

PREACHING THE GOSPEL • THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE GOSPELS • MY SON, HEAR THE INSTRUCTION OF THY FATHER

FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

January/February 2009 • \$3.95

The background of the cover is a photograph of three large, dark wooden crosses standing on a grassy hill. The sun is setting directly behind the central cross, creating a bright, starburst-like glow that illuminates the sky with shades of orange, pink, and purple. The silhouettes of the crosses and the hill are visible against the vibrant sky.

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the Gospel



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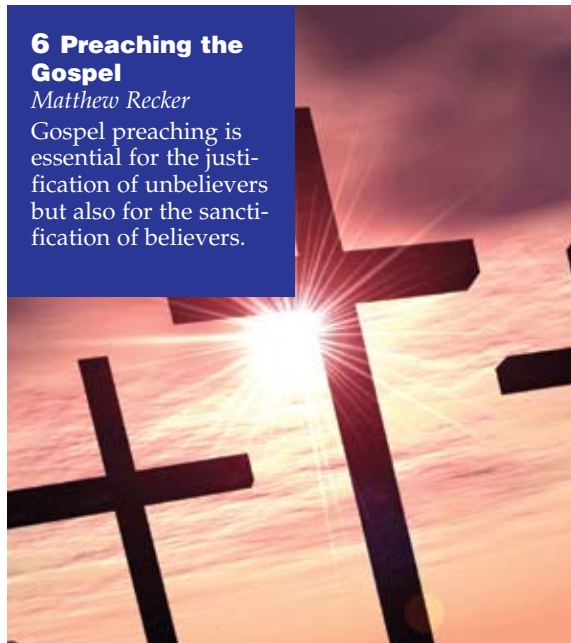
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We want to hear from you!



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You may request that your letter not be published or that your name be withheld, but anonymous letters will not be accepted.

From the Editor: *These letters, especially the one from Dr. Schaal, illustrate how FrontLine magazine is meeting a great need. We know that these are tough financial times, and some may be rethinking whether they can afford to renew their subscription; some churches might be wondering whether they can continue to send FrontLine to their missionaries, and some Christian colleges are cutting back on giving FrontLine to their preacher boys. Please read this month's On the Front Line column as you pray about how you can stand with us in this important work.*

Thank you for the articles in the September/October issue of *FrontLine*. I'm a senior (sixty-four years old) and have been forced to think about "Preparing for Winter" for some time. I am also involved in counseling many wonderful older saints in our church. My heart was personally blessed by the personal and practical nature of these

articles, especially the article titled "Don't Stop Coming." I've purchased ten additional copies for future opportunities in counseling.

Thank you again for an issue that was especially practical and helpful.

*Pastor John Tipton
Mount Calvary
Baptist Church
Greenville, SC*

We received our new *FrontLine* magazine for this month [Sept/Oct. 2008]—and it was such a blessing and comfort to me. I still am grieving the loss of my dad, and the pains of him not being here resurface at such odd times. Little things trigger memories that just flood my soul and cause the tears to flow. The articles in this month's *FrontLine* touched my heart in so many areas. I sat down and almost read it cover to cover when it came.

*Sandy Perry
Travelers Rest, SC*

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The Gospel Is What Really Matters

John C. Vaughn

God uses crises to redirect our lives. Bad news can open hearts to the Good News. The economy, the election, the erosion of the collective will of the West to face the threats to its future should wake us up to what we should have been doing all along and what we dare not ignore now. Crises remind us of what really matters: the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Seeking hope in recent personal crises, I have been led to think much about the gospel. It is the answer to every human problem—the ultimate answer. There is something about being reminded of the hope that others found in their times of trial that gives us hope in our own. Ruth Tucker’s biographical history of Christian missions, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, has allowed me to spend some days of sorrow with servants of God whom we would do well to remember.

We know from Hebrew history that God uses crises to reform His people. Missionary stories from the late eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries read like a continuation of Hebrews 11. Although our conversations about many of these faithful people are often qualified by statements about where they were wrong on some point or another, many of them set a powerful example for us. They left for the field at the expense of family, often seeing spouse and children die from the rigors of the field. Their stories report honestly that some of them benefited from the imperialism of their home countries. They lived in a day when doctrinal distinctions among the denominations were set aside. The liberalism and compromise that took root at home hurt the mission fields as well.

But the heart of their story is that they heard the call, they went to the field, and they stayed. They lived and died for the gospel; it mattered enough to them to do something about it. They did not enlist in the Lord’s army merely to wear His uniform on parade; they went to the front lines and gave their lives to the cause of Christ. That’s the kind of “stickability” we need.

My heart has been stirred to make *FrontLine* magazine the last subscription that our readers would consider canceling when they rethink their budgets in tough financial times. We have to find ways to make it possible for young preachers and missionaries to have *FrontLine* in their hands.

The world needs the message of those who read this magazine. Our aim is to help our readers as they labor to help others. Those who have few, if any, study helps, testify of the value of *FrontLine* (see this issue’s *Mail Bag* for such a testimony). The crisis of the Great Depression may have helped to prepare the Greatest Generation to shed their blood for freedom. If another great depression comes, this time accompanied by sweeping efforts to redefine the moral foundation of freedom, could that crisis provide the classroom of a future generation who will live and die for something beyond their own comfort? If so, our message needs to be taught in that classroom.

Will postmodernism triumph over propositional truth? Will we surrender the gospel—the unchanging message of a Book—for flickering images and fluid philosophy? Like the incredibly dangerous ideology that underlies the war on its tactic (terror), the underlying lie goes unnoticed. Truth exposes the common denominator in the

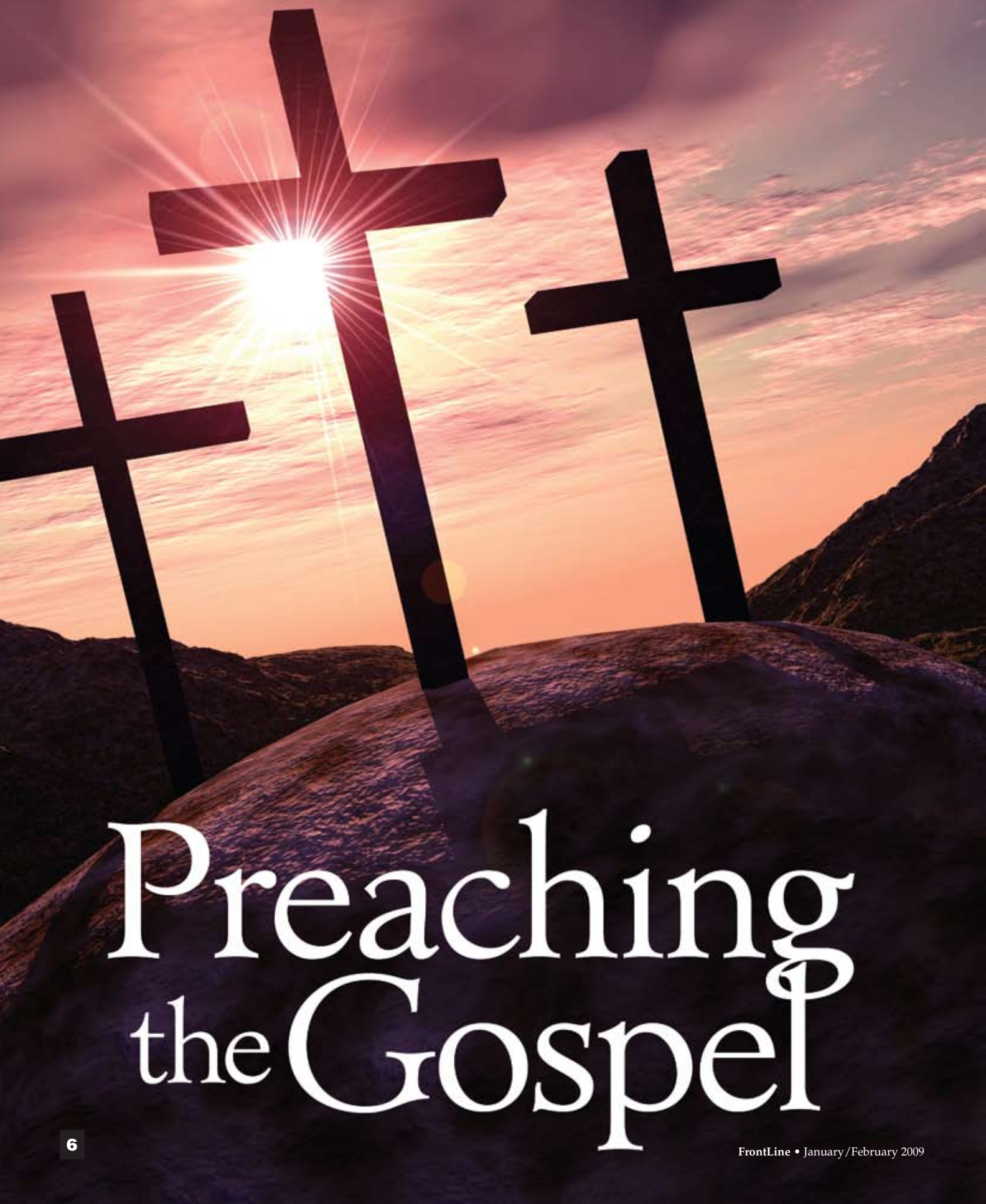
aggressive threats of Islam and the angry threats of the gay-rights movement. The one will not tolerate the other, but Satan is happy to use them both in a pincers attack on the gospel. There are well-funded outlets for the lie that men can and should have the right to live apart from Christ without consequences. God’s people need to stand behind the outlets of Truth.

Perhaps the Lord will use the current crisis to revive the preaching of the gospel. The missionaries who sacrificed their lives for Christ knew that obedience costs far less than disobedience. Tucker’s book gives far too much credit to New Evangelicalism, but she quotes Kenneth S. Latourette: “Protestant liberalism, deemphasizing and demythologizing miracles and biblical authority, introduced the powerful but crippling secularism into Chinese Christianity.” According to Tucker, he concluded that this “‘secularizing movement’ was the most important factor influencing Christianity’s losses in China in the face of communism.” We are facing no smaller threat today, and compromise with unbelief continues to blind us to it. Christianity is so preoccupied with not offending the Devil, it has nearly forgotten to preach the gospel.

The cause of Christ has always needed those who are willing to make far greater sacrifices than the current conversation involves. What is sorely needed is the willing heart, changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need preachers who will sacrifice selfish ambition to take the gospel to those who hate it with a vengeance that could cost our grandchildren their lives or their souls. He gave His life for us; will we give ours for Him? That is the question when it comes right down to it. The gospel is what really matters.

Our aim is to help our readers as they labor to help others.

Matthew Recker



Preaching the Gospel

It seems strange to say that a missing element in much preaching is Jesus Christ and His gospel of grace, but I believe it is so. Even in my own experience, I have found that I can preach on Christian living, worldliness, the decaying culture, church growth, or a host of other topics and gloss over the power of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection! God has convicted me and challenged me that preaching this gospel must be included as the ultimate motive for everything we do and the power behind all we can be for Him.

Gospel preaching is essential for the justification of unbelievers but also for the sanctification of believers. Preaching that diminishes the gospel's power will result in hearers thinking that they can earn God's approval or find strength to be a good Christian, parent, or spouse in their own ability. The unsaved will be deceived into thinking that salvation is something they can earn; the saved will be misled to think they can live the Christian life through their own effort. Gospel-less preaching will leave hearers still feeling guilt and shame no matter how hard they "try to do right." It is a fatal error to leave out the gospel, for any attempt to achieve our salvation, either our justification or sanctification, by human obedience alone will lead only to glorifying self and not God. The gospel alone gives the unsaved grace to stand in God's righteousness, and the gospel alone removes the condemnation from our lives.

In 1 Peter 1:10–12, the apostle Peter summarizes the gospel of "salvation" and "grace" as the "sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (vv. 10, 11). This can be restated as Christ's substitutionary crucifixion and His glorious exaltation. Peter then shows how three representatives—the prophets, the apostles, and the angels—center their energy upon this good news of Christ's death on the cross and His bodily resurrection from the grave.

The Prophets and the Gospel

Peter declares that the gospel is the subject of inspired prophetic consideration (vv. 10, 11). The prophets, those who lived before Christ and wrote the Hebrew Scriptures, or Tenach, did due diligence in their ministry. Peter uses two very strong terms to emphasize their strenuous effort. They "enquired" zealously (*ekzeteo*) to understand God's salvation, just as the man of faith is described as one who diligently seeks for God (Heb. 11:6). They also "searched diligently" (*exeraunao*) regarding all that they wrote. This search is used of Jesus' examining His church (Rev. 2:23) and God's searching one's heart (Rom. 8:27). Although there was intense human effort in the writing of God's Word, ultimately these prophets did not write according to their own will. What they penned was by divine inspiration: the Spirit of Christ was in them and witnessed to them of Christ's suffering and glory before it occurred! We conclude that God's Word is a coupling together of God's divine out-breathing and a humanly exhaustive inquiry in every word that was written.

This gospel of Jesus' suffering and glory is at the heart of God's revelation throughout the Tenach. Jesus questioned His doubting disciples on the Emmaus road thusly: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Jesus proceeded to expound these two truths from

the writings of Moses and all the prophets (Luke 24:25–27). In Luke 24:44–48, our Lord again explained these two themes from the three major sections of the Old Testament Scripture: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. Jesus opened their understanding as He proclaimed what was written by the prophets: "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."

We can only guess as to what Scriptures Jesus may have used in those two resurrection appearances! Did He proclaim His miraculous incarnation from Isaiah 7:14? Did He reveal His substitutionary atonement from Psalm 22 or Isaiah 53? Maybe He asserted His bodily resurrection from Psalm 16:10 and His glorious return from Psalm 24! The crimson cord of Calvary's blood and the shout of hallelujah victory over death underlie all the writing of the faithful prophets of the Scripture. Because the gospel is a central focus of the Scripture, we must make preaching the gospel predominant!

The Apostles and the Gospel

Secondly, Peter reveals how the gospel is the subject of humble apostolic proclamation (1 Pet. 1:12a). Amazingly, the Old Testament prophets did not fully understand the mystery of the gospel message which they wrote. This message was fully revealed to the New Testament apostles. Peter implies that it was overwhelming to receive prophetic testimony from those who had "trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword" and much more, and yet, they "received not the promise" (Heb. 11:36–40). Peter recognizes that the gospel message was written at great price, and it was accomplished at an even greater cost: the precious blood of Christ! This gospel humbly received was proclaimed by the power of the Holy Spirit who was sent (*apostello*) from Heaven. The human apostles, sent ones, were empowered by the divine Apostle: the Holy Spirit! This causes the human messenger to be crowned with great humility in so great a task. Throughout the pages of the Acts of the Apostles as well as into the New Testament letters, Christ's death, burial, and resurrection were proclaimed and applied to every aspect of the believer's walk through this world. It was received at a great price, and it requires a great power to make it known, so may we follow the apostolic example to humbly proclaim the gospel at every opportunity.

The Angels and the Gospel

Finally, we see that the gospel is the subject of intense angelic examination. Peter gives us a glimpse into the unseen world of angels and how these spiritual servants of God peer longingly into the gospel to uncover its rich truths (1 Pet. 1:12b). The angels "desire to look" into this gospel! The word "desire" is a strong one, referring to a passionate craving and is the same word used for "lust" in Galatians 5:17. "To look into" (*parakupto*) is used of Peter, John, and Mary stooping and staring into the empty tomb (Luke 24:12; John 20:5, 11). It speaks of an eager inspection with a boggled mind. The preposition (*para*) means "beside" and is used to denote a separation. The angels

GOSPEL PREACHING IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE JUSTIFICATION OF UNBELIEVERS BUT ALSO FOR THE SANCTIFICATION OF BELIEVERS.

peer into the mysteries of gospel truth from beside it, not as participators in the forgiveness offered through the gospel, but as spectators of God's earth-shattering grace. The holy angels do not need the gospel for themselves, yet they have an intense interest in it! It boggles their imagination to marvel at the love, wisdom, and justice of God. It staggers their mind to see how the glorious God could take upon Himself the form of a servant and be made in the likeness of men. It dumbfounds their wisdom to see how Christ arose bodily from death!

The message of Jesus' suffering and glory has come to us by God's miraculous intervention and man's noble suffering. Should we not humbly proclaim the same message that the apostles preached and prayerfully rely upon the same Holy Spirit power? Unlike angels, we are not mere spectators of the grace that cascades from the gospel. Should we do anything less than the angels, then, than intently gazing upon the grace revealed in the gospel and seeking to apply the gospel to all our living and preaching?

This is not the time for Christians to grow weary of preaching the gospel to both believer and unbeliever. The political and economic turmoil of our times cries out for gospel preaching, for this alone is the power of God leading to salvation. If we preach on Christian service, preach that the gospel is the motivating power in all our labor

(2 Cor. 5:14–21). If we preach on the home, emphasize that Calvary love and resurrection power fuel the home with sufficient grace for victory (Eph. 5:25). If we preach on great Bible characters, proclaim that Jesus is the perfect man who accomplished the most glorious work. The gospel is our glory (Gal. 6:14). It is the key to our victory over the world, flesh, and Devil (Rom. 6; Col. 2:14, 15). It is the quintessential way of knowing Christ and experiencing His power in our lives (Phil. 3:10–12).

