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JULY & AUGUST 2012

THE DAY OF CHRIST IN PHILLIPIANS

BY BOB WILKIN

THE KINGDOM
IS NOT ALREADY

BY DR. STANLEY TOUSSAINT

GOD MADE US ALIVE

BY FRANK TYLER

ALSO: GES CONFERENCE IN REVIEW, AND MORE!



Little Conference, Big Impact

While our conference doesn't meet at a major outdoor sports arena, the impact for the coming kingdom is surely much greater than that of any sold-out sporting event with tens of thousands of shouting fans. This year's theme was *Eschatology and Free Grace*. There is a strong connection.

The Free Grace position is Dispensational. Following in the steps of Darby and Scofield, the modern Free Grace movement sees a difference between the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Great White Throne Judgment. Assurance is a part of Dispensational and Free Grace thought, but not part of Covenant Theology and Lordship Salvation.

The fellowship was great. The messages were excellent. Soon the MP3s and the DVDs will be ready. In this issue of the magazine you will read condensed versions of some of the conference messages. Enjoy.

Next year's theme was set as Sanctification and Free Grace. The dates are April 22-25, again at SWBTS in Fort Worth. I hope to see you there, unless I see you in the air first.

~ Bob Wilkin

[Please send letters to the editor to:
letters@faithalone.org]

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GES
John 3:16

The Day of Christ in Philippians

by Bob Wilkin

Words and expressions carry meaning. The danger in reading anything is that we think we know what certain words and expressions mean, when in fact we may not. That is especially true in understanding the Bible. Too often people have wrong notions of what words and expressions mean and those mistaken ideas bar them from correctly understanding portions of God's Word. Two such expressions are *the day of Christ* and *the day of Jesus Christ*. These two expressions occur only three times in the Bible. All three occur in Philippians.

The Day of Jesus Christ Philippians 1:6

(Only NT Occurrence)

This verse ("being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ") is a favorite of Calvinists who think it teaches the doctrine of the persever-

ance of the saints the fifth point of Calvinism. Yet that is an unfortunate misreading of the verse based in great part on misunderstanding what "the day of Jesus Christ" is.

Dr. John Piper recently discussed this verse. At his website, *Desiring God*, he has a March 10, 2012 blog post entitled, "Will We Arrive Blameless at the Day of Christ?" (<http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/will-we-arrive-blameless-on-the-day-of-christ>). In it he indicates that the issue Paul is discussing is the eternal destiny of his readers. According to Piper, the Apostle Paul in Phil 1:6 is saying two things about the eternal destiny of the believers in Philippi. First, their arrival in Jesus' kingdom is *certain*. Second, "That arrival is *contingent* on persevering faith" (italics added).

Piper has an entire section entitled "Contingency." In that section he says, "Nevertheless, though it is certain for all who are new creatures in

Christ, Paul tells believers, 'You...[Christ] has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, *if indeed you continue in the faith*' (Col 1:21-23, italics his).

"The holiness that we are to have at the day of Christ's coming is contingent on continuing in the faith. This contingency does not contradict certainty. God is faithful; he will do it. But no believer should think that he will be ready to meet Christ if he does not 'continue in the faith.'

"God's faithfulness is experienced in his continually awakening in us the grace to keep believing. He keeps us. And he does it by giving us the passion to treasure him and pursue holiness."

Piper concludes, "Therefore, let the truth of Paul's certainty make us sure. Let the truth of contingency make us serious. And let the truth of agency make us to *surround ourselves with praying brothers*

and sisters who intercede for our faith and holiness" (italics his, underlining added).

How can our eternal destiny be certain if it is also contingent? Those are contradictory concepts. The word *contingency* means, "1) dependency on chance or on the fulfillment of a condition; uncertainty; fortuitousness... 2)...possibility conditional on something uncertain" (dictionary.com). *That which is contingent is uncertain.*

Piper is merely seeing in Phil 1:6 the Reformed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Piper believes that every person, believer and unbeliever, will be judged according to his works to determine who is "finally justified" and who is not. This final justification, according to Piper, "confirms" initial justification by faith. Or it does not. If it doesn't confirm initial justification by faith, then our belief that we were justified by faith was wrong. Since for Piper and other Calvinists, faith is not belief, but belief that results in persevering in good works and faith, no one can be sure of his eternal destiny.

