¹

Recently I had the opportunity to visit the Holy Land again with other American believers. As our Israeli guide presented information on the lives of Abraham and Lot, he compared the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to what he called “*your* Las Vegas.” Genesis 18 and 19 reveal that the tour guide was right, but a careful examination of the Scripture also reveals what *caused* the destruction of that society and the family of a “righteous man dwelling among them” (2 Pet. 2:8).

Attractions over Absolutes

When we read in Genesis 13:10 that “Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah,” we are not told of his spiritual condition. However, 2 Peter 2:7 and 8 describe him as “just Lot . . . that righteous man.” “Just” and “righteous” are the same Greek word and refer to the fact that Lot maintained righteous conduct though he was surrounded by Sodom’s wickedness. The clear implication is that Lot had knowledge of God’s absolutes and was willing to obey them!

The similarities of what happened in Lot’s life and what has taken place in the United States are striking! America was founded by men and women who, like Lot, knew God’s absolutes and were willing to be governed by them. In his book *The Vanishing Word: The Veneration of Visual Imagery in the Postmodern World*, Arthur W. Hunt III notes that John Adams, our second president, “believed that if American democracy was to work at all, two ingredients were absolutely essential—*knowledge* and *virtue*. . . . The ingredient of knowledge carries with it the notion that liberty is dependent on an informed citizenry. . . . When Adams listed his second ingredient of liberty,

that of virtue, he no doubt had in mind the concept of Christian virtue.”² Hunt goes on to illustrate that knowledge (people reading and reasoning on their own) and virtue are jeopardized when a nation’s thinking becomes “anti-intellectual and amoral.” Hunt correctly states that the result is the “postmodernism” of our day.³ Let’s consider how an individual or a nation moves from being governed by absolutes to being governed by fleshly attractions.

Reason is placed over reliance on God’s truth. The obvious question is, “When did America turn from knowledge and virtue?” The answer is this: *when she placed knowledge (reason) over virtue (reliance on God’s truth)*. It was the same mistake that Lot made when he reasoned that the “well watered” plain of Jordan would be best for his flocks (Gen. 13:10, 11), though God’s will for his family was to avoid the spiritual threat of Sodom and Gomorrah altogether. In the early twentieth century the United States was influenced by, among other things, German “higher criticism” of Scripture, Darwinism, and Freudianism. This reliance on human reason—called “Modernism”—dramatically altered the American psyche. At the same time our nation was also being blinded by great industrial and technological prosperity. It is likely that Lot also flourished in the plain of Jordan, blinding him further to his wrong thinking and the spiritual dangers that threatened his family.

Romans 1:21 clearly reveals this decline: “When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” Dr. Jim Berg points out that “the way down” described in this passage begins with “unbelief” (“accepting the reasoning of fallen man . . . over the revelation of God”), which then leads to “discontent” (“a lust for more” that “is the basis for every temptation in the heart”).⁴ Since America has chosen to “hold [down] the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18) and because she does not want “to retain God in [her] knowledge” (Rom. 1:28), the discontent in our land has led to the practice of every “reprobate” lust listed in Romans 1. We are no different than Sodom.

God intervened in Lot’s life with a wake-up call! Before He sent angels to remove Lot from Sodom, He allowed the combined armies of several kings to defeat Sodom and Gomorrah and take away everything Lot possessed (Gen. 14:11, 12). The United States received a wake-up call in 1929 with ten years of Great Depression. Many Americans lost everything they owned. At the same time God raised up the Bible Conference Movement, Bible colleges, radio ministries, publishing houses, and

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

Charles Spurgeon

sent revivalists with names like Ironside, Sunday, Rice, and Jones to turn hearts back to God's truth.⁵ Did Lot heed the warning? Has our own country turned from the fantasies of human thinking back to the realities of God's Word? The answer is clearly "no"—but notice how the decline continues.

Reason and God's revelation are abandoned for fleshly attraction. It is astonishing that after God uses Abraham's servant army to deliver Lot (Gen. 14), we find him right back in Sodom, sitting in the very gate of the city (Gen. 19:1)! "In Eastern cities [the city gate] is the market, the seat of justice . . . and amusement, especially a favorite lounge."⁶ Scripture does not tell us exactly why Lot was sitting in the city gate. What we do know is that Sodom must have been an attractive city. When Lot decides to dwell among the cities of the Jordan plain, he chose to pitch his tent closest to Sodom (Gen. 13:12). Most of Lot's family refused to leave the city, even after being warned of imminent judgment (Gen. 19:14), and Lot's wife could not resist a final, fatal look (Gen. 19:26). Ezekiel 16:49 tells us that Sodom was an affluent city and lists the other sins for which she was destroyed: "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." For many Americans, Sodom's characteristics are what they look for in a good vacation spot!

Just as Lot abandoned reason and the truths he knew about God to return to the attractions of Sodom, so also our culture has moved from knowledge and Christian virtue to Postmodernism, where truth is whatever a person wants it to be. "The major question is no longer, 'Is it true?' but 'How does it look?' and 'How does it feel?'"⁷ Those who have abandoned the reality that what God says is true will ultimately choose the visual over what is truly valuable.

The Visual over the Valuable

What Lot saw in Sodom took an awful toll on his value system. Peter says that "day to day" "in seeing and hearing" the "unlawful deeds" of his neighbors in Sodom, Lot "vexed his righteous soul" (2 Pet. 2:8). The word "vexed" is a form of the same word translated "torment" in Matthew 8:29. Lot was miserable because of the God-sent conviction in his own soul, but that wasn't the worst part. He never could have predicted what daily visual exposure to evil would do to his own life, his wife, and his children. Who would believe that to protect guests in his house, a "just" and "righteous" Lot would offer his virgin daughters to be abused by a wicked mob (Gen. 19:8)? Who would believe that daily visual exposure to the world's goods would cause Lot's sons-in-law and their families to stay in Sodom and perish by fire and brimstone (Gen. 19:14)? Who would believe that the daily visual exposure to sensuality that Lot's virgin daughters had seen would cause them to get their father drunk so they could commit immorality with him (Gen. 19:32–36)?

The visual attractions in Sodom obscured ratio-

nal thinking and were fatal. America's obsession with entertainment and materialism is having the same affect. Modernism, though damaging, was dependent upon the printed page, and people had to read, think, and reason. Postmodernism has turned away from reason, and at the same time has almost completely embraced the visual image.⁸ When did the shift to postmodernism take place in our society? History may prove that the postmodern era came about at the same time that the television in the living room was considered more useful than the bookshelf. We are an image-driven society that is now believing almost anything if it is aesthetically pleasing and makes us feel good. Romans 1:32 sounds like it is referring directly to television and movies when it explains where the postmodern mind ends up: "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but *have pleasure in them that do them.*"

As in Lot's family, the greatest tragedy is what these trends are doing spiritually to our Christian youth when careless parents allow them to absorb postmodern media through cable television, DVDs, the Internet, and iPods. Those of us in ministry and Christian education are alarmed by the lack of Biblical knowledge the average Christian young person possesses. His or her ability to reason and apply Scripture to daily problems is severely lacking. Thus our Christian teens are unable to discern the real danger that surrounds them.

As Christian parents and leaders it is time that we help our young people turn off the images and tune out the voices that are tempting them to live by feelings and not faith, by fantasy and not the facts revealed in God's Word. Above all, we must teach them by example and instruction to "be still, and know . . . God" (Ps. 46:10). Technology allows today's Christian young people to mentally "download" audiovisual media all day without ever having to be alone with their thoughts and their God. If they learn God's Word and how to walk dependent on His Spirit, they will not fulfill the lusts of their flesh, regardless of how corrupt our society becomes.