Friends, let's live according to the truth of the gospel (Gal. 2:14) and then preach the gospel! Renew your mind with the gospel by forgiving others and living free from bitterness and anger (Eph. 4:31, 32). Revive your spirit with the gospel and claim the fullness of Jesus' life dwelling in you today (2 Cor. 4:10–14). Remember the gospel by taking your cross daily and making known the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. The prophets predicted it, the apostles proclaimed it, and the angels peer into the truth of Christ's suffering and glory. In our day of amazing chaos let us faithfully make known the story of amazing grace by the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven!

Matthew Recker is the pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in New York City (www.hbcnyc.org) and hosts the weekly *Heritage of Faith* radio program. Matthew is the author of two books on urban ministry: *Behold the City* and *Living on the Edge of Eternity*, published by BJU Press.

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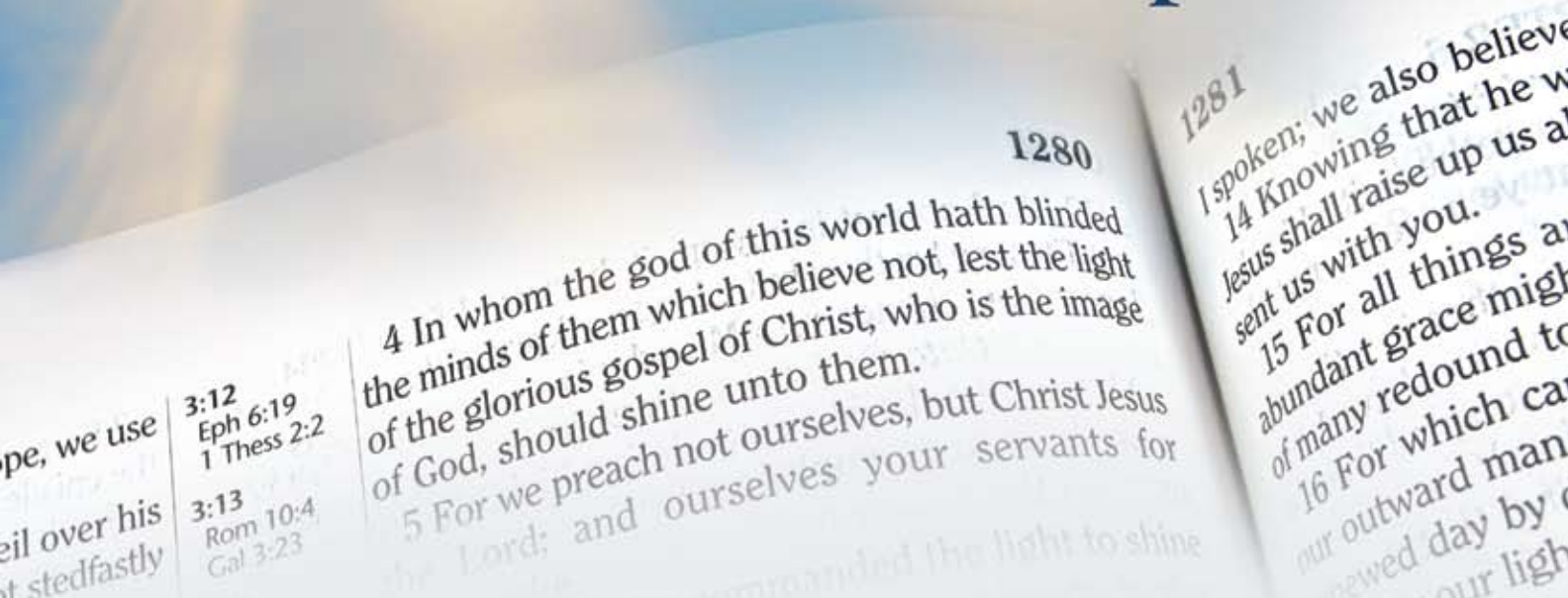
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Preaching the Gospel from New Testament Epistles



It seems, at least to this preacher, that there is an increased and growing interest in expository preaching—the careful handling of the Biblical text so that the original meaning is exposed from the text itself and then applied to a contemporary audience. One aspect of this increased interest is the practice of preaching consecutively through books of the Bible rather than moving from text to text each Sunday. This has the dual benefit of making sure that each text is understood in light of its context and of helping God’s people grow in their ability to study the Bible.

This method, though, does pose some challenges to our thinking about evangelistic or gospel preaching. Traditionally, evangelistic sermons have been viewed as those where the text was chosen precisely because of its evangelistic content and usefulness in presenting the gospel to lost hearers. When preaching through a Biblical book, however, the central point of each sermon must be controlled by the central point of the text, and because the Epistles were written to believers within the local churches, some struggle with their “evangelistic usefulness” (to put it awkwardly).

For men who are committed to expository preaching, especially consecutively through books of the Bible, this is an important subject. The Biblical text must control our sermons, but we also cannot neglect our responsibility as ambassadors for Jesus Christ. The key, then, is to think about how we can remain faithful to the text of Scripture while applying the meaning of that text to the condition of our lost hearers.

What Does Faithful to the Text Mean?

When I speak of expository or expository preaching, I am referring to the nature of the sermon, not simply the structure of the sermon. Although it is common to define an expository sermon along mainly structural lines (e.g., theme, main point, and subpoints all from the same text), I believe it is better to define it in terms of its approach to the text. “Expository preaching, therefore, emerges not merely as a type of sermon—one among many—but as the theological outgrowth of a high view of inspiration. Expository preaching then originates as a philosophy rather than a method. It reflects a preacher’s honest effort to submit his thought to the Bible rather than to subject the Bible to his thought.”¹ The central issue is not the length of text but how the text is handled.

Faithfulness, then, is demonstrated by what we do with our sermon text—have we identified the author’s intended meaning, shown the hearers this from the text itself, and then made appropriate application? All through this process the text of Scripture must be in control. Our message is clearly derived from the Biblical text; the sermon is delivered in a way that takes the hearers into the text by showing them what it says and how that relates to the sermon, and then how it crosses the bridge into their lives.

What Is the Gospel?

We must start with a clear concept of the gospel. A significant problem in our day is to bring Christian assumptions into our preaching even when we are preaching to

those who are not Christians. One example of how we do this is to treat the summary statement of 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4 as the full content of the gospel message. Someone asks, "What is the gospel?" and the answer is given, "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."

We can say clearly that without these facts there is no gospel, but is Paul saying that this is the whole or sum of the gospel message? No. The text itself makes that clear

ONE OF THE MAJOR MISTAKES THAT WE OFTEN MAKE IS TO THINK THAT THE GOSPEL IS JUST FOR LOST PEOPLE. THAT THOUGHT DOESN'T SQUARE WITH THE WAY THE NT EPISTLES WEAVE GOSPEL TRUTH INTO EVERYTHING THEY SAY.

because verses 3 and 4 are actually part of a longer sentence that includes the mention of being seen by Cephas, then the twelve, and then by over five hundred at once. All of that is found in the same sentence that tells the Corinthians what Paul's gospel communicated to them. So, to be accurate, we would have to say that the gospel Paul delivered included the statements of verses 3 and 4 *and* verses 5 and 6 (at least).

Even more to the point, though, is the fact that Paul is writing to those who have already professed faith in Christ, so he is using big ideas without explanation because they held them in common. Think about how much is assumed in this summary: Who is the Christ who died? What are sins? Why would someone die for our sins? What are the Scriptures and why is that significant?

It is, therefore, a significant mistake to conclude from the summaries of the gospel message that our evangelism is simply the repetition of the summaries. Although I don't have space to develop it here, the context of the gospel is man's alienation from the True and Living God who is our Creator (Acts 14:15; 17:23, 30, 31; cf. 1 Thess. 1:9, 10). You cannot understand the gospel without this clear theistic framework. Without this, there is no need for the good news. This means that the message of the gospel is more than simply information to be known. It confronts mankind with its rebellion and demands its repentance.

The center of the gospel is Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:12, 15, 16–18; cf. v. 14). He is the fulfillment of the OT promises (Acts 13:32), which includes the details of His life, death, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3, 4) and culminates in His exaltation, Lordship, and coming Kingdom (Acts 2:36; 2 Cor. 4:5; Acts 8:12; cf. 14:22). The preaching of this gospel includes warnings about coming judgment by Jesus Christ (Rom. 2:16: "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel"; Acts 10:42: "And he commanded us to preach . . . that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead";

17:31) and offers the promise of salvation through Him (Acts 13:38, 39; cf. 1 Thess. 1:10).

How Do Texts Set Forth the Gospel?

Ramesh Richard divides evangelistic texts into three categories: *salvation-concentrated*, *salvation-connected*, and *salvation-compliant*.² While I might choose other terminology, the basic idea is good in that it prompts us to look at a text in light of its content *and* its relationship to those who are unbelievers. Some texts directly state gospel truth with the intent of calling the reader to believe it. Other texts raise gospel-related themes that can be developed in order to proclaim Christ as the only hope of salvation. A third kind of text applies only to believers but provides an opportunity to explain to lost people that these truths apply only if one has a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Many of the texts that directly state gospel truths are found in the first section of the Epistles. The writer, most often Paul, is expressing thanksgiving for God's gracious work or elaborating on the blessings that have come to the saints through Jesus Christ. These truths form the foundation of what will follow in the epistle and should not be passed over quickly in order to get to the "practical" sections of the letter. What could be more practical than the gospel!

Because the commands of the Epistles are grounded in the blessings that God has bestowed on us through Christ (i.e., the gospel), we can and must set those commands within the framework of the gospel. For instance, the command to forgive one another in Ephesians 4:32 throws the door wide open to preach the gospel when it is joined to "even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

The Gospel Is for Everyone!

One of the major mistakes that we often make is to think that the gospel is just for lost people. That thought doesn't square with the way the NT Epistles weave gospel truth into everything they say. The gospel isn't just the foundation; it is the very fabric of the Christian life. That means that we must preach the gospel to the lost *and* to believers. We call one to receive the message of the gospel and the other to live out the truth of the gospel. Dig into the text of Scripture, expose its true and intended meaning, and then draw a straight line between the truth of that text and the souls of those who are listening. "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16).

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¹ Haddon Robinson, *Making a Difference in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), pp. 69–70.

² Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Evangelistic Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), p. 93. Italics original.



Preaching the Gospel from Prophetic Literature

An Approach to Preaching Now about the Future

Introduction

I began my Christian journey during an era of eschatological sensationalism, characterized by books such as *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey and punctuated by Christian “B” movies about the rapture and other future cataclysmic events, allegedly foretold in Revelation. (As it turns out, some were and some weren’t.)

Occasionally an old-school “prophecy preacher” hauled huge fantastically colored and illustrated flip charts into the church auditorium to regale the brethren with a rapid-fire overview of what might begin “even this very hour,” before any of us had a chance to get home and sort out the barrage of data that had been imparted to us from parts of the Bible we all were ashamed we didn’t know better. Remarkably, God in His wisdom, faithfulness, and mercy used those means to reach people with the gospel, strengthen the saints, and spark my interest in prophecy, an interest which has persisted to this day.

In fact, that interest has not just persisted, it has intensified. But my interest lies in something other than the obscure or the fantastic found in Scripture about the future. It lies in a substantial body of truth concerning the future that is intended to powerfully impact my walk with Christ today. That interest has been further magnified by the responsibility I have to pass on a correct understanding of that vast body of truth about the future as a preacher of the Word of God.

Even more specifically, I’ve come to understand that faithful preaching of the gospel always looks forward into the future for God’s continued mercy in salvation, even in the end times. It announces hope for the believer’s complete

deliverance from sin at Christ’s return. It proclaims the joyous prospect of our Savior’s ultimate victory in the world over sin. And it boldly announces the coming of the Chief Justice of the Universe, Jesus Christ, who will righteously judge every man, wrong every right, and forever solve the problem of evil. All of this is the proclamation of incredibly good news through the prophetic literature of Scripture.

A Faithful Stewardship

We all know that *all* Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable, including eschatological passages, leading to the essential equipping of the saints for ministry (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). We know that some passages are “hard to be understood” (2 Pet. 3:16) and may be tragically twisted by the unlearned to their own destruction; and that certainly some of those passages would include the great eschatological texts of the Old and New Testaments. Further, we know that a good steward of the mysteries of God must “be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:1, 2), apportioning to the people of God just the right part of the revelation of God at the right time in the right quantity and manner most fitting for that moment in the life of the church. Could that faithful stewardship possibly exclude or even diminish what by some estimates amounts to 25% (one in every four verses) of the contents of the New Testament? Well, not really.

Every good “household manager” (what the word “steward” means in Greek) must first assess his supplies, i.e., what he has to give to those in the household. So for starters, a good review of your “resources” would be to reread the sections on the doctrine of eschatology in a few conservative systematic theologies. You will find help in

Charles Ryrie's simple work *Basic Theology* (one volume), Lewis Sperry Chafer's *Systematic Theology* (eight volumes), and Norman Geisler's newer four-volume work *Systematic Theology*. All of these take a premillennial, pretribulational approach to end-times events, which best reflects the fruit of thorough exegetical work in the prophetic Scriptures. My recommendation of these works assumes that most of my readers follow a dispensational approach to the interpretation to the Scriptures, which leads inevitably to the premillennial, pretribulational approach to the doctrine of future things.

Beyond these works you can move on to more specialized books that deal with particular future events or treat the books of the New Testament that contain the highest concentration of eschatological passages. Works like Mal Couch's (ed.) *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology* and J. Dwight Pentecost's famed work *Things to Come* are valuable. Alva J. McClain's work *The Greatness of the Kingdom* and Gerald Stanton's book *Kept from the Hour* are also important and useful contributions to this field of Scripture study. H. Wayne House in his helpful work *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament* concisely organizes comparative information about millennial positions and approaches to interpreting the Book of Revelation.

For specific commentaries on Matthew, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 2 Peter, and Revelation, all books of the New Testament which contain substantial eschatological passages, consult Cyril Barber's *The Minister's Library* (two volumes), Stewart Custer's *Tools for Preaching and Teaching the Bible*, and James Rosscup's work *Commentaries for Bible Expositors*. These are annotated bibliographies of wide reputation which list, with descriptive comments, the most valuable commentaries available for each of these books of the Bible.

With a ready mind, steely discipline, careful attention to the text of Scripture, and these resources, the good steward will always come away with more to say than he can possibly preach in dozens of sermons on the end times. Think "series"; this is what it will take to get the job done with any thoroughness when preaching about the end times.

A Careful Strategy

Right Motives.

As preachers, we are always concerned about why people do what they do, aren't we? It is not enough to know what they've done; we want to know the reasons for their behavior. Well, what is good for the people is good for the pastor—why do you want to preach prophecy? It certainly can't be just to present fascinating future phenomena, with you channeling future events like a sort of homiletical crystal ball.

Further, a motive as base as just wanting to show you know a lot about something really obscure is barely worth mentioning . . . but then we all know the human heart, don't we? Triumphant and honestly you say, "I want to preach prophecy so I can be a faithful steward of the Word of God." Excellent, you're a fast learner. We should also hunger to proclaim the good news through prophecy because of the need for salvation *and* sanctification it engenders.

A Cultivation of Spiritual Qualities.

Let's go deeper now to what preaching prophecy will do for your church members. The gospel is a message of God's grace for salvation, for suffering, for service, and for sanctification. In this final achievement of the gospel of grace, sanctification, you will find a great motive for proclaiming prophetic texts. There is an important set of qualities mentioned in Scripture cultivated by preaching prophecy to believers. Preaching the "any moment" return of Christ gives a spiritual urgency about setting a holy example in this brief life, according to 2 Peter 3:11–14. It helps the believer cultivate both an other-worldly focus and a hope for the glorious deliverance of His coming, as stated in Titus 2:13. The sure future justice of the end-times judgment and the reward that awaits faithful believers cause the saint of God to cry out with John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," as stated in the second-to-last verse in the New Testament, Revelation 22:20.

Avoiding mistakes.

Every wise preaching strategy anticipates special temptations and "ditches" that should be avoided along the road of right Biblical interpretation of any type of Biblical literature, especially prophecy.

First, when preaching from end-times prophetic sections, stay focused on Christ and avoid citing specific current leaders, centers of power, political movements, or military weaponry as possible fulfillments of particular prophetic passages. The Bible is virtually never that specific in end-times prophecies. This approach is unwarranted sensationalism that unwholesomely and unnecessarily stirs up the imagination of the saints.

Second, setting dates for the rapture of believers or the coming of Christ at His second advent is clearly an error, as plainly taught in Matthew 24:36.

Third, using the rapture as a terminus point for the possible salvation of your hearers, and thereby urging an immediate decision for Christ, is based on just one interpretation of 2 Thessalonians 2 and is a misstep, in my judgment. You may hold that interpretation, but others can advance strong arguments against it, so be careful. In the end, you may undermine your own credibility as a preacher by using this evangelistic device. It is always good to keep in mind that the Tribulation period will be a time of great salvation according to Revelation 7, where millions are described as washing their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. That horrific time of the wrath of the Lamb will also be a time of His unparalleled mercy in salvation.