Piper fails to examine and discuss what *the day of Jesus Christ* means. It refers not to the Great White Throne Judgment, but to the Bema, the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The Bema is the place where the works of believers will be judged to determine their *eternal rewards*. There is no future judgment of believers to determine their eternal des-

tinies as the Lord promised in John 5:24 ("shall not come into judgment"). See Rom 14:10-12 and 2 Cor 5:9-10, which speak of the Bema (cf. 1 Cor 3:5-15; 9:24-27; 2 Tim 2:12; 4:6-8; 1 John 2:28; 4:17-19).

Piper also fails to examine and discuss what the "good work" is to which Paul refers. He assumes that it refers to the good works that the Philippians were doing and would continue to do if they were

**It is a sad fact
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truly regenerate. But Paul uses a singular here, *good work*. The good work is their financial support of Paul's ministry as the previous three verses show (Phil 1:3-5). Their "fellowship in the gospel" (v 5) is a clear reference to their financial support. That is why Paul says he thanks God for them (v 3) and prays with joy for them (v 4). Compare Phil 4:17, which confirms this understanding.

[For a more detailed discussion of Phil 1:6, see John F. Hart, "Does Philippians 1:6 Guarantee Progressive Sanctification?" Parts 1 & 2 (JOTGES, Spring and Autumn 1996). These articles are available at www.faithalone.org under Journal.]

Paul is saying that he is confident that God will take their gifts and keep on using them right up until the Bema. That means that our gifts can keep on having eternal significance until the Rapture, even if we die long before that time.

Did not the gifts of the Philippians result in several of Paul's letters? Aren't those letters still bearing fruit two millennia later? That means the believers in Philippi are *still* gaining eternal rewards for their support of Paul's gospel ministry.

Zane Hodges died in November of 2008. Yet he is still laying up treasure since his books are still being read and are still impacting people. As I edited *The Free Grace Primer* and as I edit Zane's commentary on Romans, I

realize that I am in some small measure entering into ministry with him and I am helping both of us gain at the Bema. Even after Zane has died, he can gain more rewards because the impact of his life lives on. So too for all of us. I find that encouraging.

Do you think that your financial gifts to churches and ministries may have value not just for the month in which you give, but right up until the Bema? That is an awesome thought. As long as our money goes to those who are clearly proclaiming the Apostolic message, our gifts may well keep on working.

The two different ways of looking at *the day of Jesus Christ* are radically different.

It is no surprise that people in Calvinist churches struggle with assurance. While Free Grace people are not sure about what our evaluation at the Bema will be (1 Cor 4:1-5), we are sure about our eternal destinies (John 5:24), and about the ongoing value of giving for Christ (Phil 1:5-6). The one who understands *the day of Jesus Christ* as referring to the Great White Throne Judgment is on a collision course with despair and eternal destiny concerns.

The Day of Christ (2 NT Occurrences)

Philippians 1:10

A few verses after Phil 1:6, Paul mentions *the day of Jesus Christ* again. This time he calls it simply, *the day of Christ*.

Paul wanted the believers in Philippi to "be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ," that is, until the Bema.

Now admittedly some might die before the Rapture. And the Bema doesn't occur at the very moment of the Rapture. But Paul's point is clear. He wants the believers to live exemplary lives so that at the Bema, the day of Christ, they will receive a good report from the Lord, a "Well done, good servant" (Luke 19:17). Compare Phil 1:6; 2:16; 4:17.

The "normal" understanding of this verse is that Paul wants them to be faithful until *the Great White Throne Judgment* so that they might be finally justified and finally

saved by their works. [Note: for many commentators the Bema is the same thing at the Great White Throne Judgment. They believe that there is one "final judgment" and the purpose of it is to determine who spends eternity with the Lord and who is excluded. The basis of who gets in and who does not is works, not faith.]

