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FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME



Cutting It
Straight
Biblical Hermeneutics
for Tough Issues

Cutting It Straight

Biblical Hermeneutics for Tough Issues



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We would like to thank Dr. Brian Collins for coordinating this issue.

Hermeneutics is the study of how people understand or interpret books, drama, art, music, architecture, and any number of other aspects of life.

Biblical hermeneutics is the study of how people understand or interpret the Bible. Often Biblical hermeneutics is used to describe how people ought to study the Bible. This issue of *FrontLine* looks at several controversial issues that can be solved rightly or wrongly, based on Biblical hermeneutics. Some of these issues have immediate practical relevance: the relations of husbands and wives or the discipline of children. Others are theological in nature: the interpretation of the Creation accounts or our understanding of justification by faith alone. Though not as immediately relevant, these issues are foundational to a healthy church. It is our hope that not only will this issue provide Biblical guidance about controversial issues but that it also will enable us to sharpen our ability to rightly interpret Scripture.

—Brian Collins



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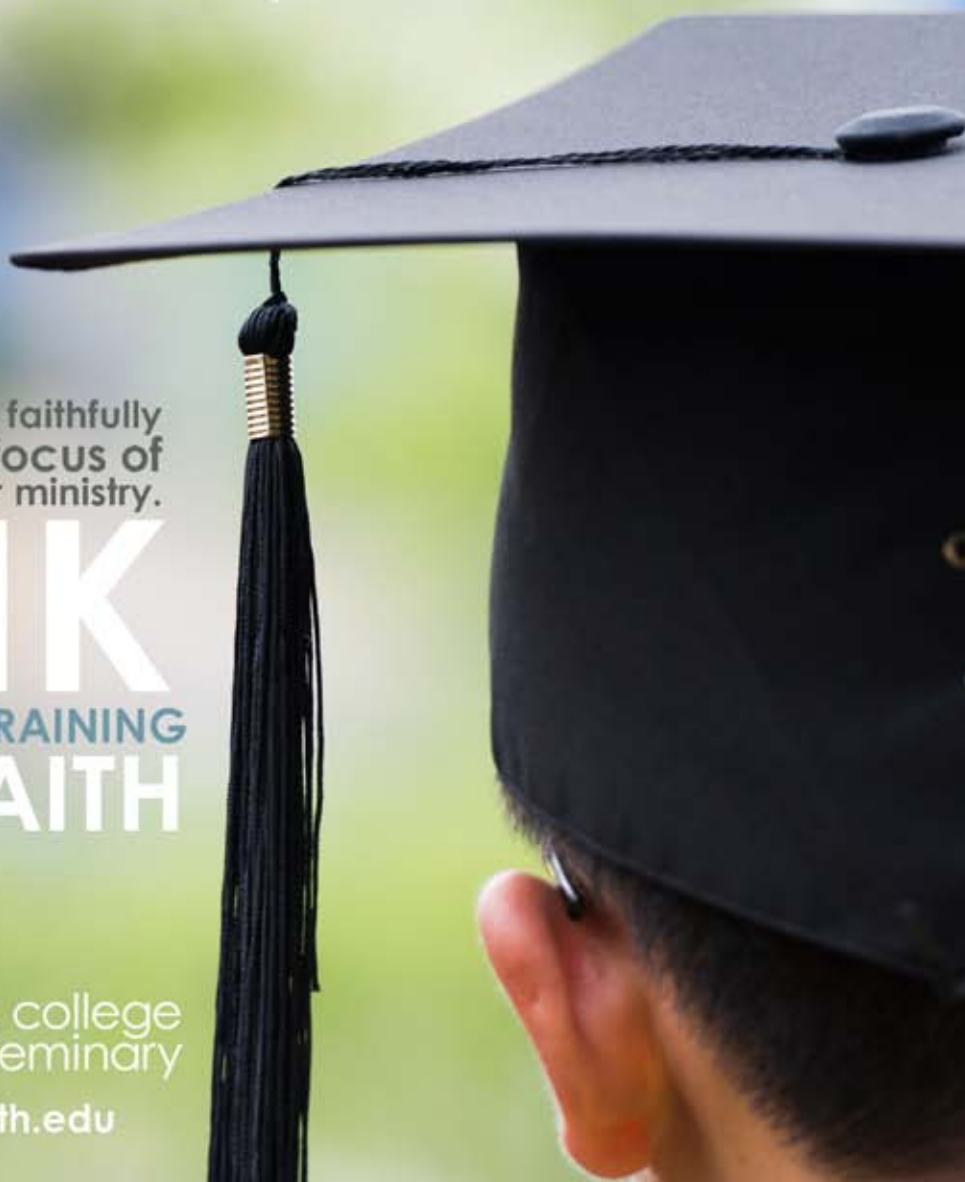
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Don Johnson

While I was reading a recent copy of your magazine I came across an article on "ministering in the Caribbean" written by Johnny Daniels, a missionary in Puerto Rico. God stirred my heart while reading the article and I was wondering if you would be able to provide Pastor Daniels' contact information (e-mail would be best) so I could reach out for more details on the ministry opportunities in that area.

Thanks for any help you can give and God bless your ministry.

*Chris Jackey
Colts Neck, NJ*

Editor: Thank you, Chris, for this encouraging note. You may contact Brother Daniels at pastordaniels@calvarypr.org.

I am the pastor of a church in Marshfield, Wisconsin. I just sat down tonight to read through much of the newest issue of *FrontLine* magazine. I particularly found two articles to be very challenging and encouraging at the same time. . . . I am referring to the article by Pastor Minnick (*Sound Words*) and the article by David Innes. Thanks so much for your continued labors to publish the *FrontLine* magazine!

*Gary Holloway
Grace Baptist Church
Marshfield, WI*

Elwood and Aletha Pfaunmiller are praying for the needed money for Elwood to travel to West Africa in November. The Pfaunmillers direct the entire work of Way of Truth Ministries and Way of Truth Baptist Missions. They are praying for individuals to come on board who can be trained toward leadership. National pastors need much counsel and advice as they continue to develop solid Fundamental churches. The Pfaunmillers are also involved with Community Bible Church in central Pennsylvania. They continue seeking someone to lead this work but have committed not to leave it till someone is brought by the Lord.



Pastor Matt Fagan and the members of Heritage Baptist Church (HBC) in New Hampshire are thrilled by the exciting things the Lord has been doing in their ministry recently: Andrew French, a full-time intern, served in the areas of music and administration; HBC held a Financial Peace University class that

greatly encouraged the members regarding finances; and HBC members were greatly stimulated toward evangelization and discipleship through the ministry of The Exchange.

Eagle's Nest Baptist Ministries (ENBM)

of Marysville, Utah, provides a boarding school for at-risk teenage boys, a counseling retreat for weary Christian workers, construction and mechanical skills for missionaries, and counseling for women in crisis. Jonathan Edwards, chairman of ENBM, is rejoicing about the progress being made on the new ministry building. The staff hopes to occupy it this fall. He also praises the Lord for the ministry teams that have come to help with the construction projects. ENBM held its first Biblical Counseling seminar in early summer. Pray for additional staff members as well as for the construction needs.



Peter Enns's Hermeneutic of Creation: In Step or Misstep?

Throughout the modern era, Christians have wrestled with how to reconcile Scripture and science. Much of this wrestling has focused upon the first eleven chapters of Genesis, and in particular, Genesis 1 and 2. Until recently, few conservatives denied the historicity of the Creation account in Genesis. Some sought reconciliation through theistic evolution, whereby God was still the Creator but the method of creation was evolution. Few, if any, found theistic evolution sustainable in light of a literal reading of Genesis. In recent years, some Evangelicals have begun to abandon a *literal* view of the Creation in favor of various *literary* views.¹ Among these is Peter Enns, who has offered what many Evangelicals think is a viable resolution that maintains the integrity of Scripture.² An examination of Enns's hermeneutic, however, reveals several missteps and the ramifications that ensue.

Enns's Position

Enns holds that much of the problem of reconciling science and Scripture is due to our modern way of thinking about Genesis. We supposedly place expectations on the text that it never meant to answer or address. To solve this alleged problem, Enns says that Genesis 1 through 11 is true in a theological sense but not in a literal sense. It should be understood figuratively within its own ancient Near Eastern context. In other words, it is like an ancient story or parable that was originally intended to teach higher truths about God. Thus, it is ahistorical and never speaks to historical or scientific truths.

Enns's hermeneutic begins with his unique view of inspiration. For Enns, inspiration is similar to Christ's incarnation. It is both divine and human. In order for God to communicate effectively with ancient mankind, He had to come down to a level that made sense to humans. With this we agree, but for Enns, this includes God's submitting to humans' ways of thinking even if those ways were wrong. Thus, God accommodated His message to the worldview of the ancient times, and He used ancient myths or stories to reveal truths about Himself to His people. Furthermore, Enns argues that those who penned God's Word were subject to their own sinful condition and finite perspective, and their culture clouded their thinking and tainted the words they wrote. As a result, claims Enns, Scripture contains errant ideas and mistaken statements that reflect ancient thinking, but according to Enns, this does not undermine the theological truth of God's message.

Enns centers his hermeneutic upon the purpose of why certain stories were included in Scripture. For Enns these

stories are not historical accounts but rather were meant to answer questions of self-definition regarding who the people were, why they were there, and how they got there. The ancient Near Eastern countries used myths to answer these questions and to define themselves. Enns postulates that editors, and not Moses, compiled the first five books of the Bible after the exile from Babylon. These "editors" used the idiom of the day and adapted myths from their neighbors to give the people of the nation a definition of who they were.³ Enns sees accounts such as the Exodus and those in Chronicles as post-exilic rewrites of Israel's history to show that they had continually been God's people since the beginning of the universe. In essence, they "rewrote the past in order to come to terms with their present."⁴

Enns contends that the Genesis account of Creation is a prime example of how the ancient Biblical authors were influenced by the mindset of their culture. When other nations wrote their creation myths, they were not teaching creation *ex nihilo*; rather, they were showing how their god organized chaos. By defining their god, they were defining who they were. According to Enns, the Biblical Creation account likewise "answers ancient questions of self-definition, not contemporary ones of scientific interest."⁵

Enns also applies similar logic to New Testament authors. Paul's treatment of Adam as a historical person who introduced sin into the world (Rom. 5; 1 Cor. 15) is one of the main problems that confront theistic evolution. Enns accuses Paul of creatively interpreting Adam's role in order to fit within his Christological focus. Paul does so, maintains Enns, because his thinking was that of his culture, which held to a historical Adam. Enns concludes that Paul's view of Adam's role in original sin is inconsequential to the solution of the gospel.⁶

Crucial Problems

An analysis of Enns's hermeneutic reveals several crucial problems. First, in Enns's attempt to define inspiration as analogous to the incarnation, he emphasizes the negative aspects of the human author, yet he ignores God's ability to overcome such issues. If Enns's view were true, God was limited to finite authors who were unable to pen His message faithfully without promoting erroneous worldviews along the way. Divine truth through personality is seen in Scripture, but divine truth through an author who is so influenced by his culture that he contaminates revelation cannot be seen.⁷ We must reject Enns's hermeneutic because it undermines the purpose of inspiration, which is an accurate revelation of the very words of God. Moreover, if the stories were mythological or fictional, how can we determine what is true in the Bible? Theological truths

based upon myth or fiction, and not historical fact, have an unstable foundation at best.

A second problem is that Scripture is made to be subservient to external forces, and this undermines the authority of Scripture. In Enns's view of inspiration and revelation, the message has succumbed to the ancient cultural mindset of the day. In his exegesis he claims that a literal understanding of the Creation account cannot withstand "the one-two-three punch of biblical criticism, biblical archaeology, and science."⁸ Enns argues that a new understanding of Genesis must take place if we are to hold any semblance of respectability with the scientific community.⁹ His hermeneutic essentially reacts to the ancient and modern cultural mindset and to scientific discoveries in order to define what truth Scripture presents.

Finally, Enns's hermeneutical approach can and often does lead to heretical conclusions. The denial of Paul's treatment of Adam as a historical figure forces Enns to abandon the doctrine of original sin. In essence, Enns says that Paul based his theology of sin upon a myth. Enns maintains that we are not bound to such interpretations and that what Paul believed in his time should not dictate what we in our modern time believe. Danger also lies in the extent to which one can carry this line of reasoning. In the New Testament, angel sightings were common. Should we ignore those passages because the first-century Greeks and Romans had a fascination with angels? Paul was rather strict concerning the role of women in the church. Should we abandon that practice because his culture did not value women as much as ours does? Do we ignore Paul's condemnation of homosexuality because the cultural mindset of his day opposed homosexuality and affected his thinking? Anything related to the mindset of ancient culture becomes fair game.

Other problems exist within Enns's hermeneutic, but those mentioned are the more prominent missteps.¹⁰ Enns accuses the Biblical authors of being contaminated with the cultural mindset of their day. Unfortunately, Enns himself is contaminated with the modern cultural mindset that evolution is true. While seeking to establish that Scripture is a product of ancient cultural preconceptions, he bases his entire hermeneutical system, ironically, upon the necessity to make Scripture conform to the modern mainstream cultural preconceptions of evolution.

Enns strives to remain in conservative circles, but his views are dangerous. He is a gifted writer and communicates easily with laymen and young adults, and he has swayed many of our own young people.¹¹ We must be diligent and answer with discernment. Although Enns's approach might appease theistic evolutionists, his herme-

neutic is fraught with missteps, and the ramifications are too great to accept.

Jimmy Tuck is a doctoral student at Bob Jones Seminary. His wife, Amy, is a faculty member in the Biology Department at Bob Jones University. They have two daughters.



¹ A literary view focuses upon genre, structure, plot, and purpose when determining the historicity of the text.

² Peter Enns has written several books that deal with Creation or hermeneutics: *Inspiration and Incarnation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005); *The Evolution of Adam* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2012); *Invitation to Genesis* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006); and *Genesis for Normal People* (Englewood: Patheos, 2012). Tremper Longman III, John H. Walton, and C. John Collins also offer similar views.

³ States Enns, "To claim that Israel, of all world cultures, somehow escaped that influence is, frankly, a peculiar assertion, resting on a theological presumption that it is beneath God to adopt these forms of speech" (*The Evolution of Adam*, 42).

⁴ *The Evolution of Adam*, 30.

⁵ *The Evolution of Adam*, 33.

⁶ Referring to Paul's use of Adam and the universal plight, Enns states, "Attributing the cause of universal sin and death to a historical Adam is not necessary for the gospel of Jesus Christ to be a fully historical solution to that problem" (*The Evolution of Adam*, 82).

⁷ Amos's message reflects his occupation when he used symbolism in nature with which a shepherd or farmer would be familiar (2:13; 6:12; 9:13, 15).

⁸ *The Evolution of Adam*, 7.

⁹ States Enns, "The scientific evidence we have for human origins and the literary evidence we have for the nature of ancient stories of origins are so overwhelmingly persuasive that belief in a first human, such as Paul understood him, is not a viable option" (*The Evolution of Adam*, 122).

¹⁰ For example, Enns holds that Paul repeatedly uses OT passages in ways never intended by the original human author. Enns seems to ignore the fact that the human author did not always know everything the divine author intended. For a more detailed treatment of the proper relationship of divine- and human-author-intended meaning, see Brian C. Collins, *Scripture, Hermeneutics, and Theology: Evaluating Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Greenville: Exegesis and Theology, 2012), 209–13.