Fourth, the 2 Thessalonians 2 passage is example of another important problem to avoid when preaching prophecy. Don't be overbearing about your views of particular passages; this is difficult material, and, in some cases, it is pretty obscure. You don't have to have the final word or always be right on all the details in prophetic passages—just fully persuaded in your own mind about your interpretation and reasonable with others who disagree with you.

Fifth, the figurative language of prophecy calls for special care in assigning accurate meaning. Prefer a literal

meaning, but recognize that what you are looking at could represent someone or something else. Ask yourself if the text makes sense if you take it “literalistically,” giving proper weight to the fact that the end times will be a unique era with many first-time phenomena. On the other hand, do keep in mind that the first-century authors were doing their best in the limited framework of their own experience to describe what they were seeing in their visions, and much of what they were seeing was, uh, shall we say, really hard to describe. If you decide that what you are looking at must be symbolic, look carefully to the immediate context for clues about the meaning and do thorough cross-referencing using a concordance to see if this potential symbol is explained elsewhere in the Bible.

Sixth, don’t omit major events in the chronological scheme of the end times in your preaching. Include (a) the Resurrection and Rapture, (b) the Tribulation, (c) Armageddon, (d) the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, (e) the Judgment of the Nations, (f) the Millennium, (g) the Battle of Gog and Magog, (h) the Great White Throne Judgment, and (i) the New Heaven, the New Earth, and the New Jerusalem, i.e., the Eternal State. There are many other lesser events and personalities to preach about from prophetic passages, but these are the main events. And when you preach these main events, always stay focused on Christ.

A Focus on Christ—Just Like the Book of Revelation

When writing a teacher’s textbook on the Book of Revelation for our high school Bible curriculum published by Bob Jones University Press some years ago, I came to a firsthand discovery that altered my approach to this crowning book of the New Testament canon forever. After reading and rereading the book and scouring the commentaries, a beautiful emphasis and structure began to surface, one that I was *discovering*, not *inventing*.

The Book of Revelation is a fascinating narrative of the end of time as we know it and the beginning of the Eternal State, beginning with chapter 4 and ending in chapter 22. These chapters follow an introduction to the book and a striking vision of Christ (chapter 1) and letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor. These churches are representative of the cumulative qualities of the church in every century since Pentecost (chapters 2–3).

The highly symbolic narrative beginning in chapter 4 is periodically interrupted by striking heavenly visions that move John out of time into an eternal perspective. These visions are followed anew each time by the book’s chronological flow reasserting itself. (House’s book mentioned earlier gives some helpful charts about this literary structure.)

Christ Dominates

What you cannot avoid seeing is that this master work of apocalyptic literature is dominated by Christ. No fewer

than twenty-five separate titles and descriptions of the Son of God are presented in its twenty-two chapters. The book begins with the phrase “The Revelation of Jesus Christ,” which is likely an example of a stylistic device in which the author is being intentionally obscure to communicate two ideas—it is a revelation *about* Jesus Christ and given *by* Jesus Christ.

Christ, the High Priest and Head of the Church

Then, just a few introductory verses are followed by an astounding vision of the risen, glorified Christ who is the High Priest of our Profession and the Head of the Church (see 1:18–20). What then follows are the letters to His churches, of which He is the Head (chapters 2–3).

Christ, the Chief Justice of the Universe

Chapters 4 and 5 take us to the throne room of God, where Christ the great Lion-Lamb takes the seven-sealed scroll of judgment and unleashes the first of three series of seven judgments that cascade upon the earth, each series rising out of the preceding one. And thus begins “the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come” (6:16b, 17). This wrath continues through to Armageddon in Revelation 19. In all this we see Christ the Great Judge, the Chief Justice of the Universe, initiating His final solution to the problem of evil, which has plagued mankind from the beginning of time for millennia.

Christ, the King

Chapters 20 through 22 fold the earlier roles of Christ in the book into His role as absolute Sovereign. He reigns in the Millennium and at the Great White Throne (chapter 20).

I’VE COME TO UNDERSTAND THAT FAITHFUL PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL ALWAYS LOOKS FORWARD INTO THE FUTURE FOR GOD’S CONTINUED MERCY IN SALVATION, EVEN IN THE END TIMES.

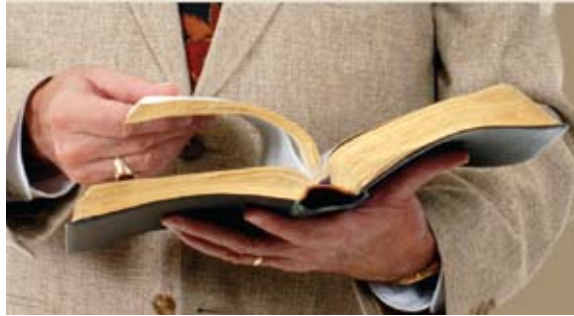
He reigns with the Father in the New Jerusalem, the capital of the New Universe (chapters 21–22). He reigns forever in the hearts of His people.

John wrote poignantly about his encounter with an angelic messenger in Revelation 19:10, after seeing a vision of the triumphant Marriage Supper of the Lamb. He said, “And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

Here is the key that unlocks the door to the beauty of the prophecy we are called to preach—the heart of all prophecy is the witness about our Lord, our Savior, our God. His salvation, His coming, His character, His justice, and His governance—that is what prophecy is about and that is what we are to proclaim. Worthy is the Lamb!

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Preaching Old Testament Narrative Literature



Dave Pennington

A brief survey of the Old Testament reveals that the majority of the Old Testament is written in a narrative style. For preachers, narrative passages (stories) are a blessing and a burden. They are a blessing because they are simple and straightforward. They are a burden because preaching narrative sections of the Bible can be challenging.

Challenges in preaching narrative sections abound. They include grasping a story's theme, the temptation to spiritualize a story's details, limiting one's presentation to retelling the story, and the tendency to focus primarily upon the human qualities of a character within the story. Perhaps the greatest challenge occurs in actually preaching narrative sections in a meaningful, interesting, and Biblical fashion. Simply put, most OT narrative sections do not lend themselves easily to "three points and a poem." A few insights are helpful in studying and presenting narrative passages. (For additional information, see the Suggested Reading section at the end of this article.)

First, study narrative sections as a story. Stories have characters, a plot, various scenes, a point of view, etc. Let's take the story of Naaman in 2 Kings 5:1–19.

Examining this Old Testament passage reveals at least five scenes.

Scene 1: Introduction of Naaman the leper and the servant girl's burden that he might visit Samaria for healing (5:1–3).

Scene 2: The king of Syria sends Naaman to Samaria and the response of the King of Israel (5:4–7).

Scene 3: Elisha's instruction to Naaman and his response (5:8–12).

Scene 4: The plea of his servants and Naaman's healing (5:13–14).

Scene 5: Naaman's return to Elisha, his offering a reward, and his departure to Syria (5:15–19).

Scenes are helpful in preaching the passage. They often form natural "points" in a preacher's message.

Further examination reveals there are eight characters in the story: the narrator, the little maid, the mistress, the King of Syria, the King of Israel, Elisha, Naaman, and Naaman's servants. In narrative literature, the narrator is important. Often God discloses His point of view through the narrator. Also, words spoken by

the various characters reveal helpful insights into the theme or message of a narrative section.

Don't forget to study narrative sections in their context. Often a "story" occurs within a "bigger story." In this passage, the healing of Naaman's leprosy takes place within a series of supernatural events occurring through the ministry of Elisha.

One of the greatest challenges in studying a narrative section is discovering its theme or message. In other words, "What is God saying in 2 Kings 5:1–19? What was His message for Elisha's day?" Even more so, "How does His message apply to our day?"

Narrative passages are not usually chock-full of grammatical or interpretational difficulties, but discerning the theme or message in a narrative passage usually requires much meditation. Initially, the little maid's words provide some rich insights. She prays, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! For he would recover him of his leprosy." She is convinced that the prophet of the God of Israel can heal Naaman's leprosy. Notice the King of Israel's words: "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" (5:7). The King of Israel takes offense that the King of Syria would ask of him what only God can do. Notice Naaman's words in verse 15: "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel." Implied within Naaman's statement is that he receives spiritual healing (salvation) in addition to physical healing. Ultimately, the story of Naaman is not about Naaman but about the power of Elisha's God. Yahweh alone is God. He alone is able to heal physically and spiritually!

Second, preach narrative sections as a story. Narrative literature is usually best presented inductively rather than

deductively. An inductive presentation allows the story to have its “punch.” In the New Testament, Jesus presents parables in such a way that the message often surprises His audience. (For example, how could the Jewish man miss the message Jesus gives through the story of the Good Samaritan?) Some writers suggest preaching narrative sections in “first person.” In other words, preach the story through the eyes of Naaman, the leper who discovers the God of Israel. Some preachers even go as far as dressing like Naaman. Others suggest you tell the story in “third person.” In other words, tell the story through the eyes of the little maiden who prays to God that her master might visit the prophet in Israel and be healed. It is easy to imagine the excitement and enthusiasm she would generate in telling how the God of Israel healed Naaman from leprosy. Certainly, only the one true God can do such a great work!

In addition, the preacher will need to highlight additional information about Naaman’s prominent position and his dreaded disease (5:1). He will want to emphasize Naaman’s pride and initial unwillingness to humble himself to dip in the Jordan River (5:11, 12). He may want to discuss the water quality of the rivers Abana and Pharpar (5:12). Ultimately, he should point out that Naaman receives healing through placing his faith in the prophet’s word (5:13, 14) and that Naaman’s experiences certainly provide some wonderful parallels to people receiving the gospel in our day! As you can see, this simple narrative section reveals God’s great power to do the impossible.

The next time you preach on a narrative passage, take some time to study the passage as a story. Ask the Lord to reveal to you its theme or message. Work hard at a fresh presentation of the passage, utilizing its inductive nature in order that the Word of God may have its full impact upon your audience. Who knows, you might find yourself preaching from those “Old Testament stories” instead of avoiding them!

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Suggested Reading on Preaching of Narrative Literature

Daniel M. Doriani, “A Plan for Applying Narrative” and “Issues in Applying Narrative Texts,” *Putting the Truth to Work* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Company, 2001), pp. 161–212.

Donald L. Hamilton, “Preaching from Old Testament History,” *Homiletical Handbook* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), pp. 128–35.

Paul House, “Written for Our Example: Preaching Old Testament Narratives,” *Preach the Word* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007), pp. 22–37.

Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), pp. 63–82.

Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moises Silva, “The Meaning of Narratives,” *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), pp. 69–86.

David L. Larsen, “How Can We Use Narrative More Effectively?” *The Anatomy of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1989), pp. 144–56.

Steven D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002).

Michael Rydelnik, “Preaching Historical Narrative,” *The Moody Handbook of Preaching* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), pp. 127–42.

Leland Ryken, “Biblical Narrative,” *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), pp. 35–158.

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The Gospel According to the Gospels

The Good News of the Gospels centers on the bloody, sacrificial, vicarious death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross for our sins, evidenced by His burial and bodily resurrection. The necessary implications of these truths include that we are Hell-bound sinners, incapable of atoning for our sins, meriting our justification, or contributing to our salvation, and that apart from a personal *unreserved trust* (repentant faith) in the Theanthropic Christ (God-man) and His Crosswork, each of us will be eternally judged by God. Additional implications of the Christian gospel that cannot be denied are His miraculous virginal conception/birth as well as His absolute equality with the Father and distinctive personality in the Triune Godhead (Phil. 2:5–11).

The way of salvation has been exactly the same at all times and in all places: by grace alone, through repentant faith alone, grounded in the merits of Christ alone. However, the content of faith increased progressively throughout Biblical history beginning with the proto-evangelium (“first gospel,” Gen. 3:15) and concluding with

the all-sufficient revelation of Christ in the sixty-six inscripturated books of the Bible. When Jesus began His ministry, He immediately proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom to national Israel (Matt. 3:2; 4:17). Jesus’ numerous references to the Kingdom of God call attention to the antecedent prophecies in the OT involving the Divine Messiah; they describe a literal, earthly realm involving the land of Palestine and the nation of Israel over which the Messiah would reign (cf. Dan. 2:44; 7:14, 27).

Nowhere does Jesus redefine this Kingdom as something substantially different than that which the OT prophets had repeatedly predicted. Though Israel as a nation rejected the good news about the promised Kingdom via rejection of the King and His message (Matt. 12:22–37, 21:43), the sacrificial death of Christ still remained a necessary precondition for the Messianic Kingdom to be inaugurated. Theoretically, had the Jewish nation not orchestrated the murder of Christ (though a virtual impossibility, cf. Acts 2:23), certainly the Romans would have done it. Nevertheless, the Christian gospel includes the concept that through the

new birth we are *positionally* present citizens of a literal, future, anticipated, coming Kingdom of God on earth in which all regenerated individuals will *experientially* participate with distinct obligations and responsibilities (John 3:5). Therefore, though the gospel of the Kingdom and the Christian gospel are not identical in their content, they are closely related and more importantly are identical in their condition of repentant faith alone through God's grace alone, grounded solely in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ alone.

Due to limited space, we will but briefly trace the gospel of the Kingdom and the Christian gospel through the Gospel of Luke, with a particular emphasis on repentant faith as the required condition for eternal life and forgiveness of sin. Luke begins with John the Baptist preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sin in anticipation of the Messiah's arrival (3:7–9). Religious heritage or Jewish ancestry cannot shield one from the coming wrath. True repentance eventually expresses itself not in religious rites or an ascetic lifestyle but rather in obeying God (3:10–14).

Repentance entails a fundamental change of mind, desire, and intent regarding one's sinful condition, including deliverance from sin's eternal penalty and enslaving power.¹ The results of repentance (*fruits* of repentance) are ultimately divinely produced in concert with the complete participation of the repentant sinner throughout the believer's life as evidence of true saving faith. Repentance and faith as theological counterparts are so closely linked in soteriological contexts that when one is mentioned the other is assumed (Mark 1:15; Acts 11:18; 17:30; Heb. 6:1; 2 Pet. 3:9).²

Jesus begins His ministry in Galilee, and Luke gives an example of Jesus' presentation of the gospel of the Kingdom to the Jewish people in His hometown of Nazareth—and Christ is utterly rejected by them (4:16–30, 44; cf. 1:26–35). After the Sermon on the Mount, Luke brackets expressions of faith around the question of who Jesus is. The centurion's humility, confidence in Jesus' authority, and his trusting dependence represent the essence of saving faith in the person of Christ as contrasted by many in Israel who respond in unbelief and reject their Messiah despite greater revelation (7:1–10). Later, Jesus pronounces a sinful woman forgiven who anoints His feet with perfume and tears. Her faith, manifested by her actions of sorrow and devotion, offers Jesus the opportunity to declare His divine authority to forgive sins in response to her repentant faith (7:36–50). Luke continues to focus on Jesus' identity and the nature of saving faith in the Kingdom parable of the sower and the soils. Only those who respond in saving faith and give evidence of such in their lives have forgiveness of sin and thereby are positional citizens of the future Kingdom (8:4–15). This conclusion is immediately reinforced by Jesus' identity of His true family as those who hear the Word of God and obey it (8:19–21). Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, comprises the apex of Jesus' Galilean ministry (9:18–22). Here Jesus gives the first clear revelation that He must suffer, be killed, and be raised on the third day.

In chapters 10–19 Jesus clarifies His earthly mission as He draws near to Jerusalem. His clarification culminates in Luke 19:10 when He says that the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Again, several clear examples of repentance are presented. Regarding those unfortunate souls who were indiscriminately massacred by Pilate or victimized by the collapsed tower of Siloam, Jesus responds by saying to His hearers that if they do not repent they also will likewise perish (13:1–9). Christ clarifies the thought with the parable of the unfruitful fig tree. God is giving the nation and its inhabitants one more chance to repent and bear evidential fruit, or eternal judgment will fall. In the parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son Heaven rejoices over the one sheep who repents and trusts in the good Shepherd, the angels joy over one sinner who repents, and the father celebrates over the salvation of his lost son (15:7, 10, 18–21). Jesus states that such repentance is always in conjunction with childlike trust and dependence upon the Father (18:15–17). Luke finalizes this section

GOD IS GIVING THE NATION AND ITS INHABITANTS ONE MORE CHANCE TO REPENT AND BEAR EVIDENTIAL FRUIT, OR ETERNAL JUDGMENT WILL FALL.

with the conversion of Zacchaeus, who exemplifies what happens when an outcast Jew comes to Christ. Zacchaeus immediately demonstrates a spirit of generosity and restitution, having experienced God's regenerating grace and divine restitution (19:1–10).

Is it any wonder, then, in the Great Commission recorded by Luke, that Jesus says to His disciples, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (24:46, 47; cf. Acts 17:30, 31)? Ultimately, this becomes the Christian gospel that all believers are to proclaim to the whole world during this Church Age, which is particularly characterized by the unmerited, undeserved, and, more accurately, ill-deserved grace of God. The Gospel writer Luke summarizes his gospel message this way: "Repent . . . and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19; cf. 2 Cor. 7:10).

