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FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

Becoming Like Christ

Views of Sanctification

Fred Moritz

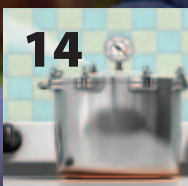
The Process of Sanctification

Larry Oats

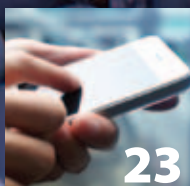
A Biblical Concept of Grace

Bob Harrison

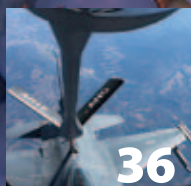
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If God Had a Toothbrush...

Bear with me for a moment. I do not mean to be irreverent in suggesting that God would ever need a toothbrush, but everyone should understand that a toothbrush is a very personal thing, not to be shared or to be used for other than its intended purpose. That simple thought might help in our understanding of sanctification. You may ask, "Didn't we just read about 'Growing in Grace' in the last issue of *FrontLine*?"

Yes, so why follow up that recent issue with another issue on the underlying doctrine, sanctification? In a word, the theme is so important that it deserves far more attention than any magazine could ever give it. Like sanctification itself, the doctrine is both simple and profound. Understanding it is like experiencing it—it is both an event and a lifelong process. Neither a single article nor a single sermon will settle it for everyone.

As a result, we often read articles or listen to sermons that are designed to correct a misunderstanding resulting from a previous, sincere attempt to offer clarity. The revivalist frames sanctification in the context of personal and corporate revival. The counselor clarifies sanctification in the context of spiritual change and growth. The professor of doctrine defines the Biblical terms and marshals the verses where they are used in defense of his discourse.

Having honed my preaching habits in the pastorate, I like the simple statement of McClintock and Strong, that sanctification is "separation from ordinary use to a sacred purpose." In preaching I found a simple illustration that never failed to make that point. "Everyone that owns a toothbrush understands the importance of dedicating it to brushing his own teeth. Of course it is possible to use a toothbrush for other purposes, like cleaning grout or carburetor parts, but once you do that, you usually replace the one you plan to use on your teeth." Thus, sanctification of a life is the dedication of that life to God's purposes rather than our own. Of course, it is more than that. It is holiness, spiritual growth, being conformed to the image of Christ, and much more.

As Dr. Oats states in his introduction on the right, "Sanctification is the believer's becoming like Christ." Every believer is predestined by God "to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29b). Thus, believers are separated from the ordinary uses of human life common among unbelievers and dedicated to the sacred purpose of becoming like Christ. Every morning when you pick up your toothbrush, you would do well to remember that you are, as it were, God's toothbrush, dedicated to His sacred purpose of becoming like Christ and not for the profane purposes of self-interest.

John Vaughn

Becoming Like Christ

Be ye holy; for I am holy. 1 Peter 1:16.

Sanctification—what is it and how does it happen? These are important questions, for discussions of sanctification are not merely academic exercises, debates over esoteric theories, or ivory-tower meditations. Sanctification is the believer's becoming like Christ. It is at the heart of the Christian life. There are numerous approaches to the topic—approaches that sometimes are hotly debated—and while some may assume this discussion to be one for the theologians, every one of us is affected by this topic.

The fruit of the Spirit, one of the results of the sanctifying work of the Spirit, begins with love, joy, and peace (Gal. 5:22). Paul indicates that as we become servants to God, obeying His Word more and more, we reap the fruit of holiness or sanctification (Rom. 6:22). The affirmation of initial sanctification (God's judicial declaration of our holiness which makes us worthy to be called the sons of God) and the hope of final sanctification (our glorification) result in our present sanctification (1 John 3:1–3).

In the following series of articles we will look at some differing views of sanctification and attempt to determine, very briefly, what the Bible says about some aspects of sanctification. Then we will look at two specific passages which help us understand this ongoing process of becoming more like Christ. William Longstaff wrote the hymn "Take Time to Be Holy." In each stanza he spoke of a means of sanctification—meditation on God's Word, prayer, obedience, and submission—and concluded, "Thus led by His Spirit to fountains of love, Thou soon shalt be fitted for service above." We trust that this series of articles will encourage you to take time to be holy.

Larry R. Oats

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We were missionaries in Germany for forty-one years. We are now retired. [One of our supporting churches] always gave us the subscription to *FrontLine* as a Christmas present. We really miss getting it. Enclosed is a [check] for a year's subscription.

Mary Lou and Russ
Frederick
Eden Prairie, MN

We appreciate so much your Jan/Feb edition of *FrontLine*. The issue has touched our family personally, and we are still reeling from the inadequate response of the church. Dedicating your edition to the different sides of the issue was a bold statement to churches that they need to take the issue seriously. In our situation it involved teenagers around thirteen to fifteen. There are those who don't see them as victims of child abuse because they should have "known better." After all, they were raised in the church, right? They should have known that what they were doing was wrong when they were being manipulated by an adult more than ten years their senior, right? Even

though the law protects our kids till they're seventeen, there are some generational [misunderstandings] that "it takes two." If you deal with the issue again, please consider touching on the issue of teens and their susceptibility to abuse by older men.

Once again, thank you for touching on such an important issue and encouraging churches to educate themselves and set up policies. Education is key since ignorance (and willful ignorance in some cases) are rampant.

Name Withheld

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

I am incarcerated in Virginia until next year. I was baptized into an independent Baptist in Marietta, Georgia, in 2002. I wrote a local Baptist church requesting some doctrinally correct literature, and they sent me a copy of the July/August 2011 issue of *FrontLine*. . . . We have two chaplains here . . . [but] available study materials are for the most part promoting a false gospel.

I can receive softcover
Continued on page 35

Pastor Bill Stutler and his wife, Pati, minister at West Milford Baptist Church in West Virginia. The Stutlers' ministry in West Milford started in 2001, but West Milford Baptist Church has been in existence since 1832, during which time the gospel has been faithfully preached.

Nate and Katrina

Bate are raising support under Gospel Fellowship Association to plant Faith Baptist Church of Roseville, California. They praise the Lord for the abundant care that they've had at the churches they've visited. Visit their website to learn more about their ministry: www.californiachurchplanting.com.



FBFI Executive Board member Dr. Charles Phelps, pastor of Colonial Hills Baptist Church in Indianapolis, and Dr. Kevin Callahan, president of International Partnership Ministries, were in Myanmar March 21–28, 2012, to celebrate the fifth graduation of the Timothy Bible School and Seminary, Tedim, Chin State. Two offerings totaling \$60,000 from Colonial Hills have allowed Pastor Nang Kap to purchase and construct school facilities to house his growing college ministry in the remote Chin State. The fifty-three students who graduated this year join nearly 250 previous graduates of the Timothy School in standing for Christ as they labor together to build the church of Christ in Myanmar.



James and Amy Greenwood minister in Argentina at Iglesia Bautista Independiente del Pilar (IBIP). IBIP is praying that the Lord will provide the needed money to purchase a piece of land that would

be ideal for the church. To find out more information about this ministry visit ibamissions.wordpress.com.

Dan and Opal Wokaty minister in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, under Missions Gospel Ministries International (mgmi.org). The Wokatys minister at Instituto Practico Ebenezer (Ebenezer Bible College) and Iglesia Bautista Ebenezer (Ebenezer Baptist Church).

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We want to hear from you!

Let us know what you like or don't like about *FrontLine*. Address your comments to **Managing Editor, *FrontLine***
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Taylors, SC 29687 or send them by e-mail to info@fbfi.org.

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



Views of Sanctification

My first regular preaching ministry was in a little southern Minnesota country chapel. The ministry was about seventy years old when as a junior in Bible college I began preaching there. The only other gospel preaching church within at least fifteen miles was a small Wesleyan Church.



With no experience in the ministry, I was immediately confronted with a question. It came in the context of our nearness to that neighboring church. I was asked, “Do you believe a Christian’s sin nature can be eradicated?” I knew Scripture (and myself) well enough to answer, “No.” That was my introduction to the reality that born-again Christians have differing opinions of sanctification and that those opinions are often warmly debated. The purpose of this article is to briefly outline the major positions on sanctification and to compare them with Scripture.

Perfectionism “holds that the Christian may, in this life, become perfectly free from sin. This view was held by John Wesley in England, and by Mahan and Finney in America.”¹ Wesley taught that sanctification begins at conversion and is appropriated by faith. But he also taught that “Christians can be delivered from willful sin and that this level of sanctification [“entire sanctification”] can occur before death.”²

Entire sanctification is “a personal, definitive work of God’s sanctifying grace by which the war within oneself might cease and the heart might be released from rebellion into whole hearted love for God and others.”³ One Wesleyan leader summarized this position, saying “that regeneration and entire sanctification are separate and distinct one from the other, and therefore received at different times.”⁴

The Pentecostal position is a progression on Wesleyan perfectionism. “Holiness Pentecostals asserted that before one can receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they must first undergo the crisis experience of entire sanctification.”⁵

There are several issues with these positions. First, these views equate their particular view of sanctification with a postconversion crisis experience, most often identified as the baptism of the Spirit. Scripture is clear that Spirit baptism occurs at the time of conversion when the Spirit begins to indwell the believer (1 Cor. 12:13).

Second, the underlying concept of “perfectionism” is not taught in Scripture. The Bible makes it clear that the Christian faces an ongoing struggle with sin (Rom. 7:14–25; Gal. 5:16–25) and that the process of sanctification is a daily, ongoing work of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16).

The Keswick movement developed its own view of sanctification. These conferences began in England in the years 1873–75. The movement has historically been oriented to an emphasis on victorious Christian living through the power of the Holy Spirit.

“The movement contains much biblical truth and good. . . . The finished work of Christ, and our justification by faith is the source of our sanctification (Rom. 6–8; 1 Cor. 1:30; Heb. 10:10, 14). The fact that the Christian life must be lived by faith (Gal. 2:20; Heb. 11:32, 33) is a fact all too often forgotten. The emphasis on the surrender of the will to Christ is biblical and necessary for victory (Lk. 9:23; Rom. 6:13, 16, 19; 12:1).”⁶

However, the Keswick movement advocates a “crisis experience” in the Christian life. This experience is different than the Wesleyan or Pentecostal experience, but it is nevertheless a postconversion experience in the believer’s life. This crisis experience is linked to the baptism of the Spirit. “At this point it is only necessary to say that it is a crisis in the life of a Christian, which none but those who have gone through it in experience, can fully understand. It means that the Spirit of God becomes so real to the man, that his supreme object in life is henceforth implicit obedience to the Holy Ghost.”⁷

Despite the positive elements in it, we must offer the following criticisms of the movement. The idea that a believer can go without

willfully or knowingly sinning is not found in Scripture.

The Keswick view of the baptism of (or with) the Spirit is flawed. This work of the Holy Spirit is mentioned in Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; and 1 Corinthians 12:13. When compared to John 7:37, 38, 1 Corinthians 12:13 indicates that the baptism with the Holy Spirit occurs at the time of the Spirit's indwelling. Believers are thus joined to Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit at salvation. It is not a work of the Holy Spirit subsequent to salvation which brings a believer into an experience "to submit his faculties, and his reasoning powers in blind obedience to that which he believes is of God." This takes the Christian life into a subjectiveness that ignores the authority of Scripture.

"Sanctification is that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit, by which the holy disposition imparted in regeneration is maintained and strengthened."

The Reformed view grounds sanctification in Christ's work on the cross and the believer's union with Him.⁸ This approach identifies three necessary elements in sanctification:

First, sanctification can only occur in the context of a growing union with Christ. We will not grow unless we are identified with Christ. Second, . . . we are sanctified by the truth. The Bible is "one of the chief means whereby God sanctifies His people." Lastly, faith is the means by which we appropriate our sanctification. Faith helps us to live in union with Christ, accept the fact that we are no longer mastered by sin, and results in the production of fruit in the life of the Christian. Like justification, sanctification comes by faith.⁹

Our Reformed friends say this and much more that is Biblically based and with which we find ourselves in hearty agreement. We also find some points of departure from this position.

Our first point of disagreement with those of the Reformed persuasion is over the role of the sacraments in Reformed theology. One writer names the sacraments as a means of sanctification as "pointing us to Christ; but they are also a visible, tangible means by which he communicates with us and we with him."¹⁰

Our second difference is over a potential tendency to the idea of eradication in Reformed theology. B. B. Warfield states, "In all accredited types of Christian teaching it is largely insisted upon that salvation consists in its substance of a radical subjective change wrought by the Holy Spirit, by virtue of which the native tendencies to evil are progressively eradicated and holy dispositions are implanted, nourished and perfected."¹¹ As surely as we must identify the weaknesses in the Wesleyan, Finney, Pentecostal, and Keswick positions, we must point out this tendency to perfectionism in Warfield's definition of sanctification.

Strong is more Biblical than Warfield in his definition when he states simply, "Sanctification is that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit, by which the holy disposition imparted in regeneration is maintained and strengthened."¹²

Conclusion

Many who hold these competing views do agree on some very basic Biblical principles. The means advocated to realize the work of progressive sanctification in a Christian's life, however, reveal some marked differences.

Dr. Fred Moritz is director emeritus of Baptist World Mission and professor of Systematic Theology and Missions at Maranatha Baptist Seminary, Watertown, Wisconsin.



¹ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1907, 2004), 877.

² Mike Sullivan, "Five Views on Sanctification: An In-Depth Analysis" <http://www.xenos.org/ministries/crossroads/OnlineJournal/issue1/fiveview.htm> (accessed April 29, 2009).

³ Melvin E. Dieter, "The Wesleyan Perspective," in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 13.

⁴ Bishop W. F. Mallaieu in C. W. Ruth, *Entire Sanctification Explained* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1952), back cover.

⁵ Sullivan.

⁶ Fred Moritz, book review of Charles G. Trumbull, *Victory in Christ* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 2000 edition), June 27, 2001.

⁷ Jesse Penn-Lewis with Evan Roberts, *War on the Saints* (World Wide Web Edition based on the 1912 unabridged edition), <http://www.apostasynow.com/wots/>, Chapter Three.

⁸ "The Reformed View of Sanctification," <http://mylifeunderthesun.blogspot.com/2006/03/reformed-view-of-sanctification.html>, accessed April 29, 2009.

⁹ Sullivan.

¹⁰ "The Reformed View of Sanctification."

¹¹ B. B. Warfield, "On the Biblical Notion of Renewal" in *Biblical Doctrines* (Dallas: Digital Publications, 2003), 295.

¹² Strong, 869. Strong has weaknesses in his theology, but his section on sanctification is one of the finest I have read. Pastors and other students of Scripture will profit from reading his work on this subject.

The Process of Sanctification

Sanctification is the process of becoming more like Christ in our conduct and character. The objective of this pursuit of moral integrity is to be holy as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15, 16).

There is a great deal of debate over how sanctification occurs, however. To determine the Biblical truth, we need to answer three questions. First, who is responsible for

sanctification? Is God responsible? Am I responsible? Or is sanctification a cooperative effort between God and the believer? Second, when does sanctification begin? Does it begin at salvation? Or is there a later decision that I must make to begin the sanctifying process? The third question concerns the extent of sanctification. Is sanctification an ongoing process without an earthly final conclusion or is there a plateau of obedience or perfection that I reach in this lifetime?

Before we look for these answers, we need to distinguish three ways the concept of sanctification occurs in Scripture. *Positional sanctification* refers to the position of the believer before God through Christ's death (Heb. 10:10, 14). This was accomplished at Christ's death (Heb. 13:12) and is applied to the believer at salvation. Paul told the Corinthians that they "have been sanctified" (1 Cor. 1:2) and coordinates sanctification with washing (regeneration) and justification "as though all three elements had taken place at the same time"¹ (1 Cor. 6:11). Thus believers can be called "saints" or "holy ones" (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2).