¹¹ His colloquial style in *Genesis for Normal People* appeals to the high-school and college-age Christian.

The Hermeneutics

Changing American Attitudes toward Homosexuality

The pace of change in American attitudes toward homosexuality is something no one could have predicted when a Democratic president signed the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996.

Witness the difference even four years can make: When president-elect Barack Obama selected Evangelical pastor Rick Warren to deliver the inaugural prayer in 2009, a hue and cry was soon raised over Warren's opposition to homosexuality. Apparently, a compromise was reached: homosexual Episcopalian bishop V. Gene Robinson got to pray too.

One term later, President Obama asked another evangelical pastor to pray at his second inaugural: Louie Giglio. Same hue, same cry. But this time Giglio backed away. It's hard not to see this as a metaphor for the balance of national power on this issue. Change can happen fast.

The "Gay Christians"

The temptation for contemporary Fundamentalists will be to violate the clear teaching of Scripture (1 Peter 3:14–16; 4:12–16) by returning railing for railing and then bemoaning our loss of cultural influence. But it seems unlikely that we Fundamentalists, known for our rock-hard backbones, will ever give in to non-Christian pressure to justify homosexual acts.

Yet there is another danger waiting on the other side, even for Fundamentalists. It is the set of plausible arguments put forward by "gay Christians."

There are numbers of them out there, some theologically liberal and others apparently quite conservative, but all desiring to be both Christian and gay. They even appeal directly to Scripture.

It's their desire to remain in some sense Christian that makes them part of a relatively new brand of homosexual activist. Of course, Jesus warned some time ago about a false teacher "which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication" (Rev. 2:20). But I am not aware of any group in church history that has tried openly to wed "gay" and "Christian."

Gay Christians don't openly dismiss the Bible. In booklets, blog posts, and earnest YouTube videos, they instead put forth a case that the Bible you've always read doesn't say what you've always assumed.

This means—and here's my motivation for this article—that their arguments will sound persuasive to some people who want to retain their Christianity *and* engage in (or defend, or just tolerate) homosexual practice. This means,

I think, that their arguments are coming your way, and you need to be ready—not so much because NBC News is likely to interview you but because you must exercise loving Christian watchcare for fellow souls in your church who experience same-sex attraction. They are the ones most likely to be hurt, confused, and tempted by the gay Christians.

Five "Gay Christian" Arguments

This issue of *FrontLine* is focused on Biblical hermeneutics—the art and science of Biblical interpretation. And the five gay Christian arguments below all raise important hermeneutical questions.

1. Jesus never mentioned homosexuality.

This argument is, of course, irrelevant. The red letters in our Bibles are not any more or less divine than the black ones. And it's inaccurate, because Jesus did not have to mention homosexuality to condemn it.

One of the most powerful arguments against homosexuality is what might be called the "natural law" argument. Quite obviously, men and women were designed for each other. Paul calls this the "natural use" (Rom. 1:26, 27), and Jesus upheld it too, when arguing against divorce. Jesus considered God's original design for human sexuality to be authoritative: "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female?" (Matt. 19:4).

2. Moses and Paul's condemnations of homosexuality were colored by their limited knowledge: they were talking only about the exploitative forms of homosexuality common in their cultures.

This argument raises a very important hermeneutical issue. How necessary is an understanding of ancient history for accurate interpretation of the Bible?

Answer: It's highly necessary. But does it all have to come from outside sources? What about the Bible's own descriptions of the ancient world? Indeed, how many cultural practices in the Bible (levirate marriage, taking off one's shoe to seal a deal, a betrothal period) are impossible to understand without a history book in hand? Generally speaking, the Bible provides enough information within its own pages to understand these practices.

I'm not arguing that Bible dictionaries are worthless. I am arguing, however, for what we call "the sufficiency of Scripture." Did the Christian church have to wait till the development of the science of archaeology (just 150 years ago) to find out what Paul really meant when he condemned "men with men working that which is unseemly"?

of Homosexuality

And why should I assume that ancient homosexual practices are clear but Paul isn't?

Even the left-leaning Anglican bishop N. T. Wright has said,

When I read the accounts from the early Roman empire of the practice of homosexuality, then it seems to me they knew just as much about it as we do. In particular . . . , they knew a great deal about what people today would regard as longer-term, reasonably stable relations between two people of the same gender. This is not a modern invention, it's already there in Plato.¹

3. The Old Testament condemns eating shellfish and wearing mixed fabrics, things every Christian does. Christians are picking and choosing the texts they want to obey.

I admit it. I have consumed shrimp while wearing a polycotton dress shirt—in a church, no less. Those are clear violations of Leviticus 11:12 and 19:19, respectively. And yet, sandwiched in between those two passages I seem to ignore is a verse I continue to appeal to, Leviticus 18:22: “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.” How do I justify this apparent inconsistency?

This argument can't be answered in one line, but there is an answer. Christians have always known—since the time of Acts 15, at least—that the relationship of Gentile Christians to the Mosaic Law carries some difficulties. Jesus Himself recognized that followers of the Lord would have legitimate questions about the law and the Christian. He openly said He came to fulfill, not abolish, the law (Matt. 5:17). The law's sacrifices, of course, were fulfilled in Christ's own sacrifice (Heb 10:11–18). But Christ's redemptive work also fulfilled the function of the Law as a teacher (Gal. 3:24, 25). That means that laws such as the one about mixed fabrics serve as an illustration of holiness but are no longer binding. The teacher's lesson has been taught.

But as the New Testament makes clear, it's still wrong to break the moral commands God gave before Christ. It's always wrong to worship other gods, to murder, to commit adultery—and to practice homosexuality. Jesus did not dismiss the moral claims of the law. He showed that, in fact,

the law concerned itself not only with our outward acts but also with our inner desires (Matt. 5:27, 28).

This is a complex issue worthy of your study. Don't let this argument take you by surprise.

4. We don't really know what the Greek word translated “homosexuals” in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 means.

Paul was a Pharisee who knew his Bible well. When he twice condemns *arsenokoitai* there is good evidence to suggest that he invented the word as a way of summarizing the prohibition of homosexuality in Leviticus. This is the argument of the current standard conservative scholarly work on homosexuality, Robert Gagnon's *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*.²

Admittedly, it is difficult to pin down the meaning of uncommon words with absolute certainty (and this sword cuts both ways: pro-homosexual interpreters can't absolutely rule out the traditional understanding). But given the Bible's overall stance toward homosexuality, a pro-gay interpretation is unlikely, to say the least.

5. Ezekiel 16 never mentions homosexuality among the sins of Sodom.

It is true that homosexuality is never named explicitly in Ezekiel 16; the text refers only to an “abomination” the Sodomites committed (vv. 49, 50).

But remember, everything the Jews in Ezekiel's day knew about Sodom—which had perished over a thousand years before—is contained in Genesis 19. What other abomination could Ezekiel be referring to than what Jews then and Christians today can read in Genesis?

Perfect certainty isn't available here, either, but it doesn't have to be. The case against gay Christian arguments is cumulative; it doesn't rise or fall based solely on any of the Bible texts in this article.

The Future

“Gay Christian” arguments have been knocking down opposition to our left: unbelievers have been the first to pick them up, then liberal Protestants, then left-leaning Evangelicals³—tomorrow certain Fundamentalists?

Gay Christians don't openly dismiss the Bible. In booklets, blog posts, and earnest YouTube videos, they instead put forth a case that the Bible you've always read doesn't say what you've always assumed.

Continued on page 34

The Flawed Hermeneutics of Evangelical Feminism

We don't have women pastors in our churches. But those who do might not be the liberals you imagine. Some are Evangelicals, people who hold to a true gospel, salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. We call them evangelical feminists.¹ And not only does their view affect who can fill the role of pastor, but it also determines how men and women function in marriage. Moreover, they claim their position is firmly supported by a conservative interpretation of Scripture. This article aims to expose evangelical feminists' faulty support for their positions in contrast to the hermeneutics we practice as complementarians.²

Dissecting Hermeneutical Faults

The evangelical feminists' hermeneutic can appear very reasonable at first glance.³ However, a close look at their interpretations reveals several repeated errors, the four most common represented below with examples.

Redefinition or mistranslation of key terms and phrases. Concerning the term "help"⁴ in Genesis 2:18, Gilbert Bilezikian argues that this term does not imply any subordination. Rather it shows Adam's need for a "rescuer."⁵ Furthermore, illustrating one side of the most prominent debate in the gender-role controversy, Rebecca Groothuis (and many others) argues that the Greek term *kephale* (head) in 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23 does not hold any connotation of authority, but instead means "source" or "origin" exclusively.⁶

Dismissal of legitimate conclusions from narratives. Complementarian scholars maintain that when Adam named Eve in Genesis 2:23 he demonstrated his God-ordained headship in their relationship, just as Adam did when he named the animals.⁷ However, feminist Richard Hess simply writes that "the text nowhere states that the man exercised authority over the animals by naming them. . . . There is no obvious way in which the man exercised any authority over either the animals or the woman."⁸

Appeal to historical reconstruction to avoid the clear authorial intent. Gilbert Bilezikian dismisses Paul's argument in 1 Timothy 2:13, 14: "The fact that Adam was created first is meaningless for the ministry of teaching in the church."⁹ He subsequently argues that the only reason Paul acknowledges Adam's creation prior to Eve is to connect it to her deception by the serpent, concluding that she was more vulnerable because "as the latecomer, she did not have the training God had provided to face the tempter."¹⁰

Fabrication of an unspecified context. Evangelical feminists emphasize the need that "individual Bible verses

be interpreted in light of both their immediate literary context and the larger context of the teaching of the Bible as a whole.”¹¹ While this principle is hermeneutically sound, the feminist applications of it and frequent context invention result in interpretations that are far different from those of complementarians. For example, Gilbert Bilezikian relegates Paul’s prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:11–15 to specific instructions to the Ephesian church “in a state of terminal crisis,”¹² not timeless instructions for all churches. This interpretation is invalid because we simply have no information indicating that the Ephesian church was in such a state. Furthermore, such an approach could lead us to dismiss any of Paul’s instructions in the book.

Discerning Some Deeper Hermeneutical Problems

Three additional hermeneutical practices of evangelical feminists are even more disturbing. First, they marginalize male headship texts while claiming that we make our position a central doctrine. Gordon Fee insists that a “patriarchal” view is supported only by “implication” and “incidental evidence,” not by “explicit statements in Scripture,” while also arguing that complementarians make their position a “basic” and “primary” theological construct on the level of the doctrines of universal sin or justification by faith.¹³ This sort of argumentation simultaneously misrepresents both the teaching of Scripture and the position of complementarians.

Second, evangelical feminists make complementarians out to be legalists. Singling out Galatians 3:28, evangelical feminists argue that a modern adherence to any New Testament commands reflecting a gender hierarchy in the church or home destroys the equality of grace. According to Gordon Fee, complementarians practice “a new form of pharisaic legalism”¹⁴ by turning “ad hoc biblical imperatives into a form of Christian law requiring observance.”¹⁵ Thus, Fee demonstrates how evangelical feminists fail to harmonize male headship texts with a theology of grace. For them, gospel equality must mean functional equality.

Lastly, a study of evangelical feminist writings yields a probing question: Which came first, the evangelical feminists’ hermeneutics or their convictions?¹⁶ Though the answer may vary for individuals, Rebecca Groothuis unintentionally reveals the progression of her belief system: “Many who are evangelical feminists today, myself included, used to believe in the ‘chain of command’ for no reason other than that they believed the Bible taught it—even though they did not like the idea and even though they

*found the secular case for women’s equality appealing.”*¹⁷ She fails to admit that she interprets the Bible with presuppositions. This tendency is the most sobering fact of evangelical feminism—sobering, because it represents a real possibility for any student of Scripture.

Applications

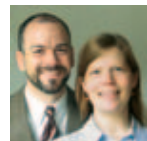
Determining the hermeneutical faults of evangelical feminists can prove challenging. Even more difficult, though, is appropriately and consistently reflecting God’s image as men and women in our respective roles. We dare not point out others’ faults without scrutinizing ourselves even more closely (Matt. 7:3–5).

Christian men, be Christlike servant leaders, not dictatorial authoritarians, by taking responsibility for the spiritual and physical welfare of those whom God has placed in your care at home and church (John 13:1–5; Eph. 5:25–32; Col. 3:19). Honor the women in your life as fellow-creations in the image of God and fellow-heirs of the grace of God (1 Pet. 3:7).

Christian women, follow the men God has placed in leadership roles in your life by imitating Christ’s submission to His Father and the church’s position of subjection to Christ (John 4:34; Eph. 5:22–24; Col. 3:18). Make much of God’s gifts and talents to you and the opportunities you have to influence others for Him. Pastors, preach functional gender difference and the equality of the

sexes—all within the framework of man’s creation in the image of God and re-creation in the image of Christ (Gen. 1:26, 27; 2 Cor. 5:17). Encourage men and women to depend upon the grace of Christ to better reflect that image. Fellow-believers, be careful not to arrive at Scripture with an idea you wish to prove or legitimize. Let the Bible speak first, interpret it skillfully, then heed it well (James 1:22).

Andy and Erika Merkle and their children live in Decatur, Illinois, where Andy serves as the assistant pastor at East Park Baptist Church.



¹ Evangelical feminists, unlike radical feminists, believe that men and women are created equal and that all believers are equal in Christ. However, like radical feminists, they deny anything other than a physiological difference between men and women. No gender hierarchy indicating a unique male leadership role is allowed in the home or the church. Evangelical feminists refer to themselves as egalitarians, “equalitarians,” or Biblical feminists. Prominent evangelical feminist authors include Gilbert Bilezikian, Gordon D. Fee, and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis.

Notes are continued on page 34

... a close look at
their interpretations
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Discipline

What If Scripture Isn't Politically Correct?

There lurks within every human heart an intractable rebel, bent on refusing the rightful lordship of Jesus Christ.

There is, of course, no answer to this defect other than the grace of God. The gospel changes the terms of the battle; the Spirit strengthens us; Scripture directs us in the fight. But even for believers the traitor remains. Sin exerts

a constant gravitational pull on our hearts, and only the greater power of God's grace can counteract it. Indeed, our fallenness is so profound that we can twist and distort even the Word of God to suit our fallen preferences.

An Example of Willful Distortion

One recent twisting of Scripture comes from William Webb, an author who views himself as evangelical.¹ Webb testifies that he was always bothered by the Proverbs that describe corporal punishment of children. He observes that just like the texts on homosexuality or submission of women, these passages offend the sensibilities of modern readers.

His solution is as ingenious as it is devious. He begins with truths we all accept. Every passage of Scripture was written in a given cultural context. Scripture always reproved the culture of its time in redemptive ways, just as it corrects our own cultural context today. To this point his argument is sound.

But Webb goes on. In passages on slavery, homosexuality, or spanking, we can detect not only Scripture's redemptive direction but also how it might have progressed further. In simple terms, while the Bible reproved its original setting, it didn't go far enough.

This leaves to the modern interpreter the monumental task of unsorting the redemptive trajectory. According to this viewpoint, we must ask ourselves what Scripture would say about our society if it were written today. The actual statements of Scripture recorded in the text are not enough. We must extend the redemptive trajectory further.

