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Contents

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2008

FRONTLINE MAGAZINE

VOLUME 18 • NUMBER 6

6 The Biblical Approach to Disaster Relief

Gordon A. Dickson

We dare not place our “creature comforts” above our passion to see others come to Christ.

13 Operation Renewed Hope

Jan Milton

Operation Renewed Hope is recapturing the burden that Christians had before charity was hijacked by the Social Gospel.

15 Restoring Body, Soul, and Spirit through Disaster Relief

Martin Masitto

When disaster strikes, the strongest of the strong and the weakest of the weak suffer intense physical needs.

17 The Joseph Project

Jan Milton

The Joseph Project is based on the wisdom of Joseph, who gathered food in the “fat” years to meet human needs in the “lean” years.

We are grateful to Operation Renewed Hope for their help with this issue.

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www.fbfi.org

10 A Burden Born in a Banana Box

David R. Shumate

We learned a lot from our banana boxes. God’s plan of mobilizing His people to work joyfully in response to a need is the best plan.



21 Disaster Reconnaissance

Todd Sasek

Believers can function as modern-day Aarons and Hurs, coming alongside to help and encourage when disaster hits.



Departments

4 Mail Bag

5 On the Front Line

A Shelter in the Storm

John C. Vaughn

20 On the Home Front

24 Cogitations

On Choice

Warren Vanhetloo

26 Ladies' Circle

The Battleground of the Worried Heart

Marcia Gammon

27 Wit & Wisdom

David Atkinson

28 Regional Report

Brent Snow

29 The Evangelist's Corner

I Was Audited by the IRS!

Jerry Sivnksty

30 At a Glance

Galatians—Defending the Truth of the Gospel

Layton Talbert

33 Newsworthy

Robert Condict

35 Global Focus

Being Worthy Senders

Pearson Johnson

37 Chaplain News

Encouraging Those on the Front Line

Bob Ellis

38 Behind the Lines

Before They Call

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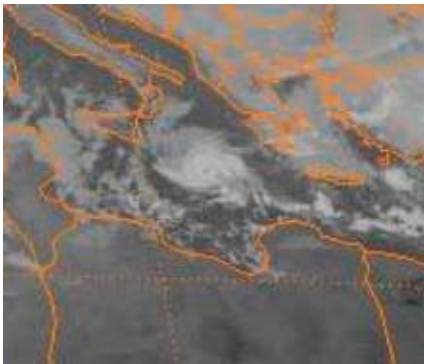
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A Shelter in the Storm

John C. Vaughn

The grainy graphic below is a satellite photo of the January 1995 “Mediterranean Hurricane” that illustrates what the storm may have looked like that Paul and his companions experienced on their way to Rome. Acts 27–28 is one of the most dramatic stories ever written, all the more thrilling because it is the inspired record of an actual event. In 1880 Englishman James Smith sailed his yacht over the exact course outlined in Scripture. What he learned from his experience and perceived from the text was written in what some have called the best modern account available: *The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul*.



Luke’s account is accurate in every detail: the mechanical working of ancient ships, seasonal aspects of weather and currents in the Mediterranean, over twenty specific geographical locations, and above all, the incredible personality of the apostle Paul. His courage and character raise the question, “Are you a shelter in the time of storm?”

Paul’s calmness and ministry in this storm beckon the diligent study of those commissioned to preach Christ as the only true shelter in the soul-destroying storm of sin. Neither “sun nor stars” had been seen in many days, but Paul still saw the Lord. He was ever aware of the Lord’s presence

(Acts 27:23), and, as always, he spoke of the Lord’s promise (27:24). The Lord had told him he would get to Rome; when the harrowing story was told, Luke’s simple conclusion was, “And so we went toward Rome” (28:14). Paul’s behavior in this terrible storm was the climax of the book of Acts, and it lays the foundation for our thinking about a Biblical response to disaster. In his commentary on Acts, Stewart Custer said, “The apostle Paul was not merely a strength to the church in his preaching and ministry, he was a strength to all he encountered in the storms of life.”

The Biblical response to disaster that Paul modeled is not only to see the Lord when everyone thinks He is out of sight, but to be confident in Him when the confidence of others is misplaced. This voyage was a bad idea, and Paul had pointed that out. It was too late in the year, as the soldiers and seamen very well knew. But men’s motives are often corrupted by the desire for profit or reward. They seek confidence in their decisions by turning to experience and expertise (27:11). They often assume that circumstances confirm their wisdom (27:13). In the storms of life, the wisdom of God must flow through men that truly trust in Him. The unalloyed or single-minded heart is able to see God (Matt. 5:8). Discernment is God’s gift to His people (27:10—“I see!”). Thus, direction is needed from God’s people (27:21, 31—“Listen!”).

Paul was in a ship with 276 others: two dear friends (Luke and Aristarchus), but also sailors (families), soldiers, and violent criminals. The experts and influential had had their way, but Paul had the truth. The disaster had brought everyone but Paul to despair: “All hope that we should be saved was then taken away” (27:20). When no one knew what to

do, Paul stood and spoke. The panic was not over, but the Word of God’s messenger prevailed at last. When disaster strikes in our day, God’s people need to stand and speak for Him. Paul became their shelter in the storm because he had a Shelter in the storm. “Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.”

How are we to have such courage when we ourselves are in the storm—seasick, starving, exhausted? In the great struggles of life, both physical and spiritual, natural and supernatural, we must not forget the balance of our great security. David wrote many Psalms on this reality (consider Psalm 25). Paul prayed many prayers, needing much help from God, and God answered (27:24b). This balance helps us in the battle in our lives: we still *seek* shelter when we should *be* a shelter. God’s plan will not be thwarted. The centurion himself would not allow the soldiers to kill Paul to protect themselves from the mandatory body count on their arrival in Rome. God sheltered Paul from the elements and his enemies on this voyage, for He had promised Paul he would stand and witness to Caesar.

And Paul’s faith became a true shelter for those who traveled with him. He preached, persuaded, and as always, persisted. While the shivering, soaked survivors struggled to shore, Paul still served. He gathered a bundle of sticks for the fire (28:3) and even in this he was bitten by a viper. But his faith was not shaken; the serpent was shaken into the fire. Paul’s experience seems to be prophetic of our continuing struggles and Satan’s certain end. Paul’s faith in God and his proclamation of the Word in this great storm raises and answers the question, “How can we be a shelter in the time of storm?”

The Biblical Approach to Disaster Relief

■ On December 26, 2004, the largest earthquake in four decades ruptured the Indian Ocean and produced the deadliest tsunami in history. Fatalities: More than 225,000.

■ August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina decimated parts of Mississippi and Louisiana. Fatalities: 1800.

■ April 16, 2007, at Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, a murderer killed 32 people.

■ February 5–6, 2008, a series of violent tornadoes tore through Alabama, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Missouri. Fatalities: 55.

■ May 3, 2008, Cyclone Nargis swamped the coast of Myanmar and the city of Yangon. Fatalities: 78,000.

■ May 12, 2008, a magnitude 7.9 earthquake struck three provinces in western China. Fatalities: 67,000.

■ June 9–18, 2008, the worst flooding on record submerged parts of Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Iowa. Fatalities: 10.

■ August–September 2008, Hurricanes Faye, Gustav, and Ike came ashore in Haiti, Cuba, Florida, Louisiana, and Texas. Fatalities: Hundreds.

■ Each new temblor in southern California reminds the people that “the Big One” may be only days away.

■ Even now the US government is running public service announcements to warn the population about the history and potential danger of an influenza pandemic.

These printed words seem to groan under the sheer weight of the human tragedies they are forced to convey. The terse descriptions above don’t even begin to address the agonies of the millions of survivors of these disasters. And the three groaning observers of Romans 8:18–26 (creation, Christians, and the Comforter) wordlessly endure these agonies. But the Scriptures portray each new disaster as a meaningful object lesson about eternity. Catastrophic earthly miseries should cause everyone to look at the coming eternal miseries of the lost. Therefore, the New Testament church must prepare to use each new disaster to declare the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The Disaster Declaration

The Good News of Jesus Christ must be continually proclaimed, especially with each new disaster. Christ gave the classic example of how to make a “disaster declaration” in Luke 13:1–5.

First, Christ used the story of the disaster to replace human suppositions with God-given authority. The crowd around Him buzzed with the news of a massacre: Pilate had killed several Galileans and mingled their blood with their sacrifices. The people were speculating that the victims must have been very evil. Take note of how Jesus Christ set aside these speculations. He asked, “Suppose ye that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Christ raised their suppositions and set them aside with authority: “I tell you, No!” After every disaster, there will be speculations

about the reasons behind the catastrophe. The media “talking heads” will seek the meaning in human tragedies. It is important for the church to respond with Scripture in order to set aside the human suppositions that accompany each new disaster.

Second, Christ used the context of the disaster to remind those who remained about their eternal destinies. He told them that, unless they would repent, they would all “likewise perish.” In so doing, He used a horrible event as an object lesson about the universal human tragedy. This teaches us that we ought to remind those around us that these horrible, earthly miseries point to the eternal miseries in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11–15). The eternal tragedy is universal—unless every individual will undergo an exceptional reversal: genuine repentance. The right “disaster declaration” is the gospel message of repentance.

Third, Christ used the aftermath of both manmade and “natural” disasters to proclaim the message. According to the speculations today, natural (or “impersonal”) disasters spring from “Mother Earth,” a warmer globe, industrial wastes, overpopulation, etc. Christ marshaled the news of a tower collapse to preach the gospel message of essential, individual repentance. When the next series of floods, tornadoes, or earthquakes strike your area, do you see how you could use the aftermath of that disaster to declare the Good News of Christ? It is not enough to say that you escape without much property damage; it is essential that you help those who are in danger of the ultimate, permanent disaster to escape.

The gospel of Jesus Christ must be continually proclaimed, even in a disaster—especially with each new disaster. How can this be done? Here are some Biblical principles we can learn to apply in evangelistic disaster relief.

A Ministry Model for Disaster Relief

How can the New Testament church passionately prepare to use each new disaster to declare the Good News of Jesus Christ? So far, we have discussed the essential nature of the “disaster declaration.” Now let’s discuss what it means to prepare for such a proclamation.

The Importance of Knowing the Words

In the New Testament, Acts 10 describes the wonderful story of the conversion of the Gentiles. Acts 11 records how the conversion of the Gentiles produced a confrontation with the Jewish believers at Jerusalem. As the apostle Peter was reporting what had happened, he used a truly remarkable quotation to make his point. In Acts 11:14, Peter was quoting from Cornelius who, in turn, was quoting from the angel who appeared to him. What message did the angel deliver to these lost men? The angel said (about Peter), “[He] shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.” For every observer, this highlights the importance of knowing the words! For every believer, this emphasizes the importance of telling others the message of salvation.

The Importance of Planting and Growing Churches

This important reminder helped to fuel the Great Commission efforts found in Acts 11:20. These efforts resulted in the planting of the church at Antioch. Under the leadership of Barnabas (“the son of consolation”), the

church at Antioch grew strong in the grace of God. The Word of God, planted upon the soil of their souls, bore fruit to the praise and glory of Christ. In a surprising move Barnabas left Antioch for a time in order to find the teacher who could help them: Saul (Paul) of Tarsus. Verse 26 records the historic greatness of that ministry: “And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” Here we see the vibrant power of the teaching and preaching of the Word of God in the church. The church at Antioch was acting upon its God-given mandate: fulfilling the Great Commission in the power of the Spirit. There can be no effective “disaster relief” unless it is built upon the foundational emphasis of planting and growing churches.

The Importance of Responding to Disasters

For the purposes of this article, it’s important to study what happened next, in Acts 11:27–30. The church became aware of an impending disaster that would be worldwide in scope. For a moment, put yourself in their place. How would you respond to the news of an impending worldwide disaster? Most disasters are regional or local in scope, but this one would be a worldwide famine. So how would your church,

command to be involved in relief efforts. These efforts were not directly mandated by the Great Commission. They were an example of Christian compassion in a voluntary application of the command to love one’s neighbors—part of the “all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” This relief effort was voluntary and given in the spirit of 2 Corinthians 8:8–21. As you know, many relief organizations began with Christian motives. But over the years, these organizations have emphasized relief methods without the message of redemption. Among many relief organizations with “Christian” names, one hears nothing of the urgency of sharing the Good News of Christ with the lost. If you choose to act in the face of an impending disaster, you must be guided by careful stewardship of the Great Commission.

Specific Principles of Disaster Relief

If you are called upon to respond to an impending or actual disaster, here are some Biblical principles to consider.

1. Good works can break down barriers for a gospel witness.

In Matthew 5:16, Jesus Christ commanded, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Evangelism itself is a good work, but other compassionate good works can break down barriers for the gospel witness (cf. John 10:32). Believers must be equipped to do the good works that can draw the attention to the

Lord. Like the Good Samaritan, they can take the opportunity to help those who desperately need them.

2. Mature Christians can have a ministry of comfort.

In 2 Corinthians 1:3,4 we find these words: “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be

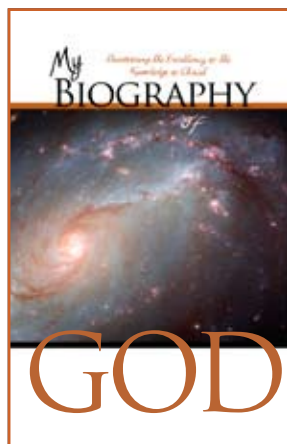
WHEN THE NEXT SERIES OF FLOODS, TORNADOES, OR EARTHQUAKES STRIKE YOUR AREA, DO YOU SEE HOW YOU COULD USE THE AFTERMATH OF THAT DISASTER TO DECLARE THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST?

for instance, respond to news of an impending worldwide influenza pandemic?

Since the church at Antioch couldn’t meet the needs of the whole world, they chose to do what they could do: focus their efforts in one local area. They chose to help the believers in Judea. If your church chooses to organize relief efforts in the face of a widespread disaster, you will have to make these same choices. You are not trying to be exclusive, but effective. The church at Antioch focused their efforts on a limited area and concentrated on helping specific people. They probably chose the persecuted Judean believers because they knew that they had no other human recourse for help. In so doing, they enabled those churches to continue to evangelize their neighbors in the crisis. Antioch’s disaster relief is the classic example of churches helping churches. Verse 30 shows that they gave careful thought to the responsibility for these relief funds as well.

It Is Voluntary, Not Mandatory

It is important to note that the church at Antioch was not following a specific



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By Sam Brock

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able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." Christians know the comfort of knowing Christ. They know how the Father of Mercies and the God of all comfort has comforted them in their trials. As a result, they know how to use God's comfort to reach out to those who experience disasters.

We dare not place our personal comforts above our desire to reach those who face a potential disaster (e.g., Jonah 4).

3. Christians should work to meet the needs of others.

By his life (Acts 20:32–35), the apostle Paul modeled the truth of Ephesians 4:28: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." This is how each disciple of Antioch was able to respond "according to his ability" (Acts 11:29)—by practicing good stewardship. Believers should plan their personal finances in such a way that they can help to meet the needs of others. If the treasure of the gospel makes us faithful "debtors" (Rom. 1:13–17), then we cannot allow financial debt to disable our ministry.

4. We seek to help all men, especially Christians.

Galatians 6:10 states this plainly: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." In the words of Galatians 2:10, "Remember the poor." As noted earlier, this is a personal choice to obey Christ's command to love your neighbors

as yourself. In the words of 1 John 3:16–18, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."

5. Disaster relief can be a "boomerang" of blessing.

With all the needs of your church, you may wonder why your church should help another church. Paul explained this in 2 Corinthians 8:14: "But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality." The day may come when your church will experience a disaster or "a time of want." When that day comes, won't you be glad that your church helped other churches in their time of need? Experience has shown that those who have received help are the first ones to offer help when the crisis comes. When your disaster strikes, prepared churches can help you share the Good News of Christ in your own disaster zone.