Final sanctification (or glorification) is the believer's hope (Eph. 1:4). "The eternal purpose not only pardons, but also sanctifies, absolves in order to renew, and purifies in order to bestow perfection. It is the uniform teaching of Paul that holiness is the end of our election, our calling, our pardon and acceptance."² Our final sanctification was provided for by Christ's redemptive work (Eph. 1:7), but it will be finally completed when the believer meets Christ at His return (1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23).

There is little disagreement over these two forms of sanctification. The debates routinely arise concerning the third kind of sanctification. *Progressive sanctification* is the process by which a believer becomes more like Christ during his earthly sojourn, and it is this sanctification which this article shall address. Many discussions of sanctification are, appropriately, focused on this sanctification. A good starting point is the New Hampshire Baptist Confession of 1833, which states,

We believe that Sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means—especially the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer (Article X).

Who is responsible for sanctification? God is responsible for the spiritual work in our lives (1 Thess. 3:13; 4:7, 8). Jesus is our "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). We are sanctified in the name of Jesus Christ and by the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:11). The Holy Spirit is the one who makes us "spiritually minded" (Rom. 8:1–11) and sanctifies us (Rom. 15:16). Jude 1:1 declares that we are "sanctified by God the Father." While sanctification is accomplished by God, believers have a responsibility to advance their own sanctification. In Eph 4:22–24 Paul teaches that sanctification negatively involves the decision to put off the "old self" and positively, through the continual process of the mind's renewal, to put on the "new self." This idea of mind renewal is also found in Romans 12:1, 2 (see Andy Hudson's article in this issue), where sanctification is identified with a conscious decision. In Ephesians 4:25ff Paul lists

a string of points of conduct, sprinkled with motivators—unity (4:25), charity (4:28), love (5:2), looking to Heaven (5:5), Spirit (5:9, 18). In chapter 6

Paul identifies the Christian's armor, which represents several elements of the Christian life. In 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 we see that Scripture was given that we might be perfect. James 1:3, 4 indicates that trials are part of our sanctification. First John 2:5 says perfection comes through keeping God's Word. God uses the fellowship of God's people in the local church (Heb. 3:12, 13) so that believers may be partakers of God's holiness. We could go on, but the idea is clear.

"Perhaps the real 'secret' of holiness consists precisely in learning to keep that balance: relying thoroughly on God as the true agent in sanctification, while faithfully discharging one's personal responsibility."³

When does sanctification begin? While there are passages that seem to indicate a post-conversion start to sanctification, it is more evident that sanctification, as a work of the Spirit, begins at salvation. A newly born believer desires the milk of God's Word to grow just as a newly born infant desires physical milk (1 Pet. 2:2). Paul indicated to the Philippians that God will not stop his work of sanctification in their lives (Phil. 1:6). In Romans 8 Paul declared that through the Holy Spirit the believer is free from the power of the law, free from the power of sin, and free from the power of the flesh. This freedom begins with our unification with Christ and indwelling by the Spirit. The work of the Spirit to help us live as sons of God (v. 14) begins once we are saved. The key is our relationship to Christ. Salvation and walking in the Spirit are connected. There is no need for a second working of God's grace now that we have a relationship with Christ.

While there are passages that seem to indicate a post-conversion start to sanctification, it is more evident that sanctification, as a work of the Spirit, begins at salvation.

This writer rejects the idea of a single crisis experience sometime after salvation that begins the sanctification process. However, he does acknowledge that there are often crises in believers' lives that play a significant role in a person's sanctification. This is frequently the case with those who accept Christ while very young. As they grow up, they enter into different areas of temptation. When they discover the "other gender," they enter into the temptations of lust. When they get a job, they may have to deal with greed. As they finish their teen years, they have to begin to make life choices concerning college, career, and life partners, some of the most important decisions in their lives, decisions that are life-changing. Each of these is a mini-crisis, that can move their sanctification forward—or backwards, depending on how they respond.

The final question concerns the extent of salvation in this life. Everyone can agree that glorification results in perfection, but not everyone agrees on whether or not one can reach "perfection" in this life. One problem is the definition of the term. The Biblical concept of "perfect" does not necessarily refer to sinlessness. Hebrews refers to the incarnate Christ as having been *made* "perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10).⁴ There was never a need for Christ to be "made sinless." Nevertheless, Christ was "made perfect" when He finished the task for which He was sent. While there are uses of "perfect" that refer to the sinlessness of our glorification, perfection also refers to maturity, growth in grace that leaves room for even more growth.

Saints at salvation, ongoing change during this life, and finally the glorification of these bodies of sin into our glorified bodies, where sinlessness is the norm: that is this author's view of Biblical sanctification.



Larry Oats is the dean of Maranatha Baptist Seminary and professor of Systematic Theology and Church History.

¹ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 1899.

² John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1931), 21, 22.

³ Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 1164.

⁴ D. R. W. Wood and I. Howard Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Leicester, England, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 900.

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What Were You Thinking?

Sanctification is a transformation of the believer into the image of Christ.

If believers are going to please God, they must involve themselves in the process of spiritual transformation. The goal of this article is to suggest some basic truths regarding Biblical transformation as expressed in Romans 12:2. Paul asks two questions. First, into what should a believer be transformed? Second, how can a believer achieve spiritual transformation?

Transformed into What?

"Into what should a believer be transformed?" Paul answers this question negatively and positively. Negatively, a believer is commanded to "be not conformed to this world." "Conformed" carries the idea of fitting into a mold.¹ "World" is "age" or "era." Believers are not to fit into the mold created by this age. The thought processes of sinful people can create a mold into which believers can allow themselves to be pressed. When a believer blends into the unbelieving environment, he loses the ability to have influence for Christ (i.e., he fails to be salt and light).

Positively, Paul commands that believers "be transformed." This conveys the idea of changing inwardly from one form to another.² Believers must be changed from the mold of this age into something else. Paul indicates the image into which believers are to be changed in the broader context of this passage. In Romans 8:29 Paul uses a different word for "transformed." Believers are predestined to be "conformed" (i.e., changed, transformed) to the image of His Son. Christ's sinless life provides the content of the believer's transformation. When the believer is changed in this way, he gains influence in the sinful world in which he lives (i.e., becomes salt and light).

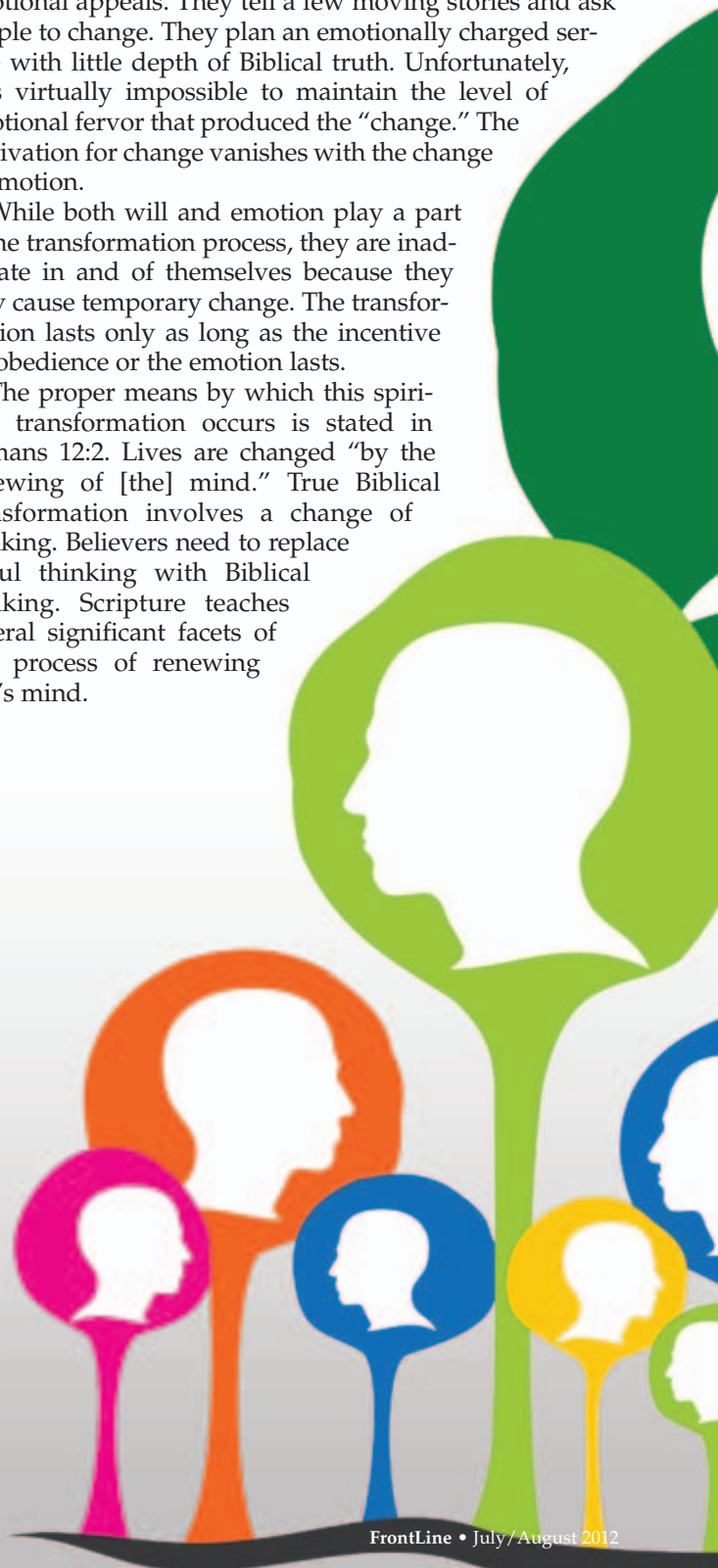
Transformed . . . How?

The second question is, "How can a believer achieve spiritual transformation?" There are at least two inadequate methods used to effect transformation. First, some suggest that people are transformed by changing their will. They make a list of rules and make the incentive for obedience great enough to comply. This method produces only an external conformity. People behave in a particular way because they want to avoid the punishment for violation of the standard. This kind of "change" is only temporary. Once the external incentive is removed, the "change" disappears. There are many examples of young people who showed their true colors after leaving the disciplined structure of their home. External conformity is not genuine transformation.

Second, some suggest that people are transformed by emotional appeals. They tell a few moving stories and ask people to change. They plan an emotionally charged service with little depth of Biblical truth. Unfortunately, it is virtually impossible to maintain the level of emotional fervor that produced the "change." The motivation for change vanishes with the change in emotion.

While both will and emotion play a part in the transformation process, they are inadequate in and of themselves because they only cause temporary change. The transformation lasts only as long as the incentive for obedience or the emotion lasts.

The proper means by which this spiritual transformation occurs is stated in Romans 12:2. Lives are changed "by the renewing of [the] mind." True Biblical transformation involves a change of thinking. Believers need to replace sinful thinking with Biblical thinking. Scripture teaches several significant facets of this process of renewing one's mind.



First, it is a spiritual process. In order to think Biblically, the believer must know God's thoughts, but only the Holy Spirit can truly know the mind of God (1 Cor. 2:10–12, 16). No amount of human skill or effort can transform lives apart from the Holy Spirit's involvement. Paul's command to be transformed is in the passive form. God transforms believers as they submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, believers must acknowledge the need for dependence upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the transformation process.

Second, it is a continual process. The tense of the command to "be transformed" indicates that it is a continual activity.

Therefore, renewing the mind is also a continual process. Renewing the mind is a lifelong process for every believer. "Christians progressively take on the perfection of Jesus Christ through the Spirit's operation."³ Therefore, believers must properly interpret and apply Scripture.

Unfortunately, believers sometimes fill their minds with things from this world that desensitize them to the need for transformation. Believers should be praying for God to make them more aware of the need to continually change, not filling their minds with things contrary to it.

Third, it is an internal process. True spiritual transformation is an internal change of mind that results in a belief that a godly lifestyle is correct. Therefore, we must change our minds with the truth of Scripture. When our thinking is genuinely changed, behavioral change will naturally follow. There are at least two implications to this truth. First, we do not succeed when all we achieve is external conformity. Second, we become frustrated because we cannot seem to achieve victory over the sin. We may even

give up trying, because we never analyze and change the sinful thinking into Biblical thinking that produces Christlike living.

Fourth, it is a mental process. It is the mind that is renewed. Sinful thinking that fits the mold of the world is natural to every man. Renewed thinking that is consistent with the image of Christ is not. It takes work to renew one's mind. Spiritual transformation requires study of God's Word. The better one understands theology, the clearer Christlike thinking becomes. It is shameful for a believer to say, "Don't make me think, just tell me what to do." Believers should be committed to serious Bible study.

It is not enough, however, to know Christlike thoughts and to see how they differ from the world's thinking. We must accept Christ's thinking as true and implement Christ's thinking into our lives. For example, the world thinks that one should love in order to get something back. Christ loves without hypocrisy (Rom. 12:9). When a believer thinks that love without hypocrisy is correct, he will act in a way that is consistent with that thought.

Fifth, it is a noticeable process. As the mind is renewed, one's behavior is changed (Col. 3:1–17). The believer lives according to a godly standard because he is convinced of its rightness. Believers will rejoice with those who rejoice rather than envying them (Rom. 12:15). Believers will associate with people of low position rather than guarding social position (Rom. 12:16). Believers will be truly humble rather than conceited (Rom. 12:16).

Sixth, it is a beneficial process. God's will is good, acceptable, and perfect. The purpose of transformation through renewed thinking is to prove or demonstrate something through testing. By living a transformed life the believer demonstrates that Christlike thinking is good (useful, helpful), acceptable (well pleasing to God; see v. 1), and perfect (mature, complete, having reached its purpose). When a believer is transformed by the renewing of his mind, he fulfills the purpose for which God called him—conformity to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29).

Romans 12:2 provides basic truths regarding the spiritual transformation process. It teaches that spiritual transformation demands a continuous and vigorous refusal to fit into the mold of the world's pattern of thinking. It also demands genuine change through the enabling of the Holy Spirit into the image of Christ. This change is accomplished by "renewing one's mind." This spiritual transformation process is not an option exercised by an elite few. It is commanded for all saints. Therefore, every believer should seriously study the Bible and make relevant application to his life. Transformation through renewed thinking is the only way to fulfill the purpose for which God saved us! We ought to regularly ask, "What was I thinking?"

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¹ BDAG, 979.

² BDAG, 639–40. This Greek word is similar to our English word "metamorphosis."

³ Ibid.

God's Pressure Cooker

Practical Help from 2 Corinthians 4:7–18

As a child, I well remember the sound of a whistle blowing to indicate that dinner was almost ready. It

was the release valve on one of my mom's favorite cooking utensils, her pressure cooker. Pressure under controlled circumstances produces greater effectiveness and productivity, making water do what it cannot naturally accomplish.

Most of us feel as though we have spent time in the pressure cooker. Why must life be so painful? We might wish to escape the pressures of this world by abandoning our responsibilities or fleeing our circumstances, but God has a purpose in applying the heat in our lives.

The Premise of God's Pressure Cooker— 2 Corinthians 4:7

Paul called the gospel a "treasure." The word is the source of our word "thesaurus" and originally spoke of the place where one kept his most valuable possessions. Where has God chosen to store this most valuable possession? Amazingly, Paul writes, in "earthen vessels." Only in dire extremities would one entrust his most valuable possessions to a common household pot. God, however, has done just that, choosing us as the vessels to whom the glorious gospel has been committed. Why? So that "the excellency of the power" would obviously reside in God. If God has called us to the ministry of the gospel (and every Christian is called in some sense), where will the power come from to accomplish this work? God has entrusted this gospel ministry to plain clay jars so that He will get all the glory for what is accomplished.