There has never been a shortage of false teaching or hermeneutical schemes to support them, and in a certain sense Webb's viewpoint is just one more bad idea. The problem is that when it comes to corporal punishment, many have unwittingly adopted his view without realizing the disastrous implications. Apparently, out of agreement with his conclusions on spanking, they have accepted teaching that is actually hostile to both the sufficiency and authority of Scripture. We must repudiate Webb's view of corporal punishment, homosexuality, and feminism, along with his hermeneutic of "redemptive trajectories." In the process, we can also glean three insights that direct us as students of the Bible.

1. Our agenda must be to understand the text as it stands.

Webb's argument begins with reducing the traditional understanding of the spanking texts to an absurdity.² He first draws parallels with Mosaic laws that teach corporal punishment for adult lawbreakers. For him, the spanking passages actually describe severe beatings given to criminals rather than measured punishment of children. Furthermore, since severely beating criminals seems rather harsh today, we should simply dismiss the passages altogether. The result is that Webb manages to leave the spanking texts in Proverbs with no modern application or meaning at all.

Exegetical problems abound in his argument. There are strong interpretational reasons that the spanking texts in Proverbs do not describe corporal punishment for adult criminals.³ But the most basic problem is that Webb has

begun with the ambition to falsify texts, not to honestly understand them. By his own confession, Webb's starting goal was to remove the "offense" of these texts, not to earnestly submit to whatever they say.

And this becomes a clear lesson to us all. Are we reading the text to understand or to confirm what we already decided is true? Would we rather submit to the text or make the text submit to us? The litmus test will be whether we come to the Bible willing to obey it, whatever it says.

2. The standard of truth is the Biblical text, not our cultural context. Webb's paradigm measures the "redemptive trajectory" of Scripture by comparing each text to its original setting. But the Bible does not tepidly complain about cultural sins. It states the absolute truth authoritatively. The Scriptures were written not only for the original recipients but "for our admonition" today (1 Cor. 10:11). If we must ask what the Bible would say to our present cultural milieu, the answer is simple—it would say exactly what it already says.

It is also apparent that Webb privileges contemporary predispositions and viewpoints. He contends that Scripture always reproved its ancient contexts—Scripture was out front, leading and correcting the culture. But ironically, the reverse is true in the contemporary context—culture becomes the control that tells us when to apply a "redemptive trajectory." How is it that ancient culture was so deeply flawed that Scripture could only partially correct it, while modern culture is so virtuous that we must help the Bible catch up? How did our own time escape from being the "present evil age"? If Scripture clashed with the wickedness of ancient culture, wouldn't the original readers have been troubled by what they read, simply because it exposed and corrected their sin? How then is it proof positive that our hermeneutics are wrong, just because certain texts trouble us today? Maybe these texts trouble modern readers because they are precisely the points where we most need to be corrected!

3. We must not re-create Scripture in our own image. This leads to the fundamental aberration of Webb's paradigm—it usurps control from the text of Scripture and places it in the hands of the interpreter. Who determines which teachings must be "updated" and which can remain? The only answer is the one doing the interpretation—a frightening prospect indeed.

Scripture has always been countercultural and while the world remains in its sinful state it always will be. This also means that faithfulness to the Biblical text will lead to cultural conflict. If some texts are "troubling to modern readers," we shouldn't be surprised.

And that points to a reality about ourselves—we don't naturally want to submit to the truth. Our own fallen hearts are subject first to our own whims or fancies and then to the viewpoints of our culture. Only by God's grace do the demands of Scripture ever factor in at all.

A Call to Honesty

We should not expect the prevailing culture to come more in line with Scripture any time in the near future.

As the antithesis grows between contemporary thought and Biblical teaching, it will become obvious who is willing to submit to Scripture. Spanking is only one example. Feminism and homosexuality (other topics Webb addresses) are also flash points where Scripture is “politically incorrect.” People will use any number of strategies and devices to diminish the conflict, but at the end of the day the question is relatively simple—will we submit to the text or will we domesticate it?

Are we prepared to read the eternal Word with the heart of a student and not a master? Are we ready to open our Bibles, willing to obey no matter what its teaching or demands? Our lives, ministries, churches, and even our families will soon show the difference.

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¹ William Webb, *Corporal Punishment in the Bible: A Redemptive-Movement Hermeneutic for Troubling Texts* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011).

² Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13, 14; 29:15–17; Hebrews 12:5–11.


³ (1) Based on the best Hebrew resources (BDB, HALOT) and usage (Exod. 2:6; Judges 13:8; 1 Sam. 1:22, and others), the key word (*na'ar*) can mean either “child” or “young man,” and the context of several of the Proverbs passages indicate that “child” is the better rendering. (2) In a number of the passages, Webb’s rendering is completely unworkable (Prov. 29:15; Heb. 12:6–10). (3) Proverbs 23:13, 14 is clearly in the context of Solomon instructing his son about child rearing.

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Land

An Important Biblical Theme for God's People

The land of Israel is disputed territory. Today it is the center of competing political claims. Israel is also the center of competing theological claims. Do the Biblical land promises have any present relevance? Does Israel have any claim to the land promised to Abraham and his seed? These are matters of theological dispute. You may even wonder why God promised Abraham land. The importance of the seed promise and the blessing are clear to many Christians. Jesus Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of the seed promise (Gal. 3:16). The blessing is the gospel going out to all the nations (Gal. 3:8). But Christians often struggle to understand the significance of the land promise. Land seems unspiritual and perhaps even irrelevant to Christianity.

The Land Promise Is Relevant for Christians

Some theologians endorse the view that the land promise has no relevance today. Just as the sacrifices were fulfilled in Christ, so also the land promise is fulfilled in Him. What “in the land” was to Israel, “in Christ” is to the Christian.¹ Thus the land is a type of Christ. This view greatly misunderstands the significance of the land theme in the Bible.

The themes of land, seed, and blessing begin in Genesis 1. All three of these themes appear together at the climax of the Creation narrative. Genesis 1:28 identifies God's words in 1:28–30 as a *blessing*. The blessing centers on *seed* (“be fruitful, and multiply”) and *land* (“replenish the earth, and subdue it”). When Adam and Eve sin the blessing is

replaced with a curse (Gen. 3:17). The content of the judgment focuses on seed (3:16) and land (3:17).

This is the context of the land promise to Abraham. Because of sin the earth/land has been cursed. But with Abraham land will once again be part of God's blessing. Israel's possession of the land could be as much of a return to Eden as is possible in a fallen world (Ezek. 36:35). It is “a good land,” a land in which they will “not lack any thing” (Deut. 8:7–10). Ideally, Israel would live under God's law within the land and demonstrate to the nations what good and wise rule over the earth looks like. In this way they were to draw the nations to God (Deut. 4:5–8). Long life in the land is promised for obedience (Deut. 5:33), but disobedience will result in exile and death (Deut. 28:64; 30:15–20). Sadly, Israel chose the route of disobedience. Though Israel enjoyed some brief periods blessing in the land (cf. 1 Kings 4:20, 21, 25), Israel's disobedience meant that the nation suffered under the covenant curses (Deut. 28:15–68). Eventually, this included exile from the land.

But disobedience and exile were not the last word. God had promised Abraham that the land of Canaan would be his and his seed's as an “everlasting possession” (Gen. 17:8). God sent prophets to Israel to expand on this promise and to predict the return of the people to the land. The land promises far exceeded the return that occurred in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. For instance, Amos prophesied of a future in which Israel will be permanently planted in the land and the plowman overtakes the reaper, and the mountains flow with wine rather than water (9:13–15; cf. Joel 3:18). This is obviously an image of extraordinary fecundity.

The New Testament affirms the importance of this theme. Jesus promises that the meek will “inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). Paul says the creation groans as it waits to be set free from its bondage (Rom. 8:21, 22). Finally, the Bible closes not with the discarding of the physical world but with a New Creation and a New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1, 2).

The hermeneutical error of those who wish to equate the OT “in the land” with a NT “in Christ” is the supposition that the physical does not really matter. These interpreters assume that the physical serves only as the type to the spiritual. But a survey of the land theme for Genesis 1 to Revelation 21 reveals that the physical earth is important in its own right as God’s good creation.

The Land Promise Persists for Israel

Another set of interpreters agree that the physical world is theologically significant. However, they argue that the land of Israel is only a type. The promises of Israel’s restoration will be fulfilled when God renovates the earth in the new creation. The beneficiaries of the promises will be all believers; Jewish believers will receive no special benefit.

Those arguing for this position make three primary arguments. First, the New Testament has broken down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile. Jewish believers therefore have no special status or promises. Second, the New Testament reinterprets the promise to Abraham, showing him to be heir of the world and not just Canaan (Rom. 4:13). Jesus also reapplies the promise of inheriting the land from the land of Canaan to the whole earth (Matt 5:5). Third, the land promised to Israel was therefore simply a type of the New Earth.²

These interpreters are correct that the benefits of the land promise will encompass the whole world. But they err in thinking that the New Testament reinterpreted the Old Testament. The extension of the land promise to the world occurs as early as the time of David and Solomon. Psalm 72 (identified as “of Solomon” in the superscription) alludes to the promised borders of Israel in verse 8, but instead of constraining them between the Euphrates River and the river of Egypt, the psalmist extends the realm of the Messiah to encompass “the ends of the earth.” Likewise, in Psalm 2 God promises the Messiah that he will receive “the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” (2:8). Amos predicts that God will raise up the Davidic house so that Israel will “possess the remnant of Edom, and all the heathen, which are called by my name” (9:12). Abraham is heir of the world because the Son of Abraham, the Son of David rules over the world.

But even though the land promise encompasses the whole creation, Israel will still receive the land promised to Abraham in the Millennium and New Creation. Those who deny Israel’s special status appeal to Galatians 2:28. But as conservatives have pointed out in debates with evangelical feminists, equality in Christ is not incompatible with differing roles and responsibilities. For instance, James notes that Gentile nations, and not Israel alone, can be identified as “called by my name” (Amos 9:12; Acts 15:16, 17). He concludes from this that Gentiles do not need to become Jews and submit to the Jewish law to be saved. But Amos 9 also

teaches that Israel will possess the nations since the Davidic heir will rule over all the earth.

Those who interpret the land promises to Israel as mere types of the New Earth make several hermeneutical errors. The fundamental error is their willingness to reinterpret the Old Testament in light of what they think the New Testament is teaching. Both Old and New Testament are the Word of God given through His prophets. The authorial intent, both divine and human, must be respected in interpreting both Testaments. Compatibility rather than contradiction between the Testaments should be the goal of the interpreter. Second, these interpreters err in thinking that oneness in Christ erases all distinction in role.³ Third, they fail to distinguish between a partial fulfillment and a type. What Israel had the potential to enjoy in the Promised Land was an anticipation of the New Creation rather than a type that would pass away as the sacrifices did.

Conclusion

Even though land may seem like an unspiritual theme when compared to justification or glorification, the earth is God’s good creation. God has promised to redeem His fallen creation (Rom. 8:21), and He has promised the nation Israel a special place in the Millennium and New Creation. In the end, Jesus, the Messiah, will rule from Israel’s capital over His redeemed world.

Far from irrelevant, the author of Hebrews places us in the same position as Abraham. Abraham lived in the Promised Land, but he lived there as a pilgrim and a sojourner. He endured by faith, looking for the better country, for the city prepared by God for him. We also live in a promised land—a renewed earth is our inheritance (Matt. 5:5). But we live here as sojourners. We are foreigners in this present evil age looking with Abraham to the New Jerusalem prepared for us by God.

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¹ Christopher J. H. Wright, *God’s People in God’s Land: Family, Land and Property in the Old Testament* (Paternoster, 1990), 111–13; idem., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 123–24. Wright argues that just as Israel had social and economic responsibilities in the land, so Christians have such responsibilities to one another in Christ. See also D. C. Allison Jr., “Land in Early Christianity,” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 644.

² O. Palmer Robertson, *Understanding the Land of the Bible: A Biblical-Theological Guide* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1996), 141–44; Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 209–12.

³ Strangely, they even think that equality in Christ prevents Israel from occupying the Promised Land. This places these interpreters in the odd position of arguing that all the nations receive the land promise except Israel, to whom the promise was made.

Faulty Hermeneutics and the New Perspective on Paul

The most challenging type of doctrinal error that confronts God's people seldom presents itself as a clear attack against the truth. More often than not, it is an insidious attack that creeps in by masquerading itself in the cloak of orthodoxy and respectability.

As the proverbial rat poison is made up of 95% good ingredients and only a small amount of toxin, so this kind of error may have the trappings of orthodoxy, but at its core be fundamentally flawed.

There is a current controversy regarding Pauline theology which shows the importance of following a proper, Biblical hermeneutic. A “new” understanding of Pauline theology has risen within broader Evangelicalism which strikes at the heart of justification by faith alone and ends up promoting works as a part of salvation. This teaching also undermines the doctrine of inspiration by following an existential and historical-critical view of Biblical interpretation.¹

This “New Perspective on Paul” (NPP) as it is called is a complicated, multifaceted, and still-developing teaching. But contrary to the name, it is not new. It is really the old error of works-based salvation dressed up in more modern-looking clothes.²

The NPP is promoted by men such as E. P. Sanders, James D. G. Dunn, and N. T. Wright. They disagree on certain points of their theology, but have each contributed significantly to the overall development of the NPP.³ Of the three promoters, Wright claims to be an evangelical Christian, which is what makes his writings so insidious and gives them a wider acceptance within certain Evangelical circles.

Although the NPP does not have a singular, unified expression, there are common threads of teaching found among its proponents:

1. We misunderstand the Judaism of the New Testament. It was not the works-based religion we have been led to believe but was a grace-based religion (salvation is received through grace not earned by meritorious works). This is concluded from the study of rabbinic writings.
2. We misunderstand the teaching of Paul in Galatians and Romans⁴ by thinking he is responding to a works-based Judaism. He did not denounce *all* works of the law as unnecessary for salvation, only the *ceremonial* laws.
3. Justification by faith and imputed righteousness are not taught by the apostle Paul but were read into Paul’s teaching by Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and others because of their contemporary situations.⁵
4. Justification (salvation) is seen as a corporate identity (remaining part of a covenant community), not the personal standing of an individual before God.

In short, the NPP is a mixture of grace and works that is not the Biblical teaching of justification by faith alone in Christ. The NPP rejects the imputed righteousness of Christ;⁶ it redefines justification, and redefines the “works of the law” to such a degree that works become a part of salvation.⁷ A similar mix of grace and works can be

found in the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. The tragic reality of this situation is that we don’t have a battle over justification taking place between Protestants and the Catholic Church, but between supposed evangelical believers!

How has the NPP arrived at these faulty conclusions? After all, the proponents of this theology are long-time students of the Bible. How could their understanding be so far off the mark? The answer to this question lies in their hermeneutic—their method of Bible interpretation. The NPP arrives at faulty conclusions by failing to practice an orthodox hermeneutic.

The first way the NPP fails an orthodox hermeneutic is by practicing a historical-critical approach to Bible understanding.

