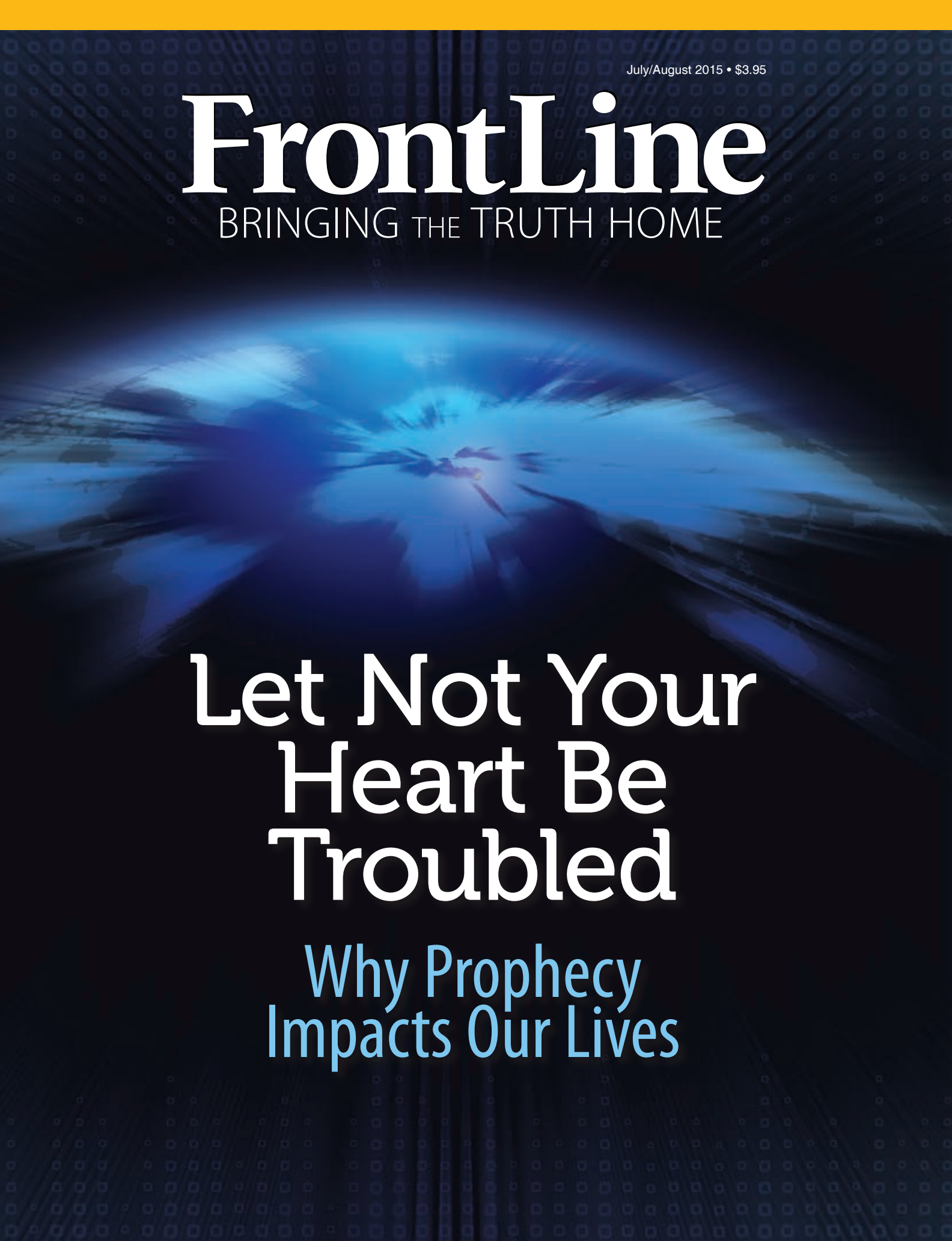


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FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

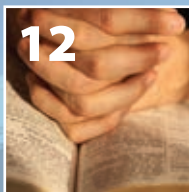
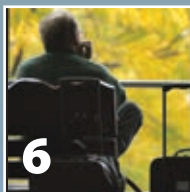


Let Not Your
Heart Be
Troubled

Why Prophecy
Impacts Our Lives

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We would like to thank Dr. Kent Ramler for coordinating this issue of *FrontLine* magazine.

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The Importance of Prophecy

It was the early 1990s. The pastor of the church where my wife and I served announced that we would be having a well-known evangelist coming to speak on the topic of prophecy. I was looking forward to it. My sweet, godly wife was not. I remember being surprised that she would react so negatively. Frankly, prophecy scared her. The events of the Tribulation terrified her, and films such as *A Thief in the Night* and its three sequels did nothing to assuage those terrors. She did not doubt her salvation, but the magnitude and scope of divine judgment on the world left her unsettled. Besides, could one really know that we would not go through those troubling times? Even though I was pursuing a graduate degree in Bible, I still had difficulty convincing her of the value of prophecy.

Years have passed, and we have both grown in our understanding of Scripture. Since over twenty-five percent of the verses in Scripture deal with prophecy to some degree, it has been a topic that demanded our attention. We have come to realize that prophecy is much more than a stick of butter melting on the street.* Recently I helped to draft a position statement explaining the importance of prophecy that was then accepted by the FBFI Board. The statement reads as follows:

Although many believers avoid the study of Bible prophecy because of the misuse of prophetic passages and because of differences among the interpreters, prophecy is a very important component of Biblical revelation and properly understood is a great blessing to God's people. We should preach the whole counsel of God, including prophetic portions. Promises and predictions of the future are an integral part of both Old and New Testament preaching.

Prophetic teaching serves as a warning to the unsaved. It is also profitable for the believer's life and ministry. The Scriptures promise a special blessing on those who study and apply prophetic teaching. Specific benefits include a greater appreciation for the glory and trustworthiness of God, a fuller understanding of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ,

the promotion of evangelistic zeal, a motivation for holy living and mutual exhortation, comfort in sorrow, encouragement in affliction, and a calming of fears.

This issue of *FrontLine* features six articles dealing with different benefits of prophecy. Certainly, prophecy enhances our understanding of Jesus Christ by manifesting Him in all of His regal and divine splendor. Such knowledge then challenges us to repent and serve Him, but it also motivates us to meet together as believers and serve others (Heb. 10:25). For the obedient Christian, prophecy provides comfort in times of great distress and trial.

Growing up I often fantasized about being a prince and wondered what it would be like to be part of a family with fabulous wealth and power. One fictional story captured my imagination as a child. The story concerned a boy whose family was wealthy beyond belief. He lived in a house that grew bigger and bigger each year because nobody told the construction workers to stop building. The boy and his friends had wonderful adventures exploring in his magnificent home. His riches provided opportunities and experiences about which I could only dream. Not long ago the thought struck me that I *am* a prince and a part of a family with fabulous wealth and power. My Father's home is far larger than any manmade structure, and my future is secure. I have a retirement plan that is out of this world! Prophecy teaches us that our reality far exceeds whatever fantasy we may have dreamed up as children.

How then ought we to live as we "see the day approaching"?

Kent Ramler has a PhD in New Testament Interpretation from Bob Jones Seminary, where he taught for several years. He has been pastoring People's Baptist Church in Frederick, Maryland, for six years.

* This is a reference to a gripping scene in the popular 1972 film *A Thief in the Night*, which over 300 million people saw. A young girl who had recently trusted Christ as her Savior is sent to retrieve a stick of butter from a neighbor across the street but is raptured on her return home. The dropped stick of butter is left melting in the road.



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On behalf of the Good News Baptist Church family, thank you for the wonderful opportunity to host the 2015 Annual Fellowship. The preaching on prophecy and the opportunity to interact with so many of God's choice servants were blessings we will long remember. May the days we had together continue to remind us of the importance of prophecy until we are "caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air."

Mike Ascher
Good News Baptist Church
Chesapeake, VA

Imagine our surprise when we received the March/April 2014 *FrontLine* and saw the cover photo of my friend Jeriel Malacao sharing the precious truth of God's Word with another young man. We praise the Lord here for the work in the island of Palawan and for the laborers there who like Jeriel are willing to spend and be spent for the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ. As missions director for Maranatha Bible Missions, I have personally traveled to Palawan and ministered there with Dr. Jethro Malaco and his father, Pastor Joe Malacao, and . . . at Brooks Point Bible Church. The Lord has surely been gracious to them, and I am honored to serve alongside them for the cause of Christ.

Pastor Chris Brown
Maranatha Bible Church/Maranatha Bible Missions

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! I wanted to write and thank you for the FBFI Annual Meeting. It was such a blessing to my wife and me. The preaching and music were so God-honoring. Thank you so much for all you did to make this happen.

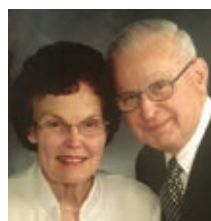
Mark Seymour
Baptist-Mid Missions
Winston-Salem, NC 27127

This note is long overdue. First of all, I am extremely late in expressing my appreciation for permitting our church to host the 2014 South FBFI meeting. . . . There were many wonderful things that came together in that meeting that I trust [have] borne out God-honoring fruit. I am grateful for the opportunity to have Buffalo Ridge Baptist, Gray, TN, and Central Baptist Church, Greeneville, TN, assist in huge ways for the meeting. I am also grateful for the opportunity to have the men exposed to Elijah's Harbor in Greeneville, TN. The Harbor is in much better shape today than even in 2014. The Lord has supplied an excellent couple, Joe and Pati Gatas, to serve as caretakers. They have made many positive changes.

Mailbag (Continued on right)

Happily married and the parents of four children, **Ben and Andrea Hamilton**

are on deputation to start a church in the Bronx. Having served for the past five years at Bethel Baptist Fellowship in Brooklyn, New York, alongside Pastor Jim Bickel, the Hamiltons are thankful for what they have already experienced and are excited about their future of working in one of the Lord's most densely planted and diverse harvest fields.



George Heusinger has served on the pastoral staff of Community Bible Church in Norfolk, Nebraska, since 1959. He and his wife, Marjorie, began the church as a Bible study in their home. Though no longer senior pastor, George is still active in visitation of the ill, shut-in, and elderly, and never misses an opportunity to share the gospel. His radio broadcast, *Reflections*, airs each Sunday morning as it has for over forty-nine years.

Mailbag (Continued from left)

[Also,] every issue of *FL* strikes its readers in different ways, but just a quick note to let you know that the March/April 2015 is spot on! Thanks for your hard work as well as Dr. Vaughn's.

Dale W. Cunningham
Boones Creek Bible Church
Johnson City, TN

Correction: In the May/June issue of *FrontLine* we incorrectly identified Maranatha Bible Missions as "Maranatha Baptist Missions." As well, the way we phrased the paragraph on MBM gave the impression that Pastor Dale McCallister, the pastor of MBM's parent ministry, Maranatha Bible Church, was pastoring a new church plant under MBM. To clarify, MBM was established in 1982 as an arm of Maranatha Bible Church. The mission board is directed by Associate Pastor Chris Brown.

Prophecy

A Revelation of God's Sovereignty 1 Timothy 6:14

The promise of Christ's imminent, or "any moment," return permeates the New Testament.

- Jesus Himself promised, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself" (John 14:3).
- When Christ ascended to heaven, the angels promised, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).
- The early preaching of the apostles included the promise that Christ is in heaven "until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21).
- Paul reminded the Roman church that Christ's ultimate victory and Satan's defeat are assured: "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. 16:20).
- The Corinthians had the testimony that they were "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:7).
- Paul reminded the Galatians that Christ died to "deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Gal. 1:4).
- The Ephesians understood that the indwelling Holy Spirit is "the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:14). We, with the Ephesians, look for the day when we will be "holy and without blemish" with Christ (Eph. 5:27).
- We have the promise that the God who began the work of salvation in us will perform it until the day of Christ (Phil. 1:6). We look for the coming of our Savior who will change us into His likeness (Phil. 3:20–21).
- The Colossians embraced the promise of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).
- The Thessalonian believers turned to God from idols, served the living God, and their hope was "to wait for his Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1:10). They had the hope of Christ's return and "so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:13–18).
- In our text passage Paul tells Timothy to be faithful "until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6:14). He anticipated the reward which God will give "unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).
- Paul taught Titus that we look "for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

- The Hebrew Christians understood that “here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Heb. 13:14).
- James encourages us to spiritual stability because “the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:8).
- Peter tells us that “the chief Shepherd shall appear” (1 Pet. 5:4), and according to God’s promise we eagerly “look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13).
- In 1 John the beloved apostle gives us repeated promises of Christ’s return with the assurance that “when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).
- Jude tells us that we are to be “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life” (Jude 21) and that Christ will present us “faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (v. 24).
- The very last promise in the Bible comes from the lips of our Savior who assures us, “Surely I come quickly” (Rev. 22:20).

It is clear that the New Testament authors and the local churches of the New Testament era believed that Jesus is coming again and that He could come at any moment.

In 1 Timothy 6:14 the apostle urges his protégé to serve the Lord in a pure, irreproachable way until the appearing of Christ. He commands Timothy to live in purity and to stand for the faith (vv. 11–12), charges him to faithfulness (vv. 13–14), and anticipates the ultimate victory of Christ (vv. 15–16). Scripture declares that Christ will come in God’s time and that He will be revealed as God alone.

The Time of Christ’s Appearing

Christ’s return will occur “in his times” (v. 15). This phrase appears four times in the New Testament. Christ came the first time to die “in due time” or “in his times” (1 Tim. 2:6). In the same way, God revealed the preaching of the gospel “in due times” (Titus 1:3). Believers will receive blessing “in due season” (Gal. 6:9) if they do not faint. And here Scripture declares that Christ will appear “in his times” (v. 15). “God controls and determines the moment when his Son will return as the victor and when the struggle shall be brought to an end.”¹

We do not know the time of Christ’s appearing. Scripture promises that He will return, and it instructs us to serve, watch, and be ready for His return. We are told that Jesus will come “quickly,” or “without delay” (Rev. 22:7, 12, 20). He will return at the proper time as God has planned.² The sovereign God is in control!

The Manifestation of Christ’s Appearing

The appearing of Jesus Christ is going to show vital truth to this world. That truth is important for us in our world today.