The Process of God's Pressure Cooker— 2 Corinthians 4:8, 9

To illustrate the fact that the power is God's and not ours, Paul shifts his metaphor a bit in verses 8 and 9. These verses reflect Paul's normal expectation for the life of ministry.

First, the gospel minister is "troubled on every side." The word means "to press in upon." God is allowing heat to be applied to the earthenware vessel, but Paul triumphantly says, "Pressed, but not distressed!"

Second, the gospel minister is "perplexed." Paul almost seems to contradict himself here, for he uses a word that implies one is cut off from resources and in perplexity as to where to turn. Paul used a strengthened form of the same verb to give the triumphant answer: "Perplexed, but not in despair."

Third, the gospel minister is "persecuted," a word that literally means to hunt down and attack. Paul had quite literally been persecuted, but God never abandoned him. "Persecuted, but not forsaken."

Fourth, the gospel minister is "cast down, but not destroyed." God is still in control.

You may wonder, though, whether any of this really applies to you. Maybe you are a housewife, a chemist, or a school teacher. The trials you face are not persecution; they are gall stones, unruly children, a hectic calendar, or neighbors who ignore your testimony.

Two things, however, incline me to think that Paul has a wider application in view. He is clearly describing all Christians in verse 7. God has entrusted every Christian with the Great Commission ministry of proclaiming the gospel so that the lost will be saved and the saved edified. Furthermore, God is at work in every Christian doing His work of sanctification. As the believer involves himself in ministry, however, God will inevitably allow obstacles, pressures, and even persecution to befall him.

The Purposes of God's Pressure Cooker— 2 Corinthians 4:10–15

As Paul continues the sentence begun in verse 7, he expresses the first purpose of God in applying heat to His saints: that they might better manifest Christ to those around them (vv. 10, 11). Paul introduces this idea by using a powerful paradox: the gospel minister is simultaneously bearing about the dying of Christ and manifesting the life of Christ.

To bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus is equivalent to always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake (v. 11a). Paul was always willing to die because of the hope of eternal life. At the same time, Paul was manifesting the life of Christ. The union with Christ that he enjoyed in his sufferings was enabling him to show others what Christ is like. Never does the Christ-life in believers shine out with more startling distinction from this world than when believers respond in a Christlike way to pain and pressure. The crucible revealed the gold in Paul—gold in a clay pot!

Paul's second purpose is to mature our faith (vv. 13, 14). Believers get to know Christ better when they are driven to their knees by adversity. In Psalm 116 the psalmist was encompassed with the sorrows of death, finding only trouble and sorrow, but he called out to God for deliverance. God heard the psalmist's voice, inclined His ear, dealt bountifully in grace, and delivered the suffering man's soul

from death, his eyes from tears, and his feet from falling. Our faith is strengthened during suffering; those are the times that stretch us beyond our natural capacities.

A third purpose is that our suffering enables us to minister to others. Nothing can cause us to be self-absorbed more than pain. As the heat increases and pressure is applied, we can easily lose our focus on both God and others and become preoccupied with our own troubles. Christ, however, modeled a suffering that was entirely unselfish. When the women bewailed Him, He turned the tables and urged them to weep for themselves and their children (Luke 23:27–31); when the soldiers drove nails into His hands, He forgave all who were persecuting Him (Luke 23:34); while hanging between two thieves, He showed compassion on one of them, assuring him of imminent rest in paradise (Luke 23:39–43). In all of Paul's sufferings, he sought to imitate Christ.

Suffering enables us to minister more effectively to those around us. When we suffer for the gospel, we are giving evidence of the reality of the thing for which we suffer. Suffering humbles us and makes us more sympathetic to those around us who are hurting. Our sufferings are pathways to more effective ministry to those around us.

Paul indicates a fourth purpose for suffering—magnifying God's grace (v. 15). God grants abundant grace in suffering. God does not turn up the heat and then leave us. Paul's sufferings were the occasion for grace to extend to more and more people. Just as God used Paul's sufferings

to introduce the gospel to the Corinthians, so He is continuing to work through the afflictions of His saints to add daily to the church those who should be saved.

The result is abounding thanksgiving. It is difficult to feel thankful (although we are commanded to give thanks) when the heat is applied. But when the meal is cooked and the results of the heat are evident, then we rejoice and overflow with thanks.

The promise of God's pressure cooker is that

- nothing important will boil off,
- the result will far outweigh the process both in quality and duration, and
- it is exactly what we need to best worship God and enjoy Him forever.

May God give us a Biblical perspective on the pressure cooker that is Christian ministry. It may be hot, but it's worth it!

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Christ-life in believers
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and pressure.





Sanctified through Commandment or

Romans 7:1–12

In Romans 7 Paul, continuing his argument from chapter 6 concerning the believer's freedom in Christ,

anticipates the misunderstanding of his Jewish readers and so explains the limitations of *Torah*. The two pericopes within this section (1–6, 7–12) seem disjointed in purpose. The exegete, however, may bridge this seeming disjunction through one common idea—the limitations of the law. Paul maintains that the law is good, but limited, in what it accomplishes in the life of believers. Therefore, Paul's intention in writing this section is to show that a believer produces spiritual fruit only in union with Christ rather than under the legislation of law.

The Law Is Limited in Its Jurisdiction (7:1–6)

In this paragraph Paul gives an illustration concerning the limits of *Torah*'s jurisdiction. First, he states the principle: the law has jurisdiction ("hath dominion over") only as long as a person is alive (v. 1). Second, he illustrates this concept through marriage (vv. 2, 3). If a person's spouse should die, the remaining mate is *free* to remarry. The language Paul employs recalls that of 6:18–20. Having died to sin and the law (6:8–11), the believer is now free to be joined to another (v. 3b). Third, Paul provides the application of his principle and illustration (vv. 4–6). When a believer dies to the law (v. 6), two results occur. The first result is the believer's union with a different spouse—Christ (v. 4). The second result is that the believer becomes productive in the Spirit (vv. 5, 6).¹

Paul expresses this union between Jesus and believers in several ways. First, although "married" does not appear in the text, Paul uses the imagery of a marriage union. Second, the production of "fruit" or "progeny" supplies

the result of the union—spiritual productivity (consistent with the marriage motif in vv. 2–3). Third, the apostle had already described such a union in 6:5 by using *synmfutoj* to describe relational oneness.²

Prior to this union, Paul says that sin was working through the law to produce fruit for death.³ The Jews considered the law to be the instrument that suppresses sinful expression; Paul, however, views sin as actually taking advantage of the law to increase sinfulness, a thought that he will describe in more detail (cf. v. 8).

Paul concludes this section with a final word ("But now") concerning the freedom from the law that the believer has in Christ. The purpose for this freedom is for the believer to live in newness of the Spirit rather than the letter of the law.⁴ This statement contradicts the notion that a believer can live in sin since he is free from the law. Living in sin would be a lifestyle consistent with the "oldness" under the letter.

The Law Is Limited in Its Function (7:7–12)

Since sin uses the law for more sinfulness, Paul anticipates that his opponents will ask, "Is the law sin?" Paul refutes this question with his emphatic "God forbid"—i.e. "May it never be." He uses this denial to supply the first function of the law: the law reveals sin (v. 7). The apostle uses two words to describe the knowledge of sin in this verse, both of which emphasize the individual's "recognition" of personal sins.⁵ Like an x-ray reveals a break in a bone, the law merely identifies the problem rather than providing an actual cure. Paul's emphasis highlights the futility of depending upon the law for deliverance from sin.⁶ Once Paul came to understand the law's specific teachings on various sins, the apostle recognized particular sins that he had committed against the law. Implied in this

Christ?

Bruce Meyer

text is the truth that sin has always existed in the life of each person, although not recognized at times.

The second function that Paul lists continues the argument that a person cannot find holiness through the law, since the law actually exacerbates the passions of sin (v. 8). Lest Paul's detractor should think he is blaming the law for this insurgence, the apostle uses the middle voice for the word "worked." Sin is personally involved in working out every kind of passion ("wrought in me all manner of concupiscence"). Paul also uses an unusual word for "taking occasion."⁷ Sin views the law's demands as a "favorable opportunity" to stimulate the passions of the individual toward more sin. Paul states a final reason why this is so in noting that without the law, sin remains dormant ("dead" or "powerless").

To summarize, a person may not recognize sin until the law identifies it. The problem intensifies, however, since, once the person recognizes sin through the commandment, the transgression seizes upon that opportunity to expand its power. Rather than controlling sin, the law provides the occasion for an immoral expansionism that causes destruction rather than restoration.

Paul illustrates this concept through his own testimony (vv. 9–11). He explains that, while he once failed in recognizing transgression, sin "revived" when he comprehended the commandment. In a series of three chiasmic constructions Paul says that he was "without the law" but the "commandment came" (v. 9). At the same time, "sin was dead" but sprang to life (vv. 8, 9). In the beginning, Paul was "alive" (one who was living). When, however, sin revived, he "died" because sin killed him (vv. 10, 11). Paul provides an editorial comment in noting that the law that is supposed to produce life actually brings death (v. 10).

Paul's conclusion is that *Torah*, while "holy," "just," and "good," is limited because it can only reveal sin. Furthermore, sin works through the law to produce more sin and death. This thought carries Paul into his next round of arguments in which he provides further testimony of his struggle with sin.⁸ This struggle prompts him to ask the question, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (7:24). He will answer that question in chapter 8 with the doctrine of sanctification through the Spirit based upon the finished atonement of Christ.

Conclusion

Believers who pursue sanctification through the law are just as foolish as unbelievers who seek justification through the law. Since the law is limited in its function of revealing sin, it cannot provide sanctification. Since *Torah* aggravates sinfulness, Paul argues that it is ineffective in producing holiness. Therefore, one can only conclude that union with Christ is the solitary way of generating spiritual productivity. While the law serves a good purpose, believers should not ask the law to accomplish that for which it is not equipped. Doing so plunges the believer into failure and frustration (7:13–24). Praise God that He is the one who will deliver believers from this sinful body through the sanctifying work of His Spirit in union with Christ.



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¹ The author takes the *hina* clause as a purpose-result clause, indicating both a purposeful intent and sure outcome.

² A NT *hapax legomenon* that Louw and Nida describe as "pertaining to being closely associated in a similar experience—to be like, to be one with" [loc. cit.].

³ A bit of irony, since fruit bearing is usually a sign of life.

⁴ While πνεῦμα here could refer to the newness of the human spirit (as most commentators hold) through regeneration (cf. 6:4), this author accepts these uses as genitives of source rather than appositional. Paul is introducing the work of the Spirit that he will discuss more thoroughly in chapter 8.

⁵ The two words, οἶδα and γινώσκω, are often distinct in their senses, with the former referring to a knowledge that is intuitive and the latter focusing more on knowledge achieved through experience. In this context, however, Paul's use appears to be more stylistic, since both clauses are stressing the recognition of sin rather than an experiential knowledge.

⁶ Since Paul has already demonstrated the law's inability to provide salvation (ch. 3–4), the author believes Paul is arguing here for the law's inability to produce holiness (sanctification) for the believer (Gal. 3:3; 5:5).

⁷ The word ἀφορμή is used only four other times outside of this context and two times here (vv. 8, 10). The meaning of the word carries the idea of a "staging area" for battle or the resources necessary for an operation. Louw and Nida give the sense of "a favorable opportunity," which fits this context well.

⁸ The author believes the contextual flow toward sanctification is too compelling and therefore views the following paragraph as Paul's postconversion rather than preconversion experience.



Bob Harrison

The Biblical Concept of Grace

From a sermon preached at the Three Rivers Regional FBFI Conference in Cumberland, Maryland, April 3, 2012

Charles Caldwell Ryrie was correct when he said, "The concept of grace is the watershed that divides Roman Catholicism from Protestantism."¹ I am speaking to you today in "Mary's land," but I live in the Catholic bastion of greater Pittsburgh, where I have watched with interest the career of the only current American serving in the College of Cardinals, a native of Pittsburgh, addressed as "His Eminence Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, DC." The theology of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) teaches that grace is infused

into the life of the saint through the medium of the church. Thus, RCC authorities from the pope down to the priest can grant the grace of God. They dole it out, claiming to have received this ability from the apostles, specifically Peter, who supposedly received this gift from Christ.

Through this apostolic succession the RCC claims, in principle, to hold God's grace in trust. But in practice it holds men who need grace in bondage. As late as October of last year Cardinal Wuerl illustrated this fact when reinstituting St. Luke's Episcopal Church (of Washington, DC) into the full communion of the RCC. During his homily, the cardinal said, "The church, instituted by Christ and alive through the power of the Holy Spirit, is both visible and spiritual. The Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes the Second Vatican Council: 'The one mediator, Christ, established and ever sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope, and charity, as a visible organization through which he communicates truth and grace to all men'" (emphasis mine).²

The unthinking listener might have missed the essential point: because these Episcopalians were reuniting with the RCC, they were thereby able to receive the grace of God. "His Eminence" was telling the Episcopalians how fortunate they were to be welcomed back under the Catholic Church's wing, since as Protestants they had no hope of receiving God's grace! But the Bible stridently rejects this notion. Cardinal Wuerl declared that the church "communicates truth and grace to all men." Yes, we can hear the apostle Paul telling Timothy that the church is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). Of course, the cardinal references the wrong church. But more to the point, nowhere in the whole of God's special revelation does the Holy Spirit declare that the church is empowered to dole out the grace of God. Grace has always been under the sole authority of God (1 Cor. 1:3–5a). God grants grace to whom He will—it is singularly the gift of God!

To lay a foundation for understanding the grace of God, it is important to begin with a Biblical concept of grace in the Old Testament. Then, by linking the Old Testament concept with the New Testament concept of grace, we will be "rightly dividing the word of truth." Finally, we will apply our knowledge of grace to the Christian responsibility to grow in grace.

Developing a Biblical Concept of Grace from the Old Testament

To begin, consider the word *chen* and its cognate verb *chanan*. The root idea is charm or agreeableness and, hence, delight or favor. It occurs 225 times in the OT, as in the following examples.

- Exodus 33:13, 14—After the rebellion of Israel at the giving of the law, Moses petitions God for additional favor in agreeing to continue to lead Israel.
- Psalm 84:11—"For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no

good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

- Proverbs 3:34—"Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly."
- Zechariah 12:10—The future national conversion of Israel will be the result of a special outpouring of divine favor.

Therefore, *chen* is unexpected and undeserved and is not secured by simply believing. It is the gracious condescension of a superior. Often, when this term is used, we read the phrase "[he] found grace in the eyes [or sight] of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8; 32:5; 47:29; Exod. 34:9; Num. 32:5; Judges 6:17).

A second word, *chesed*, occurs 250 times in the OT. The first notable element of *chesed* is an intensity of feeling. As well, *chesed* involves a relationship between parties, typically a covenant relationship. As Ryrie emphasizes, "So important is this idea of relationship in *chesed* that it may be said that *chesed* becomes the basis on which the relationship exists and grows" (p. 16). Through *chesed* God distinguished Israel from other nations, establishing His covenant relationship with them. They were never to perform civic, legal, or religious duties without considering God's *chesed*. Literally, it was to color and transform all of life.

Combining the ideas of intensity and relationship, we discern that *chesed* is firm, persistent, and steadfast (thus, the ESV translates *chesed* as "steadfast love"). Ryrie aptly notes, "Thus the thought of *faithfulness* [emphasis mine], not the ideas of kindness and mercy, predominates in the grace relationship" (p. 17). The firm steadfastness of God's love does not negate the concept of His lovingkindness or mercy, which is often used to convey the meaning of *chesed*. But *chesed* must be thought of in terms of the strength or persistence of God's unchanging love, as in the following examples.