The New Testament church must prepare to use each new disaster to declare the Good News of Jesus Christ. In so doing, we can show a lost world the comfort of Christ to deliver souls from the ultimate, eternal disaster.

Gordon Dickson is the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Findlay, Ohio.

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David R. Shumate

A Burden Born in a Banana Box



10

My vision for a Biblical approach to disaster intervention was born in a banana box. In August of 2005 I was an associate pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Taylors, South Carolina. As Hurricane Katrina was roaring across the Gulf of Mexico, I was (I sadly confess) no more than casually interested. We were already in transition to a mission outreach to Hispanics and were going to move to Arizona within the year. On August 29, when Katrina slammed into the Louisiana/Mississippi coast, it might as well have been half a world away.

Things began to change very quickly, however. Like many people I was shocked by the ferocity of the storm and the devastation that it left behind. Some individuals from our church felt a burden to travel to the impact zone and help out, much as people raced to New York after 9-11. Meanwhile, Operation Renewed Hope, working together with the FBFI, was planning a more systematic approach to the need. ORH director Jan Milton relied heavily on the organizational and communication structure of the FBFI to get his message out to Fundamental churches and to begin to coordinate relief efforts. Dr. John Vaughn, then our pastor, wanted our church to respond appropriately to the crisis, and he asked me if I would help coordinate that response.

Disaster Response

Pastor Vaughn communicated to the staff and deacons that he believed that it was crucial to take advantage of our members' initial enthusiasm by organizing an immediate response. It had been determined that one of the first needs was for boxes of food and water that could easily be distributed to victims of the tragedy. ORH quickly outlined a plan to collect, fill, assemble, ship, and distribute these boxes. Initially it was recommended that we get boxes used by grocery store chains to ship bananas to their stores. These boxes were just about the perfect size, they were doubly thick in order to protect the bananas from bruising, they had handholds cut out of the ends, and they were available.

Although churches did things different ways, such as buying contents in bulk and assembling the boxes on site at the church, our pastor believed that we could respond most quickly if we asked individual families to find the boxes and fill them based on the list of recommended items. The boxes had to provide enough food for a family of four for two days plus a gallon of water and miscellaneous items.

We found several groups in the church that were ready to help on extremely short notice. Senior members, students, and stay-at-home moms seemed to have the most flexible schedules. In addition, two organizations in particular were a tremendous help. The families of our church had each been assigned to a deacon caring group. Because of this arrangement the deacons of the church were able to get vital information to their group members between church services in a way that would have been logistically very difficult for our church staff alone. In addition, the ladies' missionary group organized assistance at the church to receive and process the boxes that came in. Of course, the office staff worked extremely hard taking care of a multitude of details.

In addition to this help, it rapidly became apparent that we needed a group of leaders dedicated specifically to this project. On Sunday, October 4, Pastor Vaughn made a call for volunteers. From the thirty or so members who attended

an information meeting, we were able select a leadership committee. They subsequently divided the project up into manageable pieces, such as communication and publicity, assembly of the boxes, and coordinating transportation of the assembled pallets of Hope boxes. Many other individuals helped as well.

Unanticipated Difficulties

In addition to the usual logistical and administrative challenges, we ran into difficulties that we never anticipated. Regarding the boxes themselves, we found some of the local produce managers getting a little frustrated because of the large number of people asking them for their banana boxes. We made sure to express to them and their store managers our thanks for their cooperation; we did not want our good to be evil spoken of. In retrospect we probably should have identified a few volunteers to call around and get the boxes. We also found that not all banana boxes are created equal. Some brands were different sizes. This might not seem important, but with these heavy boxes being stacked and put on pallets, they needed to fit tightly together for efficient and safe transportation.

Another issue involved the contents of the boxes. We originally asked that the people put a gallon jug of water in the boxes, but the dimensions of the boxes meant that some kinds of gallon jugs did not completely fit in the box upright. Because we did not want any of the jugs to leak, we ended up buying smaller bottles of water, swapping out the jugs and saving them for mission teams to use later when they went to the disaster zone. As it turned out a group of volunteers inspected and repacked the boxes anyway in order to make sure that each one was ready to go. For example, the team made sure that there were no breakables or perishables and that the canned goods all had pull tops, or else that there was a can opener in the box. They checked to ensure that items such as paper plates and plastic wear were included. It was also recommended that a fifty-gallon leaf bag be used to line the inside of the box to keep the contents of the boxes dry. The selfless labor of the task force and the many volunteers was most valuable. In the two days after the majority of the boxes had arrived at the church, the volunteers had inspected each box, made the necessary substitutions, repacked the contents, and prepared the boxes for shipping.

Hope Boxes

The boxes would have to be transportable to those in need and would have to contain everything necessary for meals that could be prepared without the use of electricity or gas. As the project progressed, ORH began receiving feedback from churches involved in the project, and they modified the contents list. They eventually began recommending for later shipments that we purchase new boxes from a manufacturer. The “banana boxes” thus came to be known as “hope boxes.” As the churches and ORH

have gained more experience with the project, other kinds of boxes have come into being: “Hot Boxes” containing food items that can be prepared once utilities are restored; Toiletries Hope Boxes; Cleaning Supplies/House Care Hope Boxes; and Baby Care Hope Boxes. Eventually ORH wrote an extensive manual for churches involved in disaster relief. This manual includes detailed instructions concerning the different facets of the Hope Box project. You can obtain a copy at this link (<http://teamorh.com/Disaster.htm>), or by contacting Operation Renewed Hope.

In about a week the people assembled around two hundred boxes, containing food and supplies for about 4,800 meals. The final hurdle to complete the project was getting the



boxes where they were needed. Volunteers from our churches took the boxes to a nearby church that had a Men for Missions warehouse and shipping facility. From there the boxes were shipped to a collection point in the gulf region designated by ORH. ORH also arranged for a packet of gospel literature to be affixed in plastic pouches to each of the hope boxes. The boxes were in turn delivered to people in need by mission teams that also presented the gospel to them.

Lessons Learned

We learned a lot from our banana boxes. We learned first of all that God works in tragedy to provide opportunities for His people to minister. God’s plan of mobilizing His people to work joyfully in response to a need is the best plan. ORH is not a Christian Red Cross that collects money, assembles

resource and staff, and then meets the need for us. Instead, it is a tool to facilitate communication and cooperation among Fundamental churches to assist fellow believers and to reach out in compassion with the gospel to those who do not know Christ.

The second lesson that we learned is that you must pay attention to the details. It was very tempting at times to be frustrated by the hosts of seemingly minor logistical questions and problems. But imagine that your home has been inundated with seawater. Almost everything you possess has been ruined. You are camping out in your backyard. Then you wait in line, perhaps hours, to receive a box of food along with a gospel witness. Now imagine that when you get the box home to your family the contents are spoiled or you cannot open any of the cans because there is no can opener. Details *do* matter.

Third, an emergency project like this reveals both a need and an opportunity to turn church members into leaders. In our case, the creation of the task force and the delegation of substantial responsibility were essential. Even as it was, I was almost constantly on the telephone, and we had to fight mightily to avoid creating a bottleneck as people were waiting for information and instructions. Without others taking initiative the project would have been impossible.

Perhaps the greatest lesson that we learned, however, is that in the Lord's work you always get more than you give. The banana box project helped our church by mobilizing our people to serve others. It was also a great blessing to me personally. The Lord knows what He is doing. We moved to Phoenix the following summer, but with the hurricane season of 2008, we became involved with ORH again. This time our role has been to provide a link between the efforts of ORH and the many Hispanic churches and individuals potentially affected by tropical cyclones. The experience that we gained in 2005 has proven invaluable for extending the outreach of the Bible-believing churches during time of crisis to those that speak Spanish. We thank the Lord that He can do so much with simple things . . . like banana boxes.

Dr. David Shumate is the director of Missions Gospel Ministries International in Phoenix, Arizona.

Picnic Boxes for Disaster Relief

Editor's Note: Information below is adapted from Operation Renewed Hope's "Disaster Relief: A Guide for the Local Church." The entire document is available at <http://teamorh.com/DisasterRelief/DisasterReliefManual.pdf> or by contacting Operation Renewed Hope.

Picnic Boxes are designed to provide for a family of four in an emergency situation for two days, sometimes longer. They are specifically designed to require no heat for cooking and no refrigeration. The ingredients below are provided as basics—if you choose to add items, please make sure you add things that can simply be opened and eaten and products that have a shelf life of at least six-to-eight months.

Plates and cups	Juice	Saltines
Utensils	Gospel tracts	Applesauce
Paper towels	Canned fruit	Raisins
Toilet paper	Pork and beans	Little Debbie Snacks
Wet wipes	Cereal bars	Peanut butter
Bottled water	Snack crackers	Canned tuna
Powdered milk	Granola bars	Canned chicken breast

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Touching the Heart . . . Reaching the Soul

The thought of having evangelistic medical teams traveling around the world to win souls and start churches was never a part of my plans as a pastor. If you had suggested that I would help orchestrate the shipping of hundreds of thousands of pounds of medical equipment or assisting churches to recover after terrible natural disasters, I would have been incredulous. As a pastor, I just wanted to preach, teach, and minister to my people.

The Lord's Moving

The forming of Operation Renewed Hope (ORH) was unique. God's hand has been with the ministry in blessing and guidance. It began while working with missionary Jim Childress in Panama with a children's sports ministry through our church, Cornerstone Baptist in Fayetteville, North Carolina. God led our group to Arenosa, a jungle village on the Gatun Lake, a major part of the Panama Canal, during a day of fishing and relaxation. After we returned to the village with a large catch of fish, the village children asked if they could clean the fish. As we watched them, we saw their obvious need for medical care. We asked the village leader for permission to bring a doctor on a future trip, and he gave permission. This simple request would prove to have far-reaching implications.

On our return to the United States we shared this story with others who began to volunteer for future trips. Doctors, nurses, dentists, optometrists, and more became a team that God was forming. Our "one doctor" ambition grew into many medical professionals able to help the people of Arenosa on a scale we had never imagined. It was amazing to watch God form a complete medical team. God was moving in a fashion that we had never seen before.

Joy and Exhilaration

As a pastor in a military town—the storied 82nd Airborne Division is based at Fort Bragg—I ministered to serious, brave men and women. Since I had never directed a medi-

cal clinic, a Special Forces soldier offered his experience and help. We sat eating lunch in a McDonald's restaurant as he shared his story.

In his service to his own country he had worked in many other countries. He told me about entering a clearing in a village where many needy people lived. As he quietly made a place for himself under a tree, he unpacked his food and began to eat. During his simple meal, a young boy approached him for help with a machete cut. He quickly treated the wound and bandaged it to prevent infection. Within minutes there stood before him a line of people seeking medical help. He used everything in his medical pack, and the people returned his kindness by bringing food and treating him graciously.

He taught me how to begin our first clinic and offered to help. He began systematically planning our first evangelistic medical clinic like a military operation. In 1993 we conducted that clinic for 1500 people. The clinic went flawlessly, and many came to Christ. It was one of the most joyous and exhilarating things that I had ever done in my life. My military brother later became a highly decorated Special Forces soldier. Today, he conducts our boot camp training programs for those who wish to travel on one of our medical teams.

Increasing Faith, Increasing Efforts

God increased our faith, and we increased our efforts. A man who learned of our medical team called our church to tell us he had a warehouse of medical supplies to donate. This unexpected and unsolicited donation was almost unbelievable, filling truckload after truckload. We started with no team, no equipment, and no knowledge of what to do. In a matter of months God sent us professionals, equipment, and the knowledge to do the work. We literally were thrust into the medical ministry.

This was happening so fast that we were not thinking too far into the future. The implications for our church

ministry were unknown. The donation was wonderful and obviously a blessing, but now came the question of how to ship this bulk of materials. Paying the shipping fees would require thousands of dollars. Being new in the shipping business, our hearts began to sink as reality set in.

Our faith was weak, but God's provision was mighty. Fayetteville is not only home to the 82nd Airborne but to Pope Air Force Base. God had everything in place for His blessing to come. A man in our church who served in the Air Force knew the Air Force could ship the materials as humanitarian aid, but he was not sure how it could be arranged. He suggested that I call the Department of Defense.

After several phone calls, we reached USAid of the State Department. They shipped the materials for us free of charge using US Air Force aircraft. The first donation filled a US Air Force C-130. God equipped a full medical team, supplied all the materials necessary for the work, plus the shipping to get them to our determined place of ministry—Panama.

The Ongoing Outreach of ORH

From this extraordinary beginning Operation Renewed Hope came into existence. The ministry has worked in Panama, Mexico, Indonesia, Thailand, Cuba, Zambia, Guyana, and a host of other nations conducting medical clinics and shipping needed medical and relief supplies. The result has been the salvation of many souls and the formation of several churches from the converts of the clinics.

Almost seventeen years later we now understand God's plan much better. We still wrestle with our human inability,

AFTER HELPING THE PEOPLE OF MANY VILLAGES, WE NOW UNDERSTAND BETTER THE EARTHLY MINISTRY OF CHRIST. HE WENT ABOUT ALL THE CITIES AND VILLAGES PREACHING . . . AND HEALING THE SICK.

but we are more settled in God's divine ability. His promises have come alive. Sometimes our limited perspective keeps us from the full meaning of a passage. So it was for us as with Matthew 9:35–38.

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

After helping the people of many villages, we now understand better the earthly ministry of Christ. He went about all the cities and villages preaching, teaching, and healing the sick. Physical healing illustrated the spiritual healing He came to offer. The words He preached were understood by the works performed. James explained it this way: "Shew me thy faith without thy works and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (2:18). Clearly the Lord was giving us a great opportunity to present the Word to people who would see it illustrated by what we were doing for them as we witnessed. While reading this passage we saw Christ relieving spiritual suffering while relieving physical suffering. He reached souls while touching bodies. Yes, liberalism lost its way by replacing spiritual help with physical help alone. It is happening again under the leadership of pragmatic Evangelicals. But Fundamental Baptists must not walk by human suffering like the priest or the Levite who passed by the dying man on the Jericho road. We are to be separated from sin and compromise but not from suffering sinners who need the gospel.

Recapturing the Burden

Operation Renewed Hope is recapturing the burden that Christians had before charity was hijacked by the Social Gospel. As these Scriptures became more personal, we saw the pattern more clearly: the preaching of the gospel accompanied with good works is still Biblical. Christ and the apostles preached and practiced it. They ministered to the physical needs of people while preaching and teaching. In the feeding of the five thousand, the physical results were temporal; the people became hungry again shortly after the miracle was accomplished. The lasting effect was the lesson involved: Christ is the Bread of Life! He assumed a physical responsibility to teach a spiritual reality. The disciples said, "Send them away," but Jesus would not send them away. Neither should we.

Operation Renewed Hope also accepts physical responsibility in order to teach spiritual truth. It is our aim to follow Christ's example in proclaiming His gospel—to do spiritual ministry with physical compassion. We have been moved with compassion for the lost, physically, as we tell them of God's compassion for their souls. We are not to offer food and walk away, nor to bind up wounds and ignore souls. We should offer bread to the hungry and, while they eat, tell them of the Bread of Life; we should touch the sick and tell them of the Savior as we bind their wounds. Good works can be mere self-righteousness, but "no works" is unrighteousness. As we have developed Operation Renewed Hope to offer hope to others, it has renewed our own hope in real compassion.

Jan Milton is the founder and director of Operation Renewed Hope based in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Restoring Body, Soul, and Spirit through Disaster Relief.

Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, leaving a path of destruction like our country had never seen. In December 2005 I made my first visit to Hancock County, Mississippi. Greg Rife of RESTORE Ministries and Dr. Ron Hodge of BATA Missions were helping the residents of Bay St. Louis (about 8000 people) and Waveland (also about 8000 people). Ninety percent of the homes were damaged in this area—seventy percent of Waveland was completely gone.

The focal point of their efforts was Calvary Independent Baptist Church of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, which is about two miles from the Gulf. Calvary's pastor had resigned three weeks prior to Katrina; they now had fifteen feet of water on their property. The metal church building withstood the storm, but the mobile home parsonage did not. RESTORE was rebuilding the inside of the church as well as homes in the community, and BATA was providing church services in the early stages of recovery.