Only Sovereign. Paul stresses the fact that Christ will show that He is “the blessed and only Potentate” (v. 15). This was a vital message for first-century believers. One of the reasons believers suffered for their faith in the ancient

world was because they would not lower God and His Christ to the level of the pantheon of idols. Their insistence on the exclusive worship of God through Christ brought a series of vicious persecutions and martyrdom across the empire. By the time of Nero, the cult of emperor worship was developing in the empire. “All of the first century emperors equally favored the cult of the dead emperor. Tiberius, Claudius, and Vespasian did not encourage the marks of adoration, but Caligula, Nero, and Domitian permitted or even provoked them.”³

God refuses to lower Himself to the level of anything or anyone man calls “god.” Christ is the only sovereign. He is King of all who are called kings. He is Lord of all who are called lords (Rev. 19:16). Paul was a Roman citizen. In this very epistle he taught obedience to and prayer for civil authority (1 Tim. 2:1–4). At the same time, he declared that there is one God (1 Tim. 2:5–6) and that Jesus Christ is the only God and sovereign. In Daniel’s day, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar’s idol and worshiped God alone (Dan. 3:12, 16–18, 28). They were willing to serve God to the death. Paul’s affirmation that Christ is the only sovereign, King of kings and Lord of lords, is a similar act of faithfulness to Christ. Paul was willing to suffer martyrdom for the testimony of Christ, and that was his fate.

Only God. God alone has immortality (1 Tim. 6:16). God is life in Himself. He gave life to mankind (Gen. 2:7) and to every creature (Gen. 2:19). We must understand that our life is in Him (Dan. 5:23; Acts 17:25). He is immortal, and believers in Christ have the promise of immortality (1 Cor. 15:51–54). There is no other God.

Paul wrote these words in a day when many idols were worshiped as God throughout the empire and in Rome itself. New Testament believers refused to worship anyone or anything as God except the creator God and His Son Jesus Christ. Paul put obedience to Christ ahead of human religious requirements. And for that loyalty to Christ he paid with his life.

God has covered Himself “with light as with a garment” (Ps. 104:2). He lives in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16). He alone is worthy of honor and praise.

In a multicultural world, we must declare the honor and praise of the only true God who reached out to reconcile sinful mankind to Himself. We must be willing to live for Him at any cost. In His own time He will appear again and declare His supremacy. We must serve Him and live for Him.



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

¹ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992), 268–71.

² Ibid.

³ <http://www.theologywebsite.com/history/rulercult.shtml>; accessed February 23, 2015.

Prophecy

A Warning to the Sinner

Scripture gives us Holy Spirit-empowered help in our daily ministries. Whether you are functioning as an ordained minister of the gospel, a church leader, a parent, or a friend, Scripture is profitable to your ministry (2 Tim. 3:16). This includes the prophetic passages. Fulfilled prophecies boost our confidence in Scripture. Those yet to be fulfilled give us a sure hope. Many prophetic passages were given specifically to reprove, rebuke, and exhort and are useful in our day-to-day ministries (2 Tim. 4:2). Let us look at three ways prophecy can be useful.

Prophecy Establishes God's Sovereignty over All People

There are many who do not believe the God of the Bible has authority over them. I recently read an opinion piece in the *Huffington Post* in which the author referred to those Christians who "shamefully resort to using the bible as justification" for their position on same-sex marriage.* The lack of capitalization of the word "Bible" alone tells us Mr. Hansen does not consider the Scriptures authoritative. According to him, the use of them as an authoritative reference in a discussion is "shameful."

Yet the Bible, through prophecy, clearly establishes God's claim to sovereignty over people who do not acknowledge Him as sovereign. Obadiah, Amos, Jonah, Nahum, and Zechariah all contain prophecies that are

targeted at nations who do not claim to be under His sovereignty.

In Isaiah 7:17–25 God tells Israel that Assyria will be used by Him to punish Israel's sin. In Isaiah 10:5–19 God tells Assyria He will punish them for atrocities they commit against Israel. God is establishing His sovereignty over Assyria by commanding their actions and then punishing them for doing them with a wrong heart. History tells us God's prophecy was fulfilled.

Merely stating that God is sovereign over an unbelieving person will not suddenly cause him to repent, but since the prophecies are the Word of God, there is opportunity for the Holy Spirit to bring repentance that does not exist when I use my own arguments. His Word will not return void (Isa. 55:11).

Two passages in the New Testament use Old Testament prophecies to challenge those who are unrepentant sinners. By examining these passages I hope to broaden our understanding of the potential use of prophecy in our personal ministry.

Prophecy Is a Warning to God's Sinful People

Let us look first at Matthew 12:38–42. Certain scribes and Pharisees asked Christ for a sign, something to certify Him as Messiah. He berated them as evil and adulterous and referred them to the "sign" of the prophet Jonah. This surely is used to prepare the unbelieving Jewish religious elite to see His resurrection as the sign that He is the Messiah. But prophecy is rarely focused on a single issue.

Our Lord then told them that the Ninevites will rise up in judgment against the Jews! Let's examine Jonah a bit more carefully:

1. Jonah was sent to a people who were not God's people; Jesus could be implying the religious elite are not God's people.
2. Jonah was reluctant to take the message. Jesus is not a reluctant prophet, but might He be implying that the Jews were reluctant to include the Gentiles in their religion?
3. Jonah was a successful preacher of God's message. Jesus would ultimately be successful.
4. Jonah was unhappy with God's results. The Jews would be unhappy with the birth of the church.

The Jews claimed to be God's people and awaiting their Messiah. Yet God had tasked them to declare His glory among the Gentiles (Ps. 96:1–3), and they were not doing so. David acknowledged the responsibility in 1 Chronicles 16 when the ark was returned. The psalm is similar to the 1 Chronicles' celebration. Perhaps it was written on that occasion. Jesus reminds the leaders of His day that David and Solomon used the kingdom to make their God known far and wide, to the Queen of the South.

The Jews had rejected John the Baptist, the first prophet in four hundred years. The Jews were skeptical of Christ. They had evidence of numerous miracles, miracles that fulfilled Isaiah 29:18–19, the coming of the Holy One of Israel. When John the Baptist sent two disciples to Jesus to ask directly if He was the one they were waiting for, He did not answer immediately. After performing several miraculous healings, He told them to tell John of the healings and the gospel preached to the poor, a fulfillment of the Isaiah prophecy (Luke 7:19–22). The religious elite had access to the prophecies and the reports and witnessed some of the miracles themselves, yet they refused to believe. They would be judged by the standard of the Ninevites, who were not even promised that repentance would be effective, but repented fervently.

Some of these Jonah-esque traits can be found in our Fundamental Baptist churches today. Some within our churches are reluctant to evangelize, unwilling to reach out across cultural barriers. Some churches have lost their fervor for missions. We have the sign of the prophet Jonah to exhort us to action and assure us of God's desire to forgive those who repent.

Prophecy Is a Warning to Sinners in General

In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit comes upon the believers and they prophesy in foreign languages. This is witnessed by many. Some seek to know the meaning of the miracle, while others mock the speakers as drunken. Peter stands up and starts preaching. He takes for his text Joel 2:28–32 and states that the events of Pentecost fulfill the passage. What the people saw was Galileans prophesying in at least thirteen languages they were not expected to know. The message was one directly from the Holy Spirit. Peter claims the prophesying was the evidence of the fulfillment of the rest of the prophecy, specifically the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Peter then goes on to explain who Christ was and the sinful actions that resulted in His crucifixion. He then moves on to David's prophecies about Christ and how they were not fulfilled in David's own body, but in Christ. A large number were pricked in their hearts. Convicted of their sin they ask Peter and the apostles what they must do. The answer: repent!

Peter was not led to use any of the apocalyptic prophecies, nor the prophecies that specifically condemn sin. He used a prophecy that was uniquely suited to that specific day, and he linked it to events that were common knowledge. The prophecy and the actions of the people were used by the Holy Spirit to bring a great first harvest of souls into the infant church.

Prophecy in the Twenty-First-Century Ministry

When I was a relatively new Christian just learning how to share the gospel with others, I found a list of several gospel "roads." The Romans Road is well known, but there is also an Isaiah Road:

- Isaiah 53:6: "All we like sheep have gone astray."
- 53:12: "He was numbered with the transgressors."
- 53:4–5: "He was wounded for our transgressions."
- 55:6–7: "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found. . . . Let the wicked forsake his way."

I have rarely used this, preferring passages from Romans, John, Ephesians, and 1 John for sharing the gospel. My focus in my preaching is decidedly New Testament. Yet we cannot do justice to many New Testament passages without an understanding of the Old Testament background of those passages. Many times that background is from prophecy.

Prophecy gives us an authoritative "thus saith the Lord" platform. Prophecy can be used to enhance Exodus 20:14, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Hosea and other prophets can take us from a narrow sermon on sexual purity to a broader sermon on spiritual purity.

In my counseling ministry I have often used Old Testament passages, including prophecy, to cut through the twenty-first-century, postmodernist worldview in an attempt to get at God's worldview. Malachi 2 is a passage that deals with treachery; it includes verses on the treachery of divorce. This can be powerful in premarital counseling or counseling people with troubled marriages.

Prophecy often reveals the heartfelt essence of God. We must relate the message of an unchanging God to our rapidly changing world (Mal. 3:6). I believe building a solid prophetic foundation can help us reprove, rebuke, and exhort, as well as comfort, encourage, and edify in today's world.

Charles Farley has an MDiv from Bob Jones Seminary. He served at Regeneration Reservation (Ft. Thomas, Arizona) for three years before pastoring West Hampden Baptist Church in Hampden, Maine, for eleven years. He currently serves as a missionary in the education department of International Partnership Ministries (Hanover, Pennsylvania), where he assists in preparing the next generation of national church leaders.



* Hansen, Dale, "Christians to Blame for the 'War on Christianity,'" *Huffington Post*, February 16, 2015; accessed February 17, 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dale-hansen/christians-to-blame-for-the-war-on-christianity-_b_6692026.html

Knowing What's Coming Will Help You through What's Happening

In language meant to be clever in the context of his times, Walter Rauschenbusch wrote, "Eschatology is usually loved in inverse proportion to the square of the mental diameter of those who do the loving."^{*} In reality, though, eschatology is usually loved in proportion to the believer's love of Christ. If we don't love Christ's appearing, how can we claim to love Him?

Sometimes pastors may balk at preaching prophecy, thinking that prophecy lacks clear application for their congregations. Still, prophecy is one of the major themes in the Word of God, with almost twenty-seven percent of its verses touching on more than 725 prophetic subjects. Clearly, the mere bulk of prophetic emphasis in the Bible suggests its importance to God's people. For example, Isaiah, rich in prophetic truth, demonstrates how God's promises for the future bring blessings in the present.

Prophecy in Isaiah and Daniel

Isaiah 40:1 begins the last half of the book with the words, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.” In their rebellion God’s people had experienced the fulfillment of God’s promised judgment. His condemnation of Israel’s sin had resulted in the fabric of the nation being torn apart. Everything they had in terms of material possession or position was taken from them. All they had left to cling to was the presence of God and His promises. It was enough.

By God’s mercy, Israel also experienced God’s gracious renewal and peace. In this section of Isaiah there is an interplay between God’s creative activities in the past and His promised prophetic fulfillment in the future (Isa. 42:5; 45:11–21; 46:8–10; 48:3–8, 12–16). God was reminding His people that He was present from the very beginning; it was by His power and wisdom that the Word brought forth the created cosmos (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1–3). In the same way that God’s faithful presence inhabits eternity (Isa. 57:15), it will ensure the fulfillment of every prophetic promise in the future.

One reason God has given His people prophetic promises is that their dependence on God’s faithfulness in keeping His Word takes away their fear of the future so they will experience spiritual comfort and peace in present difficulties (Isa. 26:3–4). Even in the midst of the Babylonian captivity Israel could take heart in God’s promise of a glorious future to come (Isa. 58–66). God, the Prophetic Promise Maker, can be trusted to be God, the Prophetic Promise Keeper.

Daniel echoes this same theme of God’s faithfulness in keeping His covenant. In the Book of Daniel we are shown that the Sovereign God of Israel also rules over Gentile kings and kingdoms. The thrust and parry of empires will not hinder God from fulfilling His every promise to the children of Israel. The security of Israel is safe in the hands of God. From God’s throne a river of fire flows out against those who choose to live in spiritual rebellion (Dan. 7:9–11). But for God’s children, the Lord gives access to a river of life (Rev. 22:1).

Prophecy in the New Testament

In the same way, God’s prophetic promises to the church come from the same heart of grace and are no less glorious than the promises of God to Israel. Speaking in Titus 2:13 of Christ’s return, Paul writes, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Since Paul first penned those words, almost two thousand years have passed. Although Christ has not yet returned, His promise is still in full force. Anticipation of Christ’s return, as the saints have sung for years, brings “strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.”

At the dawn of creation God walked with man. But man rebelled and chose to walk his own path. Consequently, God shut the door to paradise so that man no longer experienced the intimacy of God’s presence, coming instead to know moral failure and fear as his daily companions. From that day to this, God has moved to bring reconciliation between Himself and mankind. The cross of Calvary is at the foundation of God’s work in salvation, but all along the way prophetic promise has served as God’s blueprint for bridging the gulf between God and man so that man can once more walk in holy fellowship with God. Christ’s return to establish God’s kingdom on earth is the abutment of that prophetic bridge on the far shore of human history.

Today, we wait for the Lord’s return. Until then, we wait in faith, hope and love (Deut. 6:4–5; 1 Cor. 13:13; Heb. 11:1, 6). Faith and love are intertwined: we will not truly have faith in the Lord unless we also love Him; and we won’t love Him if we don’t trust Him. Moreover, it is the settled assurance of hope that sustains our love for God and our trust that He will keep His promises. In part, this is why fear is spiritual poison in a believer’s walk with God. In 1 John 4:18 the apostle writes, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”

Similarly, the Lord rebuffed the disciples’ fear with the question, “Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?” (Mark 4:40). Earlier in the passage Christ had said, “Let us pass over unto the other side” (Mark 5:35). While Christ rested in the will of God and fell asleep, the disciples focused only on the immediate circumstances surrounding their boat. In doing so, they lost hope in ever reaching the other side. Seeing only the wind and waves, they had forgotten about God’s loving care—that they, too, were actively engaged in fulfilling the will of God in Christ.