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¹ *Metamelomai* (lit. "to become a care afterward") means a feeling of concern or regret in the sense that one wishes it could be undone (BDAG, p. 639; cf. Matt. 11:21; 21:31, 32). *Metanoeo* originates from two words, *meta* meaning "after" and *noeo* meaning to "think," with the idea of feeling remorse, turning about, and changing one's mind (BDAG, p. 640; Matt. 3:8; Luke 3:8; cf. Ps. 51:3; Acts 26:20). "It affects the whole man, first and basically the center of

personal life, then logically his conduct. . . . The whole proclamation of Jesus is a proclamation of unconditional turning to God . . . from all that is against God" (Behm and Wurthwein, *TDNT*, 4:1002-3). The OT equivalent terms are *nacham*, indicating a deep feeling of regret and sorrow (Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 87), and *shuv*, which emphasizes a turning of one's whole being—such as in Jeremiah 24:7, "I will give them a heart to know me that I am the LORD and they shall be my people and I will be their God; for they shall return [*shuv*] with their whole heart"; Behm and Wurthwein, *TDNT*, 4:985). Millard Erickson summarizes that repentance is "godly sorrow for one's sin together with a resolution to turn from it" (*Christian Theology*, p. 937).

² Repentance is not penance. Penance consists of works assigned by a priest to help pay for the temporal punishment of sin. As such it is a sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church consisting of confessing sin to a priest, the priest's pronouncement of absolution, and the assignment of certain works of penance to merit mercy and make up for the temporal punishment caused by sin, thus shortening one's stay in purgatory. Penance is not toward God but toward the Romanist Church and becomes the meritorious grounds for pardon (Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 434; Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, p. 254ff).

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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

In order to begin the new year with inspiration for preachers, the short series "What's an Evangelical to Do?" is being interrupted. Lord willing, it will be resumed in the next issue.

Lying here beside me is a small book of aged, browned pages. It opens with a thirty-two page message entitled *A Sermon Preach'd at the Ordination of Mr. Atkinson, in London, Jan. 7, 1713*. Following the sermon is Mr. Atkinson's Confession of Faith. His first name is something of a mystery (but see below). The last twenty-five pages consist of a concluding *Exhortation* addressed to Mr. Atkinson by a Jeremiah Smith.

The title page announces that these three documents (sermon, confession, and exhortation) were "Printed for J. Lawrence at the Angel in the Poultry; R. Robinson at the Golden Lion in St. Paul's Churchyard; N. Cliff and D. Jackson at the Bible and Three Crowns in Cheapside." The book can be obtained at any of these locations for "6d," that is, six pennies, or half a shilling.

The average wage for carpenters in London about that time appears to have been less than 20 pennies for a ten-to-twelve-hour work day. A bushel of barley cost two pennies; a pound of beef, three pennies. So lingering among the cramped aisles of the Angel, the Golden Lion, the Bible, or the Three Crowns on a grey London day in the winter of 1713 may have tempted more than one minister to forgo carrying home a couple of pounds of stringy Smithfield beef for the sake of purchasing this small volume of encouragements about the Christian ministry—especially when he saw that the opening sermon had been preached by none other than the renowned Matthew Henry. By the time Henry preached Mr. Atkinson's ordination sermon, much of his commentary on the Bible had been available for several years.

Henry's full Old Testament commentary became available the year before Atkinson's ordination (1712). The year after he preached Atkinson's ordination sermon, Matthew Henry was called home (1714).

By the way, Matthew Henry personally completed his commentary only through the Book of Acts; Romans through Revelation was completed posthumously by a committee of Henry's fellow ministers and published about 1720. Speaking of which, the young ordainee for whom Matthew Henry preached only a year before his own death appears to have been Benjamin Andrews Atkinson—a Presbyterian pastor in London from 1713 to 1742 and one of the contributors (1, 2 Timothy) to the posthumous completion of Matthew Henry's commentary. Jeremiah Smith, whose *Exhortation* to Atkinson is included in this little volume, also contributed (Titus and Philemon) to the completion of Henry's commentary.

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

Matthew Henry's Own Ordination (1687)

Matthew Henry, son of Nonconformist minister Philip Henry, had himself been ordained in May 1687 "solemnly . . . by imposition of hands, with fasting and prayer."

In ordination I give up myself to God in a peculiar manner, Matthew Henry had observed, previous to the public examination. And will God accept the torn, and the blind, and the lame? he asked himself. Surely no, he concluded. *The sacrifice must be searched before it was offered that it might be sure to fit its end.*

What have I done? Matthew Henry had probed himself in a private paper entitled, "Serious Self Examination before Ordination." *This is a needful question, that searching and examining what hath been amiss, I may repent of it, and make even reckonings in the blood of Christ, that I may not come loaded with old guilt to put on a new character, especially such a character as this. He that comes near to God under guilt of sin unrepented of, comes*

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at his peril, and the nearer the more dangerous.

In keeping with the way in which he had examined himself twenty-five years earlier, Henry directed Mr. Atkinson's attention to the account of Isaiah's commissioning. He began with the ancient prophet's dismay at the discovery of the depth of his own depravity. But quickly it becomes apparent that Henry's intent wasn't to discourage or even to convict. Most of his sermon seems to be designed to lift up and put great heart into the young man who sat before him.

Though nearly four hundred years old now, Matthew Henry's sermon, like its text, is timeless. Reading it recently, I found it such a tonic that I wondered if it might prove to be similarly heartening to someone else. Perhaps there are preachers beginning this new year paralyzed by doubts and fears because of a depressing sense of personal unworthiness. I trust that the portions of the venerable old commentator's sermon included here might give them a fresh sense of commission for 2009.

None are so fit to display to others the riches of Gospel-grace as those who have themselves received comfort from it. . . . How feelingly may they preach repentance and remission of sins to others, who have themselves tasted the bitterness of discovered guilt and the sweetness of a sealed pardon. This is one reason that the ministry of reconciliation is committed to men like ourselves, who labor under the same burdens, and lie open to the same dangers with the rest of mankind.

Matthew Henry Preaches Another's Ordination (1713)

Also I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" Then said I, "Here am I, send me." —Isaiah 6:8

Tis likely this was not Isaiah's first mission, the sermons in the foregoing chapters being placed before it. Isaiah had, if I may so say, prophesied for some time as a candidate, that he might first be tried, and might himself make trial of his work. In that he was owned of God. And yet he had this solemn mission afterwards. He was before sent of God, spake in His name, and knew he did. But his commission was now more expressly recognized, when his work

grew more upon his hands, and the difficulties and oppositions he met with in it did increase.

"Preparatives"

If we look back at the *Preparatives* for this *Solemnity*, which we have an account of in the foregoing verses of this chapter, we shall find the Prophet deeply touched with a humbling sense of his own sinfulness, and a comfortable sense of the pardon of sin and his acceptance with God. I take notice of these for instruction to you, Brother, who are this day dedicating yourself to the service of God in the Gospel of His Son, that you may walk in the same spirit.

1. He was much affected with a sight and sense of his own sinfulness and unworthiness. See how he cries out, upon a sight of God in His glory, and hearing His holiness praised, *Woe is me, for I am undone, I am cut off*. So the word is, I am worthy to be cut off from all my privileges and hopes as an Israelite, for *I am a man of unclean lips*, unfit, unable to be employed in speaking for God. I dwell indeed *in the midst of a people of unclean lips*, that deserve to be reproved, and need to be reformed, but how unfit am I to be made use of as an instrument herein, who am myself a man of unclean lips. I never saw so much of it, nor so much of the evil of it, as now that *mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts*.

God looks upon those as fittest to be honored by Him, and employed for Him, that are humble and low in their own eyes. As Christ, so Christians are first humbled, and then exalted; like a corn of wheat, die first and then revive.

And as to particular services, *before honor is humility*. When we see ourselves utterly unworthy of the honor, and unfit for the service we are called to, then free grace will be the more magnified in passing by our unworthiness and making us strong out of weakness. They who abase themselves under strong convictions of their own sinfulness and vileness, into an entire subjection to God's grace and government, and a cheerful condescension to the meanest services, these are they whom the King of kings delights to honor. They stand fairest for preferment in the Messiah's kingdom, and are likely to be great in it, who humble themselves as little children, who do it naturally, and with sincerity, not artfully and with design.

2. He was likewise impressed with a comfortable assurance of the pardon of his sin, and his reconciliation to God. A coal from the altar was laid upon his mouth, not to burn it, but to purify it, for the sin that truly humbles us shall not ruin us. Blessed is the man, thrice blessed is the minister, whose iniquity is forgiven, and who knows it, by the witness of God's Spirit with his spirit.

None are so fit to display to others the riches of Gospel-grace as those who have themselves received comfort from it. They can best preach Christ crucified who have known experientially the power of His death, and are themselves clothed with that everlasting righteousness. How feelingly may they preach repentance and remission of sins to others, who have themselves tasted the bitterness of discovered guilt and the sweetness of a sealed pardon. This is one reason that the ministry of reconciliation is committed to men like ourselves, who labor under the same burdens, and lie open to the same dangers with the rest of mankind.

“Communion with God”

Now observe in my text the solemn treaty and transaction between God and Isaiah upon this matter. Behold a communion between God and man, as of old God talked with Abraham. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and wonder, O earth, the Lord of life and glory converseth familiarly with poor sinful dying worms of earth, as one friend converseth with another.

This communion with God is that which all Christians must keep up by faith, both in receiving the Word from God and in lifting up their prayers to Him. And it is that which ministers particularly are concerned to acquaint themselves with. An experimental knowledge of the mystery of communion with God, which the greatest part of the world are such utter strangers to, is without doubt a very necessary qualification for that office and work, which was instituted on purpose for the maintaining and carrying on of that communion. How can we expect that God should speak by us if we never heard Him speaking to us, or that we should be accepted as the mouth of others to God if we never spoke to him intelligently and sincerely for ourselves? How can we carry on the treaty of peace between God and man if we have not by searching the scriptures come to know something of the mind of God, nor by searching into our own hearts come to know something of the case of man? Moses was first well acquainted with God Himself, enquired concerning His name, and heard it proclaimed before he was employed as a mediator between God and Israel. And Samuel was first brought to know the Lord and His Word, and then was established a prophet.

And methinks it puts a great honor upon the work of the ministry, that when God was about to send a prophet to speak to His people in His name, He would thus appear in the glories of the upper world, upon a throne high and lifted up, as one that is God over all, blessed forever more,

higher than the highest. Though ministers are themselves men upon a level with you, despicable and despised, the foolish things of the world and the weak, yet He that sends them is enthroned and greatly exalted. Though their origin is mean, their character is truly great, they are the ambassadors of the King of kings.

Let this support and encourage faithful ministers under all the contempts that are put upon them and the reproaches they are loaded with, that how much soever they are trampled upon and run down, He that sent them, Whose messengers they are, and Whose messages they bring, Who doth protect them and will reward them, is the Lord, high and lifted up. Such an honor doth it put upon the gospel ministry, and such encouragements doth it give to gospel ministers, that our Lord Jesus gave these gifts unto men when He ascended on high, when He entered upon the glories of His exaltation and rode in triumph leading captivity captive. Ambassadors have respect paid them according to the dignity, not of their private families, but of the Prince that sends them.

“The Errand”

The errand upon which Isaiah was to go was a very melancholy errand, *Go make the heart of this people fat*. And yet he offered himself to the service. When we are called to act or speak for God, we must not say we would go if we were sure we should have good success and our message would be acceptable. We must go and leave the success to God. *Lord, make what use thou pleasest of me. I will not murmur or dispute, though in the event our ministry should prove contrary to what it is in the intention, to harden people instead of softening them, and to aggravate their condemnation instead of preventing it*. This is a very uncomfortable, discouraging consideration, yet we must go on in it, knowing that in the issue, God will be glorified.

Isaiah had been himself in a very melancholy frame in the 5th verse, *Woe is me, for I am undone*, much indisposed and burdened, yet now he has courage enough to offer himself to the work, which then he could not think of without terror. He had been assured that his sins were pardoned, his iniquity taken away. Then his fears are silenced, the clouds are blown over, and all is well. Many have come to be eminently serviceable to God and His Church in their day who at first were low spirited and labored under great discouragements. When God by His Spirit speaks to the heart good words and comfortable words, those who like Daniel were fallen with their faces to the ground, are wonderfully lifted up and encouraged and are ready to

say, as he did, *Now, let my Lord speak, for thou hast strengthened me.*

"Setting Out"

Isaiah's saying, *Here am I, send me*, speaks three things for direction to those that are setting out in the work of the ministry. His readiness, his resolution, and his referring himself to God.

1. His readiness. He doth not make objections as Moses did. *Send anybody but me. But Isaiah said, Behold me. I present myself to Thee to be employed as Thou pleasest. Here I am, send me.* He was a volunteer in the service, not pressed into it. He was willing in this day of power.

In this as in other things, God loves a cheerful giver, a cheerful offerer. In all acts of obedience to the calls of God and assistance to the work of God, we must be free and forward as those that know we serve a good Master Whose work, not only His for us, but ours for Him, is honorable and glorious. 'Tis its own wages. Let us be brought under the yoke of Christ by the constraining power of His love to us, drawing out our hearts in love to Him again. That's the acceptable sacrifice which is bound to the horns of the altar, with these cords of a man, these bonds of love.

2. His resolution. He gives not only a free consent, but is firm and fixed in it. He does not hesitate or waver, but is ready both to swear to it and to perform it. He will not be beaten off it.

Here am I, not only ready to go, but resolved in the strength of Divine grace to encounter the greatest difficulties and to abide by the service to the end. *Send me*, and I'll stick to it whatever it cost me, and will never draw back. Thus Christians, thus ministers as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, should war the good warfare with courage and constancy.

And good reason have we thus to serve Christ, for with such a steady and unshaken resolution did He undertake to save us when it was asked, *Who will be man's Redeemer? Who will take the book and open the seals?* And there was found none that would venture upon it. Then said Christ, *Lo, I come.* And finding it written of Him in the volume of the book, He determines, He delights to do the will of God, and shall not fail or be discouraged.


We find this prophet long after reflecting with abundant satisfaction upon that steadiness of resolution with which he entered upon his prophetic office, and in it he was both a type of Christ and a pattern to Christians. *The Lord God*, saith he, *hath given me the tongue of the learned*, which he did by touching his lips with a coal from the altar. *He hath opened mine ear. He hath promised to help me, and He is near*

that justifieth me, and therefore I have set my face like a flint. I know that I shall not be ashamed. Those who thus set out with resolution may depend upon God to bear them out.

3. His referring himself to God. His expressing himself thus generally, *Here am I, send me*, intimates this; Lord, employ me as Thou thinkest fit. Cut out what work thou pleasest for me. I'll never prescribe but ever subscribe. *Here am I, ready to go to whom and on what errand Thou wilt, whatever objections may be made against it. Lord, I am at thy service, entirely at Thy disposal. Let the will of God be done by me and done concerning me.*

Thus we should address ourselves to the work of the Lord, with an entire resignation of ourselves to His wisdom and sovereignty. The heart must be white paper to His pen, soft wax to His seal. Let Him write upon me what He pleaseth and make what impressions He pleaseth upon me. We must enter upon the service of God with Joshua's question, *What saith my Lord unto His servant?* And with St. Paul's, *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?* And with the implicit faith and obedience of the child Samuel, *Speak Lord, for thy servant hears. I desire nothing more, but the honor of receiving Thy commands and a heart to comply with them.*

The mind thus entirely referred to God is most easy and quiet to itself, as waiting to know His mind, in dependence upon His promise that *the meek he will guide in judgment and teach His way*. If we impartially search the scriptures, we may thence learn what in general God will have us to say and do for Him. And if we keep our eye upon His providence, we may by that be assisted in the application of the general rules of the world, for in it God guides us with His eye. And thus by committing our way and works to the Lord, with *Here am I, send me*, we may find a leading star in all our counsels and firm footing for all our resolves. Thus we stand in an even place. And certainly we are then most our own possessors when we are least our own masters, and have then the greatest enjoyment of ourselves, when we are most cheerfully and unreservedly devoted to God, with *Here am I, send me*.

If we go for God, then we have no reason to be ashamed of our office but to magnify it. Work for God cannot but be great work and put honor upon them that are called to it. The preachers of a gospel which to all is *the power of God unto salvation* have a great deal of reason to think highly of their work. St. Paul, who went for God to the Gentile world, though for that he was reproached by the Jews, yet magnified his office. The messengers of the churches are the glory of Christ, how scornfully however they are looked upon by the children of men. If we be not a shame to our office, we have no reason to be ashamed of it. 

Bring . . . the Books

The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament
by T. D. Bernard

If you have never read this classic series of lectures, this is a good time to add it to your reading list. If you do not already own this classic volume, this is the time to buy it. Long out of print and available only to dedicated scourers of second-hand bookstores, it now enjoys the attention of at least two publishers. And for good reason. It is currently published by University of Michigan Library (2005) and Kessinger Publishing (2007). I recommend Kessinger's hardcover for its sturdy stock (for highlighting) and wide margins (for notes).

The book comprises the Bampton Lecture series delivered to the students and faculty at Oxford in 1864 by Thomas Dehaney Bernard. Wilbur Smith called the Bampton Lectures "the oldest and most famous lectureship in the field of theology and biblical interpretation in the English world." And one of the most famous of the Bampton Lectures (along with Liddon's classic on the deity of Christ two years later) is Bernard's. The table of contents outlines the structure of each lecture in preview, and that outline is built into each lecture as well. Outlining the chapter as you read (as my NT Theology students have to do) helps you digest the content and not lose your way amid Bernard's nineteenth-century style.