- Psalms 5:6, 7, and 23:6—a means of entry into God's presence.
- Psalm 86:5, 13, 15—of such quantity that is cannot be exhausted. Note: "Mercy" in verse 16 is *chanan*.
- Psalm 103:17, 18—God's steadfast love involves our obedience in the fear of God. A *relationship* has been established, and we must respond appropriately to God's faithful love within the context of that relationship.

Ryrie clarifies an often misunderstood point concerning *chesed*. "Even though there is this human responsibility, one must not conclude that the covenants were necessarily dependent on human merit. Once God's righteous demands are met, He is free to act in grace. The enjoyment of that grace often depends on man's right relationship with God, but the exercise of that grace depends only on the steadfast loving-kindness of God" (p. 18). To illustrate this point, consider the house of David. The Davidic covenant is

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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

Recognizing God's Call to Preach

It is of momentous importance how a man enters the ministry. There is a "door" into this sheepfold, and there is "some other way." John Henry Jowett (The Preacher: His Life and Work, 10–11)

I am appointed a preacher. Paul the Apostle (2 Tim. 1:11)

In his classic on the Christian ministry, James Stalker remarked,

I do not know that I have ever seen an entirely satisfactory statement of what constitutes a call to the ministry. Probably it is one of those things of the spirit which cannot be mathematically defined. The variety of the calls in Scripture warns us against laying down any scheme to which the experience of everyone must conform.¹

Stalker's caution is wise. Scripture records examples of men who were called to preach, but it offers no inspired list of a call's components. How then does the Lord direct us for determining this critical question?

One of the most helpful indications is embedded in Ephesians 4:7–11. Here the phenomenon of the "call" is expressed as Christ's *giving* gifted truth-communicators to the Church. In an ordination sermon preached January 23, 1673, John Owen grounded his entire argument for such a thing as a Divine call to the ministry in the wording of this passage. He especially drew attention to the words, *He gave gifts unto men*. A careful reading of verse 11 within its context reveals that the *gifts* are the ministers themselves; the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. Owen preached,

The foundation of the ministry is in the gift of Christ. Let me answer that question which he put once to the Pharisees. "The baptism of John, is it from heaven? or is it of men?" In like manner, I say, The ministry, is it from heaven? or is it of men? The answer is in the text, "He gave;"—it is the gift of Christ.²

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

Paul employed similar wording when he addressed the elders of this Ephesian church. He described them as having been *made overseers* by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28).

If, then, a minister in a local church was *made* such by the Holy Spirit, if he was *given* by Christ to the Church, it would be legitimate to nuance the question about calling in terms of the inquiry, "Whom does Christ give to His Church as its ministers?" That is, what *kind* of men are these? To that question there are Scriptural answers that provide us with a fairly comprehensive package of considerations when it comes to recognizing a Divine calling to preach.

He Gives Those Whose Testimony Is Blameless (1 Tim. 3:2–7; Titus 1:5–9)

Sometimes calling is evaluated almost entirely subjectively. A man is asked about his feelings, desires, and burdens. If these strongly incline toward preaching, he is encouraged to pursue it. Granted, an individual sense of constraint is significant (as we'll see later). But there are other, more objective ways of evaluating calling that ought to be given precedence. The first is the matter of blameless testimony.

Christ has specified various requirements for those who serve in either one of the two offices of the church (elder and deacon). All but one of these requirements have to do with a man's character, habits, and domestic life. There are no candidates exempted from these. They are nonnegotiables. Therefore, since it is Christ who has specified these without exception, it would

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be impossible (not merely difficult) to make any case whatsoever for His giving a man to His Church for this office and its ministries who is incapable of meeting these requirements.

In view of this, there are two facts about ministerial qualifications that I'd like to highlight. The first is that the standards are radically high. Each of the lists for ministers begins by describing qualified men as *blameless* (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6). The word translated *blameless* in 1 Timothy 3:2 is formed from the alpha privative and the verb "to lay hold of" or "to seize upon." The point is that a minister is a man who cannot be taken hold of, that is, justly reproached, in any way, especially in any of the areas specified in verses 2–7. The word translated *blameless* in Titus 1:6 is, if anything, even more demanding. It too employs the alpha privative, but this time attached to the verb "to call in" or "to call to account." The idea is that a minister must be a man who lives beyond being called into question. The standard isn't to live in such a way that we could explain ourselves if we were accused, but that we live in such a way that we are beyond accusation. Of course, anyone can falsely accuse us at any time. That we cannot prevent. But what we are called upon to preclude is anything questionable that would give rise to such accusation. Another way of putting it is, *Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God* (2 Cor. 6:3, 4). Here Paul calls attention to the fact that in the public's mind, our very identity is indivisible from the Word of God we preach. Our lives and His words are inseparable in their perception.

C. H. Spurgeon cautioned,

We are watched by a thousand eagle eyes; let us so act that we shall never need care if all heaven and earth, and hell, swelled the list of spectators. . . . When we say to you, my dear brethren, take care of your life, we mean be careful of even the minutiae of your character. Avoid little debts, unpunctuality, gossiping, nicknaming, petty quarrels, and all other little vices which fill the ointment with flies. The self-indulgences which have lowered the repute of many must not be tolerated by us. The familiarities which have laid others open to suspicion, we must chastely avoid. The roughnesses which have rendered some obnoxious, and the fopperies which have made others contemptible, we must put away. We cannot afford to run great risks through little things.³

This kind of exacting care for testimony often makes one the object of ridicule. English pastors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who were particularly careful about their walk with God were derisively called "precisians," "disciplinarians," and "puritans." But John Foxe, the martyrologist, defended them as "the godly preachers." The pastors themselves explained their earnestness by referring to themselves as "painful" ministers.

During their Oxford days John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, and others of their small company of

spiritually minded men were jeered by their classmates as being "the holy club." Of course, not every strict man is sincere. Closed societies of especially intense believers sometimes also attract those whose motives for narrowness are carnal or whose theology of acceptance with God is flawed. Unquestionably, a combination of both right and wrong motives fueled Oxford's "holy club." Nevertheless, the necessity of caring for exactness in one's walk before both God and men cannot be denied. See Charles Bridges' chapters on "Want of Entire Devotedness of Heart to the Christian Ministry" (pp. 106–12) and "Conformity to the World" (pp. 112–21) in *The Christian Ministry* for a thorough discussion of how ministers lose their spiritual savor by a socially acceptable kind of worldliness. William Perkins goes so far as to say,

Since the best of men cannot live with the best of people without being contaminated by them, ordinary ministers must learn to differentiate men and meetings, times and places, and not in a widespread and careless way involve themselves in them. Only thus can they keep their calling free from reproach and preserve themselves from pollution, which will otherwise contaminate them.⁴

An important counterpoint to such qualifications, however, is that God is not requiring sinlessness. There would be no qualified candidates for preaching if such were the case. The issue, then, isn't so much blamelessness in the sight of God but credibility with mature Christian people.

He Gives Those Whom His Spirit Has Spiritually Gifted

A second, fairly objective indication of calling is the matter of spiritual giftedness. John Newton suggested, *The main difference between a minister and a private Christian seems to consist in . . . ministerial gifts.*⁵

There are two categories of spiritual gifts: speech gifts and service (manual) gifts (1 Pet. 4:10, 11). Obviously, preaching is primarily a matter of speech. In Paul's admonition to Timothy regarding preaching the Word (2 Tim. 4:2), he expands the concept of preaching to include reproving, rebuking, exhorting, and doctrine. In 1 Timothy 6:2 he exhorts Timothy to teach and to exhort.

The ability to teach is evidently the primary speech gift residing in a preacher, since it is the one combined with the function of *pastor* in Ephesians 4:11, 12. It is also the aspect of spoken ministry under which Paul seems to sum up all of Timothy's oral work in the church at Ephesus when he admonishes, *Take heed . . . unto the doctrine* (1 Tim. 4:16). Every elder is to be *apt to teach* (1 Tim. 3:2) and to be able *by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers* (Titus 1:9).

Exhortation, on the other hand, extends teaching into applications and actions. The difference between the two is that when a teacher finishes, people say, *I see that*. When an exhorter finishes, they say, *I'll do that*. In both cases, it is

imperative that the preacher not be a mere repeater of the right words, but a true conduit of their spirit.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones told of a Scottish journalist who listened to two speakers on the same subject. *They were both very able and learned men. Then came the devastating phrase, "The difference between the two speakers was this; the first spoke as an advocate, the second as a witness."* Lloyd-Jones goes on to explain that a preacher is not just *handling a case*. He cannot be merely clinical. He must have warmth and urgency. *I feel we are all under condemnation here*, he continues.

I confess freely that I need to be rebuked myself. Where is the passion in preaching that has always characterized great preaching in the past? Why are not modern preachers moved and carried away as the great preachers of the past so often were? The Truth has not changed. Do we believe it, have we been gripped by it, and then exalted until we were "lost in wonder love and praise"?⁶

A preacher emits both light and heat. He must not be merely fluorescent, but incandescent. He emits visible light as a result of becoming heated, or as we say, fired up!

Because we're focusing upon the call to *preach* it would be easy to overlook the fact that preaching is most often done by pastors, and pastoring requires additional giftedness, particularly in the area of administration (management). Few men will be able to oversee an expanding ministry without learning to manage well. The necessity for this is bound up in the very word "overseer."

I used to teach homiletics and preaching at Bob Jones University. Generally I would listen to over a hundred student sermons every semester. At a distance now of many years I've been happily surprised to hear of men successfully pastoring whose giftedness I might have doubted back then when they first began to preach. But I have to say that more often than not the men who had gifts for preaching were evidencing it very early on. Some were clearly gifted to an unusual degree. Their ability to handle Scripture and to teach it publicly with passion was beyond question. Occasionally a man like this would confide to me that he didn't feel called to a preaching ministry. Nevertheless, I've discovered that through the years these highly gifted men have risen into leadership within their local churches, including being valued Sunday school teachers. Their gifts have definitely made room for them. This fact raises a third issue in recognizing a call to preach.

God's People Recognize Those Whom Christ Gives

Just as our human bodies instinctively "know" what members to call upon for their various needs to be met, so Christ's Body recognizes members who are able to meet its need for teaching and exhortation. For these it makes more and more room.

This is one reason that a man who thinks that he

may be called absolutely must participate in faithful local church ministry in every way possible. Only then can a congregation of God's people observe and confirm the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given him. A man who withholds himself and his family from local church ministry effectively precludes his church's confidence in his testimony and recognition of his giftedness.

Jesus said, *My sheep hear my voice*. The same holds true for His undershepherds. The sheep hear the voice of the Chief Shepherd in the voices of the men whom He is giving to be their preachers and pastors.

One of my favorite stories along this line comes from the experience of George W. Truett, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas for forty-seven years and president of the Southern Baptist Convention (1927–29). As a junior college student preparing for law practice at Grayson College in Whitewright, Texas, Truett was also faithful in a small Baptist church. He was soon called upon to oversee the Sunday school, and sometimes in the absence of a minister he would conduct the services. One morning the attendance was enormous. He thought it unusual. The oldest deacon stood up and began to explain how God sometimes demands that a church do an extraordinary thing. Truett thought him unusually solemn. He couldn't grasp where he was going. Finally the deacon announced that the presbytery moved that they ordain George Washington Truett to the gospel ministry. This was the first Truett had heard of it! He jumped up and protested, "You have me appalled. You simply have me appalled." But one after another various church members got up and testified to their deep conviction that he ought to be preaching. At last Truett asked them to wait six months. But they responded that they wouldn't wait six hours! The next morning they reconvened and now, with their candidate's consent, they solemnly ordained the aspiring lawyer to a completely different calling than what he had thought himself best suited for.

Something similar must have occurred to Timothy, who was so *well reported of by the brethren* (Acts 16:2) that Paul proposed his accompanying him in missions work.

This, of course, is not simply a matter of popularity. Archibald Alexander, one of Princeton's early teachers of preachers, clarified,

Mere popularity is no evidence of a call; for this may be the effect of ambitious arts; and the admiration and plaudits of the careless multitude is a suspicious rather than a favorable circumstance. But if a candidate's preaching meets with the cordial approbation of the pious and judicious; and especially if God is pleased to make his ministry useful for the strengthening and comfort of His own people, it is a good evidence that he is called to the honourable work of feeding Christ's sheep and lambs.⁷

Spurgeon observed,

Churches are not all wise, neither do they all judge in the power of the Holy Ghost, but many of them

judge after the flesh; yet I had sooner accept the opinion of a company of the Lord's people than my own upon so personal a subject as my own gifts and graces. At any rate, whether you value the verdict of the church or no, one thing is certain, that none of you can be pastors without the loving consent of the flock; and therefore this will be to you a practical indicator if not a correct one.⁸

John Newton went so far as to suggest that a genuine call will be eventually obvious from even more than a *general* acceptability to spiritual people. It will be confirmed by the opening of a *specific* door for ministry. I quote him at length.

That which finally evidences a proper call is a correspondent opening in Providence, by a gradual train of circumstances pointing out the means, the time, the place, of actually entering upon the work. And till this coincidence arrives, you must not expect to be always clear from hesitation in your own mind. The principle caution on this head is, not to be too hasty in catching at first appearances. If it be the Lord's will to bring you into his ministry, he has already appointed your place and service; and though you know it not at present, you shall at a proper time. If you had the talents of an angel, you could do no good with them till his hour is come, and till he leads you to the people whom he has determined to bless by your means.⁹

He Gives Those Who Earnestly Desire This Office

Finally we come to what many place first, and which is, in fact, often first in a man's experience, but which ought, in my estimation, to be considered last when the moment of actual decision about calling is made finally and resolutely. It is the matter of personal inclination.

If a man **desire** . . . he **desireth** a good work (1 Tim. 3:1).

Taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but **willingly**; not for filthy lucre, but of a **ready mind** (1 Pet. 5:2).

It's often been said that if a man can do anything other than preach, he ought to.

Do not enter the ministry if you can help it, was the deeply sage advice of a divine to one who sought his judgment, Spurgeon told his students. If any student in this room could be content to be a newspaper editor, or a grocer, or a farmer, or a doctor, or a lawyer, or a senator, or a king, in the name of heaven and earth let him go his way.¹⁰

The thought behind that advice is that a man who is called to preach is not merely a man who *can* preach.

He is a man who *must* preach, who is compelled to preach. He has in him something of the burning compulsion to which Jeremiah testified: *His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay* (20:9).¹¹

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones explained,


A call generally starts in the form of a consciousness within one's own spirit, an awareness of a kind of pressure being brought to bear upon one's spirit, some disturbance in the realm of the spirit, then that your mind is being directed to the whole question of preaching. . . . It is thrust upon you, it is presented to you and almost forced upon you constantly in this way.¹²

This feeling will rise to a very high level.

The call of the Eternal must move through the rooms of his soul. . . . The candidate for the ministry must move like a man in secret bonds. "Necessity is laid" upon him. His choice is not a preference among alternatives. Ultimately he has no alternative.¹³

He will feel something of Paul's sentiment, *Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel* (1 Cor. 9:16).

Conclusion

In the end, we can be sure of this: it is not God's way to set men on a bleak course of futile searching to discover whether or not they are called. He Himself, and He alone, takes to Himself the entire responsibility for calling men into ministry. They do not call themselves. He calls them. When He does it, He does it convincingly. We may leave the entire matter confidently with Him. 

¹ James Stalker, *The Preacher and His Models*, 52.

² "The Ministry the Gift of Christ," *The Works of John Owen*, D. D., IX, 431.

³ *Lectures to My Students*, 20–21.

⁴ "The Vision of God," *The Art of Prophesying*, 143.

⁵ *The Works of John Newton*, II, 45.

⁶ *Preaching and Preachers*, 88–90.

