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FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

IN *His* IMAGE

What Is the Image of God in Man?

Thoroughly Human Thinking

The "Goodness" of Unbelievers

God and Atheists

In His Image



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We would like to thank Dr. Larry Oats for coordinating this issue of *FrontLine* magazine.

The Problem with Human Problems Is Humans

When Paul told the Corinthians, “There hath no

temptation taken you but such as is common to man,” he made practical the doctrine of Anthropology. Declaring that all human problems are “such as is common,” Paul explained that fallen man is susceptible to all the problems that men have in common. Man, made in the image of God, fell, and by that fall, caused all creation to fall with him. Ultimately, as we face the innumerable problems of life we find the truth stated by Dr. Bob Jones Sr.: “No doubt, the problem is with you.”

Without Paul’s next phrase, facing our fallenness would lead to despair. “But God is faithful”! Though we are fallen, He has not abandoned us in our fallen condition. In His divine plan, He makes “a way to escape,” to enable us to bear up under our trials. Having been created in the image of God, we labor in the shame of a marred image, yet we endure through the hope of God’s promise that we will not only escape but will once again be conformed to His image through Christ. If “the problem with human problem is humans,” the answer to human problems is Christ.

What follows is a series of articles discussing the doctrine of Anthropology—the doctrine of Man. They develop paragraph 5 from FBFI’s Statement of Faith on Man:

We believe that man was created directly by God on day six of the creation week (Gen. 1:26–31), in His image (James 3:9), and in a state of sinlessness (Eph. 4:24). We believe that originally man freely chose to transgress the will of God, and thereby, incurred sin, condemnation, physical, and spiritual death (Gen. 3:1–7; Rom. 5:12–19; Eph. 2:1–3) so that man is a sinner by nature and by choice, completely depraved, destitute of any moral good, and utterly unable to merit God’s favor or contribute to his salvation (Rom. 3:10; Jer. 17:9; Eph. 2:9; Titus 3:5; Rom. 4:5–6).

“That is so negative!” you say. “Why do Fundamentalists have to be so focused on making people sound so awful?” is a common response. Good question. We agree—the news about man is bad news. But knowing the bad news is what makes the Good News so good. Note that the final word in the statement above is “salvation.” That is the “way to escape” in Paul’s promise above. That is the story of man: deliverance in the face of desperation—hope for the hopeless. We don’t just *have* problems; we *are* the problem. The Creator made us in His image; the Savior would remake us into His image.

—John C. Vaughn



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Words cannot fully explain what the FBFI Annual Chaplains' Training meant to me this year. Coming from Washington State, the nearest church of like precious faith and practice is three hours away. At times, it is easy to feel that you are all alone in the battle and standing on Biblical principles that no one else seems to believe or follow. The conference refreshed my heart and was like a breath of fresh air, reminding me that there are still men and women who stand for truth and who have not compromised. What a blessing to be at Faith Baptist Church [Taylors, SC] and see a congregation who truly loves the Lord, who sings Christ-honoring music, and who showed forth a Christlike spirit in their wonderful hospitality. I thank the Lord that He allowed me to attend this year and see that He still has a Godly remnant who will stand upon the unchanging truth of God's Word.

*FBFI-Endorsed Chaplain Dan Cleghorn
Chewelah Police and Fire
Chewelah, WA*

We do appreciate all the thought, planning, and implementation of the lovely tea you ladies prepared for us at the Poinsett Ballroom [i.e., the Ladies' Excursion at the FBFI Annual Fellowship]. Your selection of Mrs. Pryor, who had used teas as an outreach, was the perfect and proper program for us.

Please thank all those who had a part in the teas. The selection of the delicious sandwiches, scones, teas, and "sweet" take home gifts made for a lovely and meaningful afternoon for my guest and me.

*Joanne Barnett
Taylors, SC*

May grace be yours in abundance through the riches of our victorious Savior, Jesus Christ!

Recently, someone at Bob Jones University kindly blessed me with some back issues of *FrontLine* magazine. Finally, a magazine that is unreservedly Fundamentalist AND rigorously intellectual! I cannot recall the last time I found a magazine to be so refreshing and edifying. I thank God for *FrontLine's* existence and commitment to Biblical truth and pray that the Lord of the harvest will continue to use you to sow good seed for the kingdom!

I am currently seeking a family member to agree to purchase a subscription on my behalf. In the meantime, I wonder if you might be willing to help me with an issue. I am in the process of writing my thesis for a master's degree in Biblical Studies. My subject is the doctrine of eternal punishment for the impenitent, defended on Biblical, theological, and historical grounds.

(Continued on page 28)

Dave and Jenny Greear

have recently been accepted as church-planting missionaries with GFA to Raleigh, North Carolina. The Greears have served as campus missionaries with Campus Light Ministries for the past seventeen years, working on the campuses of Marshall University (1997–2009) and West Virginia University (2009–14). They hope to plant a new church in central Raleigh early in 2015 in the area near the North Carolina State University campus. They have recently moved to the Raleigh area, where they will initially be partnering with the College Park Baptist Church (working with Pastor Matt Walker) in Cary for this project. The Greears have three children: Caleb (thirteen), Susanna (eleven), and Sarah (eight).



Central Baptist Church

in Dothan, Alabama, noted a number of special milestones in June 2014. Renee Russell, wife of Steve Russell, completed twenty-three years of homeschooling when their youngest daughter finished high school; in



addition, Steve Russell completed twenty-three years as pastor at Central Baptist. Also in June the church welcomed Matt Galvan to their staff to serve as associate pastor. And June ended with the entire congregation participating in Neighborhood Bible Time ministry for the eighteenth consecutive year.

Bob Reed

serves as the president of Global Baptist Schools (GBS). Better known in the Spanish-speaking world as *Seminario Bautista Panamericano*, GBS provides a three-year Spanish-language Bible Institute, taught primarily on video, to like-minded churches in the US and Latin America, allowing them to train their members within the structure of the local church. In addition to his responsibilities with the school, Bob speaks regularly in conferences and revivals in both the US and Latin America.



What Is the Image of

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Gen. 1:26, 27).

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, And hast crowned him with glory and honour (Ps. 8:4, 5).

The Bible places great value and dignity on human life. We are told that God created human beings in His image. As part of God's original creation, man was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). God gave glory and honor to mankind and made humans stewards of His earthly creation.

In this brief article we plan to describe the meaning of those statements in Genesis and elsewhere that teach how God's image in man was ruined by sin and how it will eventually be fully restored in eternity.

The Image of God in Creation

"Image" in the Old Testament basically refers to a representation, a likeness. Five times it is used of man as created in the image of God.¹ "Likeness" is a synonym. It emphasizes "that man is not just an image but a likeness-image. He is not simply representative but representational. Man is the visible, corporeal representative of the invisible, bodiless God. . . . Man is an adequate and faithful representative of God on earth."²

Scripture indicates that God created us with intellectual, spiritual, and moral qualities that reflect the One who created us (Col. 3:9, 10; Eph. 4:24; Rom. 2:14, 15). God is a spirit, and thus man bears no physical likeness to his Creator. But God designed man's body according to His own unique design.³

The Genesis account reveals that God had at least two purposes for creating man. First, He created him to have dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 8:4, 5). He commanded Adam and Eve to reproduce and fill the earth (Gen. 1:27). He put Adam in the garden to care for it (Gen. 2:15); gave him instructions for eating (vv. 16, 17), and created Eve for Adam's good (vv. 21–24). Second, Scripture teaches that God created him for fellowship with Himself. God communicated with Adam and Eve, and it seems there was a regularly appointed time for fellowship between God and man (Gen. 3:8).

The Image of God and the Fall

Adam's sin radically affected him and all of us—his descendants. Sin entered the world by Adam, and the effects of sin and the penalty of sin have thus passed on all of us (Rom. 5:12). The perfect fellowship between God and man was broken by the fall.

We are totally depraved sinners, and yet the image of God still remains.⁴ Scripture applies that truth to all of humanity in at least three ways:



God in Man?

- First, God instituted capital punishment for murder because the murderer takes the life of a fellow human who was made in the image of God (Gen. 9:6).
- Second, Paul declares that man is made in the image and glory of God (1 Cor. 11:3–7). “Man, then, was God’s authoritative representative who found in woman a divinely made ally in fulfilling this role (Gen. 2:18–24). In this sense she as a wife is **the glory of man**, her husband.”⁵ Thus, “God’s image in man continues to be the basis for functional distinctions in the home and church (1 Cor. 11:7).”⁶
- Third, James declares that use of the tongue to curse men is egregious because we use the tongue to bless God and curse man who is made in the “similitude” of God (James 3:9). “Similitude” indicates “to make like, likeness, resemblance.” This is the only New Testament use of this word, and “man is said to bear God’s likeness. Although theologians continue to debate about the precise nature of the *imago Dei* in man . . . one thing is certain from this passage, namely, that even fallen man retains some semblance (however badly marred by sin) of the divine impress given him at the original creation.”⁷ This ought to cause us to seriously consider how we speak of our fellow man.

God created us in His image. That likeness is badly marred by sin and yet remains. These three implications of the *imago Dei* still apply to all mankind even though we are depraved sinners.

The Image of God in Salvation

Even before the creation, God knew that Adam would sin. In grace unique to His own character, He purposed to provide salvation for sinful mankind. “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9).⁸ Upon Adam’s sin God began to reveal and work out His eternal plan of salvation. Scripture clearly teaches

- That God still seeks fellowship with sinners (John 4:23).
- That Christ is the only way to God (John 14:6).
- That eternal life is a living relationship with God through Jesus (John 17:3).
- That those who come to God through Christ are saved (Heb. 7:25).
- That Christ died to restore mankind to fellowship with God (1 Pet. 3:18).
- That God’s work of sanctification in believers is a progressive recreation of the image of God (2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).

- That in eternity the image of God will be completely restored in believers (Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:20, 21).
- And that the curse will be removed and perfect fellowship with God will be restored (Rev. 21:3–4; 22:3).

In summation, everything that was wrecked by the fall and resultant curse will be fully and completely restored in eternity!

Romans 8 and 1 Peter 3:18 are among the passages teaching that this restoration is effected by the finished work of Christ at Calvary.

After salvation, part of God’s work of sanctification in those who are saved is to restore the image of God that was ruined by the Fall. Believers have been made new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), and their positional sanctification is to be worked out in their life (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). The Holy Spirit performs a progressive work of sanctification, gradually changing the believer into the image of God’s glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

God will completely and ultimately restore His image in those who have come to Him through Christ. He has predestined believers to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). With Paul we eagerly look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory (Phil. 3:20). In that day God’s sovereign purpose will be fully accomplished, and we will be perfectly conformed to the image of His Son. We will have glorified bodies like His. With Paul, we eagerly look for the Savior.

Fred Moritz serves as associate professor of Systematic Theology at Maranatha Baptist Seminary.



¹ R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, and B. K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980, 1999), 767.

² *Ibid.*, 192.

³ See Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity* (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 2:26–29.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 29–30.

⁵ David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, Vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 529.

⁶ McCune, 2:30.

⁷ S. Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000, c1992, c1993) G3669.

⁸ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2009), 2 Ti 1:9.



Thoroughly Human Thinking

The fall of mankind into sin has caused corruption to human thinking (Titus 1:15). This is evidenced by the repeated appeals in the New Testament for believers to renew their thinking (Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:10). This raises the question, “What is fallen man’s thinking like?” The answer to this question is multifaceted. Fallen man is unable to understand spiritual truth (Rom. 3:11; 1 Cor. 2:14). Fallen man is susceptible to the deception of the Devil (Rev. 13:14). Fallen man considers Biblical truth foolish and mocks those who believe it (1 Cor. 2:14; Jude 18). Fallen man elevates his own thinking over the truth of the Bible (Rom. 1:21–23; 12:3).

Even though the thinking of man is corrupt because of sin, he has not lost the ability to think altogether. He can still formulate rational thoughts. Man is created in the image of God, which includes an ability to think rationally (Isa. 1:18). This is one of the aspects of man that distinguishes mankind from animals. Man’s ability to think was marred at the Fall but not completely lost. Lost men can make airplanes that fly and decide where to fly them. They can design working computers and write code to direct them.

They can organize charitable organizations and feed thousands of hungry people. They can decide when to get up, what to wear, how much to eat, whom to marry, and where to live and work.¹ What an unsaved human cannot do is understand the spiritual significance of flying, computing, helping, or marrying. As a result, his thinking is skewed in every area of life. His thinking is never Christlike.

Three Ways of Thinking

Paul addressed the nature of man’s thinking in 1 Corinthians. The first issue that Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians is the elevation of human wisdom that threatened to corrupt the gospel (1 Cor. 1:10–4:21). This was most evident in the divisions in the church (1 Cor. 1:11–17). As part of this discussion Paul contrasts human wisdom with divine wisdom. This contrast is expanded in 1 Corinthians 2:6–3:4. Paul identifies three ways man thinks. The natural man (unsaved) can think only according to human wisdom. He is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit and thus cannot think according to divine wisdom. The spiritual man (saved) is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and thus is able to think according to divine wisdom. That is

why there are appeals for believers in the NT to renew their thinking (e.g., Rom. 12:2). Believers are to replace human wisdom with divine wisdom.

Paul addresses a third person in 1 Corinthians 3:1–4. The “carnal” man (saved) is a believer who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and yet still thinks according to human wisdom. Paul literally says the carnal man is a brother (3:1) who is “not . . . spiritual but . . . carnal” (3:1) and is walking according to man (3:3). It is possible for him to walk according to the Spirit, but he chooses to walk according to human wisdom. The presence of “carnal” Christians who prized human wisdom at Corinth produced the need for Paul to clarify the gospel (which they were corrupting by their human thinking).

Paul compares the thinking of the spiritual believer with the thinking of the “carnal” believer in 1 Corinthians 4:6–13. Apparently, the “carnal” Corinthian believers thought Paul was a weak apostle because he did not value human wisdom like they (and their so called super-apostles) did. Paul, on the other hand, taught that the Corinthian believers were poor servants of Christ because they did not follow divine wisdom like he did (1 Cor. 4:6, 7). Indeed, these carnal believers were following the thinking of unsaved philosophers who thought they were the only ones with sufficient maturity to rule rightly.² Paul proceeds to describe both the “carnal” Christian’s thinking (human wisdom) and his own thinking (divine wisdom) (1 Cor. 4:8–13). Through this contrast between “carnal” and spiritual thinking Paul reveals what is at the core of thoroughly human thinking.