It is very significant that at the same time fire is rising from Sodom and Gomorrah, consuming some of Lot's family, Scripture reveals that "Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD" (Gen. 19:27). ☐

¹ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1985), pp. 3–4.

² Arthur W. Hunt III, *The Vanishing Word: The Veneration of Visual Imagery in the Postmodern World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), p. 186.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Jim Berg, *Taking Time to Quiet Your Soul* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2005), p. 8.

⁵ David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 1986), pp. 251–56.

⁶ Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Power Bible CD, Version 4.0a.

⁷ Postman, p. 187.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 188–89.

The Muslim World

After church planting in Ontario, Canada, for close to fourteen years, the Lord has led me on an interesting path, traveling to developing countries, many in the Muslim world. In the last five years I have been to Turkey, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Pakistan, staying several days in each. In these countries, as in Cuba where I have taught for several weeks, going out on the streets and evangelizing by passing out tracts or preaching is forbidden without a permit. Those laws concern me less than does the possibility that were I to do so I would jeopardize the lives of the national Baptist believers and hinder the small freedoms that they have.

Allah and Jehovah

I have however, given out tracts to people I have met in all of these countries and had great times of witnessing personally to the ones who spoke English. An example would be a businessman named Mohammed who asked me while chatting in a hotel lobby, “Aren’t Allah and Jehovah the same?” An hour later we parted, but not before he told me about a Baptist church in Amman that he has always wondered about near his home.

On another occasion I was able to speak with a Lebanese woman all the way on the plane from Istanbul to Paris. She was a negotiator in the recent Lebanese-Israeli war involving the Hezbollah. She was raised Muslim but was intrigued by Catholicism. She asked me first of all if I believed in the Immaculate Conception. Of course I answered “no”! This shocked her until I explained that I was a Christian but not a Catholic and that while Mary was a pure and virtuous woman, she was not conceived immaculately by her mother. Once again, I felt that my witness had broken down some barriers, but one does not convince a Muslim in one conversation unless that person has been worked on already by the Holy Ghost and is ready to abandon his or her beliefs.

It was my joy in a Muslim village near the Turkish border of Georgia to witness and preach in a community center not far from the mountains of Ararat where Noah’s ark landed. Two hundred men, women, and children listened to a gospel message after Pastor Jerry Young and I spoke to them, and they would have stayed longer to hear more. We were able to

give out Georgian New Testaments, and everyone came up to get his New Testament signed by Brother Young and me.

Like Nicodemus

While there is definitely persecution in places and at times in these Muslim countries (and one never knows when a mob scene can erupt because of cartoons in a newspaper, for example), there is freedom to witness and preach in prescribed places. In Pakistan I was able to preach on rooftops and in courtyards to about two hundred people each time in the city of Lahore, near the border with India, as well as towns such as Patoki and cities such as Gurjanwala and Faisalabad. The students from the Bible college set up a generator and a couple of microphones, and we had some singing. After preaching, which was heard for about a hundred yards in every direction, I gave an invitation, and in every case we had people come forward to believe on Jesus as Savior. The ones converted were former Protestants or Catholics or secular non-Muslims. (Those who are not Muslims are called Christians in these countries even though many of them have never heard the gospel presented apart from works, the Church, catechism, and so on—much less been truly born again.)

Now, Muslims could not come to the meetings as they would face beatings and worse, but they heard the gospel in the open air on the clear evenings. The only hindrance I faced was the Call to Prayer, which for two minutes drowns out everything all over the Muslim world. We simply had to stop and continue when it was over. On a few occasions a Muslim would come to talk with the Bible college leaders after the meeting, but these inquirers had to be secretive, like Nicodemus. It is against the law in the countries I named to convert a Muslim. They are converted, however, when they quietly come, ask questions, and are led individually to Christ.

In Pakistan while I was there, I read often in the English newspaper of relatives attempting to kill or actually killing a young lady for marrying outside of the Muslim faith. I met a few Muslims who were friends of the Bible college, doing work on computers and other things. The guys at the college witness to them and answer their questions. I know of one at least who has been saved this way. But it

is very dangerous for one who was raised Muslim to turn in conversion to Christ.

The Past and the Future

I am working with a national from Pakistan to start a church in Dubai, UAE, for Punjabi people (Urdu and Hindi speakers). He is in the process of getting his visa to permanently reside there, and that should happen in a few days or weeks at most. We have already met with officials about the suitable government-prescribed meeting place. I was there during Ramadan last October and spoke to several Muslims openly about the differences between Islam and Bible Christianity. I was received by a Muslim who invited me and the young man from Pakistan to eat and stay with him.

I plan to go back to Dubai and Pakistan this spring to assist the church planter and teach in the Baptist Bible college. The assassination of former Prime Minister Bhutto and upcoming elections present a

safety concern, but, Lord willing, I plan to go. Yes, there is the constant threat of persecution; thus far, however, I have not seen any firsthand. But I have been guarded by soldiers to, from, and during preaching to large crowds.

God is doing some great things in the Muslim world where missionaries cannot live and work openly but where nationals who love the Lord and are willing to be taught are doing a great job. That is what I know God has called me to do. I appreciate your prayers for me and my family as I travel in this ministry of teaching pastors and planting churches. The door is open to reach people in the Muslim world—and not just Muslims but also so-called Christians who do not know of the free gift of salvation.

Mark Logan is Representative-at-Large for BIML. He assists nationals in church planting and teaches in Bible institutes and colleges in developing countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the Caribbean.

Cogitations Continued from page 24

Those who constitute the body of believers in Corinth do not choose the ones to receive certain gifts; that is the decision of the Holy Spirit (vv. 7–11). They should not exalt or despise any part of the body (vv. 14–27). They should accept God's designation of special gifts. They should not long for local apostles or prophets, but accept those God has given to all churches (vv. 28–30).

Now, within that context, the specific questions:

Is this Spirit baptism? Yes. Clearly. But not as some think of speaking in tongues or a special outpouring of some sort. This is the legal union of a sinner to the Savior, uniting the sinner in the death and burial of the Substitute, making us one in Him, along with the experiential union of being made alive spiritually as a result of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. This has been pictured in water immersion. The picture is not to be confused with the reality. The picture began with John the Baptist;

the full reality began at Pentecost.

Is this verse an illustration of water immersion and the local church? No, the other way around. This verse speaks of the spiritual reality, the portrayal of which is publicly proclaimed by water immersion. Immersion in water bears witness to the reality of spirit baptism, our being accepted in the Beloved. The local church, too, is a reality and in addition is a picture of a future greater body, far more glorious than that achieved by any local body in this world. The unity and function of a local body of believers anticipates a marvelous future gathering of all true believers of this dispensation at the Rapture. A picture is never as vivid as is the handiwork of God.

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For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:12

"Pastor, there is a light out in the men's restroom, and, while I am thinking about it, the back stairs going up to the choir room are filthy—again!"

This observant church member has approached the pastor just prior to the Sunday morning worship service in an effort to be helpful. The pastor has several options as to how to respond to this church member. He can simply say "thank you" and go on with the service. Later, on Sunday afternoon, the pastor can take a few minutes to install a new light bulb and run the vacuum cleaner on the back stairs. That is probably the most common response.

However, you, the layman, need to understand what just happened. God did not reveal the nonfunctioning light bulb to the pastor. God gave you an opportunity for service! The pastor is certainly capable of and probably willing to run the vacuum cleaner on the steps, but

you are the one who noticed the "filth." Perhaps God wants you to do it! In fact, that may be the case with the trash blowing across the parking lot, the wall that needs painted, the crib in the nursery that needs repaired, or a number of other touch-ups. These are opportunities to serve.