Once again, the issue here is not eternal destiny (though many pastors and teachers understand this verse in that way), but eternal rewards.

Philippians 2:16

Paul told the believers in Philippi to "hold fast the word of life, so that I [Paul] may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain."


Note that Paul's concern is not merely for *their* rewards and *their* outcome at the Bema. He is also concerned about *his* rewards and *his* outcome at the Bema. This theme of not running and not laboring in vain runs through many of his epistles. See, for example, Gal 2:2; 4:11.

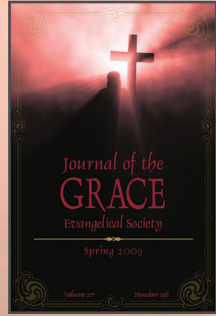
Conclusion

It is sad that many Evangelicals do not know where they are going when they die. Part of their confusion stems from failing to understand what the day of Christ is. It is not a reference to the Great White Throne Judgment. It is a reference to the Judgment Seat of Christ. Believers are guaranteed that we will not come into judgment concerning our eternal destiny (John 5:24). We will be held accountable for our words and deeds,

but that will impact our eternal rewards, not our eternal destiny.

To whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48). If you know with certainty that you are eternally secure, then you've been given much. You should be ready and willing and able to share that assurance with anyone who is open.

We live in a world that longs for eternal life and for eternal significance as well. We who know the truth can tell them about both the free gift of everlasting life and the potentially wonderful payday that is the day of Christ. 



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ESCHATOLOGY & Free Grace

Reflections on the 2012 Conference

GH said:

This year's conference was just wonderful. I loved how different people at the conference were passionate about different aspects of eschatology and Free Grace, and how all of these views highlighted in different ways the fact that God keeps His promises. Believing that God is faithful to all of His promises seems to be, at a basic level, what ties us together at GES more than anything. Studying eschatology together was a fantastic way to bring that out.

We had more time built in to the schedule to have fellowship with fellow conferees, and I was able to get to know some of the incredible people who were attending the conference a lot better. Everyone had great stories of how God has shown His love and goodness in them. In a group of people who are all passionate about the freeness of everlasting life, the fellowship is really something special. I learned so much about the Bible at the conference, but I probably learned even more about things like love, compassion, and passion for sharing God's promises with others.

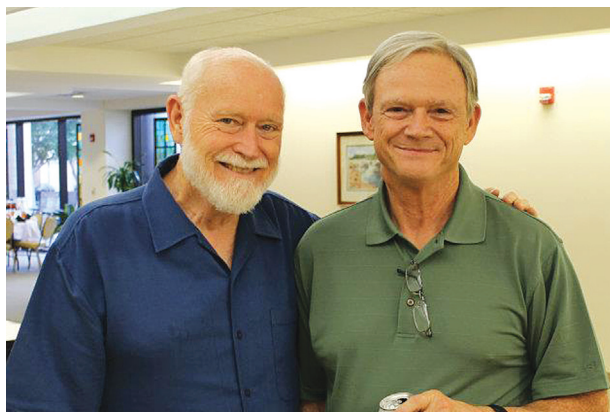


BK wrote:

I often heard it said in seminary that *doctrines derived from the Bible are all interrelated*. Nowhere recently have I experienced that truth more than at this year's GES Conference. Many speakers, in line with this year's theme, demonstrated the connection between the Biblical message of future things (eschatology) and the Biblical message GES consistently highlights (soteriology).

The message of God's free gift of eternal life as expounded each year at the GES Conference has everything to do with the assured guarantee of the believer's future with Christ beyond the grave. The often-repeated message of God's gift of life is the starting point that establishes my accountability at the Judgment Seat of Christ in the future. *How I have lived* the eternal life I have been given will be judged, not *whether I possess* eternal life. The judgment of my works will reflect the choices I am making each day in this life, including the forgiveness of identifiable sins I confess.

I especially liked the plenary messages by Drs. Stan Toussaint and John Niemelä, as well as the panel discussion.