Three Suppositions

Paul identifies three presuppositions that are at the core of thoroughly human thinking (whether that thinking comes from a natural man or a “carnal” believer). Human wisdom presupposes that man is self-satisfied (full),³ self-sufficient (rich),⁴ and self-governing (reigning)⁵ (1 Cor. 4:8). These presuppositions caused some Corinthian believers to interpret their ability to speak in tongues as an indication that they had reached a state of spiritual maturity akin to glorification. Therefore, they elevated their thinking above Paul’s apostolic doctrine (and above the divine wisdom revealed in God’s Word). Paul demonstrates the falsehood of these presuppositions by sharing his personal experience (1 Cor. 4:9–13).

Human Wisdom	Divine Wisdom
Self-satisfied (4:8)	Growing in God (4:12b, 13)
Self-sufficient (4:8)	Depending upon God (4:11, 12a)
Self-governing (4:8)	Submitting to God (4:9, 10)

First, the “carnal” Corinthian believers presupposed they were “full” (i.e., “I do not need to change”). This word connotes the idea of “having enough” or “being satiated.”⁶ These “carnal” believers were satisfied with where they were spiritually. When they looked at themselves they did not see a need to change. They thought they had arrived spiritually. This is exactly what natural man presupposes. We see this in lost culture today in the emphasis on self-

esteem. Secular culture encourages lost men to feel good about themselves. Man does not need to change; he just needs to be satisfied with himself. In both “carnal” and lost people, self-satisfaction is accomplished by replacing God’s standard with one’s own standard. In Jesus’ day the Pharisees did this with their tradition. In Corinth the “carnal” believers chose human wisdom for their standard.

Paul rehearses his personal experience in order to demonstrate the falsehood of this presupposition (1 Cor. 4:12b, 13). Paul says that he is reviled, persecuted, and slandered. He also says that he is considered to be the scum of this world and garbage of all things. What Paul describes is certainly far short of “having enough” or “being satisfied.” Paul anticipates far more in the coming age. Certainly, Paul looked more like the description of Christ in Isaiah 53:2b, 3 which says, “He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”⁷ Paul chose divine wisdom for his standard, and it put him at odds with the world.

Second, the “carnal” Corinthian believers presupposed they were “rich” (i.e., “I do not need any help”). Their wealth was not physical but spiritual. They thought they had such spiritual wealth that they no longer needed the Lord’s help. They saw no need to depend on the Lord. They were even acting like they generated their own spiritual gifts rather than admitting they were a gift from God. They felt they could live the Christian life without any help from the Lord. Natural man also believes he has no need for God’s help. Former professional wrestler Jesse Ventura, when he was governor of Minnesota, attempted to legislate self-reliance. He stated publicly that religion was a crutch for the weak. Lost man does not feel a need for God’s help. He may momentarily realize that he is not in control (e.g., after 9/11). But that realization is short lived. He soon returns to his self-reliance (foolishly believing he is in control of his life).

Paul’s life illustrates the truth that every human is dependent upon God in all things. In 1 Corinthians 4:11, 12a Paul says that he is hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed, beaten, homeless, and working a job out of necessity. This is certainly not a description of one who is “rich.” Paul is not mandating poverty as a requirement for spiritually minded people. He is using his physical reality to illustrate his need to depend on the Lord in all matters of his life. Human wisdom sees no reason to thank God because God did nothing to help. Divine wisdom praises and thanks God because man does nothing without God’s help.

Third, the “carnal” Corinthian believers presupposed they were “reigning as kings” (i.e., “No one will tell me what to do”). They believed the lie that they were so spiritual that they did not need anyone telling them how to behave. Their knowledge and gifts were sufficient for them to govern themselves. Their presupposition led them to seriously question everything Paul taught them. They found “super-apostles” who would endorse their self-governance. They replaced the authority of God with the authority of self. They claimed to be their own god. Natural man also worships himself as god (Rom. 1:25). Lost man is

fiercely independent. He does not want anyone to tell him what to do. He recognizes no other authority but himself.

Paul again refutes this way of thinking with his personal experience (1 Cor. 4:9, 10). He describes himself as one sentenced to die. He is not sitting in a place of honor or declaring the sentence of death. This is not the position of one ruling. He further compares himself to chained prisoners of war who are placed last in the victory procession. Soldiers would conclude the procession when they returned home by killing the prisoners in the sight of the townspeople.⁸ A prisoner is certainly not the one ruling. Paul also describes himself as foolish, weak, and despised. This is obviously not an apt description of one ruling. Paul was not ruling his own life. He was a minister of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:2). And, as a result, he was despised by those who thought according to human wisdom.

These three presuppositions are as old as the sin nature from which they are sourced. They underlie every sinful human choice. They come as a package—they are interwoven in human thinking. They drive human behavior. This way of thinking was common in the philosophical schools of the first century AD. It would have permeated thinking in Corinth. The various philosophical schools provided various ethics by which people lived. But all of these ethics were driven by the same thinking. “For all the schools, self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*), freedom (*eleutheria*), and happiness (*eudaimonia*) were goals but they differed in the specific ways of attaining them.”⁹ This should sound familiar. Happiness (self-satisfaction), self-sufficiency, and freedom (self-governing) are the same presuppositions that Paul was describing in 1 Corinthians 4. The natural man and the “carnal” Christian are driven by this human wisdom. Paul, on the other hand, was driven by divine wisdom. He was driven by the glorification of God, dependence upon God, and submission to God’s standard.

Two Applications

How does understanding thoroughly human thinking help us today? There are at least two relevant applications. First, we need to recognize human wisdom in our own lives. All believers struggle with our sin nature. Spiritual maturity does not mean the battle with our sin nature ends (Rom. 8:23). Human wisdom is still in us. We need to battle it. Wherever we see self-satisfaction, self-reliance, or self-governing in our life, we need to “renew” our human thinking into thinking that is consistent with divine wisdom. Are you deceived into thinking you are spiritually mature when you are not (James 1:21–27)? Do you sense any need to ask for God’s help when you drive, teach, work, interact with your spouse, or any other activity? Do you make excuses for watching that movie that violates God’s standard?

Second, we need to recognize human wisdom in lost people. In fact, we should expect it. Paul avoided human wisdom when he presented the gospel in Corinth. The gospel is not sensible to human wisdom (1 Cor. 1:18–25). The gospel is not granted because of human wisdom or strength (1 Cor. 1:26–31). Paul did not present the gospel with methods of human wisdom (1 Cor. 2:1–5). The gospel is not unwise but is the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 2:6–3:4). Paul did not want the gospel of Christ to be corrupted with human

wisdom. Neither should we! We must have such confidence in the power of the gospel that we sense no need to “adorn” it with methods derived from human wisdom.

It is possible for genuine believers to think according to human wisdom or according to divine wisdom. So, *how* are you thinking?

Andrew Hudson serves as professor of Greek and New Testament at Maranatha Baptist Seminary.



¹ Claims by behaviorists such as B. F. Skinner that man never decides anything but only responds to stimuli are obviously misguided and false.

² Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Downers Grove: IVP Press, 1993), 460.

³ Robert G. Gromacki, *Called to Be Saints: An Exposition of 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 55.

⁴ Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale NT Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 79.

⁵ Simon J. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 137.

⁶ BDAG, 559.


⁷ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 181.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 174–75. Others suggest the picture is of a criminal whose execution was the “last show” of the day. Keener, 460.


⁹ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 303.

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The “Goodness” of Unbelievers

David Saxon

The interpreter of the New Testament faces an apparent contradiction when he reads that Cornelius was a “devout man, and one that feared God,” although he was clearly not yet regenerated, and then hears Paul affirming that “there is none righteous, no, not one. . . . There is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10, 12, quoting Psalm 14:1, 3). Lest one think this is a contradiction between Luke’s optimistic view of unregenerate man and Paul’s pessimistic view, Paul himself seems to come down on both sides of the issue, affirming in Romans 2:14 that “Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law.” Indeed, throughout Scripture, two sets of data can be compiled and set opposite one another. On the one hand (apparently) unregenerate people, such as Cyrus, do (apparently) good things. On the other hand axiomatic statements such as Isaiah 64:6 (“all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags”) seem to preclude goodness in the unregenerate. How are these seemingly disparate data reconciled? Can unregenerate people do good? Can they be good?

Paul’s Argument in Romans

It is helpful to trace Paul’s argument for the universal sinfulness of mankind in Romans 1:18–3:20 in order to see how Paul would answer this question. Paul’s overall purpose is to establish the universal sinfulness of both Jews and Gentiles (see his conclusion in 3:19, 20). In the process, however, he appears to affirm the apparent goodness of unbelievers.

First, Paul affirms that “that which may be known of God is manifest in” people who suppress the truth. Unbelievers have this knowledge of God because “God hath shewed it unto them.” How has God shown them this knowledge of Himself? They are able to see it in the created order. So unbelievers have an innate capacity for moral reflection that enables them to infer from visible data—the created world—the existence of a powerful and moral Creator. Although Paul does not directly allude to the image of God in this text, the fact that God made man in His own image, enduing him with rationality, morality, and volition, would seem to be implied by this capacity for seeing God in his environment. By any account, having such a capacity is good.

Second, at the conclusion of his sweeping indictment of idolatry and its heinous moral effects (1:21–32), Paul says that these very unbelievers “[know] the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death.” This appears to be an advance on his claim in 1:18–20. Now, unbelievers not only see evidence of a powerful and moral God, but they recognize that some behaviors are morally repugnant and place one in a precarious position relative to



that God. Again, this is a correct judgment and, therefore, intrinsically a good thing to possess.

Third, Paul elaborates a little on how man can have this moral awareness. The argument in 2:1–16 has the purpose of stripping away the self-righteous claims of the man who views himself as superior to others—in particular, the Jewish man who does so. Possessing the law would seem to give the Jew an advantage over Gentiles, but Paul counters this idea in two ways. In 2:13 and 17–29 he points out that having the law (“hearing” it) is no advantage if one does not obey it. In 2:14, 15 he makes the parallel claim that Gentiles who do not have the law nevertheless have an equivalent standard of behavior. If Gentiles can “do by nature the things contained in the law,” then having the Mosaic Law would not seem to be the advantage the Jews thought. This is the strongest statement Paul makes about the “goodness” of unbelievers.¹

What about Pervasive Depravity?

The case Paul is making in 1:18–3:20, however, is for pervasive depravity, that is, depravity that affects every aspect of man. How do these statements about positive characteristics of unbelievers fit into this argument? It is quite clear in 1:21ff that the awareness of God’s eternal power and Godhead does not result in righteous or meritorious behavior. Instead, man suppresses that knowledge, refuses to glorify God, embraces idols, and sinks into wicked behaviors. God made man in His own image, and this image included a Godward orientation that man cannot entirely escape. It

does not, however, result in godliness. Indeed, Paul brings it up in chapter 1 to aggravate man’s guilt.

Similarly, in 1:32 the people who “[know] the judgment of God . . . not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” The “goodness” man has not only does not commend him before God, but it makes him more culpable for his sinfulness.

What about Paul’s argument in 2:13–15? He makes a series of points about Gentiles:

1. Gentiles do not have the law, i.e., the Mosaic Law.
2. Nevertheless, Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the law.
3. So, although they do not have the Mosaic Law, they are a law unto themselves.
4. They show the work of the law written on their hearts in three ways:
 - a. “Their actions show to all that they are aware of an inward moral law;
 - b. “Their consciences show to themselves that they are aware of and sensitive to such a law;
 - c. “And their thoughts or reasonings which condemn or approve one another’s conduct show that they possess and follow an inward law or moral standard of some sort.”²

While exploring the intricacies of this argument would be beyond the scope of this article, it is important to see Paul’s point. Paul does not say that Gentiles abide by or keep the law; he says they do *things contained in the law*. So



an unbelieving Gentile may tell the truth or refrain from committing murder or rest content with his own possessions rather than coveting his neighbor's. Each of these behaviors is good or, at least, better than various alternatives.

How do unbelieving Gentiles do these good things? God has endowed them with the capacity to make moral judgments and even to choose superior alternatives. He has given them a conscience that serves as a moral regulator, telling them that they ought to do what they think is right and ought not to do what they think is wrong. He has given them reason, which can evaluate the behavior of others and pass moral judgment, either accusing or excusing them. This is not to say that man's reason when functioning in this way does so infallibly. It is clearly excusing or approving based on the person's own fallible judgments. But the process of evaluating others' actions expresses man's God-given capacity for moral intuitions. "As God's creation, the human being remains a moral being, and cannot become amoral, only immoral."³ So we should not be surprised when unbelievers sacrifice themselves for a higher cause; express loyalty, creativity, or punctuality; show disdain for cruelty; or claim aspirations for a noble legacy. These are human behaviors that they do *by nature*, i.e., through the capacities God placed within them at creation. Sin does not cause men to cease to be human.⁴

But is Paul trying to show in this text that Gentiles, after all, are not so bad? That is clearly not his purpose. Verse 16 puts the whole section in context. Judgment Day is coming, and God will evaluate the *secrets of men*, i.e., their motives, inner desires, priorities, and values. The basis of judgment will be the *gospel of Jesus Christ*. The conclusion of such a judgment is evident: "every mouth [will] be stopped, and all the world [will] become guilty before God" (3:19). Why then does Paul speak of these "good things" Gentiles do? His purpose, once again, is to show the aggravation of man's guilt. No one⁵ will be able to stand before God and say he did not know right from wrong. Whether or not he had special revelation of God's law, as did the Jews, he had an innate moral intuition⁶ that enabled him to make moral choices, some of which violated his conscience. "As far as the final judgement is concerned, the work of God the creator within the fallen human being is equal to the manifestation of his will in the law of Moses."⁷

"Goodness" as a Contributor to Condemnation

If the "goodness" man has—his capacity for making moral judgments and sometimes doing externally good things—is actually contributory to his condemnation, is it really good? As Paul continues to develop his case, he will put man's actions in their true light, in relation to God's glory. Man sinned—in Adam—and is falling short of God's glory (3:23) so that those who are "in the flesh," i.e., without the power of the Spirit, cannot please God (8:8). Paul leaves no doubt that when man uses his moral nature without seeking to glorify God, he is in rebellion and his apparent goodness has no merit before God. Indeed, Paul highlights the sin of the Jews in "going about to establish their own righteousness" rather than submitting to the righteousness of God (10:3). Thus, Paul can say without

any contradiction of his earlier claims, "there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Perhaps, an illustration will show how the apparent goodness of unregenerate men relates to the true good in relation to God.⁸ Imagine pirates that are terrorizing the coast of a country with a longsuffering sovereign. After a few years, these pirates seize an island off the coast of the country. Eventually, they build a town, bring women to live with them as their wives, and settle down somewhat. Once they have children, they might build a school, pave the roads, and stock a library with stolen books. One day, a visitor might be surprised to find a well-ordered community with an elected mayor, a police force, and reasonably decent citizens. This would be a group of people who, for various self-interested motives, are doing "good." Would the sovereign be pleased with them? He most certainly would not be. They are still pirates, and everything they do on the island—whether good or bad in the view of other pirates—is still rebellion. The only thing that will please the sovereign is repentance of their rebellious ways and submission to his authority. Everything else is falling short of his righteous requirement.