⁷ Quoted by James M. Garretson in *Princeton and Preaching*, 47.

⁸ *Lectures to My Students*, 32–33.

⁹ *Works*, II, 45–46.

¹⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 26–27.

¹¹ Merton Rice, William Quayle's close friend and biographer, wrote of him, *He was a preacher from compulsion. His preaching broke out of his soul* (quoted by Warren Wiersbe in *The Pastor-Preacher*, 10).

¹² *Preaching and Preachers*, 104.

¹³ Jowett, *The Preacher: His Life and Work*, 12.

Bring . . . the Books

The Importance of Precision in Theological Terminology

Too often today theological terms and words are thrown around without an accurate and precise understanding of their meaning. As a result, preaching lacks credibility, articles and publications lack accuracy, and in some cases the church lacks unity. In this last instance, division has sometimes occurred between good Fundamental brethren who have quibbled over misunderstood terms and concepts.

Belief in a God who is precise demands understanding the minute details of His teachings and defining and referring to those doctrines in precise terms. It matters whether someone says that justification refers to God's "making a man righteous" or God's "declaring a man righteous." The doctrinal distance between those two statements is the difference between Biblical and erroneous theology. Truth leaves no room for error, even the slightest shades of it. The possession and use of a conservative and Biblical reference work that defines theological terms with precision can help eliminate inaccurate thinking and thus the pitfalls that go with it.

The balanced and mature Christian leader understands, however, that in the area of theology there are often variations of interpretation—even in conservative reference works that attempt to define the terms of theology. I possess four other dictionaries on theological terms as well as numerous books on Biblical and systematic theology. I do not agree with the Neo-Evangelical position of many of the authors, nor do I agree with everything they discuss and every conclusion they draw. I do, however, find much agreement in the subjects they write about. Their views on baptism, church polity, dispensationalism, eschatology, predestination, and other subjects are at times divergent from mine. The point of possessing such books is not that I necessarily agree with everything in them but that what they explain and the positions they define is done accurately and honestly. Then I possess a helpful tool—helpful in that it enables me to precisely understand terms, doctrines, and positions whether I agree with them or not. Even in discussing positions with which I disagree, I need to do so honestly and with some degree of intelligent understanding of that position. Fundamentalism is not helped when we discuss theological positions, whether ours or those of another, from a platform of misinformation or misunderstanding. We discredit ourselves in the eyes of those who have the facts and know differently.

That leads me to Alan Cairns' *Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Ambassador Emerald, 538 pages). The front cover indicates that it is "a ready reference for over 800 theological and doctrinal terms." The word "dictionary" in the title could be misleading, since the work doesn't just give a definition of each

term but actually contains a short article about it. These articles vary in length from roughly a quarter of a page to several pages. Terms and positions covered include both those held and rejected by Fundamentalists as well as positions held in the past and present.

The following alphabetical sampling of terms indicates the type of articles covered: Illumination, Image of God, Immaculate Conception, Immanence, Immediate Imputation, Immediate Works of God, Immensity of God, Immerse/Immersion, Immortality; Postmillennialism, Postmodernism, Practical Theology, Pragmatism, Praxis, Preceptive Will of God, Predestination; Locus Classicus, Logical Positivism, Logos, Long-suffering, Lord's Supper, Lordship Salvation; Spanish Inquisition, Special Grace, Spiration, Spirit, Spiritism. Additional articles include Depravity, Expiation, Perfectionism, Repentance, Sanctification, Shekinah, Universalism, Vicarious Atonement, and many others.

As the back cover states, "*The Dictionary of Theological Terms* has something for Christians at many levels of study. Pastors will find in it a compact but dependable source of help for their pulpit preparation. Students will discover a wealth of information about theological terms and movements, old and new. Sunday school teachers will benefit from insights that will give substance to their lessons."

The author, Alan Cairns, is a strong Fundamentalist. He has been a pastor for over forty years, first in Northern Ireland and then for many years at Faith Free Presbyterian Church in Greenville, South Carolina. The dedication of the book indicates that Dr. Ian Paisley (Ireland) "guided my first steps in the study of Systematic Theology, and from [his] life and work I learned that theology should produce in the student a passion for God, a total submission to Scripture, a Christ-centered ministry, and a love for souls."

Students of the Bible reveal their seriousness about its inspiration and infallibility by the care with which they define and explain its words, doctrines, and theological instruction. Good tools, such as *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, can enable us to make those definitions and explanations with precision and theological accuracy. ☞

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

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Straight Cuts

Gospel-Centered Buzzwords: An American Christian Pendulum

There is a pendulum swing rushing through conservative Christianity, and you can see it in our buzzwords. Put “Gospel-Centered” on the front of a Christian book and it will sell. These books are popular because many Christians are discovering that there has been a noticeable—and sometimes virulent—strain of moralism or legalism in their upbringing. God’s grace appeared in their hymns and in their Bibles, but it didn’t make their day-to-day sanctification very much different from that of a Roman Catholic. Their penance was a little less formal, that’s all. But after a while the pressure of a depraved heart proves too great. People falter. Their rules—touch not, taste not, handle not—are ultimately of no value in restraining sensual indulgence (Col 2:21–23).

Surprised by the Gospel

Milton Vincent’s *Gospel Primer* tells this very story. When Vincent sinned, he imagined God was fed up with him. He threw himself into paying God back. He pressed himself to shape up, to get back into God’s good graces. This pressure characterized his life. But finally, ten years into his first pastorate, he just couldn’t hold up under the strain. He reached a moment of crisis. It was then that he read with newly illumined eyes the opening words of Paul in Romans 5: “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.” He suddenly realized he didn’t need to get back into God’s good graces because *he’d never left them*.

All Things That Pertain to Godliness

Peter agrees with Paul, and points to those good graces as the only force that can give us “all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” We need “grace and peace,” he says. We need “divine power” (2 Pet. 1:2–4).

Peter calls this a power that God *has granted*—it came with our conversion. But that doesn’t mean divine power is no longer necessary, that we can now proceed toward greater godliness without it. God’s power is not the crank that starts the Model T’s engine; it is the engine. Divine power energizes the first major paragraph of Peter’s epistle. Every phrase in verses 3 and 4 hangs on it in a chain: God’s power gave us what we need for godliness *through* the knowledge of Christ, *by which* He has given us some wonderful promises, *so that* we might also share in God’s nature, *since we have* escaped from the world’s corruption.

We have every reason to revel in this gracious divine power, to enjoy the rush as we ride the pendulum on its swing toward God’s grace!

Take Care, Brethren

But swings have momentum, and we need some gospel-centered caution. No one can gain too deep

an appreciation or experience of God’s grace. But in our zeal to honor God and His powerful, even determinative, role in sanctification, we must be able to say *everything* Peter says. *Right after* praising God’s power to make us godly, Peter writes, “*Giving all diligence* [or *making every effort*], add to your faith virtue.” And knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, even love itself. Peter is doing what Layton Talbert does in an appendix to *Not By Chance: Learning to Trust a Sovereign God* (pp. 257–61). Peter is underlining both God’s absolute sovereignty and man’s undeniable responsibility.

He does it again at the end of the paragraph: “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall” (2 Pet 1:10). How can someone make his calling and election sure if these are things God does? This tension finds its way onto nearly every page of the Bible in one way or another. God is constantly setting high standards we can’t meet and then commanding us to meet them. “Love your enemies.” Then Jesus proceeds to demand something even more impossible: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt 5:48).

These demands can do only one thing if we take them seriously: drive us to God’s grace. Only if He “worketh in us” can we will and do His good pleasure (Phil 2:13). But—and here’s that tension again—from our perspective doing His pleasure still looks like *work* (Phil 2:12b). It’s still *effort* (2 Pet 1:5). It’s just built on a divine foundation.

Indicatives and Imperatives

The preacher who gives only imperatives is asking people to drive their sanctification like the Flintstones—without any engine but human power. Every command of God requires His omnipotence. That’s why the Bible doesn’t give only imperatives. It also gives all-important *indicatives*. The proper order of the two is built into the very structure of books like Romans and Ephesians: the “indicative” of what God has done always come before the “imperatives” of what we must do. God’s prior actions fuel and direct our sanctification, and this is a life-saving, legalism-killing truth.

Our preaching should exalt God’s grace as well as drive home God’s demands. The only way to achieve the right balance—to stop the pendulum at dead-center—is to repeat what God Himself says. Indicative passages ought to give rise to grace-filled messages about what God has done. Imperative passages should produce strong exhortations rooted in the prior truths of grace.

Augustine put it this way: “Give what you command, and command what you will.” ☞

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

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Martin Luther (1483–1546)

In 1535, Martin Luther wrote for his barber a short little volume entitled *A Simple Way to Pray*. His first guideline was,

When I feel that I have become cool and joyless in prayer, because of other tasks or thoughts (for the flesh and the devil always impede and obstruct prayer), I take my Psalter, hurry to my room . . . and as time permits, I say quietly to myself and word for word the Lord's Prayer, The Ten Commandments, The Apostles Creed and . . . some Psalms.

He recommended,

When your heart has been warmed by such recitation to yourself (of The Ten Commandments, the Words of Christ, etc.) . . . kneel or stand with your hands folded and your eyes towards Heaven and speak or think as briefly as you can, "O Heavenly Father, dear God, I am a poor, unworthy sinner. I do not deserve to raise my eyes or hands toward You or to pray. But because You have commanded us all to pray and have promised to hear us and through Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, have taught us both how, and what, to pray, I come to You in obedience to Your Word, trusting in Your gracious promises."

Cotton Mather (1663–1728)

The early New England pastor of Boston's South Church, Cotton Mather, wrote in his diary on April 8, 1681, "When I can't pray, I'll groan. There is an, 'It may be,' a 'Who knows!,' a 'Who can tell!' But the Lord may pity me and relieve me."

Two months later, on June 4, he recorded a convicting encounter with one of his books on prayer.

This morning as I was going, for I know not what myself, into one of our chambers, I accidentally took up a book, lying there; which was Mr. H. Lukins of Prayer. There I lit upon this passage, "Some men go to market only for company and curiosity, and such are soon weary of being there; and may come home as soon as they please. But those that are men of much business, and great dealing have many occasions to take up their time, which cause them many times to stay late. Formal Christians have little to do with God when they come to Him only for company or custom, but a serious Christian, that understands the business of Christianity, hath so much to do, when he comes to the Throne of Grace and the Favour of God, to desire towards in so many particular cases and on so many occasions, that he hardly knows how to get away."

These words were to me like a rebuke of thunder. I thought, they came to me, as if the Lord from Heaven had intended me an admonition for slothfulness, the lukewarmness, the formality, which I saw was of late grown upon me, in the ways of God. And I hope, not without some impression!

J. Sidlow Baxter (1903–99)

Born in Australia and reared in England, Baxter attended Spurgeon's Theological College in London and pastored in Scotland and England. He authored some thirty books and ministered throughout the UK, the US, and Canada. Here are some of his reflections, as a minister, on personal prayer.

Most of us need to lift our prayer life from the tyranny of our moods. Let me give one illustration, a leaf out of my own diary.

When I entered the ministry in 1928 I determined that I would be the most "Methodist" Baptist in the history of the world. Talk about perfectionism! Talk about making plans for the day! They must have been a marvel to both angels and demons. But, just as the stars in their courses fought against Sisera long ago, so the stars in the courses seemed set on smashing my well-made plans to smithereens. Oh, I would start. You know, I'd rise at 5:30. Fifteen minutes to wash and dress. Then an hour and a half of prayer and Bible reading. Half an hour for breakfast. Thirty minutes for a constitutional—to walk up to the woods, breathe deep and, when nobody was looking, run now and again—that's a constitutional.

I had everything all planned out; it was wonderful. Now I won't take time telling you all the subtle subterfuges which Satan used to trip me up and trick me out of keeping my plans. But I found that with increasing administrative duties and responsibilities in the pastorate my plans were going haywire. My time for prayer was getting crowded out and my periods of study with the Bible were getting scarcer. That was bad enough, but it was worse when I began to get used to it. And then I began excusing myself. My prayer life became a case of sinning and repenting. Every time I got down to pray I had to start weeping and asking the Lord's forgiveness. I had to repent that I hadn't prayed more and ask Him to help me to do better in the future. All such things really take the pleasure out of praying! Then it all came to crisis.

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

Charles Spurgeon

At a certain time one morning I looked at my watch. According to my plan, for I was still bravely persevering, I was to withdraw for an hour of prayer. I looked at my watch and it said: "Time for prayer, Sid." But I looked at my desk and there was a miniature mountain of correspondence. And Conscience said, "You ought to answer those letters." So, as we say in Scotland, I swithered. I vacillated. Shall it be prayer? Shall it be letters? Yes, no. Yes, no. Yes, no. And while I was swithering a velvety little voice began to speak in my inner consciousness: "Look here, Sid, what's all this bother? You know very well what you should do. The practical thing is to get those letters answered. You can't afford the time for prayer this morning. Get those letters answered."

But I still swithered, and the voice began to reinforce what it had said. It said, "Look here, Sid, don't you think the Lord knows all the busy occupations which are taking your time? You're converted, you're born again, and you're in the ministry. People are crowding in; you're having conversions. Doesn't that show that God is pleased with you? And even if you can't pray, don't worry too much about it. Look, Sid, you'd better face up to it. You're not one of the spiritual ones!"

I don't want to use extravagant phrases, but if you had plunged a dagger into my bosom it couldn't have hurt me more. "Sid, you are not one of the spiritual ones."

I'm not the introspective type, but that morning I took a good look into Sidlow Baxter. And I found that there was an area of me that did not want to pray. I had to admit it. It didn't want to pray. But I looked more closely and I found that there was a part of me that did. The part that didn't was the emotions, and the part that did was the intellect and the will.

Suddenly I found myself asking Sidlow Baxter, "Are you going to let your will be dragged about by your changeful emotions?" And I said to my will: "Will, are you ready for prayer?" And Will said, "Here I am, I'm ready." So Will and I set off to pray. But the minute we turned our footsteps to go and pray all my emotions began to talk: "We're not coming, we're not coming." And I said to Will, "Will, can you stick it?" And Will said, "Yes, if you can." So Will and I, we dragged off those wretched emotions and we went to pray, and stayed an hour in prayer.

If you had asked me afterwards, "Did you have a good time?" do think I could have said yes? A good time? No, it was a fight all the way!

What I would have done without the companionship of Will, I don't know. In the middle of the most earnest intercessions I suddenly found one of the principal emotions way out on the golf course, playing golf. And I had to run to the golf course and say "Come back." And a few minutes later I

found another of the emotions; it had traveled one and a half days in advance and it was in the pulpit preaching a sermon I had not even yet prepared. And I had to say, "Come back."

I certainly couldn't have said we had a good time. It was exhausting, but we did it.

The next morning came. I looked at my watch and it was time. I said to Will, "Come on, Will, it's time for prayer." And all the emotions began to pull the other way and I said, "Will, can you stick it?" And Will said, "Yes, in fact I think I'm stronger after the struggle yesterday morning." So Will and I went in again.

The same thing happened. Rebellious, tumultuous, uncooperative emotions. If you had asked me, "Have you had a good time?" I would have had to tell you with tears, "No, the heavens were like brass. It was a job to concentrate. I had an awful time with the emotions."

This went on for about two and a half weeks. But Will and I stuck it out. Then one morning during that third week I looked at my watch and I said, "Will it's time for prayer. Are you ready?" And Will said, "Yes, I'm ready."


And just as we were going in I heard one of my chief emotions say to the others, "Come on, fellows, there's no use wearing ourselves out: they'll go on whatever we do."