Fear and anxiety are two names for the same malady. George Mueller, no stranger to a life of faith, wrote, “The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety.” The disciples were anxious because Christ was asleep while they were in trouble. They feared that God was inattentive to their need. Nevertheless, Christ was equally present with the disciples and no less in control when He rested, as when He rebuked the storm—no less Sovereign when He slept, as when He spoke.

Every Lord’s Day there are people in church who, like the disciples, struggle with the silence of God. Their prayers seem to have gone unanswered. They have become discouraged with personal failure or they feel overwhelmed with the pressures and stresses of life. Spiritually, they may have gotten to the point where all they can see are problems. Yet they know their own resources are insufficient to meet the need.

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Every portion of God's Word invites response. Its narrative and history portions challenge us to embrace or avoid certain kinds of conduct; its laws compel our obedience; its laments and praises evoke confession and adoration; its proverbs and wisdom literature challenge us to ethical conduct; the Gospels implore us to accept the good news of salvation in Christ; and the Epistles appeal theologically to transformed living. But the study of prophecy has, at times, led to fruitless speculation without a profitable change of life. W. Graham Scroggie warned, "An interest in prophecy which is merely speculative and sensational comes perilously close to being sinful."¹ Truly, all revelation demands a proper response of faith.

In fact, the Book of Hebrews illustrates how faith is the age-old response of God's people to His Word. Faith functions as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (11:1). While this is not a strict definition, it reveals that faith exists in tangible expressions as a "substance" or "foundation" undergirding future certainties and as an "evidence" or "proof" of unseen realities. In effect faith is the "title deed" to the promises of God.²

Dangerous philosophies that had infiltrated the church at the end of the first century generated the need for John's first epistle. Heretical teachers enticed Christians to seek status in "hidden knowledge" and to cast off the restraints of moral living. To correct that error and to motivate God's people to holy living, John challenged believers to focus on the blessed hope by addressing the present realities and future certainties surrounding that event (1 John 2:28–3:3).³

Present Realities

John pointed out the reality of who the believers "now" were by appealing to them as "[dear] little children."⁴ He assured them that their security in God's family rested in an act of God—they were "born of him" (2:29). Yes, they were already "sons of God" (3:1), and even if we omit the words "and we are!" found in most translations,⁵ he stated again, "now are we the sons of God" (3:2). These truths establish our relationship with God as His children in terms of special, present, and secure realities.

The term "child of God" is a rich and inspiring description. John's use of "little children" calls attention to the family resemblance we share with God.⁶ The tense of the verb rendered "born of Him" (2:29) reinforces our family likeness, signifying that it is rooted in a new birth begun, completed, and preserved by God Himself.⁷ We are secure in His likeness and kept by His power. What a blessed truth!

Another reality is expressed in the exclamation, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." These words overflow with family privilege. "What manner

The Purifying of Blessed





Power the Hope

of love" seeks a response to the question, "From what country" does this kind of love come?⁸ Certainly no one had ever before seen love so great or glorious as that of God giving His unique Son to lay down His life for His enemies to qualify them to be His children. This is a *great* and *glorious* and *wonderful* love. In fact, it is love *from another world*!

Not every family trait seems to be beneficial; we also share in Christ's ignobility. The world does not now know us, for neither did it recognize Him (3:1). Expecting to be lauded as "God's child" in this age is misguided. Popular Christian culture might claim to offer "your best life now," but Jesus told His followers that if the world persecuted the Master, it would also persecute His servants (John 15:20). If this were "our best life," heaven would be disappointing indeed. But denigration by the world must never discourage us or extinguish our hope. No, "now are we the sons of God," and we must live in light of that truth.

Future Certainties

Having affirmed these realities, John assures us of future certainties. Although the time of Christ's coming is uncertain, its occurrence is unquestionable. Christ will "appear in glorious procession as King"⁹ and we "will see Him just exactly as He is." These words inspire both delight and fear. His appearing is abrupt and inescapable; we will be "present" in this dynamic event. Standing fully exposed, we will "be revealed." There will be no pretense, no façade—we will be "naked and opened" before Him¹⁰—our works revealed, motives exposed, and actions weighed in an equitable accounting of our service. Then we will be cleansed by the purifying presence of His holiness. This is awe-inspiring and terribly sobering!

Finally, the wait will be over. Faith will become sight. We will be changed! Not bit-by-bit, as now while gazing on His glory as revealed darkly in the mirror of His Word (2 Cor. 3:18), but dramatically, powerfully, and completely as we are transformed into His image. When we see Him "just exactly as He is," appearing in radiant brightness and unapproachable glory, He will transform us into His marvelous likeness. That is the beatific vision!

So how then should we, as "children of God," respond in anticipation of these certainties? First, we must live in recognition of who we "already" are. That means that, as God's children, we are obligated to "abide in him."¹¹ We must "be absorbed" in doing His will, constantly living in prayerful communion, and ever delighting in His presence. Our love must be enduring and our obedience unwavering. We must endeavor to proclaim His name and to preserve His truth, guarding the apostolic teachings and exposing the errors of those who teach otherwise (2:18–27; 4:1ff.). This is "abiding."

As well, we must anticipate the "not yet" of Christ's appearing by embracing choices that are consistent with

Continued on page 28

Prophecy

A Reason for Ministry to Believe

This past year we experienced a uniquely dramatic illustration of the application of the exhortations in Hebrews 10:24–25. Believers are admonished there to “consider” (willingly pay thorough and intense attention, resulting in complete understanding) “one another” for the purpose of “provoking” (stimulating/motivating) each other “unto love and good works.” We are also (parallel clause in same sentence) to “exhort” (Gk. *parakaleo*—elsewhere rendered “comfort,” “encourage”) “one another, and so much the more” than ever before, as we “see the day” (of Christ’s return) “approaching.” This practical product of prophecy was graphically demonstrated to us last summer.

On July 2, 2014, without any advance warning or symptoms, I suffered a massive heart attack while returning home to Arizona from a preaching-and-family-visit trip. Thus began an incredible series of miracles of God and an overwhelming corresponding outpouring of prayer, love, and good works from the family of God.

The Lord showed Himself obviously to be in control in multiple ways.

- The heart attack occurred in a restaurant in Gallup, New Mexico, at meal time, rather than out on a lonely interstate highway “in the middle of nowhere.”
- It “just so happened” that one waitress who was getting off work saw what happened and was able to administer CPR while another waitress did chest compression until the 911 help arrived. All agreed that these ladies saved my life.

- In the course of being transported by emergency vehicle to the Gallup hospital, by ambulance to the Gallup airport, by Life Flight jet to the Albuquerque airport, and by ambulance to the Heart Hospital of New Mexico, the EMTs and hospital personnel had to alternately stabilize me, then lose me (“code blue”), and bring me back to life four times.
- In the Heart Hospital I was kept in a medically induced coma for nine days while neither doctors, nurses, nor family members were sure just how badly my heart may have been damaged or whether I would live, have brain damage, or be able to recover fully.
- It “just so happened,” however, that this particular hospital possessed a new type of device (not yet available in many places) that could be inserted to help the heart overcome damage enough to increase its function and strength while waiting to see whether the surgically installed stents would repair the blocked artery until my heart could perform naturally.
- When I was brought out of the coma after the device was removed, the medical personnel confirmed that my heart was functioning properly and were amazed that there was no apparent loss of mental ability—and that my alertness, good spirits, and sense of humor seemed normal.
- Final billed charges for emergency transportation, hospital care, doctors and medical services, etc., totaled well over a half million dollars. After Medicare adjustments and insurance payments, we were responsible



for less than one percent of the original total (more about this later)! Praise the Lord!

- When I was finally released from the hospital to go home to Arizona, the Lord put me under the care of one of the top ten cardiologists in America, who “just happens” to be based in our Verde Valley location, for follow-up and rehab. He is also the founder and director of the very cardiac rehab program that I went through and completed after thirteen weeks of heart monitoring, strengthening, and exercise programs.
- Periodic tests, doctor visits, and the final stress test in March (nine months after the heart attack) all showed no further damage and that all stents and arteries were clear. I was declared “officially recovered” and able to resume all normal activity.

Right from the first hours after being awakened from the coma and hearing the details of what had happened (I had no memory of anything to do with the heart attack or succeeding events), I was overwhelmed with the realization that God must not have been finished with me just yet and has more ministry for me to fulfill. My long-time life verse, Acts 20:24, has become so much more real to me than ever before—“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

What connection does all this have with the prophecy text in Hebrews? Just this—the roles that hundreds of various members of the Body of Christ from, literally, all around the world have played in this drama by exercising

spiritual gifts and ministering through fervent prayer, hospitality, sacrificial giving, physical presence and comfort, encouragement from Scripture, and much more, clearly demonstrates the present practical aspects of both the “considering” and “provoking” functions.

Here is just a sampling.

- Before I had even reached the hospital, our missionary daughter in Chile (after receiving a hurried call from my wife) had posted on social media news of my initial life-threatening condition and the desperate need for urgent prayer. She also invested much time in providing updates through many sources. Multitudes of responses were immediate and heartwarming. We firmly believe that so much prayer bombarding the throne of God made all the difference. Our other daughter later told me, “Dad, you went viral!”
- One of those who received the early communication was the daughter of a pastor in Albuquerque, neither of whom we had ever met, but she knew our missionary son in Oregon. Her dad came to the hospital and stayed with my wife (a complete stranger to him) throughout that first long night. He also contacted a retired pastor and wife (members of his church but, again, complete strangers to us), who offered their home for a place for my wife to stay while I was in the hospital, for as long as necessary. As she would arrive back at their house each night and check her computer, she was tremendously helped, encouraged, and blessed by the realization that so many people were investing so much time in fervent prayer on our behalf.

- Two of our sons made sacrificial rush trips from their respective homes and families in Colorado and Ohio to support and wait with their mom to see what would happen. They were an invaluable help and blessing to her. My sister and her husband in Arizona also drove through much of that first night, after stopping in Gallup to pick up our car and bring it on to Albuquerque. (My wife had ridden over with the air ambulance.)
- Our third son was able to come down from Oregon for several days after the other two had left and was a special help to my wife as well. Then after we arrived home, both daughters were able to come for separate weeks (one all the way from Chile!) to help both my wife and me to adjust to changes in my restricted diet, initial physical weakness limitations, not being permitted to drive, and so on, as well as the aftereffects of the emotional trauma. So all five kids had to sacrifice work and ministry days, family time, and money in order to minister to their mom and me, yet they did so willingly and joyfully, and thus exercised their spiritual gifts—even though the “one another” involved happened to also be family. Many of their own friends, supporters, and contacts also helped them financially to make the trips that they could not otherwise have afforded.
- After our mission agency, World Wide New Testament Baptist Missions, sent out a notice through various social media sources that anyone wishing to assist with our anticipated huge medical expenses could do so by designated gifts through the mission, the response was far beyond anything we could have expected. God’s people from a wide variety of life situations and income levels exhibited “love and good works” through gifts of all sizes. Some came from other missionaries (some of whom we had never even met personally yet), sacrificing out of their own support funds. Some came from high school friends of over fifty years. Some came from complete strangers who simply followed the leading of the Holy Spirit to be a blessing to fellow believers. Some came from very dear friends, and some from previous brief ministry contacts. Some came from professional people, and some from families who were themselves struggling to make ends meet. In total, there was enough given to cover our “after insurance” obligations and some other additional related expenses, all because some choice believers

were willing to “consider one another” in these last days.

- Besides the financial gifts, we received many hundreds of e-mails, cards and letters, phone calls, and social media notes of encouragement, assurance of prayers, and sweet expressions of love and concern.
- An equally meaningful blessing to us has been the ongoing efforts our own church folks and other family members have made to provide such things as finding low-sodium meal alternatives, providing or sharing transportation needs, volunteering to help relieve initial home-care burdens, being exercise companions, and many other ways of “considering one another.”

All of these examples have deeply touched our hearts far more than mere words can express and have changed our lives and perspectives forever. Not only have they driven home the prophetic truth that “the day” may indeed be “approaching,” but they have also served to increasingly “provoke” us to greater “love and good works” toward the “one anothers” whom God brings into our lives through ministry contacts, prayer letters and requests, giving opportunities, and spiritual needs.

Mike Smith has been involved in pastoring and missions in the American West for over forty years. He also taught Bible at Ambassador Baptist College for several years. He is currently serving with World Wide New Testament Baptist Missions as its coordinator for church planting in the Mountain States and is working to plant Faith Baptist Church in Rimrock, Arizona.





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Prophecy

A Motivation for Missions

As someone who loves missions, I find encouragement and hope in the

prophecy of Revelation 5:9. Just think: the task our Lord calls us to fulfill, namely, making disciples out of every ethnos (Matt. 28:19), is prophesied as being fulfilled around the throne of God in heaven! Revelation 5:9–10 states, “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” What He calls us to do, He enables us to accomplish.

But on this side of heaven, either we are kept in the dark regarding how much work remains to be done in making disciples out of every nation, or Christ’s followers have yet to make other disciples out of every nation. We know it will happen because of the prophecy, but we do not yet know how much of a role current believers are going to play in seeing the prophecy fulfilled.

With that in mind, consider what our response should be to Revelation 5:9. What does the Lord want us to do in light of the knowledge we have about what He will do in the future? I ask you to consider two portions of Scripture and what they illustrate concerning believers behaving in the present based on what God reveals about the future.

Responding to What the Lord Will Do Next

Mark 14 recounts the story of a supper in Bethany at the home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. The meal took place after Lazarus was raised from the dead and just before Christ went to the cross.

In a beautiful display of love and adoration, Mary breaks open a valuable container of spikenard oil and anoints the body of Jesus with the precious contents. The disciples, led by Judas Iscariot, respond negatively to Mary’s actions, but Jesus defends her (“Let her alone”) and tells them all what He thinks of her behavior. Mark 14:8–9 states, “She hath

done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.”

Christ’s characterization of what Mary did is interesting. Two things stand out to which I would draw your attention. First, the Lord says that Mary’s actions will be told along with the gospel. He is making a powerful statement. He lets His followers know that He values actions like this in the same way He values the spread of the gospel.

Second, and even more important, the Lord says that Mary is behaving appropriately in the present based on what He will do in the near future. She anointed His body for burial. That is an amazing thought.

When Jesus told His disciples on several occasions that He was going to Jerusalem to suffer and die, they either didn’t understand Him (Mark 9:31–32) or flatly rejected the idea (Mark 8:31–33).