Historical-criticism rejects the inerrancy of the Word of God by maintaining the Scriptures are unreliable and must be understood with the aid of secular, outside sources. This interpretative method places more authority on external sources than in the Biblical text itself. The error of historical-criticism is that it subjugates the Word of God to the shackles of fallible mankind and operates from a built-in bias *against* the Word of God. Though interpreters of the New Perspective do not always deny that Scripture is divine revelation, they do place undue weight on historical reconstructions in their interpretation of Scripture.

Based on his study of external rabbinic sources, Sanders maintains that the Judaism of Jesus’ day was not a religion of self-righteous works, nor one “especially marked by hypocrisy.”⁸ Yet this is the very charge that Jesus levels against the Pharisees in passages such as Matthew 23:27, 28 and Matthew 5:20. Sanders rejects the validity of passages like these that refute his agenda. Rather than relying on Scripture to evaluate man’s ideas, the NPP relies on *man’s* understanding of ancient history to impose his viewpoint onto the text of Scripture. A clear problem, however, is that the interpretation of history can be subject to bias.

One critic of the NPP has shown how Sanders’s research has omitted aspects of study which are significant to a proper understanding of Judaism.⁹ Further, it appears that the selection of rabbinic writings upon which Sanders based his conclusions was too narrow, resulting in a skewed view of Judaism and setting up a false contradiction with Scripture.¹⁰

Placing more validity on historical sources than on the Bible inevitably leads to a tragic outcome. Sadly, Sanders’s historical-critical methodology leads him to conclude that “very little or virtually nothing in the Gospels is factual.”¹¹

The second way the NPP fails an orthodox hermeneutic is by practicing eisegesis rather than exegesis. *Exegesis* is digging out of the text the single, intended meaning the author desired to communicate. This is “letting Scripture speak for itself.” *Eisegesis* is pushing onto the text the meaning that has already been determined by the interpreter.

N. T. Wright commits the error of eisegesis when he reads into the word “righteousness” the meaning “right standing within [the] covenant” when referring to human righteousness, and God’s “unswerving commitment to be faithful to that covenant” when referring to God’s righ-

teousness.¹² This is opposed to the Biblical concept that righteousness is an imputed standing before God that He grants an individual through faith. Similarly, Sanders redefines justification as “covenant membership” by reading into the term his broader theology.¹³ Wright goes so far in his denial of righteousness being something God imputes to sinful man that he actually reinterprets Philippians 3:9 by rendering the imputed *righteousness* of Christ as merely a covenantal faithfulness.

The third way the NPP fails an orthodox hermeneutic is by approaching the text of Scripture with a pre-understanding.

Conservative grammatical-historical principles dictate that an interpreter set aside his ideas about the text and let the text speak for itself. This is called *objectivity* and is necessary for accurate interpretation. The NPP proponents, armed with a historical-critical methodology, however, come to the text with a “pre-understanding” of what it says. They accuse Augustine and Luther of reading the controversy of their time (Pelagianism and Roman Catholic heresy) into Paul, but they themselves are guilty of this by reading the current controversy of post-modern, skeptical-criticism in to Paul. As one critic has noted, the NPP “falters because it is based on an unsupported pre-understanding, not on allowing the biblical text to speak for itself. . . . It seeks to integrate rabbinic tradition with Scripture, thereby reducing the voice of Scripture to a whisper.”¹⁴ The irony of this is that in their claim to approach Scripture more objectively than others, they actually end up superimposing their own pre-understanding.

NPP theology is permeated with a low view of Scripture. Through the lens of pre-understanding, Wright, the most conservative of the proponents, sees the Gospels as a combination of “biography and religious propaganda.” He maintains that “first-century Judaism and the Gospels are opposite edges, and all discourse about Jesus must take place between them.”¹⁵ Contrary to this opinion, a proper hermeneutic places *full* authority in the Word of God and does not view Scripture as merely the “edge” of truth.

The NPP is an errant theology that stems from a bad hermeneutic. It is a hermeneutic of unbelief that denies the inerrancy of the Word of God and seeks to redefine justification by forcing man’s opinions onto the text of Scripture. If God’s people are to remain faithful to Scripture and guard the truth, they must value and practice a solid, Biblical hermeneutic. The way one understands the Bible does matter.

A “new” understanding of Pauline theology has risen within broader Evangelicalism which strikes at the heart of justification by faith alone and ends up promoting works as a part of salvation.

Ryan Banman is a Midwesterner serving the Lord in the cornfields of Illinois at East Park Baptist Church, where he has ministered for ten years as pastor.



¹ F. David Farnell, *The New Perspective on Paul: Its Basic Tenets, History, and Presuppositions*, Masters Seminary Journal 16:2 (Fall 2005): 189.

² Calvin addressed one of the very issues of the NPP (the definition of the “works of the Law”) in his commentary on Romans 3:20. See *Calvin’s Commentaries: Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), vol. 19, 130–32.

³ Significant works of each author on NPP are as follows: E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992).

⁴ See Romans 9:32; Galatians 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10.

⁵ In an alarming statement about the doctrine of justification by faith, Wright calls it a “second-order” doctrine that is not an essential matter of the Christian faith. See John MacArthur, ed., *Fool’s Gold* (Wheaton, IL: 2005), 70, for further information.

⁶ Wright, N. T., *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 98.

⁷ Fred A. Malone, *Justification by Faith Alone in Contemporary Theological Perspective*, Reformed Baptist Theological Review 01:1 (January 2004): 120–21.

⁸ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 427.

⁹ In his study Sanders overlooks aspects of first-century Judaism such as synagogue worship, Jewish feasts, and even a substantial study of Pharisees. See Robert L. Thomas, *Hermeneutics of the New Perspective on Paul*, Masters Seminary Journal 16:2 (Fall 2005): 303.

¹⁰ For a more complete discussion on the validity of Sanders’s selection of rabbinic writings see Thomas, 295–96.

¹¹ Thomas, 299.

¹² Tom Wright, *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision* (London: SPCK, 2009), 48.

¹³ N. T. Wright, “Justification,” in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), 359.

¹⁴ Thomas, 303.

¹⁵ Thomas, 299.

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First Partaker

Graced to Spend and Be Spent: Seeing the Green Pastures in the Care of Souls

Part 2—Pastors Are Amazingly Graced to Be Able to Joy in Spending and Being Spent

The men God graciously calls to feed Christ's sheep are enabled by that amazing grace of God to delight in the work that God has given them to do. So often, however, the duties and burdens of ministry become distasteful pastures for God's ministers, filling their mouths with noxious weeds rather than nourishing them with soul-satisfying joy. Though pastoral ministry is truly a burden, it is a glorious burden, handcrafted and customized by God Himself for pastors to carry. Ministers of God are amazingly graced by God to be able to spend themselves and be spent (Part 1), and they are amazingly graced by God to be able to do so with gladness and joy (Part 2). The following outline attempts to fill out a Scriptural understanding of the second of these realities.

All of the labor, expenditure, sorrow, and tears of ministry are intermingled with and driven by gladness and joy, and joy of a superlative nature. "Most gladly" and "very gladly" Paul says dogmatically, in a context of glorying in the fact that ministry provides a way for his weakness to be manifest so that God's sufficient, strengthening grace is more evident (2 Cor. 12:9) and even recognizing that his labors potentially *lessen* the affection of the very people he so gladly and lovingly serves (2 Cor. 12:15).

Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. . . . And I will **very gladly** spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved (2 Cor. 12:9, 15).

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

Earlier, Paul captures the bittersweet tension of his ministry life as "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor. 6:10). Paul's ministry resembled that of our Savior who bore our "griefs, and carried our sorrows" (Isa. 53:4); yet, like our Savior, Paul remained joyful, and encouraged other ministers and believers to labor in this same abounding joy:

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

Pastors can joy because our expenditure is given willingly.

Paul and Peter capture the willing delight that engages a man's ministry heart. Though a sense of constraint and necessity from the Lord grows in the heart of a minister, out of the same root God graciously births aspiration and desire. Men aspire to the work of the ministry (1 Tim. 3:1), setting their hearts voluntarily upon it with Scriptural eagerness (1 Pet. 5:2). When the winds and waves of pastoral care are the fiercest, rejoicing that we embraced our calling willingly heartens the minister and vivifies his readiness to again answer the call of duty.

So that upon the whole, though there are many difficulties and enemies apparent in the way; I see clearly that there are more with me than against me. All the praying souls on earth, all the glorified saints in heaven, all the angels of God, nay God

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himself the Judge of all and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, are on the side of every faithful messenger of the Gospel—Lord it is enough. I have to the best of my ability counted the cost and I find the odds are beyond all comparison: I accept the terms, *all for all*, Lord prevent me from holding back a part of the price, I would not make reserve of a single thought. Speak thou unto my soul, say Be of good cheer, it is I and I am satisfied: I stand upon the side of the ship, ready at thy bidding to walk on thy errand, in defiance of winds and waves; only when the storm runs high, and faith begins to fail, be thou near to stretch out thy right hand to save me, to disperse my tears, and inspire me with new strength (John Newton, *Ministry on My Mind*, 7–8, original emphasis).

Pastors can joy because our expenditure is given cheerfully.

Paul relishes the opportunity that ministry provides to put into practice a maxim Jesus bequeathed to His hearers. He unveils this truth to the Ephesian elders: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The ministry afforded Paul multiple opportunities to see Jesus’ words prove true, and these words have heartened other men in their expensive labors. Richard Baxter (1615–91), who in his later years of ministry in the Church of England endured nearly twenty-five years of bitter persecution, resoundingly affirmed his cheerful contentment as a minister:

In a word, . . . the life of a minister is so heavy a burden, and such a continual grief, that I confess from my heart, I have been many a time haunted by Jonah’s temptation, to overrun God’s work and to put it off, as Moses and Jeremiah would have done. We have flesh and blood as well as other men, for we are but men; and when in the time of temptation, I have hearkened to the flesh, this hath been the language of it—was not I born as free a man as others? Why must I then be tied up to this work? . . . Such thoughts as these the flesh has suggested. . . . But do I approve of this, or grudge at my employment? No, I bless the Lord daily, that ever He called me to this blessed work! God hath paid me for all these sufferings a thousand fold. . . . And my constant experience assureth me, that the dearer it costeth me to serve Him, the more abundant will be the incomes of my peace! I would not therefore change my life for any of the greatest dignitaries on earth. I had rather thus serve in the Gospel, so He will go on to bless my labours. I am contented to consume my body, to sacrifice to His service, and to spend all that I have, to be spent myself, for the souls of these men (Richard Baxter, in Ralph G. Turnbull, *A Minister’s Obstacles*, 189).

Often for the minister, the joy in pastoral ministry

comes prior to our spending ourselves. Sometimes God gives joy as we spend ourselves. But sometimes God gives the joy after we have spent ourselves.

Pastors can joy because our expenditure is spiritually productive—for our people and for ourselves.

Paul was willing to spend and be spent for those souls entrusted to him. He thrilled in the front-row view the ministry afforded him to observe the varied forms of fruitfulness wrought by the working of God in a person’s life. He relished the privilege of souls brought near to God and to him—so near that he could refer to them as “children” in whom Christ was being formed (Gal. 4:19; 2 Cor. 12:14), “my son” (2 Tim. 2:1), or the unusual picture of people as letters: “Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Cor. 3:2, 3). He rejoiced to watch genuine spiritual fruit bear fruit (Gal. 5:22, 23)!

He has the gratification of helping people, and the peace of mind at the end of work by which a heart has been soothed and brightened, the pleasure of taking men by the hand and lifting them out of the sloughs of despond, and sometimes out of the pit of despair. To him the joy is given of changing the tone and temper of a home. He may enjoy the rapture of knowing that in the hands of God he has been instrumental in transforming the life of a community. These are rewards of a subtle and ethereal sort, coins paid out over the counters of heaven. They are indescribable and unspeakable forms of remuneration. The world cannot give them, nor can the world take them away. . . . The power of personal influence, the ability to pour one’s life into another life, is one of the richest of all the gifts of heaven, and this is peculiarly the gift granted to the shepherd (Charles Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd*, 136–37).

Yet Paul is mindful that a Scriptural ministry produces fruit in the minister as well. He alerted Timothy to watch for the Scripture’s ministry in his own life, because it alone matures the man and equips him for all good works (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Read carefully the following from three men bearing testimony to the spiritual benefit they received back to themselves through their pastoral ministry:

Not only does the ministerial profession require eminent piety, but it tends to produce it. By his very position, the clergyman is greatly assisted in attaining to a superior grade of Christian character; and if, therefore, he is a worldly and unscriptural man, he is deeply culpable. . . . The daily labour of

the clergyman is as truly and exclusively religious as that of the farmer is agricultural, or that of the merchant is mercantile. This is highly favourable to spirituality. Ought not one to grow in grace whose daily avocations bring him into communication with the anxious, the thoughtful, the convicted soul, the rejoicing heart, the bereaved, the sick, and the dying? Ought not that man to advance in the love and knowledge of God whose regular occupation from day to day is to become acquainted with the strictly religious wants and condition of the community and minister to them? . . . The influence of active life upon character is, in its own place and manner, as great as that of the contemplative life. A man is unconsciously molded and formed by his daily routine of duties, as really as by the books he reads, or the science he studies. Hence a faithful performance of clerical duties contributes directly to spirituality (W. G. T. Shedd, *Homeletics and Pastoral Theology*, 283–84).

The clergy have one great advantage, beyond all the rest of the world, in this respect besides all others, that whereas the particular callings of other men prove to them great distractions, and lay many temptations in their way, to divert them from minding their “high and holy calling” of being Christians, it is quite otherwise with the clergy; the more they follow their private callings, they do the more certainly advance their general one. The better priests [pastors] they are, they become also the better Christians: every part of their calling, when well performed, raises good thoughts, brings good ideas to their mind, and tends both to increase their knowledge, and quicken their sense of divine matters (Gilbert Burnet, *A Discourse of the Pastoral Care*, 198).

Anything I came to know of such things [grace of God and love of Christ], seemed to come slowly and gradually, and to a great extent through further trial and sorrow. But, like many, I found that the very trials which at the time were hardest to bear were ultimately the most fruitful of good. Our nature is so sluggish, that to stir it and mould it a new and higher life demands right sharp and powerful applications. Hence the prominent place of pain, and even acute and heart-rending pain, in the discipline of our life. . . . Pain and profit are in vital connection, and if ever God’s ways toward us are explained, we shall find, I believe, that in no case did He inflict one pang that was not needed (William Garden Blaikie, *Autobiography, Recollections of a Busy Life*, 54).

Pastors can joy because our expenditure is an eternal investment.

Paul pastored continually with eternity in view. He

frequently lifted his eyes from the demanding, expensive obligations of pastoral ministry to view his ministerial labors in proper context:

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy (1 Thess. 2:19, 20).

As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 1:14).

Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain (Phil. 2:16).

Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved (Phil. 4:1).

Pastors can joy because our expenditure is measured by the Lord.

Few truly know how much of a minister’s soul is poured out in costly, selfless ministry. How can it be accurately measured by others, or even by the minister himself? Happily, it cannot—but it is noted and accurately measured by God.

Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour (1 Cor. 3:8).

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (2 Tim. 2:4).

We were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our heart (1 Thess. 2:4).

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you (Heb. 13:17).

Men of God within church history have often heeded Paul’s ministry example, endeavoring not to weigh their ministries by any standard less than the pleasure of God.