What if that pastor had looked back at you and said, "Oh, thank you for pointing that out. The light bulbs are in the closet between the restrooms, and the vacuum cleaner is in the storage room behind the baptistry. I appreciate you taking care of those things."

How would you respond? I trust you would see it for what it is—a ministry opportunity. If all of our church members were looking for opportunities to serve in this capacity, our workload would be minimal and our ministry opportunities maximized. Ministry is not just teaching a Sunday school class, singing the special before the message, or counseling in the invitation. It includes a vast array of duties that will make the presentation of the gospel more effective.

Laymen in Action!

Biblical Examples of Laymen Serving the Lord
The Prophet's Chamber

Have you ever heard of a "prophet's chamber"? Most of you would probably say yes, but do you know where the name came from? Second Kings 4:8–17 relates the inception of what most of us would know of as the modern-day prophet's chamber. Elisha, like his predecessor Elijah, often found himself traveling from town to town as part of his ministry. Second Kings 4:8–11 describes a little walled upper chamber dedicated to meeting the physical needs of the man of God so that he could more effectively continue his work for the Lord. Notice that this is a relatively simple dwelling. The Scripture describes it as little and having only a bed, table, chair, and lamp as its furnishings. The other things that we can infer from the account are that it was readily available—"when he cometh to us"—and that it was restful—he "lay there," or rested.

The prominent Shunammite woman and her husband made a deliberate decision to be a blessing to the man of God. Adding a room to their home and making it available to the man of God as he traveled through meant that they were willing to invest time, money, and effort into their endeavor. The objective of pointing out their efforts is not to encourage every believer to build a prophet's chamber in his home but rather to encourage you to be observant of the needs around you and respond to them. You, a layman, must have the same attitude. When there are regular needs, whether housing needs, laborers, or spiritual needs, respond to them!

The end result was a twofold blessing. Elisha was so encouraged by the hospitality that he made a special effort to repay his debt of gratitude. The remainder of the passage (vv. 12–17) finishes the story of how this hostess received a blessing beyond her wildest imagination. God used this couple to be a blessing to Elisha, and He used Elisha to be a blessing to this couple. You will find the same thing to be true when you invest time, money, and effort in meeting the needs of others.

Parenting Tips

Pastor John Mincy
Heritage Baptist Church, Antioch, California

Parenting is a wonderful privilege and responsibility. It is, however, sometimes hard to keep a balance between love and discipline. Our children will know that we love them by how we talk to them and by how we treat them. Discipline will be of little value if it is done out of anger and frustration. Disciplinary actions that spring from love are those that are done under control and for the good of our children. Too many times parents discipline for selfish reasons, simply because their children have gotten in their way. Even severe disciplinary measures will be well received when our children know that they come from a heart of love.

Doug Wright is an FBFI board member and pastors Keystone Baptist Church in Berryville, Virginia.

On Church

Dr. Vanhetloo, in one of your articles you mentioned the body of Christ (the church). Do you see this as the local congregation or as an invisible church?

What I “see” depends first on the usage in the verse and in the context, with the primary emphasis on what the original human writer and the recipients probably understood; and secondly it depends on what my readers or hearers might understand by the label “invisible” or “universal” when I speak of the body of Christ. These days, it’s usually the way others conceive of “church” that needs clarification.

(1) There are many in other denominations who understand and speak of but one church, composed of all believers since Adam and Eve. Such people carry over Old Testament practices and concepts into the church, such as sacred offices or objects (priests, sprinkling). I accept, in contrast, that Jesus was speaking of the future when He said to His disciples, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18) and of a very important beginning when He “commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized [immersed] with water; but ye shall be baptized [immersed] with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (Acts 1:4, 5). Consequently, I accept that the church began at Pentecost. All believers of all time are redemptively in Christ and will be in Heaven, but it seems clear that God has a different “dispensational” arrangement for the saved between Pentecost and the Rapture and that that group, spoken of as the “body of Christ,” may also have eternal differentiation.

(2) Early chapters of the Book of Acts explain much about the local congregation of believers in Jerusalem. Later, as Paul and others went into other areas, they at times found gatherings of believers, briefly indicated in Acts 2:7–11. Contact was such that the practices and teachings of those other congregations usually corresponded to what was done in the Jerusalem congregation. Things that needed to be corrected were usually from pagan influences, not from “denominational” differences.

(3) Without question, uses of the word “church” (“assembly,” “gathering,” “congregation”) throughout the New Testament retain the sense of a local assembled group. It is usually from the use of “body of Christ” that different concepts arise. Each individual church is such a body. All local churches separately and independently enjoy this special “body” oneness in Jesus. Individual believers, though, may be “in Christ” but not functioning in a “body of Christ.”

(4) The New Testament speaks of a future gathering of all believers from the time of Pentecost, assembling at

what we refer to as the Rapture. With glorified bodies, we will all participate in that greater, more glorious body of Christ. That future gathering may occur at any moment, but so far there is no oneness or unitary arrangement of all true believers in the sense that many speak of as a “universal” church. Many may partake of the same regenerate nature, but we do not function jointly nor is there any suggestion in Scripture that we ought to try to do so.

(5) We live in a day when terms are made to mean what the speaker or writer wants them to mean. An “invisible” church exists only in the concepts of some, but not in reality. The Bible emphasis, till Jesus comes back, is loyalty to a local functioning body of believers. Trying to serve in an “invisible” entity seems totally futile. Nor is there a Baptist church, only Baptist churches. So some ask, “Will the future gathering be a collection of all members of Baptist churches?” No, it will be of all true believers, whether obedient or disobedient in this life. Not all Baptists are saved, but all the saved will be raptured and assembled together in a truly glorious body, the first gathering of the complete body of Christ.

What is your view of 1 Corinthians 12:13? Do you view this as Spirit baptism? Do you view this verse as an illustration of water baptism and the local church?

The context is clearly important for understanding this verse (as for any verse). The Corinthians had written Paul asking about spiritual things (12: 1), to which he first answers that the primary test is whether those “speaking by the Spirit” were correctly honoring Jesus as Lord (v. 3). Then he speaks of different gifts of the Spirit to different individuals in the local church (vv. 4–12), which are not the choice of the individual but of the Holy Spirit (vv. 11, 18). They should recognize this so that there is no division in the local body (v. 25). They should not covet gifts that they have not been given but seek faith, hope, and love (13:1–13).

In the midst of explaining to them about the variety of gifts by the Holy Spirit given to individuals for distinct purposes, Paul reminds them of a work of the Spirit they all have received: the immersion of each one into one body (v. 13). This immersion work was true of each one at the time of believing, not a second experience for a few, not a gift enabling special service for the Lord (vv. 8–11). All believers, by the special dispensational activity of the Holy Spirit, have been judicially united in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus (cf. Rom. 6). These who are receiving his letter have become a part of a spiritual body of believers who now assemble in Corinth. They should understand that God desires to be honored by the entire body, not just by a foot or an ear (vv. 14–20).