DJ observed:

I wanted to give you some additional feedback on the conference. It is always a time of encouragement for me because of who I get to visit with and a time to stretch my thinking as I hear presenters.

Bob Wilkin's sessions are always good. He does thorough research on a given word or topic. Also he seems to be able to decide on the appropriate amount of material to cover for a given time frame. He is a clear presenter with a rare ability to communicate that truly is a benefit to me and many others.

Philippe Sterling did an excellent job in his workshop, as did Mark Piland, who was a classmate of mine from DTS and is a friend.

Jody Dillow was superb! I am not sure I agree with everything he presents but I greatly enjoy what he has to say because he challenges my thinking. The summary of motivations with "love of Jesus" in the middle is something I will be able to use often. I hope he will continue to present material in the future.

Thanks to Bob and his team for putting on a great conference.



DB noted:

The GES Conference is the highlight of my husband's and my year. We always look forward to going. This year was no exception.

We love the facilities. Those who work hard at the Seminary to make us comfortable do a great job and always are so nice. We appreciate all their work. We also appreciate the good work of the GES Staff.

We especially appreciate the hard work of Don Reiher in videotaping all the main sessions and some of the workshops. We're looking forward to those DVDs so that we can carefully study the material presented and be faithful Bereans to check everything out in the Scriptures. It takes time for us to digest all the material, but that time is well worth every minute.

It was a real treat this year to hear Dr. Stanley Toussaint. What a gentle and gracious man! Brilliant Biblical scholar! I can't remember ever hearing him in person, but I used to listen to cassette tape messages of him years ago.

Our very first GES Conference that we attended was 15 years ago. It was held in Irving, TX in a small room. We remember Jody Dillow was the speaker, and we attended because we had read his wonderful book, *The Reign of the Servant Kings*. That was the year Dr. Radmacher was excited about his upcoming *Nelson Study Bible* (now called *The NKJV Study Bible*). We remember meeting Charlie Bing at that conference. Lots of good memories. We were hooked! There are very few conferences we've missed since then. Now we look forward to seeing good friends each year who love the free-grace message of life.

We pray that He will continue to use GES for His glory until He returns.



GES Conference 2012



Don't Underestimate the Impact of Free Grace Teaching !

BY ROGER LAMFERS

Many years ago in a Sunday school class I realized that I had a deep desire to learn more about God. After the class ended I went up to the teacher and tried to explain what it was I was feeling inside. Instead of taking the opportunity to talk to me more and even tell me about spiritual salvation, the Sunday school teacher simply said, "Well, maybe you should become a preacher."

I didn't go on to become a preacher, but I did begin to learn about salvation, thanks to my wife and Tabernacle Baptist Church in George, IA. I didn't quite understand the message I was hearing, but

I went through the process of "accepting Christ as my Savior." Even through my confusion and doubt during this period, God honored my desire for more knowledge of Him by bringing Dan Hauge to our church as the Pastor. Dan began to teach grace, and what it means to believe. I remember him teaching on the passage in John 4 about the woman at the well and all of Dan's teachings on Free Grace began to trickle into my heart and mind—just a little bit at first, then a little bit more.

After a few years Dan introduced me to Zane Hodges and his writings. Zane came to our church for a Bible conference and during that time I

was able to meet and talk with Zane and Dan. After meeting Zane, I had the privilege of being able to call him with questions during my studies. By trade I'm a hog farmer, not a theologian, yet he was gracious enough to take the time to talk to me and answer my questions.

Even though my whole church had access to Zane during that time, I was one of the few who took advantage of the opportunity to sit and discuss the Bible with him. Seeing my interest in what Zane had to say, Dan invited me to attend the GES Grace Conference with him in 2002, and of course I went. That conference is how I began to meet

many Free Grace people from around the U.S. and Canada. I've come to know a lot of people on a first-name basis—and for that I'm very thankful.

My point is this: When you teach the Free Grace message, you never know precisely who your teaching is going to impact. Free Grace teaching impacted my life.