To see His name made precious to the hearts of sinners; to see those who were blind admiring His excellence; to see those who were so far off from God brought so nigh; to see those who were

wretched, rejoicing in His goodness; to hear those whose lips were filled with folly, falsehood, or blasphemy, proclaiming His praise. Such salutary effects of their ministry fill them likewise with praise and joy. And when their hearers express the power and spirit of the Gospel, in their tempers and conduct, they can say, Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord (1 Thessalonians 3:8) (from a sermon of John Newton, "The Gospel Message of Glad Tidings" [Romans 10:15] in *The Works of the Rev. John Newton*, 6 vols., 4:352).

Certainly if angels in heaven rejoice at the conversion of a sinner (Luke 15: 7, 10), how shall that minister rejoice in heaven over every soul that he has been instrumental to convert! As it shall add a member to Christ's body, so a jewel to a minister's crown (Thomas Watson in *Beatitudes: An Exposition of Matthew 5:1–12*, 6).

The smallest work done for Jesus Christ lasts forever, whether it abides in men's memories or no (Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, 17 vols., *Colossians*, 15:37).

May you and I, my dear Jabez, always keep in view our character, our obligations, and our vast responsibility and let us spend and be spent for God. Our reward is on high and God will acknowledge at last those who faithfully labour for him here (from a letter from William Carey to his son Jabez, February 20, 1821, in Terry G. Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey*, 254).

Pastors can joy because God uses our people to minister grace to us.

Paul notes the possibility that his ministry of grace will result in being loved less ("the less I be loved"), but the Scripture also holds out the potential that the people of God will grow to love their ministers more and will grow in their understanding of how to better minister to him. It is one thing for a pastor to rightly value his office and function; it is another thing for the people to mature to do it.

When such a minister and such a people are thus united, it is attended with great joy. The minister joyfully devoting himself to the service of his Lord in the work of the ministry, as a work that he delights in; and also joyfully uniting himself to the society of the saints that he is set over, as having complacency in them, for his dear Lord's sake, whose people they are; and willingly and joyfully, on Christ's call, undertaking the labours and difficulties of the service of their souls (Jonathan Edwards, "The

Church's Marriage to Her Sons, and to Her God," preached at the installment of Samuel Buel to his church in Long Island in September 1746, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 2:20).

Some of the most precious descriptions of pastoral ministry I've read are connected with the Baptist pastor John Bunyan (1628–88), who continues to pastor generations through his timeless allegories, *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Holy War*. In *The Holy War*, Bunyan poignantly portrays the interdependent relationship between pastors and their people:

I charge you, therefore, said he, O ye inhabitants of the now flourishing town of Mansoul, that you carry it not untowardly to my captains and their men; since they are picked and choice men, men chosen out of many for the good of the town of Mansoul. I say, I charge you, that you carry it not untowardly to them; for though they have the hearts and faces of lions, when at any time they shall be called forth to engage and fight with the King's foes, and the enemies of the town of Mansoul, yet a little discountenance cast upon them from the town of Mansoul, will deject and cast down their faces, will weaken and take away their courage. Do not, therefore, carry it unkindly toward to my valiant captains, and courageous men of war, but love them, nourish them, succour them, and lay them to your bosoms, and they will not only fight for you, but cause to fly from you all those Diabolonians that seek, and will, if possible, prove your utter destruction.

If, therefore, any of them should at any time be sick, or weak, and so not able to perform that office of love which with all their hearts they are willing to do (and will do also when well and in health,) slight them not, nor despise them, but rather strengthen and encourage them, though weak and ready to die; for they are your fence and your guard, your walls, gates, locks and bars. And although, when they are weak they can do but little, but rather need to be helped by you, than that you should expect great things from them; yet when well, you know what exploits and warlike achievements they can do, and will perform for you.

Besides, if they be weak, the town of Mansoul cannot be strong; if they be strong, then Mansoul cannot be weak: Your safety therefore doth lie in their health, and in your countenancing them. Remember also, that if they be sick, they catch that disease of the town of Mansoul itself (John Bunyan, *The Holy War*, 272–74).

We are graced to be able to serve in pastoral ministry. We are further graced to be able to joy in that service. It is God's intention that not all of a minister's joys be future—the present joys of expending ourselves for God on behalf of others is a worthy foretaste of the greater joys yet awaiting the minister who is faithful to care for His sheep. ☞

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Bring . . . the Books

Vance Christie, *David Brainerd: A Flame for God*

Most Christians are familiar with the name of David Brainerd. This familiarity is due largely to Jonathan Edwards's classic biography, *An Account of the Life of the Late Rev. David Brainerd*. First published in 1749, this book has never been out of print. Many historians consider it to be the first real missionary biography. Thanks to Edwards, Brainerd's brief life has cast a lengthy shadow that has left an indelible impression on subsequent generations of believers. His example of earnest devotion has inspired many notable missionaries such as William Carey, Henry Martyn, and Jim Elliot.

Although Edwards's biography is a great classic, it does not furnish the modern reader with an account of Brainerd's life couched in the full historic context in which he lived. Thankfully, Vance Christie has provided just what we need in his 2009 publication of *David Brainerd: A Flame for God*. Although other helpful biographies of Brainerd have been published since Edwards's, none possesses the balance of scholarly accuracy and spiritual warmth of Christie's biography.

Christie begins with Brainerd's family background, including the early death of both his parents, and explains how four doctrinal issues hindered Brainerd's coming to Christ until his glorious conversion on July 12, 1739. Christie shows that Brainerd's expulsion from Yale was due in part to the inflammatory influence of an unbalanced revivalist named James Davenport. This event haunted Brainerd for years and actually led to the founding of a college (later named Princeton).

Brainerd's early missionary efforts were not very fruitful—only two converts in his first two years. But in less than two years at Crossweeksung, nearly one hundred Indians were converted and baptized. This remarkable response can be credited only to a genuine work of revival.

Brainerd's life was cut short by tuberculosis. In the providence of God, his final days were spent in the home of Jonathan Edwards. Many have speculated that David Brainerd had a love interest in Jonathan Edwards's daughter Jerusha, who cared for him in his final days. Christie convincingly demonstrates that there is no clear evidence that this was the case.

Several important lessons flow naturally from the brief life of David Brainerd. First, his life reminds us that God uses weak, humble, broken vessels to bear the treasure of the gospel. Brainerd's journals are filled with references to his physical, emotional, and spiritual weakness. Consider this telling entry from his journal right after he struggled to preach.

Had a considerable sense of helplessness and inability; saw I must be dependent on God for all I want and especially when I went to the place of public worship: I found I could not speak a word for God without His special help and assistance: I went into the assembly

trembling, as I frequently do, under my own insufficiency to do anything in the cause of God, as I ought to do. But it pleased God to afford me much assistance, and there seemed to be a considerable effect on the hearers.

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

There is much arrogance in the pulpit today. We need more men who, like Brainerd, are keenly aware of their own unworthiness and insufficiency.

A second lesson conspicuous in Brainerd's writings is the earnest devotion that should characterize a man of God. Perhaps Brainerd should have taken better care of himself, but how desperately, in this day of creature comforts, we need men of God who are willing to “spend and be spent.” It is no wonder that many pioneer missionaries have found him an inspiration. Listen to these aspirations:

Here I am, Lord, send me; send me to the ends of the earth; send me to the rough savage pagans of the wilderness; send me from all that is called comfort in earth or earthly comfort; send me even to death itself, if it be but in Thy service and to promote Thy kingdom.

Vance Christie takes the title of his book from this brief entry: “In the evening I was grieved that I had done so little for God. Oh, that I could be ‘a flame of fire’ in the service of my God!”

Finally, we see from Brainerd's life the Church's overwhelming need for revival. Listen to Brainerd's firsthand description of what Christie calls “the single most outstanding day in Brainerd's ministry career.”

There was much visible concern among them while I was discoursing publicly. . . . The power of God seemed to descend upon the assembly like “a rushing mighty wind” (Acts 2:2), and with astonishing energy bore down all before it.

In the next few weeks many were saved, and this little community was radically transformed by the grace of God. Sometime later Brainerd recorded,

I know of no assembly of Christians where there is so much of the presence of God, where brotherly love so much prevails, and where I should take so much delight in the public worship of God . . . although not more than nine months ago they were worshipping devils and dumb idols under the power of pagan darkness and superstition!

Oh, may the Lord revive us again! 

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Peter says Paul wrote “some things hard to be understood.” Peter, too, has his difficult passages. First Peter 3:18–22 is filled with at least five interpretive decisions that the exegete has to wrestle with before he can accurately relate this passage to the main theme of suffering. The first fork in the road is the decision whether to capitalize the word *pneumati* (Spirit) or to leave it as a lowercase word referring to the human spirit of Christ (3:18). The parallel construction of the passive voices of the verbs (literally, “having been put to death” and “made alive”) and the dative nouns (“in the flesh” and “in the spirit”) appear to be contrasting Christ’s human flesh with His human spirit.

It was “by which,” in His “quicken” human spirit, that Jesus “went” on a journey between His physical death and bodily resurrection. While His body lay in the grave, Jesus in His spirit “preached.” At this juncture, we need to answer the second interpretative question: What did Jesus preach? Did He give unsaved people a second chance in Hell? No, this verb “preach” (*kerusso*) is not the word to evangelize (*euaggelizo*) but means to make an announcement or a proclamation. In His human spirit He was making an announcement to other “spirits.” We know from Colossians 2:15 that in the cross (on earth), through “being put to death in the flesh,” Christ was seen publicly “triumphing” over “principalities and powers.” It appears that Christ also wanted to celebrate and proclaim His victory over those “spirits” that were bound in prison. Consequently, all the evil “spirits,” free and bound, would know firsthand of Christ’s triumph over sin, Hell, and ultimately, death.

The third interpretative decision is to determine the identity of the “spirits” in verse 19. This word, with one exception (Heb. 12:23), is used to describe angels or demons and not human spirits. The context of the “prison” and the preponderance of the use of the word to describe angels or demons makes it likely that demons are in view. It would be true that the spirits of the unsaved deceased would also occupy the same place—Hell!


The fourth interpretative issue: if the “spirits” being highlighted are a unique class of demons, then what did they do that led them to “prison” before other demons are cast into the abyss (Rev. 20)? The answer is seen in the next phrase (3:20). These “spirits” were “disobedient” in the “days of Noah.” In Noah’s day (Gen. 6:2), “the sons of God,” a title that Job used before Moses wrote Genesis to describe angels (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7), were seeking to destroy the human race, “the daughters of men.” This class of worst offenders appears to be the group of angels that Peter references in 2 Peter 2:4, which already had been assigned to *tartarus* for not keeping their “first estate” (Jude 6)—spiritual realm.

This answers why some demons are chained in Hell now, while others are bound later. These disobedient “spirits” were seeking to corrupt the Messianic line and hence derail the hope of the human race. Their brainchild was to create a hybrid, something

that was not fully human. The means for creating such “giants” (“fallen ones”) was by the union of human flesh and an “unclean spirit.” They knew they could not tamper with the Messiah’s deity, but perhaps they could engineer a messiah who was not fully human. If successful, that messiah could not be the appropriate substitute for mankind. It was only fitting that Christ in His perfect, human spirit made a proclamation of victory over those “spirits”! The Second Adam could declare that He triumphed in His perfect humanity, “the just for the unjust”!

The Lord said that His Spirit would “not always strive with man” (Gen. 6:3). The result was that God judged the earth, despite 120 years of God’s Spirit’s pleading with man (“flesh”) through Noah, “the preacher of righteousness.” While God judged the earth with a universal flood, Noah was brought safely through the waters of judgment by the ark he had made. Just as believers are safe in Christ, Noah was safe while in the ark. There were a total of “eight souls” saved. The word Peter used to describe these human “souls” was *psuche*, not *pneumati*. This strengthens the view that the *pneumatic* in 3:19 were not humans but demons.

The fifth challenge is to interpret the phrase “baptism doth also now save us” (3:21). Is this teaching baptismal regeneration? The answer is clearly no, as seen by Peter’s use of the word *antitupos*, informing us that he is speaking figuratively and not literally. The word “figure” agrees with “water” in the previous verse. Peter is saying that water baptism “saves” in the sense that this ordinance symbolizes the reality of Christ’s saving grace through His death, burial, and resurrection. Peter makes it crystal clear that baptism does not cleanse sin but serves as the “answer/pledge” of a good conscience toward God.” Peter then anchors salvation not in baptism but “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

The unit ends by building on the “resurrection” Peter just referenced. He uses the same verb “gone/went” that he used to describe Jesus’ journey to speak to the “spirits” in prison after His death. After His resurrection Jesus journeys to Heaven (3:22), where He is exalted at the right hand of God and where the “angels” are made “subject unto him.” What a gulf Christ spanned in those two trips: from proclaiming victory to “spirits” in Hell to being worshipped by “angels” in Heaven! 

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

This edition of *Windows* offers illustrations developing the themes of “the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3) and the “labour of love” (1 Thess. 1:3; Heb. 6:10). Quarrels among Christians, particularly on the mission field, work disaster to a church. Someone put his finger on our problem when he rhymed,

To live above with saints we love,
Oh, that will be grace and glory;
To live below with saints we know,
Oh, that’s a different story.

Several of these illustrations are taken from stories of conflict between missionaries, but supporters at home have the same temptations to quarrelsomeness. So the examples are sent forth with the prayer that they might help someone, somewhere, to change some church’s “different story.”

The Bond of Peace at Risk

“Ants pick a carcass clean sooner than a lion will” (Alexander MacLaren).

Most Christians know Amy Carmichael through her many books written during fifty-six years of missionary service in India. When she passed into the Lord’s presence in 1951, she took with her a lifetime’s learning of lessons about getting along with people with whom you differ. Her first glimpse of the shameful state of things between Christian workers occurred when at age twenty-six she arrived in Japan and walked one day along the seashore with a veteran missionary. Brimming over with enthusiasm for missions work and missions workers, she was startled by a rather offhanded remark made by her companion about some other missionaries. When Amy questioned what had been said, she was even more dismayed at the answer. “You don’t mean to say,” the woman responded, “you think that all missionaries love one another?”

Amy wrote years later, “The words chilled my heart. Of course I had thought they did. I had never dreamed they didn’t” (Frank Houghton, *Amy Carmichael of Dohmavur*, p. 58).

What is it that reduces fellow Christians to an unloving relationship? Isobel Kuhn, missionary to China, used to explain it as “our earthen vessels jarring each other.” She had observed that when other people admire us, particularly if we are leaders in Christ’s service, they in a subtle sort of way confirm our own flattering opinions of ourselves. We conclude that we are made of very fine porcelain. But the jarring against another Christian jolts us back to reality. We are still disappointingly very much made of common earth. What shall we do to minimize the shock of our jarring one another?

The Bond of Peace Maintained

Philip Henry, father of the famous commentator Matthew Henry, was a dissenting Puritan pastor who

suffered ejection from his church in 1662 for failing to comply with the government’s regulations concerning church worship. In spite of his strong convictions, Henry maintained cordial relations with fellow pastors whose consciences allowed them to submit to these regulations. He became known as a man who did all within his power to avoid unnecessary quarrels with brethren. His wise observation was, “We may as well expect all the clocks in town to strike together as to expect all Christians to agree on every point. It is not so much our differences of opinion that do us mischief, but the mismanagement of those differences” (*The Lives of Philip and Matthew Henry*, p. 54).