Bernard's treatment is premised on the argument (Lecture 1) that the order of the New Testament corpora—Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelation—is not the product of caprice, accident, or random organization but of providential superintendence. To organize a presentation of NT doctrine along these lines, let alone posit a detectable theological progression within that framework, may strike some as artificial, even naïve. But if we believe that God has providentially guided the translation and preservation of His Word over the centuries, it is hardly unreasonable that He would have an interest and hand in the form in which it has been almost uniformly preserved. Moreover, when viewed in the light of this canonical-corporal framework, the NT displays a remarkable doctrinal progression in terms of both content and teaching method.

Lectures 2 and 3 focus on the Gospels' introduction of the person of Jesus Christ. Within this fourfold variation, Bernard demonstrates a progression not only from the Synoptics to John's Gospel but even from one Gospel to the next. Yet the Gospels raise a raft of issues and questions that they are not designed to answer. Indeed, "the evangelical narrative creates the want [need] and gives the pledge of an evangelical doctrine" to come later in the NT. Even as the teaching of Christ reaches its highest stage of revelation (John 13–17), it "declares its own incompleteness and refers us to another stage of instruction" yet to come (see John 16:12–15).

Because doctrinal aberrations have a way of recycling themselves, Bernard's critique of the "Quest for the Historical Jesus" error of his day is equally applicable to a popular modern trend. Emerging Church thinkers urge us to sideline the doctrinal debates of the Epistles and focus on authentic Christianity in its purest form

as displayed by Jesus Himself in the Gospels. But "the words of our Lord are not honored (as these men seem to think) by being thus isolated [from the rest of the NT]; for it is an isolation which separates them from other words which are also his own, given by him

in that day when he no longer spoke in proverbs, but showed his servants plainly of the Father." Bernard is referring to Jesus' promise (John 16:12–15) that His own teaching would be continued through the apostles. Understanding the Epistles as not merely apostolic reflections and applications of Jesus' teaching but, rather, as Jesus' extension of His own teaching through the apostles is revolutionary for grasping the holistic authenticity of the NT.

Lectures 4 and 5 are devoted to Acts as the next stage of revelation. Acts functions as a crucial bridge, both historically and doctrinally, between the introduction of the facts and teaching of Jesus in the Gospels and the interpretation of those facts and teachings in the Epistles.

Lectures 6 and 7 not only highlight the pedagogical genius of the epistolary literature but also showcase Bernard's ability to slice to the bone and expose the marrow of apostolic doctrine. It would take the entire column to do them any justice, so I will not spoil the pleasure of the discovery for you. I'll say only that these lectures alone are worth the price of the book. Lecture 8 traces the major thematic threads out of which the Apocalypse is woven, as it unfolds the consummation of the Person and work of Christ.

Amid a profusion of sophisticated treatments of the theology of the NT (at least twenty major works on NT theology have surfaced in the last decade alone), some may be tempted to dismiss Bernard's treatment as simplistic. But such a judgment only signifies shortsighted chronological snobbery. Bernard's big-picture grasp of how the NT functions pedagogically is unmatched. His lectures flicker with flashes of brilliant insight. Even the key text selected for each lecture displays remarkable perception. Above all, few modern theological works breathe the rich devotional air that animates Bernard's lectures. Through his knowledge of the Scriptures, Bernard has entered not only into the mind of God but the heart of God.

If you have never read *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament*, it will transform your view of the NT as an organic body of systematic revelation from God to man. If it has been some time since you have read it, this is one of those works that bears rereading at least every five years to reorient you to the whole forest of the NT lest you lose your bearings among the individual trees. ☞

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

Layton Talbert is Professor of Theology and Exposition at Bob Jones University & Seminary and the author of *Not by Chance: Learning to Trust a Sovereign God* and *Beyond Suffering: Discovering the Message of Job*.

Straight Cuts

How Does the Prayer of Faith Heal? (James 5:13–18)

James tells us that the prayer of faith guarantees healing for a believer who is sick (5:13–18). What does he mean? There are at least three interpretations.

First, the passage could mean that God guarantees to heal any Christian who is physically ill. If the believer who is sick follows the procedures outlined in 5:14 and the elders have enough faith, then God will grant physical healing (5:15). This interpretation is held by some in the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement but is not likely because God does not always wish to heal physical illness (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7ff). Furthermore, the prayer of faith is offered by the elders and not the one who is sick. So if the person is not healed, then the elders are at fault.

Second, it could mean that God guarantees to strengthen any Christian who is spiritually weak (the Greek word *astheneo* can be translated either “sick” or “weak”). If the believer who is struggling spiritually follows the procedures outlined in 5:14 and the elders have enough faith, then God will grant spiritual power. Every phrase of this passage can be explained using this interpretation. However, the idea of physical sickness rather than spiritual weakness seems to fit the overall context better.

Therefore, the third interpretation is probably the best. James is saying that God guarantees to heal anyone whose sickness is a divinely inflicted punishment for sin, provided that he repents. If the sinning believer will humble himself by calling the elders of the church (5:14) and allowing them to pray for him, then God will heal the illness, thus raising him up (5:15a). Someone might object that the Greek word *sozo*, meaning “to save,” would not describe physical healing but spiritual healing. However, *sozo* describes physical healing in the NT many times (e.g., Matt. 9:21, 22; Mark 3:4; 5:23, 28, 34; 6:56; 10:52; Luke 8:48–50; 17:19; 18:42; John 11:12). Why does James say, “If he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him”? He realizes that many if not most illnesses are not the result of divine punishment. But if a believer has been living in sin and then gets deathly ill, he should realize that this might be God’s way of punishing him (cf. 1 Cor. 11:27–30; Heb. 12:3–11). If he will finally humble himself and seek forgiveness, God will not only raise him up physically, He will most assuredly forgive his sins.

Verse 16a makes better sense when the entire passage is read with the third interpretation in mind. If God sometimes punishes sin with physical illness, then all the believers of a local church should seek forgiveness from those they have wronged, and they should pray diligently for each other.


Possibly the most conclusive reason to follow the third interpretation is the illustration that James chooses.

Though some do not understand why James chose to illustrate this text with Elijah’s prayers to stop and then restart the rain (Moo suggests that James could have used other illustrations from Elijah’s life that would have fit better; see *The Letter of James*, PNTC, 248), the reason is as follows.

Deuteronomy 28 is a message to Israel. They will be blessed for obedience (28:1–14) but cursed for disobedience (28:15–68). A warning of prolonged drought is in the midst of the curses (28:23, 24). In Elijah’s day Israel was moving further away from God. King Ahab’s predecessors worshiped both Yahweh and idols. That was bad enough, but Ahab went a step further. He supplanted the worship of Yahweh with idols (1 Kings 16:33). Elijah knew the Pentateuch and believed it was time for God to punish sin with the drought. So he prayed Scripture back to God, and the Lord answered.

What is so amazing about the prayer is the timing of the drought. Elijah first confronted Ahab at the end of the dry season. Israel’s farmers were expecting the early rains at that time. Shortly after Ahab laughed Elijah out of the throne room, the king was trying to find and kill the prophet hoping that his “hex” on the sky would die with him. Ahab did not take Elijah seriously when there was no rain at the end of the dry season. But when there was no rain a few weeks later things were different. About three years later Elijah confronted Ahab again and challenged him to a duel. After a few months, having sent letters to Israel’s VIPs inviting them to Mount Carmel on a specific future date, they gathered for the final battle between Yahweh and Baal.

What is so amazing about the answer is the timing of the rain. Three-and-a-half years prior it did not rain when it was supposed to. The farmers missed the early rains that germinated the seed, the heavy winter rains, and the latter rains that nourished the crops shortly before harvest. Three-and-a-half years later, and four full growing seasons ruined, it rained when it was not supposed to. It rained cats and dogs and a few elephants at the beginning of the six-month dry season. God answers prayer!

This was truly an amazing answer to prayer and one of the reasons that James chose it. But more importantly for the present argument, James chose this illustration because of the parallel it afforded. In Elijah’s day, confession and forgiveness removed the reason for punishment and brought divine restoration. (The drought was so severe that Ahab could not even find grass to feed the chariot horses that were essential for national defense.) In James’s day, as well as ours, confession and forgiveness will remove the reason for punishment and bring divine healing. 

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

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A new year presents a menagerie of new scenarios for many people. New diet and fitness plans are implemented, new goals are set, and new resolutions for personal changes are made—these are some of the many ways that people plan for renewal in their lives. The Bible talks about *new* things 150 times in over 131 verses. An examination of these occurrences enables one to see the true value, or lack thereof, for those things that are deemed new.

"New" That Is Priceless

The Bible proclaims the importance of *new* with regard to one's spiritual standing. First, it is imperative that each person have a *new birth* in Christ (John 3:3). Nicodemus could not understand how this could possibly happen, but Jesus explained that the birth was from above, supernatural. By comparing eternal life to human birth, Jesus was impressing upon Nicodemus the definite nature of salvation. You would think it strange if you asked someone when he was born and he responded by saying he was born the whole month of January. It would be equally odd if he were to say that "I have always been alive. There was never a time that I was born." Jesus is letting us know that salvation is a specific change to the inner man; we are made new.

As a result of the new birth, a *new life* begins. This new life is referred to in John 3:15 as "eternal life." A new life is not made up and acted out. Instead, a transformation takes place inside an individual, and he is completely changed. A young mother does not look at a list of activities that are normal for infants to see whether what she has qualifies to be a baby. She knows that she is holding a new life because of the child's activities. If there were no sign of physical life, there would be grave concern for the well-being of the child.

Upon arriving home from work one day, a father was given an excellent opportunity to explain to his son the difference between real life and artificial substitutes. The father came home to find apples tied to their silver maple tree in the front yard. "Wow," exclaimed the father as the son ran to meet him in the driveway, "look at those beautiful apples on that tree." Embracing his father the son said, "Daddy, I know you love apples, so I made an apple tree for you." Of course, tying apples to a tree does not make it an apple tree; in the same manner, outward conformity or added activity to a life does not make one a Christian.

Having a new life means the individual is now a *new creature* in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Once a person accepts Christ as his Savior, the changes from within the heart begin to manifest themselves in outward attitudes and actions. Ephesians 4:24 calls this the act of putting on the "new man." Areas of the life that were once motivated by selfishness are now motivated by pleasing the One who gave this new life. These changes

involve, among other things, our music; when Christ enters the heart, a person is given a "new song" (Ps. 40:3). Such changes will also include our attitudes and our lifestyle choices (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

When Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you" (John 13:34), He was implying that *new instruction* would be given to those in Him. In John 10:27 Jesus states, "My sheep hear my voice, and I

know them, and they follow me." A person with new life is attentive to what Christ, the Good Shepherd, is instructing. The Epistles give the completion of the instruction needed for living a life as one of Christ's sheep. If a person has no desire to follow the voice of the Shepherd, then that person very likely does not belong in the sheepfold and does not possess this new life.

Those who have the new life in Christ are gathered by God into one *new body* called the church. Ephesians 2:15 calls this gathering a *new man*. Distinction is not made between Jew or Gentile, male or female, rich or poor. The body should be focused on Jesus Christ and His purpose for unity. The body or church is following the "new testament" (Matt. 26:28) that we have been given by our Savior. The local gathering together of believers is commanded by our Savior to demonstrate the sacrificial love of Christ (Heb. 10:25).

What is the future for these new people in Christ? God's Word instructs us that Christ Himself is preparing a dwelling place for them (John 14:2). In this abode, each will have a "new name" (Rev. 2:17) or a new means of identity. On earth we are identified by our physical features, but in Heaven there will be a new means to identify each believer. We will live and move about in "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1). Here God declares that He will "make all things new" (Rev. 21:5).

Because of the redeeming work that Christ has done for all of mankind, every believer should demonstrate to others the new life in Christ. Being an example of the believer will involve choices that represent the new creature that we are in our Savior. We should consider making some personal resolutions to help us remember that all things are new in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Jonathan Edwards (1703–58) set some good examples for us to follow in resolutions he set for himself. Here are some:

- Resolved, That I will do whatsoever I think to be most to the glory of God, and my own good, profit, and pleasure, in the whole of my duration; without any consideration of the time, whether now, or never so many myriads of ages hence.

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

Charles Spurgeon

- Resolved, To do whatever I think to be my duty, and most for the good and advantage of mankind in general.
- Resolved, Never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can.
- Resolved, To live with all my might, while I do live.
- Resolved, Never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.
- Resolved, Never to do anything out of revenge.
- Resolved, Never to speak evil of anyone, so that it shall tend to his dishonor, more or less, upon no account except for some real good.
- Resolved, To study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly, and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive, myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.
- Resolved, Never to give over, nor in the least to slacken, my fight with my corruptions, however unsuccessful I may be.
- Resolved, After afflictions, to inquire, what I am the better for them; what good I have got by them, and what I might have got by them.
- Resolved, Always to do that which I shall wish I had done when I see others do it.
- Resolved, To let there be something of benevolence in all that I speak.

"New" That Is Worthless

The Bible also clearly proclaims the potential spiritual harms with regard to some types of new. For example, any new doctrine should be avoided (Gal. 1:9). God has revealed the truth to man through His written Word. If a person chooses to live according to the world's standards, he is literally going against God. No matter how tempting a seemingly harmless worldly practice might be, it always results in disaster. A simple lesson in home cooking can illustrate this truth.

Beatrice did not have baking soda that the recipe called for, and a trip to the store seemed to be too much trouble. So she substituted cornstarch in its place. As a result, the cookies she made were the oddest she had ever baked; needless to say, her guests at the meal that night did not ask for seconds. In the same way, believers are never to substitute any details of the gospel for a more appealing or less confrontational message. Such substitutes will not produce the new life one receives at salvation. The end result will be devastating—and the soul will spend eternity apart from Christ.

In addition, new methods that are contrary to God's clear delineations are always wrong. King David

tried a new method—that of imitating the Philistine way of transporting the ark of the covenant (2 Sam. 6). David's method was direct disobedience. As a result, one of the individuals helping with the ark died. God is never pleased when we attempt to do His work using the methods or ways of the world.


In Christianity today, some feel it is their responsibility to create some new way to worship God. They construe new methods and programs that often violate the foundational response of man humbly seeking God above anything else. Such was the case with Nadab and Abihu in the Old Testament; they used a new fire source (Lev. 10) that was not according to that dictated by God to Aaron. God judged these two men with death. In his day Jeremiah cried out against the same mindset of false worship (Jer. 6:16).

Christianity is not a sparsely written musical composition in which random notes are placed on a page in hopes that a blended work will be the result. God's salvation is a masterfully created symphony where each note is perfectly placed in the composition. Any attempts at rearranging the notes in this musical piece destroy the masterpiece. The New Testament instruction for Christian living is solely prescribed by God; when followed, the resulting melody is a perfect harmony for believers of any time period.

Some in Christianity today ignore what the Bible exalts as new that is honorable, and they pursue after the new that is considered dishonorable. Some actually downplay the new birth and the new life in Christ. Such weak teachers fail to even mention that one born into the family of God is a new creature and should walk in newness of life.

Having forsaken the old paths, such false teachers emphasize new teaching, such as prosperity theology or that of joining the world to win the world. Such individuals are using new methods to propagate that which undermines the clear teachings of Scripture. Bible believers should have nothing to do with these new ideas or approaches.

Some do not like the Master's idea of gathering together for collective worship. Ryan did not like following instructions for setting up his computer desk. It just was not "macho." After hours of unsuccessful labor, producing an assembly of parts that did not resemble the desk in the picture on the front of the box, Ryan decided that instructions were necessary after all. In the same manner, we need to realize that the instruction from God in the Bible is always best; any teaching that contradicts God's commands will never work.

Christians must be careful to examine the value of "new" in their personal lives and in their service for the Lord. Just because something is new does not make it wrong. Scripturally sound new methods can further the cause of Christ. We must be careful, however, to keep God's Word as our guide and not seek ways that will undermine His clear instruction. Let's make sure that we emphasize the "new" that is of priceless worth and that we always avoid the "new" that is worthless. 

“My Son, Hear the Instruction of Thy Father”

The Long War

On July 10, 2007, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James T. Conway, gave a speech at the Marines' Memorial Association and World Affairs Council in San Francisco, California. In General Conway's opening remarks, he made the following statement: “Many in our country routinely characterize what is taking place in the Gulf as the ‘War with Iraq.’ I would ask you to think of it differently. I believe we are seeing the first real battles against the field forces of terrorism, both in Afghanistan and Iraq, in what will be a generational struggle. Instead of the ‘War with Iraq,’ it is more correctly said, the ‘Battle in Iraq’ or the ‘Battle in Afghanistan.’” General Conway went on to title this struggle with terrorism as “the first battles of the Long War.”

A title such as “The Long War” certainly has an ominous connotation. Perhaps it even evokes a reality that many of us who joined the military post-September 11, 2001, never imagined. Many of us joined with patriotic fervor, determined as our forefathers of yesteryear were, that we “won’t come back till it’s over, over there.” Now, seven years and thousands of lives later, there are many who are questioning the resolve of our nation as a whole and of our military specifically. Will we have the stamina to fight and conclude this “Long War” no matter how much time is necessary? Can we go the distance to eradicate Islamic fascists and their diabolic deeds? We can as long as we continue to send young men and women who understand the cause—men and women who will commit themselves not for sake of education or adventure but because they love their nation and are willing, if necessary, to bleed for their liberties.