The rebuilding activity was enhanced when various groups and individuals began bringing disaster relief supplies to the church site. A distribution center was established where over three million dollars' worth of Bibles, tracts, water, food, clothing, household items, and other needs were given to the residents. Everyone visiting the center filled out a registration form provided by Operation Renewed Hope. On this form were boxes to check for various needs. People were asking for counseling regarding depression and their family. People were asking to know more about trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, needing a visit from a pastor, looking for a church home, and sharing specific prayer requests.

FellowHelpersMinistries began a follow-up program that helped meet the spiritual needs of 2400 families (about 7500 people) over the ten months the Relief Center was open as Calvary was rebuilt. We recorded over five hundred decisions for the Lord. I became the interim pastor and served over two years in the recovery efforts. Some of you reading this article helped with this effort or helped send groups from your church who helped with this effort. In all, over 2000 Christian volunteers worked through

Calvary Independent Baptist Church. What did we learn from this endeavor?

When Disaster Strikes, There Is a Need to Restore the Body.

When disaster strikes the strongest of the strong and the weakest of the weak suffer intense physical needs. The need for food, water, shelter, clothing, medicine, and relief from the sense of being trapped all take a toll.

Note how the following verses address this issue: Matthew 25:35, 36, "For I was an hungred . . . I was thirsty . . . I was a stranger . . . Naked . . . I was sick . . . I was in prison. . . ." What met the physical needs? Again, quoting from Matthew 25:35, 36: "and **ye** gave me meat [food] . . . and **ye** gave me drink [water] . . . and **ye** took me in [shelter] . . . and **ye** clothed me . . . and **ye** visited me [medicine] . . . and **ye** came unto me."

Who are the "**ye**" being spoken of in this passage? Matthew 25:37 explains: "Then shall *the righteous* answer him. . . ."

It is clear from Scripture that the Lord desires and delights when the righteous meet physical needs. In fact, Matthew 25:40 states, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Yes, addressing others' physical needs when disaster strikes is a great place to begin recovery, but it does not end there.

When Disaster Strikes, There Is a Need to Restore the Soul.

There is no question that we live in a day when earthly riches distract one's soul from Christ and divert one's attention from eternal issues. The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches give many a false sense of comfort—that "everything is just fine." We saw firsthand how facing disaster changes all of that.

Note how Mark 8:36 addresses this issue: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

When one's whole world is lying in a ditch or has been

moved out into the depths of the Gulf, the verse above takes on a completely different meaning. We could word it this way: "For what profit it is for man, when he has lost his whole world, but gained his own soul!"

We would pray earnestly prior to every distribution that the Lord would open doors of opportunity for us to share the gospel of Christ and treasures of God's Word that can never be swept away by the storms of life. God would reveal souls ready to be saved through their checking boxes on the registration or by His Spirit directing us into a conversation as we helped folks select items and carry them to their cars.

I had opportunity to fly into New Orleans and drive over to Bay St. Louis for the third anniversary of Katrina, August 29, 2008. You may remember that this was two days prior to the evacuation for Gustav. Old and new Christians alike had an interesting perspective on the pending storm. They said something like this: "We don't want to see another Katrina, to be sure, but if that's what God allows to see others come to know Christ—so be it." This brings us to our last point.

When Disaster Strikes, There Is a Need to Restore the Spirit.

When disaster strikes the strongest Christian and the weakest Christian suffer intense spiritual needs. "Why is this happening to me? What have I done to deserve this? How will I ever recover from this? What about my family? What about my friends?" . . . and a hundred other questions run through the mind and sap one's spiritual strength.

Note how 1 Thessalonians 5:14 addresses this issue: "Now we exhort you, brethren . . . comfort the feebleminded, support the weak. . . ."

The Lord sent an army of Christians into Hancock County to encourage the fainthearted and energize the weak in body and faith following Katrina. And this was a two-way street. Christians on the Gulf suffering and Christians coming from all over the country serving had their spirits restored in the Lord. Have we ever seen the body of Christ unite in such a monumental task as bringing

relief to the suffering before?

In closing I want to share one example from hundreds about restoring body, soul, and spirit through disaster relief. Through the relief center we met sixty-year-old Linda, who is confined to a wheelchair with muscular dystrophy. Chuck McClean, a college professor, came down for two weeks to help with follow-up. I gave him Linda's name. He visited her a few times during his stay, and Linda trusted Christ as her personal Savior.

Mandy, a relief center volunteer, and Connie, a missionary wife, discipled Linda. She desired to be baptized and asked me to make invitations to share with her family. Over thirty of her family members attended her Sunday-morning baptism—her grandson carried her into the baptismal tank. Later that afternoon her son called and met me at the church, where he received Christ as his Savior too. Other family members have been saved since then.

I saw Linda and her sister Joy, also in a wheelchair with MD, during my August 29, 2008, visit. Once again they were facing a serious storm. Their homes, rebuilt by volunteers, were in danger of being destroyed once again. But unlike before, there was the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeping their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. They were rejoicing in what God had done over the last three years and confident that He, if need be, would do it again. This, I thought, is the fruit of Biblical disaster relief restoring body, soul, and spirit.

May the Lord bless each and every one of you who came, gave, and prayed!



Pastor Martin Masitto began FellowHelpersMinistries in October of 2005 to help churches support the hands of their pastor and his family. He is currently serving as interim pastor of Victory Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida, and may be reached at masittovilla@yahoo.com.

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As a believer, I constantly search the Scriptures for examples that I can follow in modern-day living. As a minister of the gospel and servant of Christ, I seek examples from His ministry that will direct the efforts in my ministry.

In a previous article in this issue ("Operation Renewed Hope—Touching the Heart . . . Reaching the Soul") I explained how I became involved in disaster relief. When meeting the needs of people in relief efforts, I knew we needed a Biblical philosophy and wanted to have a Biblical model to follow. One of the most critical needs for survival after disaster is food and water. Providing them is a perfect introduction to a clear presentation of the gospel of Christ.

We all know the problem of the "Social Gospel"—it got so focused on the society, it left out the gospel. There are renewed efforts today to feed the hungry and heal the sick, whether they ever learn of Christ or not. We have to tell people about Christ, but we cannot ignore the suffering we see as we fulfill the Great Commission. I wanted to find a person in the Scriptures who conducted a major relief operation against the natural elements of sin-cursed earth. While speaking with a fellow brother and pastor, we both realized that Joseph was that example.

The Joseph Project is based on the wisdom of Joseph, who gathered food in the "fat" years to meet human needs in the "lean" years. Joseph's solution was simple: prepare for the bad days during the plentiful days. Joseph's disaster relief model was perfect for the modern-day Bible-believing church. Joseph's preparation saved the citizens of the nation he served and his own people in a land nearby.

This kind of foresight can be used to demonstrate Biblical wisdom and compassion to a nation that needs God and to revive His own people as well.

If we would be wise stewards for God, we should prepare just like Joseph did. We should store up food between disasters so that we can rush in with relief immediately while hearts are tender and open to the gospel. We do not have pay exorbitant amounts in a crisis when we can steadily collect and store food for the eventuality that we know will come in the next disaster. Joseph was wise, and we can be also.

In order to meet the needs of people during national, state or local crises, we must have food stuffs and general necessities stored and waiting to be used.

Operation Renewed Hope invites you to become involved in this ongoing project. Interested Fundamental Baptist churches could gather specific foodstuffs and prepare them for pick-up. The ORH Truck will pass through their areas collecting the food stuffs for storage in areas near the target zones. Then, in the "ill favored" days we will be ready to minister and witness to thousands without destroying our budgets or missing our opportunity. In one year, one church with a pantry could gather in excess of one thousand pounds of food.

Remember the old-fashioned "food pounding"? Everyone would bring a pound of something for a needy family. Because of the weight of a pallet of food, we must call this effort a "food tonning." If twenty churches in your state would collect one pallet of food (20–25 boxes), we could fill a tractor-trailer on one pass through that



Hope Boxes being distributed in Hurricane Katrina work.



state. We could methodically fill a warehouse in advance of disaster.

If each Fundamental Baptist pastor will challenge his congregation to fill twenty-five boxes for the work of the Lord, ORH will plan a route to pick up and store that food for distribution. In addition, if that church would donate \$100 toward the transportation costs for the truck, it would be the lowest cost relief work in the history of man. These efforts could save as much as \$20,000 per truckload and would greatly minimize the cost for future relief efforts. Please read the other articles in this issue of *FrontLine* about the souls that have been saved and the churches planted through efforts like this by people like you.

Pastor Larry Gilaspy of Meadowlake Baptist Church in Mobile, Alabama, took this challenge. He led a group of pastors from his area in a Joseph Project. His effort was used mightily and led to hundreds hearing the gospel through food distribution in Hurricane Dolly in August 2008. If you would like speak with him about this, please contact him at Operation Renewed Hope, Larry Gilaspy, 8075 Three Notch Road, Mobile, AL 36619, Phone: 251.661.3982 or 251.243.1372.

We pray that you will join with us. Use this project as an evangelistic opportunity or to exercise the gifts of your people. Preparing for disaster relief is a powerful illustration of our mission: telling men to prepare to meet God now, before it is too late!

Jan Milton is the founder of Operation Renewed Hope



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480.838.5430

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828.884.7811

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Dep-Ed ECOTECH Center
Cebu City, Philippines
dynamis06@yahoo.com

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akbf@earthlink.net

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

First Partaker

What's an Evangelical to Do? Part 3

RESURRECTING THE QUESTION: Two previous columns in this series raised the issue of how Evangelicals should respond to unorthodox men within evangelical ministries. Admittedly, Jesus warned His followers that false prophets can be difficult to detect. They appeal for association with Christ's true disciples as *wolves in sheep's clothing* (Matt. 7:15). Yet our Lord taught that despite their deceptive facade, these non-Evangelicals can be detected by their fruit. *A corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit* (7:17). But what is that fruit? Scripture identifies fruit to be, in the first place, a man's heart beliefs. Evangelicals must begin discovering and dealing Scripturally with unorthodoxy at the root level of heart persuasion if they're ever to terminate the debates over theological fundamentals which all too often characterize their movement.

Getting Down to Persuasions

Aberrant theologians who covet Evangelical pulpits, Evangelical professorships, and Evangelical readerships for their publications are compelled to employ Evangelical vocabulary. I heard one conservative Evangelical recount how he asked a liberal theologian teaching in an Evangelical institution how he could possibly subscribe to the creed required of its faculty. The

reply was something like, *I can make those terms mean anything I want to.*

Theological terms. God-breathed vocabulary. Words like *resurrection*, *atonement*, *propitiation*, *justification*, and *redemption*, and even *son of*

God. Non-Evangelicals in Evangelical churches and ministries must ply their trade with these coins. But they're passing counterfeit currency. The terms are gilding. Just below its surface is the slag of a non-Evangelical's true persuasions.

This is why the first thing Evangelicals need to do in order to end the controversies in their movement over theological fundamentals is (as I suggested in the last column) to *require that any organization to which they belong for Christian endeavor or any professing Christian theologian with whom they enter into any spiritual cooperation whatsoever give unfeigned, unqualified, dogmatic assent to every single fundamental of the Christian (that is, "evangelical") faith.* To be sure that it is assent which is *unfeigned, unqualified, and dogmatic*, institutions and individuals must be asked to define their terms.

For instance, if a theologian says he believes in Christ's *resurrection*, what is his conviction about what *resurrection* is? Two years ago I had both a private and a public exchange (in our local paper) with a religion professor over the heralded discovery of an ossuary in which Jesus' body was supposedly buried. Her take was that it wouldn't disturb her Christian faith an iota if the ossuary in question held Jesus' bones to this day. Resurrection transcends the physical. Her responses to my correspondence included, *Jesus' resurrection body is not easy to define, but I think we both can agree that it is the center of our faith. . . . I believe we are raised as Christ was raised. . . . I am certainly still a Baptist, and more importantly a Christian. . . . May God bless you in your work.*

Here are apparent affirmations of standard Biblical terms and propositions. *Resurrection body, we are raised, Christ was raised, Baptist, and Christian.* But what do these

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

Inside

- Bring . . . the Books—Key books for the pastor's study 5
- Straight Cuts—An exegetical study 6
- Windows—Themed sermon illustrations 7

mean to this theologian? *I understand your viewpoint*, she wrote, *I just do not interpret the text exactly as you do.*

Well, that's what must be fleshed out. How does a leader we're cooperating with on public platforms or from whom we're accepting a *May God bless you* interpret the texts and their terms?

Isn't it self-evident that when a man puts his interpretations into print he's defining terms? Especially when his purpose for writing is to enter the stream of public dialogue over those very terms? It would seem, then, that he (or she) ought to be held most accountable, not for signing a creed, but for what he publicizes that he means by that creed's terms and propositions. We cannot be entirely content with signed creeds. They're certainly a first line of defense against error's infiltration. But Evangelicals will have to plumb men's heart persuasions about the terms in those creeds if they're ever going to end debate, safeguard Christian institutions, and propagate what is truly *the faith once delivered to the saints*.

It would be utterly inconsistent not to consider momentarily at this point whether we Fundamentalists are prepared to accept the same accountability for holding one another accountable for fundamental theological terms. We're not debating bodily resurrection, justification, or the imputation of Christ's righteousness, but apparently we are torn over a doctrine equally fundamental, the inspiration of the Bible. What do we mean when we use the word *inspiration* in our preaching and in our doctrinal statements? What do we conceive *inspiration* to have been? Are some within our ranks actually teaching a *repeated* inspiration? And what do we mean by *the Bible*? Are some within Fundamentalism divisively restricting the definition of what a true Bible is to a particular edition or translation? There are few questions more fundamental than *What was inspiration?* and *What truly is the Bible?*

There's a Scriptural answer to these questions. There's also an unscriptural one. At this critical moment in the history of Fundamentalism are both answers, the Scriptural and the unscriptural, being taught within its ranks? If so, what are truly orthodox Fundamentalists to do in order to terminate this controversy, safeguard our institutions, and pass on to the next generation an entirely orthodox position on one of the most foundational of all doctrines? At some point we're going to need to hold one another accountable for a rigorously Scriptural creed and practice on the inspiration of the Bible. We all understand that the cost may be painful. But we rightly expect Evangelicals to be prepared to pay whatever is necessary to contend for foundational doctrines. Can we refuse to do the same? Whatever an Evangelical must do in order to correct error is what a Fundamentalist must do also. To refuse will be to betray a sacred trust and to forfeit a certain amount of God's approval and blessing.

Offenses for Which to Discipline

We'll return to the issue of a Scriptural response

to aberrant theologians shortly. But as a help to understanding and really submitting to the Scripture's further directives on that score, I want to mention briefly the second mark of a true man of God. It consists in his behavior, or his separated life. In fact, a consistently unholy life betrays an unregenerated heart.

No wonder then that in His Final Judgment our Lord will employ this reality as the clinching evidence for laying bare the true spiritual state of false prophets: *I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity* (Matt. 7:23). John the Apostle develops this same line of argument for differentiating true possessors of Christ from false professors (right through 1 John). So do Peter (2 Pet. 3:19–22) and Jude.

This being the case, how should leaders respond when other leaders fall into gross sin? Generally Evangelicals seem to concur on the answer: If the fallen leader is a pastor, president of an educational institution, officer in a theological society, or board member of a missions agency, Evangelicals almost always remove him from leadership in fairly short order. Seldom do they debate the issue, let alone protest when others take a firm stance. There appears to be nearly universal agreement that such a man disqualifies himself and should be disciplined.

Let's hold on to that for a moment. Evangelicals generally practice some form of discipline upon leaders who fall into gross sin. At the very least, they discontinue public appearances with them. But now here's a critical fact to help with the primary issue we're considering. The apostle Paul dealt with aberrant theologians in precisely the same way as he dealt with immoral church members.