A good motto for managing differences was given by Augustine: “In essentials, unity; in doubtful questions, liberty; in all things, charity.” Those “doubtful questions” are difficult to answer. On the one hand, as the English preacher Richard Sibbes admonished, “There is a due in a penny, as well as in a pound; therefore we must be faithful in the least truth, when season calleth for it.” But on the other hand, this same Sibbes wisely warned, “Fractions always breed factions” (I.D.E. Thomas, *A Puritan Golden Treasury*, pp. 80, 81).

A good principle for managing differences was humorously illustrated by Martin Luther. He used to tell the story of two burly billy goats so unfortunate as to meet on a narrow bridge over deep water. Neither could go back without great risk, and each knew better than to jeopardize everything by fighting. At last they had a parley, and shortly one of them lay down and let the other walk over his back. So no harm was done to either one (*Lives of Philip and Matthew Henry*, pp. 115–16).

Immediately, of course, the flesh protests that surely God doesn’t expect for me to be a “door mat”! But why not? Unless there is some genuine article of truth at stake, what harm can there be in allowing a brother to have his way for the sake of preserving the much more important thing at risk?

Hudson Taylor once said, “Hard missionaries are not of much use: they are not like the Master. He is never hard. It is better to be trusting and gentle and sympathetic, even if often taken in, rather than sharp and hard” (Isobel Kuhn, *The Earthen Jar*, pp. 8–9).

Three missionaries were working together in the Snow Mountains of Irian Jaya during the early 1950s to reach the cannibalistic Yali people. One of them, a tough, no-nonsense former World War II infantryman, Stan Dale, preferred eating a rather spare diet so as to save expense and avoid becoming soft. The other, a younger man named Bruno, unwittingly ordered some better food to be included in the provisions flown in

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

Charles Spurgeon

weekly from their missions' base station. He and the third man, Bill Widbin, eagerly anticipated their first decent meal out of the new supplies.

"Come and get it!" Bill called.

Stan was hungry as a wild boar, . . . yet he stopped short when he saw the meal Bill had prepared. Expensive tinned vegetables complemented the plain boiled rice, and a more costly canned meat replaced Stan's favorite—bully beef. Worse yet, sweetened tinned fruits and jelly waited for dessert!

Stan bristled. "How can God's soldiers on the front lines of this spiritual warfare afford such luxuries?" he demanded.

Bruno and Bill looked at him. They already knew that Stan was not merely content, but actually *happy*, with an almost unvarying field menu of bully beef and rice. But they hadn't expected him to raise such a forthright objection to *their* enjoyment of more appetizing food.

"Stan," they countered, "We've scoured these grim hillsides and found no fruit at all. Even banana plants never bear, because of the high altitude. We'd prefer fresh fruit, of course, but since none is available except for a few things Pat sends in air-drops . . . we thought—"

"My family and I cannot afford to pay for such expensive foods," Stan interjected, "so I'll thank you not to serve them to me. I'll share the costs of the rice, the bully beef, tea, and other basics, but nothing more."

Bruno and Bill looked at each other. Stan's proposal meant complex bookkeeping. They had ordered enough of everything for Stan as well as themselves, and counted on him sharing the cost. Bill thought Stan had promised to share, but Stan denied this. Finally, it would be awkward day after day to continue eating the food they had chosen under Stan's disapproving eye.

But what did they eat? Mainly bully beef and rice, of course! For though Stan could not budge from his principles, Bruno found grace in Christ to subordinate his personal tastes to the dictates of his colleague's conscience.

Months later, however, Bruno felt constrained to admit to an acquaintance elsewhere, "I have a deep, dark secret to confess." Sighing forlornly but with twinkling eyes he continued, "One night I opened a tin of mandarin oranges and ate them under my blanket!" (Don Richardson, *Lords of the Earth*, pp. 200–203).

Labor of Love

In 1883 the Scottish scientist and evangelist Henry Drummond delivered a striking appeal for love to missions workers and church leaders at a mission station in central Africa. Drummond entitled his message, "The Greatest Thing in the World," and subsequent to his first preaching of it delivered it many more times to audiences in the British Isles and America. Later it

was published and sold over 350,000 copies in the next thirty years. D. L. Moody, who invited Drummond to give it at his famous Bible conference in Northfield, Massachusetts, several years later, said that he had never heard anything so beautiful.

Drummond used David Livingstone as an example. Here's an illustration of the universal language of love taken right from Livingstone's life.

Seven years after Livingstone's death, Rev. Chauncy Maples, of the Universities Mission, was traveling in central Africa where he came across an old African man who was carrying over his right shoulder the worn tatters of an aged coat which was obviously of English manufacture. It turned out, from the man's statement, that ten years earlier a white man had travelled with him and, seeing that the African had no protection from the elements, had given him his own coat. The African did not know the man's name, but he related that to have once seen and talked with him was to remember him for life, for he was a white man who treated black men as his brothers. That man, Chauncy discovered, was David Livingstone (William Garden Blaikie, *Personal Life of David Livingstone*, p. 397).

Livingstone was not the first missionary to discover that love is a universal language. Over a century earlier a Norwegian missionary moved his family to Greenland to evangelize the Eskimos there. His name was Hans Egede.

The Eskimos he had come to reach lived primitively in overcrowded dwellings torturously overheated in winter and reeking with the sickening stench of spoiled meat and fish combined with the repulsive odor of urine tubs in which they soaked hides. For twelve years Egede and his family practiced a faithful home visitation under these difficult conditions. There was very little to show for their work. But in 1733 a smallpox epidemic swept through the Eskimo villages. It was then that Egede was able to demonstrate a sacrificial love that spoke more loudly than his preaching. He was out on continual call, and, in addition, opened his own home to the sick. Hearing of this generosity, Eskimos came from miles around to be treated by him. His wife gave them beds and lovingly cared for them.

After the epidemic had passed, a dying Greenlandic who had previously ignored the missionary's preaching feelingly expressed the sentiments of many of the Eskimos toward Egede. "You have been more kind to us than we have been to one another; you have fed us when we were famished; you have buried our dead, who would else have been prey to dogs, foxes, and ravens; and in particular you have told us of God and how to become blessed, so that we may now die gladly, in expectation of a better life hereafter."

The price Hans paid was high. He never fully regained his health, and his wife remained ill until her death in 1736, but in time hundreds of Eskimos were converted as a result of the love they had shown (Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, pp. 76–78). ☞

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What's "Fundamental" to "Fundamentalism"?

Any discussion of Fundamentalism should begin with an understanding of the word "fundamental." There is much confusion in the religious world and especially among Bible-believers as to what constitutes a belief or teaching as being "fundamental." Many erroneously believe that everything about which they have strong convictions is therefore "fundamental." Not so! Let's take a fresh look at this important word and its meaning.

In dictionaries the basic idea of "fundamental" is defined quite consistently along the following lines: something that is an essential or necessary part of a system or object; of or relating to the foundation or base, forming or serving as an essential component of a system or structure; or something which serves as a basis which makes existence possible or determines the essential structure of something.

Synonyms of the word "fundamentalism" in general use are "foundational," "primary," "principal," "basic," "elemental," "underlying," "essential," "indispensable." Obviously, according to its generally accepted definition, not everything is fundamental in any academic discipline.

We would therefore conclude that that which is "fundamental" is both foundational and a part of the superstructure to which everything else is attached. The foundation and framework of a building are absolutely essential. Many other parts of a building are not—for example, heating and air conditioning or furnishings. As important as they may be, the building can exist without them.

In the Word of God there are statements that are fundamental and those that are not. To help us understand how to differentiate between these two categories of truth we would say that there is class of Biblical truth that is *very clear* and another that is *not so clear*.

That which is *clear* is not debatable. The words and the grammar are so clear that there is only one conclusion that can be drawn from the statement. Everyone who is personally committed to believing in the inspiration, inerrancy, infallibility, and integrity of God's Word will be in agreement with the obvious meaning of the statement. Teachings such as the creation of man by the direct act of God, the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, the deity of Christ, His bodily resurrection, and salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone are in this category of *clear Biblical teaching*.

Clear Biblical teaching is so plain and obvious that to deny the teaching is tantamount to denying the inherent meaning of the words and the integrity of the language used.

The statement of *clear Biblical truth* in this case is beyond argument or debate as to its meaning. This is why we regard this kind of statement as being "fundamental." To deny any teaching that is this *clearly stated* is tantamount to denying both the integrity and authority of Scripture.

Many statements of Scripture are *not clearly defined* in this sense. In the case of statements *not so clear*, those who are genuinely committed to the integrity of Scripture come to different conclusions, arguing from the statements of Scriptures themselves as to what they perceive the meaning to be. Statements about predestination, divorce, eternal security, the covenants, and dispensationalism, to name but a few, have provoked heated debates among those who personally own the absolute authority and integrity of Scripture. Not all statements are *clear*; therefore, not all statements are *fundamental*. There can be disagreement and debate on things *not so clear* but never on things that are *clear—fundamental*.

Here is a question to ponder: Why did God not make all of the statements in Scripture so clear that they could not be debated? One clear statement by our Lord Jesus on the subject of divorce and remarriage could have put an end to the heated debate and controversy on this subject. Obviously, in His divine and infinite wisdom He chose not to make such a statement. Among our beliefs about inspiration we believe that the Scriptures are without error or omission in the whole and in the part. This means that God in His providence omitted nothing which He felt we needed to know nor did He fail to give proper clarification about matters He wanted clearly understood. God apparently did not intend for everything in His Word, though important and necessary to His revelation, to be fundamental.

Fundamentalism must always be defined in terms of a personal relationship to God and His Word—to inspired Biblical truth—not to men, movements, organizations, or institutions. A Fundamentalist is one who joyfully and boldly embraces and is totally committed to the absolute authority of the Word of God over every aspect and dynamic of his life, in everything it clearly teaches and in everything it clearly commands. This means that fundamental truth is not "up for grabs" in his life and ministry—it is not negotiable, it should not be bartered away or compromised. In the end, Fundamentalism is about Biblical integrity in life and ministry.

Where do you personally stand on that which is "fundamental?" Are you a "Fundamentalist"?

Dr. David C. Innes has served as senior pastor of Hamilton Square Baptist Church since January of 1977.



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Mary, the one individual above all others on the face of the earth who actually knew by her own experience whether Jesus was born of the Holy Ghost or of human parentage . . . always was found endorsing the claims of Christ. —Robert T. Ketcham

Is it any wonder that to this day this Galilean is too much for our small hearts? —H. G. Wells

He [Jesus] represents a definite, divine intervention on behalf of man, at a particular moment of time in the world's history, and on this great miracle of the Person of Christ we take our stand. —W. H. Griffith Thomas

This Christ . . . is historical, not mythical; is an individual, no mere symbol. . . . He remains the highest model of religion within the reach of our thoughts; and no perfect piety is possible without His presence in the heart. —David Strauss

Only a Christ could have conceived a Christ. —Joseph Parker

From the time of Irenaeus, Christian tradition has understood Genesis 3:15 as a prophecy about Christ (and Mary). —Claus Westermann

The coming Savior was to be the seed of the woman—human; and yet in the fact that He is not called the seed of man, we have the foreshadowing of the virgin birth. —John Walvoord on Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 7:14, Luke 3:23, Galatians 4:4

There is no place among the seven occurrences of 'almah in the Old Testament where the word is clearly used of a woman who was not a virgin. —J. Gresham Machen

What wonderful thing did Isaiah say [in Isaiah 7:14] if he spoke of a young woman who conceived through intercourse with a man? It would certainly have been absurd to hold this out as a sign or a miracle. —John Calvin

But the greatest proof of the virgin birth (and the premise that Matthew gives a genealogy through Joseph while Luke gives a genealogy through our Lord's mother, Mary) lies in one of the names in the account of Matthew: the name Jechonias. It is that name that furnishes the reason for the inclusion of the genealogy of Jesus' step-father, for it proves that Joseph could not have been the father of Jesus, or if he had been, that Jesus could not have been the Messiah. —Donald Gray Barnhouse

Joseph by his very attitude disclaimed the fatherhood of [the] precious body [of Jesus]. —Robert T. Ketcham

The virgin birth of Christ was a miracle wrought by the third person of the Trinity whereby the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God, took to Himself a human nature so that He became man. —J. Oliver Buswell

The virgin birth was a "Grade A" miracle that involved setting aside the laws of thermodynamics creating either matter or energy or a higher degree of order. —Henry M. Morris

The fetal blood in the vessels of the chorionic villae at no time gains access to the maternal blood in the intervillous spaces, being separated from one another by the double layer of chorionic epithelium. —Williams' Practice of Obstetrics, page 32

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



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Regional Fellowships

New Mexico Regional Fellowship

Doug Wright

Pastor Mark Zahn and the people of Manzano Baptist Church in Albuquerque stepped up as hosts of the New Mexico Regional Fellowship after a scheduling conflict prohibited Northwest Baptist Church from hosting it. Dr. David Innes and Pastor Jonathan Edwards spoke for the October 24–25 event. Thirteen pastors were able to attend, plus spouses and additional guests. Pastor Innes presented each pastor with a twenty-five page notebook entitled “What Is a Fundamentalist?” The notebook provided definitions, axioms, and helpful historical as well as present-day guidance.

The study focused on various aspects of Fundamentalism, the tension within Fundamentalism, and maintaining unity in the movement. Jonathan Edwards, the other speaker, moved to the rural town of Marysvale, Utah, in 1994. One year later he founded Marysvale Baptist Church, which he still pastors. The church has grown and matured dramatically. Pastor Edwards’s Eagle’s Nest Baptist Ministries also has an outreach to at-risk teenage boys, a counseling center for burned-out Christian workers, and a retreat and conference center. Also under the umbrella of Eagle’s Nest will be a resource center for women in crisis as well as industrial arts and construction training for missionaries. Pastor Edwards reported on his ministries as well as outside efforts to reach Latter Day Saints who practice polygamy in the region. Dan Mauldin commended both speakers for their exceptional knowledge and willingness to encourage the brethren.

Central Regional Fellowship

Dr. Larry Karsies

The Central Regional FBF Fellowship was held on October 21 and 22, 2013, at Harvest Hills Baptist Church in Northwest Oklahoma City, where Dr. Larry Karsies is the senior pastor. There were about 115 attendees on Monday and Tuesday nights and approximately fifty in attendance on Tuesday. Many of those who attended were pastors and their wives—from Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, and Nebraska.

The conference theme was “Our Eyes Are upon Thee” (2 Chron. 20:12). After some enthusiastic congregational singing and special music, Dr. John Vaughn kicked off the conference on Monday night with his message “And Their Eyes Were Opened, and They Knew Him” (Luke 24:31). Four different pastors preached on Tuesday: Pastor Greg Kelley’s message was entitled “Our Eyes Are upon Thee” (2 Chron. 20:12); Pastor Scott Kliever’s text was Psalm 123, with his message entitled “Unto Thee Lift Up Mine Eyes.” Pastor Jeremy Van Delinder preached from 2 Corinthians 3–4—“Looking Right to Keep from Fainting.” Pastor Arin Hess brought the closing message on Tuesday night and took his text from Hebrews. 12:1–3, “Looking Unto Jesus.”