Those who knew Jesus well were not prepared for what He told them He was about to accomplish. But, though her understanding was undoubtedly imperfect concerning the events of Christ’s crucifixion, Mary behaved in a most appropriate manner for someone who believed that Jesus was going to die on an unannounced date in the future. Christ said He would die. Mary anointed Him for burial.

This is a beautiful example of faith in future events altering behavior in the present. The use of her precious resources was directed by what the Lord Jesus declared would happen next. She acted in the present as if the prophecy of the future was true, because it was. That concept is stirring, and I want to draw some conclusions from it. But, first, consider a second account from Scripture.

Responding to the Promise of Prophecy

The children of Israel were custodians of a prophetic promise (Josh. 1:3–4; Gen. 17:4–8) that stretched the border of their land all the way northward to the Euphrates River. They crossed the Jordan River into the land of Canaan to



claim the promise and realize the prophecy.

Yet the history of Israel, first under the judges and then under the kings, is not a happy history of continuing victory. They left off following God on many occasions, failed to remember His promises to them, and behaved as if they did not believe what God had in store for them.

At a low point in national history, King Joash of the Northern Kingdom visited Elisha on his sick bed. The king, though not an example of godliness, was still the embodiment of the strength and resources of the people he led. And, more importantly, he was the leader permitted by God to be in that position. He had a relationship to the promises of God based on his position. He was a custodian of the prophecy concerning the conquest of the Promised Land (2 Kings 13:14–19).

Elisha cared deeply about the state of the nation. He told the king to take up arrows and “smite upon the ground” as a sign of God’s deliverance of Israel from Syria. The king smote only three times, and this angered Elisha. Elisha said, “Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it.” Why was this such an urgent matter to Elisha?

Remember, God promised that Israel would be able to conquer the Promised Land all the way to a northern border at the Euphrates River. For most of its history, Israel’s enemy to the north was Syria. The land of Syria lay between Israel and the Euphrates River, between God’s people and the fulfillment of God’s promise. People who care about God’s prophetic promises are moved by opportunities to see those promises realized. Elisha was one of those people, and he responded to Joash’s incomplete action as someone who was waiting on God in order to see the prophecy of Israel’s conquest fulfilled.

He was angry, I believe, not only because King Joash was missing military opportunities for Israel but also, most importantly, because King Joash was missing the opportunity to lead God’s people into the realization of God’s promise of conquering the land all the way to the Euphrates River (Josh.1:3–4).

Responding to Prophecy Today

If we take the two examples, that of Mary anointing Jesus and Elisha prophesying victory to Israel, I think we can develop a proper response to Revelation 5:9.

Like Mary, we should allocate present resources in light of future events. We should be asking not only what the proper understanding of prophecy is but also how that understanding alters my current behavior. How can we act now as if every people group on earth will have disciples of Christ in it? That is what Mary did, is it not? Her actions make perfect sense in light of what had not yet

This is a beautiful example of faith in future events altering behavior in the present.

occurred. How can we respond to Revelation 5:9 today, though that scene has not yet played out around the throne in heaven?

Like Elisha, we should be consumed with what God said could and would happen and should be looking for opportunities to see it accomplished. A church that believes it is commanded to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19) and that all nations will be represented around God’s throne (Rev. 5:9) will learn what it can about what God has already done and look for opportunities to make disciples out of people groups that do not appear

to have any. New Testament believers with an Elisha-like focus will bear the “all nations” promise in their minds, look for opportunities to see it fulfilled, and mourn when other concerns derail acts of faith in line with what Jesus says will happen.

The Saddest Page in the Bible

Forgive my overstating this, but one of the saddest pages in my Bible—if not the saddest—is a map in the back showing the territory of Israel under its various kings. Saul’s kingdom is outlined inside of the area designated as David’s kingdom. And that is good as far as it goes. At least progress is shown. But the sad part is the line showing Solomon’s kingdom. Invariably, the line is dotted on the northern border at the Euphrates River and there is an explanatory note at the bottom of the page: “Dotted line designates the area effectively under Solomon’s economic control.”

Now that line says two things. First, it is wonderful that God did all that through such a stiff-necked people. Second, how sad that God’s people had only economic control of the land for the lifetime of one of its kings instead of conquering to the fullness of God’s promises.

The church will accomplish its mission. The scene in Revelation 5:9 will take place. But I wonder—will our role need an explanatory note? Will people of other generations say, “Isn’t it wonderful that God accomplished so much with such a stiff-necked people?”

As custodians of Revelation 5:9, believers should be alert to opportunities to fill up the space around God’s throne with people out of every nation. We should use our resources and “smite the ground” on purpose toward fulfilling what God said will be. If we believe prophecy, our obedience to Matthew 28:19 should be informed by our faith in the prophecy of Revelation 5:9.

Matthew Barfield helped start a church and a Bible institute in Jordan. After returning to the States he stepped into the role of vice president of Field Ministries at International Partnership Ministries. He continues to lead the Field Ministries department at IPM and ministers extensively around the world in that capacity. He and his wife, Chrysta, have seven children.





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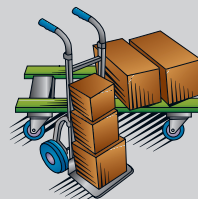
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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

Try Matthew Henry's *A Method for Prayer*

Each fall the leadership of the church at which I'm the senior pastor leaves town for a day and a half to spend devotional time reading and praying together. The church provides a book for each man, and I work up a brief presentation to introduce both the author and his writing. When his book is longer than we can complete at the retreat, we continue working through it in the months that follow.

Last year our book was one that had done my own prayer life an immense amount of good. It's entitled *A Method for Prayer*, authored by the famous English commentator Matthew Henry. What makes it particularly helpful is its unusual content and format.

The full title when Henry published it in 1710 was *A Method for Prayer with Scripture Expressions*. It's those *Scripture expressions* that make up almost the entirety of the book and which make it uncommon. Let me give an example of what Henry did.

Henry's work is essentially an extended outline of topics for prayer. The chapters are dedicated to the major prayer categories, such as *Adoration*, *Confession*, *Petitions*, etc. Each chapter is then subdivided. For instance, the chapter on *Petition and Supplication* has four subtopics. Each of these is further divided and then, in some cases, there are still further subpoints under those divisions. Take a look at a sample of how this works. I'm omitting all of the topics and subtopics except those that illustrate how many levels of subordination there can be.

Petition and Supplication

4. We must pray for the grace of God, and all the kind and powerful influences and operations of that grace.

C. More particularly we must pray for grace.

5) To sanctify our nature, to plant in us all holy principles and dispositions, and to increase every grace in us.

a) We must pray for faith.

Now comes the amazing part. Under each point, whether it is major or minor, Henry weaves together an astounding number of Scripture phrases. These phrases, what he calls *Scripture expressions*, are what he's suggesting that we pray back to God. Here's his combination of expressions under the last point in the sample above.

a) We must pray for faith.

Unto us (Lord) let it be given to believe; for the faith by which we are saved is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8).

Lord, increase our faith (Lk. 17:5), and perfect what is lacking in it (I Thess. 3:10), that we may be strong in faith, giving glory to God (Rom. 4:20).

Lord, give us so to be crucified with Christ, as that the life we may live in the flesh, we may live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us (Gal. 2:20); and so to bear about with us continually the dying of the Lord Jesus, as that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal bodies (II Cor. 4:10).

As we have received Christ Jesus, the Lord enable us so to walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith as we have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving (Col. 2:6–7).

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

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Let every word of thine profit us (Heb. 4:2), being mixed with faith, by which we receive thy testimony, and set to our seal that God is true (John 3:33).

We beseech thee work in us that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1), by which we may look above the things that are seen, that are temporal, and may look at the things that are not seen, which are eternal (II Cor. 4:18).

Enable us by faith to set the Lord always before us (Ps. 16:8), and to have our eyes ever towards him (Ps. 25:15), that we may act in everything, as seeing him that is invisible, and having a respect to the recompense of the reward (Heb. 11:26–27).

Let our hearts be purified by faith (Acts 15:9), and let it be our victory overcoming the world (I John 5:4). And let us be kept from fainting, by believing that we shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living (Ps. 27:13).

There are seventeen Scripture expressions underneath that one subpoint, a subpoint that is itself one of fifty (!) in this chapter on petitionary prayer. Altogether, this one chapter contains 418 Scripture expressions. You see the point of the book. Look again at the title: *A Method for Prayer with Scripture Expressions*.

Providential Preparation

In all, Henry's work on prayer incorporates over 2300 Scripture quotations. But what is even more significant is that Henry was generally taking their context into consideration when he included them where he did. I've been using his book for almost a year now, looking up the texts as I use them, and making marginal notations about their contexts. I frequently marvel at the spiritual insight behind his choices. But actually, I shouldn't be surprised.

From his childhood, Matthew Henry had been schooled to be a close student of the Word. His father, Philip, a widely respected Puritan pastor in his day, taught all of his children to read the Bible at an early age. Matthew could do so at three. Philip asked his children to write out in notebooks the passages they were impressed with. He also required them to take notes on the sermons they heard, as well as on his own daily expositions in their family worship. Then on Saturdays he would gather them together and ask them to relate to him and to one another what they remembered. *Gather up the fragments which remain*, he urged them, *that nothing might be lost*.

Little wonder, then, that on one occasion Matthew wrote in his journal, *I love the Word of God. I esteem it above all. . . . I desire it as the food of my soul. I greatly delight in it—both in the reading of it and in the hearing of it. . . . I love the ministers and messengers of the Word. I am often reading it. I rejoice in the good success of it*. That

personal testimony was penned when he was just eleven years old!

All during his adult ministry, Henry continued to feed on Scripture to an unusual degree, even when benchmarked by the lofty standards of his Puritan era. In his church's Lord's Day services he read and expounded a full chapter, morning and evening. During his twenty-five years at Chester he worked this way through the entire Old Testament once, Genesis to Numbers a second time, and the entire New Testament twice. This was in addition to his hour-long sermons!

Combined with this consistent weekly public reading, expounding, and preaching of Scripture, Henry led his congregation in pastoral prayers of about half an hour in each service. His biographer testified, *In the exercise of public and social prayer, Mr. Henry was almost unrivaled. There was no pompous finery, no abstruse and complex elaboration, no disgusting familiarity, no personal reproofs or compliments, no vain repetitions, no preaching. He prayed, and his style was reverent, humble, simple, and devout*. Undoubtedly, the chapters he had just read and expounded would have seasoned his praying.

I'm going somewhere with this, but before I do, let me add a little further information.

In 1704, at the age of forty-two, Henry began his notable commentary. By 1710 he had completed it up through the Song of Solomon. It was at that point that he took a hiatus—not from writing, but from writing the commentary.

What Henry turned his pen to during the interruption of his commentary was a book that would aid his church members as they prayed. You've already anticipated that the result was his *A Method for Prayer*. But here's where I've been headed with all of this biographical information about Henry's own study and prayer habits.

The fact that he wrote this book when he did means that all those Scripture quotations, grouped under appropriate headings skillfully taking into account their contexts, were the mature culmination of a lifetime of careful Scripture study and of nearly twenty-five years of systematic pulpit exposition conducted week by week and chapter by chapter. What further testifies to this fact is that he wrote the book in just two months. There's no possibility that he could have amassed well over two thousand Scripture expressions and arranged them under hundreds of divisions within just sixty days. Unquestionably, he drew upon written notes, probably written prayers, composed over what amounted to years and years of public, pastoral praying. The result is a book on prayer that is probably unique, truly one of a kind, in its decades of development, spiritual wisdom, and pastoral insight.

Purpose

What was Henry's intention? Why did he interrupt his commentary, the project he was anxious to complete before he died, in order to write this book on prayer?

Henry explained his purpose in an introduction

entitled "To the Reader." I'm going to include now a somewhat lengthy section of it, which I've edited slightly. But you'll still need to read slowly, perhaps more than once, to follow the eighteenth-century style.

When we join with others in prayer, who are our mouth to God [as they lead us in public prayer], our minds must attend them, by an intelligent believing concurrence with that which is the sense, and scope, and substance of what they say, and affections working in us suitable thereunto. And this the scripture directs us to signify, by saying "Amen," mentally if not vocally, "at their giving of thanks" (I Cor. 14:16). . . .

But he that is the mouth of others in prayer, whether in public or private, and therein uses that freedom of speech, that holy liberty of prayer which is allowed us (and which we are sure many good Christians have found by experience to be very comfortable and advantageous in this duty), ought not only to consult the workings of his own heart (though them principally, as putting most life and spirit into the performance), but the edification also of those that join with him: and both in matter and words should have an eye to that; and for service in that case I principally design this endeavor.

Here is Henry's principle design: to provide for his congregation *matter* (we would say, content) *and words* to use in public praying. This content, Henry says, should be such that those whom we lead in prayer can say "amen" at their hearing of it. It should also edify them.

But he goes on to point out that there are constraints that limit our praying in certain ways. One is the number of things we need. Another is our human infirmity, which can bear with prayer for only so long.

It is desirable that our prayers should be copious and full. Our burdens, cares, and wants are many, so are our sins and mercies. The promises are numerous and very rich; our God gives liberally, and hath bid us open our mouths wide, and he will fill them, will satisfy them with good things. . . . But since, at the same time, we cannot go over the tenth part of the particulars which are fit to be the matter of prayer, without making the duty burdensome to the flesh, which is weak, even where the spirit is willing (an extreme which ought carefully to be avoided), and without danger of entrenching upon other religious exercises, it will be requisite that what is but briefly touched upon at one time, should be enlarged upon at another time. And herein this storehouse of materials for prayer may be of use to put us in remembrance of our several errands at the throne of grace, that none may be quite forgotten.

In addition, Henry argues, there are considerations of appropriateness which must govern our spirits when we pray.

And it is requisite to the decent performance of the duty, that some proper method be observed, not only that what is said be good, but that it be said in its proper place and time; and that we offer not anything to the glorious Majesty of heaven and earth, which is confused, impertinent, and indigested. Care must be taken then more than ever, that we be not "rash with our mouth, nor hasty to utter anything before God," that we say not what comes uppermost, nor use such repetitions as evidence not the fervency, but the barrenness and slightness of our spirits; but that the matters we are dealing with God about being of such vast importance, we observe a decorum in our words, that they be well chosen, well weighed, and well placed.