Compare these two statements. Concerning the immoral member of the Corinthian church, Paul directs, *deliver such an one unto Satan* (1 Cor. 5:5). Concerning Hymenaeus, who was teaching that the resurrection had already taken place (2 Tim. 2:17), and Alexander (whose error may have been the same) Paul writes, *I have delivered them unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme* (1 Tim. 1:20).

This isn't to say, of course, that every instance of moral failure or doctrinal aberration demands such a severe response. My point is simply that Paul's response to the one sort of threat to the church mirrors his response to the other sort. He didn't exchange perspectives with men who persisted in immoral behavior. Neither did he do so with those who persisted in serious theological error. He didn't take pains to display deferential respect toward whoremongers. Neither did he do so toward heretics. The two kinds of threats to the welfare of Christ's church were handled in an equivalent way.

Conservative Evangelicals seem prepared to carry out 1 Corinthians 5:5 in cases of gross immorality. They rightly regard such behavior as disqualifying men from spiritual leadership, if not calling into question their very salvation. Have they considered the fact that Scripture takes an identical position toward heretical theologians? Examples of such heretics include, but certainly cannot

be limited to, those who pervert the gospel by adding works to faith (Gal. 1–2), who forbid to marry and command to abstain from certain foods (1 Tim. 4:1–3), who turn away from the once-for-all High Priestly work of Jesus Christ through His blood (Heb. 10:29), who deny the reality of the Son of God’s incarnation (1 John 4:3) or resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12), who abandon any of the cardinal doctrines concerning the person and work of Christ (2 John 9), who twist the Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:16), or who *cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned* (Rom. 16:17).

What, then, ought Evangelicals to be doing when they discover these teachers of error within their ministry organizations?

The Long-Standing Debate

The very ideological essence of the New Evangelicalism spawned just over half a century ago called for respectful toleration and even cooperation with non-Evangelicals—not merely charitable cooperation with men of differing persuasions on minor points, but cooperation with men who are actually not Evangelical at all.

For the purpose of comparison, just for a moment try to imagine a policy on associations that argued the necessity of cooperating with pastors, theologians, and other religious leaders who publish for all the world to read that they are practicing gross sins such as theft, drunkenness, drug addiction, or adultery. (For the moment I’ll refrain from enlarging on the current embarrassment to some major denominations who now find themselves brazenly challenged by some of their own ordained ministers on such issues. They openly practice homosexuality. Evangelicals denominationally associated with them are now unavoidably compelled to decide the very issue I’m raising. Will they continue to associate with immoral church leadership? They’ve been associating with false teachers for decades. Will they now do the same when it comes to grossly immoral persons?)

It’s almost unthinkable that a conservative Evangelical would associate in ministry with a seminary professor or church bishop whose public writings advocated fornication or adultery. On what Scriptural basis, then, would he associate with one whose publications argue against the inerrancy of Scripture, Christ’s bodily resurrection, the necessity of blood atonement, or, as in N. T. Wright’s case, the necessity of Christ’s imputed righteousness for salvation? Paul’s response to both kinds of “fruitlessness,” both behavioral and creedal, was equivalent. That’s because just as moral laxity will eventually leaven an entire church (1 Cor. 5:6), so will theological error. That is precisely why Evangelicalism is in such an amorphous state at present that the very word “Evangelical” has ceased to be definitive.

Yet even now, when the catastrophic consequences of a long course of accommodating unorthodoxy is finally being factually documented by Evangelicals such as David Wells (in *No Place for Truth*), John Armstrong (in *The Compromised Church*), Iain H.

Murray (in *Evangelicalism Divided*), and others, much of the Evangelical leadership continues to equivocate. Just the title of Iain Murray’s little booklet, *The Unresolved Controversy: Unity with Non-Evangelicals* (Banner of Truth, 2001) is a tragic indictment of the irresolute state of the movement. Look at it again, *The Unresolved* [emphasis mine] *Controversy*. What is it? *Unity with Non-Evangelicals*. Before moving on I need to clarify that Murray isn’t talking primarily about this being a controversy between Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism, though it is. Murray is talking about the controversy *within* Evangelicalism. He’s talking about Evangelicals debating the question among themselves. I think, then, that the title of this series is appropriate: *What’s an Evangelical to Do?* Evangelicals are presently in controversy with one another over this matter of associations. What ought every one of them to do when he encounters unorthodox men? One of the most highly publicized debates within Evangelicalism over that question occurred over forty years ago in London. It’s well worth revisiting.

Proposed Answers

In October 1966, Britain’s National Assembly of Evangelicals gathered in London’s Westminster Central Hall to consider the subject of Christian Unity.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, successor to G. Campbell Morgan at Westminster Chapel, had been asked to give the opening address. His solution to the need for true Christian unity was a stirring challenge for Evangelicals to leave their apostate denominations and join together in orthodoxy. *Ecumenical people put fellowship before doctrine*, he explained. *We, as Evangelicals, put doctrine before fellowship. . . . I make this appeal to you Evangelical people this evening, what reasons have we for not coming together?* Lloyd-Jones well knew one of the foremost arguments for rebutting his proposal, and he spoke to it. *You cannot justify your decision to remain in your denomination by saying that you maintain your independence. You cannot disassociate yourself from the church to which you belong. This is a very contradictory position.*

One can only imagine the atmosphere. Some present testified afterwards that the effect was *electric*. What happened next did nothing to diffuse the tension.

John Stott, who was chairing the meeting, stood up and publicly disagreed. *I believe history is against Dr. Jones in that others have tried to do this very thing. I believe that Scripture is against him in that the remnant was within the Church and not outside it. . . . I hope no one will act precipitately.* There we have a conspicuous example of the controversy within Evangelicalism.

In June 1995, J. I. Packer, another leading British Evangelical, reflected back on that night. Though it will take up valuable space to do so, I think it would be worthwhile to quote him at length, because his full statement reveals his own answer to the question at hand.

Lloyd-Jones, Packer said, had two bad arguments. He was a great man, but great men can be enmeshed

in bad arguments. Bad argument number one was that if we stay in the Church of England we're guilty by association of all the theological errors that any Anglican may be propagating anywhere at all. To which of course the answer is rubbish: on that basis Paul would have been guilty of all the errors that were abroad in Corinth, in Colossae, in the Galatian churches and the Thessalonian church and elsewhere—and of course he wasn't guilty of any of that, and why not? Simply because he entered into the discipline of debate and wrote pastoral letters to them to put them straight. As long as we are free to raise our voices against the errors and seek to correct them from within we are not guilty of them. We are negating and refusing the error, we are not acquiescing in it, we are not guilty of it. It was a sad thing that a great mind like that of the late Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones should ever have toyed with an argument as bad as this one.

Secondly he said, "Don't you see that the times call us to leave all the doctrinally mixed congregations and form a new one." And I and others looked around and couldn't see that the times called us to any such thing. We asked what do the times call us to do? And it seemed clear that the times called us to stay put and work for Reformation, renewal and fresh life in the church that has this rich heritage. So when people used to ask me why are you in the Church of England when the Church of England is in such a mess today I used to reply, "I'm in the Church of England today for the sake of what under God it might be tomorrow" (quoted by Roger Steer in *Guarding the Fire* [Baker Books, 1999], p. 225).

We are not reading about ancient history here. Though Lloyd-Jones died in 1981 (*not* that long ago), Stott and Packer are still leading spokesmen within Evangelicalism, and the decision they made that night forty years ago to disagree with Lloyd-Jones's proposal is the one they continue to flesh out as Evangelicals rooted inseparably within the Church of England to this very hour. Their example influences literally thousands of younger men, both within and without Anglicanism.

A Fuller Answer from John Stott

Three years ago, *Time* magazine listed John Stott, former rector of All Souls Church in London, as one of the one hundred most influential people in the world. He is the author of nearly forty books, one of which, *Basic Christianity*, has sold over two-and-a-half million copies and is translated into fifty languages. Probably most of us have at least one of Stott's books on our shelves. I readily acknowledge that I personally value several of his works highly. However, last year John Stott issued a work entitled *The Living Church: Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor* (IVP). One of the appendices is titled, "Why I Am Still a Member of the Church of England."

In it he discusses three possible responses to error: (1) Separation; (2) Compromise or Conformity; (3) Comprehensiveness without Compromise.

Stott says the first of these responses pursues truth at the expense of unity. The second pursues unity at the expense of truth. The third, which Stott advocates, fights for both truth and unity. He says it is *staying in without caving in* and is the *most painful of the three options*. But how does that flesh itself out? Stott explains that correct comprehensiveness

is a distinction which goes right back to the apostle Paul's insistence on loyalty to the apostolic faith, alongside liberty of conscience on secondary issues. In conclusion, can we envisage a situation in which orthodox believers feel absolutely obliged to leave? Such an extreme situation might be

- when an issue of first order is at stake, such as deserves the condemnation "antichrist" (I John 2:22) or "anathema" (Galatians 1:8-9)
- when the offending issue is held not by an idiosyncratic minority of individuals but has become the official position of the majority
- when the majority have silenced the faithful remnant, forbidding them to witness or protest any longer
- when we have conscientiously explored every possible alternative
- when, after a painful period of prayer and discussion, our conscience can bear the weight no longer

Until that day comes, I for one intend to stay in and fight on.

So I do believe in the Church of England, in the rightness of belonging to it and of maintaining a faithful evangelical witness within it and to it. For I believe in the power of God's word and Spirit to reform and renew the church. I also believe in the patience of God. Max Warren wrote that "the history of the Church is the story of the patience of God."

To Be Continued

I want to continue this series in the next issue by discussing both Packer's and Stott's views. In the meantime, I'd like to recommend the reading of Lloyd-Jones' entire address and argument over the Christmas holiday. Those who do so will be in a better position to evaluate Stott's response.

Lloyd-Jones' entire address is published in *Knowing the Times* (Banner of Truth, 1989), pp. 246–57. I'd especially like to suggest it for any younger men who are earnestly seeking the right answer to the question of associations. Lloyd-Jones doesn't provide a comprehensive survey of all that Scripture brings to bear on the issue, but he does come at the subject from an angle that even we Fundamentalists sometimes unwittingly neglect. Prayerfully consider his treatment of the subject and, Lord willing, we'll continue working it out in the next column. ☞

Bring . . . the Books

The Practice of Prayer by G. Campbell Morgan

Recently I had opportunity to revisit a small work on prayer whose impact on my life far exceeds its size. First published in 1925, G. Campbell Morgan's *The Practice of Prayer* has aided countless believers to pray more and better. Thankfully, Ambassador Publications has reprinted this classic and made it available again to the church at reasonable cost.

Morgan begins with a captivating paragraph.

Never did the disciples prefer a more important request than when they said: "Lord, teach us to pray": and no petition was more graciously answered. The Church to-day needs to bring that petition first of all, but she needs to do so remembering that she already has the answer in all spaciousness and clearness. Whatever may have been the case with the first disciples, it is certainly true of us that before we "call" He "answers."

He adds the insight that the disciples were not merely asking the Lord to teach them "how" to pray but more importantly to teach them "to" pray. This is certainly our need today. In an age where books on prayer abound, what is lacking is not more instruction regarding the mechanics of prayer but rather exhortation to practice what we know so that we actually engage in prayer.

To this end Morgan devotes almost the entire first section to setting forth the theological foundation upon which all of our praying rests. For instance, in setting forth the possibility of prayer for believers, Morgan argues that one who prays must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who seek Him diligently (Heb. 11:7). Apart from such a belief in a man's heart, the practice of prayer will soon cease in his life.

Once persuade a man that it is impossible for him to receive an answer to his petition and he will not persist in asking. Thus will the subjective value of prayer be inevitably destroyed when the objective value is denied. No man will continue to ask if he be once convinced that his asking has no greater value than that it produces an effect upon himself.

Surely Morgan is right on this score.

Morgan turns next to setting forth the platform upon which a believer's praying may be established. This platform is the finished work of Christ. Christ's coming revealed the Father and His cross-work gained us access into the Father's presence. Additionally, Christ has sent us the Spirit to bring us into the Father's presence by means of the atonement. All of this leads believers to the inescapable conclusion that God not only desires our prayers, He has erected the very platform on which our praying is made possible. Therefore, how can we doubt but that He will answer when we come before His presence?

So, how should a man prepare for such praying? Such praying, Morgan answers, requires life preparation. And this preparation begins and ends with a man becoming so convinced of the truth of God's existence and the work that God has done to bring men into His presence that his entire life is shaped and governed by them. Here is how Morgan expresses it:


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

I am prepared for prayer in proportion as I obey the claims set upon my life by the revelation of the Father; in proportion as I yield myself to the claims made upon my life by the mediation of the Son; in proportion as my life answers the claims set up within me by the Spirit's indwelling and inspiration . . . in other words, preparation for prayer is the life lived in harmony with the truth we profess to believe.

Morgan warned against the incompatibility of praying for God's kingdom to come while at the same time refusing to live in submission to the will of the One appointed over that kingdom.

It is a solemn, yet awful truth that we blaspheme when we pray for the Kingdom to come and will not permit it to obtain in our own life. It is an infinitely worse thing that I should pray for God's Kingdom to come in the world, while I refuse to allow it to be set up in my heart, than it is to take His name in vain because I was born in a slum and had never learned to revere it.

Morgan devotes a final section to the "pattern prayer" that Jesus taught His disciples in Matthew 6. He rightly observes that the first portion of the prayer is devoted exclusively to the interest or priorities of God. Before men are instructed to ask for their daily bread they are to seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness. Before they are to petition for forgiveness of their sins or protection on life's path they are to pray that His name would be hallowed and that His will would be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

Perhaps this is why much of our praying is so weak and lifeless. Much of our praying is consumed with things that don't consume God. We seek our interests and desire that our will on earth would be done in Heaven. Morgan forces us to evaluate personally and carefully our praying and calls us to reform our practice and conform it to the pattern Jesus set forth. 

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Christians for a long time have speculated about the identity of Paul's thorn in flesh. It is interesting to consider what Paul was talking about. God has a helpful message for all believers in various kinds of trials through this divinely recorded experience of Paul.

What Was Paul's "Thorn in the Flesh"?

Commentators differ about the identity of Paul's thorn in the flesh. Suggestions include a **physical problem** (an illness or disability, such as poor eyesight), or a **moral temptation** (taking "flesh" in the sense of our fallen nature), or a **relational issue** (such as opposition to Paul's ministry in context). Commentators would agree that Paul uses "thorn" (Greek *skolops*) figuratively. The word is used in the Septuagint in Numbers 33:55 with a figurative application based upon physical imagery (people as a thorn in the side). In support of the idea that the thorn is a moral temptation, one can note that Paul sometimes in 2 Corinthians uses "flesh" to refer to our fallen nature (2 Cor. 1:12; 10:2). In support of the idea that the thorn is a relational issue is the fact that Paul does mention personal opposition to his ministry in the context (2 Cor. 10–11). However, this evidence does not rule out the thorn in the flesh being a physical problem.

Paul uses "flesh" several times in 2 Corinthians to refer to the body or our mortal existence (5:16; 7:1; 10:3a). He describes the thorn in the flesh as a "messenger of Satan" (v. 7) that keeps on buffeting him (present tense). God allowed Satan to afflict Job physically (Job 2:5–7). Paul also describes his thorn as "weakness" or "infirmities" in verse 9, which are translations of the same Greek word. The Greek word can refer to physical weakness or infirmity. Paul uses the verb form of the Greek word in the preceding chapter (11:29) in the context of physical weakness related to such things as "weariness, toil, sleeplessness, hunger, thirst, fastings, cold, nakedness" (11:27). These considerations give weight to the idea of the thorn in the flesh as a physical problem.