Are the unrighteous good? Because they are in the image of God and remain moral beings, they are capable of appearing good to other unrighteous people and even being evaluated as good along the horizontal line. But relative to the vertical dimension, their goodness is rebellion. They are using their God-given gifts for their own glory, and God will call them to account for their "righteousness" just as much as for their other sins.

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¹ Although Cranfield, Dunn, and a few others argue that Paul is speaking here of Gentile believers, the majority of the commentators rightly reject this view. See, for instance, Doug Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 148–51.

² Roy B. Zuck, "The Doctrine of the Conscience," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 126, no. 504 (Oct. 1969): 333.

³ Mark A. Seifrid, "Natural Revelation and the Purpose of the Law in Romans," *Tyndale Bulletin* 49, no. 1 (1998): 122.

⁴ See the helpful discussion in Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986), 68–73.

⁵ Paul does not pause to speak of mentally handicapped people or small children dying before developing cognitive and moral competence. They would appear to be an exception to this argument until one reaches Romans 5:12–14 and learns that *all* men are under sentence of death because of Adam's imputed guilt. This aspect of the case will not be developed in this article.

⁶ See the interesting argument in Mark D. Mathewson, "Moral Intuitionism and the Law Inscribed on Our Hearts," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42, no. 4 (December 1991): 629–43.

⁷ Seifrid, 123.

⁸ I do not know the source of this illustration. I heard it attributed to Spurgeon, but I have not found it in his writings.

God



edge, and—just as the image itself—it cannot be eradicated.

The second source of knowledge is external to man. Paul says, “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (v. 20). Notice that this knowledge is mediated *through* creation.⁵ When we see the intricacy of the eye, the beauty of a blossomed orchid, or the power of a raging thunderstorm, these communicate the intricacy, beauty, and power of the Creator. What is expressed within creation is only a microcosm of the nature of the Creator! Indeed, so rich is the revelation of God through creation that Paul could say that in it we see the “eternal power and Godhead.”⁶

Is it possible for someone to miss this dual revelation of God? In other words, is

God Doesn't Believe in Atheists.¹

So goes the purposefully ironic title of Ray Comfort's book. Of course, if we believe Romans 1, Comfort is right. The subtitle of his book, *Proof That Atheists Don't Exist*, could be the title of this essay. Comfort's point of departure for his humorous title was the logical contradiction in claiming that one could actually *know* (without a shadow of a doubt) that God does not exist. My departure, however, will be exegetical and ethical. In the following paragraphs we will look at Romans 1:18–20, noting (1) that all people know God and (2) why people claim that they do not know God.

Let's begin with the most controversial statement of this essay—all men know God. Can this be proven? Certainly, someone would respond, there are people who do not believe in God! A close look at Romans 1:18, however, indicates that *all men*² “hold the truth in unrighteousness.”

Paul indicates in verses 19 and 20 the two sources of this revelation. The primary source of the revelation of God's existence is *within* man. Verse 19 says, “that which may be known of God is manifest *in* them” (emphasis mine).³ The knowledge of God is not something external to man, a knowledge that he must seek out; rather, it is an intimate knowledge communicated through the creation of man in the image of God.⁴ Mankind is created with this knowl-

it possible to still remain ignorant of God in spite of these two sources of revelation? Paul closes the door to that possibility in three ways. First, he says that *God gives the knowledge*: “God hath shewed it unto them” (v. 19). Now, my wife can testify that she sometimes attempts to communicate with me unsuccessfully. Generally, I am to blame. However, sometimes due to a lack of clarity, she has not been successful. But God is not limited as a husband and wife are. When He communicates, He is successful.

God's successful communication is confirmed by Paul's second point: *men inescapably receive this revelation and understand it*. In verse 20 Paul says that the revelation is “clearly seen.” Further, he argues that this clearly seen revelation has been “understood.” These points follow logically from the sources of revelation. Is it possible for one to escape the world, which in all of its capacities reveals God? Remember Psalm 139, which rhetorically asks, “Whither shall I flee from thy presence?” Further, if one is made in the image of God, that image, which includes the knowledge of God within it, cannot be erased. While the image has been marred in the fall, it has not lost its capacity for communicating the truth of who we are. It is no surprise, then, that the knowledge of God has been clearly seen and understood.

The previous two points lead to a third: *all men are without excuse*. If sinful men inescapably retain the knowledge of

and Atheists

God, Paul's conclusion clearly follows—"they are without excuse" (v. 20). If there was a way to escape the knowledge provided through the image and through creation, Paul could not say that *all men* are without excuse. Certainly one would have found the way to escape. But Paul, through the inspiration of the Spirit, closes this door, showing the just condemnation of all mankind in the process.

So why are there people who claim to be atheists and agnostics? The answer is complex. Certainly, we do not want to say, "Stop lying! You are not an atheist!" That would be both unhelpful and counterproductive. It is unhelpful because the atheist is *not exactly lying* when he says that he does not believe in God. There is a complicated mixture of truth, error, and self-deception happening within the heart of the atheist. He has both (1) an ineradicable knowledge of God and (2) a belief that he does not know God. It would take us too far off-field to discuss the intricacies of self-deception. However, I think an example may prove helpful. Some philosophers have argued that they do not believe in truth. However, they must believe in truth in order to argue that they do not believe in truth. (For instance, they believe their statement about not believing in truth is true!) They have two conflicting beliefs: (1) there are no truths and (2) there are some truths.⁷

Going beyond (or perhaps deeper into) the self-deception of the heart, the reason some claim to be atheists is because *they want the world to be that way*. In the scientific age, we often assume that our beliefs are driven by the data. However, this belief is not entirely correct. Often our beliefs drive our interpretation of the data!⁸ People claim atheism not because the evidence leads them there but because their sinful inclinations lead them. Listen to two prominent philosophers express, in their own words, their sinful desire not to believe in God. Thomas Nagel stated, "I want atheism to be true. . . . It isn't just that I don't believe in God, and, naturally, hope that I'm right about my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that."⁹ Mortimer Adler adds, "[The reality of God] would require a radical change in my way of life, a basic alteration in the direction of my day-to-day choices as well as in the ultimate objectives to be sought or hoped for. . . . The simple truth of the matter is that I did not wish to live up to being a genuinely religious person."¹⁰

These philosophers give us a refreshing and rare glimpse into the heart of unbelief. The source of unbelief is not lack of evidence; instead, it is the sinful heart. For this reason, Paul is not ashamed of the gospel (v. 16). For in the gospel

Paul finds the remedy to man's sinful heart. Paul does not seek to give the unbeliever more evidence of God's existence; rather, he gives the gospel! This insight is not designed to denigrate apologetics or the use of evidence. Instead, it is designed to put evidence and apologetics in the proper place.

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¹ Ray Comfort, *God Doesn't Believe in Atheists* (Bridge-Logos, 1993).

² That *all men* are in view is confirmed by the following: first, the preceding context of the passage concerns why Paul is not ashamed of the gospel, which Paul confirms is for the "Jew" and the "Greek" (16). Second, the argument begun in verse 16 continues all the way through chapter 3, which pinnacles in the statement, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (3:23). Third, the sources of revelation indicated in the passage (creation, direct revelation from God) are available to all men.

³ I take the dative *ev* to be a dative of location. This means that the knowledge is placed and located inextricably *within* mankind.

⁴ Space does not allow for a development of the argument that this knowledge comes through the image. However, it is hard to escape the all-encompassing nature of both the image of God in man and the way Romans 1 speaks of the all-pervasiveness of this internal knowledge.

⁵ While the knowledge of God comes mediated through creation, it would be a mistake to believe that one can come to know God salvifically through creation. Clearly, Paul argues that natural revelation is not enough to save (though it is enough to condemn [Rom. 10:14, 15]). Further, the sin nature twists the revelation of creation, leading mankind to fashion idols rather than worship God (1:22, 23).

⁶ While the content of knowledge expressed as "eternal power" is clear, what is meant by the "Divine Godhead" is not as clear. In my estimation, this knowledge includes more than most commentators often allow. However, this knowledge alone is not capable of bring one to saving faith.

⁷ I am not claiming that this analogy is perfect or exact. But I do believe it allows us to clearly see one way in which self-deception can take place.

⁸ For a clear example of this see the attempt by those who claim to be Christian to defend homosexuality on the basis of Scripture. Clearly, their desire for this sinful activity leads them to skew the data. See http://www.gaychristian.net/justins_view.php.

⁹ As quoted in Martin Gardner, *The Whys of a Philosophical Scrivener* (Macmillan, 1999), 437.

¹⁰ Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 130.

From the Realm of Sin

David Hockman

Salvation is a glorious experience freeing one from the bondage of sin. Like Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress*, at salvation one experiences the relief of the incredible burden of sin. The removal of this burden is wonderful, but it does not mean one's relationship to sin is completely severed. A believer still faces a daily struggle with sin. Paul seems to send mixed messages regarding this struggle in Romans 6–8. On one hand we have died to sin (6:2), but on the other he commands believers not to “let sin . . . reign” (6:12). The obvious question is, “If one died to sin, how can it still impact him?” Romans chapters 6 through 8 provide the answer to a believer's relationship to sin and how one can live a victorious life in Christ.

In the context of Romans, chapters 6 through 8 are dealing with a believer's response to a realm transfer. A believer has been transferred from the realm of sin to the realm of Christ. How does this transfer impact the life of a believer? Paul describes the believer as dead to sin (6:2). This does not mean one no longer sins. Chapters 6 through 8 make no sense if this were the case. It does mean that at conversion sin's rule in the life of a believer is decisively broken. An old illustration from Martin Lloyd-Jones helps to clarify what occurs in the life of a believer at salvation. He pictures two fields in a British country scene enclosed by high rock walls. One field pictures the flesh and the other field pictures Christ. We all begin life in the field of sin ruled over by Satan. No one can scale the wall or get out of the field in his own power. However, at salvation Christ picks up the believer and places him in the adjacent field ruled by Christ. This transfer from one field to the other pictures one's death to sin. Although death through the transfer occurred, we can hear the calls of sin over the wall and out of habit we at times obey these calls.

Why do we give in to sin if we died to it? An example from the military may help. When enlisted in the armed forces, a soldier must obey his superiors. If his superior tells him to run, he runs. When his commanding officer enters a room, the soldier comes to attention. However,

upon the soldier's discharge he is no longer under the authority of his former superiors. He may pass a sergeant on the sidewalk and out of habit come to attention, but he is no longer under compulsion to do so. The power of his superiors was decisively broken when he was discharged. Romans 6 makes it clear that a believer will not have the attitude of continuing in sin since this power was decisively broken at salvation, although he will continue to sin.

In chapter 7 Paul deals with the tension we all face as believers. Yes, we have died to sin, but we are still influenced by sin. We still hear the calls of sin over the wall, and it can seem at times like we are being pulled in two different directions. The end of chapter 7 reveals a struggle with sin in Paul's own life. Good men differ whether Paul is describing a believer or an unbeliever in 7:13–24. In this writer's opinion, the overall context of Romans points to this referring to a believer, since the state of the unbeliever was dealt with in Romans 1:18–3:20. On whichever side of the debate one falls, however, it is safe to say that the struggle Paul presents here is one that each believer faces. Chapter 7 pictures one who is attempting to win this struggle through his own strength. As chapter 6 relates that a believer died to sin, so chapter 7 demonstrates that a believer died to the law. The struggle Paul presents in chapter 7 happens when one tries to bear fruit through keeping the law. He demonstrates that this produces carnality (vv. 13–17), frustration (vv. 18–20), and ultimately defeat (vv. 21–24). It brings Paul to state at the end of chapter 7, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (7:24).

The simple answer to the struggles of chapters 6 and 7 is revealed in 7:25. Jesus Christ is the answer. However, this sounds like an answer one receives when asking a child, “What was Sunday school about?” and the child responds “God.” In chapter 8 Paul unpacks this answer to demonstrate what life looks like lived in the realm of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Chapter 8 indicates that there is still a battle going on in the life of a believer. Two laws war against one another. The law of the Spirit is in conflict with the law of sin and death (8:2). We have the answer in 7:25, but this must be lived out daily. Each believer is faced with

to the Realm of Christ

a daily struggle that is pictured throughout these chapters. Will one yield to the Spirit or to the flesh? An illustration the author heard from Stuart Briscoe is helpful. Everyone daily lives under the law of gravity. However, there is a law that can help one break the law of gravity. This is the law of aerodynamics. The simple way for an individual to allow the law of aerodynamics to break the law of gravity is to get in an airplane. However, to keep the law of gravity from taking over, one must stay in the plane. If one decides to open the door and get out of the plane, at that moment the law of gravity will replace the law of aerodynamics.

For a believer, Spirit-empowered living allows one to have victory over the flesh. However, just as one must stay in the plane, so must a believer live in the Spirit. When one follows chapter 6 and gives in to the flesh, the results are devastating (6:16). It is like jumping out of a plane and allowing the law of gravity to take over. When a believer lives according to the law, he thinks he can live the Christian life on his own, which is carnality. He soon realizes that this is not possible, and he is frustrated. Ultimately he finds defeat in living the Christian life according to the law. This is like trying to run down the runway and break the law of gravity in one's own strength. However, when a believer yields to the power of the Spirit, he finds that he can live a victorious Christian life. Spirit-empowered living allows one to have victory over the flesh. Just like the one who stays in the plane finds victory over the law of gravity, so the believer finds victory when he daily submits to the Spirit.

So the answer to victorious Christian living is found in Romans 6 through 8. The commands of Romans 6 through 8 grow out of the fact that believers have experienced a realm transfer. We have been transferred from the realm of sin and as believers we are in Christ. A believer can never have the attitude that he can continue in sin (ch. 6). At the same time, we cannot live a victorious Christian life in our own strength (ch. 7). However, when we submit to the power of the Spirit, we can become what we already are and what we will be.

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A full-page photograph of a man and a woman walking away from the camera down a dirt path. They are holding hands. The path is flanked by trees and shrubs. A large, thick tree trunk is on the right. The sun is shining from the upper left, creating a lens flare and casting long shadows of the couple onto the path. The background shows a hilly landscape.

Made in His Image

**So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him,
male and female created He them. (Genesis 1:27)**

Ladies, you are made in God's image, a person as He is a Person.

A person has knowledge. God knows, and so do you.

God knows all there is to know. He knows everything about you because He created you. He wants you to know Him too, so He welcomes you—urges you—to sit at His feet like Mary of Bethany and learn from Him. There are no limits to the truth you can absorb from His Word, for you are a person made in His image, and you can know. *Know Him!*

**But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth
and knoweth me. (Jeremiah 9:24)**

A person has a will. God makes choices, and so do you.