I've taught a Sunday school class for twenty-something years and I teach Free Grace. The things I learn at the annual GES Conference I take back to my class and share with all of them. This past year I have had the opportunity to begin mentoring two men who attend my church. I took them through the Gospel

of John and we discussed several of the key passages. One of the men, Ed, grew up Catholic and struggled with many of the concepts of Free Grace. Ed is a man of God and truly desires to serve Him, but he was burdened with the bondage of works. It took about eight weeks, but Ed and I kept working through things until he got to the point that he understood. The day it finally sank in was a special day. Ed and I were talking:

"Do you know what it is that God is offering you?" I asked.

"I don't know," Ed said.

"Well, what do you receive if you accept what Jesus is offering you?"

"I would have everlasting life," Ed responded.

"Do you believe that?"

"Well, yeah. That's what it says."

"So then what do you have?" I asked.

"I have eternal life." Then Ed put his head down on his arms on the table.

If I never live to see another spectacular thing, it won't matter after having a part in Ed's discovery of the free gift of everlasting life. To see the Word of God move a man from death to life is an amazing thing.

I could go on and on but the point is this: Don't think your words are falling on deaf ears—they're not. ■

The Kingdom Is Not Already

(Excerpt from Conference Message)

BY Dr. Stanley Toussaint

Matthew Chapter 13 is a cornerstone on the discussions of the modern-day views of the kingdom. In Matthew 13 the Lord speaks in parables and the disciples ask, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” And Christ tells them He does so to conceal the truth from

those who reject Him and to reveal the truth to those who believe. To conceal and reveal. That’s the point of the parables.

The first parable is the parable of the sower. It is a much disputed parable. The one distinction of the good soil is that the person thereby represented heard and understood. He heard and understood. And he bore fruit—much fruit. The Lord is explaining that if you don’t understand this parable, then you can’t understand the other parables either.

The Lord was saying that the fruit of understanding is more understanding. He was speaking in parables so that people might have a greater

understanding of what the kingdom is going to be.

The first parable is followed by six others. These six parables are parables which are called ‘mysteries of the kingdom.’ To the disciples it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom.

For years my brothers in the Dispensational family have said that this is teaching a mystery form of the kingdom. You hear this over and over again: “Matthew 13 contains the mystery form of the kingdom.” But that changes the meaning. In Matthew 3, 4, and 10, we Dispensationalists argue vociferously and strongly that the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, is the earthly kingdom promised to Israel. So how in Matthew 13 can the kingdom refer to something present and unrelated to Israel?

The parables of Matthew 13 are not talking about a new form. They are talking about mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. What does the word

mysteries mean? It means new truths, truths that have not been taught before. So to the disciples—and to us—it has been given to know new truths about the kingdom.

Listen to that first mystery parable. One man sowed good seeds; the other man sowed tares. They grow together. At the end of the age the tares are taken out first. The Lord is saying there is a whole new age coming. In the kingdom of heaven good and evil are not going to coexist. Righteousness is going to prevail. But now we have tares and wheat, a whole new age. This is the new truth not taught in the Old Testament. A whole new age in which good and evil are going to coexist. It teaches us something else. John the Baptist had said “And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees... His winnowing fan is in His hand” (Matt 3:10, 12) and Christ is in effect saying, “No, no, no. Don’t judge them now. Wait. The judgment is going to be at the end of this next age.” So these are things not found in the Old Testament, they are new truths about the kingdom of heaven. And so you can go through all six mystery parables and learn about new truths.

The third mystery parable talks about leaven. What is the leaven? Well in the New Testament leaven consistently portrays evil. I don’t think you can get away from that. And it is talking about the growth of evil in this age. That is just exactly what prophecy teachers teach, that there is going

to be the spreading of apostasy, and evil, and wickedness. And so instead of the kingdom, it is going to get worse and worse. Leaven is going to pervade the whole lump of dough and so on.