The bottom line is that we do not know the precise identity of Paul's thorn in the flesh. God probably communicated Scripture that way on purpose so all believers could identify their struggles with Paul's struggle and God's solution. Also, in verse 10, Paul lists in addition to his "infirmities" other troubles in life such as "insults" or "injuries" (a similar word used for Paul's receiving shameful treatment at Philippi in 1 Thess. 2:2), "hardships" or "necessities" (a word used for material needs in 2 Cor. 6:4), "persecutions" (opposition for Christian testimony—2 Cor. 11:23–26), and "calamities" or "distresses" (2 Cor. 4:8, hard pressed on every side but not crushed; note the translation of these words in the

ESV and ASV). Believers in our congregations go through physical maladies, financial pressures, emotional hurts, and personal opposition like Paul. All of us as believers should identify with his struggles and God's solution for similar kinds of trials.

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

What Does God Teach Us through It?

Second Corinthians 12:7–10 teaches us that God has *power* over, a *purpose* in, and *provision* for our difficulties. God has *power* over our difficulties. God sends our difficulties (note the divine passive "was given" in v. 7). God is the one to whom we pray about our difficulties (v. 8), and He is the one who sovereignly decides whether to answer our prayers by removing them (v. 9). Considering God's loving character and powerful control can encourage us that God will keep our problems under control and will not let them become more than we can bear with His grace (1 Cor. 10:12).

God has a *purpose* in our difficulties. He uses our difficulties for a good purpose (Rom. 8:28)—to humble us and make us more dependent upon Him (vv. 7, 9). Paul had extraordinary revelations from God (2 Cor. 12:1–6), and God saw fit to keep Paul humble through the thorn in the flesh. God keeps us humbly dependent on Him through trials.

God has *provision* for our difficulties. God does not promise to remove our difficulties. However, He does promise His sustaining grace through our difficulty (v. 9). His grace would involve undeserved mercy upon our plight and enablement to endure our trials. Therefore, we can view our troubles in our life with positive hope (v. 10), because of God's good purpose and provision of sustaining and enabling grace (compare James 1:2,3; 1 Pet. 1:6, 7). A few chapters earlier Paul communicates to the Corinthian believers that our life difficulties are light and temporary in light of our future eternal glory (2 Cor. 4:17). Therefore, even if God does not answer our prayer to remove our difficulty, we can still have confidence that it will eventually pass and will not keep us from enjoying future glory with the Lord. Like Paul and like Job, we can recognize that all people have troubles that bring pain and difficulty in this mortal life (Job 5:7) and that God can sustain and purify us through those troubles, of whatever sort they are (Job 23:10).

Hopefully, this consideration of God's encouragement through Paul's trial will bring encouragement to the reader. Also, hopefully this study will give food for thought for Christian counselors, teachers, and preachers as they minister God's Word to believers in need of encouragement. Whatever our trial and however God chooses to answer our prayer about our trial, God's grace is sufficient to sustain His people in life's trials. ☞

We who are Baptists hold several truths dear and precious. When these truths are listed together, we call them the “Baptist Distinctives.” Authors and teachers list them in various forms. The list of our distinctives will always include the following:

1. We believe the Bible is our sole authority for faith and practice. While other Bible believers also hold to the principle of *sola scriptura*, we seek to consistently apply that truth to the doctrine of the church. Although the magisterial reformers affirmed the authority of Scripture, for various reasons they held on to the practice of infant baptism, a sacramental view of the Lord’s Supper, and the union of church and state. Baptists have sought to be a consistent “back-to-the-Bible” people who practice believer’s baptism, hold a symbolic view of Communion, and advocate the separation of church and state. We hold these tenets for the simple reason that we find them in the Bible.
2. We believe in individual soul liberty and the priesthood of the believer.
3. We believe in the autonomy of local churches.
4. We believe in a regenerate church membership. By this we understand that only those who have received Christ as Savior and have given credible testimony of that faith by immersion in water after salvation are to be members of a New Testament church.
5. We believe the Lord Jesus left His churches with two ordinances, which are believer’s baptism and the Lord’s Supper.
6. As stated above, we believe in the separation of church and state.

In this article I want to examine one of these distinctive teachings: the priesthood of the believer. We believe the Bible teaches that every Christian has the privilege of direct access to God without a human mediator. We believe that every true Christian is responsible to God for his own spiritual condition. “We have always proclaimed that every child of God has the right, in his own person, of drawing near to God through the intercession of the only Mediator and High Priest” (Francis Wayland, *Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches* [Watertown, WI: Baptist Heritage Press, 1988 reprint of 1857 edition], 131).

Biblical Basis

The Bible teaches that God is sovereign and that He has given men a will. God allowed Adam and Eve to choose to serve Him or to sin. He created them

and placed them in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 2:16 records that God gave them the fruit of every tree of the garden to eat, and in verse 17 He warned them against eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and told them that death would be certain were they to do so. Our first parents had the God-given power to make a choice. Joshua challenged the Israelites to “choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Josh. 24:15). Gospel invitations in the Bible call upon men to enter in at the strait gate (Matt. 7:13), willingly place their faith in Christ (John 3:16–19), and come and freely take the water of life (Rev. 22:17). Paul announced that God has appointed a day of judgment and calls men to repent (Acts 17:30, 31). Believers are called to willingly seek the Kingdom of God first (Matt. 6:33) and put obedience to God ahead of obedience to men (Acts 5:29). We are told that, as believers, we will give account of our lives to the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10–12).

We cannot grasp all God’s mind in this discussion. He is infinite—not limited by time or space. We are finite—limited by both. He is infinite Creator—we are finite creatures. Our freedom of choice is given to us by God and can be exercised only within the limits of His sovereignty.

We will never understand how the seemingly parallel truths of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility reconcile with each other. No puny human mind will ever solve this conundrum. The problem exists for us because of the limitations of our human minds and our finite natures. The issue is perfectly resolved in the mind of God. This issue has been a theological battleground for hundreds of years. We ought not to think that we will solve the problem. I have settled the issue for myself by understanding that, by faith, I must accept everything the Bible teaches about God’s sovereignty. I must also accept everything the Bible says about man’s responsibility. I also recognize that the resultant “gap” is in my frail understanding and not in God’s perfect wisdom.

Nevertheless, the foregoing Biblical teaching leaves us with some principles that certainly apply to this matter of the priesthood of the believer. The freedom of the will, within the limits of God’s sovereignty, is the foundation for this truth. Scripture repeatedly emphasizes the importance of man’s obedience to God’s will as revealed in His Word. The Bible teaches the certainty

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

Charles Spurgeon

of judgment and man's accountability to God. Scripture teaches that God makes a real offer of salvation in Christ to all men.

Christ, Our High Priest

Scripture teaches that Christ is the believer's High Priest. He functions as our representative before God. This is why Christ came to earth. He assumed flesh and blood to destroy the Devil and deliver us from bondage to him (Heb. 2:14–16). The next verses tell us of His priestly work for us: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:17, 18).

As our High Priest He offered himself as the sacrifice for our sins, and now He is able to help us in the time of temptation. He is an effective Mediator for the tempted (Heb. 4:14–16). He is the only Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5, 6). He is our advocate with the Father and the satisfaction for our sins (1 John 2:2).

Hebrews 9 also teaches the fact of Christ's priesthood. He provided redemption (v. 12), cleansing (v. 14), forgiveness (v. 22), and a permanent sacrifice for sin (vv. 24–28). Building on that great truth, the author of Hebrews comes to a climax with the announcement that Christ is not only the Mediator between men and God but that He opened the way to God for believers. Hebrews 10:19–25 is a wonderful passage for believers. It says:

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Because of Christ's work for us as our Priest, and because we are priests before God, we have several great privileges and responsibilities. The priesthood of the believer impacts us in at least these ways:

1. There is an *individual aspect* of the priesthood of the believer. The believer enjoys *access* to God. We can call on our High Priest to help us

in temptation (Heb. 2:18; 4:16). We can draw near to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16) and draw near into God's presence (Heb. 10:22) in communion with our Creator and Redeemer.

2. There is a *corporate aspect* of the priesthood of the believer. The church *serves* God. We are to consider one another and encourage our fellow believers to love and good works (Heb. 10:24). We are to regularly and habitually gather in worship with our fellow Christians (Heb. 10:25). We need the teaching and exhortation we receive from the ministry of the Word in our services. But we also need the encouragement we receive from each other's fellowship. We are *holy* priests and we worship God. He alone is the object of our service. We serve Him acceptably through Christ. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5). This is our service to God as we interact with each other as members of a local church. As *royal* priests we are to corporately testify the saving power of Christ to a lost world. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). This is our service to God in ministering to a lost world in evangelism.
3. There is a *prophetic aspect* of the priesthood of the believer. Believers will *reign* with Christ. Revelation 5:9, 10 tells us of the new song all the redeemed will address to God. Scripture anticipates that festival of worship, saying, "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

Conclusion

Christ our High Priest has paid the penalty for our sins. He has opened the way to God for us. As believer-priests, we have access into the presence of God. We are to encourage our fellow believers to live for the Lord. We are to assemble with them in our local churches. We are to focus on our God through His Son, Jesus Christ. We are to proclaim His salvation to a lost world. We will reign with Him. Let us use all our privileges as believer-priests. Let us fulfill our obligations to our fellow Christians and to a lost world. Let us look for and pray for the day when Christ reigns and we reign with Him. ☞

Disaster Reconnaissance: Finding Leaders to Hold Up Their Hands

For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. 2 Chronicles 16:9

As I watched the coverage of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina I was overwhelmed by the emptiness and hopelessness of the people being interviewed. People were looking for loved ones, friends, their possessions, and any kind of help they could find. I watched as members of the news media would try to get interviews while at the same time trying to comfort with empty words—and often they themselves would end up in tears because they didn't know what hope to give.

Our nation was outraged at what appeared to be a lack of preparation by leadership and a careless response to the muted alarms that were sounded. The Red Cross, FEMA, and other groups were scrambling to meet physical needs, but these people needed Christ! What a perfect time for churches to minister to their communities. But then I was struck with the thought, “Who will help the pastors get back on their feet so they can lead the charge to edify their flocks and evangelize the lost? Who would hold up the hands of these spiritual leaders who were swept up in the disaster themselves? How would we find them?”

Aaron and Hur for Today

You remember the story of Aaron and Hur holding up the weary hands of Moses.

Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going

down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. (Exod. 17:8–13)

When a pastor is faced with concerns about power outages, home damage, his family's safety, church property damage, loss of income from no offerings, his flock scattered or injured, and even loss of life, he needs others like Aaron and Hur to come alongside him to help and encourage him. Operation Renewed Hope has arranged to take immediate reconnaissance trips after disasters to find leaders in the disaster zone whom we can encourage: Fundamental pastors who need immediate help with necessities and help in evaluating needs and in organizing relief efforts. When I do reconnaissance, I carry a vanload of water, nonperishable food items, gasoline, first aid, coolers of ice, and general sanitizing agents to give out at first contact. We evaluate and photograph repair needs. We communicate with the ORH leaders to organize clean-up and repair teams. We help pastors in the disaster zone evaluate whether their ministries are able to function as a relief distribution station, and, if so, ORH sends the necessary items for the church to distribute along with the gospel.

After Hurricane Rita I headed south with some of the pastors who had evacuated to Southland Camp. One pastor was Bret Rice from Faith Baptist Church in Vidor, Texas. He and his family were welcomed to his first pastorate by unloading their moving truck into the parsonage and immediately evacuating to Southland. On Monday he and his church were distributing food and water before other agencies even arrived in town.

When FEMA representatives arrived to set up distribution and saw Faith was already doing the job with ORH supplies, the representatives asked whether Pastor Rice and his associate Joe Reed would be willing to continue with FEMA-provided food, water, and ice. They agreed to do so as long as they could continue to give out the gospel. In one week Faith Baptist Church gave out food, water, ice, and the gospel to over 20,000 carloads of people! The church people said Pastor Rice was better known in his community after one week than the previous pastor had been in ten years. They have seen many saved, baptized, and disciplined since that time.

A “Chance” Encounter?

After Hurricane Katrina, I was looking for Pastor Clarence Smith from Faith Baptist Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He had a church building, a renovated fruit stand, out on a highway. Half of the roof had blown off and all of the contents were ruined. It took twenty-four hours to run down his home address and find the street, since most of the signs were missing. (I now have GPS!) I had to park the van a few blocks away because of downed trees. As I walked down the street approaching the house number I was looking for, a man on the sidewalk was watching a crane lift a tree off his neighbor’s house, and he asked me how things were down the street. I told him the house number I was looking for. He turned and looked behind him in bewilderment and stated that that was his house number. I said I was looking for Pastor Clarence Smith, and again he looked behind and turned back, announcing that he was Clarence Smith.

I introduced myself and explained my purpose for being there. I shared that I had looked over his church building and that we were developing a network of churches who wanted to help him get set back up so he could focus on his ministry. He shared with me that he had been standing on the sidewalk telling the Lord that his food was gone, his power was out, the building God gave them to worship in was destroyed, and most of his flock was scattered and hurting. He was asking God what he was supposed to do.

After we prayed together, Pastor Smith looked me in the eyes and said, “Brother, even if you were to build us a million-dollar facility, nothing would encourage me more than me standing here hopelessly asking God what I am supposed to do and you walk up saying you’re here to help!” What a thrill it was to see how Pastor Smith was able to encourage others as he himself had been encouraged in the Lord. His building turned out beautifully, and the local media coverage brought out many visitors for many weeks!

Outreach as a Result of Disaster

Pastor Denny Winborne’s Lighthouse Baptist Church in Slidell, Louisiana, was the first distribution site we were able to set up after Katrina. Several work teams and I were able to base out of his church and reach out to other surrounding areas. One evening a man by the name of Juan showed up asking whether we had a place he could stay. He had just returned home to find a tree in the middle of his house and water damage three feet high inside. I directed him to Pastor Winborne, who gave him a place to stay and a nice meal out of a can.

The next day a team of men went by his house and helped remove the tree, get a tarp over the hole, and began removing the damaged materials from the house. That night was Wednesday, and Juan returned to the church and came to the service and afterward sat and talked with pastor, asking why strangers would come and help him. Pastor Winborne was able to share the gospel with Juan and see Christ wonderfully deliver him from darkness to light! Over the next few weeks Juan became faithful to church and started bringing his family once they were able to return home. How encouraging it was for Pastor Winborne to see life come out of destruction.

Just recently, most of the evacuees from Gustav left camp, and I headed down to make contact with several pastors who had been in the path of the hurricane. On Wednesday evening the state police allowed me into Houma, Louisiana, to make contact with Victory Baptist Church and Pastor Barry Thomas. I found the church but was unable to make contact with the pastor. The church van was unlocked, so I left a supply of food, water, and a few cleaning items.

On Thursday Pastor Thomas’s cell phone regained coverage, and I was able to get to his house. He and his wife shared with me how they have been ministering to their unsaved neighbors for four years and on Wednesday night the two families were together talking. Mrs. Thomas mentioned to her neighbor how much she would like ice and a roll of paper towels, and the neighbor man said how much he would like some green beans. Pastor Thomas drove over to the church and found the items and brought them home. Mrs. Thomas was thrilled to see rolls of paper towels and a couple of cases of green beans! What an opportunity God opened up for the Thomases to have an open door to discuss God’s provision and try to explain to them why complete strangers would drive hundreds of miles to deliver food items. When I found the Thomas home on Thursday morning, they were rejoicing in the sweltering heat that God had chipped away a little more of their neighbor’s hardened heart. They doubly rejoiced when I pulled out a cooler full of ice!

Everyday Disaster Relief

There are many more illustrations that could be shared of God working through His people to impact others during times of devastation. In reality, though, all of us have the opportunity to be involved in disaster relief. Every day all around us individuals, families, and churches have mini-hurricanes of one sort or another that wreak havoc in their lives. They need someone willing to change his schedule, reprioritize, and minister to their needs. We pray for opportunities to minister, but do we genuinely look for opportunities to serve?