The cross was God's own divine choice, the place He chose to die as your Redeemer. No matter who you are, when you choose to receive the gift of salvation He provided there, He makes you one with Him, for at the foot of the cross there is perfect equality. You are a woman made in His image, and He allows you to choose. *Choose Him!*

**There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is
neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)**

A person can feel. God has emotions, and so do you.

God rejoices and sorrows, sings and weeps over His children. He soothes our sorrows and understands our frailties. He protects us from harm and never, not even for a moment, forgets us. He loves those who love Him and those who don't. His lovingkindness draws wanderers home. Because you are made in His image, you also are an emotionally expressive creature. When you use that womanly strength for others' good, you are like Him. *Feel deeply!*

**He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love,
he will joy over thee with singing. (Zephaniah 3:17)**

A person has relationships. God has friends. He calls YOU His friend!

God demonstrated the greatest friendship ever when He gave His life for you. When you sacrifice to do His will rather than your own, you show Him that you are His friend too. His friendship never falters; it is not changed by circumstances or altered by your behavior. You can be a steadfast friend to God by trusting Him even in uncertain and puzzling times, by praising Him even when He allows trouble and pain. You can have a friendship with God because you are made in His image. *Be His friend!*

**Greater love hath no man than this,
that a man lay down his life for his friends.
Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. (John 15:13–14)**

You are God's crowning creation, and someday you will be just like Him. Until that day, it's your privilege to bring your Creator honor by knowing, loving, and serving Him. *Give Him glory!*

Claudia Barba and her husband, Dave, have an itinerant ministry called Press On! Ministries, helping to plant new churches in the USA. They have three grown children and five perfect grandsons.



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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

Union and Communion

In the interests of some variety, this column's present series on ministerial qualifications is being interrupted. Lord willing, the series will be resumed in the next issue.

When my pastor, Mr. Jesse L. Boyd Jr, was taken into the Lord's presence in 1991, his wife gave me the privilege of selecting from his library whatever volumes I wished. I spent several delightful afternoons browsing through his shelves. Among the treasures he left behind was a little hardback volume of which I'd never heard, authored by J. Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission. Just eighty-four pages long, it was entitled *Union and Communion*. On the title page Mr. Boyd had penciled that he had purchased the book brand new in October of 1952 for the high price of forty cents. Can you believe that there was ever such a time when you could get a hardback book of any kind for forty cents?

Mr. Boyd had read the book and marked it here and there with his own observations. I read it as well, adding my own highlighting to the pages and enjoying the pleasant experience of tracing my former pastor's footsteps through this warm little devotional I was now sharing with him.

What I discovered was that *Union and Communion* was actually a devotional commentary on the Song of Solomon. Taylor took the not uncommon position that the Song of Solomon is an extended figurative poem on the relationship between our Lord and ourselves. Regarding the ability to see and appreciate this, he remarked at the outset that it is *a song which grace alone can teach and experience alone can learn*.

Several years after reading Taylor's work, I spent

several wonderful reading times with James Durham's seventeenth-century work on the Song of Solomon. Durham had taken the same interpretive position that Taylor did over two centuries later and had begun with a remark very similar to Taylor's, to the effect that the book required *much liveliness of frame and acquaintance in experience . . . and nearness in walking with God, as being necessary for finding out the mind and meaning of the Spirit of God therein*.

I found that interesting because of the well-deserved reputation Hudson Taylor had for walking with the Lord intimately. In the book's Forward J. Stuart Holden testified, *To those who knew him, Mr. Hudson Taylor's life was in the nature of emphasis upon the value of this small volume. For what he here expounds he also exemplified. If his words indicate the possibility and blessedness of union with Christ, his whole life declared it in actual experience. He lived as one who was "married to Another, even to Him Who is raised from the dead."* . . . What he was has given a meaning and confirmation to what he has here said, which cannot be exaggerated.

Holden's impression is confirmed by Taylor's own words. In 1870 he lost two of his six children as well as his beloved wife, Maria. The next year he wrote to friends back in Europe,

I need not tell you of the difficulties and dangers, the pressure daily changing, and the sickness and sorrows of the past year. I think I may say that in the aggregate they have equaled, if not exceeded, those of the sixteen previous years of my missionary labour. Be this as it may, the Lord had previously taught me practically, as I never knew it before, our *present, real oneness* with Christ. . . . Oh, my dear Brother! in this dark, dark land, one does need a *deep* assurance of the presence of Jesus (Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission: The Growth of a Work of God*, 212).

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

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Right through to the end of his life Taylor pursued this kind of intimacy with Christ. His son wrote,

To him, the secret of overcoming lay in daily, hourly fellowship with God; and this, he found, could only be maintained by secret prayer and feeding upon the Word through which He reveals Himself to the waiting soul. It was not easy for Mr Taylor, in his changeful life, to make time for prayer and Bible study, but he knew that it was vital. Well do the writers remember travelling with him month after month in northern China, by cart and wheelbarrow, with the poorest of inns at night. Often with only one large room for coolies and travellers alike, they would screen off a corner for their father and another for themselves, with curtains of some sort; and then, after sleep at last had brought a measure of quiet, they would hear a match struck and see the flicker of candlelight which told that Mr. Taylor, however weary, was poring over the little Bible in two volumes always at hand. From two to four A.M. was the time he usually gave to prayer; the time when he could be most sure of being undisturbed to wait upon God. That flicker of candlelight has meant more to them than all they have read or heard on secret prayer; it meant reality, not preaching but practice. The hardest part of a missionary career, Mr. Taylor found, is to maintain regular, prayerful Bible study. "Satan will always find you something to do," he would say, "when you ought to be occupied about that, if it is only arranging a window blind" (Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*, 223).

Whether Hudson Taylor, James Durham, and many others of their persuasion have been correct in their view of how to interpret the Song isn't something we should discuss here. What I'm really concerned with is to capitalize on the wonderful, warm applicational insights that fill Taylor's pages. His treatment of the theme of a believer's communion with the Lord is the mature fruit of rich personal and pastoral experience. And communion, or at least something akin to it, is a powerful emphasis within the words of the two lovers in Song of Solomon. Even Richard Hess, one of the more recent (2005) interpreters of a different school, observes, *The language of commitment pervades the whole Song and provides one of the most important interpretive keys for understanding the work.*

Taylor had a six-point outline under which he commented on the believer's personal communion with Christ.

- I. The Unsatisfied Life and Its Remedy (1:2–2:7).
- II. Communion Broken. Restoration (2:8–3:5).
- III. Unbroken Communion (3:6–5:1).
- IV. Communion Again Broken. Restoration (5:2–6:10).
- V. Fruits of Recognized Union (6:11–8:4).
- VI. Unrestrained Communion (8:5–14).

I've extracted from his first and last points some of Taylor's richest comments on this theme of union and communion. I trust that they will encourage and warm our hearts toward our Savior in some significant, perhaps even some truly life-fashioning, way.

The Unsatisfied Life and Its Remedy

For Thy love is better than wine.

It is well that it should be so. It marks a distinct stage in the development of the life of grace in the soul. And this recorded experience gives, as it were, a Divine warrant for the desire for sensible manifestations of His presence—sensible communications of His love.

It was not always so with her. Once she was contented in His absence—other society and other occupations sufficed her; but now it can never be so again. The world can never be to her what it once was. The betrothed bride has learnt to love her LORD, and no other society than His can satisfy her. His visits may be occasional and may be brief, but they are precious times of enjoyment. Their memory is cherished in the intervals, and their repetition longed for. There is no real satisfaction in His absence, and yet, alas! He is not always with her: He comes and goes. Now her joy in Him is a heaven below; but again she is longing, and longing in vain, for His presence. Like the ever-changing tide, her experience is an ebbing and flowing one. It may even be that unrest is the rule, satisfaction the exception.

Is there no help for this? Must it always continue so? Has He, can He have created these unquenchable longings only to tantalize them? Strange indeed it would be if this were the case. Yet are there not many of the LORD'S people whose habitual experience corresponds with hers? They know not the rest, the joy of abiding in CHRIST; and they know not how to attain to it, nor why it is not theirs. Are there not many who look back to the delightful times of their first espousals, who, so far from finding richer inheritance in CHRIST than they then had, are even conscious that they have lost their first love, and might express their experience in the sad lament:—

Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?

Others, again, who may not have lost their first love, may yet be feeling that the occasional interruptions to communion are becoming more and more unbearable, as the world becomes less and He becomes more. His absence is an ever-increasing distress. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" 'Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Thy love is better than wine.' Would that His love were strong and constant like mine, and that He never withdrew the light of His countenance!"

Poor mistaken one! There is a love far stronger than thine waiting, longing for satisfaction. The Bridegroom is waiting for thee all the time. The conditions that debar His approach are all of thine own making. Take the right place before Him, and He will be most ready, most glad, to “Satisfy thy deepest longings, to meet, supply thine every need.”

What should we think of a betrothed one whose conceit and self-will prevented not only the consummation of her own joy, but of his who had given her his heart? Though never at rest in his absence, she cannot trust him fully. And she does not care to give up her own name, her own rights and possessions, her own will to him who has become necessary for her happiness. She would fain claim him fully, without giving up herself fully to him. But it can never be. While she retains her own name, she can never claim his. She may not promise to love and honour if she will not also promise to obey. And till her love reaches that point of surrender she must remain an unsatisfied lover—she cannot, as a satisfied bride, find rest in the home of her husband. While she retains her own will, and the control of her own possessions, she must be content to live on her own resources; she cannot claim his.

Could there be a sadder proof of the extent and reality of the Fall than the deep-seated distrust of our loving LORD and MASTER which makes us hesitate to give ourselves entirely up to Him? Which fears that He might require something beyond our powers, or call for something that we should find it hard to give or to do?

The real secret of an unsatisfied life lies too often in an unsundered will. And yet how foolish, as well as how wrong, this is! Do we fancy that we are wiser than He? Or that our love for ourselves is more tender and strong than His? Or that we know ourselves better than He does? How our distrust must grieve and wound afresh the tender heart of Him who was for us the Man of Sorrows! What would be the feelings of an earthly bridegroom if he discovered that his bride-elect was dreading to marry him, lest, when he had the power, he should render her life insupportable? Yet how many of the LORD's redeemed ones treat Him just so! No wonder they are neither happy nor satisfied!

The King hath brought me into His chambers.

Not first to the banqueting house—that will come in due season; but first to be alone with Himself.

How perfect! Could we be satisfied to meet a beloved one only in public? No. We want to take such an one aside—to have him all to ourselves. So with our MASTER: He takes His now fully consecrated bride aside, to taste and enjoy the sacred intimacies of His wondrous love. The Bridegroom of His Church longs for communion with His people

more than they long for fellowship with Him, and often has to cry:—

Let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice;

For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.

Are we not all too apt to seek Him rather because of our need than for His joy and pleasure? This should not be. We do not admire selfish children who only think of what they can get from their parents, and are unmindful of the pleasure that they may give or the service that they may render. But are not we in danger of forgetting that pleasing GOD means giving Him pleasure? Some of us look back to the time when the words “To please GOD” meant no more than not to sin against Him, not to grieve Him; but would the love of earthly parents be satisfied with the mere absence of disobedience? Or a bridegroom, if his bride only sought him for the supply of her own need?

From two to four A.M. was the time he usually gave to prayer; the time when he could be most sure of being undisturbed to wait upon God. That flicker of candlelight has meant more to them than all they have read or heard on secret prayer; it meant reality, not preaching but practice.

A word about the morning watch may not be out of place here. There is no time so profitably spent as the early hour given to JESUS only. Do we give sufficient attention to this hour? If possible, it should be redeemed; nothing can make up for it. We must take time to be holy! One other thought. When we bring our questions to GOD, do we not sometimes either go on to offer some other petition, or leave the closet without waiting for replies? Does not this seem to show little expectation of an answer, and little desire for one? Should we like to be treated so? Quiet waiting before GOD would save from many a mistake and from many a sorrow.

*They made me keeper of the vineyards;
But mine own vineyard have I not kept.*

Our attention is here drawn to a danger which is pre-eminently one of this day: the intense activity of our times may lead to zeal in service, to the neglect of personal communion. But such neglect will not only lessen the value of the service, but tend to incapacitate us for the highest service. If we

are watchful over the souls of others, and neglect our own—if we are seeking to remove motes from our brother's eye, unmindful of the beam in our own, we shall often be disappointed with our powerlessness to help our brethren, while our MASTER will not be less disappointed in us.

Let us never forget that what we are is more important than what we do, and that all fruit borne when not abiding in CHRIST must be fruit of the flesh, and not of the SPIRIT. The sin of neglected communion may be forgiven, and yet the effect remain permanently, as wounds when healed often leave a scar behind.

Do we not all need to learn a lesson from this? And to pray to be kept from turning to Egypt for help, from trusting in horses and chariots, from putting confidence in princes, or in the son of man, rather than in the living GOD? How the Kings of Israel, who had won great triumphs by faith, sometimes turned aside to heathen nations in their later years!

Unrestrained Communion

Set me as a seal upon Thine heart, as a seal upon Thine arm.

The High Priest bore the names of the twelve tribes upon his heart, each name being engraved as a seal in the costly and imperishable stone chosen by GOD, each seal or stone being set in the purest gold. He likewise bore the same names upon his shoulders, indicating that both the love and the strength of the High Priest were pledged on behalf of the tribes of Israel.

The bride would be thus upborne by Him who is alike her Prophet, Priest, and King, for love is strong as death, and jealousy, or ardent love, retentive as the grave. Not that she doubts the constancy of her Beloved, but that she has learned, alas! the inconstancy of her own heart, and she would be bound to the heart and arm of her Beloved as with chains and settings of gold, ever the emblem of divinity. Thus the Psalmist prayed, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar."

It is comparatively easy to lay the sacrifice on the altar that sanctifies the gift, but it requires divine compulsion—the cords of love—to retain it there. So here the bride would be set and fixed on the heart and on the arm of Him who is henceforth to be her all in all, that she may evermore trust only in that love, be sustained only by that power.

Do we not all need to learn a lesson from this? And to pray to be kept from turning to Egypt for help, from trusting in horses and chariots, from putting confidence in princes, or in the son of man, rather than in the living GOD? How the Kings of Israel, who had won great triumphs by faith, sometimes turned aside to heathen nations in their later years! The LORD keep His people from this snare.

*Many waters cannot quench love,
Neither can the floods drown it.*

To her request the Bridegroom replies in reassuring words. The love which grace has begotten in the heart of the bride is itself divine and persistent. Many waters cannot quench it, nor the floods drown it. Suffering and pain, bereavement and loss may test its constancy, but they will not quench it. Its source is not human or natural; like the life, it is hidden with CHRIST in God. . . .