Continued on page 22

It is by those who have suffered that the world has been advanced.
—Leo Tolstoy

We need to suffer that we may learn to pity.
—Letitia Landon

Pain is the deepest thing we have in our nature, and union through pain and suffering has always seemed more real and holy than any other.
—Arthur Hallam

Suffering is the sole origin of consciousness.
—Fyodor Dostoevsky

The number of Christians in Sudan has grown to more than 25 percent of the population amidst persecution.
—*The Voice of the Martyrs*

The Communist authorities are very afraid of the house church groups because they are not willing to obey. . . . If you ask them to register, they refuse. If you harass them, they have more martyrs.
—Kwok Nai-Wong, Hong Kong

Be of good cheer, Master Ridley. By God's grace we shall light a fire this day in England that shall never go out. —Bishop Latimer, as he and Ridley were burned at the stake in October 1555

The same Hindu sect that killed the Australian missionary Graham Stewart Staines and his two sons murdered Arul Doss, a Roman Catholic priest, on September 14, 1999, using a bow and poisonous arrowheads.
—P. D. Cherian

God examineth with trials, the devil examineth with temptations, the world examineth with persecutions.
—Henry Smith

The way of this world is to praise dead saints and persecute living ones.
—Unknown

It much more concerned us, to be sure that we deserved not suffering, than that we be delivered from it.
—Richard Baxter

When Queen Mary forbade Rev. Saunders of England to preach the gospel and he would not comply, he was condemned. As he approached the stake he embraced it and kissed it, crying out, "Welcome, cross of Christ! Welcome everlasting life!"

Persecution often does in this life, what the last great day will do completely—separate the wheat from the tares.
—James Milner

In suffering one learns to pray best of all.
—Harold Bosley

You can't stand for Jesus Christ without producing friction. . . . The Christian moves with God, and God moves across the current of the age, not with the age.
—Bob Jones Sr.

Look, as our greatest good comes through the sufferings of Christ, so God's greatest glory that He hath from His saints comes through their sufferings.
—Thomas Brooks

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

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The Storm and the Rainbow

Barbara Harper

It had been a grey and drizzly day. When I was waiting in the car line at my son's school in the afternoon, a computerized voice on the radio broke into the regular programming to warn of a fast-moving storm that had conditions that could produce a tornado. The voice stated that a tornado warning was in effect for the next forty-five minutes. Right on cue, raindrops began splattering hard and fast against the windshield, and as I drove up to where my son was waiting, he made a mad dash for the car. Just then I saw another mother and friend herding several children into the cafeteria. She saw me, made a swirling motion with her hand, and mouthed, "Tornado." I nodded to indicate that I had heard the warning, but I felt sure we could make it home all right. We lived only a short distance away—three minutes if the lights were green, ten minutes at most.

As I drove toward the main road, though, I saw low, dark, swirling clouds that had not been there when I came to the school. The rain pounded harder and harder, the sudden onslaught almost flooding the roads. My original plans had been to take my son home and then go run an errand, but with these conditions I decided I'd better stay home until the storm blew over. I had injudiciously not taken the warning seriously enough, but now it looked as though a tornado could materialize out of the sky at any moment. With the sky getting darker, the rain coming down harder, and water beginning to stand in the congested streets, I began to second-guess the wisdom of thinking that I could make it safely home in a few minutes, but by now I was as close to home as I was to the school.

Just before we got to the turn into our subdivision, I was aware of a bright light behind us. The sun was shining! As I waited in the turn lane, I thought I saw a bit of color—I had to blink a couple of times, and it seemed as though a rainbow appeared almost right before my eyes. It was a perfect arc, seeming to start on one side of a little red brick church and going over our neighborhood, coming down on the other side. It looked like you could reach out and touch it. It made you want to go look for the end of it just to see whether it touched the ground.

Then I noticed that, though the rain had slowed, just above the rainbow the sky was still dark grey. The sunlight was coming from behind us. Just below the rainbow, the sky wasn't daylight blue, but it was definitely lighter and brighter than the stormy sky. It made the whole area under the arc look like a light-filled globe. I wished I had my camera, but probably neither my camera nor I had the skills to capture the beauty of it.

I have always loved the ethereal beauty of rainbows, and I've always loved associating them with God's promise in Genesis 9:11–17. When my older boys were toddlers they would say the rainbow was "God's promise."

The next morning after the storm, thinking about the rainbow being the dividing line between the grey clouds above and the brighter sky below it, I realized that God's promises are the dividing line between hope and despair in the storms of life. Whether a sudden squall of disaster assails us or a slow-brewing storm erupts over us, only the solid, unmoving, unchangeable promises of God keep us anchored and hopeful amidst the dark, glowering clouds and pelting rain of circumstances. He has promised that He loves His children and always will (Jer. 31:3). He has promised to supply our needs (Phil. 4:19). He has promised sufficient grace (2 Cor. 9:8). He has promised to work all things together for good for those who love Him (Rom. 8:28). He has promised new mercies every morning and unfailing compassion (Lam. 3:22, 23). He has promised never to leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5). He has promised to strengthen and uphold us (Isa. 41:10). There are multitudes of His promises that we can cling to through the storms of life that will make our skies brighter in comparison to the storm clouds above.

For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. Isaiah 25:4

The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. Nahum 1:3

Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! Psalm 107:28–31

Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. Psalm 57:1, 2

Barbara Harper has been married for twenty-seven years to her husband, Jim, and they have three sons. She is the author of several articles that have been published in *FrontLine*. Barbara has been blessed to be a stay-at-home mom for twenty-two years.



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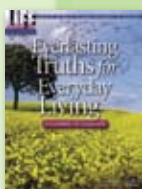
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Right and Wrong Motives in the Ministry

Jerry Sivnksty

The *American College Dictionary* defines motive as “something that prompts a person to act in a certain way or that determines volition; an incentive. The goal or object of one’s actions.” Every child of God must seriously weigh his motives in serving the Lord. There are many examples in Scripture of individuals who had wrong motives. In 3 John 9, 10 we read,

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

Here is a man in the Bible who craved preeminence over other believers. He was a dictator in his dealings with people—he cast many out of the church and would not receive them. He is the prime example of an egotist.

Recently, a man told me of a church that has been without a pastor for over a year because one man in that church is controlling the calling of a new pastor. What is his motive? The same as Diotrophes! He wants to have preeminence over the church.

Many years ago, I stayed with a dear elderly lady in a southern state during a week of meetings in her church. The people affectionately called her “Aunt Duck,” and she was quite a feisty lady. She was in her late seventies and rode a large version of a tricycle. She would pull up beside the cars of teenagers and call out, “You want to race me to the next light?”

She told me the story of her brother who always did things in the church for human recognition. One Sunday morning the pastor made an announcement that there was an urgent financial need. Aunt Duck said that her brother jumped up in front of the congregation, pulled out a fifty-dollar bill, began waving it in front of everyone, and said, “I will give fifty dollars for that need!” Aunt Duck said she was so embarrassed that she slid all the way down in her pew. When they got home she said to him, “Do you know what I’m going to do to you when you’re lying in your casket? I’m going to put a big sign in your dead hands that says, ‘I came into this world empty and I am leaving it empty!’”

The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:12, 13, “Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s work shall be made manifest.” Each one of us can build upon Christ with either good works or works that are good for nothing. The wood, hay, and stubble are works that are good for nothing—

serving the Lord for preeminence, human recognition, and man’s applause. I cannot judge a person’s motives because I cannot see his heart, but the Lord can! First Samuel 16:7 says, “For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.” The gold, silver and precious stones mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3:12 are works rendered unto the Lord out pure motives of love, submission, and obedience to God’s Word.

My heart was deeply stirred when I talked with Pastor and Mrs. John Herniman down in Orangeburg, South Carolina. They were missionaries in Africa for many years. They had three daughters, two of whom contracted malaria and died. Several years later, the Hernimans had to leave the field because of health problems. One day as I was in their home I was full of questions after I heard of the death of their two daughters. Their third daughter, Esther, was sixteen by this time. I turned to Mrs. Herniman and asked, “How could you stay in Africa after the death of your two daughters, knowing that Esther also could have contracted malaria and died? What kept you there?” Mrs. Herniman smiled, and tears glistened in her eyes as she quoted 2 Corinthians 5:14: “For the love of Christ constraineth us.” No human may remember the sacrifice of this dear lady in Africa, but the Lord does. He knew that her motive was one of sincere love for Him.