The Lord made it clear what our duty is in situations like these:

Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (Matt. 22:36–39)

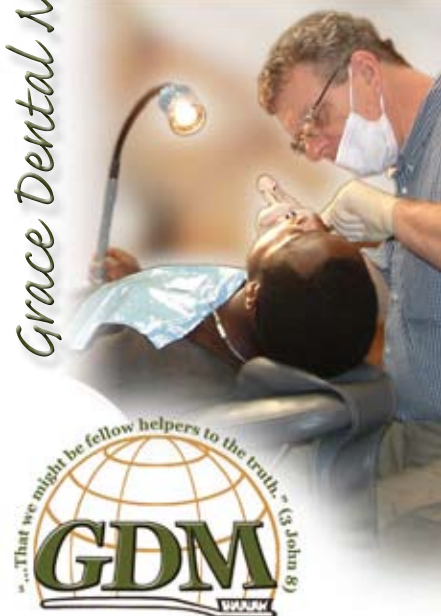
ORH is looking for faithful men—Fundamental Baptists on the ground in the strike zone who need our help in helping others. If the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him, we can certainly depend on His guidance as we do our own reconnaissance to find faithful men to whom we can be a blessing in these great times of need.

Todd Sasek is the director of Southland Christian Camp in Ringgold, Louisiana. Southland is a primary staging area for disaster leadership evacuation, relief teams, and relief distribution through Operation Renewed Hope.

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On Choice

A reader expressed problems with some misunderstandings typical of many in our day: "Some friends seem to think that God's foreknowledge is in some fashion controlling human choices. They seem to go beyond God's general plan to say that God determines every detail, which to me 'implies' including sinful choices, though they might deny that, I assume. I do not understand how 'human freedom of choice' can be denied. Wouldn't that go against God's creation of man 'in His own image' being distinct from the animal creation?"

This problem is confusing many today. Basic, of course, is to remember that God never chooses or causes evil. He allows it. He permits it. He has included its existence in His eternal plan, even though it is in opposition to His very nature, in order to manifest His grace and mercy in Christ Jesus. God has not "made" me sin, even though He knew eternally the choices I make. God is never responsible for what He allows a sinner to do. The "stupid" (my word for emphasis) key by which to judge: God never deserves to be "spanked" for any iniquity.

Another basic point, as you pointed out, is that God made angels and humans different from animals or forces of nature in giving them (us) the ability to make free, conscious, responsible choices. We are responsible for every thought and every act. Various outward influences may have a bearing on choices we make, but we are solely responsible. Where any penalty is due, we alone will pay (we can never legitimately make the excuse that "the Devil made me do it"). Force, even death, give us no excuse. Many in the past have chosen to die at the stake rather than curse God or deny the Lord Jesus Christ.

Third, God's foreknowledge is just that, knowledge, and not the same as fore-ordination. God does not "determine" every detail in the sense that He causes it, although He knows about and allows all that comes to pass in history. God knows the past, the present, and the future in full detail. He cannot be surprised by anyone or anything. His having "set" it in eternity past includes His certain knowledge and His gracious dealing with angels and men. Although He knows all that will come to pass, He does not Himself cause the evil things of this wicked world.

Some things that God has planned He will see accomplished, even if He must allow ungodly men to sin to bring about His good pleasure. Many of these things He has prophesied, but knowing them in advance, including them in His plan, and even announcing them does not in any way make Him a "participant" in bringing them about. He permits sinful men to act sinfully. Wicked men slew Jesus. God could have stopped them, but He did not.

Many attempted to do so before His time was come, but God did not allow His timetable to be adjusted. Evil men fulfilled God's plan of redemption, but God did not sin nor was He responsible for their sin in any way.

The crux for some is a limited perspective whereby they consider that God cannot know in advance what a free agent will choose. God says He can and does. That settles it for me. I used to illustrate that aspect of the misunderstandings in class by using a pencil, which I could bring down to paper either eraser first or lead first. Year after year, I did not plan before class which it would be (one year I brought it down flat). What I did not know five seconds before the fact, God knew in eternity, one of the insignificant details of His foreknowledge. In my mind it was as yet one of two (or three) possibilities; in God's knowledge, He knew eternally all the possibilities as possibilities, as well as knowing the fact (my choice) as fact. He did not ever "force" me to do it one way or the other.

God's foreknowledge does not set aside His sovereignty, His omniscience, or His omnipotence. His total plan is for His greatest glory. None can thwart His will. He knows the intentions of man's heart. He knows of numerous possibilities regarding anything that might take place. He is aware of the little things that might greatly influence what will happen thereafter. His providential interventions, however, are not last-minute fixes. They are, every one, a part of His total plan. His answers to our prayers may await our asking, but are in no way "dependent" on our asking.

Positively, every believer can be assured that God knows every hair on each head. His watchcare over His own is 24/7. Nothing can happen to us that He does not allow for a purpose. That we "have not because we ask not" does not modify His protective care of us day after day. He is so supremely in charge of every force and every detail that we can fully rely on His care each moment till we go to be with Him in a better setting.

Unquestionably, God is far greater than any man can conceive. In spite of evil machinations of Satan and sinful choices of men, God maintains full control of this world. He has one eternal all-inclusive plan; nothing can thwart it. He grants true freedom to free moral agents, but holds them (us) responsible for each free choice. Eternal damnation has been deserved by every offspring of Adam. Eternal life is offered, and urged, of every last sinner. God is perfect. His plan for time is perfect. His grace is ideal.

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The Battleground of the Worried Heart

Marcia Gammon

Biblical issues such as “daily bread” and “food and raiment” are foreign to the modern materialistic society. Yet the disasters that left their mark on our planet within the last few years have left many people scurrying for life’s basic necessities. The anxiety that comes from lacking such basics was addressed by our Lord in Matthew 6. Whether our anxieties are rooted in life’s necessities or some other problem, Jesus’ words are salient to us today.

Anxiety consumes the thoughts of many people. Responsibilities in life such as business, family, church, and finances along with concerns over health, the economy, aging relatives, and personal relationships can cast heavy loads on men’s shoulders. For the Christian who has all of God’s divine promises (2 Pet. 1:4), worry is an indicator that unbelief has taken root in his heart and must be uprooted. Worry reveals a lack of trust in the sovereignty of God, a lack of belief in God’s love, and a divided loyalty in the heart of the Christian.

Jesus addressed the topic of worry in Matthew 6:25–34. He cautioned His listeners five times in ten verses about worrying. In this text, the words “worry,” “careful,” and “anxious” and the phrase “take no thought” are all derived from the same Greek word *merimnao*, which means “to be anxious about, to have a distracting care.”¹ Jesus knew that His followers would be distracted by daily cares because life was very difficult, but He wanted them to know and trust their God.

Most people in Jesus’ day had little beyond their most basic needs. The stress of meeting their daily physical needs was daunting, but Christ knew their spiritual needs were greater. Jesus admonished them not to worry over the basic necessities of life: food, water, and clothing (Matt. 6:25, 26). Their life was more valuable than the things they used to make life work.

Jesus reminded His disciples to look at birds and flowers as evidence of God’s loving, sovereign care. The birds did not plant, harvest, or store grain, but God abundantly provided for them (Matt. 6:26). Jesus knew that the disciples’ faith and trust would be strengthened by knowing that their sovereign Father valued them more than the rest of creation He adorned. The “lilies” of the field, which could have been any of the wildflowers abundant in Galilee, were beautifully adorned. Since God clothed the short-lived grass and flowers so well (Matt. 6:30), how much more would He clothe the ones made for eternity?² Jerry Bridges wrote, “Confidence in the sovereignty of God in all that affects us is crucial to our trusting Him. *If there is a single event in all of the universe that can occur outside of God’s sovereign control then we cannot trust Him.*”³ All believers must choose to trust in the sovereignty of God.

Worry reveals a lack of belief in God’s love. Trusting

this love comes by knowing and believing the Scriptures. The Psalms frequently declare God’s unfailing love for the man who trusts in Him (Pss. 18:2, 30; 32:10). In Isaiah 49:15, God reassures His people that His love for them is greater than a mother’s love for her infant child.

The New Testament’s highest portrait of love was demonstrated in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4). Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would indwell His disciples and be with them forever (John 14:16, 17). Every child of God can be confident that Christ will never forsake him (Heb. 13:5, 6). God is present in the midst of trouble (Isa. 43:2). He is the strength the believer needs when he is weary of trials (2 Cor. 12:9). He is the way of escape in enduring difficulties (1 Cor. 10:13). Nothing can ever separate the believer from God’s love (Rom. 8:38, 39).

Experiencing the love of God and resting in its comfort comes through reliance upon and belief in the Scriptures. God’s Word must be memorized and its great truths applied in every situation the believer faces. Wrong thinking must be replaced with Biblical thinking by renewing the mind (Rom. 12:2). Disciplined thinking will enable all believers to deal with doubt by trusting God’s love.

Although Jesus addressed the disciples’ mistrust of God’s sovereignty and love in this text, the theme of His message is revealed in later verses. Jesus warns them that they cannot serve two masters—riches and God (v. 24). They would be torn in different directions trying to serve two owners. They could not serve the true and living God while following after any other “god.”

After reassuring His followers that God would provide their needs, Jesus admonished them not to worry as the pagans or unbelievers do (Matt. 6:31, 32). The pagans trust no one but themselves, depend on no one but themselves, seek power and riches for no one but themselves.⁴ Jesus knew their worry would reveal an idolatrous heart, a divided heart, a *merimnao* heart because they would fail to serve God their Father with their whole hearts. They would serve another god—themselves and their interests.

Marcia Gammon is the dean of women at International Baptist College, a ministry of Tri-City Baptist Church in Tempe, Arizona.

¹ W. E. Vine, *Vine’s Concise Dictionary of Bible Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 48.

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew*, Vol. 5 of *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (USA: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d.), 84.

³ Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988), 37.

⁴ Robert Jamieson, et al., *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 23.

The highest point of all worship and prayer is adoration and praise and thanksgiving. —D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Gratitude is born in hearts that take time to count up past mercies. —Charles Jefferson

Gratitude to God makes even a temporal blessing a taste of heaven. —William Romaine

Ingratitude is always a form of weakness. I have never known a man of real ability to be ungrateful. —Johann von Goethe

So much has been given to me, I have no time to ponder over that which has been denied. —Helen Keller

I have found the least gratitude from those families in which I had performed the greatest services. —Benjamin Rush

Thanksgiving was never meant to be shut up in a single day. —Robert Lintner

Cultivate the thankful spirit! It will be to you a perpetual feast. —John MacDuff

Christ did not only come into our flesh, but also into our condition . . . where we were, and where we are, as we are sinners. —John Bunyan

God clothed Himself in vile man's flesh so He might be weak enough to suffer. —John Donne

We know how God would act if He were in our place—He has been in our place. —A. W. Tozer

If we could only grasp the significance of the incarnation, the word "sacrifice" would disappear from our vocabulary. —Nate Saint

The incarnation is so revolutionary a thought that it probably could only come from a God who is beyond logic and beyond theology. —Harry Reasoner

When man invents a super being, he comes up with a Superman, or a Captain Marvel. God gives the world a baby. And in that baby is tied up the whole destiny of the world and mankind and history. —Richard C. Halverson

Christmas began in the heart of God. It is complete only when it reaches the heart of man. —Unknown

Christmas is the day that holds all time together. —Alexander Smith

Only the Word made flesh can give any sort of hope in a world as grim and ugly and hard and sordid as ours. —Lynn Harold Hough

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

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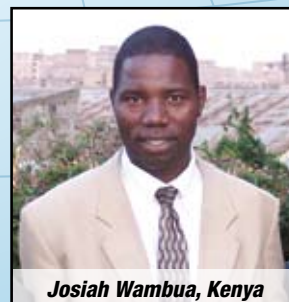
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Church Planting

The word “heritage” in 1 Peter 5:3 means “the charge allotted to you.” This should be a comfort to every church planter because the Sovereign Head appoints the number of lambs in your flock. Not too many; not too few. Is it fair to say that the sovereignty of Christ may be the most neglected meditation in church planting? Though our earnest expectation may be large, God’s sovereign plan is always larger.

His power may be seen in a couple of ministry experiences in our church. God’s sovereignty reigned: in the first six months of our existence He sent along fourteen members, eleven finding the church without our help and with the wrong Yellow Pages listing! Also, while attending grad classes at International Baptist in Tempe, Arizona, a wealthy Filipino man befriended me. One night, while suffering through studies in his hot tub, I mentioned admiration for his zeal in evangelism and discipleship. We bowed our heads right there in the hot tub and asked God to send a fervent Filipino family to the church. Within a few months the church doubled in size. Filipino families come connected! My desire, but God’s power.

As the Lord has been exercising His power, we have been obedient in evangelism and discipleship. We have many hooks in the water, such as a grief support group, English classes, a college and singles ministry, and an addiction recovery ministry. Our ladies host evangelistic “Tabitha” parties by inviting unsaved women to help them serve in the pattern of the Biblical Tabitha. Our families will use a birthday or a holiday to hold an evangelistic “Mathew” dinner to present the gospel in the pattern of



the disciple after his conversion. Each Wednesday is devoted to evangelistic training, home discipleship, and an open-door prayer time.

Cornerstone Baptist has grown, taken on her own foreign missions, and ordained one young man. We are investing in servants such as Jeremy Law who is church replanting Calvary Baptist in Lakeport, California, and church plant-

er Doug Hammond in Federal Way, Washington. Lord willing we will ordain a Filipino man, Dale Trinidad, this next year and become his sending church as he goes to the Philippines.

Eastern US congregations should catch a vision for Western US church planting. They should know that starting a church in the West may take more time and extended financial support than other areas of the country. Why? Westward expansion was greed driven, not God driven—and the trend never changed. Property prices and rents are very high, so facilities are harder to find or afford. Pluralism is mainstream. Like other metropolitan areas, California is very ethnically and religiously diverse. (Have you ever witnessed to a Zoroastrian?) Materialism is entrenched, and recreation (god, for many) is year-round.

But yet, we like Paul can learn that Sovereign God has “many people” in our harvest field. We have dreams to ring the San Francisco Bay Area with Fundamental, independent, Baptist churches—want to help?

Brent Snow is the pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Pleasant Hill, California.

*A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*.



I Was Audited by the IRS!

In times of trouble in my life I have been greatly strengthened by the Scriptures and by statements from godly men. I once heard someone say, "Why did the Lord allow this in my life? To test my trust in Him."

When I got the news that my ministry was going to be audited, I reacted the way most people do—I became despondent and full of anxiety. I could do one of two things: focus on the problem or focus on the promises of God's Word. I chose the latter. Allow me to share with you the verses that were my mainstay and confidence.

- Psalm 50:15, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."
- Psalm 54:4, "Behold, God is mine helper."
- Psalm 55:22, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."
- Psalm 56:3, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."
- Psalm 112:7, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD."
- 1 Peter 5:7, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

These verses have been a tremendous comfort to me and have bolstered my confidence in God. Matthew Henry stated, "A believing confidence in God is a sovereign antidote against prevailing despondency and disquietude of spirit."

Just before I received the news of the audit, I told a man who had gone through a life-threatening disease, "Brother, our detours are designed by the Lord for our spiritual development." Little did I know I'd be experiencing the truth of this statement! Throughout the whole ordeal of the audit, I kept my eyes on the Lord. Psalm 141:8 says, "But mine eyes are unto thee, O GOD the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute." Our Lord will never fail us; He has given us His Word as our source of strength, confidence and assurance. My desire is to use this experience to help others.

First, I want to say that the IRS was not picking on

me. I personally believe that the audits of nonprofit organizations are mainly because of TV evangelists who are milking millions of dollars from people through their programs. By the way, don't ever insult me by associating me with these TV evangelists! The majority of them are con artists who take advantage of vulnerable people. It would be a blessing to our country if we took 99% of these charlatans and put them on a ship out to sea!

Second, I want to encourage other men of God to be careful with their finances in the ministry. This means that accurate recording must be done. I personally record every check that comes to our association through love offerings and always record the date and check number. This is crucial, especially if you are a nonprofit organization. Do not have any checks made out to your name; the IRS mandates this. Not only did I record all the checks but so did my secretary. Having this double accountability will safeguard you and your ministry. I have also recorded all decisions for salvation and decisions among Christians. I have an itinerary for each year to show how many meetings we held. The IRS wanted all of this information! They also wanted to know about my college and graduate school education. At one point they even asked our CPA, "How do we know his ordination certificate wasn't out of a mail order catalog?" I am very happy to report that the outcome of the audit was tremendous; they couldn't find anything wrong or amiss in our records. Needless to say, it was quite a relief!