Our love to GOD is secured by God's love to us. To the soul really rescued by grace, no bribe to forsake GOD's love will be finally successful.

*Make haste, my Beloved,
And be Thou like to a roe or to a young hart
Upon the mountains of spices!*

He who inhabits the praises of Israel, which rise, like the incense of spices, from His people's hearts, is invited by His bride to make haste, to come quickly, and be like a roe or young hart upon the mountains of spices.

Very sweet is the presence of our LORD, as by His SPIRIT He dwells among His people, while they serve Him below; but here there are many thorns in every path, which call for watchful care; and it is meet that now we should suffer with our LORD, in order that we may hereafter be glorified together. The day, however, is soon coming in which He will bring us up out of the earthly gardens and associations to the palace of the great KING. There His people "shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the LAMB, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and GOD shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

The SPIRIT and the bride say, Come! . . . Surely I come quickly.

Amen; even so, come, LORD JESUS! ☞

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Bring . . . the Books

Facing Grief by John Flavel

It would be both impossible and undesirable for a pastor to have personal experience in every crisis he faces in ministry. We all long to confirm to our counselees, “I know how you feel.” But for many situations (and especially for a young man new to the ministry) we just haven’t “been there.” Experience is not always necessary, but it does come in handy! For instance, where does an inexperienced pastor find sound advice for helping someone through the loss of a spouse or a child? Clearly our first source is God’s Word. But sometimes our inexperience can make our application of Scripture more academic than personal. Thankfully, there are godly believers who have not only experienced life’s most challenging trials but have also written about them.

The writings of the Puritan John Flavel offer a rich supply of practical applications from Scripture. One of his finest works is called *Facing Grief* (originally *A Token for Mourners*). For many people the words “Puritan” and “book” equal “heady theology.” Not so with *Facing Grief*. Although it’s not lacking in depth, this book is one that is easily read (only 122 pages in a small paperback) and readily applied.

Born in 1627 or 1628 John Flavel was the son of Nonconformist minister Richard Flavel. John’s parents both died while imprisoned for their nonconformity. About ten years prior, John was married, but at the birth of their first child, his wife and the baby died. He remarried a year later, had children, but again lost his wife. A personally contemplative man, Flavel used his tragic experiences to counsel a woman who had lost her child. His advice was taken from Scripture (Luke 7:13) and salted with a personal touch. As Flavel stated it, these are “after-fruits . . . which I have, in some measure, proved and tasted in my own trials” (p. xi).


The reader is immediately satisfied to find that the Puritans did not decry emotions. In a refreshing opening, Flavel admits that sorrow is a natural part of our trials. He says that only angels are above the stroke of passions, and a person who cannot sense sorrow has a “disposition beneath beasts.” Then in typical Puritan (albeit brief) manner, he describes the story of the widow of Nain in Luke 7 with clear and insightful truths, setting the stage for a powerful lesson on grief.

In chapter 2 (only two-and-a-quarter pages), he warns against excess in our feelings for that which is temporary, then uses Scripture to explain his strong yet gentle statement. There must be balance in our response to loss. Here we should remember that he writes after the loss of two wives and a child. He does not condemn sorrow; indeed he argues for it in chapter 3, where he points out four truths that are expected from deep loss. Two of these are that “the afflicted must be allowed an awakened and tender sense of the Lord’s afflicting hand upon them,” and “the afflicted soul is

due an expression of his grief in his complaints both to God and man.”

Having gained the reader’s confidence that he does understand, Flavel then exposes seven elements which make sorrow sinful—and these pills are hard to swallow! Among these gems are explanations such as, “Our tears for lost enjoyments so blind our eyes that we cannot see the many other mercies which yet remain; we take so much notice of what is gone that we take little or no notice of what is left” (p. 21). When he warns about sorrows overtaking our communion with the Lord, he says, “To lose the heavenly warmth and spiritual liveliness of your affections is undoubtedly a far more considerable loss than to lose the wife of your bosom, or the sweetest child that ever a tender parent laid in the grave” (p. 26). Again, when speaking against a response to affliction which sours the spirit to God he states, “But to . . . have hard thoughts of God, as if he had done us wrong, or dealt more severely with us than any: oh, this is a vile temper” (p. 30). As a godly man who’s “been there,” he can confirm these challenging truths with authority! Thankfully, he doesn’t simply expose and condemn disproportionate sorrow; the last chapter gives practical, Biblical wisdom on how to restrain excessive emotions.

In the largest part of the book (chapter 6) Flavel provides comfort for mourners. In over fifty pages of Biblical reasoning we benefit from the godly thinking of a Puritan mind. Here, trouble is put in perspective. Here, the truth of God’s superintendence is magnified. For instance: “Lift up your eyes to the sovereign, wise, and holy pleasure that ordered this affliction. Consider who he is, and what you are; yea, pursue this consideration, till you can say, I am now filled with the will of God” (p. 44).

Great emotional trauma requires both sensitivity and soundness. Pastors look for help like this. We have all read books on the subject. Some are spiritually light or lacking (explaining only the feelings of the one who suffers); others are bizarre (reaching in directions not beneficial for Christian living); still others are too touchy-feely (apparently aiming at an audience that wants only pity and not help). This book, however, is sound. It was in demand for its first 150 years, and today, with its recent reprinting (2010), its teaching is still fresh and relevant. Whether a person is sharpening his Biblical skills of counsel or personally facing a distressing crisis, *Facing Grief* provides valuable Biblical direction. 

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

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One phrase, unique to Romans, occurs at the beginning and end of the book. Like two ends of a strand of twine, they tie up the contents of this large letter into a single package. Paul opens the letter by announcing that he has received from Christ (literally) “grace and apostleship unto [for] obedience of faith among all nations, for his name” (1:5). Paul closes the epistle with the same language, referring to a previously hidden mystery now revealed by the commandment of God and “made known to all nations unto [for] obedience of faith” (16:25, 26). Whatever this language means, it is first on his mind when he begins dictating to Tertius (16:22) this epistolary introduction of himself to a church he had not yet visited, and it is last on his mind as he wraps up that dictation. It is shorthand for the whole purpose of Paul’s apostolic ministry (1:5) and the reason for God’s revelation in the first place (16:25, 26).

So what exactly is this universal “obedience of faith”? The commentary literature generally entertains two major grammatical options: subjective genitive or epexegetical genitive. Before investigating grammatical technicalities, however, it is worth exploring the broader epistolary context a bit more. Paul uses similar “universal obedience” language elsewhere in Romans. In 15:18, Paul refers to what Christ has accomplished through His ministry and His life (“by word and deed”) “unto obedience of nations” (literally). Notice that Paul says this in connection with the *grace* of God by which he is a *minister* to the Gentiles (15:15, 16), and the linkage to 1:5 becomes clear. In short, Paul is saying in 15:18 that the effect of his ministry resulted in the obedience of Gentiles. But obedience to what? The text does not specify. Obedience to the Law? That’s clearly not what Paul is after in Romans. Aside from these passages, “obedience” takes a backseat in Romans. In the front seat of this epistle is the other end of the phrase we are investigating: *faith*. *Pistis* appears nearly forty times in Romans. (The verb appears over twenty times as well.)

Now we’re ready to return to the grammatical options for the phrase “the obedience of faith.” Paul’s emphasis in Romans on faith as the definitive response to God and to His gospel suggests that the “obedience of faith” that Paul endeavored to secure “among all the nations” was not so much an obedience (to Law or to God) *produced by* faith (genitive of source or subjective genitive)—though it’s true that genuine faith does produce enduring obedience. Schreiner argues that “Gentiles participate in the Abrahamic blessing through the obedience that flows from faith”; but whether this accurately reflects Paul’s emphasis throughout Romans seems dubious. Rather, Paul is speaking of the *obedience which is faith* (genitive of apposition or epexegeti-

cal genitive). Moo warns against collapsing either term into the other; obeying is not a synonym for believing, nor is faith a convenient substitute for obedience. *Obedience to* the revelation and claims of the gospel expresses itself by *faith in* that revelation and in those claims. Likewise, genuine *faith in* God’s revelation and claims is the proper form of *obedience to* that revelation. See John 6:28, 29. To a question about *obedience* (“What shall we *do* that we might *work* the *works* of God?”) Jesus’ answer was *faith* (“This is the *work* of God, that ye *believe* on him whom he hath sent”). John seems to have woven this interchange into his epistle: “And this is his *commandment*, that we should *believe* on the name of his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 3:23).

Paul begins this magnificent epistle with a succinct expression of the sum and substance of his apostolic ministry—the *obedience of faith among all nations for His name* (1:5). He ends it on the same note (16:25, 26)—God’s purpose for his life and ministry was to make known the mystery (described back in 11:25, the only other reference to the “mystery” in Romans) that God has a great and gracious purpose not merely for the Jews but also for the Gentiles (“among all nations”), so that (“unto”) they will obey God’s claims on them (“obedience”) by believing the gospel (“of faith”). All of this is ultimately “for his name” (1:5)—“a reminder that the true end of preaching the gospel and winning men to faith is not just the good those to whom the preaching is directed but also—and above all—the glorification of Christ, of God” (Cranfield). These two ends tie up the Roman epistle into a single package under its central theme: *the good news of the saving righteousness of God available to all by faith*.

This study raises one final observation worth pressing. Is the gospel to be believed or to be obeyed? Several passages express the necessary response to the gospel not in terms of *believing* it but *obeying* it (2 Thess. 1:8; Rom. 10:16; 1 Pet. 4:17). How do you “obey” good news? The “gospel of the kingdom” preached by Jesus (Matt. 4:23), by Paul (Acts 28:30, 31), and by us (cf. Col. 1:13) is a declaration of the good news that Jesus is the true King. Satan is a pretender and usurper. Jesus came to assert His claim over the world and everyone in it and will come to exert His rights. The gospel, then, poses this choice: Will you acknowledge His rule and submit to His claims, or retain your allegiance to the usurper? The gospel is not merely an opportunity but an ultimatum, not just an announcement of good news that invites acceptance but the assertion of authority that requires submission. ☞

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

Windows

"Let No Man Deceive You" (1 John 3:7)

Last summer I received a small padded envelope by registered mail containing an 1801 US Draped Bust silver dollar. The address and customs labels indicated the package came from China, but strangely, there was no packing slip or invoice. Since I had not ordered any such coin, I was left wondering why I had received it.

Using a 2006 coin guide, I was able to judge the coin's "grade" and estimate its value at around \$1000! My curiosity mounting, I went to an acquaintance I knew to be knowledgeable about coins. He looked intently at the coin and said, "That's a really nice coin, if it's genuine." His words "if it's genuine" rang in my ears all the way home. Wanting the coin to be real, I had not considered that it might be counterfeit. Back to my numismatic guide, I read that all Draped Bust silver dollars from 1792–1804 had "HUNDRED CENTS ONE DOLLAR OR UNIT" stamped on the rim. There was no writing to be found on the rim. The coin was a fake. It was a deception.

Deceiving and Being Deceived

In 2 Timothy 3 Paul instructs us about the last days. The familiar "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned" is preceded by "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."

"Deceiving and . . . deceived" translates the Greek word *planao* from which we get our English word "planet." To the eyes of the ancients most of the lights of the night sky were in fixed positions, but there were other lights which appeared to wander across the sky. These wandering lights were the planets. This same word is translated as "deceit" in 1 Thessalonians 2:3. There Paul asserts the integrity of his message in that it did not *wander*. While others sought to please "itching ears," Paul did not change his message to appease certain audiences (2 Tim. 4:3).

Satan effectively plays to the deceitfulness of men's hearts. Paul reminds Corinthian believers that "we are not ignorant of his [Satan's] devices" (2 Cor. 2:11). He exhorts the Ephesians, "Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." *Wiles* translates *methodeia* from which we get "methods." Paul elaborates on Satan's method of deceit in Ephesians 4:14: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait [*methodeia*] to deceive [*plane*]."

Warnings and Examples from Scripture

We can survey the Old Testament and be warned about the consequences of being deceived. Eve was

deceived by the serpent (Gen. 3), and Jacob's life is marred by many incidents of deception. The Israelites were deceived by the Gibeonites (Josh. 9). Proverbs warns not to be deceived by intoxicating drink: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1). Obadiah records the Lord's condemnation of Edom: "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee" (v. 3).

Jeremiah grieved as he repeatedly warned the people not to be deceived by the words of the false prophets promising peace: "Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place" (Jer. 14:13).

In the New Testament, John writes to "the elect lady" that "many deceivers are entered into the world" (2 John 7). Ananias and Sapphira sought to deceive the church pertaining to their giving (Acts 5). "Be not deceived" precedes the warning that "God is not mocked" (Gal. 6:7). In other places believers are exhorted concerning the interesting proposition that they could deceive themselves (1 Cor. 3:18; 1 John 1:8).

Deception Depicted in Church History

Satan deceives God's people with the suggestion that they can cater to their appetites without consequence.

Written about AD 150, *The Shepherd of Hermas* enjoyed immense popularity among Christians well into the fourth century. The allegorical work opens this way: "Magnifying the creatures of God, and thinking how magnificent, and beautiful and powerful they are, I fell asleep." In this dream Hermas has five visions. In the last vision he is shown numerous similitudes. In the sixth similitude Hermas is led to a pasture where he observed a flock of sheep, lead by a shepherd to a place of "rioting and luxuriating in one place." Hermas is told that this shepherd is "the angel of luxury and deceit: he wears out the souls of the servants of God and perverts them from truth, *deceiving them with wicked desires* through which they will perish for they forget the commandments of the living God" (emphasis added). When Hermas presses for an explanation, he receives this answer:

Every act of a man which he performs with pleasure, is an act of luxury; for the sharp-tempered man, when he is gratifying his tendency, indulges in luxury; and the adulterer, and the drunkard, and the back-biter, and the liar, and the covetous man, and the thief, and he who does things like these,

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

Charles Spurgeon

gratifies his peculiar propensity, and in so doing indulges in luxury. All these acts are hurtful to the servant of God.

Satan's deceptions can come from within or without.

Believers of more recent years have profited from another allegorical work that uses language similar to that of *Hermas*. John Bunyan originally titled his work *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come*; *Delivered under the Similitude of a Dream*, though we are more familiar with the shorter title, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In Bunyan's tale we find Christian being instructed by Mr. Worldly Wiseman to go to the house of Mr. Legality to be rid of the burden of sin, portraying the age-old deception that forgiveness of sin is possible through keeping the law. After being rid of his burden at Calvary, Christian is now set on a path to the Celestial Kingdom. He comes to a place where the straight path is beset with difficulty. Close by, and seeming to run parallel, is a smooth easy road. Taking that path, Christian soon finds himself a prisoner in Doubting Castle. In the first instance Christian is deceived by an external evil, while in the second, he is deceived by an internal evil, his own wicked heart that sought for ease.