In my estimation there is one specific demographic group that stands out among all groups who are supplying their boys and girls to this war on terrorism. This group would be the right-wing conservative Evangelicals. On any given Sunday you can visit these churches where you will find prayer bulletins publishing the names of those deployed. Messages are preached and music is played that celebrate love of both God and country.

Conservative churches seem to be sending their sons and daughters into the military at an impressive rate. Without question, their patriotism and devotion should

be commended.

However, the reality is that most Christians who enlist in the military face an alarming culture shock. They intended to serve both God and country, but all too soon they are serving only country. In short, the military lifestyle has revealed that it is no friend to the Christian, and many Christians turn their back on their heritage and upbringing. Often Fundamental pastors are embarrassed by the fact that their sons no longer maintain a Christlike lifestyle. The children of godly church members bring a reproach upon their parents because they turn from the sound teaching of their youth. This “Long War” is affecting the next generation of Christians in a greater way than we might be willing to acknowledge.

So, what is to be done? Do we discourage our teenagers from serving their country? I would *not* advocate that as a solution. But if we continue the trend of promoting the military to our youth, we would do well to do a better job of preparing them for the lifestyle they are about to encounter. We must warn them of the wickedness that is prevalent in a culture that trains hard, fights hard, and most certainly plays hard.

The Yellow Footprints

Someone once said that the “yellow footprints” are among the most vivid memories that a Marine has of boot camp. The “yellow footprints” consist of four rows of fifteen sets of yellow footprints painted with heels together at a forty-five-degree angle. These footprints are located just outside the Receiving Barracks Company, and they are the first thing a Recruit sees when he or she steps off the bus at the Recruit Depot. The Marines use these footprints as a training tool to introduce the recruits to the position



of attention. These standardized templates are literally the first exercise in the Recruit's thirteen-week indoctrination process that is Marine Corps recruit training. Soon the footprints are removed and a Marine is able to stand at attention as if it is part of his nature.

It is imperative that we give due diligence to providing a spiritual set of yellow footprints to the Christian youth who are joining the military in droves. We must be able to give "to the young man knowledge and discretion" (Prov. 1:4). If a young person can receive this spiritual template he will be enabled to maintain his Christian testimony when he is embedded in a society that is not congruent with his Christian heritage. Parents, pastors, youth leaders, and schoolteachers must play a proactive role in preparing a young person for the military culture. The following five principles from Proverbs 1 should be discussed with every man or woman before he or she physically stands on his or her respective military branch's "yellow footprints."

1. "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck" (Prov. 1:8, 9). The Christian young person who comes from a good home, conservative church, or Christian school has enjoyed a bit of shelter from the magnitude of the world's filth. That person can use this protection as a benefit or as a catalyst for rebellion. As already stated, the military is a world to itself. From the moment a recruit arrives at boot camp, the sheltered life he or she enjoyed is ripped away. The glaring vices that are prevalent in the military confront him in a glaring and often stinging fashion. However, instead of resisting the trappings of a heathen society, many young Christians leave their homes and churches and dive headlong into the vices that the military encourages. They view their newfound freedom as an opportunity to "sow their wild oats." To many the military is a welcome distraction from their home, church, or school and the "legalistic" rules those institutions promulgated; and, once separated, they speed with reckless abandon down a destructive path. The young men and women must be asked: Will you abandon the foundations of your youth; or, rather, will you protect the Christian character and innocence you were privileged to develop? The Christian service member would be wise to allow the rules he received as a child to develop his principles as a young man or woman. Of course, every young adult is free to tailor these principles to adequately suit his maturity and growth, but it is unwise to altogether forsake "the instruction of thy father" and the "law of thy mother."

2. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. . . . My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood" (Prov. 1:10, 15, 16). Profanity, sex, pornography, alcohol, and tobacco are trademarks of the military culture. Each service member must choose whether to adopt this culture as his own or to shun those things which would ruin a Christian's testimony. First Thessalonians 5:22 is imperative: "Abstain from all appearance of evil." Every person who enlists stands before a commissioned officer and makes the following statement:

I, [state your name], do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God. (Title 10, US Code; Act of 5 May 1960 replacing the wording first adopted in 1789, with amendment effective 5 October 1962.)

This oath is a binding contract between the service member and his or her government. By bearing "true faith and allegiance" to the US Constitution, a person is agreeing to abstain from even the appearance of treason, insubordination, or conspiracy. How different is it for a Christian who has already sworn allegiance to Christ to make a similar stand for righteous living?

However, too often, young Christian men and women leave home and, when confronted with the vices of this world, begin to walk in step with the very things that compromise holy living. In the military community alcohol and tobacco use are social staples; profanity is part of communication bravado; premarital sex is a celebrated ritual; and pornography, though professionally condemned, is privately condoned. Are Christian youth ready for this culture? Or, like so many before them, will they leave home never glancing back at the wholesome upbringing of their youth? To their shame, many Christian young men and women in the military forget that even the world considers drinking, smoking, and swearing as taboo behavior for Christians. But when Christians do not see these vices with the same perspective, the result is Christians who sacrifice their testimony for the purpose of being accepted by the world. Christians must commit early to staying pure in a filthy world and not being enticed by sinners. They must be prepared to "Flee . . . youthful lusts: but follow righteousness" (2 Tim. 2:22).

3. "If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit. . . . They lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives" (Prov. 1:11, 12, 18). If one is perceived to be emotionally or physically weak, that weakness will be exploited. Therefore, the Christian individual who is entering the military must determine what strength means. Furthermore, his spiritual condition plays a defining role in the "strength" of an individual.

Too often it seems that the Christians are the ones who cannot survive the rigors of military life. It does not take long for Christians to become engulfed in the chaos of the wicked culture around them, and quickly thereafter many lose their Christian identity altogether. Others simply cannot cope emotionally or physically with the demanding lifestyle distinctive to military life. Many Christian service members have quit, seeking administrative discharge from the military, because they feel they cannot "adapt." Upon their return home, they are lauded as heroes and as those who chose "rather to suffer affliction . . . than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25). The reality is that

he was weak spiritually, emotionally, and physically. That is, he could not handle military life and instead used a false piety to excuse himself from a daunting challenge.

It is bothersome that those who claim that the joy of the Lord is their strength are the ones who are first to the Chaplain's office, the medical officer, or their command leadership, begging to be separated because they cannot, for one more second, tolerate the grueling life that is the military. Worse yet are those who are dishonorably discharged because they failed to maintain a standard of conduct that could be exemplary to their unregenerate contemporaries. Christians should endeavor to lead in their physical fitness training, weapons qualifications, and professional military education. Christian service members should be the ones who say, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). But the reality is that too many young Christians reject their role of being salt and light and instead enter the military only to fall victim to those who are lying "in wait for blood." Many Christians show themselves to be ready and vulnerable targets because they have failed to "wait upon the LORD" who can "renew their strength" (Isa. 40:31). We desperately need Christian service members who are strong enough to repel those who "lurk privily for the innocent."

4. "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof" (Prov. 1:23–25). In the multitude of counselors there is wisdom. Even before a military member leaves home, he or she should be creating a network of accountability. Christian family members, church members, youth pastors, and teachers are ready and willing to be accountability partners to their military brothers and sisters in Christ. Christians must be bold in their stand for Christ and let those back home keep them accountable in their Christian walk. It must not be forgotten that the service member represents those back home as well as Christ and yourself to the military.

The first priority of any military member upon arriving at a new duty station should be to find a Bible-believing, conservative church. Even before leaving, the service member should talk to his pastor about finding a church. The opportunity to attend church and thus escape from the perils of the world that he is forced to tolerate each day is a priceless commodity. In addition, outside the gates of most every major military installation are quality Christian servicemen centers. Especially to a single military member, these servicemen's centers are an invaluable resource of ministry. By staying active in local church ministry, one can maintain the connection between a godly upbringing and the newfound responsibility away from home. As Christians serve their country, they must not forget that their primary calling is to serve God. Too many Christians have "set at nought" the counsel they received as a child, and the consequences of refusing the wholesome words of their Christian heritage are steep. If a Christian service member will build a network of influence before he enlists, when he is in need of encouragement and godly counsel

he will not be found wanting. Being both a Christian *and* a service member is the true measure of strength.

5. "For . . . they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD. . . . But whoso hearkeneth unto me [wisdom] shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil" (Prov. 1:29, 33). It must never be forgotten that one's parents and church family are not proud because one wears a uniform but because one is a separated Christian. Media mogul Ted Turner once said that "Christianity is a religion for losers." In fact, the majority of the world would agree that Christianity is for the weak, some even calling it a crutch for the feeble-minded. However, the reality is that it takes a strong, principled man or woman of conviction to stand for what is right in a world that balks and even despises those of faith. No, Christianity is not for the weak; it is for the strong. Anyone can go with the crowd, do what they do, say the things they say. But it takes a man among boys to be a Christian in the military. Christian service members must be willing and ready to stand up and be counted with the righteous.

The Bible promises a blessing to those who "choose the fear of the Lord." Furthermore, a Christian service member should anticipate little to no Christian support from fellow service members. Many will testify with Paul, "All men forsook me. . . . Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me" (2 Tim. 4:16, 17). Too often Christian service members utilize the military as an avenue to escape the Christian faith. Many rebel outright against the principles in which they were raised. Though some turn their back permanently, others separate only for a time and find themselves eventually wandering back to the faith. Those who do return often do so after they have done great detriment to their testimony and the cause of Christ. They bring with them many hard lessons—their lives scarred by consequences of being where a Christian never should have been. It is true that Christian service members must wear the uniform with distinction. But just as important is remembering that when in civilian clothes on liberty or leave they must also demonstrate a continued godly walk, a Christian testimony, and a Spirit-filled character. Consider what John said in 3 John 4: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." Serving one's country is good and will certainly make many parents proud. But to serve God, to walk in truth, is of greater nobility!

The End State

These five principles are fundamental for all teenagers to understand before they raise their right hand to defend the freedoms we all know and love. Pastors, youth pastors, Sunday school teachers, Christian school teachers, and parents are encouraged to discuss these with their children. Then, maybe, we might turn the tide of service members who are turning their backs on their Christian heritage. We must enable them to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering" (Heb. 10:23).

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On Being Happy in the Lord

For no apparent reason, I have an inner happy feeling today. And in keeping with that feeling, I soon found myself singing, "I am happy in the service of the King. I am happy, oh so happy." The bright sunshine may have something to do with it. A good (not great, by any means) lunch satisfied. Time spent in the Bible has been unusually blessed. I goofed getting out *Cogitations*, but God may have a purpose to get a certain message to someone through my goof. Inward I'm on tiptoes.

Yesterday was a down day. Again, no particular reason for it. It was dark and drizzling most of the day. Muscles of my upper legs hurt more than usual. An e-mail asked for encouragement for a friend suffering from clinical depression, and I had no ready answers. Things got done, and most of the day went as usual, but today it is all in the past. My mind is bright. My outlook is bright. My inner spirit is joyous. Life is like that.

My mind toyed with a contrast: Heaven is not just a dream. It is a real place, a real destination. What makes it so great is that Jesus and His Father live there. God is in Heaven, without any question, but God is here too. He is omnipresent. He is as much here and everywhere throughout His creation as He is in Heaven. My joy is not just that I expect to spend eternity in His presence instead of eternal damnation; it is also that I am already privileged to enjoy each day in His presence and walk with Him. It's not a wait-till-then relationship; it's an enjoy-it-now relationship.

Because my sins are forgiven and I'm right with God, every day I'm "excellent." In more ways than I can enumerate, I'm richly blessed. Daily spiritual joys abound. The Bible and Bible study are more precious than ever. Good friends abound. Good health is another of the riches of His grace. In church, I know of only one man older than I am, and many ladies older than I am are in nursing homes. Several who are younger must use walkers. I am privileged to be able to meet and greet the saints.

The only real irritation in my life recently has been a computer crash, leaving me without an address list and requiring my adjusting to another computer. My mind does not grasp computer logic. The vocabulary is all new, and the procedures too often nonsensical. I do not expect to have to work on a computer in Heaven. Through recent weeks, I have appreciated considerable help from others to be able to prepare and share some encouraging thoughts in these retirement years. Occasionally I hear from former students that my comments remind them of sitting in seminary class.

Life is good. I'm not sure how it could be better. I assume it will get worse. I am not sure my attitude each

day will be what it ought to be, but I am sure that God will be no different no matter what comes. If you don't know Him and the joy of a daily walk with Him, you don't know what you're missing. Try it; you'll like it.

On Entertainment in the Church

It seems to this old-timer that newscasts are more and more getting to be primarily entertainment. Dramatic or unusual shots often accompany a story. Reports of natural disasters may be extended for days, with a variety of interviews to arouse sympathy or concern. Items that are morally shocking are kept prominent. Eliminate the commercials and the "entertainment" aspects, and there are actually but a few minutes' worth of news in each so-called newscast.

What is more disturbing is that this trend to entertain more than to inform seems to have found its way into churches. In conversations, you hear people inquiring, "Did you like this or that? Did you enjoy the speaker? Did you have a good time at church today?" We need to remind ourselves that church is not about us; it's about God. Was He worshiped? Might He have been pleased with what was done? Was His Name honored in all that took place? Did you come away thrilled over the time you spent in His presence?

We need to recognize also that the Bible is not so much about what devoted people did for God in the past as it is about what God so graciously did for His people in the past and is doing yet today. The Bible records the sins of sinners, but it exalts the grace and goodness of One who created a perfect world and sinless mankind—who then had to put up with rebellion, animosity, and rejection generation after generation. We need to read the Bible the way we look into a mirror, not to exalt in our good looks (mostly imaginary) but to note blemishes that might be eliminated or even a mote in the eye.

Perhaps more of us need to recognize that the Bible is not a general newscast to suit a great variety of hearers but a personal love note directed to each individual alive. God is not saying in His Word so much "I love all humans" as He is, "I love you as a single lamb under my personal care. I know everything about you. I know and can meet your needs. I desire that you walk in joyful comfort in My presence. You are precious in My sight. I have much in store for you as you walk with Me."

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Why Isn't My Husband Perfect? (Or at Least Better than Average?)

Lyn Sehested

Many years ago there lived a woman who, you could truly say, had it all. She lived in the most beautiful home in her area. Her husband was the most handsome man in the world, and his job allowed him to spend a great deal of time with her. His income allowed her to have whatever she wanted—the best foods, every comfort imaginable, the most beautiful decorations for her home, and whatever her heart desired. He literally denied her nothing, and she loved him completely. Because she loved him so much she was never too tired or too busy to help him or to meet his needs. Their life together was ideal. That is . . . until one day when a neighbor struck up a conversation with her and casually pointed out that, perhaps she didn't really "have it all." It took only a moment for her to fall, but that moment changed her life completely. Not only did it change her life, but it changed every life that came after her. Eve lived in Paradise, but even Paradise didn't satisfy her.

Early in my Christian life I often had the attitude, "Thanks a lot, Eve. You really messed things up for the rest of us. Now we have to fix things." My husband and I would attend marriage seminars (because all the other young married couples did), and we'd listen to sermons about husband-wife relationships. As a dutiful young wife, I carefully took notes. I'm ashamed to say that the only things I generally took away from those seminars and sermon series were a sore elbow (from jabbing my husband) and a long list of things that my husband needed to work on to improve his husbanding abilities. I was trying to be submissive, so I knew not to overtly try to change him. Instead, I made it a matter of prayer for God to change him into the husband I thought he should be. I was careful to tell God exactly how my husband needed to change and how God needed to bring about those changes.

To help me pray more effectively and work more diligently at changing my husband, I decided to do a personal Bible study on the Virtuous Woman of Proverbs 31. Surely this godly woman of history could offer me some advice to help my husband, and perhaps even show me some areas in my life where I needed to make some small improvements. I wanted to be thorough, so I studied verse by verse, and even word by word.

My, what a hardworking, industrious woman she was! I learned that she got up early and stayed up late to provide for the needs of her family. She used her money wisely to stretch the food budget and even to

provide extras for her family. She made all of her own clothes and all the clothes for her family, and she even sold some of the things that she had made to add to the family income. She kept a garden and sold some of the produce to benefit her family. She even was able to provide for those less fortunate than she. How thoughtful of God to give us women this detailed passage to teach us how to be the kind of wife and mother He wants us to be. I began to wonder where the companion passage was that told husbands all the things they should do for their wives.

I searched diligently for quite a while, but, as you already know, there is no "Proverbs 32 for the Perfect Husband," so I finally gave up looking. In fact, I threw away all those "improve my husband" notes I had taken at the marriage seminars and the prayer lists of things I wanted God to change in my husband. As I got to the second part of verse 30 in Proverbs 31, I realized that my focus had been wrong all along. "A woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised."

The woman of Proverbs 31 did not focus on the things she wanted to change in her husband. We can be sure that her life was not easy, but there's not even a hint of discontentment or complaining because of all the hard work she had to do. Was she perfect? No. Was her husband perfect? Probably not. The passage says, though, that she did her husband good and not evil. She didn't focus on what he wasn't—she focused on what he was—and praised God for him. Neither did she focus on her needs. The only mention of anything that she did specifically for herself is found in verse 22 where we find that she made tapestry for herself, probably to decorate her home for her family's enjoyment as well as for her own. Her home and children are mentioned, but these were not her focus either. Her focus was on the Lord. She knew God—personally. He was real to her, and the most important thing to her was to please Him. Everything that she did, she did to bring honor and glory to God. She feared the Lord.