The fact that he wrote this book when he did means that all those Scripture quotations, grouped under appropriate headings skillfully taking into account their contexts, were the mature culmination of a lifetime of careful Scripture study and of nearly twenty-five years of systematic pulpit exposition conducted week by week and chapter by chapter.

Consequently, Henry wished to provide prayer content that would be congregationally acceptable, edifying, concise, pungent, appropriate, and above all, scriptural. For that, there could be nothing better than Scripture expressions themselves.

As to the words and expressions we use in prayer . . . I would advise that the sacred dialect be most used, and made familiar to us and others in our dealing about sacred things; that language Christian people are most accustomed to, most affected with, and will most readily agree to; and where the Scriptures are opened and explained to the people in the ministry of the word, scripture language will be most intelligible, and the sense of it best apprehended. This is "sound speech that cannot be condemned," and those that are able to do it, may do well to enlarge by way of descant or paraphrase upon the scriptures they make use of; still speaking according to that rule, and comparing spiritual things with spiritual, that they may illustrate each other.

And yet Henry did not intend to stifle personal expression.

There are those, I doubt not, who, at some times, have their hearts so wonderfully elevated and

enlarged in prayer, above themselves; at other times, such a fixedness and fullness of thought, such a fervor of pious and devout affections, the product of which is such a fluency and variety of pertinent and moving expressions, and in such just and natural method, that then to have an eye to such a scheme as this, would be a hindrance to them, and would be likely to cramp and straiten them. If the heart be full of its good matter, it may make “the tongue as the pen of a ready writer.”

But this is a case that rarely happens, and ordinarily there is need of proposing ourselves a method in prayer, that the service may be performed decently and in order; in which yet one would avoid that which looks too formal. A man may write straight without having his paper ruled.

So what was Henry’s purpose? Simply stated, he wanted to provide his people with content and structure for their prayers that were so thoroughly scriptural, yet concise, that they would feel confident that their prayers would be heard. They could say, therefore, a convinced “Amen” when others prayed.

How remarkable. The man who gave the world its most widely read commentary also gave it one its most unusually helpful books on prayer.

Providential Timing

Henry never completed his commentary. Just four years after publishing *A Method for Prayer*, he was thrown from his horse on a journey between preaching engagements. Unable to complete the trip, he took to bed in a friend’s home along the way. In his swiftly weakening condition, he requested brothers and sisters in Christ to pray for him. *For now*, he said, *I cannot pray for myself*. He fell asleep in Jesus the next day, a Tuesday, about eight o’clock in the morning on June 22, 1714. He’d completed the commentary through Acts, but friends would have to use what additional notes he left behind in order to finish the New Testament.

In light of the timing of his homegoing, it appears providential that he left off the commentary when he did in order to write his book on prayer. Had he decided not to do so, we might have the benefit of his own comments on Romans or even up through 1 or 2 Corinthians. But we’d have forfeited a unique work on prayer.

Legacy

How remarkable. The man who gave the world its most widely read commentary also gave it one of its most unusually helpful books on prayer. Seldom has a minister been known equally for giving himself to both prayer and the ministry of the Word, but Henry deserves that recognition.

A Method for Prayer went through some thirty editions between 1712 and 1865. At some point it fell off the evangelical radar, but was reissued in 1993 by a Presbyterian pastor, J. Ligon Duncan, in an edition that includes three lectures Henry gave to a neighboring church two years before he died, on the subject of walking with God consistently all day long. The titles and texts were:

“Showing How to Begin Everyday with God”

My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord, in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up (Psalm 5:3).

“Showing How to Spend Every Day with God”

On thee do I wait all the day (Psalm 25:5).


“Showing How to Close Every Day with God”

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety (Psalm 4:8).

There are two printings of Duncan’s reissue, one by the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals and the other by Christian Focus Publications. The latter is the better printing in my estimation, mostly because the Scripture references are included in the text rather than in endnotes. Another plus is that Reformation Heritage Books sells it deeply discounted. If you access it on the Reformation Heritage Books website, take a look around. There are many historic titles available there at little more than cost.

An Approach

What works best for me is to select a subpoint or two from a chapter and then to look up the Scripture expressions in their contexts. As I mentioned earlier, in my copy I like to make marginal notes of anything which I find helps illuminate or underscore the importance of each expression. Then I pray through the point and its Scriptures, sometimes pleading them just as they’re written, other times enlarging upon them in light of their contexts. I’ve found it helpful to dip in and out of the various chapters rather than attempting to proceed successively through a single chapter’s subpoints day after day. It would take so long to complete an entire chapter in that fashion that one would be praying only adorations, or confessions, or intercessions for many weeks before being able to move on to a second category of content.

I heartily recommend to you *A Method for Prayer with Scripture Expressions*. Several of our church leaders testify that it has changed the way they pray. Perhaps it might also be, for you, the help you’ve been looking for to take your prayer life to a higher plane. 

Dr. Mark Minnick serves as senior pastor at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina. To access Dr. Minnick’s sermons, go to <http://www.mountcalvarybaptist.org/pages/sermons/>.

Bring . . . the Books

Pastors at Greater Risk
H. B. London Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman

More than 90% of people entering ministry quit, burn out, get fired, die, or suffer a disqualifying moral failure before retirement. Approximately 1500 pastors leave the ministry each month because of moral failure, spiritual burnout, or strife in their church. It is because of statistics such as these that *Pastors at Greater Risk* was written by H. B. London Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman in 2003. It is an update from *Pastors at Great Risk* written in 1993.

H. B. London is a fourth-generation minister who had thirty-one years as a pastor before becoming vice president of ministry outreach/pastoral ministries for Focus on the Family. Neil Wiseman serves churches as a consultant and preacher. He is a veteran of twenty years in the pastorate. The authors seek to help pastors find fulfillment in their future ministries. The goal is for pastors to “become whole individuals who balance being and doing, family and church, person and profession, worship and work—wounded healers who allow themselves to be healed.”

This book has been a personal encouragement to me as I minister and as I have the opportunity to minister to other pastors. It is a practical book that every minister will be able to identify with and see himself in the challenges it describes. The book not only identifies the risks we pastors face but gives many practical ways to overcome those risks and be victorious in our service for the King of kings.

The book is divided into three sections that deal with the risks pastors face and have shared with the authors. In section 1 they explore in detail where the risks come from. In section 2 they investigate the risks pastors face right in their own families. In section 3 they look at the risks confronting pastors in their inner, personal lives. Throughout the book the authors and experts they consult try to offer solutions for avoiding and overcoming the risks.


Section 1 details twenty hazards that we must deal with as pastors. Many of these cause great damage because they blindside us without warning. Part of the answer to these hazards is to recognize and anticipate them. This section will help you do this. The section asks the question, “Who Decides What You Do?” The authors include urgent lessons about expectations. Expectations have destroyed many a ministry and minister. This section concludes by giving eight suggestions for reshaping your church’s expectations.

Section 2 is a great encouragement to the pastor and his family. It includes an interview with Gordon and Gail MacDonald about avoiding the hazards in ministry marriage. Gordon is very transparent about how he almost destroyed their marriage and the lessons he wants to pass on to other ministers. A chapter on the pastor’s wife includes conversations with seven pastors’

wives. The section concludes with a chapter on the pastor’s children and their relationship to ministry. The greatest ministry we can have is to our families. They are the greatest source of future ministers. They are able to approach the ministry with years of experience by living in the parsonage and seeing the example of their parents.

Section 3 covers how to recover from stress and burnout and includes a conversation with Archibald Hart. Help and healing for wounded healers is discussed with Bob and Sandy Sewell. Dr. Richard Swenson gives one of the most helpful chapters in the book entitled “Margins: New Ways to Manage Your Priorities.” There is a chapter on an issue that we don’t like to consider—“Online Sex or Off: Finding Freedom from Sexual Addictions.” Then the authors discuss pursuing and practicing personal holiness with an interview with Jerry Bridges. The section and book close with a very helpful chapter on twelve steps to a more effective ministry.

The chapter on margins is especially helpful to the busy pastor. Far too often we find ourselves stretched too thin and ready to break. We feel like a juggler who is juggling too many things but is afraid to let go of any of them. Crisis situations come to us and we are already at the end of our abilities and we fail to be able to help as we would like to. “Margin is something held in reserve for contingencies or unanticipated situations. Margin is the gap between rest and exhaustion, the space between breathing freely and suffocating. It is the leeway we once had between ourselves and our limits.” How many times do you find yourself just trying to get by because you have no energy or enthusiasm to do your best for the Lord and the people He has called you to minister to every day? Pastors need to keep their schedule flexible enough so they can make room for a crisis. This chapter also has an excellent discussion on contentment.

Chapter 12 puts it all together in a format that is easy to put in place, giving the answers that have been revealed to be lacking in the minister’s life. These twelve steps will give the pastor plenty to work on but will also give the help he needs from pastors who’ve been there. 

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

Dale Seaman has pastored Calvary Baptist Church of Porterville, California, for twenty-three years. He was an assistant pastor for twelve years before this and had the blessing of growing up in a pastor’s home. He and his wife, Jane, also seek to encourage other pastors and wives through a ministry called “Yoke Bearers,” which consists of free weeklong retreats. You may contact him at cbcseaman@att.net.

"For the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10).

Does 1 Timothy 6:10 really teach that the love of money "is the root of all evil"? In order to answer that question we must first note some related issues regarding the context.

Although careful commentators and teachers have noted that the Scriptures do not condemn money, only the love of money, it is still quite common for some to say that money itself is the root of all evil. In fact, the early church was blessed with numerous wealthy benefactors who opened their homes to apostles, missionaries, entire churches, and helped finance the ministry. In this passage Paul does not condemn riches or money, but he condemns the desire for riches (v. 9), the "love of money," and the coveting after or longing for money (v. 10).

1. "They that will be rich" (6:9) well expresses the idea of the original; the verb expresses a settled decision of the will and the mind to pursue wealth—generally as a top priority and at almost any cost.
2. "The love of money" represents one word in Greek—literally "love of silver"—and the word occurs only here in the NT. All humans must deal with money, but it is not necessary to "love" money as a high or even the highest priority.
3. The coveting of money represents a vivid Greek verb that means "to stretch out, lean to or forward, desire, or long for." The picture is the straining of every fiber of one's being in the pursuit of wealth.

All Christian workers and dedicated Christians have seen numerous examples of such; sadly enough, Paul makes a connection in this text with professing Christian workers themselves who become enamored with success, wealth, and prosperity. As the culmination of Paul's discussion of false (literally "heterodox," teaching a doctrine of a different kind, 6:3) teachers in 6:3–5, he says they mistakenly suppose "that godliness is gain." The reading "gain is godliness" found in some English translations must be clarified. In the original, "godliness," having the article, must be the subject, and "gain, means of gain" must be the predicate nominative. Many have erred in this way by thinking that Christian profession or ministry is a means of gain or prosperity. Literally millions of professing Christians today, especially in Third-World countries, have become enmeshed in the "Health, Wealth, and Prosperity Gospel."

Surely Scriptures give us many examples of the

devastating effects of the love of money in the lives of both unbelievers and believers: the rich man in Nathan's parable who stole the poor man's one ewe lamb (2 Sam. 12), the rich young ruler who turned from Christ (Matt. 19), the rich fool who neglected his soul's needs (Luke 12), the rich man who scorned the beggar Lazarus (Luke 16), Judas who betrayed Jesus (Matt. 26:14–16), Ananias and Sapphira who lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5), and the rich oppressors of the poor in James 2. But such examples only scratch the surface of the devastating effects known and experienced by many who are the victims of those guilty of the love of money. Love of money destroys life and crushes everything; it lures nations into battle and leads men to murders, plundering, family divisions, spousal abuse, child neglect and mistreatment, gambling addictions, sex trafficking, slavery, the personal loss of one's eternal soul—and the list goes on and on.

However, is "love of money" really the root of all evil? One would be hard pressed to prove that it was the root cause of the sin of Eve and Adam. David's motivation for his sin with Bathsheba was hardly due to the love of money. Therefore, how can Paul's statement be justified? An understanding of a small but significant point of Greek grammar can help solve this problem.

Daniel B. Wallace in his *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (265) has an extended discussion of the in-articular word "root." The noun without the article can be: (1) truly indefinite; (2) articular; or (3) qualitative, describing the quality of the word and not pointing to a particular "root." Wallace correctly favors the *qualitative* use of the noun without the article in this place; the meaning would then be "the love of money is the root of—i.e., it motivates—all evils, or better, all sorts of evil." Wallace notes that the indefinite usage of the noun without the article is the least attested usage; therefore, Paul does not mean that the love of money is "a root of" all sorts of evil. Nor is (2) a better choice, for if the noun were definite here, Paul would be saying either that (a) the love of money is the only root of all evils, or (b) that it is the greatest root of all evils. Choosing the definite usage of the un-articular noun would bring Paul's statement into conflict with passages pointing out other sources of evil and also would conflict with daily experience. *The qualitative usage does not comment on anything else that might motivate or produce evil, just that the love of money does do so.* "For evils of every kind are rooted in the love of money." Yet we will miss the point made by Paul if we do not acknowledge the stress in the text on the word "root" by its first position in the sentence. ☞

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

Does the Great Commission include the Jewish people? Oftentimes it is implied or stated outright: “The Jews had their chance; they rejected it, and now God is working with the Gentiles.” Or, “Jews today have the same opportunity as Gentiles to accept the gospel, so no special effort needs to be made to bring the gospel to them.” Still others have gone so far as to state, “The Jews rejected the gospel and will continue to reject it, so there is no reason to waste time and resources evangelizing the Jewish people.” Other Christians, recognizing that God does have a future for the Jewish people, say that “all Israel shall be saved” when the Messiah returns (Rom. 11:25–26). In the meantime, they feel that we should bring the gospel to the Gentiles and “leave the fate of the Jews in the hands of God.” A more recent variation on these views has been called the “Dual Covenant” or “Two Covenant” Theory. It states, “God made a covenant with the Jewish people. Jews are saved on the basis of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, while Gentiles are saved on the basis of the New Covenant. Therefore, there is no longer a need to bring the gospel to the Jewish people.”

Sadly, these erroneous views are gaining popularity among many Christians. Across our nation, and perhaps the world, there is a lack of good biblical teaching regarding why the church must evangelize the Jewish people.