Satan deceives many with the deceitfulness of riches.

Around AD 500 Benedict of Nursia left his wealthy upbringing at about age twenty to take up the life of a hermit. Over time both poor and wealthy followed him for what they perceived to be a more complete Christian life. Benedict's growing influence resulted in the establishment of numerous monasteries under his leadership. Having learned from the failure of previous monastic orders, Benedict required the monasteries to be self-supporting communities with fields and workshops. Over many years this work ethic resulted in prosperity and the attention of wealthy patrons. Life in these monasteries became easier than life for the common farmer or tradesman. The apparent ease of life within the Benedictine monasteries drew many people. In the words of Kenneth Scott Latourette, "Like other monastic establishments, Benedictine foundations tended to decline from the high ideals set by the rule. Many were heavily endowed, and in a number of them life became easy and at times scandalous."¹

Satan multiplies deception where the light of the gospel is absent.

In *The Revivals of the Eighteenth Century* Rev. Macfarlan provides an account of events in Ireland in the early 1700s. Political upheaval resulted in former military officers becoming landowners. Ministerial charges were often given to their sons who, like their fathers, were accustomed to carousing and riotous living. These ill-prepared clergy gave "short moral

discourses" to placate their ignorant congregations. Catholic priests gained the confidence of the sick and dying poor, and played upon their fears.

They were told of the power which the priests had . . . and much about the old church; and as soon as any seemed to give way, on whatever point, the priest was sent for—he plied them anew, and seldom failed in succeeding. . . . They were now ready to receive absolution; but he had farther conditions to propose. The whole family must submit to be rebaptized or at least promise to attend mass; and this, was not infrequently gained. . . . *In this way, more than two-thirds of the lower and middle classes of protestants went over to the church of Rome.*²

Satan deceives people into giving him too much attention or no attention at all.

In the preface to *The Screwtape Letters* C. S. Lewis pegs satanic deception:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.

Satan will readily substitute one deception for another.

With the exile of Napoleon in 1815, Europe enjoyed relative peace that lasted for ninety-nine years. This era of peace led some people to embrace the deception that mankind is inherently good and in the right environment will become better and better. This was one tenet of the theological liberalism that was sweeping through Europe and America. This deception was exposed as a lie with the onset of World War I. With belief in the goodness of man discredited, many theological liberals adapted to the Neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth, which acknowledged that man is not good, nor can he be, but which refused to accept the inerrancy of the Scriptures.

Just days before the cross, Jesus warned His disciples, "Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them" (Luke 21:8).

Have we not seen Christ's words fulfilled in church history from the time of His resurrection to present day? Through false christs, false teachers, and counterfeit faiths claiming veracity, Satan still seeks to deceive the hearts of men. ☞

¹ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, Vol. I (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 331–35.

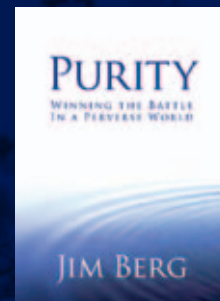
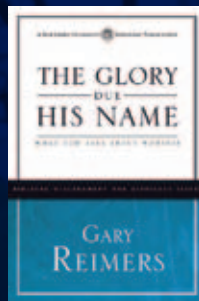
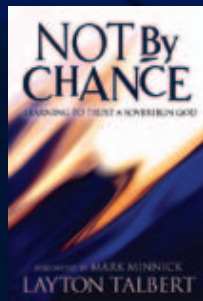
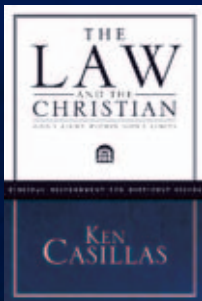
² Rev. D. Macfarlan, *The Revivals of the Eighteenth Century* (Glasgow, Free Presbyterian Publications, 1988), 10–11.



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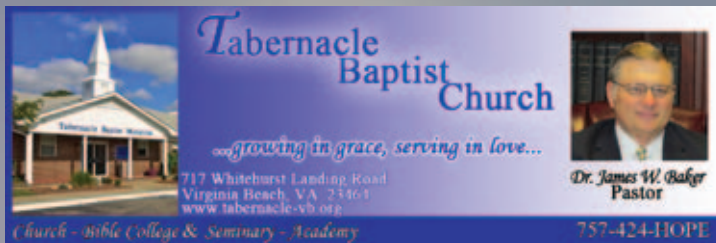
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Rock journalism is people who can't write interviewing people who can't talk for people who can't read.
—Frank Zappa

A husband always prefers his wife's mother-in-law to his own.
—Unknown

No man is high born until he is born from on high.
—Bob Jones Sr.

God made man a little lower than the angels, and he's been getting lower and lower ever since.—Will Rogers

When men turn away from God, [Blaise] Pascal tells us, they must either imagine they are gods themselves or . . . revert to being animals and seek their satisfaction in their own carnality. Megalomania or erotomania . . . Hitler or Hugh Hefner. —Malcolm Muggeridge

The old nature knows no law. The new nature needs no law.
—Unknown

Whatever else is or is not true, this one thing is certain—man is not what he was meant to be.
—G. K. Chesterton

So great is the depravity of the unregenerate man that, although there is nothing that he needs more than the gospel, there is nothing that he desires less. —R. B. Kuiper

In dismissing the God he cannot understand, man is left to possess the things he cannot enjoy.
—Donald DeMarco

Everything is wrong in a wicked man.
—John Duncan

There was a time when there was humanity without depravity. I refer to Adam before the Fall. We can scarcely conceive of undepraved humanity, but God did.
—David M. Atkinson

A prudent wife commands her husband by obeying him.—John Trapp

Unless the being of a God be pre-supposed, no tolerable account can be given of the being of any thing. . . . There is a conscience in man; therefore there is a God in heaven.
—Ezekiel Hopkins

Theologically, there are only two men, Adam and Christ.
—John Duncan

The sense of being lost does not make a man a Christian. It only proves he is a man. —Arthur E. Holt

If we are clay, let us remember there is a Potter, and His wheel.
—Peter Marshall

The hour is come, but not the man. —Sir Walter Scott

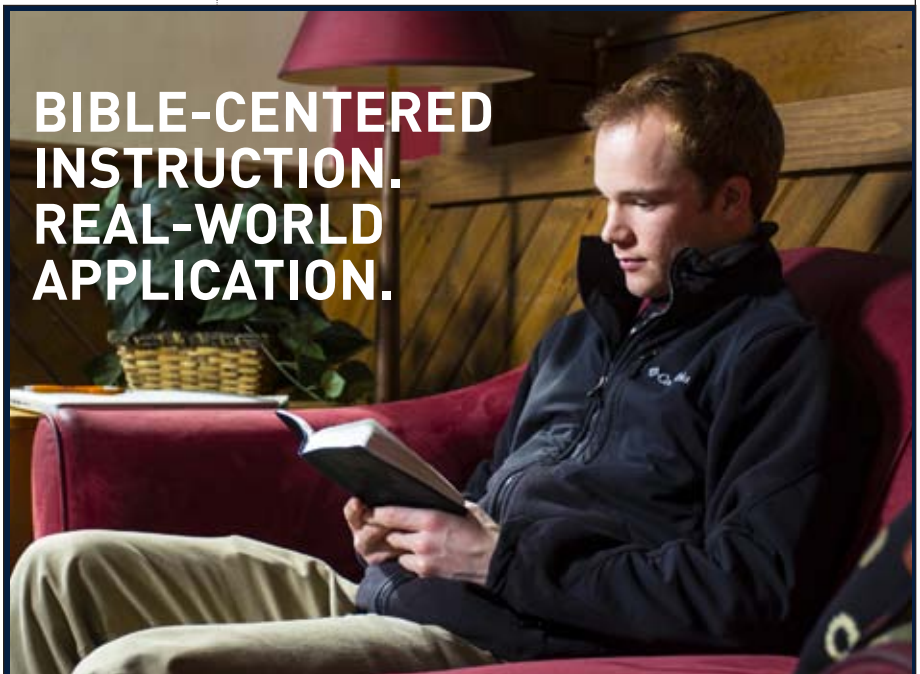
When God at first made man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by;
Let us (said He) pour on him all we can:
Let the world's riches, which dispersed lie,
Contract into a span.
—George Herbert in "The Pulley"

It is not a world out of joint that makes our problem but the shipwrecked soul in it. It is Hamlet, not his world, that is wrong.
—P. T. Forsyth

We can never know who or what we are till we know at least something of what God is.
—A. W. Tozer

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

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What's "Fundamental" to "Fundamentalism"?

David C. Innes

Basic Axioms Foundational to Fundamentalism (Part Two)

All processes of thought, including those used in theology and Christian ministry, are ultimately based on axioms—self-evident, presuppositional truths. We now continue the discussion of these axioms.

The Holy Spirit of God *never* leads anyone to do anything that is contrary to His Word. Divine guidance never contradicts divinely inspired revelation. Oftentimes those who disobey the clear commands of Scripture do so under the pretense that they have been “led of the Lord” to do so. But God is not in the business of commanding one thing and then telling someone to disregard or disobey what He has inspired to be written.

Anything that is not Scriptural is not spiritual—of the Holy Spirit of God. Ecumenical evangelism has been justified by many because it was perceived to be a legitimate way to carry out the Great Commission. Spiritual pretexts never justify ignoring or disobeying the clear commands of Scripture. The Holy Spirit of God is not in the business of approving direct disobedience to His own Word.

It is always wrong to add strength or numbers to an apostasy. This would be tantamount to building up the kingdom of darkness under the guise of building up the kingdom of God. Ecumenical evangelism is based on this kind of self-contradictory, unbiblical thinking.

Along this line, it is always wrong to give credibility (believability) to the works and messengers of apostasy. When the lines of separation from apostasy are broken down, public approbation is given to apostate men and movements by those who claim loyalty to God and His Word. It is impossible to build confidence in God's Word and at the same time put one's stamp of approval on those who patently deny the fundamentals set forth therein.

It is also wrong to give authority to the message of apostasy. This is most often done by giving public approval or recognition to those who bear this false message. The sinister suggestion that there is room for discussion (theological and otherwise) with those whose gospel contradicts the Biblical gospel is based on the false premise that *error* has something worthwhile to contribute to *truth*. But when you add to the truth, you no longer have the truth. When you subtract from the truth, you no longer have the truth. When you change the truth, you no longer have the truth.

Neither error nor modification has anything to contribute to the truth!

God has not called us to succeed. The love of success, like the love of money, is a root of all kinds of compromise, accommodation, and other evils. God has called us to work diligently and to be faithful and true to His Word. The results of our labors are God's business, not ours. He must

be trusted to dispose of our works in His own way and in His own time. Integrity in life and ministry must not be for sale—at any price!

Pragmatism (outcome-based, result-oriented philosophy) is never the measure of a man's life and work. The glory of God is the ultimate measure of *success*. Pleasing God in a life that is faithful to His Word must be the goal. Success can be measured only by the standard of God's Word. The results of our life and ministry may never be seen in our lifetime.

Fighting and confrontation are absolutely necessary under certain conditions. *That for which you are not willing to fight you will ultimately lose.* On the other hand, combative men (given to fighting) are disqualified by the apostle Paul from serving in the

ministry. You should not be looking for a fight. But if you are faithful and fully committed to that which is right, the battle will come to you whether or not you seek to avoid it.

God has enemies. We cannot avoid having our lives and ministries affected by them. The Bible instructs believers to relate to God's enemies *differently* than to their own personal enemies. Entirely different principles apply as to how we are to relate and how we are to conduct ourselves with respect to the enemies of God.

Everyone, without exception, who claims to represent the Living God and His Son, Jesus Christ, is morally and spiritually obligated to be in full agreement with God in everything He has clearly stated in His Word—to be on God's side in every issue of life and ministry.

Dr. David C. Innes has served as senior pastor of Hamilton Square Baptist Church in San Francisco, California, since January of 1977.



Author's Note: Much of this material, including the title of this article, has been borrowed from a number of sources over the years. Regrettably, I have lost track of them but wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to them.



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Written and Compiled by Dr. Layton Talbert

THE BOOK OF

In the previous column I raised the question, “Who is the Book of Ruth about?” I argued that a strong argument can be made—on the basis of an observant literary analysis of the Biblical-theological data—that the story of Ruth is actually folded into the larger story of Naomi. The book is a slice of real life, and real life interweaves the storylines of different people. Every person is the protagonist of his or her own storyline, and each storyline parallels and intertwines and interacts with many others along the way. Because God works providentially and uniquely in each of our lives, the *themes* of our intertwined storylines will often differ from each other. Any slice of the tapestry of life will be woven of individual storylines that are as unique and distinctive as we are from one another. As a slice of real life, the Book of Ruth is flexible enough to be read from the perspective of Ruth, or Naomi, or even Boaz, and each perspective lends itself to emphasizing different truths and points of applications.

This column raises the question, “Who is the Book of Esther about?” Several years ago this column explored the Book of Esther (Sep/Oct 2007 and Nov/Dec 2007). So we won’t delve back into the larger thematic issues of the book here. Instead, our focus will be on investigating the possibility of reading this book not as the story of Esther but as the story of Mordecai. The point of this is not novelty; still less is this approach prompted by some agenda of chauvinistic patriarchalism that seeks to dethrone Esther from her prominence in the book. It is an attempt to display the multidimensional complexity of God’s Word and to draw attention to details in the text that are frequently overlooked. Any book that bears fresh insights upon multiple rereadings is a testimony to the author’s brilliance and literary skill. That is truer of no book more than the Bible, and of no author more than God.

Noticing the Details

You may recall from the previous column (or from a high school or college literature class) that the protagonist of a story is who the story is *about*. The protagonist may or may not be the good guy in the story, but (s)he is the main character around whom the story revolves. Who is the protagonist of the storyline of Esther? Or is there more than one protagonist and more than one storyline?

Chapter 1 opens with King Ahasuerus and Queen Vashti. (Ahasuerus was his Aramaic name. History students know him better by his Greek name Xerxes, who ruled Persia 485–464 BC.) Clearly, though, the story is not primarily about them—important as they are from a historical standpoint. If a secular historian were telling the story, Xerxes would certainly figure more prominently.

After all, he was involved in a monumental power struggle that resulted in one of the significant shifts in political momentum in ancient history. Xerxes’ massive Greek campaign (which happened between the events of Esther 1 and 2) resulted in Persia’s humiliating defeat both at sea (Salamis, 480 BC) and on land (Plataea, 479 BC), contributing to the rise of a Greek Empire that would eventually unite behind a young general named Alexander.