In one of our meetings I met a young man who recently had been saved. He told me how he had read the entire New Testament as well as Psalms and Proverbs. He was overwhelmed with the privilege of being saved. He looked at me and said, “You know, I would count it an honor if I could just sweep floors for the Lord!” I was touched by the sincerity of this young man. There was no pretence, no false piety—he simply wanted to serve his Savior.

It would be well for all of us to examine our lives and evaluate our motives in serving the Lord. Are we trying to impress people? Are we trying to build a name? Are we trying to manipulate people to see what we can get out of them? In our preaching, are we trying to create an atmosphere by playing on people’s emotions? Are we giving invitations with the motive of boasting over decisions? Do we want the spotlight on us?

No one can answer these questions except you. You have to examine your own motives. Paul said in Galatians 6:14, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

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How to Help the Hurting (and How Not To)

In Elizabeth Gaskell's 1866 novel *Wives and Daughters* Squire Hamley is devastated when he loses his cherished wife of many years. His eldest son, Osborne, whose already precarious health was weakened by the anxiety of an estrangement from his father, lies dead as well. The old squire's life is crumbling around him as age and death conspire to loosen his grip, little by little, on the things and people that mean the most to him. Sitting by his fireside, he reflects with rustic eloquence, "I do try to say, 'God's will be done' . . . but it is harder to be resigned than happy people think." The chasm between sufferer and spectator is a broad one to span.

Many are inclined to read the introduction to Job's companions (Job 2:11ff.) with a degree of scorn. Some have disdainfully designated them "fair-weather friends." That certainly applies to Job's other acquaintances and relatives: disaster struck Job and they were nowhere to be found (19:13–17). Everyone deserted and avoided him (19:19)—*except* these three. They were willing to travel significant distances to meet with him (2:11).

Vultures will wing a long way to pick over a fresh kill. But the narrator tells us exactly why these three came to Job: to *mourn* with him (2:11), to *comfort* him (2:11), to *weep* with him (2:12), and simply to *sit* with him and say *nothing* for *seven days* out of sympathetic respect for his "great grief" (2:12). Whatever else they may be, "fair-weather friends" is hardly an appropriate description.

Granted, they came with the erroneous assumption that Job had brought this on himself by some grievous sin. That

assumption does not diminish the genuineness of their sympathy, but heightens it. Despite their belief that Job had sinned, they inconvenienced themselves and came to mourn, comfort, weep, and sit with him. The narrator's frank depiction of Job's friends should silence our suspicions about the sincerity of their compassion.

Job's world is suspended in a limbo of static chaos. Suffering can seem like that, as if God pours your life into a blender, throws everything crazily out of alignment—disarranging all your plans and priorities and daily routines—and suspends the awkward constellation of circumstances indefinitely. Job's companions sat with him in his devastation. They came to console him. Job's three friends stand out as positive (initially) and negative (eventually) role models for ministering to someone in affliction. Their example invites some counsel for how we respond to those who are suffering.

How can you help—or hinder—those grappling with illness, loss, or injustice? Personal embarrassment prods us to avoid the sufferer. We wouldn't know what to say. But suffering alone only compounds the suffering (Ps. 142:4). Here is some practical advice for how to help those who are hurting, and how not to. Most of it originates from Christians, many of them personal friends, who have suffered not only the weight of affliction but also the added burden of well-intentioned but unhelpful "help." These are not merely sterile "suggestions." They are pleas from sufferers as well as principles from Scripture.

Be inclusive. We focus all our attention on Job, but Job's wife lost everything too. Be attentive to background sufferers. Affliction rarely affects isolated individuals. No sufferer is an island. Surrounding almost any primary sufferer are secondary sufferers—spouses, children, siblings,

Editorial Note: In view of the focus of this issue, *FrontLine* invited Dr. Layton Talbert to substitute an excerpt from his recent book *Beyond Suffering: Discovering the Message of Job* in lieu of the regular "At a Glance" column. His series on the Pastoral Epistles will continue with the next issue.

caretakers. Secondary suffering may be a different kind of suffering, but it can be every bit as acute.

When a couple lost their first child five hours after her premature birth, I regularly contacted the father to see how he was doing and to listen to anything he might have to say. He told me once that I was the only one who made an effort to talk with him about their loss. As the primary sufferer in this case, the mother was the natural focus of attention and consolation. He understood that his wife needed special support; but nobody really thought of the father in the same terms.

A woman whose husband was in the last stages of cancer shared a similar observation from the other side of the gender aisle. She was deeply grateful for the hospital visits her husband received from the men of the church. What she missed was their wives during those visits. "I would have appreciated a comforting hug from the wives," she said. "It made me think that this was a way that the wives could come alongside their husbands and minister too."

Especially in cases of serious or terminal illness, it is usually the secondary sufferers for whom we can and need to do the most. Family members require as much ministry as the one lying in the hospital bed, and caretakers may bear the brunt of the hardship in cases such as Alzheimer's disease. Extend the ministry of consolation as widely as the impact of the suffering.

Be sympathetic. "Weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15) is not fuzzy, feel-good advice or hyperbole. It is a command to sympathize, to "feel with" those who suffer (1 Cor. 12:25, 26). Your calling is not to attach some explanation to their circumstances. You need not—and probably don't—have the answer to their affliction. There is a time for counsel, usually when the sufferer solicits it, and there is a time to lay your hand upon your mouth and just weep with them (Eccles. 3:7). The open ear of a sympathetic Christian brother or sister willing to listen without rushing to explain or advise or criticize can be more helpful in working through a difficult experience than you will ever know until you are the sufferer. Our instinctive response to a suffering saint should be sympathy, not suspicion or censure or advice. Be willing just to sit with him. Even Job's friends could do that.

Be available. "Bear ye one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2). When Paul says that everyone is to bear his own "burden" (Gal. 6:5), he uses the word for a backpack, something suitable and appropriate to an individual, the customary duties of our daily life and calling for which we are individually responsible. The "burden" we are to help others bear (Gal. 6:2) is the word for cargo, a great load too heavy for one person. Offer the sufferer a hand. Run errands, keep the children, help with chores, provide meals. Drop a note or card. Call periodically. Simply being present and available reminds them that they are not alone and that their difficulty is not being ignored or forgotten.

Be sensitive. Sometimes aloneness is necessary, preferable, or helpful (Jer. 15:15–18; Lam. 3:25–28). Balance availability with respect for privacy. Visits and calls are encouraging,

but at times your presence may be intrusive. Ask ahead to avoid imposing at a time when privacy, not company, is needed. Sometimes the most helpful thing you can be is absent. Do not take that personally, and do not be offended. Ministering to others in times of affliction is about their needs, not about your feelings.

Be prayerful. "Remember . . . them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body" (Heb. 13:3). It is not a pious cliché to say that prayer is the most effectual ministry you can have to fellow believers in the furnace of affliction. Pray in their shoes. Pray for them as you would want to be prayed for if you were in their circumstances. Find a Biblical request that matches their needs and pray it for them thoughtfully. Tell them that you are praying for them and even what you are praying for them. God often instructs us through the trials of others and adjusts our own spirits as we pray for them.

Be patient. "Support the weak, be patient toward all men" (1 Thess. 5:14). Working through a trial of any magnitude takes time. Scripture exhorts the sufferer to "let patience have her perfect work" (James 1:4), so it is not too much to ask those around the sufferer to do the same. Suffering is not an inconvenient obstacle to "normal" life. Affliction *is* "normal" life. For the duration of the trial, this *is* God's will for their life and ministry.