Some years ago, a minister of the Church of England attended an early morning prayer meeting on behalf of Israel in an East London Jewish Mission. Coming out on the street, he met another minister, who had attended a special service at St. Paul’s Cathedral on the anniversary of the salvation of the apostle Paul. After greeting each other, the second minister asked the other where he had been. He told him he had attended a Jewish mission meeting, upon which the second minister showed some surprise that his friend should believe in the possibility of Jews coming to faith. The minister who had attended the mission service asked the other where he had been and was told that he had attended a special service in honor of Paul at the cathedral bearing his name. The minister who had attended the Jewish service asked, “Who exactly was Paul?” The hesitating reply was, “I suppose you would consider him a believing Jew.” “What music did they have at the service?” “Why Mendelssohn’s *St. Paul*, of course.” “Who was Mendelssohn?” “Why, a German.” “No, he was not, he was a believing Jew,” was the reply. The minister who did not seem to believe in the possibility of Jews being saved had been in a church dedicated to the memory of a Jewish believer, attending a service in honor of this rabbi’s acceptance of the Messiah, had been listening to music composed by a Jewish believer, and was talking

to a fellow minister, who was the Rev. Aaron Bernstein, a believing Jewish pastor.¹

In discussing the salvation of the Jewish people, C. S. Lewis once said, “In a sense, the saved Jew is the only normal human being in the world.” He continued, “Everyone else is, from one point of view, a special case dealt with under emergency conditions.”²

Who Is a Jew?

The hard part, however, is determining who is a “Jew.” Automatic Israeli citizenship is granted to any Jew under the 1950 Law of Return. In January of 1970 the Israeli Supreme Court, by a margin of one vote, again settled the question by deciding that the term referred to a nationality and not necessarily a religion. Then Israel’s Knesset (Parliament) enacted a new law at the same time that defines a Jew as either one born of a Jewish mother or a convert to Judaism. This supposedly overturned the Supreme Court decision.³ However, according to former Rabbi Shaul (Saul), a Jew is one who not only can verify his physical descent but has undergone a spiritual change of heart (Rom. 2:28–29).

On the eighth day after the birth of a Jewish boy, a ceremony takes place that unites him with all other Jewish males in a bond of commitment to the God of Israel. It is a rite of passage so important that, if not obeyed, it is seen as a rejection of Judaism itself. It is called the Covenant of Circumcision (*Brit Milah* or *Bris*).

Jewish fathers today often use the services of a *Mohel*, who is specially trained in the surgical procedure and has thorough knowledge of Jewish law. During a brief ceremony attended by family members, the infant is held by a person of honor, called the *Sandek*. Blessings are given as baby is brought in, and prayers are recited by the *Mohel*, *Sandek*, and the father. It is at this time that the child is given his formal Hebrew name. After the surgery, blessings over wine (*kiddush*) are recited. Prayers are offered with the desire that the child will be fruitful and come to love and obey the Law (Torah) by performing good deeds (*mitzvot*).

Moses taught that fulfilling Torah requires the circumcision of the heart (Deut. 10:6). The Holy Spirit (*Ruach Hakodesh*) does the work of the *Mohel* performing spiritual surgery in the heart at the moment of salvation. Circumcision, as Paul describes, is not simply the receiving of an external mark on the body, but it is the life of God Himself planted in the inner man. The law is

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

Charles Spurgeon

written on the fleshy tables of the heart by the Spirit of the living God, and the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus frees the believer from the law of sin and death.⁴

A messianic Jewish evangelist told about a time when he was in Boston speaking to a group of believers and unbelievers meeting together in a private home. After the meeting a very prim and serious lady came up to him rather perturbed, and said to him, "Sir, I am not at all interested in what you have to say. You talk about this gospel as though I needed something. I want you to know that I am from one of the finest families in Boston, and our people have been here in this country from the beginning. My ancestors came over on the *Mayflower*, and I have a great ancestry." He looked at her, and said, "Lady, you have an ancestry? Why, you don't know what an ancestry is! You trace your ancestry back to the *Mayflower*, some three hundred years ago. I have an ancestry that goes back to Abraham, some four thousand years ago. I am a Jew. But my ancestry did me no good at all!"⁵ Clearly, both Jew and Gentile must be born again.

Reaching Israel's Lost Sheep


Without question, God has called the church to reach out to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (see Rom. 11:11, 30–31). When believers obey, God does some amazing things. The following are just a few examples.

Richard Wurmbrand, author of the book *Tortured for Christ*, was a hardened atheist. But then an old carpenter up in the mountains of Romania prayed, "My God, I have served you on earth and I wish to have my reward in heaven. But I wish my reward should be that I not die until I bring a Jew to Christ, because Jesus was from the Jewish people." One day, Wurmbrand was irresistibly drawn to the village (out of twelve thousand other villages) which had no Jews. Wurmbrand later noted that the old carpenter, seeing Wurmbrand was a Jew, "wooded me as never a beautiful girl had been courted." He prayed for hours for his salvation and gave him a Bible to read. And Wurmbrand was finally saved.⁶

Years ago, Mr. Reichart, missionary to the Jews in Cairo, Egypt, was working in his Bible bookstore one day when he had a visit from a small group of *Sephardic* (Middle Eastern) Jews. They had somehow heard of his bookshop and came for copies of the *Tenach* (Old Testament) in Hebrew. Reichart gladly supplied them; but prior to closing the box, with earnest prayer and without a word, he also placed a Hebrew New Covenant (New Testament), hidden with the *Tenach*. The group left, and after some time passed, some men returned, bringing a letter. The letter stated how highly Mr. Reichart's first visitors valued the copies of *Tenach*, and how surprised they were to find another book in the holy tongue, about which they had never known. The Person of whom it spoke never crossed their knowledge before,

and as they read of Him in the holy words of the book, enclosed with their Scripture, with one mind they had come to the conclusion that He was Israel's Messiah.⁷

In 1882 a Russian Jew by the name of Joseph Rabinowitz was sent from Russia to what was then called Palestine by other Russian Jews to purchase land for them there, with the hope that they would someday make *Aliyah* (immigrate to Israel) and begin a new home there. Prior to leaving on his trip, he was told by someone that the best guidebook to the land of Israel and specifically Jerusalem, was the New Testament. So as Rabinowitz traveled up and down in Israel he made frequent reference to the New Testament. On one particular afternoon he went up on the Mount of Olives overlooking the city of Jerusalem and began to read the Gospel writers' account of Jesus of Nazareth entering the city. As he was looking at these various passages dealing with Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, the Spirit of God began to work in his heart. He looked up and viewed the city; then pausing, he asked himself, "Why are my people so persecuted and so cast out?" And suddenly the answer burst upon his thinking: "Because you've rejected your Messiah." That afternoon upon the Mount of Olives, Joseph Rabinowitz lifted his eyes to heaven and cried, "My Lord and my God," and placed his faith in Jesus of Nazareth as his Messiah and Savior from sin. Rabinowitz traveled back to Russia and founded a Jewish synagogue for his people. He placed a sign over the door on the outside taken from Peter's words on Pentecost: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).⁸

Satan hates God and is waging a cosmic war. It is his bid for God's throne. His strategy is to prevent God's redemptive plan, of which Israel is key. It is through the seed of Abraham that worldwide blessing flows (Gen. 12:3; Rom. 11:12, 15). Therefore, Satan is behind all anti-Semitism. He hates what God loves and is determined to do all possible to derail the plan of God. Have we considered that by ignoring the evangelizing of the Jew, the Devil's purposes are subtly being served? "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is [present tense] the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). 

¹ Michael P. Green, ed., *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 205–6.

² Ibid., 206.

³ Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations* (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley & Sons, Inc.), 630.

⁴ Steve Herzig, *Jewish Culture & Customs* (Bellmawr: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc.), 48–51.

⁵ <http://www.raystedman.org/romans1>

⁶ Tan, 640.

⁷ <http://www.moreillustrations.com/Illustrations/jew>

⁸ Tan, 639–40.

Jim Bickel is a church planter and pastors Bethel Baptist Fellowship in Brooklyn, New York. He and his wife, Nancy, have been married for nearly forty years. They have seven children, five of whom are married, and fourteen grandchildren.

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Only a great revival of reverence for God and the authority of His Word could stem the tide of anarchy breaking around us. —W. Wilbert Welch in 1966

May God help all His sons and daughters to be faithful in service . . . anticipating His soon and sure return so that we may stand before His person with boldness and confidence, not shamed away from His person (1 John 2:28). —Bryce B. Augsburger

What the mother sings to the cradle goes all the way down to the coffin. —Henry Ward Beecher

The second coming of Christ is the imperative of missions in the divine program of God!—Mitchell S. Seidler

THIS SAME JESUS! The second coming of Christ is founded on, grounded in, and bounded by these words. The Jesus who ascended is the One Who will descend. —Paul Tassell

Thou canst not pass from thy death-bed a sinner, and appear at the great assizes a saint. —Unknown

Jesus Christ's teaching never beats about the bush. —Oswald Chambers

For every prophecy on the First Coming of Christ, there are eight on Christ's Second coming. —Paul Lee Tan

I do not know what the heart of a bad man is like. But I do know what the heart of a good man is like. And it is terrible. —Ivan Turgenev

He was a self-made man who owed his lack of success to nobody. —Joseph Heller

You must act as you believe, for you will eventually believe as you act. —Anonymous

Discipline is a reminder that we are sinners by nature. —David Castle

Some of you have just enough Christianity to be miserable in a nightclub and not enough to be happy in a prayer meeting. —Donald Grey Barnhouse

The nicest thing about dictating a letter is that you can use words you don't know how to spell. —Unknown

Tell me with whom you are contending, and I'll tell you who you are. —Goethe

Naturalism is warring against supernaturalism—and winning the battle. —W. Wilbert Welch

If from infancy you treat children as gods, they are liable to act as devils. —P. D. James

I have come to the conclusion that none of us in our generation feels as guilty about sin as we should or as our forefathers did. I think this basically is the problem of living in a psychologically oriented age. —Francis A. Schaeffer

"Father" is the Christian name for God. —J. I. Packer

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



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10 Categories of Truth We Teach and Preach

David C. Innes

Much confusion prevails in Fundamental circles about what is fundamental to our Christian faith and therefore over what we must separate. This is the first of three charts to be presented that should lend some clarity to this issue.

The categories of truth listed below should never be taught or preached with the same level of authority. Truth must be preached out of the Scriptures, not into the Scriptures. It is dishonest to preach our own logical conclusions and speculations with the same “thus saith the LORD” as we would with truth which is very clear. Our preaching and teaching should be confined for the most part to columns 1 and 2. The truths and commands of the column 1 category constitute “the faith” referred to as such many times throughout the New Testament (Acts 6:7; 14:22; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 4:7; Jude 1:3, et al.).

	APPLICATIONS	VERY CLEAR BIBLICAL STATEMENTS	LOGICAL CONCLUSIONS based on <i>very clear</i> biblical statements	SPECULATION— informed and uninformed personal opinions	PETTY PERSONAL PREFERENCE
1	As to doctrine this becomes	A conviction—a belief for which we would die	A preference though strongly believed	A mere preference	No obligation whatever
2	Essence of doctrinal belief	Belief of a clear statement	A matter of interpretation	A matter of supposition	Totally immaterial
3	As to practice this becomes	A divine command with no option	An option though strongly believed	Totally optional	No obligation whatever
4	Level of importance	Absolutely essential to the Christian faith	Not fundamental or essential but very important	Generally, not very important	A hindrance rather than a help
5	Essence of practice	Necessary obedience	A sincere desire to obey	A desire to be sincere	Totally immaterial
6	Denial of this category of truth is	Heresy or willful rebellion against God	A disagreement of some consequence	A mere disagreement	Not worth talking about
7	Biblical command that applies to denial	Command of repudiation and separation	Command of love and harmony	Command of love and unity	Command to avoid foolish questions and contentions
8	Biblical response to denial of this category	Denunciation and separation; confrontation	Toleration and Christian charity; accommodation	Toleration and Christian charity	Ignore
9	At issue is	Separation	Participation	Unity	Nothing
10	Level of fellowship agreement allows	Personal fellowship and limited church fellowship	Closer church fellowship and joint participation	Unlimited fellowship and participation	Has a negative impact on fellowship
11	Level of fellowship lack of agreement allows	None	Limited	Unlimited	Has a negative impact on fellowship
12	Agreement of belief indicates	A true Christian brother	A Christian brother of like faith and order	A rare find	Doesn't exist
13	Ultimate significance	Defines a Fundamentalist	Defines denominational distinctives	Defines denominational idiosyncrasies	Defines personal idiosyncrasies



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THE STORY OF DAVID, PART 2:

This chapter is one of the most familiar stories in the Bible. I want to rely on your familiarity with this story and approach this episode in David's life a little differently. This column will double as a kind of workshop on how to read and understand narrative—a type of literature that dominates the Bible. Not only is this story a familiar one, but it is also classic narrative drama.

Say you go to a performance of a Shakespeare play. The usher hands you a copy of the program that includes a cast of characters and a synopsis of the plotline. Then you watch the play and listen to the dialogue. The drama may attempt to provide some explanation or historical perspective on an event of the past; but mostly a drama is about *people*—what they do, and why they do what they do. And virtually the only indicator of that is *what they say*. In drama and narrative, dialogue is crucial. So let's do this like a play—investigate the program, familiarize ourselves with the cast of characters, work through the plotline, then pay attention to the dialogue and see if we get the point.

The Cast

Who are the principle characters and what is their relationship to the action and to each other?

The *narrator* provides the perspective from which we are to view the story as well as the details we need to know to process the story and its meaning. In biblical narrative he functions as the divine perspective on the story; he is the voice of God, and his analysis and explanation, when he gives them, are God's analysis and perspective.

The *protagonist* is the central character most indispensable to the plot; the protagonist may be good or bad, but the story is primarily about him or her. There can be more than one protagonist, but generally it's more accurate to say there's only one protagonist *at a time*. For example, though we're focusing on this as part of David's story (1 Sam. 16–1 Kings 1), it also furnishes a window into Saul's story (1 Sam. 9–31). We might initially think of David and Goliath as protagonists in this story. The story is about David, certainly, but there are other factors to consider.

Antagonists are the main adversaries or forces arrayed against the protagonist. In this story, the main antagonist is clearly Goliath. But Eliab also functions in this role in terms of his relationship to his little brother. What about Saul? He initially tells David he can't possibly do this, but his relationship to David in the story is not a hostile or adversarial one. There's another kind of character.