Yes, God could and would change my husband, but first He needed to change me. I had to acknowledge the fact that, if my husband were as perfect as I wanted him to be, he would never have married someone like me! Furthermore, I had to realize that my purpose in life, the thing I needed to focus on, was not to change my husband. My purpose in life was, and still is, to allow God to change me through His Word so that I will be the

Continued on page 32

We never reach the innermost room in any man's soul by the expediences of the showman or the buffoon.
—John Henry Jowett

Good preaching will at one and the same time win followers and provoke enmity.
—John Wesley

If Wales could have been saved by eloquent sermons, salvation would have been general and complete long ago. In Wales the road to Hell has been paved with "the eloquent sermon." Wales has produced a race of actor preachers whose pulpit eloquence merely pleases the ear and has no permanent effect on the conscience of man.
—Phillips of Bloomsbury

God has not ordained that preaching should be tame and spiritless.
—Iain Murray

I preached as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men.
—Richard Baxter

An hot iron, though blunt, will pierce sooner than a cold one, though sharper.
—John Flavel

Not every day the preacher's soul is fired, but when the spark is there, foundations quake and mountains move.
—Bob Jones Jr.

True preaching is the sweating of blood.
—Joseph Parker

Actors speak of things imaginary as if they were real, while preachers too often speak of things real as if they were imaginary.
—Thomas Betterton, actor

Would ministers preach for eternity . . . they would endeavor to move the affections and warm the heart, and not constrain their hearers to suspect that they dealt in the false commerce of unfelt truth.
—George Whitefield

Put your elbows on the pulpit. . . . Put your face in your hands. . . . Now let the tears flow. That was the way Mr. McCheyne used to do it!
—The sexton, St. Peter's Church, Dundee, Scotland

Modern preachers are trying to bring men into the church without requiring them to relinquish their pride; they are trying to help men avoid the conviction of sin. . . . Such is modern preaching. . . . It is entirely futile.
—J. Gresham Machen

Tearless hearts can never be the heralds of Christ's Passion.
—John Henry Jowett

When preaching becomes effortless and heartless exposition, it is no longer great gospel preaching.
—R. L. Hymers Jr.

The work of preaching is the highest and the greatest and the most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called.
—D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

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

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Fall 2008 Regional Conference Reports

September 13: Mid-Atlantic

An FBFI Lay Leadership Conference was held in the Midwest Region at Calvary Baptist Church in Findlay, Ohio, on September 13. The featured speakers were Dr. Chuck Phelps and Dr. John C. Vaughn. Representatives from sixteen churches in the region gathered for this Saturday conference. Pastors, evangelists, and lay leaders from these churches conducted workshops on practical ministry skills in the areas of evangelism, discipleship, music, adult Sunday school, missions, and children's ministry. The conference also included practical instruction for deacons, ushers, and teens.

—Pastor Gordon Dickson

October 20–21: New Mexico

The New Mexico FBFI Regional Meeting was held on October 20 and 21 at Northwest Baptist Church in Albuquerque. We were blessed to have Dr. Rick Cross from Faith Baptist Church of Longmont, Colorado, and Dr. Kevin Schaal from Northwest Valley Baptist of Glendale, Arizona, as guest speakers. They encouraged and refreshed all those attending with the preaching of God's Word. We had a great time of fellowship and encouragement about what God is doing in each church. We had ten churches from New Mexico in attendance, along with International Baptist College from Arizona; two of the churches attending were new to FBFI. It truly was a good meeting.

—Pastor Scott Snyder

October 20–21: South Central Regional Meeting

Pastor Thomas Hamilton and the members of Stony Point Baptist church in Kansas City, Kansas, hosted the south Central Regional FBFI Meeting on October 20–21, 2008. Although it was only shortly after his son Daniel's unexpected death, Dr. Vaughn spoke passionately, intensely, and insightfully to the South Central Regional FBFI Conference. Adopting the recurring theme from the national meeting, "Press Toward the Mark," we were reminded of our eternal perspective. The keynote speaker, Dr. Hantz Bernard, President of Bibles International, faithfully and tenderly handled

the Word of God. Having translated the New Testament from the original Greek into his native Haitian Creole, he approaches the precious Word with the expertise of one whose life has been deeply impacted by it. The majestic piano skills of G. Richard Deal provided a high caliber of music seldom experienced in our small Midwest churches. Hailing from all over Kansas, Oklahoma, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, and even from Illinois and Michigan, the attendees shared warm fellowship, good food, and rewarding preaching.

—Pastor Thomas Hamilton



October 27–31: Caribbean

The FBFI Caribbean Regional Conference was hosted by Calvary Baptist Tabernacle (Carolina, Puerto Rico) on October 27–31, 2008. The theme of the conference was "Strengthening the Home for the Storms to Come." The day sessions were attended by about 150 people, but the evening sessions had nearly 300—and the final session exceeded that number. The attendees included 75 preachers from 28 different countries. Dr. John Vaughn was the keynote speaker, and he along with Dr. Rod Bell, Dr. Brian Green, Pastor Mark Bouslog, Pastor Jim Moats, Dr. Don Strange, Pastor Rafael Rodriguez, and Pastor Newman Johnson preached twenty-two God-centered, challenging, and practical sermons during the conference. The next Caribbean Conference is scheduled for October 26–30, 2009.

—Pastor Johnny Daniels

The Blessings of Being a Witness for Christ

The Lord stands ready to show His power through His Word! Sometimes His Word has a long fuse that does not explode immediately when it is lit; but the Lord's timing is always perfect. Isaiah 55:11 states, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Let me share with you the wonderful and blessed results of someone who was given a gospel tract in Fairmont, West Virginia.

I recently held meetings at Fellowship Baptist Church in Fairmont and sat down with Mr. Patrick Smith, who related to me his salvation testimony and the events that followed. Patrick told me that his mother died of cancer in 1994 at the age of forty-eight, and this was a very difficult time for him. At the time he was a sophomore at Fairmont State College, which made it even harder for him. He was an avid football fan, and on Saturdays he would watch college football games all day and wouldn't let anything interfere with the game he was watching. One Saturday afternoon, Patrick heard a knock on his door. He said he usually would never answer the door; however, there was a commercial on so he opened the door. Two teenage girls from Fellowship Baptist Church were passing out gospel tracts and offered one to Patrick. He took it, thanked them, and returned to his den. He placed the tract on top of his television and proceeded to watch the rest of the game.

Two weeks later, Patrick came home completely discouraged and hopeless. He walked into the den and saw the tract on top of the television. He picked it up and noticed the time of services at the church. It was Sunday evening, and he saw that the service started at 7:30, so he decided to go. But he waited until it was past 7:30 to enter the auditorium because he didn't want anyone to see or acknowledge him, and he sat down on the very back row. Pastor Ron Blackburn got up to preach and said he was glad to see a young man walk into the auditorium to join the service. Patrick said everyone turned around to see him—the very thing he had tried

to avoid. Then when Pastor Blackburn began to preach, Patrick thought someone had told the pastor his life story! He fell under deep conviction of his sin and his need of a Savior; when the invitation was given, Patrick was the first one down the aisle. He received Christ as his Savior and began faithfully attending church.

One day he saw the teenage girl who had given him the tract. He walked up to her and asked whether she remembered giving him the tract. She said she did and was very glad to see that he had gotten saved. The girl's name is Erin Ash; her father, Mark, was saved under our ministry in June of 1981 and is now a deacon in the church. One Sunday evening Mrs. Ash invited some college students to their house for refreshments after the service and invited Patrick to join them. He went that night and got better acquainted with the Ash family. In fact, he got so acquainted that he ended up marrying Erin! They are serving the Lord today and have a handsome little boy. I was thrilled to hear Patrick's testimony!

So often when people hand out gospel tracts they have no idea what the Lord is doing in the hearts of individuals. Not too long ago, my tract "The Most Important Thing in Life Is . . ." was returned to me with a letter. A young man said he read the tract and asked the Lord to save him. He said he had been involved in a homosexual lifestyle and was searching for the truth.

We must remember the words of Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." I trust that many who read this article will see the marvelous results of being a witness for Christ. I challenge you to start handing out gospel tracts; who knows what the Lord might do in the lives of those who read them? Only eternity will reveal the results of those who have been faithful in confronting the lost with the gospel.

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

PSALM 33—A PSALM TO SETTLE THE

The themes for psalms supplied by the editors of our Bibles are not, of course, inspired. Here's a sampling of the subject headings for Psalm 33: *A Psalm of Joy* (NSRB); *Praise to the Creator and Preserver* (ASV); *Praise God Who Creates and Saves* (NCV); *The Sovereignty of the Lord in Creation in History* (NKJV); *The Steadfast Love of the Lord* (ESV). All of these pick up on some detail of the text. Some are more distinctive than others. Some capture more aptly and accurately than others the theme and thrust of the text's core message. This column is an inductive study of Psalm 33 to see if we can (a) derive the theme internally by observing the psalm's details and progression and (b) express the theme in a way that is both comprehensive (covering all those details) and distinctive (distinguishing it from all other psalms).

Based on the psalmist's transitions reflected in his shifting key words, the psalm divides naturally into seven sections: five stanzas bookended by an introductory call (1–3) and a model response (20–22). Note the key terms in each stanza that tip you off to the topic of each stanza, as well as the progression from one stanza to the next.

A Call to the Righteous to Praise Jehovah (1–3)

Exhortations to jubilation and celebration leap off the page. These verses may sound redundant, but the psalmist actually draws six different words from the glossary of gratitude. More literally, the terms run like this: *rejoice . . . praise . . . lift up the hands in exultation . . . make melody . . . sing . . . play music*.

The first verse identifies those to whom this call to praise is addressed: the *righteous*, the *upright*. These are not the self-righteous, the sanctimonious, the smug moralists. Jesus taught that such people are not "righteous" at all (see Luke 18:9–14). Nor are the *righteous* and *upright* those who are inherently good by nature; the psalmist elsewhere insists (Ps. 14:1–3), and Paul affirms (Rom. 3:10–18), that there are no such people. How, then, do such genuinely *righteous* and *upright* people exist? The previous psalm answers that question. In Psalm 32:1, 2, multiple blessings are attributed not to those who are sinless but to those whose sins and sinfulness are *forgiven*, *covered*, and *not charged to their account*. When a sinner confesses his sin and sinfulness to God, trusting only in Him and His provision, the Lord graciously forgives and extends mercy (Ps. 32:5, 10). The wicked in 32:10 are not the excessively sinful; remember, the psalm was penned by a man who committed adultery and murder. The wicked are merely those who refuse to repent. But those who repent and trust

in the Lord are the *righteous* and the *upright* to whom this call comes (see Ps. 32:11).

Who is the center of all this celebration? To whom is all this praise to be directed? Not just any nondescript "God" or vague "Greater Power." There is one God; He has a name, and it is not Allah or Krishna, but *Yahweh* (v. 1) . . . *Yahweh* (v. 2) . . . *him* (v. 2) . . . *him* (v. 3). What is the cause for all this exultation and celebration? That is what the rest of the psalm unfolds.

For His Character (4, 5)

Look at all the words that point your attention to what He is like. In verse 4, His *uprightness* is displayed in all that He says ("the word of the LORD") and his *faithfulness* is exhibited in all that He does ("all his works"). What is He like? Verse 5 tells us that *He loves righteousness and justice*. Just look around; the earth is *full* of the *goodness* of the Lord. Even the shroud of human sin and the suffering that results cannot erase the created majesty of this earth, the beauty, resilience, and nearly infinite variety of its ecosystems, the fruitfulness and self-perpetuation built into creation. These are praiseworthy characteristics for which to magnify the Lord.

For His Word (6–9)

This section talks about God's creative acts, but the psalmist emphasizes that at the root of those creative acts is His powerful and authoritative *word*. Yes, "the heavens were made" but how? *By the word of the LORD* and all the universes of stars and planets *by the breath of his mouth* (v. 6). He is a God of incomparable power, yet it is not merely a power of strength but a power of authority. He does not need to flex His arm to create such breathtaking works (like in verse 7); He merely has to speak.

What should be man's response to such a sovereign God? Universal *fear* and *awe* (v. 8)! Why? Because He merely spoke *and it was done*; He simply *commanded*, and *it stood fast* (v. 9). You can see how the psalmist is directing our attention to the creative power and sovereign authority of His words, and the only appropriate response to Him and to His words—a fear and awe that takes His words seriously and submits to Him.

For His Sovereignty over the Nations (10–12)

The psalmist now shifts our focus from the world of nature to the world of humanity. You can hear it in the words *heathen* [*nations*] and *people* in verse 10, and again in *nation* and *people* in verse 12. Nations are powerful and

SAINT FOR A NEW YEAR

threatening and arrayed against God and God's people. Their governments seem to have all financial and military resources at their disposal to enforce their will. They lay their plans and they seem invincible. Yet God brings their *counsel* [plans] to nothing and renders utterly inoperable and ineffective all their *devices*—that is, their *plots* or *thoughts* or *strategies* (the Hebrew word almost sounds like *machinations*).

In contrast to the plans of the nations, the *counsel* of the Lord stands forever; and unlike the thoughts of mere men, the *thoughts* of *his heart* are what comes to pass (v. 11)! That's why the nation that is on Yahweh's side and the people that He has chosen to be His are so fortunate (v. 12). This assurance, aimed specifically at Israel, is equally applicable to anyone—nation or individual—of whom the same can be said.

For His Providence over Individuals (13–15)

Notice how the focus has become progressively narrower and more personal, from creation (6–9) to nations (10–12) to individuals (13–15). The psalmist is still addressing our concerns with humanity, but he turns our attention to the personal level. No longer is he talking about nations and peoples—mankind conceived collectively—but about *all the sons of men* (v. 13) and *all the inhabitants of the earth* (v. 14) and *their hearts* and *all their works* (v. 15). The *all* assures us that not a single one slips under His radar. The action words here are all words of *providence*—the Lord *looks*, *sees*, *observes*, *fashions*, *considers*. Space does not permit an investigation of the intriguing language of verse 15. Translations vary widely, but the word *fashioneth* means to *form*, *frame*, or *shape* and the word *alike* literally means *all together* or *at the same time* or *simultaneously*. That is, God governs peoples' hearts coordinately, simultaneously—like a conductor orchestrating a symphony made up of lots of different people playing lots of different instruments, who are nevertheless freely choosing to play what they are playing at that time.

God providentially molds the hearts of all people *simultaneously*—their thoughts and decisions, choices and actions—in order to accomplish His sovereign purposes. And yet all the time they are making their own free decisions and freely choosing their own actions. “As the wheels of a watch, though of different shapes, sizes, and motions, are yet all put together to serve one and the same purpose, so the hearts of men and their dispositions, however varying from each other and seeming to contradict one another, are yet all overruled to serve the divine purpose” (Matthew Henry).

For His Preservation (16–19)

Listen to the repetition in this section and you can see immediately where the psalmist has turned his (and our) attention: *saved . . . delivered . . . safety . . . deliver . . . deliver . . . keep them alive*. Where lies our safety and security? In massive military might? It did not do Ahab or Sennacherib any good. In personal power and health? That's what both Samson and Goliath thought. What could give more confidence to a warrior than the strength and speed of a well-trained steed? It didn't help Ahaziah (cf. Prov. 21:31). Even the most powerful and insulated people are vulnerable. The psalmist is accentuating *the ineffectiveness of human strategies for safety* (vv. 16, 17). People naturally search for ways to insure their safety and security, but they usually look in all the wrong places and ignore the most obvious. Rather, safety and preservation are God's providential prerogative, and He gives His attention to those who fear Him and trust in His loyalty (vv. 18, 19).

The house alarms may be set, our seatbelts buckled, the emergency savings fund in the bank, our diet healthy—but “safeness” and security are not in alarms or air bags or savings accounts or healthy diets, any more than they are in armies and muscles and horses. We must trust Yahweh alone for the safety, security, and deliverance not only of our eternal souls, but also of our daily health and welfare. How easily we subtly shift our trust from the Lord alone to what we can see and do.

Personalizing God's Providence (20–22)

Look at the pronouns and you will see that they have all changed from *they*, *them*, and *their* to *we*, *us*, and *our*. The psalmist models for us how to translate all this third-person theory into personal practice. In the face of any danger, perplexity, trouble, or distress, our security lies in affirming our patient confidence in the Lord (v. 20). As we learn to trust in Him, we will be able to *rejoice* as the psalm exhorts us to (v. 21). As we anchor our confidence in Him, His loyalty will hover over us (v. 22; *mercy* and *hope* are echoes from v. 18). The psalmist ends by making all this truth very personal.

Theme

The message of this psalm is unmistakable: *praise and trust God alone for His sovereign providence over anything and everything that could possibly affect you—creation, the nations of the earth, the individuals around us, and*

Continued on next page.

Ladies' Circle Continued

servant and wife that God would have me to be. I needed to learn to fear the Lord and to focus on Him.

My husband and I have been married almost thirty years now. I can honestly say that he is not the same man I married all those years ago. Praise the Lord! As I look back, I can see that God has indeed changed my husband, but God changed him His way to please Himself and to bring glory to Himself. I'm thankful that God did not change my husband to conform him to my selfish desires and to please me. God's way is always best—sometimes painful if we don't yield—but it is always best.