Dr. Karsies had two sessions with the men while his wife, Bonnie, had two sessions with the ladies. They “reversed” the theme—from “Our Eyes Are upon Thee” to “His Eyes Are upon Us.” In addition to teaching from Dr. and Mrs. Karsies, these split sessions gave those who attended an opportunity to participate, with questions presented for those attending the sessions to answer.

All who attended the conference were greatly encouraged and challenged to go back to their homes and churches with great determination to keep their eyes upon their God as they continue the ministry to which He has called them.





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A Sacrifice of Praise

We live in Africa, where my husband and I grew up and then reared our children. Now they are all grown and have their own families. Where did the days go? Our children are greatly missed, but the memory treasures they gave us come up in conversations that bring a chuckle or a "Praise the Lord for His deliverance" or "Remember how . . . ?" Often we have tears remembering—not tears of sadness but tears of praise and missing them. That is the time to start offering a "sacrifice of praise," to the Lord, right?

Now those four children have their spouses, each of whom is very special and God given. Those children are now giving us grandchildren. At present we have twelve, twelve years old and under! When our older son is on the field, we live behind his family's house and have five grandsons to enjoy. The others are in the States or Cape Town, South Africa.

As I was reading in Psalm 78 this week, my heart said to me, "What are you doing in the lives of your grandchildren to help them set their hope in God?" I thought of three short, though special, memories. May I share them with you?

While in the States, we went with our son David, his wife, September, and three children to a pottery studio. It was just a small place on the side of the road, but a potter worked at his wheel to show how the items for sale were made. I remember sitting down with our granddaughter, Jenna, seven years of age. We watched as the potter moistened the clay, moved it, shaped it, and removed little pieces of unwanted material. As he worked, I spoke gently to Jenna saying, "Just like that potter is molding a pot, he wets it to make it smooth and workable. God uses His Word to mold us. Look, the potter has his hands on the outside *and* on the inside of the pot as he molds. God uses things that happen, the way He made you to shape your life. And He is working inside of your heart to make a vase, cup, or whatever He knows is best for you to be used for. Let God work in your life." She listened. I don't know if she remembers that or not, but I do, and it blessed my heart to be able to share one-on-one with her. I have a piece of pottery given that day that was like the one she chose as her piece. Mine holds silk flowers. I thank God for those few minutes.

On the way home from that trip, Jenna and her older brother, David, had their heads in my lap and wanted me to scratch their backs. I knew we would be leaving soon for the

field. I was thankful for the darkness that hid my tears as I talked to them, reminding them that God blessed them with a daddy and mommy who love the Lord and their children. "Even when you don't understand, remember your daddy is not going to make decisions that will be wrong for you. Your parents love you and want what is best for you." It was kind of nice to have them soothed with a back scratch, but still awake and able to hear. Was it a big moment? No, but part of "teaching as we went on our way."

Then just a few words were said by two-year-old John—John here in Zambia before he left with his family for furlough. Whenever we would be outside at night, looking at the stars that are so clear and beautiful, I would say, "Look at the stars. God made the stars." Or if he brought a flower to me, I would say, "Thank you, John-John. Who made the flowers? God made the flowers." So one day he brought me a rose, picked with no stem, just the flower. He handed it to me and said, "Oma. For you. Dod made it." I was blessed to tears that just a tiny message had reached his heart and came out of his mouth. "Dod made it."

Those little moment-treasures in the heart of this Oma have been tucked away but shared with you today. If you have your grandkids nearby, you never know what God will use through you to help them know Him better. My mother led one of our four to the Lord. I am never too old to have influence in any child's life.

Yes, we miss the smiles, funny things said, first words, steps, songs sung with words not quite right. Our children are good to send pictures. When I see Lilly Belle, who is almost one year old but whom we have not met or cuddled, or Amy, who will be six months old when we meet her, I pray that God will help me in some way to pass on the godly heritage I have been blessed with, "that they might set their hope in God."

God has given us some other children here, too, not to take the place of our kids, but for us to influence for the Lord. Some are so naughty. Others are very sensitive with heart hurts at very young ages. May God use us to "[show His] strength unto this generation, and [His] power to every one that is to come" (Ps. 71:18).

Sandy Fields Washer and her husband, Terry, both grew up in different parts of Africa. They currently serve the Lord as missionaries in Zambia under Independent Faith Mission.

Written and Compiled by Dr. Layton Talbert

Joshua is the outlet emerging from the Mosaic era of the Pentateuch and flowing into the river of history that waters the rest of the OT. It combines a backward glance at God's faithfulness to everything He had promised with an anticipation of Israel's settling into their God-given inheritance as the unique people of Yahweh. The book opens, and echoes, with an optimistic charge: "Be strong and of a good courage" (1:6, 7, 9, 18; 10:25; 23:6). A reassuring promise begins and periodically punctuates the book: "I will be with thee [as I was with Moses]" (1:5, 9, 17; 3:7; 6:27; cf. 5:15; 7:12).

Joshua presents Israel at a high point in the nation's history and, simultaneously, at a crucial crossroads. Signs of victory and faithfulness are bedeviled by disturbing displays of ongoing indwelling sin (7:1–26). Amid the scenes of victory is "a veiled prediction that a remnant of the Canaanites would become a snare to Israel" (18:3; 23:13). "The Book of Judges vividly reveals how lamentably true this prophecy proved to be." Still, "the predominant note sounded in Joshua, however, is not so much one of warning as one of joy and encouragement. . . . Every page resounds with the joyful optimism of faith" (C. J. Goslinga, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, 6).

Outline of Joshua

The motto in Joshua is not "divide and conquer" but "conquer and divide." Joshua consists of two major divisions: *Conquering Canaan* (1–12) and *Securing Canaan* (13–24).

Canaan (1–12)

Preparation for Entry (1–5)

- Charging the Leaders of God's People (1)
 - Be courageous to believe God's promises.
 - Be diligent to retain God's words.
 - Be faithful to obey your covenant obligations.
- Promising Loyalty for Faith: The Rahab Story (2)
- Following God's Presence: Crossing the Jordan (3)
- Memorializing God's Acts: Building a Memorial Altar (4)
- Submitting to God's Leadership: The Captain of the Lord's Hosts (5)

Entry and Conquest (6–12)

- Victorious over Jericho (6)
- Defeated at Ai (7)
- Victorious over Ai (8)
- Deceived by Gibeon (9)

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA:

- Victorious over Southern (Pentapolic) Confederation (10)
- Victorious over Northern Confederation (11)
- Conquest List (12)

Securing Canaan (13–24)

- Partitioning of Canaan (13–21)
- Holding on to Canaan (22–24)

Themes in Joshua

Acquiring the land. Several words contribute to highlighting this theme.

- **Give** (*nathan*) occurs 64x with reference to *giving* the land of Canaan to Israel.
 - 16x of Moses' giving the land, or portion of it, to Israel
 - 23x of God's giving the land, or a portion of it, to Israel
 - 9x of God's giving enemies over to Israel, in order to disinherit them and give their land to Israel
- **Inheritance** (*nachalah*) occurs 50x (the verb also occurs 9x).
 - Coupled with *nathan*, the term emphasizes that God and His promises are solely responsible for Israel's acquisition of the land in the first place.
- **(Dis)Possess** (*yarash*) occurs 32x with reference either to Israel's possessing the land or dispossessing the inhabitants of the land.

Miracles. Several miracles highlight the divine intervention that enabled Israel to secure the land.

- Parting the Jordan (3; note 3:11)
- Fall of Jericho (6)
- Hail on Amorites (10; note 10:11)
- Stopping the sun against the Pentapolic League (10)
- "Hornets" to drive out inhabitants (24:12; cf. Exod. 23:27–28; Deut. 7:20)

The reference to "hornets" has evoked considerable debate. Is this a reference to literal hornets? Or is it a metaphorical reference to divinely induced fear and panic, so that they fled before Israel as if hornets were after them? Neither is impossible nor without parallel elsewhere in the OT. Calvin hits upon the central point when he observes that, in either case, God's intervention and activity is directly responsible for Israel's victories against nations mightier than they were.

CONQUEST AND INHERITANCE

Theological Summary of Joshua

The inheritance was obtained through a combination of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

Divine Sovereignty

- By sovereign determination (see key concepts)
- By divine intervention (see miracles)
- In faithful fulfillment of promises (21:43–45; 23:14)
- In an immediately livable condition (24:13)
- Note the repetition in the conclusion (24:28, 30, 32, 33)

Human Responsibility

- Courageous adherence to God's law essential for success (1:7, 8; 23:6)
- Memorializing God's acts important for future generations (4)
- Obedience to known duties a prerequisite for conquest (5)
- Disobedience brings defeat (7)
- Reminder of covenant responsibilities (8)
- Love Yahweh (22:5; 23:11)
- "Serve" Yahweh, not any other gods (16x in ch. 24)

Purpose of Joshua

To demonstrate the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His promise to give the land of Canaan to Abraham's seed. Acquisition of the land was contingent upon Yahweh's loyalty to His word in enabling them to do the impossible. But that is a two-sided equation combining Divine faithfulness to His words (promises) and human faithfulness to His words (commands). See 4:8; 10:40; 11:9, 15, 20; 14:2, 5, 12; 21:8; 23:5, 10, 14, 15. The full and final expression of that Divine faithfulness is chapter 23.

To underscore the obligation of Abraham's seed to cling to Yahweh alone and keep His law—or risk losing His promised blessings. The gift of the land to the nation was eternal, but each generation's retention of the land was contingent on their faithfulness to Yahweh. The full and final expression of that human obligation to faithfulness is chapter 24.

The Jews have traditionally designated Joshua as among the "Former Prophets." That designation displays considerable insight into the character and aim of the book of Joshua.

The author's intention was not to preserve history for its own sake, not even a prophetically interpreted history. He presented a careful selection of historical and traditional materials in order to preach. He wanted to proclaim that Israel was blessed at the time of the Conquest because she was faithful to her God and to His law and that this would be

the secret of Israel's success and blessing in every generation (Madvig, "Joshua" in *EBC*, 244).

Dale Ralph Davis makes a similar observation.

What happens when one looks at Joshua as primarily prophecy rather than history? What is the difference between former prophets and historical books? To oversimplify, it is like the difference between preaching and a world history book. The "prophecy of Joshua" means to convict, not merely to inform; to comfort, not simply to enlighten. . . . We need to see clearly that "history in the OT is a declaration from God about God." But until we begin to think of history that way, we will do well to think of Joshua as one of the *former* prophets. As you read and study Joshua, try to keep asking yourself the question: What is the writer *preaching about* when he tells me this story? He is not telling you the story only to inform you (although that is part of it); he has a message to proclaim, a God to press upon you (Davis, "Introduction," *Joshua*, 11–12).

Rahab: A Footnote

Certainly one of the book's most intriguing and theologically significant characters is Rahab. Scripture presents her as a model of faith and loyalty. This is the consistent and combined testimony of both OT and NT (Josh. 2; Heb. 11:31; James 2:25). Nevertheless, Rahab's actions (and the Bible's depiction of them) have elicited considerable debate, especially over the relation between faith and ethics. Much of the issue can be resolved by simply observing carefully what the texts do and do not say.

Rahab's expression of *faith* was not her lying, but (as Heb. 11:31 puts it) but that she "received the spies with peace." The "faith" that motivates all her actions is clearly expressed in Joshua 2:9–11. Likewise, her hiding and protection of the spies is described not as her faith but, interestingly, as showing *loyalty* (Hebrew, *chesed*) in Joshua 2:12. That word need not necessarily imply some spoken or tacit "agreement" between them when the spies realized their arrival was known, but it seems likely (since 2:3 indicates what prompted her to hide them in the 2:4).

In other words, her faith in Yahweh because of all she'd heard (2:9–11) is expressed when she receives the spies peaceably (Heb. 11:31; James 2:25) and does not report their presence to the king or his officials; her hiding them and misdirecting their pursuers is described as an act of *loyalty* to them.

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Criminalizing “Islamophobia”

In September 2013 members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held their first International Conference on Islamophobia. The result of this meeting was the decision to meet again and the establishment of the OIC Media Forum. The purpose of the forum is to “correct the image of Islam and Muslims in Europe and North America.” The problem in their eyes is that Islam is defamed and that that defamation is rooted in “Islamophobia.”

The OIC has fifty-seven members from countries such as Egypt (persecutors of Copts), Saudi Arabia (who deny citizenship to Jewish people), and Iran (who deny equal employment to those of the Bahá’í faith).

The OIC has been instrumental in pushing for the acceptance and implementation of Resolution 16/18 in the United Nations, which prohibits speech that defames religion. By religion, they mean only Islam. Any free speech that would criticize the actions or philosophies of Muslims would be labeled Islamophobia. Any religious proclamation that insists on absolute principles would not be welcome either.

This article can be accessed at http://frontpagemag.com/2013/deborah-weiss/geneva-conference-moves-toward-criminalizing-islamophobic-speech/?utm_source=FrontPage+Magazine&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=70845e102f-Mailchimp_FrontPageMag&utm_term=0_57e32c1dad-70845e102f-156495750.

In God We Trust

On September 9, 2013, New York Federal Court Judge Harold Baer Jr. ruled that the motto “In God We Trust” had not created a “substantial burden” on the people who brought a suit. The suit was filed by members of the New York City Atheist and the Freedom from Religion Foundation. Baer argued that the plaintiffs may indeed be offended by the motto found on our nation’s currency, but that offense does not constitute the “substantial burden” necessary to win the case.

Baer also noted that no circuit court to date has found our nation’s motto to be a violation of the establishment clause and does not represent an excessive entanglement with religion.

This article can be accessed in the *New American*, October 7, 2013, p. 8.

Al Mohler Jr. at Brigham Young

On October 21, 2013, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary President Al Mohler Jr. spoke at Brigham Young University on the topic of advancing Modernism and its effect on the moral issues of marriage and human sexuality. His address was titled, “A Clear and Present Danger: Religious Liberty, Marriage and Family in the Late Modern Age—An Address at Brigham Young University.”

In part Mohler stated, “I come as a Christian theologian to speak explicitly and respectfully as

a Christian—a Christian who defines Christianity only within the historic creeds and confessions of the Christian church and who comes as one committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to the ancient and eternal Trinitarian faith of the Christian church. I have not come as less, and you know whom you have invited. I come knowing who you are—to an institution that stands as the most powerful intellectual center of the Latter-Day Saints, the most visible academic institution of Mormonism. . . . We do not enjoy such friendship and constructive conversation in spite of our theological differences, but in light of them. This does not eliminate the possibility of conversation. To the contrary, this kind of convictional difference at the deepest level makes for the most important kind of conversation. This is why I am so thankful for your gracious invitation.”

In conclusion he also asserted, “This is what brings me to Brigham Young University today. I am not here because I believe we are going to heaven together. I do not believe that. I believe that salvation comes only to those who believe and trust only in Christ and in his substitutionary atonement for salvation. I believe in justification by faith alone, in Christ alone. I love and respect you as friends, and as friends we would speak only what we believe to be true, especially on matters of eternal significance. We inhabit separate and irreconcilable theological

worlds, made clear with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity. And yet here I am, and gladly so. We will speak to one another of what we most sincerely believe to be true, precisely because we love and respect one another. I do not believe that we are going to heaven together, but I do believe we may go to jail together.”