Foils are characters in a story who function as a point of comparison or contrast to another character. Saul poses a significant point of contrast to David. He's physically the biggest in Israel and, more importantly, he's the king, the leader; if anyone should be out there fighting Goliath, he should. On the other hand, Jonathan (18:1–4) functions as a sympathetic point of comparison with David. We know from previous accounts that Jonathan has acted similarly both in terms of courage and in terms of his loyalty to and confidence in Yahweh. Jonathan is a character in transition, because this is a big story, of which 1 Samuel 17 is only a small part. He will become a protagonist with David as the narrative develops.

Interestingly, when you pay close attention to the chronology as it unfolds in the narrative, you discover that Jonathan and David are not contemporaries at all. Jonathan is already an experienced military leader. Reliable OT historians (such as Merrill and Kaiser) note that Jonathan is about *twenty years older* than David (perhaps a little more). That casts a very different light on the nature of their developing friendship; Jonathan is more like an uncle or older brother, yet there is a kind of mutual mentoring going on between them.

Finally, *agents* are relatively minor but necessary characters who facilitate action in the story. Jesse sends David. Soldiers inform David. Abner officially presents David to Saul.

The Plot

Crises are news; non-crises are not. I can tell you about how I make my oven-roasted barbecue or relate my recent trip to Canada; those are "reports," but they're not really stories. Stories and dramas generally progress in a fairly standardized, predictable pattern.

Exposition (17:1–3)

Let's go back to the theater for a moment. When you start reading the synopsis in a program, the first thing it will usually do is lay out the setting—the year or era, the historical context, the circumstances in play when the curtain rises and the story begins. That's called the *exposition*. It sets the stage for the action of the story. But before long, something happens. At least it better; that's what you paid your money for.

Crisis (17:4–11)

All narrative drama revolves around *conflict*, *crisis*, a *problem*. Have you ever wondered why so much space is given to describing the size of Goliath and the weight of

DAVID'S HEART PUBLICLY DISPLAYED (1 SAMUEL 17)

his weapons (17:4–7)? On one level, that *is* the problem! To make sure you appreciate the magnitude of the problem, the writer of this story takes time to magnify its dimensions in detail. But the words “strike, smite, kill” and “defy, reproach, insult” (17:8–10) also describes the crisis in spiritual-theological terms as well. And 17:11 clarifies in no uncertain terms that this is a *problem*. The point is not just *that* the conflict or crisis is resolved, but *how* it is resolved and what that says about the characters involved or the progress of the larger storyline.

Rising Action (17:12–39)

As the story progresses it gets more complex. Things will get worse and less certain before they get better. A good drama sustains suspense as it moves toward climax and resolution. The spotlight follows David around the stage. We're reminded of the crisis (17:23–24). And notice how much of the story is dialogue (17:17–18, 25–30, 32–39). Why? Because that's what tells you what's going on between people and inside people; people are at the heart of all history and what we learn from it.

Resolution (17:40–51)

The threat is removed, the crisis averted. But there's a lot of talk surrounding it, including the third of David's speeches (17:26, 34–37, 45–47). All of them drip with theology—not theoretical, abstract, armchair theology, but the very practical theology of David's personal belief in God. Descriptive details are still important as well, because they magnify the contrast we are meant to see between Goliath and David in terms of size, strength, experience, weaponry, and confidence. On the front end, the thought that David would win this battle is laughable. *That* he did is not the point; *why* he did, and what it says about him, that's the point.

Dénouement (17:52–18:5)

The conclusion ties up the loose ends and rehearses the final outcome of key characters. The Philistines were defeated (17:52–54), David was reintroduced to Saul (17:55–58), a relationship between David and Jonathan was born (18:1–4), and David was exalted by Saul (18:5) . . . for the time being.

The Dialogue

Dialogue reveals the traits and motivations of the actors. In a sense, the dialogue is more important than the “action.” When we think of this story we tend to remember it as David whacking Goliath; we concentrate on the fight

itself. But how many verses describe the actual battle? Only two (17:48–49)! It takes longer to read it than it took to happen. The rest of the climax is dialogue and description. So learn to listen to the dialogue in a narrative. Out of fifty-eight verses, twenty-eight verses record people talking.

The core of David's confidence is expressed in 17:36–37—in effect, “God has delivered me before, and God will surely deliver me now because His glory is at stake.” It is based on a personal, experiential knowledge of who God is and what He can do. But the focus is on Yahweh, not David. “He does not ascribe his escapes to luck or skill or audacity; *Yahweh* delivered me. Looking back in faith enables him to look forward in faith” (Davis). Moreover, David's anger is expressed consistently against the blasphemy of Goliath, not self-righteously against his failing elders and his quailing countrymen. That the crisis itself (and its resolution) is not merely a military one but a theological one rings out clearly in David's battle speech (17:45–47). It is in listening to the dialogue, and especially David, that one rightly interprets the action, the significance of this event, the meaning of the story—and the heart of this newly anointed leader of God's people.

The Message

If we are focusing on how the narrative has been structured and presented to us, if we are really listening to the voice of the Narrator, the core of the message ought to be pretty clear: *God can do the impossible through weak people who seek His glory, remember who He is, and trust Him.*

The point for the larger narrative, however, is that everyone sees David's heart and what kind of man he is—his passion, his motivation, his courage, and his confidence in God. There is no substitute for experiential heart acquaintance with God. David reflected back on the lion and bear incidents and applied God's faithful protection and strength to his seemingly impossible present circumstances. It seems David is doing the same thing in Psalm 27:1–3, reflecting back on *this* experience (and others) and applying it to his present needs.

It should be no surprise when the next chapter notes that everyone loved David—Jonathan (18:1–3), all Israel and Judah (18:16), Saul's daughter Michal (18:20, 28), and all Saul's servants (18:22). Interestingly, though, the first person said to love David was Saul (16:21). But that's about to change.

The Purifying Power of the Blessed Hope

Continued from page 13

that certainty. Remember, we will be “exposed” for who we are: then, some will approach with “confidence”¹² while others will “shrink away in shame.”¹³ The reality of that event demands our vigilance. Those who “have been born of God” must live in moral obedience. God’s child cannot persist in unrepentant sin, “for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (3:4–10). John demands that we walk in ethical obedience as we await the certain future (3:11–19). Thus, when we anticipate His appearing, we “[purify ourselves], even as he is pure” (3:3). This is the evidence of authentic faith.

Faith in the blessed hope will express itself in two realities that inspire godly living. When we reflect on our privilege as God’s children, sharing His likeness and benefiting from His gracious love, we are moved to “abide in him.” Then as we anticipate His certain “appearing,” recalling how we will be exposed and our works weighed, we are compelled to “[purify ourselves] even as he is pure.” Faith changes how we live. If it does not, it is not faith. As you contemplate your sonship and His appearing, what needs to change in your life? “Now we are children . . . soon he shall appear.” May all of God’s dear children live in light of these realities by responding to the “purifying power of the blessed hope.”

Ron Webber serves on pastoral staff at Tri-City Baptist Church in Independence, Missouri, where he has ministered since 1999.



¹ Martin H. Manser, ed. *The Westminster Collection of Christian Quotations* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2001), 302.

² In the first century the word “substance” described a “title deed” (Moulton & Milligan, “ὑπόστασις,” *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, reprint ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985], 659–60).

³ John’s view of the believer’s hope as focusing in the present and future supports modern paradigms of God’s kingdom. See Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical*

Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 381–85; G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1993), 54–67.

⁴ This is the third of six uses of the diminutive in his short work: 1 John 2:1, 12, 28; 3:18; 4:4; 5:21.

⁵ C. H. Spurgeon regarded this phrase as “a genuine fragment of Inspired Scripture . . . dropped by our older translators . . . too precious to be lost.” He preached the sermon “*And We Are*”—*A Jewel from the Revised Version* on July 19, 1885, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Early examples of geographically distributed texts affirm Spurgeon’s *Jewel* (P74^{vid} A B C 33 81 614 1739 it^h, ⁶⁵ vg, et al).

⁶ Differing roots for “child” express distinct senses. This “gives prominence to the physical and outward aspects of parentage”; i.e., physical likeness (Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, “τέκνον”).

⁷ The perfect tense “describes an event that, completed in the past . . . has results existing in the present” (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 573).

⁸ “The basic meaning is ‘of what origin, from what country?’ . . . [It is] an exceptional, prodigiously generous love, coming from heaven; its nature is divine” (TLNT, “ποταπός,” 3:144).

⁹ Moulton & Milligan, “παρουσία,” *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, 497.

¹⁰ “We must all appear before the judgment seat” (2 Cor. 5:10) means “not in the sense of a simple ‘showing up’ but in the sense of being laid bare, for all the world to see the true nature of [our] character” (Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, Vol. 40 of *Word Biblical Commentary* [Waco: Word Books, 1986], n.p.).

¹¹ A full 23 of 112 occurrences in our NT appear in this small letter. We must “abide” in Him.

¹² Originally “freedom-of-speech,” i.e., an “outspokenness, frankness, plainness.” The term describes “a state of . . . fearlessness, esp. in the presence of persons of high rank” (BDAG, “παρησία,” 781).

¹³ From a root meaning “ugly, disgraceful, or disfigured.” See NIDNTT, “Shame, Respect,” 3:562. The verb means either “to have a sense of shame” or more likely “to be put to shame” (BDAG, “αἰσχύνω,” 30). The latter sense recalls the sober warning of Jesus; cf. Mark 8:38.

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Maintaining a Position

Carole Hulslander has served as the pastor of the Still Waters United Methodist Church until recently. Hulslander claims that she was removed from her position and that her congregation is being removed from their facilities because of her call on her denomination to maintain the denomination's long-held positions on homosexuality and marriage. She particularly places the blame on the United Methodist's North Georgia Conference.

Hulslander maintains that she was only calling on the denomination to maintain previously held positions found in the United Methodist Book of Discipline. She has now begun a GoFundMe page to help the displaced congregation find a new home. At the time of the writing of this article, the page has attracted over \$5000 in donations.

This article can be referenced at: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/united-methodist-regional-body-accused-of-bullying-pastor-for-supporting-traditional-marriage-138690/>.

The Girl Scouts and Gender Confusion

While this is not the first time the Girl Scouts have made poor decisions about gender issues, a recent decision has demonstrated that their moral compass is completely broken. Though to be taken on a case-by-case basis, the Girl Scouts will now admit boys who identify themselves as girls into their ranks. In a written statement, the Girl

Scouts' "Chief Girl Expert," Andrea Bastiani Archibald, stated that the Girl Scouts exist to serve all girls, no matter what they look like or their biological gender. The assumptions made are staggering.

On the Girl Scouts FAQ page the following can be read: "Girl Scouts is proud to be the premiere leadership organization for girls in the country. Placement of transgender youth is handled on a case-by-case basis, with the welfare and best interests of the child and the members of the troop/group in question a top priority. That said, if the child is recognized by the family and school/community as a girl and lives culturally as a girl, then Girl Scouts is an organization that can serve her in a setting that is both emotionally and physically safe."

Since 2003 Girl Scout enrollment has dropped twenty-seven percent.

This article can be referenced at: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/girl-scouts-of-america-allows-boys-who-identify-as-girls-to-join-troops-opponent-says-policy-is-slap-in-the-face-to-christian-parents-139239/>.

Smelling a Fake

The journal *Science* published a study in December 2014 entitled, "When Contact Changes Minds: An Experiment on Transmission of Support for Gay Equality." The thesis that the study verified is that twenty minutes of personal contact with someone who is gay is likely to change the position that a person has towards gay marriage in a pro-gay-

marriage direction. The study and its results were co-authored by Donald Green, professor of political science at Columbia University, and UCLA graduate student Michael LaCour.

Professor Green submitted a retraction after he found out that LaCour's data was inauthentic. Green wrote, "I am deeply embarrassed by this turn of events and apologize to the editors, reviewers, and readers of *Science*."

This article can be referenced at: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/pro-gay-marriage-study-retracted-for-using-fake-data-139355/>.

Iranian Persecution of Christians

In recent days Iran has increased its persecution of Christians, arresting and sending an additional eighteen converts to prison. Charges range from evangelism and propaganda against the regime to creating house churches. For the eighteen arrests the total prison time is about twenty-four years, but due to the lack of transparency of Iranian courts, it is undetermined who will serve how much time.

There are over 78 million people in Iran. Of course, Christianity is an extreme minority. The watchdog group Open Doors ranks Iran as number seven on their list of the most persecuted people regarding issues of faith. Anything a Christian would want to do—printing, translating, Bible studies, preaching in Farsi, evangelism—all of

these things are illegal in Iran.

This article can be referenced at: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/iran-sentences-18-christians-to-prison-for-their-faith-in-new-crackdown-on-christianity-139902/>.

Unto Death

Sudanese pastors Yat Michael and David Yein have been arrested and are facing possible execution for "offending Islamic beliefs" and "inciting organized groups." Presently they are being held in a prison in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan. Both have indicated that they are willing to bear whatever consequences their faith may bring to them.

Pastor Tut Kony, a pastor in southern Sudan, commented, "This is not 'something new' for our church. Almost all pastors have gone to jail under the government of Sudan. We have been stoned and beaten. This is their habit to pull down the church. We are not surprised. This is the way they deal with the church."

This article can be referenced at: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/two-sudanese-pastor-on-facing-possible-execution-for-offending-islam-pastor-says-god-chose-him-to-suffer-139961/>.

Sweet Cakes by Melissa, Part One

Aaron and Melissa Klein, owners of Sweet Cakes by Melissa, have been thrown into the public view over their denying service for a same-sex wedding. Their fate regarding the financial redress sought by the plaintiffs is in the hands of Oregon's Bureau

of Labor and Industries, headed by Commissioner Brad Avakian.

Evidence has surfaced that demonstrates that the commissioner's role is anything but impartial. Avakian has several ties to Basic Rights Oregon, the pro-LGBT group championing the attack. Basic Rights Oregon donated \$8000 for Avakian's political bid for commissioner. Avakian has purchased tickets for fundraisers held by Basic Rights Oregon, even while this case has been open. Avakian updates Basic Rights Oregon regularly on the progress of the case, ignoring the requests of Daily Signal (a conservative media outlet) at the same time. Communications have surfaced between Avakian and Basic Rights Oregon in which they discuss avoiding the Daily Signal's questions.