A farmer buys some land in the fourth mystery parable. There he unearths a hidden treasure. The treasure shows that the kingdom of heaven is near. The man buries it and then buys it. *I don’t think that is talking about Christians giving up everything to be saved.* Literally, some people

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think that. Some people think that you must give up everything to be saved. That is not what the Lord is teaching. You don’t *buy* your salvation. *Christ* redeems us. So this is talking about *our* redemption and *Christ* buying the field.

The same point is made in the fifth mystery parable, the pearl of great price. Christ is going to buy this body of believers.

These are new truths that are given.

What is Christ doing now, if He is not ruling over the kingdom? Well it is very clear in Ps 110:1 what He’s doing:

“The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’ And that is exactly what Hebrews chapter 10 says. In Hebrews 10:12-13 we are told that He “sat down on the right hand of God... expecting till His enemies be made His footstool.” That is what the King James says. I love that! I grew up in Hinckley, Minnesota where the men are men and the women are slightly above average. And when referring to a woman as expecting, that was, she is *expecting*. Now I like that here. The translators used *expecting* in Heb 10:13. Well, that is not exactly the word, but it is *anticipating*. He is sitting at the right hand of the Father waiting “till His enemies be made His footstool.”

He is not now reigning. He is waiting for that. *Sit at my right hand, until I subdue the enemies.* That’s why Isaiah said, “A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench *till* He sends forth justice to victory” (Matt 12:20, quoting Isa 42:3, emphasis added).

So right now, we are at the time of history where Christ is seen in His weakness. He doesn’t strike down someone for blaspheming His name. People get by with all kinds of things. A bruised reed, He really will not break. Smoking flax He will not quench. He is just being very gracious in this time. It is incredible.

There is no present form of the kingdom. The kingdom is in the future. ■



For God Made Us Alive Together with Christ Through Faith:

EPHESIANS 2:5 AND 8-9 RECONSIDERED



BY FRANK TYLER

Some people believe that the new birth occurs before faith. Reformed theologians commonly cite Eph 2:8-9 as evidence that faith is the gift of God. For example, R. C. Sproul says, “Faith is a result of the Spirit’s sovereign work of regeneration” (*Grace Unknown*, pp. 156-57). In another work Sproul similarly commented, “We do not believe in order to be born again; we are born again in order that we may believe” (*Chosen By God*, p. 73).

A Strategically Repeated Parenthetical Expression

In Eph 2:5 the parenthetical expression *by grace you have been saved* explains in abbreviated fashion the preceding content of verses 4-5. The adversative, *but*, contrasts the bad news in Eph 2:1-3 of man’s depravity with the good news in Eph 2:4-7. Ephesians 2:4-5 reads:

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (*by grace you have been saved*).”

Three verses later the Apostle Paul repeats this same expression, *by grace you have been saved*: For *by grace you have been saved* through faith and that not of yourselves.

By strategically linking Eph 2:8 with the content of the parenthetical statement in Eph 2:4-5, Paul exercises a wonderful economy of words (cf. J. B. Bond, “Ephesians” in *The Grace NT Commentary*, Vol. 2, p. 868).

Paul’s words in Eph 2:4-5, *God...made us alive together with Christ*, are clearly parallel to his words in Eph 2:8, *For*

by grace you have been saved. We know this because Paul put *by grace you have been saved* parenthetically after verse 5 and then repeated it again in verse 8. But notice that in Eph 2:8 Paul *adds* “through faith” after *you have been saved* [or made alive].

According to Paul, God made the Ephesians *alive together with Christ*, that is, He regenerated them... *through faith*. God regenerated them *after* they believed, *not before* they believed. Clearly, the instrument of faith precedes the magnificent gift of being *made alive together with Christ...through faith*.

In John’s Gospel the Lord Jesus repeatedly promises that the one who believes in Him has everlasting life (e.g., John 3:16; 5:24; 6:35, 47; 11:25-27). Jesus never reverses this order to reveal faith as a result or gift following regeneration. The instrument of faith always precedes regeneration.

Therefore, the Ephesians did not come to faith “[as] a result of the Spirit’s sovereign work of regeneration,” as R. C. Sproul suggests (*Grace Unknown*, p. 156).

Cont. on page 15

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