I have to commend the man who served as our CPA. He told me, "Jerry, I told the Lord before the audit that I was going to render my services as a gift. The money could be better spent on the ministry than on me." I am so grateful for such a kind and gracious spirit that this young man displayed. However, if you are audited, that may not be the case! I trust that my IRS audit will be a help and admonition to you.

Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty may be contacted at PO Box 141, Starr, SC 29684 or via e-mail at evangjsivn@aol.com.

Paul's fiercest, most urgent and combative epistle has wielded pivotal influence throughout church history. Its doctrine formed a cornerstone of the Protestant Reformation. The Pauline authorship of Galatians has historically enjoyed almost universal acceptance, even among liberals. Galatians is the most autobiographical of Paul's epistles. Of the first 35 verses of the book, 25 are devoted to Paul's personal spiritual history. The data he includes about himself—the nature of his call, the origin of his message, the chronology of his comings and goings especially to Jerusalem—fill in numerous gaps in our knowledge about the early years of this apostle. It is appropriate that the earliest of Paul's epistolary writings should lay down the law so explicitly that both salvation and sanctification come by faith only, apart from any works of the law.

Historical Setting

Accurately understanding the theological content of the books of the NT requires an awareness of the historical setting in which they were written. We are accustomed to thinking of the Church as predominantly Gentile, not Jewish. But for the first decade or two of its existence, the Church was predominantly Jewish, not Gentile. That began to change in Acts 8, as a door to the Gentiles opened a crack with Philip's preaching in Samaria. Acts 10–11 pushed the door to the Gentiles ajar through the divine direction given to Peter and his ministry to the household of Cornelius. It was Paul, however, who burst through that open door with the express mission of carrying the gospel "to the Jews first, but also to the Gentiles"—beginning in Acts 13 with the first missionary journey. The influx of Gentiles into the Church, combined with the virtual absence of any revelation apart from the OT, raised a major issue that had to be addressed and resolved: *What was the relation of Gentiles to the OT (the only available revelation from God to that point) and its requirements for how God's people were to live in a way that was pleasing to Him? What laws were they to obey? What practices were they to observe?*

Historically, for Gentiles to attach themselves to the people of God (Israel), they had to submit to the whole process of proselytism and begin observing the law like any other Jew (starting with circumcision). But things were different now . . . or were they? That was the heart of the debate. To appreciate the complexity of the issue we have to understand the highly transitional nature of what God was doing. *Over a millennium of religious tradition was*

being stood on its head. Indeed, *over a millennium of divine revelation*—addressed to a single race and nation that comprised His chosen people—was being not overturned, but certainly overhauled.

Gentile converts were historically a minority in the predominantly Israel-oriented focus of God's attention and revelation. But as the NT era progresses, that proportion and focus begins not merely to shift but to *reverse*. The entire economy of God was being retooled in order to include and address His people—now comprised of an increasingly international audience. So far the only available "instruction manual" was the one for the old economy. Scripture explaining the inauguration of the New Covenant and governing life under the New Covenant was in the birth process. Birth processes are generally time-consuming and painful. Hence the combative nature of Galatians and the debate that necessitated it.

Acts 13–14 record Paul's first missionary journey (ca. A.D. 46–48), which included the region of Galatia (in modern Turkey). Acts 15 records the Jerusalem Council (late A.D. 49), convened specifically to address and promulgate the Church's official decision regarding this central question of what was required or expected of the Gentiles in order to recognize them as full and equal partners in the Church. Galatians seems clearly to have been written between these two events—after (or perhaps during) the missionary journey but before the Jerusalem Council. Significantly, one of the first places Paul visits immediately after the Jerusalem Council is Galatia (Acts 16:4–6a).

What exactly are the issues Paul addresses so passionately, and how do they relate to readers living thousands of years later? This is the historical context that shaped Paul's Epistle to the Galatians and must, therefore, condition our understanding of this epistle.

Overview

Galatians is an unfolding argument against a distorted gospel (Gal. 1:6–9), what someone has described as "the Pauline polemic against gospel perversion" (J. S. Baxter, *Explore the Book*). The word "pervert" or "distort" in 1:7 (*metastropho*) means *to change from one thing into another, to change to the opposite*. (See the only other two NT occurrences in Acts 2:20 and James 4:9.) One may "distort" the true gospel into a different "gospel" by (1) denying the facts (liberalism), (2) redefining the facts (neo-orthodoxy), (3) substituting the facts (false religion), or (4) adding to the

THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL

facts (legalism). It is this last kind of distortion with which Galatians is particularly concerned.

Paul describes the influence of these outside false teachers as (a) “bewitching” the Galatians (3:1; the term means hypnotizing them so as to divert their attention from the person and work of Christ), (b) “eagerly seeking” them in order to shut them out from Christ so that the Galatians will seek them instead of Christ (4:17), and (c) “hindering” them from obeying the truth (5:7).

However, the problem does not stop with the outsiders. Paul is concerned that some of the Galatians themselves were “deserting” God “who called them by the grace of Christ” for an altogether different kind of “gospel”—a gospel that was “good news” only for those who were trying to proselytize the Galatians away from Christ alone (4:17; 6:12, 13). Now some of the Galatians were seeking sanctification through the law rather than through the Spirit (3:3), observing ritual times and seasons (4:10), desiring to be under the law (4:21), considering the rite of circumcision as essential (5:2), endeavoring to be justified by law and falling from grace (5:4). They were not denying the gospel; they were adding to it, thereby changing it into something else entirely.

The threat to this gospel truth is rooted in the teaching of legalism by those known as Judaizers. The presence of these enemies of “gospel truth” is traceable throughout the epistle. Tracing the references helps the reader to keep his eye on the primary message and problem that prompted the writing of this epistle in the first place.

- 1:7—“some who trouble you and would pervert [distort] the gospel of Christ”
- 2:4—“false brethren”
- 4:17—“they” zealously court you and want to shut you out from our gospel so that you will make much of them
- 5:7—“who” hindered you (an implied reference to them)
- 5:10—“he who troubles you” will bear his judgment
- 5:12—“those who trouble you”
- 6:12, 13—those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh, who try to insist that you be circumcised so that they can glory in your flesh
- 6:17—from now on let none of them trouble me

Paul is not interested in dignifying with academic debate any error that so strikes at the heart of the truth of the gospel. He has no use or time for these false teachers, and no care for what they say of him.

Outline

The threefold organization of Galatians is almost as universally recognized as its Pauline authorship. After a greeting (1:1–5) and a summary of the problem that has prompted him to write—namely, a distortion of the gospel of Christ of eternal consequence (1:6–9)—the letter proceeds to unfold into three major sections.

Galatians 1–2—Autobiographical Argument (Personal Narrative)

Paul presents his own independent call and credentials and carefully chronicles his contacts with the Jerusalem leadership. It is important to note that Paul’s dispute with Peter was *not an issue of doctrine* (cf. Paul in Gal. 2:16 and Peter in Acts 15:11), *but of practice*—specifically, *an issue of association* with those holding a flawed (and potentially dangerous) doctrine. Peter was preaching right content and right response to the gospel. But his fellowship with those who teach a flawed response to the gospel (by insisting that now they must be circumcised and keep the Mosaic law, or they are excluded from fellowship) was undercutting and compromising the “truth of the gospel” that he taught. Paul’s argument in this section is most concisely summarized in 2:16, 21.

Galatians 3–4—Theological Argument (Doctrinal Discussion)

The didactic doctrinal/theological nature of the content is underscored by the fact that these chapters contain no exhortations whatsoever regarding Christian living. Paul’s arguments (bolstered by a succession of nine OT quotations) include the following: (1) Their experience of salvation came in connection not with law-keeping but faith in God’s Word (3:1–5); (2) Their salvation is, like Abraham’s was, the result not of circumcision or law-keeping, but of promise accessed by faith in God’s Word—making them sons of God and the true spiritual seed of Abraham (3:6–9); (3) The law cannot justify anyone but only curse those who cannot keep it (3:10–14); (4) Salvation is granted by promise on the basis of faith, not awarded on the basis of law-keeping (3:14–18); (5) The whole purpose of the law in the first place was to regulate sin and drive us to Christ for salvation; why, then, having come to Christ would we go back to law (3:19–4:9)?

Galatians 5–6—Practical Argument (Practical Exhortation)

Paul concludes with the applicational exhortation to

Continued on next page.

At a Glance Continued

stand fast in the liberty of Christ (5:1), using your liberty to serve one another (5:13). He furnishes laws for the liberated (5:16–6:10). And he concludes with final warnings and principles (6:11–18).

Theme

Paul's approach to this topic can be deduced by noting the words that surface like buoys throughout his discussion, marking the channel of the book's central message. The issue at stake is **justification** (8x, more than any other NT book except Romans)—acceptance with God and right standing before Him. The **means** to justification is *not law* (32x) or *circumcision* (13x) but **promise** (11x). The **access** to justification is *not by works* (8x) but by **faith** (22x). And the **agent** of justification is *not the flesh* (18x) but the **Spirit** (16x).

The central theme of *Galatians* is safeguarding "the truth of the gospel" (2:5, 14). Every person (Jew or Gentile) obtains acceptance with God and maintains acceptance with God through Christ alone and on the basis of faith alone, unadorned by any meritorious good works. That, as we say, is "the gospel truth." *Galatians* magnifies the *grace* of Christ, literally from beginning (1:3) to end (6:18).

Application

The personal applications of *Galatians* are searching. On what, exactly, are you depending for your present

acceptance with God, and your final salvation? Don't misunderstand the extended focus on circumcision. Circumcision is not a major hot-button religious issue today, but it was the historically immediate application in Paul's religious context of a broader and timeless principle. "Circumcision" in *Galatians* is representative of legalism in any of its manifestations in any age—any dependence on good works, law-keeping, or human merit as an essential part of gaining or maintaining acceptance with God.

Legalism is not a strange, rare form of religion. It is the universal religious alternative to Christianity, the religion practiced, in one form or another, by the majority of humanity. The circumcision debate of the early church is merely the ancient Jewish expression of works-for-salvation. No one argues the circumcision issue any more. The Reformers (most of whom started out *in* the Church of Rome) came to see that the same issue and error had been recast in a different form—namely, the addition of good works and ritual observances to faith in Christ for salvation and/or security. Our standing before God is obtained, sustained, and maintained by virtue of the fact that we are, by faith alone, *in Christ* (Gal. 5:6; 6:15). If you are a believer, your standing before God and your daily access to God are as secure as His!



STANDING FAST
IN THE FAITH

ISAIAH 40
The Lord is my strength
A Psalm of David
I want.
He maketh me
pastures: he leadeth
me
waters.
He restoreth me
the paths of right
sake.
Yea, thou
of the shadow
for thou comest

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Who Is Going to Heaven?

In a recent survey conducted by Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion, fifty-four percent of respondents believe that at least half of all Americans will enter Heaven. Rodney Stark, the Institute's co-director, indicated that there is a decided shift in American thinking on this issue. Similar studies in the 1960s indicated that American generally believed that only Christians would go to Heaven. This according to Stark is "good American middle ground." Later he stated, "I think what you're seeing is a real level of religious tolerance. It's probably going to be higher ten years from now."

The article states, "Researchers found that while 72 percent of respondents said at least half of Christians will make it into heaven, the figures were lower for other faiths: Jews (46 percent), Buddhists (37 percent) and Muslims (34 percent)."

This same study also showed that:

"Widows and widowers are some of the biggest tithers, with 17.6 percent giving 10 percent or more of their income to the church, compared to 8.6 percent of non-widowed people."

"People attending large churches (with more than 1,000 in the congregation) are more likely to tithe, attend worship services weekly and believe that heaven and hell 'absolutely' exist."

"Those who attend stricter churches—those tending to differ from secular society on issues such as abortion and homosexual behavior—are more likely to tithe, attend worship services weekly and share their faith with others than attenders of less strict churches."

This article can be referenced at <http://www.crosswalk.com/news/religiontoday/11581985/>.

Duty to Die

In an interview with LifeSiteNews.com, Baroness Mary Helen Warnock (who has been esteemed by some as "Britain's leading moral philosopher") stated that people who are suffering with dementia have a duty to commit suicide. In an interview with *Life and Work* magazine she stated, "If you're demented, you're wasting people's lives—your family's lives—and you're wasting the resources of the National Health Service." In another article she stated, "Actually I've just written an article called 'A Duty to Die?' for a Norwegian periodical. I wrote it really suggesting that there's nothing wrong with feeling you ought to do so for the sake of others as well as yourself."

Warnock's views are gaining a larger acceptance under the title of "contemporary utilitarianism." This philosophy urges that "life has no inherent value and can be sacrificed for the good of society." She

likens the act of suicide as a noble sacrifice for the good of society to that of a soldier throwing himself on a grenade to protect his comrades.

John Smeaton, director of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, wrote that Warnock's philosophy is a "regression to the brutal ancient world, when enforced suicide as a punishment was commonplace."

This article can be referenced at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2983652/Baroness-Warnock-Dementia-sufferers-may-have-a-duty-to-die.html>.

Forced Participation in Gay Pride

Charles LiMandri, attorney and West Coast director of the Thomas More Law Center, is representing four San Diego firefighters who were ordered against their will to drive a fire truck in the city's "gay pride" parade. One of the firefighters commented, "You could not even look at the crowd without getting some type of sexual gesture. If any crew member were to hang up pictures at the station of what we saw, we would be disciplined."

Assistant Chief Jeff Carle, who gave the order, acknowledged that the parade could be offensive but justified his orders by saying, "I was faced with not having an engine in the pride parade. I didn't think it would be proper to be

absent in that parade when we're present in almost every other one."

"Richard Thompson, President and Chief Counsel of the Thomas More Law Center, said, 'These firefighters dedicated their lives to save the lives of others. They did not sign on to become unwilling props to a controversial political and social agenda.'"

This article can be referenced at <http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2008/sep/08092203.html>.

The Unregistered Russian Church

A Norwegian news agency named Forum 18 has reported on a growing trend toward religious persecution in Russia of the unregistered church. One of the incidents reported involved a small congregation in Yurgamysh (of the Kurgan Region, 1120 miles east of Moscow). In July of this year members were interrogated by the FSB security service. Interrogators attended services and secretly filmed segments for government propaganda. In August a series was aired in the region for a period of three days on a program called *Criminal News*. A local teacher charged Baptist children are "retarded" and "downtrodden" and that they "dress differently from other pupils and often have to repeat a year." An elderly woman was filmed weeping that her children have "ended up in that

terrible sect. They beat their children, and, when I try to intervene, they beat me!"

Forum 18 reports that the proposal includes "compulsory notification about the existence of an unregistered religious group and compulsory registration for communities with ten or more members. Kurgan regional parliamentarians believe that the measures would allow 'sectarians' dangerous activity'—including their telephone conversations—to be monitored."

The second incident involved two Baptist preachers who "sang Christian hymns and read from the Bible" in the town of Bolkhov (190 miles south of Moscow) near a public market to a group of twenty-two church members. The interrogators were reported to have said to the gathered church, "If you don't want problems, forget about Bolkhov and don't ever come back. God could abandon you for twenty minutes, and that would be quite enough for something to happen to you."

This article can be referenced at http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1190.

Catholic Hospitals Prepared to Close

The Victoria Parliament is considering legislation that would require all qualified medical personnel to either perform abortions or give abortion referrals. Melbourne Archbishop Denis Hart warned that Catholic hospitals would close rather than subject doctors to violate their consciences in this area. Catholic hospitals perform one third of that region's births.