Dr. Mohler’s complete address can be accessed at <http://www.albertmohler.com/2013/10/21/a-clear-and-present-danger-religious-liberty-marriage-and-the-family-in-the-late-modern-age-an-address-at-brigham-young-university/>.

In the USA?

Father Ray Leonard serves as a civilian Navy chaplain at Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay in Georgia. He has filed suit against the United States Department of Defense, the US Navy, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, and Navy Secretary Ray Mabus. During the latest US government shutdown, over fifty chaplains were barred from fulfilling their chaplaincy duties. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, in conference with Attorney General Eric Holder did not believe the chaplains’ work “[contributed] to the morale” and “well-being” of military personnel.

The reason for the lawsuit relates to the fact that Congress passed and President Obama signed into law instructions that allowed the Department of Defense to reinstate civilian contract employees who served military personnel “during the lapse of appropriations.” The chaplains,

however, were not even permitted to volunteer their time to service the needs of the military.

This article can be accessed at <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/terry-jeffrey/dod-bars-50-priests-administering-sacraments-locks-eucharist-priest-sues>

Vandalized Monument

The Evangelical Christian group Faith and Action holds its headquarters across from the Supreme Court Building in Washington, DC. In 2006 the group applied for a permit to erect a three-by-three-foot marble Ten Commandments monument that had been removed from an Ohio public school in 2002. Initially the permit was denied. After threat of legal action, the city relented and granted the permit to install the monument.

On Saturday, September 21, 2013, a local pastor reported to Faith and Action personnel that the monument had been defaced. Vandals had moved the 850-pound monument and bent the reinforcing rod designed to hold one of the tablets in place. Vandals also removed the lighting and put a "For Rent" sign in the yard.

Read more at <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/sep/23/vandals-topple-ten-commandments-statue-near-suprem/>.

Crime against Humanity

Federal District Court Judge Michael Ponsor ruled that Evangelist Scott Lively was "aiding and abetting a crime against humanity" when he was preaching evangelist services in Uganda. His main offense was speaking openly against homosexual behavior from a Bible perspective. Ponsor described Lively's work as "analogous to a terrorist designing and manufacturing a bomb in this country, which he then mails to Uganda with the intent that

NOTABLE QUOTES

Always respond to every impulse to pray. The impulse to pray may come when you are reading or when you are battling with a text. I would make an absolute law of this—always obey such an impulse. Where does it come from? It is the work of the Holy Spirit. This often leads to some of the most remarkable experiences in the life of the minister. So never resist, never postpone it, never push it aside because you are busy. Give yourself to it, yield to it; and you will find not only that you have not been wasting time with respect to the matter with which you are dealing but that actually it has helped you greatly in that respect. You will experience an ease and a facility in understanding what you were reading, in thinking, in ordering matter for a sermon, in writing, in everything which is quite astonishing. Such a call to prayer must never be regarded as a distraction; always respond to it immediately, and thank God if it happens to you frequently. —D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet. —Thomas Watson

Ah! believers, you are a tempted people. You are always poor and needy. And God intends it should be so, to give you constant errands to go to Jesus. Some may say, it is not good to be a believer; but ah! see to whom we can go. —Robert Murray McCheyne

Not to be occupied with your sin, but to be occupied with God brings deliverance from self. —Andrew Murray

With the goodness of God to desire our highest welfare, the wisdom of God to plan it, and the power of God to achieve it, what do we lack? Surely we are the most favored of all creatures. —A. W. Tozer

There, poor sinner, take my garment, and put it on; you shall stand before God as if you were Christ, and I will stand before God as if I had been the sinner; I will suffer in the sinner's stead, and you shall be rewarded for works that you did not do, but which I did for you. —Charles Spurgeon

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

it will explode there." He also described Lively as an "upper level manager and leader of a criminal enterprise."

If Ponsor's verdict is allowed to stand (it has been appealed), serious First Amendment erosion must follow. Beware the one who speaks truth when truth is no longer accepted.

This article can be accessed at <http://thenewamerican.com/culture/faith-and-morals/item/16415-fed-judge-declares-anti-gay-sermon-a-crime-against-humanity>.

Trends in the Information Age

Regardless of how one views the conclusions that George Barna reaches in his research, it is good for leaders to evaluate the research data that he offers. Barna recently released a study of how living in the Information Age has impacted the desires and expectation of people in our culture.

His research pointed to three conclusions:

- People feel that modern life is accelerating and becoming more complex.
- People want to be culturally informed but are becoming accustomed to skimming the content. For example, 41 percent of men and 28 percent of women believe that books are too long, and 49 percent of all Millennials believe that books are too long. (That being true, how do they view Scripture or in-depth studies?)
- And people are moving beyond the facts and information and are looking for holistic integration of faith and life.

Read more at <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/641-3-trends-redefining-the-information-age>.

Compiled by Robert Condict, FBFI Executive Board member and pastor of Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church, Baldwin, Maryland.

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The Flawed Hermeneutics of Evangelical Feminism

(Continued from page 11)

² Complementarians believe that men and women, created in God's image, are equally valuable but functionally different in marriage and the church. Prominent works include Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More than One Hundred Disputed Questions* (Sisters, OR: 2004); Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010). Complementarians are distinct from strict patriarchalists, who believe the Bible urges men to exercise an authoritarian style of leadership in the home and church and, for some, in all spheres of life. See the teachings of Vision Forum, Michael Pearl, and Bill Gothard.

³ Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Women Caught in the Conflict: The Culture War between Traditionalism and Feminism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1997), 112–14. Groothuis describes the “Biblical feminist hermeneutic” with eight principles, including sensing authorial intent, translating Scripture accurately, using the analogy of Scripture, and giving attention to a text's receptor situation and culture.

⁴ While the word “help” doesn't in itself point to male headship, the entire sentence clearly does. Eve was created as a helper for Adam, not vice versa, Paul's precise point of argumentation in 1 Corinthians 11:9.

⁵ Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says about a Woman's Place in Church and Family*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 22.

⁶ Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 151–52.

⁷ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 462.

⁸ Richard S. Hess, “Equality with and without Innocence: Genesis 1–3,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 87.

⁹ Bilezikian, 243, n. 42a.

¹⁰ Ibid. Mounce, however, argues that vv. 13 and 14 supply two distinct reasons for the prohibition of vv. 11 and 12 on the basis that “this is the most natural reading of the verse, primarily because

its syntax so closely parallels that of v. 13.” He also argues that the egalitarian interpretation of these verses reads into the text an unsubstantiated assumption about Ephesian culture, namely, that the women were uneducated. Furthermore, Eve states in Genesis 3 that she had received instruction from God regarding the tree. William D. Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 46: Pastoral Epistles (Thomas Nelson, 2000), 136–43.

¹¹ Groothuis, *Good News*, 149.

¹² Bilezikian, 132.

¹³ Gordon Fee, “Hermeneutics and the Gender Debate,” in Pierce and Groothuis, 373–78.

¹⁴ Ibid., 381.

¹⁵ Ibid., 373.

¹⁶ Andreas J. Köstenberger, “Gender Passages in the NT: Hermeneutical Fallacies Critiqued,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 56:2 (fall 1994): 261–63. Köstenberger's article is an extremely valuable comprehensive analysis going far beyond the scope of this article.

¹⁷ Groothuis, *Women Caught*, 120, emphasis mine.

The Hermeneutics of Homosexuality

(Continued from page 9)

I'm not fear-mongering, nor is this prospect as implausible as it initially sounds. The American values of equality and liberty have had a deeply formative influence on Fundamentalists (they have partly Biblical roots, after all). Already it's tempting to nod when we hear, “The government has no business intruding itself into the bedroom!” Toss in some hermeneutical uncertainty about whether and how the Old Testament applies today (why do we eat shellfish, anyway?) and Fundamentalist opposition to homosexual marriage, at the very least, may fall.

As cultural pressure to accept homosexuality mounts, it will be very tempting to hedge. For the good of the culture and the good of Christians who experience homosexual temptation, get your hermeneutics in line

now—so that your backbone can be not merely strong as a rock, but truly founded on one.

Mark L. Ward Jr., PhD, is a Bible curriculum author and Biblical Worldview Team member at BJU Press. He is a weekly evangelist in a Sunday outreach service at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina.



¹ *National Catholic Reporter* interview, May 21, 2004.

² (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 303–39. See also James B. DeYoung, “The Source and NT Meaning of Ἀρσενικοῦται, with Implications for Christian Ethics and Ministry,” *The Master's Seminary Journal* 3:2 (1992): 191–215.

³ Whether or not writers such as Brian McLaren, Rachel Held Evans, and Rob Bell are still in any sense Evangelicals, they certainly came from Evangelical backgrounds.

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Common Misconceptions about

What is the military's view on homosexuality and how are chaplains affected?

On September 20, 2011, the United States military repealed its policy on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." The policy had restricted the liberty to ask a service member about his or her sexual orientation and/or the liberty of a service member's openly providing information that would "demonstrate a propensity or intent to engage in homosexual acts."* More recently, on June 26, 2013, the Supreme Court of the United States repealed Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which did not recognize marriages between same-sex couples for the purpose of federal laws or programs. It is the military's role to comply.

The chaplain has a distinct position and the freedom to teach and preach his beliefs without fear of reprimand. Every chaplain has the unique protection of an endorser. My endorser is Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International (FBFI), the publisher of *FrontLine*. It is the function of the endorsing agency to protect its chaplains and communicate what the chaplain can and cannot teach, preach, and do. The confusion for most is that many believe it is the military's responsibility to dictate the freedoms of the chaplain, when it is, in fact, the endorser's obligation to establish these parameters.

There are some denominations that approve of same-sex marriages and thus will allow their chaplains to perform wedding ceremonies for same-sex couples. However, most are still opposed and, therefore, select an endorser of like belief. If an endorser is supportive of same-sex marriages and a chaplain has personal convictions against it, then the chaplain must fight that battle with his endorser, not the military.

So the bottom line is that if an endorser is opposed to its chaplains performing same-sex marriages, then it would be unlawful for a chaplain, under that endorser, to marry a same-sex couple.

Is the chaplain limited on sharing his faith while at work?

The military chaplain has every right to share his personal faith with others. This brings up the discussion of the difference between proselytizing and evangelism. Proselytizing is viewed as forcing your views or opinions of religious matters upon another in an attempt to convert that individual. Often, those who proselytize



do so by using their rank or position with threats of unequal treatment to those who might refuse to convert. Evangelism is using the opportunities you have been given to share your faith with those who would be receptive to listening, with no adverse reaction to those who refuse to accept what you present. In fact, it is the requirement of many endorsers, including FBFI, that their chaplains openly and willingly share their own faith.

Are chaplains allowed to pray in Jesus' name?

The issue that most hear of, typically through the liberal media or a chain e-mail, is whether or not the military chaplain has the freedom to pray in Jesus' name. In 2006 a Navy chaplain was reprimanded for disobeying his commanding officer's orders not to attend a public protest in uniform, in essence representing the Navy. He prayed "in Jesus' name" at the protest while wearing his Navy uniform. He then claimed the charge was disobedience of orders to not to pray in Jesus' name. The media were also misled and reported the incident as the chaplain claimed. The purpose for his dismissal from the Navy is often misunderstood. Nevertheless, the incident resulted in Congress clarifying the policy, allowing chaplains the freedom to pray according to their own faith and tradition.

So, how can you (and should you) support the military chaplain?

It is my prayer to see a coordinated effort in ministry between civilian ministries and the military chaplain. Too often the military chaplain is wrongfully dismissed as an illegitimate New Testament ministry. I challenge pastors, teachers, evangelists, and missionaries to learn more of the military chaplain's opportunities to minister and preach the gospel to men and women in uniform. Military and civilian ministries are compatible, and greater teamwork and cooperation between the two will benefit both. It is my prayer that pastors will present this valuable ministry to young preacher boys as a ministry option and, more importantly, for fellow Christians to develop a burden for military personnel who are without Christ. The first place to start in support of military chaplains is to pray for them.

FBFI CH (LT) Trenten Long is currently with the 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

*U.S. Code Title 10

the Military Chaplain

Trenten Long



Getting Back to the Basics, Part 2

In my last article I discussed the matter of reading, memorizing, and meditating on Scripture. Our spiritual nourishment for a healthy life is feeding daily upon the milk and meat of God's Word. This is the first basic of the Christian life we must get back to.

Second, we need to get back to the basic of a strong prayer life. Jesus Christ said in Luke 18:1, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." We read in Colossians 4:2, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." First Thessalonians 5:17 exhorts believers to "pray without ceasing." Our lives should be characterized by fervent prayer!

Our Lord Jesus Christ set the example for us in Mark 1:35: "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." We all need a solitary place; we all need to get alone with the Lord in prayer. He desires to hear us. Jeremiah 33:3 says, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." First Peter 3:12 says "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers." What more assurance do we need than the wonderful truth that the Lord wants us to call unto Him, and that His ears are open unto our prayers?

Many years ago I met the secretary who had worked for Dr. Pappy Reveal, who operated the Evansville Rescue Mission in Indiana. Dr. Reveal was known for his powerful prayer life, and his secretary related the following story to me. She said he was sitting in his office one day, unaware of her presence. She heard Dr. Reveal pray aloud, "Dear Lord, I need two hundred and fifty dollars for the Rescue Mission today, and I am not moving from this chair until You send it to me." The secretary thought to herself, "Why, he will rot in that chair! Who does he think he is that God will send him that amount of money?" She said he sat there for some time and then prayed a second prayer: "Lord, You are wasting my time, and You are wasting Your time. Now, Lord, please send me the money." She said she was shocked to hear a man pray like that.

All of a sudden the office door swung open; a man walked in and said, "Are you Dr. Reveal?" He said, "Yes, I am." The man said, "Sir, you don't know me, but I'm

a Christian businessman traveling through the area, and the Lord has laid on my heart to bring you this check for two hundred and fifty dollars." The secretary said that Dr. Reveal raised the check toward Heaven and prayed aloud, "Thank You, Lord, thank You, Lord. I knew You were going to do it all the time." How this ought to stir our hearts in the area of prayer! First John 5:14 states, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." The Lord stands ready to answer us as well as anybody else—the Lord does not show favoritism. Acts 10:34 says, "God is no respecter of persons." I am convinced that we need to get back to some basic areas of praying.

We need to develop a prayer priority list. I believe it would be wise for all of us to begin our praying with a focus on the Lord. Worship Him first. Magnify His name, power, wisdom, goodness, protection, and mercy. Second, confess to Him your sin, disobedience, and inconsistencies; ask Him to cleanse and forgive you as you approach His throne. Third, develop a prayer list. Include on that list the names of unsaved loved ones and family members. Pray for the Jews, our country, our political leaders, pastors, missionaries, evangelists, those who are sick, and your own personal needs. You can always expand these lists; I am only giving ideas of developing a prayer list.

My mother was a great prayer warrior. She had a list of people that she faithfully prayed for over a number of years. I know she prayed for me twice a day for many years, and I believe that any effectiveness I may have had in the ministry is due to a godly mother who upheld me before the Lord's throne. When she passed away in 2009,

many people across the country voiced to me that they were grateful for my mother's prayers for them. A dear friend of mine said, "We lost a great prayer warrior when your mother died." I trust that we will get back to the basic of a strong prayer life. Philippians 4:6 says, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

In my next article I will continue to address other basics we need to get back to.

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





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