So Ahasuerus is hardly a historical small potato. But here, when God is telling the story, one of the most powerful monarchs of that ancient world is merely part of the political landscape in which bigger and more important events play out. Into that providentially orchestrated historical situation steps . . . Esther or Mordecai? The answer, of course, is yes. But observe exactly how we are introduced to them. Mordecai is the one behind it all. He is introduced by name first (2:5) as the one who raised Esther (2:7) and charged her to maintain the secrecy of her Jewishness (2:10, 20). In other words, from a human (and literary) standpoint, without Mordecai there would have been no Esther to come to the throne.

As you work progressively through the book, the narrative constantly shifts between Esther’s story and Mordecai’s; but contrary to what you might expect when you start calculating the narrative space allotted to each, Mordecai’s side of the story clearly dominates. After their brief introduction in 2:5–7, here’s how the narrative divides by character:

- 2:8–20 (224 words in Hebrew)—the narrative focuses on Esther’s accession to the throne with only passing references to Mordecai.
- 2:21–4:3 (317 words in Hebrew)—Apart from one passing reference to Esther (2:22), the narrative shifts to Mordecai’s storyline, including his discovery of an assassination plot and his confrontation with Haman.
- 4:4–17—Esther seems to return to the limelight but in reality Mordecai pulls her into his story, convincing her to capitalize on her providential position of influence for the sake of their people. Esther responds heroically, but the mover and shaker is Mordecai.
- 5:1–8 (118 words)—A brief record of Esther’s first banquet.
- 5:9–6:14 (330 words)—The narrative refocuses on an extensive and crucial segment of Mordecai’s plotline. The events recorded here dominate both the structural and emotional center of the story. In fact, 5:9 marks virtually the exact midpoint of the book in terms of word count.

MORDECAI?

- 7:1–10 (165 words)—The story peaks with a climactic but brief return to Esther’s second banquet.
- 8:1–10:3—The rest of the narrative records the resolution of the mortal danger posed to the Jews. Though Esther and Mordecai share the stage throughout this final section of the book, the prominent authority figure is not the queen but Mordecai. Note especially the following passages:
 - 8:2—The king gives his signet ring to *Mordecai*.
 - 8:9, 10—*Mordecai* dictates the decree authorizing the Jews to destroy anyone who assaults them and to plunder their possessions.
 - 8:15—*Mordecai* is dressed in royal apparel as Shushan rejoices.
 - 9:3, 4—The Persian officials help the Jews “because the fear of *Mordecai* fell upon them”; as a result, *Mordecai*’s fame spreads throughout the empire and he becomes increasingly powerful.
 - 9:20, 23—*Mordecai* is credited with originally establishing the celebration of the Feast of Purim (though the promulgation of this feast throughout the empire is later credited to both *Mordecai* and Esther [9:29–32]).
 - 10:1–3—The final frames of the story are reserved for praising the greatness and influence of *Mordecai*. It is *Mordecai*, not Esther, who (like Joseph) is “second to the king” in the dominant empire of the day.

Apart from a few key scenes where Esther dominates, *Mordecai* is the main actor, his is the dominant storyline, and he is the driving force and the final focus of the story. Evidence suggests that subsequent Jewish history even came to refer to the feast of Purim as *Mordecai*’s Day (2 Macc. 15:36).

Drawing Conclusions

How does recovering the narrative focus on *Mordecai* impact our understanding of the story? First, it does not in any way diminish the fact that Esther is profoundly significant and heroic. But Esther’s role in the book, though strategic, is primarily passive, reactive, and overshadowed by *Mordecai*. Just as the Book of Ruth begins and ends with Naomi, the Book of Esther begins and ends with *Mordecai*. He becomes providentially placed, exalted, and empowered as the human agent through whom God ensures the welfare and security of His people. But the role of *Mordecai* also brings a surprising closure to a painful chapter in Israel’s history.

About 1050 BC Israel had demanded and received their first king (1 Sam. 8). Of the kind of man they wanted, God gave them the best available at the time—a Benjamite named Saul, the son of Kish. Saul’s refusal to carry out God’s judicial verdict against the Amalekites and their king, Agag (1 Sam. 15) was his most definitive failure (1 Sam. 28:18). Many Amalekites survived (1 Sam. 30:1; 2 Sam. 1:8; 1 Chron. 4:43). Despite Samuel’s execution of Agag himself (1 Sam 15:33), it seems that members of the royal family escaped as well.

Now, nearly 600 years later, Esther 2:5 introduces us to a *Benjamite* (*Mordecai*) whose great-grandfather was named *Kish* and who ends up confronting the personification of the ultimate genocidal anti-Semite—Haman the *Agagite* (Esther 3:1). Other meanings for “*Agagite*” have been suggested, but in the literary-historical context of the OT it is difficult to dismiss the traditional Jewish view that Haman was an Amalekite descendant of the royal line of Agag. (Being of the royal line of a conquered people may help explain Haman’s rise to power in Xerxes’ regime; indeed, he seems to have little else to commend him to such a position!) In one of Balaam’s remarkable prophecies (350 years *before* King Saul!), God had promised that Israel’s king would be “higher than Agag” (Num. 24:7)—suggesting that “Agag” was to the Amalekites what “Pharaoh” was to the Egyptians, not a name but a royal title.

Esther 10:2, 3 also implies that *Mordecai* played a strategic political role of international scope at this stage in Israel’s history. Xerxes’ reign ended in 465 BC (ironically, by another assassination plot), less than a decade after the events of Esther. *Mordecai* seems to have significantly influenced Persian Semitic policy, for Xerxes’ son, Artaxerxes, becomes a tool in the hand of God to further the Jewish cause. It was Artaxerxes who commissioned Ezra the scribe to return to Israel (in 457 BC, less than twenty years after the events of Esther). And it was Artaxerxes who appointed another Jew named Nehemiah to the coveted and influential position of royal cupbearer and, later, appointed him governor of Judah armed with a royal edict authorizing the Jews to rebuild the city of Jerusalem.

Focusing on *Mordecai*’s role neither diminishes Esther’s significance nor replaces God’s invisible preeminence. The book is still the Bible’s classic portrayal of the interface between divine providence and human responsibility. *Mordecai*’s prominence on the human responsibility side of the equation, however, deserves much more attention than it usually receives.

As you can imagine, the prison library here is not exactly conducive to graduate-level research. In fact, there are no monographs on Hell, and only one systematic theology (by Louis Berkhof). And aside from a Thayer's, there are not lexical tools either.

My question for you is whether *FrontLine* has covered the doctrine of eternal punishment in the past, and if so, if you would be able to send that material. As an indigent inmate, anything you could send me would be a tremendous blessing.

I appreciate your taking the time to read this letter. May the Father bless and keep you, now and always!

Jeremy Skocz
Everglades Correctional Institute
Miami, FL

I'm a Cuban Baptist pastor. I want to [inquire] about any way to receive your magazine. I'm so sorry but I have not resource to pay, is there a hope for me? Lord continue [to] bless you. . . . About website, I'm so sorry but we have not access, it is very expensive for us. Thanks a lot!

Pastor Pedro A. Obregón Sánchez
CUBA

Editor's Note: *This pastor's request for an international subscription has been graciously met through the generosity of a fellow believer.*

I read in the May/June 2014 *FrontLine* magazine that the FBFI is now authorized to endorse VA Hospital chaplains. I am rejoicing in another opportunity for the proclamation of the gospel among Bible-believing Fundamentalists. My interest in the VA Chaplaincy has roots back to my service in the United States Navy Seabees. I served . . . in

Vietnam 1969–1970 at the hospital base in Da Nang while the base was under enemy fire. While I was in Vietnam the Lord called me to full-time ministry. Upon discharge from the Navy I entered Bible college and trained for the ministry. At the time of my seminary graduation I attempted to become a military chaplain but was unable to do so because of accreditation issues with my Master of Divinity. I was endorsed and had passed my physical exams and attended the chaplains' schools. The accreditation issue was all that hindered my entrance to the Army Military Chaplaincy. I considered this a closed door at that time, but now my alma mater is an accredited seminary. After many years in the pastorate, perhaps the door has opened again.

Pastor Barry Layne
Arvada Baptist Church
Arvada, CO

I really enjoyed attending the [FBFI Annual] Fellowship, and I believe it was definitely worth the time and money I invested as the proprietor of Forward Design. Actually, however, the value of meeting and greeting fellow Fundamental Baptists was probably greater than the business benefit I received. I was very impressed, too, by the way the church people at Faith [Baptist Church, Taylors, SC] chipped in to help in so many ways. It was very noticeable, and they were all friendly and helpful.

Mark L. Ward Jr.
Greenville, SC

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Another Step of Apostasy

The Presbyterian Church USA denomination held its annual meeting of the General Assembly in Detroit, Michigan, this year. Two items were raised and passed in the Assembly that reveal a heightening corruption of Biblical faithfulness. First the Assembly passed a redefinition of marriage as "the union of two people" instead of the union of a man and a woman. For this definition to be fully sanctioned, a majority of the 172 regional presbyteries must agree to adopt the wording. Secondly, they voted to immediately allow their pastors to perform same-sex "marriages in states that allow such marriages."

This article can be accessed at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/church/2014/06/21/msg-to-pcusa-have-you-not-read-about-marriage#.U6wrLRZN1Zg>.

Jews Leaving France

France holds the world's largest Jewish population after the Israel and the United States. According to census statistics there are 500,000 Jews in France, yet more than 5000 are preparing to relocate to Israel this year.

The reasons cited for leaving include dim economic prospects and the growing frustration of being pinched between a growing political right and a growing Islamic population. Where Islam advances, so does anti-Semitism. France presently holds the largest Islamic population in Europe.

This article can be accessed

at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/culture/2014/06/24/jews-exiting-france-for-israel—why#.U6w1eRZN1Zg>.

Strategic Alliance

On June 3 of this year Daniel Patz, president of Northland International University, publicized the university's "strategic alliance" with Southern Seminary.

"I'm pleased to announce that God has led us into a strategic partnership with The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary," Patz said. "The details of the partnership will be forthcoming, but the overall goal is to leverage Southern Seminary's strengths to help Northland fulfill its mission of 'training the next generation of servant leaders for Great Commission living' with greater efficiency and greater gospel impact. By God's grace, this partnership will help us to solidify our future, energize our mission, and anchor our institutional stability for generations."

R. Albert Mohler Jr., Southern Seminary's president, is quoted on the seminary's website: "I am a big believer in the potential of Northland and its historic mission. We are pleased to enter into this strategic partnership with a bold vision for continuing and expanding the mission and influence of this historic and strategic school."

Northland's rationale for linking with Southern can be read on their website: <http://www.ni.edu/news-events/northland-partners-with-southern/>.

No Creation or Intelligent Design

In January of 2012, after a campaign by the British Humanist Association, the UK Department of Education revised its policies for "free schools." No creation or intelligent design arguments were to be presented in the context of science classes, on pain of losing their public funding.

Since that time, a new funding agreement has been published that takes this stand even further. No creation or intelligent design material can be covered in any class, including religion classes. The policy states, "[The school] shall not make provision in the context of any subject for the teaching, as an evidence-based view or theory, of any view or theory that is contrary to established scientific and/or historical evidence and explanations."

According to one British survey, 29% of teachers believe in creation or intelligent design. Almost 50% of teachers believe that excluding creation and/or intelligent design would alienate or be counterproductive to their teaching responsibilities.

This article can be accessed at <http://creation.com/creation-religious-education>.

The SBC Chooses Inaction

Danny Cortez, pastor of New Heart Community Church in La Mirada, California, has publically announced that he no longer believes homosexuality

is a sin and that he would be willing to embrace members of the LGBT community even if they are living in such a relationship. The church retained the services of their pastor but was unwilling to welcome or affirm gay members. They called this approach to the issue the "third way."

Southern Seminary President R. Albert Mohler singled out New Heart Community Church in his June 2 blog, insisting there could be no "third way."

When asked what action would be taken by convention members in the June national SBC meeting, Mohler responded, "I am confident that the Southern Baptist Convention will act in accordance with its own convictions, confession of faith and constitution when messengers to the convention gather next week in Baltimore."

During the convention Wiley Drake, a former SBC president, made a motion "requesting convention officers to represent convention messengers in visiting discipline on the church for violating a constitutional ban on congregations which act to affirm, approve, or endorse homosexual behavior."

The motion was determined to be "out of order." It was not addressed again. Thus the SBC chose inaction.

Read more at <http://www.baptiststandard.com/news/baptist/16570-sbc-takes-no-action-against-gay-tolerant-california-church>.

On Unwanted Pregnancies

The Presbyterian Church USA is generating much news on moral issues resulting from this summer's annual meeting, held in Detroit, Michigan.

A resolution that was designed, among other things, to condemn the taking the life of children who are already born through failed abortions was debated by the delegates. The measure was soundly defeated in a vote of 465 to 133. This represents 78% of voting members. The rejection rationale was presented by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy: "The church's policy affirms that, in face of the 'complicated and insolvable circumstances' surrounding problem pregnancies, it has 'neither the wisdom nor the authority to address or decide each situation' for women."

The committee later affirmed "the ability and responsibility of women, guided by the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, to make good moral choices in regard to problem pregnancies."

The church has already invested support in organizations such as Planned Parenthood, Presbyterians Affirming Reproductive Options, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, and other abortion providers or pro-choice organizations.

This article can be accessed at <http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/presbyterian-church-usa-voted-down-measure-to-condemn-abortion-of-babies-bo>.

Ground Zero Cross

The Ground Zero Cross, a seventeen-foot steel beam construction found in the wreckage of the World Trade Center, has become an important and revered part of the histori-

NOTABLE QUOTES

Today missed some fine opportunities of speaking a word for Christ. The Lord saw I would have spoken as much for my own honour as for His, and therefore shut my mouth. I see a man cannot be a faithful minister until he preaches Christ, for Christ's sake, until he gives up striving to attract people himself, and seeks to attract them to Christ. Lord, give me this!—Robert Murray McCheyne

Men do not know how happy they are until they cease to be so. Our present miseries and our past blessings are the themes on which unbelief harps. Let him that is without similar sin cast the first stone at those grumbling Israelites.—Alexander Maclaren

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds you so much dread

Are big with mercy, and shall break

With blessings on your head.—William Cowper

We need to accept that the reasons that God does what he does in our lives, or how our lives fit into the whole of his grand redemptive plan, will never be completely clear in this life. This is why real rest and peace is not found in knowing and understanding. It is found only in trust.—Paul David Tripp

Satan gives Adam an apple, and takes away Paradise. Therefore in all temptations let us consider not what he offers, but what we shall lose.—Richard Sibbes

Every trial that ever burdened a mortal man, every temptation that ever stormed a human heart, and every blessing that ever delighted a needy soul have been skillfully designed by the Creator for one purpose: to draw men to Himself.—Jim Berg

Our anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strengths.—C. H. Spurgeon

cal event. Subsequently it was planned as part of the historical exhibit in the site museum. American Atheists, Inc., filed suit to keep the cross from being included, citing evidence that its presence made some people ill.