"Serving God" is not about accomplishing tasks but waiting on Him in all His appointments. No one has expressed this truth more famously than the Puritan poet who lost his eyesight by the age of forty-five. "God doth not need either man's work or His own gifts; who best bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best." Others may travel far and labor tirelessly at God's bidding but, added the blind John Milton, "they also serve who only stand and wait."

Be Scriptural. By this I do *not* mean you should quote lots of Scripture. Though there is a large place for the Scriptures in consoling the afflicted, resist the temptation to be a surrogate Holy Spirit. Some passages are better left to Him to minister. Do not quote Romans 8:28 to a suffering saint. It is a wonderful verse, but the afflicted have thought of that verse long before you have. Some truths can be effectively ministered to the believer by God alone. Sufferers draw Spirit-ministered comfort from Romans 8:28, but it is not a verse to be doled out like spiritual aspirin, as though it instantly answers all questions, quiets all concerns, and heals all the hurts.

What I mean is, be Scriptural in *your* approach to the sufferer and his or her suffering. Allow the full range of the Bible's teaching on suffering inform your ministry to the sufferer. Think through the stories of those who suffer in the pages of Scripture—Joseph, Job, David, Jeremiah, Jesus, Paul. All suffering goes through God, and He rarely forwards suffering to accomplish only a single object. God typically orchestrates a symphony of purposes through any single experience of affliction.

This article is an adapted excerpt from the author's book *Beyond Suffering: Discovering the Message of Job* (BJU Press, 2007). Used with permission.

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STANDING FAST IN THE FAITH

PSALM 23
The Lord is my shepherd.
A Psalm of David.
1 THE LORD is my shepherd, I want not.
2 He maketh me to lie down in pastures; he leadeth me beside the waters.
3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, O Lord.

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Islamic Law Expert Fired

Stephen Coughlin has worked for the Pentagon because of his understanding of Islamic law, but recently he was fired for being "a Christian zealot with a pen." The stated reason for his dismissal was economic reasons. But Steve Emerson, another terrorism expert with Pentagon ties, expressed a differing reason in a Fox News program: Coughlin was a political embarrassment. His insistence on the dangers of a group known as the Muslim Brotherhood was an embarrassment to named official.

View the details of this article at <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,322450,00.html>.

Public School Bible Distribution

It has been a long-standing tradition in the South Iron School District in southwest Missouri to allow the Gideons International to pass out Bibles in fifth-grade classrooms. In August of this last year the ACLU filed suit against the practice on behalf of four sets of parents, and the 8th US Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a temporary injunction against the Scripture distribution. In early January, US District Judge Kathryn Perry ruled that the practice was illegal and granted "permanent injunction." Her reason-

ing was that the purpose of Bible distribution "is a promotion of Christianity." "The policy has the principle or primary effective of advancing religion by conveying a message of endorsement to elementary school children." The school said it would appeal the decision.

The parents who sued the school claimed to be Christian but believe that religious beliefs are to be taught in the home and not in the school.

View the details of this article at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/09/AR2008010902166.html>.

Why Churches Decline

Irwin McManus is lead pastor at the Mosaic Church in Los Angeles. He met with the *Christian Post* to discuss why he believes his church is doing well and other churches are declining. His assessment is that "American Christians tend to be incredibly self-indulgent so they see the church as a place there for them to meet their needs and to express faith in a way that is meaningful for them. . . . There is almost no genuine compassion or urgency about serving or reaching people that do not know Christ." So what is the solution? None was really discussed.

According to the article, the United Methodist Church reported that its

membership was at its lowest point since 1930. They now have just over 8 million members. The Lutheran World Federation spoke about its decline in Western church membership of about 1.73%.

Although no solutions were mentioned, McManus did speak about the Awakening Conference, April 1–3, where innovative Christian thinkers will offer different perspectives on ways to develop the church and ministry.

View the details of this article at http://www.christianpost.com/article/20080115/30855_Cultural_Architect:_Why_Churches_are_Declining_in_America.htm.

The NAE Weighs in on Global Warming

Richard Cizik, Vice President for Governmental Affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) has made his views and reportedly those of fellow NAE members strikingly clear: If American officials—and particularly Evangelicals—will not take responsibility to curb global warming, they will face the judgment of God. Cizik quoted Hebrews 10:41: "It is fearful to fall in the hands of a living God."

While Cizik's views do not represent those of everyone in the NAE, the board of directors has supported him in his social activism. In March of this year a group of Evangelical

leaders wrote a letter suggesting that Cizik "be encouraged to resign his position at the NAE." The board, however, not only refused to take action, but they reaffirmed their commitment to Cizik by reaffirming their statement of *For The Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility*.

Cizik's activism has earned him the Nation Public Radio title of the "green evangelist."

View the details of this article at <http://www.theird.org/site/apps/nl/content2.asp?c=fvKVLfMVI sG&b=470197&ct=476>.

Co-ed Locker Rooms

Citizens of Montgomery County, Maryland, are launching a petition against recently unanimously signed legislation that would allow people to choose their own gender identity when choosing a restroom or lockers in public health facilities. The intent of the law was to "protect people's gender identity issues." The legal team indicated that provisions be made for "intimate facilities such as restrooms and locker rooms"; however, when the law came out, none of those provisions were made. This is just another illustration of political correctness gone awry.

View the details of this article at http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=59152.

The NCC's Social Creed

The General Assembly of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, hereafter referred to as the NCC, received a "social creed for the twenty-first century." This creed was to replace the social creed adopted in 1908 by the Federal Council of Churches. This creed was accepted unanimously as a tool to "set an overall direction for the church's social witness in the new century."

Here are some items that this creed contains. First, "a vision of a society that shares more and consumes less, seeks compassion over suspicion, and quality over domination, and finds security in joined hands rather than massed arms." It calls for the "end of the death penalty" as well as for "binding covenants to reduce global warming" It calls for the strengthening of the United Nations and "alternative energy sources and public transportation." It seeks for "immigration policies that protect family unity and safeguard workers' rights"; and, finally, it calls for "public education for all, and universal, and affordable, accessible health care."

But what is not quoted in their call for social action? There is no call for lightening burdensome taxes. There is no concern about foreign nations that threaten to annihilate minority groups and other nations. It says nothing about the upholding of marriage, and while being concerned for convicted murderers, it does not express care at all for the life of the unborn or the scientific use of human embryos. While calling for public education for all, it is strangely silent on religious and private education.

In the end, this social creed has very little to do with

NOTABLE QUOTES

This we have to fear as the greatest and nearest danger, that Satan take from us the pure doctrine of faith, and bring into the Church again the doctrine of works and man's traditions. Wherefore, it is very necessary, that this doctrine be kept in continual practice and public exercise both of reading and hearing. . . . Wherefore, this doctrine can never be taught, urged, and repeated enough. If this doctrine be lost, then also the whole knowledge of truth, life, and salvation lost and gone. If this doctrine flourish, then all good things flourish, religion, the true service of God, the glory of God, the right knowledge of all things and all states of life. —Martin Luther

We say that there ought to be no sorrow, but there is sorrow, and we have to receive it ourselves in its fires. If we try to evade sorrow, refuse to lay our account with it, we are foolish. Sorrow is one of the biggest facts of life; it is no use saying sorrow ought not to be. Sin and sorrow, and suffering are, and it is not for us to say that God has made a mistake in allowing them. —Oswald Chambers

The better you prepare yourself to meet suffering, the more wisely you will act, and the greater will be your merit. You will bear all the more easily if your heart and mind is diligently prepared. Do not say, "I cannot endure such things from this person," or "I will not tolerate these things: he has done me great injury, and accused me of things I never considered; from another person I might bear it, and regard it as something that must be endured." Such thoughts are foolish, for you ignore the merit of patience and Him who rewards it, and think only of the person that has injured you and the wrong you endure. —Thomas à Kempis

Thou canst not banish me for this world is my Father's house. (But I will slay thee, the Emperor said.) No, thou canst not, for my life is hid with Christ in God. (I will take away thy treasures.) Nay, but thou canst not, for my treasure is in heaven and my heart is there. (But I will drive thee away from man and thou shalt have no friend left.) Nay, thou canst not, for I have a friend in heaven from whom thou canst not separate me. I defy thee; for there is nothing that thou canst do to hurt me. —Chrysostom

Scriptural social concerns. It evidences instead an embracing of today's liberal, politically correct agendas.