The Heritage Foundation has published a motion to reopen the case because of a clear bias against their client.

This article can be referenced at: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/did-oregon-govt-agency-collude-with-lgbt-group-against-christian-bakers-who-refused-to-bake-cake-for-gay-wedding-139833/>.

Sweet Cakes by Melissa, Part Two

Oregon Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian finalized his ruling against Aaron and Melissa Klein, ordering the couple to pay reparation for damages that resulted from the couple's unwillingness to make a cake for a same-sex wedding. The lesbian couple's list of damages included "acute loss of confidence," "doubt," "excessive sleep," "felt mentally raped, dirty and shameful," "high blood pressure," "impaired digestion," "loss of appetite," "migraine headaches," "pale and sick at home after work," "resumption of smoking habit," "shock," "stunned,"

NOTABLE QUOTES

A Christian is an impregnable person. He is a person that never can be conquered. Emmanuel became man to make the church and every Christian to be one with him. Christ's nature is out of danger of all that is hurtful. The sun shall not shine, the wind shall not blow, to the church's hurt. For the church's Head rules over all things and has all things in subjection. Therefore let all the enemies consult together, this king and that power, there is a counsel in heaven which will disturb and dash all their counsels. Emmanuel in heaven laughs them to scorn. And as Luther said, "Shall we weep and cry when God laughs?"—Richard Sibbes

Indeed, there is a counterfeit love that often appears amongst those that are led by the spirit of delusion. There is commonly in the wildest enthusiast a kind of union and affection that appears in them towards another, arising from self-love, occasioned by their agreeing one with another in those things wherein they greatly differ from all others, and for which they are the objects of the ridicule of the rest of mankind; which naturally will cause them so much the more to prize the esteem they observe in each other, of those peculiarities that make them the object of other's contempt: so the ancient Gnostics, and the wild fanatics that appeared in the beginning of the Reformation, boasted of their great love one to another: one sect of them in particular, calling themselves the Family of Love. But this is quite another thing than that Christian love that I have just described; 'tis only the working of natural self-love, and no true benevolence, any more than union and friendship which may be among a company of pirates that are at war with the rest of the world.—Jonathan Edwards

Beware of manufacturing a God of your own: a God who is all mercy, but not just; a God who is all love, but not holy; a God who as a heaven for every body, but a hell for none; a God who can allow good and bad to be side by side in time, but will make no distinction between good and bad in eternity. Such a God is an idol of your own, as truly an idol as any snake or crocodile in an Egyptian temple. The hands of your own fancy and sentimentality have made him. He is not the God of the Bible, and beside the God of the Bible there is no God at all.—J. C. Ryle

"surprise," "uncertainty," "weight gain" and "worry." Such damages were worth \$135,000 in compensation.

Avakian also issued a gag order. "The Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor and Industries hereby orders [Aaron and Melissa Klein] to cease and desist from publishing, circulating, issuing or displaying, or causing to be published . . . any communication to the effect that any of the accommodations . . . will be refused, withheld from or denied to, or that any discrimination be made against, any person on account of their sexual orientation."

No freedom of religion. No freedom of speech.

This article can be referenced at: <http://dailysignal.com/2015/07/02/state-silences-bakers-who-refused-to-make-cake-for-lesbian-couple-fines-them-135k/>.

Air Force to Ease Transgender Policy

In the past, airmen who struggled with gender dysphoria (who often identified themselves as "transgender") were dismissed from service for medical reasons.

That policy is being eased. A new policy is being proposed that will require more than a medical report to dismiss such military personnel. It is estimated that 15,000 of the nation's 1.3 million military are "transgender."

This article can be referenced at: <http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/244105-air-force-eases-rules-on-transgender-troops>.

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

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

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ON LANGUAGE & SCRIPTURE

"Pure Religion"?

Christianity is not a religion; it's a relationship—that's one of the first common Christian sayings new American believers learn. And there's truth in it: Christianity isn't, fundamentally, a set of religious practices to perform but is instead something internal; it is union with Christ and a new heart of love for Him. The external, visible "religion" comes as a result. The reader might object, "Ah, but James 1:27 talks about 'pure religion,' so Christianity is a religion!" That would depend on the meaning of "religion." It probably doesn't mean what you're thinking. When we say "religion," we mean "an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god or a group of gods" (*Merriam-Webster*). But in 1611 it wasn't as common to speak of "religions" like Islam or Buddhism or even the popular meaning of Christianity. "Religion" didn't refer to a set of beliefs at all. Rather, it focused on the individual (Christian) believer's invisible acts of devotion and piety. These things might spill over into vows or offerings or other visible acts, but they weren't the focus of the word.

Tyndale, in fact, translated James 1:27 with "pure devotion." "Pure piety" would work too. The verse is not defining the Christian religion as a whole, as if it could all be summarized as helping widows and orphans and keeping yourself unstained by the world. As you know, there's a good bit more to Christianity than that. James is merely saying that one indispensable element of Christian devotion—one necessary aspect of Christian piety—is to help those in need. Almost all modern English translations use the word "religion" in James 1:27, but they're using it in a sense English speakers don't use anymore.

(Bonus thought: You may have puzzled, as I have, over the title of John Calvin's classic work *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. What are "institutes"? I just assumed they were something like "basic principles." But a better translation of the Latin title, *Institutio Christianae religionis*, would be *The Formation of Christian Piety*. Indeed, in the second sentence of the work, when Calvin describes to King Francis what he set out to do, he writes, "My purpose was . . . to transmit certain rudiments by which those who are touched by a zeal for religion might be shaped to true godliness" [Battles trans., p. 9].)

Christianity is a religion, in the modern sense. And true Christians—those who have the *relationship*—will cultivate religion in the older sense too.

Dr. Mark L. Ward, Jr. is a Logos Bible Software expert in Bellingham, Washington.



95th FBFI Annual Fellowship

John C. Vaughn

Last October, to our surprise, Dr. Marty Marriot and I realized we were discussing two different weeks for the 95th Annual Fellowship. Neither Maranatha nor FBFI were able to adjust for 2015, so we rescheduled the Fellowship to be held there for June 13–15, 2017. To their great credit, Pastor Mike Ascher and the hard-working people of Good News Baptist Church in Chesapeake, Virginia, agreed to host the Annual Fellowship this year, with just eight months to prepare. Not only did they meet the deadline, they hosted what some have called “the best meeting we have ever had!” Yes, people say that every year, but why wouldn’t they when it’s true! They just keep getting better and better.

Everything about the meeting at Good News was excellent: the preaching, the music, the fellowship, the food, the excursions, and the amazing hospitality. In spite of the heat, everyone had a wonderful time. Many of the young men in attendance said things like, “Wow, this is my crowd!” or “This is my first FBFI Annual Fellowship, but it certainly won’t be my last!” One young man said, “I had no idea there were so many Fundamental Baptists who stand so firmly with Israel; I was pleasantly surprised by that.”

This year’s theme was, “As Ye See the Day Approaching: Why Prophecy Still Matters.” Dr. Fred Moritz opened the conference on Tuesday evening with a powerful message on dispensational eschatology. Wednesday brought a full day of powerful preaching on Israel and the Middle East from Dr. Craig Hartman and a practical and convicting message by Dr. Jim Bickel on how we should live in light of the imminent return of Christ. Dr. Chuck Phelps blessed us with his always encouraging and effective exposition on Wednesday evening. Dr. Vaughn explained the dispensational position of the FBFI on Thursday morning, and Pastor Ascher moderated what

had to be the most effective panel discussion ever held at an FBFI meeting before the meeting ended with Chaplain (LCDR) Tavis Long preaching at the Leadership Luncheon.

Thank you, Pastor Ascher, and dear friends at Good News. And congratulations to Good News Pastor Emeritus Dr. Walt Coles, who received the 2015 Torchbearers Award! What else can we say? “You should’a been there!”



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Annual Chaplains Training and Fellowship: An Annual Overlap!



Each summer on the Tuesday through Thursday of the second full week of June, FBFI holds its Annual Fellowship. In conjunction with this annual event, FBFI chaplains are provided mandatory annual training beginning on Monday afternoon and ending on Friday morning. Although chaplains may often obtain financial support from their military branch or civilian agency to attend this training, all FBFI chaplains are required to attend or to obtain an endorser waiver for legitimate reasons, such as deployment overseas or personal hardship. Chaplains who fail to participate in Annual Endorser Training put their endorsement at risk.

Chaplains often make Annual Training an opportunity to spend time with family members who attend the FBFI Annual Fellowship, related excursions, or nearby sightseeing venues with them. Visiting extended family or spending a few days en route at some memorable locations can make this annual event special for both the chaplains and their loved ones. Of course, many of our chaplains make the often long and lonely trek to Annual Training on their own, often at their own expense, even losing work in the process if they are civilian chaplains or are attached to reserve or guard units that have no funding to offer.

In addition to FBFI Annual Training, our chaplains spend many days in other profes-

sional training provided by their military branches, civilian agencies, and other professional organizations, as well as in continuing graduate education that enhances their understanding and skills. At the recent Annual Conference of the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC), held in Louisville, Kentucky, FBFI-endorsed hospital chaplain John Morgan was awarded the APC Certificate of Board Certification. Congratulations to Chaplain Morgan, who serves at the Akron Children's Hospital in Ohio.

FBFI chaplains need your prayers not only for the sacrifices they make to serve but also for the many stressful situations they must deal with on a regular basis. Our readers can imagine the hardship and danger of serving in the military, but all of our chaplains stand ready to intervene in life-threatening or life-altering situations where people are ready to call on someone for spiritual help. For example, in recent days we have received reports from several of our first-responder chaplains about these kinds of crises. Chaplain Bob Keller, with the Pomona, California, police department, was called to the Pomona Valley Hospital to comfort a family who accidentally left their three-year-old in the car during the recent heat wave. Tragically, both parents thought the other had taken her indoors, but after three hours they discovered she was still in the car! Chaplain Keller was able to comfort not only the shattered family but also the officer who

LCDR Tavis Long during training.



the FBFI Annual

John C. Vaughn

was called to the scene. News reports were supportive of all involved, and no charges were filed due to the accidental circumstances.

Round Rock, Texas, fire department chaplain and church planter Jeremy Van Delinder was recently called to a scene where a police officer had been killed in the line of duty. Chaplain Van Delinder was called in to minister to all departments affected by the tragedy. Like others, he uses Jim Berg's book *When Trouble Comes* when situations such as this occur. Chaplain Van Delinder and other First Responder Chaplains could use multiple copies of this book at times like these. Perhaps pastors and their missions committees might want to invest in getting the gospel to those who need it in tragedy by helping provide these books.

Although there are many practical ways to support the important mission field of chaplaincy, all of our chaplains would agree, "What we need most is your prayers."



Jennifer and Jeremy
Van Delinder



Hospital Chaplain John Morgan
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Knowing What's Coming Will Help You through What's Happening

Continued from page 11

When God's people need to hear God speak, we know that there is no place in the Bible that God has not breathed out His Word. The pastor must confidently preach it all, including its prophecies. Prophecy was given to expand our vision of what God is doing in the world. When God gives prophetic promise, His full glory is on display. Prophetic preaching provides a congregation with the opportunity to move its focus away from man-centered thinking and to listen to God's revelation concerning Himself. Then the pastor is preaching about the God who breathed out that prophetic word—the God who is able and willing to see His Word of promise through to its fulfillment. Preach on prophecy and your people will experience an increasingly

confident faith and a spiritual vibrancy in every aspect of their walk with God.

Mike Davidson holds a ThM from Dallas Theological Seminary and received an honorary doctorate from South India Baptist Bible College. He has pastored for over thirty years and has been serving with International Partnership Ministries for seven years in their education department as a Bible and ministry instructor.



* Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (p. 209), as cited in J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), p. vii.



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Making Decisions That Lead to Ruin

We are going to examine some scriptural accounts of men who made decisions that led to their downfall. I am sure that these men had no idea of the consequences that would result from their decisions. And I am sure that no one would want to make a decision that would lead to his ruin, but the truth of the matter is that many people do. The Bible warns us in 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

The first man we will look at is King Saul. The decision he made that led to his ruin stemmed from disobedience. Saul was instructed by the Lord to destroy the Amalekites in 1 Samuel 15:3: "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." The Lord made absolutely clear what Saul was to do. What God commands is what must be obeyed, without exception! But Saul did not obey what God instructed—he disobeyed. He didn't destroy the wicked, depraved, ungodly Amalekites as God had ordered, and his disobedience cost him his kingship. First Samuel 15:28 says, "The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou."

I want to make an observation here that I believe is very important concerning Saul: one act of disobedience will often lead to other acts of disobedience. When Saul was dethroned as king, he then became jealous of David and tried to kill him: "And Saul cast the javelin, for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice" (1 Sam. 18:11). Then Saul's disobedience went even further as he sought guidance not from the Lord, but from a witch. "Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor" (1 Sam. 28:7). So Saul's disobedience led him to attempted murder and then to witchcraft. We find the shocking consequence of Saul's sin in 1 Samuel 31:3-4: "And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit

him; and he was sore wounded of the archers. Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it." Later an Amalekite went to David and falsely claimed to have killed Saul; how ironic that the ones that Saul was supposed to destroy ended up taking credit for his death.

The second man we are going to observe is Samson. The decision he made that led to his ruin stemmed from lust. Samson was a man of unbelievable strength; it was a gift from God to be used to destroy the Philistines. The Book of Judges recounts several amazing feats of Samson's strength: killing a lion with his bare hands, killing a thousand men with the jawbone of a donkey, even carrying the gates of a city by himself to the top of a hill. Such manifestations of strength have never been matched in the history of mankind! Samson was a man of unusual physical strength; however, he did not have the moral strength to control his lust for women. Samson knew his power was given to him as a Nazarite by the Lord. He told Delilah, who was a Philistine, the secret of his strength in Judges 16:17: "He told her all his heart, and said unto her. There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man." Then this wicked Delilah cut Samson's hair while he was asleep. When he awoke, his power was gone. He couldn't defend himself; the Philistines overpowered Samson, put out his eyes, and made him a slave. Samson's example is a solemn warning of what happens when one makes a decision based on lust. This man lost his strength and then his eyesight. A decision based on lust will always lead to ruin.

In the next issue we will examine other men in the Bible who made decisions that led to their ruin.

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