In a story about the case, the Examiner.com quoted court documents saying, "Named plaintiffs have suffered . . . dyspepsia, symptoms of depression, headaches, anxiety, and mental pain and anguish from the knowledge that they are made to feel officially excluded from the ranks of citizens who were directly injured by the 9/11 attack."

Read more at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/legal-courts/2014/06/24/court-ground-zero-cross-makes-atheists-sick-so-what#.U6xw2xZN1Zg>.

Time to Go

A British court has ruled on a case involving physician-assisted suicide. Up till now, the arguments have followed the logic that a terminally ill patient should have the right to end the overwhelming suffering by physician-aided termination. This case is different. This case discussed the merits of physician-assisted suicide when life is troublesome. The language of "terminally ill" and "pain" are removed from the argument.

The court insisted that physicians should be able to do it, but lawmakers would need to act first.

This article may be accessed at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/pro-life/2014/06/26/right-to-die-creeping-closer-to-time-to-go#.U6x4-hZN1Zg>.

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

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

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ON LANGUAGE & SCRIPTURE

God Commendeth His Love

We usually say that “God commendeth his love” in Romans 5:8 means He “shows” or “demonstrates” it. But “sheweth” and “demonstrateth” were both available; why did the translators choose “commendeth”?

Ask ten lifelong Christians to explain “But God commendeth his love towards us” and I am willing to bet (is that allowed in *FrontLine*?) that they will all be in the same boat I was until today—the *USS Look It Up, Dear*.

But look it up where? If you try the excellent contemporary dictionaries *Merriam-Webster* and *American Heritage*, you’ll get no sense that fits. You’ll get “praises” and “recommends.” Try those senses. They don’t work. You’ll also get “entrusts.” Is that it? “But God entrusteth his love towards us”? No, that doesn’t make sense, either. And the English translators wouldn’t have said something that means “entrusts” when the underlying Greek word doesn’t mean anything of the sort. You can’t use modern English dictionaries. You can’t even use Webster’s 1828 dictionary, which has been reprinted in recent years.

You need the OED. The *Oxford English Dictionary*—the preeminently massive, exhaustive, authoritative (and expensive) resource on our mother tongue. The OED editors have collected millions and millions of citations (examples of how a word gets used) going back to the earliest days of anything resembling English—like AD 800. If someone used “commendeth” in writing, the OED editors looked at it.

And the OED reveals an “obs.” sense that fits Romans 5:8 perfectly. The last time anyone used this sense, according to the OED, was 1644 (it was John Milton in *Areopagitica*). And here’s the sense: “To set off to advantage, or with added grace, lustre, etc.; to adorn or grace.”

That, the translators were saying, is what God did to His love toward us when He sent His Son to die for sin. He was putting His love in a graceful setting, like placing a beautiful diamond on a velvet cushion. He was adorning or gracing His love with added lustre through the greatest demonstration of divine love in all history. What a brilliant translation choice! “Commendeth” is a much richer word than “sheweth.”

But without the OED, you’d never know. The OED is an essential tool for English Bible reading, because it alone tells you how English words have been used throughout history. I love the OED and use it all the time. I commend it to you.

Dr. Mark Lee Ward Jr. serves as an author of Bible curriculum materials with BJU Press. He blogs at *By Faith We Understand*.



Mission Statement: The Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International exists to provide a rallying point for Fundamental Baptists seeking personal revival and the opportunity to work with committed Bible-believers in glorifying God through the uncompromising fulfillment of the Great Commission.

As the journal of the FBFI, *FrontLine Magazine* provides a forum for God’s people to reverently express a conservative Christian perspective on pertinent issues. In an effort to keep readers informed, quotes and references to many different individuals and organizations will appear. This does not imply the endorsement of the magazine or its board. Unsolicited manuscripts and artwork accepted for review.

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2014 Annual Fellowship Report

Every year, when the Annual Fellowship is closing and the lingering laughter and expressions of love and friendship continue long after the final service has ended, we hear someone say, "I think this was our best Fellowship ever!" That was certainly true of 2014. Pastor John Monroe and the incredible servants of Faith Baptist Church in Taylors, South Carolina, hosted one of the most edifying, encouraging, and uplifting series of meetings ever enjoyed by FBFI. Under the leadership of Dr. Tim Fisher, the choir and orchestra brought together musicians from over half a dozen churches in the Greenville area. The music was glorious, and each registered attendee received a copy of the new Faith Baptist Church choir and orchestra CD, *A Living Sacrifice*.

The beautiful church atrium was filled with thirty-six exhibitors and venues for refreshment. Fellowship broke out at every break as old friends flocked to the atrium to meet. Best of all, the preaching was powerful and greatly appreciated. The crowds were large, which always encourages the speakers and makes the singing ring out. For the Wednesday evening service, Dr. Mark Minnick was scheduled to preach. He dismissed his congregation from their regular service and encouraged them to attend the Fellowship. With members from Mt. Calvary and Faith, plus those who came in from out of town and locally to attend the meeting, the crowd was over 1450 that evening. Although Dr. Minnick was taken ill and called on Wednesday morning to cancel, God graciously arranged for the new president of Bob Jones University, Dr. Steve Pettit, to preach to us that evening. Many commented that it had been a very long time since they had attended a service like that held in a local church.

That evening, FBFI presented the well-deserved Torchbearer's Award to Dr. John Monroe. Also, the sharply-dressed FBFI Chaplains in attendance were presented and honored and then sang "Souls for Jesus." Chaplains opened and closed the meetings in prayer, and Chaplain (COL) Joe Willis addressed the Leadership Luncheon, bringing deep conviction and gales of laughter. The presence of the chaplains during the meeting roused the patriotism of those who attended, so that one man who never misses the Fellowship joyfully said, "Next year, let's have all the speakers to be chaplains!"

Perhaps it was the national malaise spreading like fog from Washington, DC, or the flames of frustration fanned by talk radio and TV news, or more likely the sadness of heart in so many who have been touched by the drift of Fundamentalist friends into a resurgent New Evangelicalism—whatever it was, something brought huge crowds to the 2014 Annual Fellowship hungry for preaching, singing, and genuine Christ-honoring fellowship. Clearly, it was a hunger for truth and for time with the people of truth. The "bad news" faded in the bright light of the Good News. Sadness and disappointment at the direction of country and kin gave way to the joyful assurance that God is still on the throne, and we continue to be remade "Into His Image." When Dr. Pettit closed his message on Wednesday evening with a gentle invitation to rededication of purpose for the cause of Christ, the response was overwhelming as a vast number came quickly to bow before the Lord.

The 2014 FBFI Annual Fellowship may well have been the most edifying and encouraging, the "best Fellowship ever." It certainly was the happiest!

—Submitted by Dr. John C. Vaughn.





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What Is a Chaplain Endorser and What

Court decisions interpreting the “free exercise” clause of the First Amendment to the Constitution argue that military chaplains are not only legal but are actually required. But to avoid a government “establishment” of religion, the chaplain’s religious ministry must be subject to a nonmilitary ecclesiastical endorser. The endorser represents an approved agency that examines both the chaplain’s qualification and compatibility for service. Thus, one of the main functions of FBFI is to serve as a chaplain-endorsing agency.

In that role FBFI not only examines and certifies the education, ordination, and other qualifications that allow chaplains to serve in their dual role as military officers and ministers, but it also performs an ongoing service of encouragement, advocacy, and training required to maintain the chaplain’s proficiency. Much of the effort of the FBFI Home Office is directed toward that end as we serve our expanding cadre of chaplains, currently numbering 60 endorsed chaplains, candidates, and applicants.

Chaplaincy: An Extension of the Local Church

FBFI believes that chaplaincy is an extension of local church ministry. Therefore, like all ministers, chaplains are spiritually accountable to their local churches. Consequently, endorsing agencies function much like mission boards, managing and serving those who minister to the military, police, and in hospitals in much the

same way mission boards serve as liaisons between multiple churches and the missionaries they support.

In addition to verifying education, ordination, and progress in the chaplaincy, the duties of the endorser include interviewing chaplain candidates and making official Endorser Visits sanctioned by the military service branches. Endorsers who visit military bases on official business do so with Two-Star Protocol, reserved for those in the rank of Major General. On a recent visit to Ft. Bragg it was rather humbling to be greeted at the on-base hotel not only as “Dr. Vaughn” but also as “General Vaughn,” an undeserved and inaccurate courtesy. (The only General John C. Vaughn on record was “the last Confederate General,” as he is listed on the Google search engine.) Regardless, visiting chaplains where they serve is a major blessing, even without the protocol.

As an endorser, I routinely attend chaplains’ graduations at the Army, Air Force, and Navy Chaplains’ Schools conveniently located (for the FBFI Home Office) here in South Carolina at Ft. Jackson. The chaplains call the training complex “the Schoolhouse.” Our newly promoted Chaplain (LTC) Gary Fisher is on the command staff there. Years ago, he served as a young Captain at Ft. Jackson, ministering to troops there for basic training. Now, after a storied career as a combat chaplain and in various posts here in the States, he is training many other chaplains. Of course, his endorser visits him, but while his endorser spent a couple of days in the VA Hospital in Columbia last summer, Chaplain Fisher actually made a pastoral call on him!



Does He Do?

John C. Vaughn

An Endorser Visit

Recently, my daughter Becky and I visited Camp Lejeune and Ft. Bragg, both in Eastern North Carolina. Lejeune is a Marine base, where we visited Chaplain Trenton Long. For that official visit, we stayed off base, speaking at Chaplain Long's local church, Maranatha Baptist, with Pastor Jon McConkey. We also made office calls with Chaplain Long's senior chaplain and commander on the base. Of course, access to military installations requires a security check to obtain temporary credentials to pass through the gates. Endorsers then conduct private interviews with superiors to determine their chaplains' strengths and weaknesses to ensure that proper annual training will be conducted by the agency. We consistently receive strong, positive reports on our FBFI chaplains. We insist that they be excellent officers in order to be excellent chaplains, and they certainly are.

While at Ft. Bragg, we stayed on post but ministered in Sunday services at Cornerstone Baptist Church, pastored by former FBFI Chaplain Greg Odiorne. Chaplain (CPT) Michael Barnette organized the Endorser Visit and arranged the reservation at the on-post hotel. We were there to see Chaplains Barnett; Bret Perchukin, who is transitioning to the Reserves; and Chaplain Matt Sprecher, who arranged the Sunday speaking opportunity at Cornerstone, his local church. We attended a ceremony where he was promoted to major while we were there and enjoyed taking his family to Olive Garden for

great food and fellowship. It is not only beneficial for the chaplains to log in their records a visit from their endorser but for commanders as well. Endorsers are received as colleagues since commanders understand that without them there would be no chaplains.

Touring the historic chapels of Ft. Bragg was like visiting the chapels attended by our Founding Fathers. Meeting with high-ranking officers, many of whom share their personal testimonies of faith in Christ, is always a great privilege. On these visits I was able to see again, firsthand, the delicate environment in which our chaplains serve. It is a paradox that they serve our military often in dangerous, life-threatening circumstances while walking a tightrope of changing public policy. Their ministries include all of the challenges of local church pastors, who have all faith groups represented in their communities; chaplains serve in close quarters with ministers of all theological persuasions, not to mention doing so while under fire, literally.

To summarize, a chaplain endorser provides qualified ministers to the military, police, and hospitals. Because of the dual role of the chaplain, the endorser "owns" the chaplain's ordination and endorsement, while the military branch, law enforcement department, or hospital board/CEO "owns" the chaplain's rank and uniform, or if a civilian, his employment. Thus, the separation of church and state is maintained, while the free exercise of religion is protected.



Laying Up Treasures on Earth or in Heaven?

Our Lord declared to His disciples in Matthew 6:19, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal." In this passage the Lord taught His disciples not to make it their goal to amass wealth for themselves. Again He declared in Luke 12:15, "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Here the Lord taught emphatically that our lives do not consist of those things which we possess.

But many people spend most of their mental powers and exert a lot of their physical energies in the hot pursuit of stockpiling the treasures of this world. The Bible shows us the foolishness of doing so. Ecclesiastes 5:16 says, "And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?" Imagine seeing a man running across a field with a burlap bag and you say to him, "What are you doing?" And the man replies, "I am gathering wind. You know you can't be too sure about the air currents in the future." You then ask, "How long have you been doing this?" He answers, "I have spent my entire life gathering wind." You would stand there in shock and say to yourself, "How foolish!" But it is no more foolish than a man gathering wealth for himself. We read in Proverbs 23:4, 5, "Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven."

Money is not the measurement of wealth! Oh, there are things money can buy. Money can buy things, but not happiness; luxuries, but not contentment; pleasures, but not peace. We have been deceived in believing that our source of security and protection is financial success. The Word of God warns us in 1 Timothy 6:9, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." Proverbs 28:22 says, "He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him." First Timothy 6:10 tells us that "the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Here the Word of God shows us the brevity, poverty and sorrows of riches.

As the Lord warned His disciples about the dangers of laying up treasures on this earth, we also should carefully consider how easily wealth could do the same harm to us.

Riches, wealth, and possessions have a way of getting a hold on us. I have often said that people possess possessions and then possessions possess them. These things can easily dominate us! However, the Lord also instructed His disciples about the direction of our riches. We read in Matthew 6:20, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Here the Lord teaches that the safest place for our investments, with the highest percentage of interest and greatest dividends in stock, is in Heaven. The Lord said in Matthew 6:21, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." What a person treasures is what he watches. The Lord said that a person will either focus on that which is physical—that is, temporal—or else he will focus on that which is spiritual—that is, the eternal. God contrasts these in Matthew 6:23: "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." The word "evil" in this verse speaks of a person whose focus on this life is so intense that his life is characterized by selfishness, covetousness, and greed. All he sees is money and more things that he must have—and yet he is never satisfied.

Someone asked John D. Rockefeller, one of the wealthiest men of the twentieth century, "How much money does it take to satisfy?" He replied, "Just a little bit more." Someone has said, "Money is like salt water; the more you drink, the thirstier you get." So the person whose focus is on the physical has a life full of things, yet he ends up full of darkness and emptiness because this world has dominated his life. The Scriptures describe the outcome of a person who lives only for the temporal in Proverbs 13:7: "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing." Ecclesiastes 5:12, 13 warns that "the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt."

As the Lord warned His disciples of not living for the temporal, we also should take heed. First Timothy 6:7 says, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." The Lord wants us to focus on the spiritual, that is, the eternal. We will look at what the Lord taught about this in our next article.

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



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