View the details of this article at http://www.witherspoonociety.org/2004/social_creed.htm.

The New Harvest from Prosperity Teaching

An Associated Press writer has highlighted the life of Cindy Fleenor, a fifty-three-year-old accountant from Tampa, Florida. She identified three particular health-and-wealth preachers whom she had watched on television, believing their message of sacrifice and prosperity. Each of those three is now under a government probe spearheaded by Senator Charles Grassley, a ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Committee.

The probe, said Grassley, is not a theological issue. The concern is rather that lower- and middle-income people (1) are the most vulnerable, (2) are the most motivated to give, and (3) have the most to lose by being manipulated.

The health-and-wealth gospel teaches that if you trust God you will receive material benefits here and now. Of course, tied to that is usually giving to a particular ministry that espouses that teaching. What has been generally understood before is now becoming evident: how much this wealth has been misused by those who are receiving it. Some of those being investigated are cooperating, while others are fighting it on the basis of "religious beliefs."

View the details of this article at <http://www.cnn.com/2007/LIVING/wayoflife/12/27/prosperity.preachers.ap/>.

Compiled by Robert Condict, Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International Advisory Board member and pastor of Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church, Baldwin, Maryland.

Newsworthy is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the FBFI.

Crossing the Ocean

Steve Hafler

Crossing the ocean has never made a person more spiritual. Money-worshiping businessmen with an obsession for gain do this 365 days a year. Even when Hudson Taylor sailed across the ocean there were merchants and pirates doing the same thing. Nowadays the merchants carry handheld satellite devices and the pirates carry automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades. A wise man once wrote, "There is no new thing under the sun."

Nothing mystical happens when you reach a distant coast or when your feet touch foreign soil. Such an experience can, however, reveal the person that you truly are. Here now is an accurate standard by which you can measure yourself—what you are now, this moment, you will be if you go to a foreign place for missionary service.

- If you are lazy at home, you will be a sluggard in missions.
- If you are a fervent evangelist in your community now, then you will be passionate for souls everywhere.
- If you are faithful at home then you will be a trustworthy person when sent.
- If you are a wise steward now you will steward the wealth of finances, attention, and opportunities made available to you.
- If you are a foot out of joint now, then you will be a broken tooth in a strange land.
- If you are fearful at home, then you will likewise be a coward when among foreign people and odd customs.
- If your life resonates with Christlike humility in your place of service while stateside, then you will be equally like your Master among those to whom He has sent you—no matter what the people look, sound, or smell like.
- If you are a lover of praise at home, then you will be a blot on the name of Christ wherever you travel as you seek to exalt yourself in vain glory and build an empire to your own name.

A change in geography will not change your character. Paul the apostle and Paul the prisoner are the same man. Do not deceive yourself that some kind of missionary metamorphosis will take place simply because your address is in a distant country. Let God's Spirit transform you as you grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ this moment.

Oh that we would repent and desire to see His Kingdom rather than building a personal fiefdom unto ourselves even though we claim to have done it in Jesus' name. May we boast in nothing except the cross of Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world, rather than each individual praising himself even though his rank pride is carefully couched in Christian terms. Pride and self-

centeredness are just as much an abomination when done in ministry as they are in nightclubs among pagans on the weekends.

May we be reminded that if we are doing what we do to please men, then we have our reward. Three times Jesus says of those who live for the praise of men in Matthew, the sixth chapter, "They have their reward." The reward is that people think we are a "Christian success." Just because a person can gather a crowd does not mean he is doing gospel work that is pleasing to the Lord. Our standard must go beyond the sensual—blocks, mortar, steel, newsletters, brochures, DVD presentations, and websites—all of this will perish by fire. Only let these serve our primary task of glorifying God by building people.

Do not believe everything you hear or read. A man may boast of many things and seem righteous until one comes and searches him out. Our emphasis of assuming success by numbers and buildings is nowhere to be found in Scripture. Yes, we may run the risk of appearing to be a failure in a day when success, even in conservative evangelicalism, is often measured by outward appearance and sensual (sight and sound) standards. This desire for vain glory is a most disturbing and a crippling element in ministry and must be repented of and purged from gospel work. Our ministry is at best an anemic one—and worse a total fabrication—if the marks of brokenness and humility are not evidently present. Not mere words of humility are necessary; what is needed is an evident selflessness from a life controlled by the Spirit of God.

Our faith is not just black words on a white page; it is experiential. We must keep from making a false dichotomy. I may know the complete literary structure and themes of Paul's writings yet miss the Person he writes about. Our desire should be like Paul's: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Phil. 3:10). How can the Son of God walk in our midst and His Spirit not be grieved when "celebrity ministry" is not only overlooked but actually encouraged? Maybe we have been deceived into thinking that we live in a day when we finally have an exception to the Master's principle that "the servant is not above his Master." It is enough that a servant is like his Master.

"Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5).

Steve Hafler has served with Gospel Fellowship Association since 1998 as an evangelist/church planter to the countries of Kenya and Zambia. In addition, he presently serves as the Executive Vice President of Central Africa Baptist College.

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May Is National Police Officer Memorial Month

Donald Karnes

The early morning hours of that November day will always be burned into my memory. I had been a law enforcement chaplain for the Chesapeake (Virginia) Police Department for just under a year when my phone rang around three that cold, misty morning. The voice on was one of our dispatchers apologizing for waking me so early; then she informed me that one of our officers had been killed in a tragic accident while on duty. She asked whether I could immediately go to a local hospital to assist in notifying the officer's wife and family.

In the previous year I had made other next-of-kin notifications in my duties as a chaplain, but I'd never had to deal with the tragic loss of a member of our police department. Honestly, because I was new to the department and did not know this officer, I was petrified at the prospect. Later that same day I received a call from that fallen officer's wife asking me whether I'd be willing to preach the funeral, since their family did not have a minister. I had a wonderful opportunity in that tragedy to share the love of Christ with individuals whom I'd never have been introduced to had I not had the burden to minister to our law-enforcement community.

On the morning of October 8, 2005, the caller ID at home showed another call from police dispatch. An officer whom I'd just chatted with the previous day had been fatally injured in a shootout with the suspect in a bank robbery/hostage situation. Once again I had an opportunity to provide comfort to family members, police officers, dispatchers, and those officers who had been on scene while the events of that tragedy unfolded. Then, too soon again, on the night of January 17, 2008, my phone rang with the news that a detective serving a narcotics warrant had been fatally shot as he made entry into the residence.

In all these situations the emotions, grief, pain, and chronic second-guessing of actions and procedure find officers contemplating a different outcome. These mental demons plague the hearts of our servants in blue and often result in continued personal disasters. It is during these moments that the police chaplain can provide a solace and a witness as he seeks to share God's wisdom to meet immediate needs.

Since President John F. Kennedy signed it into law on October 1, 1962, May 15 has been National Police Officers Memorial Day and the week containing May 15 has been National Police Week. On May 15, 1982, the first National Police Officers Memorial Day Service was held at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, DC.