That morning we didn't have any hilarious experience of wonderful visions with heavenly voices and raptures. But Will and I were able with less distraction to get on with praying. And that went on for another two or three weeks. In fact, Will and I had begun to forget the emotions. I would say, "Will, are you ready for prayer?" And Will replied, "Yes, I'm always ready."

Suddenly one day while Will and I were pressing our case at the throne of the heavenly glory one of the chief emotions shouted, "Hallelujah!" and all the other emotions suddenly shouted, "Amen!" For the first time the whole territory of James Sidlow Baxter was happily coordinated in the exercise of prayer, and God suddenly became real and heaven was wide open and Christ was there and the Holy Spirit was moving and I knew that all the time God had been listening.

The point is this: the validity and the effectuality of prayer are not determined or even affected by the subjective psychological condition of the one who prays. The thing that makes prayer valid and vital and moving and operative is "My faith takes hold of God's truth."

Brothers and sisters, soon now we shall be meeting Him. When you meet Him, and I speak reverently, when you feel His arms around you, and when you embrace as well as adore Him, don't you want to be able to look into that wonderful face and say, "Lord, at last I'm seeing face-to-face the One I have for years known heart to heart."

Why don't you resolve that from this time on you will be a praying Christian? You will never, never, never regret it! Never! 

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The Biblical Concept of Grace (Continued from pg. 19)

closely related to the *chesed* of God (2 Sam. 7:15; 1 Chron. 17:13). This *chesed* would never be removed, even though David's descendants would be punished for their covenant disobedience (Ps. 89:33–37). This is the OT concept of grace.

Linking the OT and NT Concepts of Grace (*Chesed* and *Charis*)

The NT employs only one major term for “grace” (i.e. *charis*). The related term, *charisma*, is a “gift” which some translate as a “gift of grace.” Therefore, Ryrie observes, “Grace is the peculiar property of the Christian religion, and Christianity gave grace a meaning it never had before.”³ We can accurately say that Jesus Christ is the embodiment of the grace of God. His mission on earth was a mission of grace. The salient text is found in John 1:16, 17. Christ is literally the grace of God incarnate. Every facet of His being ministers grace to His own.

Linking the OT term *chesed* and the NT term *charis* is possible through observation of their meanings within various Scriptural contexts. If *chesed* and *charis* possess virtually the same overall meaning, then they are synonyms. We find this to be incontrovertibly true (reference TDNT, Vol. IX, 2a, p. 381), as in the following examples.

- Meaning of delight, charm, or loveliness: Luke 4:22; Ephesians 4:29.
- Meaning of good will, lovingkindness: Acts 7:10 (Joseph received favor in the sight of Pharaoh—favor bestowed by a superior upon an inferior); 2 Corinthians 9:14, 15 (“grace” in verse 14 is *charin* and “thanks” in verse 15 is *charis*)!
- Primary meaning of steadfast faithfulness in all its intense persistence and tenacity: Romans 5:15–21!

Joseph Henry Thayer links *chesed* and *charis* when he states that *charis* “refers to the merciful kindness by which God, exerting His holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of Christian virtues.”⁴ Thus, The Christian salvation experience (from its beginnings at conversion to its culmination of purpose in glorification) is saturated by the grace of God. His grace is steadfast (OT) and bestowed as a gift through Jesus Christ (NT).

A Final Development: Growing in Grace and Knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18)

Believers are commanded, through the present imperative, to “grow in grace.” Peter alone uses this expansive use of the word grace. I confess that it baffled me for a while. How are we supposed to grow in grace? Repeatedly, the Bible stresses that grace is from God, a fact at the center of the Biblical concept of grace. Grace does not come from man—not from a man in religious authority, nor from the man who needs the grace. We do not possess it. It is distinctively divine. God grants us His grace; we do not earn it or exercise it ourselves. Grace is not “of yourselves” (Eph. 2:8, 9).

Consider the following insights. Peter is not telling us to be “gracious.” He is telling us to grow in divine grace—something that it seems we cannot do. The answer lies in a change of perspective. We are to see ourselves as operating within a sphere or context of grace. In a sense, Christianity does, indeed, exist within a “bubble.” A snow globe is a bubble—a sphere where the liquid and the “snow” are contained. As we live out our Christian lives, we do everything within the sphere—the bubble—of grace. In the context of grace, we flourish. As we focus our hearts on grace, and rejoice in it through God's Word, we reflect on what He has done for us.

Aware that He has redeemed us and is straightening out our thinking, we enjoy new life, bearing much fruit for Him. God provides for us and protects us as His own within the sphere of His grace (2 Pet. 1:3). To use another comparison, it is as if the Master Gardener has placed us in the most fertile soil of the greenhouse of His grace and has given us just the right amount of nutrients. He leans over us and says, “Grow!” Specifically, we are to grow in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior through the special revelation of the Word of God. There, we learn that grace is all from God.

To enjoy consistent growth, we must consistently find grace as it is revealed in the Word. An ongoing saturation with the Word of God is essential for us to learn more about Jesus Christ and to grow in the knowledge of Him. Of course, we miss the larger point if we think Peter simply tells us to read the Bible. The context of Peter's command is a discussion of spiritual stability. He explains the ability to grow to a point of spiritual maturity that moves beyond the adolescent stages of Christian development. Peter describes a comprehensive grasp of the person and work of Jesus Christ that is in itself sort of vaccination against doctrinal error. In every case, those in spiritual error are skewed on some vital point doctrine on the nature of the person of Christ. Who He is, what He said, and what He did are always relevant to our understanding of the “right way” (John 14:6).

The sphere of grace in which we live is a place of rich blessing. It is secure, unlike the fearful bondage of a church-bestowed parole from persistent sin. Peter's doxology is a fitting conclusion. Glory will be heaped on Christ both in this present age and (literally) “in eternity's day.” Armed with the Biblical concept of grace, we will keep on growing in Christ through the catalyst of grace. In Heaven we will confess that we have arrived due to God's persistent grace and with the hymn writer exclaim, “Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!”

Bob Harrison Jr. pastors Fellowship Baptist Church in Baden, Pennsylvania. His wife of nineteen years, Sheri, and their three children all contribute to make his ministry sustainable. Bob holds a BA (Bible), MA (Pastoral Studies), and MDiv degrees from Bob Jones University.



¹ Ryrie, C. C. *The Grace of God*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1975, p. 11.

² “Cardinal Wuerl's Homily at Rite of Reception for the St. Luke Community,” dated October 10, 2011, http://www.catholic.org/national/national_story.php?id=43163.

³ Ryrie, p. 27.

⁴ Thayer, J. T. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, New York: American Book Co., 1889, p. 666.

Has Technology Changed Us?

Joel Arnold

“We were just a group of college kids,” recalls Mark Zuckerberg, the twenty-seven-year-old founder of Facebook. “Little by little . . . it just kept getting wider and wider, and we just went, ‘Wow.’ Then one day it kind of hit us that we could play a leading role.” When “Thefacebook.com” launched in 2004, it was a dorm room project by three eggheads. Today nearly half of all Americans and one out of every seven people in the world uses it actively. From all appearances, Mark Zuckerberg achieved his goal “to change the world.”¹

Change is happening faster than anyone can keep up with. As technology inserts itself into every part of daily life, it’s impossible not to wonder how it is affecting us. Neil Postman feels that computers have stolen our ability to reason; Nicholas Carr thinks it’s rewiring our brains; David Gordon believes that technology is making us terrible preachers by keeping us from reading high literature.

Meanwhile, many pastors see real changes in their congregations. How can you not blame technology for a twenty-three-year-old who is apathetic at church but passionate about his Xbox? Or what about the family that attends sporadically on Sunday mornings because they can catch MP3s online while meeting their social needs through Facebook? Or what do you tell your sixteen-year-old son when he wants to empty his bank account on an iPhone 4S, just because it’s new and seems cool?

Under such pressures, it’s hard not to blame technology

for weakness in our churches and families, and it’s tempting to wish we could somehow return to the pre-Internet age. Wouldn’t we be better off without the constant pressures of digital life, the world-awareness that the Internet brings, and the never-ending rings, beeps, and buzzes?

But Scripture cuts through our confusion by emphasizing that these problems aren’t new at all—they’re as old as the Fall. The wisest philosopher and cultural commentator who ever lived reminds us, “Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us” (Eccles. 1:9, 10).


Fallen people have always exploited every possible technology to resist God and fulfill their lusts. Show them how to make bricks and they’ll build a tower to Heaven (Gen. 11:3, 4). Give them metallurgy and they’ll make idols (Exod. 32:4). Teach them to write and they’ll conspire against God (2 Sam. 11:14, 15). The problem isn’t in the tools they use—it’s the wicked hearts those capabilities reveal. The solution, therefore, can be nothing short of life-transformation through the power of the gospel.

Is it possible that while living in a blinded culture we might have inadvertently accepted one of the distortions of our age—the lie that technology inaugurated a unique era in human history? Might we have strayed into unbelief by seeking new and different answers to people’s problems just because the glowing screens seem so revolutionary? Might we have started to think that technology is our problem, when it’s really an age-old matter of our hearts?

Continued on page 30



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Even a stopped clock is right twice a day. —Unknown

If the Holy Ghost is indwelling a man or woman, no matter . . . how Christlike they are, the lasting thought you go away with is—what a wonderful being the Lord Jesus Christ is. —Oswald Chambers

In spite of all devils there shall be saints. —Joseph Hall

It is absurd to imagine that God should justify a people and not sanctify them. —Thomas Watson

Holiness indeed is perfected in heaven: but the beginning of it is invariably confined to this world. —John Owen

The Spirit's control will replace sin's control. His power is greater than the power of all your sin. —Erwin Lutzer

God does not fill with His Holy Spirit those who believe in the fullness of the Spirit, or those who desire Him, but those who obey Him. —F. B. Meyer

Die before you die. There is no chance after. —C. S. Lewis

In coming to Christ we do not bring our old life up to a higher plane; we leave it at the cross. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die. —A. W. Tozer

To be another than I am, I must abandon that I am. —John Chrysostom

There is a beauty in holiness as well as a beauty of holiness. —George Swinnock

There is no imagination . . . more foolish, none so pernicious, as this—that persons not purified, not sanctified, not made holy in their life, should afterwards be taken into that state of blessedness which consists in the enjoyment of God. —John Owen

It is extraordinary how things fall off from a man like autumn leaves once he comes to the place where there is no rule but that of the personal domination of the Holy Spirit. —Oswald Chambers

God would not rub so hard if it were not to fetch out the dirt that is ingrained in our natures. God loves purity so well He had rather see a hole than a spot in His child's garments. —William Gurnall

There is nothing destroyed by sanctification but that which would destroy us. —William Jenkyn

Some people won't suffer in silence because that would take the pleasure out of it. —Unknown

The infilling of the Holy Ghost makes us witnesses to Jesus, not wonder-workers. The witness is not to what Jesus does, but to what He is. —Oswald Chambers

Holiness hath in it a natural tendency to life and peace. —Elisha Coles

I do not mean by holiness the mere performance of outward duties of religion, coldly acted over, as a task; but I mean an inward soul and principle of divine life that spiriteth all these. —Ralph Cudworth

Faith is the least self-regarding of the virtues. . . . Faith is occupied with the Object upon which it rests and pays no attention to itself at all. Faith is the gaze of a soul upon a saving God. —A. W. Tozer

A fault denied is twice committed. —Unknown

The average man's idea of a good sermon is one that goes over his head—and hits one of his neighbors. —Unknown

After sanctification, it is difficult to state what your aim in life is because God has taken you up into His purposes. —Oswald Chambers

It is altogether doubtful whether any man can be saved who comes to Christ for His help but with no intention to obey Him. —A. W. Tozer

Strange how percentages work out. We've met two hundred people who have had their fenders smashed in parking lots, but never one that's smashed anybody else's. —Bill Vaughn

Scripture does not emphasize a robot-like conformity to a list of prohibited and prescribed actions. . . . A proper attitude of heart is essential to the right practice of personal separation. —Fred Moritz

Only God can make us holy, but He will not do it without our cooperation. As in so many areas of the Christian life, there is a curious mingling of the divine and the human. —William MacDonald

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

Grown-Up Christianity

What does “grown-up Christianity” look like? The same Scripture that reveals Jesus as the only way of salvation also exhorts us to “grow in grace.” But what does a full-grown believer look like? That question seemed simplistic in years gone by, but some segments of “Christianity” have sought to redefine sanctification and “Christlikeness.” Those segments of Christianity approve lifestyle choices that were once handily dismissed. Bible-believing Christians do not want to hang on to stereotypes simply for the sake of history, but we need to take a serious look at the choices we make within our culture. This year’s conference was designed to review the Biblical mandates connected with that desire.

“Growing in Grace” was the theme of the 92nd Annual Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International meeting in Chandler, Arizona. Pastor Mike Sproul, the staff, and members of Tri-City Baptist Church did an exceptional job hosting the meeting. Their beautiful facilities effectively blocked the “dry heat” outside but offered warmth inside. Tri-City Baptist Church’s music pastor, Dave Stertzbach, not only led the congregational songs, but also led the conference choir—a combination of choir members from several local churches. The outstanding, God-honoring music added to the “Growing in Grace” theme.

The general sessions began Tuesday Evening with Evangelist Steve Pettit and concluded with a luncheon at the Castle at Ashley Manor, where Pastor Mike Sproul shared “What a Pastor Learned on a Deployment to a War Zone.” The main session speakers addressed topics relating to the general theme.

Steve Pettit—“Union with Christ: The Foundation for Spiritual Growth”

Marty Marriott—“Sanctification: The Pastor’s Role in the Believer’s Progress of Godliness”

Kevin Schaal—“Confrontation and Conflict in Constructive Godly Relationships”

Mark Minnick—“Overcoming the Mind of the Flesh: Combating the Dynamics of How the Flesh Attempts to Enslave Our Minds to War against God”

James Maxwell—“Sanctification and Revival”

Jim Berg—“Do We Know What Christlikeness Looks Like?”

The main sessions were packed with valuable, convicting, and substantive information. Those sessions along with workshops on Wednesday and Thursday morning allowed the attendees to leave challenged, refreshed, and excited to serve the Lord.

Mingled with the Annual Fellowship is the Chaplains’ Annual Training. Dr. Jim Berg presented six workshops on “Crisis Counseling.” The comments and increased

attendance in the sessions verified the value of the training. We recognized the FBFI-endorsed chaplains in the Wednesday evening service and continue to pray for their safety and wisdom in a hostile environment.

Over three hundred registered delegates plus the guests from Tri-City and other local churches make us look forward to the June 11–13, 2013, meeting in Ankeny, Iowa. The 2013 meeting will be unique in that we have accepted an offer from Faith Baptist Bible College to host the meeting. Dr. Maxwell expressed his excitement to host the meeting, and many of our constituents will enjoy getting to know more about Faith Baptist Bible College. I trust you will make plans to join us.



Alaska Meeting

I Just Couldn't Leave the Parking Lot

The Lord Jesus Christ declared the work of the Holy Spirit in John 16:8: "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." No person is convicted of sin apart from the Holy Spirit—this is His work alone! On the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter preached in Acts 2:36, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." When the people heard this message, this is how they responded in verse 37: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The word "pricked" means that their hearts were pierced with deep conviction. They now wanted to know what they needed to do. Peter gave the answer in verse 38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remissions of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." That day, three thousand men received the Lord as their Savior. What a powerful manifestation of the Holy Spirit's working! We must constantly be reminded of what Zechariah 4:6 said—"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." It is always sobering to see the Holy Spirit bring deep conviction upon a person's life and draw him to salvation through Christ.