I think I've changed too in the past thirty years. Praise the Lord! Oh, I'm still learning what it means to "fear the Lord," and I hope I never stop learning. My husband isn't perfect (but neither am I—far from it actually!), but he's the perfect one for me because God chose him specifically for me. I'm thankful that God didn't let me mess him up with all my selfish prayers and note-taking. God is gracious. God is patient. God knows best. His ways are perfect.

Lyn Sehested and her husband, Dan, serve the Lord with Baptist World Mission in Beius, Romania.

At a Glance Continued

even the dangers you encounter. Nothing has a more profound impact on practical daily living than your perception of God's relationship to the circumstances that arise in your life. Nothing governs your spirit when reading the newspaper like knowing that God is in complete control of the nations and the people in them. And nothing is more reassuring to the child of God than a Biblical view of God's providence and all that it reveals about His character and His active presence in the life of all who trust in Him. That is a message we will need to take to heart and put to use in the coming year.

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Praise Parties

For Christians who are struggling to “find wholesome Christian gathering,” Club Destiny seeks to meet the need. Club Destiny is self-described “Christian nightclub.” Actually, this form of depravity is nothing new to the watered-down “Christian scene.” For over ten years such Christian entertainment centers have dotted the landscape of major cities. They are really no more than an expanded version of the coffeehouses offered in many of today’s seeker churches.

The rationalization for such places is an outgrowth of the contemporary music philosophy, and opponents of such entertainment are set aside as “stubborn church-going saints.” Keith Goodman, pastor of a north Philadelphia Seventh Day Adventist congregation, states it more clearly: “The Christian Booksellers Association says nearly \$3 billion a year is spent on faith-based items—and [such nightclubs] seek to capitalize on it.”

This article can be referenced at http://www.philly.com/dailynews/features/20081208_Praise_parties_Christian_nightclubs_hanging_on_in_Phillly.html.

Scripture Perversion

New Mexican film writer/producer/director Max Mitchell claims to be producing a perversion of the Scriptures under

the title *The Princess Diana Bible*. The entire premise is to rewrite Scripture to condone sexual perversion. Mitchell defended the so-called “bible” when he stated, “There are 116 versions of the Bible. I don’t see why we can’t have one.”

This article can be referenced at <http://www.princessdianabible.com>.

Legalized Assisted Suicide

A Montana district court has ruled that patients who are deemed both competent and terminal have the right to commit suicide. This makes Montana the third state in the US, with Washington and Oregon, to legalize assisted suicide.

The initial case was filed by Robert Baxter, a seventy-five-year-old man suffering from lymphocytic leukemia. He was aided in his case by four physicians and the assisted-suicide advocacy group Compassion & Choices (formerly known as the Hemlock Society).

Baxter is quoted as saying, “I’ve just watched people suffer so badly when they died, and it goes on every day. You can just see it in their eyes: ‘Why am I having to go through this terrible part of my life, when we do it for animals? We put them out of their misery.’”

In her opinion Judge Dorothy McCarter wrote, “The Montana constitutional rights of individual privacy and human dignity, taken

together, encompass the right of a competent terminally [ill] patient to die with dignity.”

This article can be referenced at <http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2008/dec/08120808.html>.

NAE Leadership and Gay Unions

While it is not accurate so say each of the members of the National Association of Evangelical embraces gay unions, the statement of Richard Cizik, their chief lobbyist and vice president for governmental affairs, ought to cause believers genuine concern.

In an interview with National Public Radio in early December, Cizik defended his support of President-Elect Obama in the primary by stating that character and party values were more important to him than issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage. Cizik went on to suggest that Christians redirect their focus away from the debate about gay marriage. “Maybe we need to reevaluate and look at it a little differently,” he stated in the interview. “I am always looking for ways to reframe issues. Give the Biblical point of view from a different slant.” Regarding civil unions he stated; “I’m shifting, I’ll admit. . . . I believe in civil unions.”

This article can be referenced at <http://worldnetdaily.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&pageId=82709>.

President Bush—Faith and Evolution

In an interview for ABC’s *Nightline* program dated December 8, President Bush spoke candidly regarding his faith and his views on evolution. Regarding evolution, he stated that he believed that God created the earth, but “I think the creation of the world is so mysterious it requires something as large as an Almighty, and I don’t think it’s incompatible with the scientific proof that there is evolution.” Later he added, “I happen to believe that evolution doesn’t fully explain the mystery of life.”

Regarding the interpretation of Scripture he stated, “I’m not a literalist, but I think you can learn a lot from it, but I do think that the New Testament for example is . . . has got. . . . You know, the important lesson is ‘God sent a son.’ It is hard for me to justify or prove the mystery of the Almighty in my life. All I can just tell you is that I got back into religion and I quit drinking shortly thereafter and I asked for help. . . . I was a one-step program guy.”

The President’s God, however, is the same “god” who receives the prayers from people of other religions. “I do believe there is an almighty that is broad and big enough and loving enough that can encompass a lot of people.”

This article can be referenced at <http://www.rockymountainnews>

.com/news/2008/dec/08/bush-talks-belief-god-and-evolution/.

Proposition 8's Legal Challenge

California voters voted in favor of Proposition 8, which initiated a constitutional ban on same-sex marriages. Three lawsuits to counter the amendment were already prepared prior to the tally of the vote. In November of 2008 the state had already sanctioned 18,000 such "unions."

After the passage of Proposition 8, demonstrations occurred at the state capitol and outside Evangelical and Mormon meeting places.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger opposed Proposition 8, calling it a "total waste of time." Hopeful that the state supreme court will undo the measure, he encouraged supporters to "never give up" and to "be on it and on it until they get it done."

Opponents of the measure claim it does not function as an amendment but rather as a revision. Revisions require legislative approval prior to a popular vote. It is uncertain how the supreme court will rule. Both sides seem optimistic.

David Cruz, a law professor at the University of Southern California, believes that the proposition allows the majority to take away "a fundamental right from a minority group entitled to the greatest judicial protection."

This article can be referenced at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/10/AR2008111002874.html>.

NOTABLE QUOTES

Divine truth as revealed in Scripture seems often to lie between two extremes. If we regard the doctrine of sinless perfection as a heresy, we regard contentment with sinful imperfection as a greater heresy. And we gravely fear that many Christian make the apostle's words, "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," the unconscious justification for a low standard of Christian living. It were almost better for one to overstate the possibilities of sanctification in his eager grasp after holiness, than to understate them in his complacent satisfaction with a traditional unholiness. Certainly it is not an edifying spectacle to see a Christian worldling throwing stones at a Christian perfectionist. —A. J. Gordon

Note that Paul does not say, reckon sin dead to you. God's way to victory over sin is not through the suppression of sinful desires, nor through the eradication of the old nature, nor yet through the cleansing of inbred sin. God's way of victory is through crucifixion—deliverance is only through death. —L. E. Maxwell

The heresy of all heresies is a worldly spirit. Whence is all the degeneracy of the present Christian church? I should place it all in a worldly spirit. —William Law

Whether thoughtlessly, hypocritically, or sincerely, it is always safe and easy to follow the crowd. The crowd can tolerate insincerity, but not independence, particularly that which is motivated by religious conviction based upon biblical truth. The world tends to be intolerant of anybody that defies society's norms and refuse to go along because of adherence to biblical principles. —Michael P. V. Barrett

"It is bitter," say you, "when we bring you the honey of the gospel." It is not the honey that is bitter; it is your mouth; it is your mouth that is out of order. How often people ought to recollect this when they hear a true gospel sermon! George Herbert says, "Judge not the preacher; he is thy judge." And very often when the man has condemned the sermon he had far better condemn himself. He has not agreed with it! No; if he had, it would not have been true. —C. H. Spurgeon

Religious Expression in Public Parks

Pleasant Grove, Utah, is a small city situated about thirty miles south of Salt Lake City. Across from city hall is a small public park that possesses a red granite monument that had been donated to the park by the Fraternal Order of Eagles in 1971. The monument features the Ten Commandments. All was fine until the president of the Summum Church wrote the mayor seeking permission to erect a similar monument that would feature the sect's seven aphorisms.

Summum is taken from a Latin term that means "the sum of all creation." It is a mixture of Egyptian faiths and Gnostic Christianity. Its adherents believe that Moses received two tablets. The one broken when he came down from the mount contained the seven aphorisms. The Ten Commandments survived his descent. The aphorisms were reclaimed in 1975 through a series of telepathic encounters with what Corky Ra (the group's founder) calls Summa Individuals.

The Summum case is based upon the fact that government cannot establish one religion over another. The city and others joining the suit claim that equal time would be ludicrous. A federal appeals court has already sided with the Summum Church. Now arguments have been heard before the US Supreme Court. As we go to publication, their decision is still pending.

This article can be referenced at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/11/washington/11sect.html?_r=1.

Compiled by Robert Conduct, FBFI 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

The Next Generation of Fundamental Baptist Missionaries

God has given my church the opportunity to be involved in training and interacting with the next generation of Fundamental Baptist Missionaries in a unique way. Through the educational ministry of Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary (www.dbts.edu), the missions networking and conferences of Student Global Impact, and the equipping ministry of Missions Mandate (www.missionsmandate.org), we have interacted with hundreds of students, Christian servants, and potential missionaries about their questions, concerns, and comments about missions. We are concerned that the next generation of Fundamental Baptist missionaries receive well-thought, Biblical answers to their questions.

As we face a new year of ministry for the sake of the gospel, I would like to share with you pastors, missionaries, and leaders in churches who read *FrontLine* the top four questions that the next generation of Fundamental Baptist missionaries are concerned about. Why these four? In talking to Tim Aynes, the director of Missions Mandate, we have seen these questions mentioned more than others in the conversations, comments, and e-mails we have had. What answers would you give to these questions?

1. *What is the future of Fundamentalism?* This is a question that is larger in scope than just missions, but it affects men looking to plant churches overseas. How should they carry the label "Fundamentalist" as they travel around to churches raising support? Does it communicate the ideas that they stand behind? Are there Fundamentalists they should avoid? Must they avoid all who have not historically been in our circles, yet hold to Biblical separatism?

2. *What opportunities are there for gaining access to restrictive countries?* What are Fundamental churches and mission boards doing or planning to do to penetrate traditionally "closed" coun-

tries with the gospel? Are our churches willing to undertake the risk involved in sending families to difficult and even hostile areas?

3. *What is a Biblical definition of "missions"?* Are international social ministries and other non-church-planting ministries viewed by many Fundamental churches as "missions"? What about medical missions or "business-as-mission"? Should missions money be given for pastoral training on the field? Many observe that missions money is often given to organizations in the US that, were those organizations overseas, many churches would not financially support. Is this consistent?

4. *What model of deputation should one follow as a missionary, and what model of support should our churches have?* Many are concerned that they will run into problems because many churches still support a lot of missionaries for a small amount of money. As well, with many areas facing economic recession, how should missionaries and pastors respond to these challenges? Is it reasonable for pastors to reevaluate the effectiveness of missionaries who are presently supported when we have new missionaries needing support?

At my church and in our ministries we take time to discuss and comment on many of these issues through our website, weblog, conferences, and seminars. However, we strongly believe that every missionary must be sent, advised, and directed by his local church and pastor(s), and so he should find the answers to his questions in his home church first of all. May God grant you wisdom as you seek to provide Biblical guidance to the next generation of Fundamental Baptist missionaries!

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.

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Chaplain News

Bob Ellis

James refers to Elijah as "a man subject to like passions as we are" (James 5:17). We do not have to be known as great prayer warriors for God to hear and answer our prayers. The important thing is that we spend time in *earnest prayer*.

Below is a list of all chaplains endorsed by the FBFI Commission on Chaplains. All are in critical places of ministry and need the prayers of God's people. One Army chaplain, Brian Palmer, is in Iraq now; others will be deployed during 2009. Their request, if they could speak to you, would be, "Brethren, pray for us."

Active Duty Chaplains

Army

Chaplain (COL) Joe Willis
Chaplain (MAJ) Scott Bullock
Chaplain (MAJ) Gary Fisher
Chaplain (MAJ) Michael Shellman
Chaplain (CAPT) Doug Nab
Chaplain (CAPT) Brian Palmer
Chaplain (CAPT) Bret Perkuchin
Chaplain (CAPT) Roger Rodriguez
Chaplain (2LT) Michael Barnette

Navy

Chaplain (LT) Robert Johnson
Chaplain (LT) Tavis Long
Chaplain (LT) Robert Spivey

Guard Chaplains

Air National Guard

Chaplain (LT COL) Michael Sproul
Chaplain (CAPT) Thad Todd

Army National Guard

Chaplain (CAPT) Chris Melvin
Chaplain (1LT) John Shay
Chaplain (2LT) John Lockhart

Reserve Chaplains

Air Force

Chaplain Lukus Counterman

Army

Chaplain (1LT) Joshua Cox
Chaplain (1LT) William Holcomb

Navy
Chaplain (CAPT) Wayne Bley
USNR Retired

Civil Air Patrol
Chaplain (LTC) Daniel Perry
Chaplain (MAJ) Daryl Jeffers
Chaplain (MAJ) Michael Marshall

Police
Chaplain Dan Cleghorn
Chaplain Fred Henzler
Chaplain Don Karnes
Chaplain Bob Keller
Chaplain Michael Privett

Hospital
Chaplain David Cotner II

VA Hospital
Chaplain Edward Fiszer

Chaplain Candidates

Army

Jeffery Campa
Marshall Fant IV
Seth Hamilton
Andrew Hines
Darren Ronsick
Phillip Stephens

Navy

Christopher Harrison
Trenten Long

Air Force

Alan Findley

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Craig Hartman • Director

Mailbag

Continued from Page 4

Thank you for focusing on us "seasoned saints" in the Sept./Oct. edition of *FrontLine*. I read every word; it was such an encouragement! As a "redirected" pastor after forty-five years in the ministry (I don't like the word "retired"), I was blessed by every article. "Winter is on my head, but eternal spring is in my heart" is my sentiment, and to quote former President Reagan, "Believe me, when you're my age, you just love hearing about alternative sources of energy." This edition was a great "source"!

Charles Britt
Chaplain to the Workplace
Gainesville, GA

I just wanted to forward a letter to you that I got from a Kenyan pastor. Last year at Christmas time I encouraged our congregation to buy *FrontLine* subscriptions for approximately twenty Kenyan national pastors.

I got numerous letters and e-mails thanking us. We are now getting e-mails asking if the subscriptions could continue. These men have very minimal financial resources. They have carefully noted how long the subscriptions last, and in some cases are traveling to the city to pay for e-mail access in internet cafés to request that the subscriptions continue. . . .

They use info from *FrontLine* for personal study and encouragement, [Sunday school] source material, and much more. Since most Kenyans speak and read English, the magazine is quite useful for them. . . .

It's a great blessing to our people to provide such a personal help to the dear servants of God half way around the world. Really, the cost is so little in comparison to the impact.

. . . This is a situation in which an online magazine would not be of help. These men do not have Internet access like we do. The printed page is of great value to them, and *FrontLine* becomes part of their library. . . .

Kevin Schaal
Glendale, AZ

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An Immediate Need and a Great Opportunity for Young Preachers

Our armed forces continue to serve faithfully and sacrificially, their commitment to protect our freedoms unchanged, even though attitudes and actions necessary to support them here at home often change. All of us know the importance of prayer and personal support of the military personnel we know and love. There are hundreds of thousands more who need our prayers and an opportunity to hear a clear presentation of the gospel. An area of great need today is for Bible-believing chaplains to serve with them. As a Department of Defense-recognized Chaplain Endorsing Agency, the FBFI sends outstanding men into military ministry, placing strong spiritual leaders in key positions of service. Right now, for any qualified applicant, the US Army Chaplaincy is an open door. I would love to discuss the opportunities with you personally if you want more information.

You may know of a young man who is seeking God's will for his future ministry. There are good resources available to you if you see potential in anyone who might be effective in the chaplaincy. There is a brief video at <http://www.chapnet.army.mil/Pages/ConsidertheCall.aspx> that you can share with others or even consider showing in a missions conference, to young preachers, or to college classes. You might even share it with the

servicemen from your congregation or prayerfully consider it as an option for yourself. The spokesman in this video is Chaplain (Major General) Doug Carver, the US Army Chief of Chaplains. To give you some idea of the kind of men who are serving and

http://www.goarmy.com/chaplain/chaplain_officer_basic.jsp. Please invest a few minutes in your preacher boys and in our country by informing yourself about this immediate need and great opportunity for young preachers.



seeking military ministry, here is a recent photo taken at the Chaplains' Basic Officer Leadership Course at Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

You can learn more about CH-BOLC and the immediate opportunities in the US Army at this site:

Left to right: FBFI Chaplain (Major) Scott Bullock, CH-BOLC Course Developer; FBFI Chaplain (Colonel) Joe Willis, CENTCOM Plans and Operations Chaplain; Chaplain (Major General) Doug Carver, US Army Chief of Chaplains; FBFI Chaplain (1LT) John Shay; FBFI Chaplain (Captain) Darren Ronsick; FBFI Chaplain (1LT) Josh Cox; and FBFI President and Chaplain Endorser John Vaughn



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