The bill would require doctors to perform abortions in what is considered an "emergency." The bill also requires nurses and pharmacists to

NOTABLE QUOTES

We sanctify the Lord God in our hearts when we with sincerity and fervency adore Him, when our thoughts of Him are awful and reverend, when we rely upon His power, trust His faithfulness, submit to His wisdom, imitate His holiness, and give Him the glory due to His most illustrious perfections. We sanctify God before others when our deportment is such as invites and encourages others to glorify and honor Him.—Matthew Henry

Both God and difficult people can affect our countenances. Both God and others can control our smiles, our foreheads, or expressions, and our eyes. Both can . . . but only one will. The one we deem as the biggest, the most important, or the most relevant to our lives. So what happens to you when people in your life are big and the God in your life is small? How will those who intimidate you control the way you look? Take a look in the mirror and see who is controlling your appearance.—Rand Hummel

Suppose that even one-tenth of contemporary nominal evangelicals pored over the pages of Scripture to establish what their lifestyles should be like, and, with balance, determination, meekness, and courage, found grace to live accordingly. What transformation would be effected in our world!—D. A. Carson

We do not seek tomorrow's grace or tomorrow's bread. They thrive best, and get most out of life, who live in the living present. They pray best who pray for today's needs, and not tomorrow's, which may render our prayers unnecessary and redundant by not existing at all! True prayers are born of present trials and present needs. Bread, for today, is bread enough. Bread for today is the strongest sort of pledge that there will be bread tomorrow.—E. M. Bounds

You can do more than pray, after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed. . . . Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer. . . . When you pray, rather let your heart be without words than your words without heart. . . . He who runs from God in the morning will scarcely find him the rest of the day.—John Bunyan

administer doctor-ordered abortifacients. Neither is there any ban of partial-birth procedures nor does the bill address the issue of parental consent.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2008/sep/08092207.html>.

The Authority of Scriptures

Pope Benedict XVI has been lauded as a theological watchdog for the Catholic Church. While his recent statements are not inconsistent with typical Catholic theology, they are worthy of note to those who love and defend the sacred Scriptures.

In his address to representatives from the World of Culture in France early September, Pope Benedict XVI sought to demonstrate the church's congeniality with secular scientific culture. He stated, "Thus it is through the search for God that the secular sciences take on their importance, science which shows the path towards language." This began his defense of the notion that Scriptures are interpreted and have their meaning assigned through the advancing worlds of history and science. "Scripture requires exegesis, and it requires the context of the community in which it came to birth and in which it is lived. This is where its unity is to be found, and here too its unifying meaning is opened up. To put it yet another way: there are dimensions of meaning in the word and in words which only come to light within the living community of this history-generating word."

Compiled by Robert Conduct, 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.

Pearson Johnson

Being Worthy Senders

When we think about missions, we often focus exclusively on the missionaries or the mission fields. In the current series of articles, we have been focusing on an equally important aspect of missions—our local churches. This theme continues in this *Global Focus*.

In the near future, Lord willing, God will give our church the privilege of commissioning a number of families for service on various mission fields. It is a wonderful answer to prayer, as we have prayed that the Lord of the harvest would send forth laborers into His harvest (Matt. 9:38) and that He would raise them up from our congregation. There will be great rejoicing and celebration as we see God provide their support and we see them depart for the field. But there is also a sober responsibility involved in being the senders of young families, and we pray God will help us be “worthy senders.”

The apostle John gives us insight into the ministry of sending and supporting missionaries in his third epistle, so that we may be “worthy senders.” He says in 3 John 5–8:

Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

We see first, that worthy senders are commended for their ministry to those who have gone forth for Christ's name's sake. We do a faithful thing when we minister to missionaries. We show our faithfulness to God, to the brethren, and to the gospel when we put effort and labor into serving our missionaries and sending them forth in a worthy manner.

The text goes on to say “we therefore ought to receive such.” Literally, this means “we ought to support such men,” or, as a figure, we should put our arms underneath them and lift them up. As families are sent out to proclaim the name of Christ, they need our earnest and dedicated support.

Andrew Fuller, good friend of William Carey, wrote from the evening of Carey's declaration of going to India, “We saw there a gold mine in India, but it seemed almost as deep as the center of the earth. Who will venture to explore it? ‘I will go down,’ said Mr. Carey to his brethren, ‘but remember that you must hold the ropes.’ We solemnly engaged to do so; nor while we live, shall we desert him.”*

William Carey knew that he was about to descend into the darkness of a land without the light of the gospel. He also knew that he could not do the work without the attentive, laborious support of those in the church who remained behind. This work of holding the ropes, or being worthy senders, is a necessary ministry that requires tiring effort!

Being worthy senders is a loving ministry as well. The workers John spoke of bore witness to their love before the church. This love was shown by providing hospitality. It was confirmed when they sacrificed means that could have been used for their own needs for the sake of those going abroad. It takes a great deal of loving, unselfish activity to serve as a worthy sender. However, this love is not wasted, for it becomes a display to the church abroad of the worth of the gospel!

Being worthy senders is a God-glorifying work as well. John says that they would “do well” if they sent the workers out “after a godly sort.” That is, they do well, if they treat those serving God in a way they should treat God Himself. When we show care, concern, support, and sacrifice for those going out for the sake of His name, we show how much God means to us. When we do this well, God is glorified through our service.

Being worthy senders takes effort and sacrifice, but it is a faithful, loving, and God-glorifying work that we do as local churches. Let's strive to be “worthy senders” for the sake of His name!

Pearson Johnson is the Pastor of Missions and Evangelism at Inter-City Baptist Church. You can e-mail him with questions or comments at pjohnson@intercity.org.

*Quoted in Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Christian History Institute, 1998), p. 74.

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Evening Worship 6:00 P.M.
Wednesday Prayer Meeting 7:00 P.M.

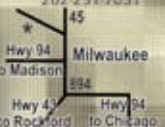
Praise God for His grace at work in Falls Baptist Church! Our church, academy, Bible college, and seminary are united in the goal to produce Spirit-filled leaders impacting the world with the good news of life in Christ Jesus. When you visit, you will always receive a warm welcome and the ministry of the Word through godly music and Bible preaching.

Falls Baptist Church

1669 W12703 Appleton Ave.
Menomonie Falls, WI 53051
www.fallsbaptist.org
262.251.7051



Pastor Wayne Van Gelderen



Encouraging Those on the Front Line

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. . . . As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country. Proverbs 25:11, 25.

Everyone in a distant and strange place, even under the best circumstances, longs for and rejoices when news and encouragement arrive. Imagine the loneliness and homesickness of being in a foreign country with a lot of people yet at the same time alone. Add to that, your location being a battlefield, in a desert, in the summer where temperatures are in triple digits. According to Chaplain Gary Fisher, a troop commander once said, "Being in Iraq in the summer is like being stuck in an oven on broil, and just for fun, someone every so often opens the door and throws sand in your face." Many American military personnel will be in such a place this holiday season, including chaplains.

The FBFI Commission on Chaplains, in partnership with Fundamental Baptist churches, has sent men (military chaplains) to serve and minister in distant and often dangerous places. FBFI-endorsed chaplains are godly, dedicated, and faithful men who are serving God and their country with distinction, men who deserve and need the prayers and encouragement of God's people.

The coming holiday season provides an opportunity for Christians to be a blessing to our military personnel who are serving at home and on the front line. Using the following suggestions, individuals, families, churches (Sunday school classes, senior saints, a group of veterans), or Christian schools

can be used as instruments of encouragement and help to FBFI chaplains.

Care Packages: How to Send and When to Send

Using small boxes, such as shoeboxes, make care packages. One box should be marked for the chaplain. All other boxes should be gift-wrapped and marked "male" or "female." Place the small boxes (ten to twelve) in a large box and send it to the chaplain. Fill each box and pack it so the items will not move and be damaged. The chaplain will give the boxes to the military personnel of his choice. Plan ahead, since it can take up to a month for overseas military personnel to receive packages.

You may send such materials to the following FBFI chaplain, who is deployed overseas:

CH (CPT) Brian G. Palmer
HHC, 1-24 IN
FOB Warhorse
APO AE 09336

Care Packages: What to Send

Suggested items:

Written materials

A note of encouragement giving brief information about you or your family, Sunday school class, school class, or group

An attractive gospel tract that gives the plan of salvation, a copy of John/Romans combination, a small pocket-size New Testament

Do not send any materials that criticize the Muslim religion.

Personal items

Practical, durable items such as

toothbrush, toothpaste, stick deodorant, disposable razors, shaving gel, shampoo, bars of soap, comb, hairbrush, lotion, lip balm, wet wipes, and other practical items. Items such as shampoo and lotion that might leak should be put in a Ziploc bag.

Food items

Hard candy (individually wrapped pieces), chewing gum, canned nuts, etc. Do not send items that will melt, spoil, or become stale. (It's okay to send chocolate from December to February.) Do not pack food items in boxes with soap, shampoo, or items with fragrances since the fragrance will affect the flavor of the food items.

Include your name and address; also include the name of your church, pastor, and the address and phone number of the church. If your church has a web page, include the web address as well.

FBFI-endorsed chaplains are among the best educated, most dedicated chaplains in our armed forces. Your participation in project "Encouraging Those on the Frontline" will enable them to minister in another way, thereby opening the door for witnessing. All will be very thankful for your concern and effort in helping to encourage and reach those to whom they minister. If they could speak with you personally, their request would be "Brethren, pray for us" (1 Thess. 5:25).

Bro. Bob Ellis is the National Field Representative for the FBFI Commission on Chaplains. He travels extensively, visiting Fundamental Christian colleges and seminaries, promoting the FBFI chaplaincy ministry. He is also available to speak in churches and can be contacted at 850.261.6647.

Before They Call . . .

And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. Isaiah 65:24

Dominica

Dominica looked like one of the Pacific islands in WWII after a pre-invasion bombardment. The vegetation was stripped bare and the structures lay in ruins. Category Five Hurricane David had churned through the Caribbean in 1979, leaving devastation and death in its wake. Before it passed directly over the Dominican Republic, where 2000 people lost their lives, it hit the tiny island of Dominica head-on. There, Dr. Johnny Daniels had planted the Lighthouse Baptist Church next to the Carib Reserve and turned it over to Pastor Hutson Challenger; then Dr. Daniels had started another ministry in Carolina, Puerto Rico. The lessons of faith and sacrifice learned through many storms have served these men well.

Puerto Rico

"Everybody's got some kind of weather," Dr. Daniels says. "Some have heat, some have ice, we have hurricanes. You prepare and pray, then you keep serving God." There would be other storms after Hurricane David, just as there were many before. When the Calvary Baptist Church with its large Christian school and Bible college moved to a new location, with an unforgettable summer of construction and temporary buildings behind them, 1998 Category Four Hurricane George soon arrived to rake the island from east to west.

Georg Zimmer had come with his sons to help put up those buildings; then Hurricane George came in September and knocked them down.

So Zimmer and his sons came back and built them up again.

Yap

Today, Georg is a missionary to Calvary Baptist Bible College, and his sons have built churches and changed another island halfway around the world in the Pacific—the island of Yap. Planting churches through the use of a radio station and more hard work than you could imagine, the Zimmer brothers, their families, and former *FrontLine* editor Bob Whitmore were already making missions history when Typhoon Sudal hit Yap on Easter weekend 2004 with 132-mph winds and 35-foot waves. In the aftermath of that storm, their experiences were like the great missions biographies of the 1800s. But, as they say, that is another story.

Grenada

In June 2004, two months after Sudal, back in the Caribbean Pastor Michael Lambert, the pastor of Corinth Baptist Church of St. David Parish, Grenada, was scheduled to depart for a speaking engagement at the FBFI Annual Fellowship in Concord, New Hampshire. But, while

he and his wife were at the airport, she became ill and had to be rushed to the hospital on the island of Trinidad. There she died of undiagnosed cancer, leaving Pastor Lambert with a young daughter and son. Just three months later, Category Four Hurricane Ivan destroyed his church building and the homes of many of his church members. St. David Parish was one of six of Grenada's parishes that were completely destroyed. Ninety percent of the structures on Grenada were gone, and fifty percent of the people were left homeless. An old stone prison, which had stood strong for centuries, hospitals, clinics, schools, and government buildings were severely damaged or destroyed. The country was without water or electricity, and the threat of disease was great. Into this utter devastation the first relief plane to arrive with food and water was brought in to Michael Lambert by Johnny Daniels.

Puerto Rico

A book needs to be written about the souls saved and the churches planted or rebuilt by Fundamental Baptists in the Caribbean through disaster relief. The islands themselves, like the



Atlantic and Gulf Coasts of America, have been scarred by centuries of storms. The Christians there have been shaped by the lessons those storms have brought. 1989's Category Four Hurricane Hugo cast its eye on Puerto Rico, wreaking havoc and hardship. For two weeks the young people of Dr. Daniels' church carried food and water up twenty stories in high-rise San Juan apartment buildings to elderly shut ins. But that, too, is another story.

Dominica

In 1982 Dominica was on the mend from David's destruction three years earlier. Banana trees grow quickly, and the tropical humidity had revived the lush green blanket of the money crop. Hutson Challenger and his family were struggling to get by in their tiny, fragile two-room house on the Carib Reserve, where one of the last surviving groups of the Carib people resides. It was late in the day, and Louise Challenger, herself a Carib, had nothing to feed her seven children. Hutson gathered the family around the table to thank the Lord for whatever He was going to provide. As they prayed, a message came from Johnny Daniels that he was on his way to Dominica and to be ready. He did not have time to tell them what he was bringing or how.

That morning, LCDR Bill Seney had told his pastor, Dr. Daniels, that the United States Coast Guard had taken possession of a boat off the southwest coast of Puerto Rico. It was loaded with drugs . . . and food. If Dr. Daniels would be at the dock when the boat arrived, he could have the food to use in his ministry. You know he was there in time! There was too much food to process. How the Lord had arranged for a Coast Guard C-130 based in Miami to be in Puerto Rico that day; how permission was obtained to use it for this humanitarian effort; how it was loaded with food, beds, and other materials collected for the Challengers; and how it was arranged for Dr. Daniels to fly with the crew, is . . . well . . . another story. But before the day was over the C-130 was on its way to Dominica's little unlighted runway on

the eastern coast where only the most able pilots can land even a small plane safely, in daylight.

When the Challengers got the phone message, Hutson was reading the story of Joshua leading the Children of Israel around the walls of Jericho. They stood to shout in praise to God as they marched around the empty table seven times. Then father and sons set out in an old truck for the little airport just a few miles away. The boys were wide-eyed as the lumbering C-130 slowly shadowed the runway in a short landing, lowered its huge cargo door, and Dr. Daniels and the United States Coast Guard began to unload the supplies. There were seven fifty-five-gallon drums of food—one for each trip around the table! The Challenger children were allowed to visit the cockpit of the huge cargo plane. The food it contained fed the family for weeks. The men of the Coast Guard saw prayer being answered through them. The gospel of Jesus Christ was sounded out that day, and souls continue to be saved through this work of God through and to His people.

Disaster is a way of life during the Caribbean hurricane season. And disaster relief is a well-established

ministry there. Another generation of leaders has been raised up, and a new crop of souls is ready for harvest. The storms are still coming. The sinners are still selling drugs. But God is still saving souls. Johnny Daniels still brings relief, and national pastors such as Michael Lambert and Hutson Challenger still sacrifice to help others survive and recover. The seven Challenger children saw that day what they would see over and over again: We serve a God who is still answering prayer. *And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.*

Oran Challenger sat in the cockpit of a Coast Guard C-130 and saw God answer his father's prayer through the service and sacrifice of others. He saw that God will set a table in the wilderness and that He will use people and planes to do it. Oran is a grown man now, a graduate of the Missions Aviation Program of Bob Jones University. He has plans, and he's praying for a plane. . . . But that's another story.

Told by Dr. Johnny Daniels, with additional details provided by Pastors Hutson Challenger, Michael Lambert, Georg Zimmer, and Dr. John Vaughn's research. At this writing, the Lord has provided \$35,000 of the \$85,000 needed for the plane.



Left to right: Loren, Andel, and Oran Challenger. Oran Challenger is now a pilot.



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