Not too long ago in one of our meetings a man was invited to come to our services. This young medical student came under conviction during the message; when I gave the invitation, he raised his hand acknowledging his need of being saved. But when the invitational hymn began, he gripped the pew in front of him and did not come down the aisle. I mentioned at the close of the service that if anyone wanted to talk with me about the matter of salvation to come and find me

afterwards. I stood in the church foyer for ten minutes, hoping that this young man would come to me, but he didn't. I saw him walk out of the church, so I turned around to talk to another person. A few minutes later, someone tapped me on the shoulder. I turned around, and a young lady said, "Excuse me, but this man wants to talk to you." It was the medical student.

He said to me, "I need to talk to you." So I took him into an office. As we sat down, he stated, "You know, I just couldn't leave the parking lot. I had to come back and talk to you."

I said, "Do you want to know how the Lord Jesus Christ can save you?"

He said, "That's why I came back." So I showed him from the Bible how he could invite Christ into his life. The young man bowed his head and received Christ as his Savior. He came back to the rest of the services that week.

It is always a thrill when the Holy Spirit begins to work in the heart of an individual! In my ministry of preaching as an evangelist, I have kept in my heart the words of 1 Corinthians 3:7: "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." The last part of this verse has been a constant reminder to me. It is not my intellect, sincerity, or charisma that will bring a person to salvation. Nor is it my trying to create an atmosphere or pulling on someone's emotions. No! It has to be the Lord's working in the hearts of people through the power of the Word of God and the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. Psalm 3:8 says, "Salvation belongeth unto the LORD." May we all rely upon the working of the blessed Holy Spirit to convict men of sin, righteousness, and judgment!

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

ANATOMY OF A ROYAL

I have heard some people—including some Christians—express their goal in life in these terms: “I want to be independently wealthy”—meaning, of course, that they are not dependent on any outside employer. Their goal is to be wealthy enough to be free to work only if and when they want to, not because they need to. Probably most people would prefer that situation. But it seems to me that an appropriate Biblical adjustment to the “independently wealthy” ambition is this: “I want to be dependently wealthy”—meaning that I want to retain both (1) a consciousness that I am wealthy in God and have in Him access to everything I need, and (2) a consciousness that I am dependent on Him to supply everything I need.

At different stages in his life, Asa portrays both of these postures. Yahweh rewarded his express dependence on Him. In time, however, amid the abundant blessing of God, Asa came to see himself as independently wealthy, with two interlocking results: (1) in seeing himself as independently wealthy, he abandoned a conscious reliance on the Lord; and (2) in abandoning his reliance on the Lord, he lost a submissive spirit to the Lord as well. The real potency of Asa’s example lies in the fact that *he was a genuinely godly man with a heart that was singularly loyal to the true God*. His story has divinely designed application for us—both individually as believers and corporately for our churches and institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Data

- *Reign*: 41 years
 - *Date*: 911–870 BC
 - *Age*: unknown
 - *Death*: disease
 - *Record*: 2 Chronicles 14–16*; 1 Kings 15:9–24
- *References below are to 2 Chronicles, unless otherwise marked.*

Asa reigned forty-one years. (If his reign ended this year, it would have begun in 1971.) In fact, during the time Asa reigned in Judah, the northern kingdom of Israel saw *eight* different kings: Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, Omri, and Ahab.

The brevity of his father’s reign and the length of Asa’s own reign suggest that Asa probably came to the throne at quite a young age. That seems corroborated by the absolute, childlike reliance on the Lord that characterized his early reign.

Key Words/Concepts

These are repeated terms that draw your attention to the spiritual/theological concepts that the author especially wants to emphasize for his readers.

- **Dependence** on God (13x) expressed in various terms.
 - Desiring God—*darash* (14:4, 7 [2x]; 15:2, 12, 13; 16:12)
 - Seeking God—*baqash* (15:4, 15)
 - Relying on God—*sha’an* (14:11; 16:7 [2x], 8)
- **Blessings** from God (7x) expressed in various terms.
 - Quiet—*shaqat*, quiet (ref. to the land); absence of disturbances from outside (14:1, 5, 6a)
 - Security—*nuach*, security (ref. to people) (14:6b, 7; 15:15)
 - Prosperity—*tsaleach* (14:7)

Auspicious Beginning—Purity and Prosperity (14:3–7)

- 14:2—Judah’s first “good” king
- 14:3—removed pagan influences of the world around them
- 14:4—required God’s people to seek/depend on God
- 14:5—removed unscriptural influences
- 14:6, 7—circumspect use of providential prosperity to prepare for future conflicts

Application: Our tendency in times of prosperity and peace is spiritual inertia. We need to be alert to use providential periods of peace and prosperity to pursue personal purity and fortify ourselves for future battles.

Crisis: God-Reliance in Impossible Circumstances (14:8–15)

Status: 14:8 inform us of Asa’s strength (580,000) because it sets the stage for the difficulty introduced in the next verse.

Problem: Over a *million* Egyptians are poised to attack Judah (14:9).

Response: Asa’s instinctive response is prayer (14:11).

Application: We pray most and best not when we are needy (which is always) but when we are *conscious* that we are needy (which is not nearly often enough).

Prayers are not recorded in the Bible merely as a matter of historical record but as models to inform and inspire our own praying. Asa’s is a model prayer, especially for extreme circumstances (14:11):

NARRATIVE: KING ASA OF JUDAH

- **Affirm the omnipotence of God.** “LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power.”

Our personal strength or utter helplessness is totally inconsequential to God’s ability to help us. Victory rests solely in God’s power and our dependence upon it. Without it, the strongest human forces may fail; with it, the powerless may prevail.

- **Acknowledge sole dependence upon God.** “Help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go.”

This is a major recurring theme throughout Chronicles—*relying* on God. “Religion” is often a pejorative term used to express human effort or human righteousness. But the word “religion” is from the same Latin root from which we get “rely.” When you ask someone about his “religion” you are asking about his *reliance*. This word “rest” is the same translated “rely” in 13:18 and 16:7 (2x), 8. The Hebrew word is very picturesque—to lean upon, rest your weight on. It is used of Saul resting upon his spear (2 Sam. 1:6), of a king leaning on the hand of a servant (2 Kings 12:7), of *not* leaning (relying) on your own understanding (Prov. 3:5). See also Isaiah 31:1 (“Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay [rely] on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!”) and Isaiah 50:10 (“Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay [rely] upon his God”).

- **Claim, humbly but confidently, your covenant relationship to God.** “In thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God.”

God is a God who “keepeth covenant and mercy [loyalty]” and He has bound Himself to His people by certain irrevocable promises. All our confidence rests not only in our dependence on God’s omnipotence, but in His willingness to employ His power on our behalf, because of our covenant relationship to Him through Jesus Christ.

- **Center your primary concern in prayer on the glory of God, not on your personal deliverance or benefit.** “Let not man prevail against thee.”

If this is sincerely done, it is not manipulating God to

link our prayers to the vindication of God’s name and reputation; it is adjusting our own perspective to what is really at stake and what really matters.

Space prevents us from looking at Asa’s grateful and righteous response to the God-given victory that was the answer to his prayer (15:1–19). But somewhere along the line, as the rest of the passage shows, Asa forgot his dependence on the Lord.

Crisis Revisited: Self-Reliance in “Manageable” Circumstances (16:1–14)

When Asa confronted impossible odds (Zerah’s million-man army), he *knew* he needed God. But when more “manageable” situations arise, he seems to assume he can handle these on his own and displays a reliance on himself, his own skill, his own wisdom, his own past success, and other humans. The consequences are disturbing.

Public Crisis (16:1–10)

Going up against two-to-one odds (especially against chariots, as 14:9 took pains to note) is one thing; situations that we recognize as impossible drive us to God. But going up against Baasha is something else; Asa seems to assume, “This is *manageable*. I know how to deal with this. I can handle this.” And he proceeds to (16:2–4). The inspiring account of Asa’s God-reliant confrontation with Zerah’s army stands in stark contrast to the self-reliant, calculating, worldly-wise way of handling this manageable threat from Baasha.

But then we read 16:5, 6 and think, “Well, it *worked*, didn’t it? Isn’t that what counts?” Just because we successfully overcome threats or obstacles “on our own” (as it seems) doesn’t mean that God is pleased with us or blessing us or approves of how we are handling things. Scripture frequently demonstrates that God can be displeased with us, or with a ministry, even when our plans work and seem to be successful. This passage is one example. Asa’s strategy was shrewdly pragmatic (16:2–4) and successful (16:5, 6). But God didn’t see it that way at all (16:7–9)—and it is God Himself who makes the contrast explicit between how Asa handled the two situations (16:8). The test of whether any life or leadership or ministry pleases or glorifies God is not whether it works but whether it is Scriptural. In what seemed an impossible circumstance Asa sought the Lord (note the end of 14:7); in what seemed a manageable situation, Asa didn’t (note the end of 16:9). God may have to

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Has Technology Changed Us?

Continued from page 23

Fallen human hearts have always been enthralled with the wisdom of the world while heaping up the alluring trinkets of their age. But when the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus touches a life, people change; lives change; priorities change. Hearts absorbed with the supreme value of knowing Christ still use technology, but their whole purpose in living is now absorbed with the kingdom of God and His righteousness rather than convenience, novelty, or fulfilling their personal desires.

Perhaps the *last* thing the twenty-three-year-old Xbox enthusiast needs to hear is that technology is making him a different person than any previous generation. Perhaps he needs an ancient answer: Jesus Christ paid dearly to buy his life, and wasting it on video games dishonors that sacrifice. Perhaps families tempted to skip church need to know they aren't on the cutting edge. People have always avoided face-to-face accountability and sought alternatives to church gatherings (Heb. 10:25; 13:8). Perhaps the problem with letting a sixteen-year-old buy an iPhone 4S isn't that it will rewire his brain. It's an issue that has been around as long as there have been sixteen-year-olds to struggle with it—covetousness and the lie that new things bring happiness. If there's something wrong with our preaching it isn't that we should have been reading high literature instead of watching television. We should have renounced both, locked ourselves in our studies with our Bible, and grown to love the Word who has been changing lives for thousands of years.

Consider these wise words, spoken long before the Internet was even a thought:

The problem confronting the Church today is not the new circumstances in which we find ourselves. That is what we are always being told, is it not? until we are all, I hope, sick and tired of it. The radio, the television, the motor car, and all the things that are being offered to the modern man, these, we are told, are the problem. The Church has never had such a battle to fight in her life as she has now against all these things that

draw people away. We think we are such experts on these things, do we not? And they are all completely irrelevant, every one of them. Let me tell you why. In different forms those things have always been there. . . . Before that evangelical awakening of two hundred years ago the churches were as empty as they are today, perhaps even more so, and they could not get the people to come to listen to the preaching of the gospel. Why? Because they were interested in other things. "But," says someone, "they had not got televisions!" I know. But they greatly enjoyed cock fighting and card playing; they greatly enjoyed gambling and they greatly enjoyed drinking. The world has never been at a loss to find an excuse not to go to Church to listen to the preaching of the gospel. . . . Because there is a change in the form of the pleasure, we think that the whole situation is new, and talk about the problem of the twentieth century, and all the things that are against us. Hell and the Devil have always been against us. The world has always hated the message, and people of the world have never been short of an excuse to avoid it.²

Joining with the clamoring voices of generation upon generation throughout the ages, the cultural commentators of our day proclaim that a new era has dawned. Somehow, they tell us, we are different from every generation that came before because of what we managed to invent. But God is the same; man is the same; the Word of God is sufficient. The answers to contemporary problems are the ancient truths of Scripture that have transformed lives from the first century until now. If our homes or churches are weak, it won't be because Mark Zuckerberg changed the world, but because we failed to follow the truth of God's all-sufficient Word. Are we prepared to proclaim and live these truths with confidence?

After completing a PhD at Bob Jones University Joel Arnold began raising support with his wife, Sarah, to serve in the Philippines. For more information about their ministry visit EveryTribeAndTongue.com.

¹ *The Facebook Effect* by David Kirkpatrick, 14–15, 43.

² *Revival* by Martyn Lloyd-Jones, 29–30. These words were first published in 1959.

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A New Definition for Reason

In March of this year atheists, secular humanists, and agnostics of various stripes and persuasions gathered at the Mall in Washington, DC, for what they dubbed a "Reason Rally." Their purpose, found on the website reasonrally.org, was in part to "unify, energize and embolden secular people nationwide, while dispelling the negative opinions held by so much of American society." As part of their promotion, they attempted to assure people that the gathering was not for the bashing of religion. "This," they preempted, "will be a positive experience, focusing on all non-theists have achieved in the past several years (and beyond) and motivating those in attendance to become more active." They did leave a little wiggle room in their assertion for the free discourse of their speaker.

The rally featured prominent speakers such as the president of American Atheists, David Silverman, as well as comedians Bill Maher and Penn Jillette. It was Richard Dawkins, however, who moved from "reason" to call on people to "ridicule and show contempt" for the religious and their doctrines.

This article can be referenced at <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/Religion/post/2012/03/-atheists-richard-dawkins-reason-rally/1#.T-yMXZHkaSo>.

A Peaceful Religion

In Abuja, Nigeria, six people were killed and

an additional fifty were injured in two separate attacks on churches. At the Christ Chosen Church the pastor and his family were reported to be critically injured and in the hospital when a suicide bomber drove his vehicle through the front entrance of the church.

In the town of Bui another service was interrupted as a gunman shot repeatedly into a crowd, killing one and injuring many others. While no one has claimed responsibility for the attacks, they are similar to the attacks of Boko Haram, a radical Islamic sect, who coordinated attacks last Christmas.

This article can be referenced at http://jewishworldreview.com/0612/nigeria_church_bombing_again.php3.

Shorter's Woes

Shorter University, a college affiliated with the Georgia SBC, has become one more illustration of the war against objective truth. Last October the trustees added a "lifestyle statement" that was included with contract to be signed for the coming year. The statement required a repudiation of any sexual activity that the Bible condemns (including premarital sex, homosexuality, and adultery), drug use, and public drinking of alcohol near campus. The statement also required an active role in a local church near campus.

An anonymous survey of faculty and staff revealed that only twelve percent intended to remain at Shorter for the next contracted year. Fifty

resigned immediately. In a written statement the university stated, "Through our policies, we seek to honor Jesus Christ. We understand that there are those who do not agree with our beliefs. We are not trying to undermine their right to those beliefs, but want to be transparent about our own."

Sherri Weiler, a tenured professor at Shorter, wrote, "Where is today's American Taliban? At Shorter University. Religious fundamentalism in any form (Muslim or Christian) is sheer lunacy in today's divided, fractured and tormented world. True peace is only to be found in opening doors, not closing the gates."

This article can be referenced at <http://www.democraticunderground.com/121827885>.

The Bulletin of Christian Persecution

Rather than a news article, this bulletin is made available on the Internet as a monthly service for those who want to see the scope of Christian persecution around the world. Not every account features the persecution of those who are theological Christians, yet the news articles reveal the ant-Christian violence that is ever a part of Satan's strategies in the world today.

The Bulletin of Christian Persecution can be accessed at <http://redcounty.com/content/bulletin-persecution-christians-may-10-june-26-2012>.

Hamas in Tennessee

In an article combining the writings of several authors, Eric Bell outlines

the investigative efforts of a few regarding the construction of the Islamic Center of Murfreesboro, Tennessee. One of the board members of the project has posted the Hamas terrorism pledge on his website. Hamas receives more than fifty percent of its funding from Saudi Arabia, from Muslim charities. The Hamas charter states that "our struggle against the Jews is very great and very serious" and calls for the obliteration of the Jewish State. According to the Hamas charter, they consider themselves the Muslim Brotherhood of Palestine.

The Hadith, a Muslim holy book, states, "The last hour would not come unless the Muslims will fight against the Jews and the Muslims would kill them until the Jews would hide themselves behind a stone or a tree and a stone or a tree would say: Muslim, or the servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me; come and kill him."