According to the Officer Down Memorial Page, Inc. (www.odmp.org), in the last twenty years an average of 170 officers a year have made that ultimate sacrifice by laying down their lives for their community. In 2007, 180 officers lost their life in the line of duty—that's roughly one officer killed in the line

of duty every other day. Included in this number are officers who lose the battle with an illness contracted on September 11, 2001. That tragic day members of the public safety community were running toward the threat while most other citizens were seeking the cover of safety.

The stresses of these criminal justice responsibilities contribute to higher-than-average alcohol abuse, drug abuse, domestic problems, and suicide than those found among the general population. (See Chaplain Bob Keller's article in the November/December 2007 *FrontLine*.) These officers need our thanks, praise, and prayers on a daily basis as they fulfill the mission of Romans 13:1-4.

During the week of May 11-17, 2008, we should seek out opportunities to show our thanks to our law enforcement community. Most officers, only too often, hear our complaints about how they've conducted their responsibilities. In the back of their mind is the constant "Could this be the day that I won't make it home at the end of my shift?" Rarely are members of our law-enforcement community approached by the citizens whom they are sworn to protect with a word of thanks and a promise of prayer. As followers of the original Lawgiver, let us take to heart the words of 1 Timothy 2:1-3: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour."

Most law enforcement professionals will not immediately be overly warm to the police chaplain—they may even be skeptical—but with godly wisdom, Scripture, and consistency, a chaplain can overcome that blue barrier and become a true friend while maintaining his testimony. When a chaplain gains the trust of local criminal-justices professionals, opportunities to be a true witness of God's saving grace will present themselves in ways that are unimaginable. Most opportunities are volunteer situations that allow for flexibility and can be easily added to a busy schedule.

There are many resources available for training in how to deal with the needs of the criminal-justice system. Still the greatest need in criminal justice community is to have a trusted, faithful person available to proclaim the truths of God's Word when a professional has a need. You can check with your local police/sheriff/jail for chaplain opportunities. If none are available, you may be able to suggest that one get started with your help.

Donald Karnes (chaplainkarnes@hotmail.com) pastors Grace Baptist Church in Norfolk, Virginia, and serves as Chaplain/Auxiliary Police Sergeant with the Chesapeake Police Department. In addition, he is the Northeastern Seaboard Representative for In Pursuit! Ministries.

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A Comforting Promise to His Own

Robert Congdon

In the night in which the Lord was betrayed, He hosted the Jewish Passover meal with His twelve disciples. After the departure of Judas, the Lord delivered a discourse that would establish the course of the Church Age¹ to the remaining eleven disciples “until He comes.”² He began by offering them comfort that would enable them to face the next day, the next week, and the years to come until they would be present with Him.

He said,

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; **that where I am, there ye may be also.** . . . Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. **Let not your heart be troubled,** neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and **come again unto you.** If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I (John 14:1–3, 27, 28).

This promise of His presence extends to all Church Age saints, including you, if you know the Lord as your Savior (John 17:20–24):

Neither pray I for these alone, but **for them also which shall believe on me through their word;** . . . Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, **be with me where I am;** that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world (John 17:20, 24).

Key to this comforting promise is

that one day all Church Age believers will be with Him wherever He is. Until that day, He has sent them and us the Holy Spirit to comfort and help as earnest of this promise (John 16:7; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5).

At the Passover meal that followed, the Lord filled four ceremonial cups with the fruit of the vine as was customary of that day:

■ **The First Cup** of thanksgiving³

■ **The Second Cup** of praise (sometimes called the cup of sanctification or setting apart)

■ **The Third Cup** of blessing or redemption (Exod. 6:6; 1 Cor. 10:16)⁴

■ **The Fourth Cup**—the Hallel cup

The third cup is the one that the Church observes at the Lord’s Table. After the Lord passed the third cup to each of the eleven, prior to passing the fourth cup, He declared:

But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when **I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom** (Matt. 26:29).

Matthew informs us that they then sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives (Matt. 26:30).⁵ The fourth cup remained as they left the room—filled, untaken, and left behind.⁶

The fourth cup is waiting for the time when the Bride is complete and joined with her Lord in His Father’s kingdom. At this time, the entire company of Church Age saints will join the disciples in observing and participating in the fulfillment of Matthew 26:29.

The purpose of the Lord’s Table today is to look back at redemption through Jesus Christ (symbolized in the cup of redemption) and to look forward to that union with Him, symbolized by the waiting fourth cup. As a lesson and reminder of Christ’s

comforting promise to His own Bride, the Church is to observe the Lord’s Table “till He come” (1 Cor. 11:26).

The marriage supper of the Lamb in the Father’s kingdom culminates that union (Rev. 19:7). The taking of the fourth cup, the cup of acceptance, signifies the completion of the Bride of Christ. This conclusion harmonizes the statements of Matthew 26:29 and 1 Corinthians 11:26 by explaining the “neglect” of the fourth cup. It fulfills the promises of John 14:1–3 and Revelation 20:6–9, and explains why the Lord’s Table is to be observed only until He comes.

From that day forward, Christ’s Bride will be with Him wherever He goes, never to suffer again (Rev. 21:4). Since she is transformed with a glorified body at the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:17, 18), Christ provides a fitting home for her in the New Jerusalem, a literal and physical dwelling place (Rev. 21:9, 10). Further fulfillment of the promise of His eternal presence to His Bride (John 14:3) is seen when she accompanies Him back to His earthly kingdom at the end of the Tribulation to co-rule with Him as He takes up the throne of David and begins His Millennial reign (Isa. 9:7; Rev. 20:4).

¹ Church Age is the period of time from Pentecost, Acts 2, to the catching up (Rapture) of the Bride of Christ consisting of all true believers of the Church Age.

² Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (nl: MacDonald Publishing Company, nd.), 569.

³ Edersheim, 561.

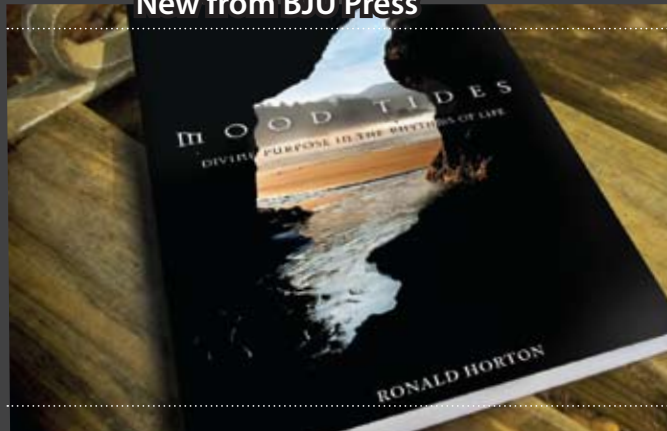
⁴ Ibid., 568. Ceil and Moishe Rosen, *Christ in the Passover* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 57, 59.

⁵ Ibid., 579.

⁶ J. Carl Laney, *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, Stanley Toussaint and Charles H. Dyer, eds. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 73.

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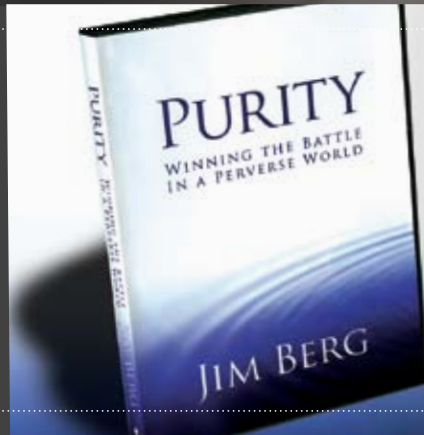
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