The article outlines the ties that the board of the Islamic Center of Murfreesboro has with Hamas and other terror links. Even though the building of this 53,000-foot mega-mosque has been ordered to stop (until some financing issues can be resolved), the builders have ignored the injunction and have continued to build anyway.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.faithfreedom.org/articles/political-islam/is-hamas-building-a-53000-square-foot-facility-in-america/>.

First in Gay Marriage

The US Episcopal Church hopes to be the first to demonstrate their blessing on gay marriage. In an Indianapolis meeting it was revealed that the change in the marriage code had the necessary votes to pass the Chamber of Bishops. The vote was formally ratified by a 111–41 vote on Monday, July 9, with only three abstentions.

"Today the Episcopal Church affirmed the human dignity of a deeply stigmatized population that is far too often victim to discrimination, bullying and abuse," remarked Rev. Lowell Grisham, a member of the Chicago Consultation.

The Episcopal Church has become increasingly open in its stance in favor of homosexuality. Sixteen years ago it allowed for the continued service of openly homosexual priests. The national convention that met in July of this year has stated, "No one shall be denied rights, status or access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disabilities or age."

This article can be referenced at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/episcopal-church-set-to-become-first-major-us-church-to-give-gay-marriage-blessing-77962/>.

PC-USA Struggles to Form Its Identity

The national convention for the PC-USA met during July of this year. Like the Episcopalians, they voted to determine their own stand and identity regarding the advance of homosexuality and the church. Conservatives won a narrow victory keeping its current definition of marriage "between a woman and

NOTABLE QUOTES

Happiness is caused by things that happen around me, and circumstances will mar it; but joy flows right on through trouble; joy flows on through the dark; joy flows in the night as well as in the day; joy flows all through persecution and opposition. It is an unceasing fountain bubbling up in the heart; a secret spring the world can't see and doesn't know anything about. The Lord gives his people perpetual joy when they walk in obedience to him.

A great many people are trying to make peace, but that has already been done. God has not left it for us to do; all we have to do is to enter into it.—D. L. Moody

I have to learn to identify myself with God's interests in other people.—Oswald Chambers

God does not allow his people to sin successfully.—C. H. Spurgeon

If I take care of my character, my reputation will take care of itself.—D. L. Moody

The Bible looks on sin, not as a disease, but as red-handed rebellion against the domination of the Creator. The essence of sin is "I won't allow anybody to 'boss' me saving myself," and it may manifest itself in a morally good man as well as in a morally bad man. Sin has not to do with morality or immorality, it has to do with my claim to my right to myself, a deliberate and emphatic independence of God, though I veneer it over with Christian phraseology.

The Bible looks upon the human race as it is as the result of a mutiny against God; consequently, you find in the Bible something you find in no other book or conception. The modern view of man is, What a marvelous promise of what he is going to be! The Bible looks at man and sees the ruin of what he once was. In the Bible everything is based on the fact that there is something wrong at the basis of things.—Oswald Chambers

Aman is never thoroughly converted until he delighteth in God and his service, and his heart is overpowered by the sweetness of divine love. A slavish kind of religiousness, when we had rather not do than do our work, is no fruit of grace, and cannot evidence sincere love.—Thomas Manton

a man" by narrowly defeating a proposal to change the wording to "between two people."

The PC-USA's Civil Union and Marriage Issues Committee had voted 28–24 in favor of changing the traditionally held position, yet after nearly four hours of debate, the vote was 338–308 in favor of keeping the traditional definition. The PC-USA is clearly a divided house on this issue.

After the defeat, Michael Adee, executive director of More Light Presbyterians, posted, "We have more work to do to show those who oppose full inclusion how truly wonderful the gifts that committed, married same-sex couples bring to our church. We're inspired by the progress we've made together and are just as committed to continuing this work, together."

This article can be referenced at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/presbyterian-church-usa-rejects-same-sex-definition-of-marriage-by-narrow-vote-77804/>.

Inerrancy Attacked

Richard Kremer, pastor of the Garden Lakes Baptist Church in Rome, Georgia, is another to enter the fray—attacking the inerrancy of Scripture. "Biblical inerrancy—the idea that the Bible's authors were safeguarded against error when inspired by God to write facts about science and history in Scripture—is a misleading and harmful concept that has been used to hurt people and is damaging to the cause of Christ."

This article can be referenced at http://www.abpnews.com/faith/theology/item/7586-pastor-blasts-biblical-inerrancy#.T_yZpHkaSo.

Compiled by Robert Condict, FBFI Executive 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.

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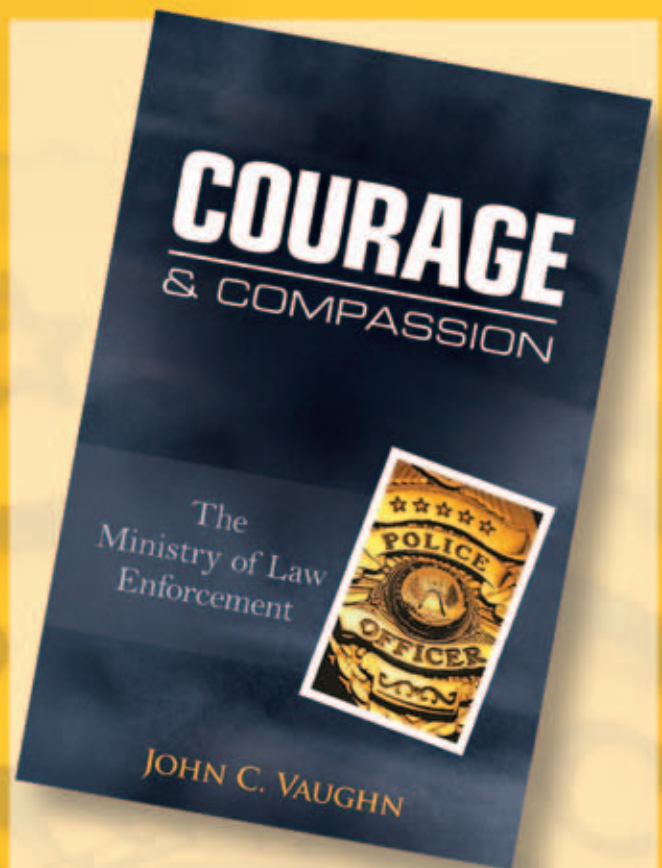
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Thank you.

Name Withheld

I really, REALLY want to thank you for the great FBFI Annual Conference. I can't even describe to you what a blessing it was to my own heart! I'm sure you get into even more stateside churches than I do, but I have all too frequently been discouraged by what I see. Too many Fundamental churches seem to be either defecting or dying. Compromise with worldly methods and ministry alliances with disobedient brethren do not smell right, but the stench of death is even worse. The conference was a HUGE encouragement because I saw in it vibrant life without compromise. The terms "fundamental" and "Fundamentalist" have certainly lost any kind of universal or cohesive definition, even amongst Fundamentalists themselves. I am not ultimately worried about whether or not the label survives, but I certainly want to see the ministry philosophy behind the FBFI form of Fundamentalism survive.

Not long ago I asked a rather well-known Fundamental Baptist pastor why he was not a member of the FBFI. He said it was because

it was "an old men's club." I found that rather interesting, because he's older than I am! What he meant, though, was that he didn't see enough young blood in it for it to have much of a future. I'm not sure that I agree with that pastor's assessment of the FBFI. Nonetheless, I see a great need to develop more opportunities for older Fundamentalists to interact with younger ones in live settings, not just virtual ones like online forums and blogs.

The transparency expressed by some of the session leaders meant so much to me. Numerous men were in tears, and they were sincere tears. The Spirit of God was at work! Too many young men view older Fundamental leaders only from a distance. Too often they see them merely as members of the "old guard" who take cold-hearted positions on the basis of principle without love. I largely grew up in that kind of Fundamentalism, and it was the FBFI version of Fundamentalism that saved me from becoming fully immersed in it. I long for many other young men to be exposed to godly, warmhearted Fundamentalist leaders like I was. These younger men need to see the same tears that I just saw flow from the eyes of men whose hearts were overflowing in love for God and their brethren.

*Rev. Kevin Callahan,
President
Inter. Partnership
Ministries, Inc.
Hanover, PA*

Alberto and Adela Marquez serve the Lord as Hispanic church planters in Phoenix, Arizona. To read more about their ministry, visit faitharizona.com.

Mark Massey serves as director of Victory Academy for Boys (vafb.org), which has been "[challenging] teens to academic excellence and Christian character since 1983."



Doug Wright pastors Keystone Baptist Church in Berryville, Virginia. Keystone Baptist (keystonebaptist.org) reaches out through church ministries, a Christian academy, and a fellowship of Chinese believers.



Dr. Keith Gephart is the pastor of Berean Baptist Church (bereanaz.com) in the southeast valley of the Phoenix area. The Lord continues to send families to their church; people are being saved, baptized, and becoming new members.

Dave and Claudia Barba assist church

planters through their Press On! ministries. They need a bilingual, church planting pastor who is a supported missionary or is willing to "make tents"

while planting a church in Tucson. They have several dedicated families, an excellent place to meet in a good location, a cash nest egg to help the launch, and can offer a small monthly salary. Visit ipresson.com for more information.



Dr. Bill Fortner has been on the Executive Board of Frontline Fellowship (frontlinefellowship.org) since its inception thirty-five years ago. Dr. Fortner became the executive director in 2005.

Mark and Diane Zimmer and their children serve the Lord in Yap, Micronesia, with World Wide New Testament Baptist Missions. For more information about their ministry, visit wwntbm.com.

Continued on page 39

Refueling in Arizona

The recent FBFI Annual Fellowship hosted by Tri-City Baptist Church in Chandler, Arizona, was a time for spiritual refueling for the huge crowds that attended every service and the many workshops. The sweet spirit of fellowship and the edifying messages were so helpful that everyone was talking about how they could not have anticipated what the Lord had in store for us. The spiritual refueling was illustrated for our uniformed military chaplains very early on Tuesday morning. Rising early for a 5:45 departure, the chaplains pictured here participated in an “incentive flight” aboard a KC-135 tanker for a refueling

mission in the skies over Arizona.

Arranged by host pastor Dr. Mike Sproul, who also wears the uniform as CH (LTC) Michael D. Sproul with the 161st ARW (Air Refueling Wing) Arizona Air National Guard, the flight was a routine mission for the refueling unit,

but it was a special treat for many of the FBFI chaplains. After a briefing in preparation for the flight, they boarded the flight for some coffee refueling and then settled in for the several-hour flight refueling F-16s from nearby Air Force bases.

Each chaplain took a turn in the refueling boom operator's station, seeing the refueling operation from a vantage point that allowed them to see the pilots face-to-face—behind their sun visors, of course. While these chaplains were in the air, many other chaplains and all the chaplains' wives in attendance participated in the ongoing training in Crisis Counseling provided from Monday through Friday by Dr. Jim Berg.

Each year the chaplains' required Annual Training begins with a banquet on Monday evening, hosted this year by the capable staff of Tri-City Baptist Church, who served up the tri-tip beef in generous portions. Our banquet speaker was Air Force veteran Rick Huntress, who told of the brokenness that God brought into his life through a life-changing accident on duty that put him in a wheelchair for life. He presented each chaplain with a signed copy of his new book, *Better to Be Broken*, which tells his full story (<http://www.rickhuntress.com>).

As the large assembly of chaplains stood before the congregation on Wednesday evening, representing almost twice

CH (LTC) Michael D. Sproul

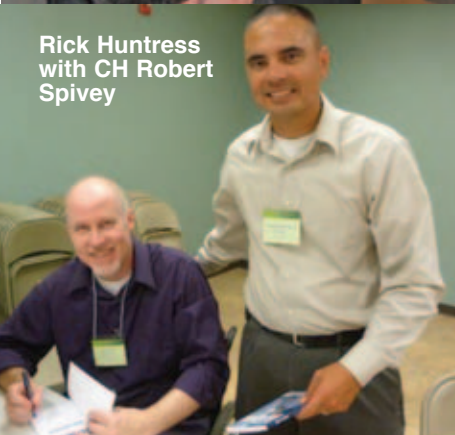




Crisis Counseling with Dr. Jim Berg



**Rick Huntress
with CH Robert
Spivey**



as many who were not able to attend due to duty assignments, we were all reminded of the many years of service to the FBFI Chaplaincy from Dr. Bob Ellis, our chaplain recruiter. Dr. Ellis is responsible for bringing nearly every chaplain now serving into the FBFI Chaplaincy. His tireless efforts and long hours of travel take him to scores of colleges and churches every year as well as to the home stations of our chaplains, where he meets with them, encourages them, and helps them in any way they need. Bob and Sylvia spend most of their time in their motorhome, on the road for the chaplaincy. A long-time pastor, Dr. Ellis is in many ways a pastor to our chaplains. He knows them and their wives by name and can tell you where they are stationed, what they are doing, where they came from, and where they are going. Without him, there would be no FBFI Chaplaincy.

Refueled from the fellowship with their fellow chaplains, the outstanding training from Dr. Berg and the General Session speakers at the Annual Fellowship, many of the chaplains assembled at Rudy's Bar-B-Que on Thursday evening for a "top off" of beef and beans. Our chaplains are spiritually and physically fit, but they always need our prayers for the dangerous and demanding ministry they perform. Please don't forget to pray for them. They minister in our stead to those who are in harm's way.

The week following the Annual Chaplains' Training and the Annual Fellowship, our chaplains continued to reach milestones and make news. Air Force Chaplain Allen Findlay graduated from Basic Chaplaincy Course (Air Force) and served as the Master of Ceremony for the graduation banquet. Chaplain Daniel Roland was accessioned into the Active Duty Army chaplaincy. And CH (MAJ) Mike Shellman again made history as one of the oldest men ever to graduate from Green Platoon and is now assigned to 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne).



**Bob and
Sylvia Ellis**

**CH Alan Findlay
graduation**





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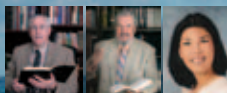
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News from All Over

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Evangelist Ken Lynch and his wife recently ministered in Kenya, East Africa. For more information, visit bbcwcs.org/kenlynch.

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At A Glance

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multiply our conflicts to teach us to rely consistently and exclusively on Him.

It's bad enough that God must rebuke Asa for failing to rely on Him. But it gets worse with Asa's response to God's rebuke; rather than repent, he is incensed (16:10). Remarkably, the first king of Judah specifically noted for his godliness (14:2ff.) initiated the first official persecution of a prophet! In fact, this previously exemplary leader of God's people even lashed out at others as well (apparently those who were sympathetic to the prophet's rebuke).

Personal Crisis (16:11, 12)

Sin, unrepented of, breeds more sin. Asa's failure to rely on the Lord in a public crisis—and perhaps more importantly, his failure to respond rightly when he was rebuked for it—was followed by a failure to rely on the Lord in personal crisis as well (16:12). His sin was not that he sought

the physicians, but that “he sought not to the LORD, but [only] to the physicians.”

Conclusion

It's often said that “God helps those who help themselves.” I'm not fond of that statement, though it does make a valid point in the proper context. Far closer to the Biblical mark is this: “God helps those who cannot help themselves and know it”—those who are humble enough to admit their helplessness and need and to seek Him and rely on Him. God is *looking* for people like that (16:9). Why? Because that guarantees that He receives the glory for His power, His wisdom, and His grace. Do not assume that because your prayerless, self-reliant strategies seem to work, God is obviously pleased with you and favoring your method and your mentality. The gauge of God's pleasure with us and our methods is not apparent success, but Scripture. The narrative of Asa is a warning against the danger of becoming “independently wealthy” and outgrowing our reliance on the Lord—for *everything*.



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