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THE ROLE OF GOOD WORKS IN
JUSTIFICATION:
A REVIEW OF CHAPTER 16 OF THOMAS
SCHREINER'S *FAITH ALONE—THE
DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Dr. Thomas R. Schreiner is the James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament and the Associate Dean of Scripture and Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. That school strongly advocates five-point Calvinism and justification by faith alone (understood from a Calvinist perspective).

Over the past few decades the way in which Calvinists explain justification *by faith alone—sola fide* in Latin—has changed somewhat. While Calvinists have long spoken of *true faith* (i.e., faith that perseveres in obedience to the end of life), they have been reluctant to actually say that good works are necessary for justification.

No longer.

In his new book, *Faith Alone—The Doctrine of Justification*,¹ Schreiner freely and repeatedly says that good works are necessary for justification. In fact, Chapter 16 is entitled “The Role of Good Works in Justification” (pp. 191–206). In this article I am responding to that chapter. I have adopted Schreiner’s chapter title and his subsection titles as well. It is my

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Faith Alone—The Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015).

contention that Schreiner, though well-intentioned, has done precisely what he claims Free Grace advocates have done:

The Free Grace interpretation looks like an expedient to defend and support one's theology. While Scripture interprets Scripture, at the same time we must ensure that we don't do violence to what texts say, for otherwise we are in danger of twisting the Scripture to fit our own preconceptions.²

Let's begin where Schreiner does, with a discussion of what saving faith is and is not.

II. MENTAL ASSENT ISN'T SAVING FAITH

Schreiner defines mental assent as "bare faith," that is, as "intellectual assent to a set of statements, doctrines, or beliefs."³ He continues, "Ascribing to and endorsing orthodox doctrines should never be confused with genuine faith."⁴

If saving faith is not mental/intellectual assent to the truth of a proposition, then it is not faith, but something else.

For example, if someone believes that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, is that "intellectual assent to a statement"? Is that "ascribing to and endorsing orthodox doctrine"? Or is it something more? Are works involved in believing that Bethlehem is the Savior's birthplace?

Or take belief in the virgin birth. Are works involved in that faith?

Or how about belief in the deity of Christ? Must one work for a lifetime to prove that he truly believes in the deity of Christ?

Obviously I could give a million examples from Scripture. Schreiner implies, but does not actually explicitly say, that he is only talking about *saving faith*. But if so, that would be quite odd, would it not?

Isn't it odd that faith in the entire Bible is always being convinced that some proposition is true, but when it comes to being born again, faith is no longer mental assent, but a lifetime of works?

Yet when the Lord asks Martha, "Do you believe this?" He is clearly only asking her to affirm what she is convinced is true. Does she believe that He guarantees everlasting life to all who simply believe in Him

² Ibid., 193.

³ Ibid., 191.

⁴ Ibid., 192.

(John 11:26)? He is not asking about whether she loves Him (compare John 21:15–19). He is not asking whether she is persevering in good works. He is asking her if she believes what He said.

And, as Schreiner himself notes in this chapter (pp. 194, 201), in John 11:25–26b, Jesus told Martha the saving message, the promise of everlasting life. Compare John 20:30–31.

Later in the chapter Schreiner will give examples in Scripture of where he thinks that faith is something other than being persuaded. We will consider those as they occur. But here his only example is Jas 2:14–26. Oddly he does not exegete that passage. He simply makes some claims about it and then moves on.

Space does not permit a detailed discussion here. I've written on this elsewhere.⁵ However, I will make a few observations from the text:

1. Demons really do believe in monotheism (Jas 2:19). That's why they tremble.
2. Since demons are not living human beings, they cannot have everlasting life even if they believe the truth of John 3:16 or John 11:26. Everlasting life is for "he who lives and believes in Me" (John 11:26). Since demons are not living human beings, they cannot be born again even if they believe that Jesus promises everlasting life to living humans who believe in Him.
3. The other four uses of *save* (*sōzō*) in James (1:21; 4:12; 5:15, 20) all refer to deliverance from temporal difficulties, including premature death.
4. Abraham was justified or vindicated *before men* when he offered up Isaac (Gen 22:1–19; Rom 4:2, "not before God"). However, more than two decades earlier he was justified or declared righteous *before God* when he believed God's promise concerning the coming Messiah (Gen 15:1–6; Rom 4:3–4; Gal 3:6–14).
5. Rahab was justified or vindicated *before the men of Israel* when she delivered the spies from the authorities in Jericho. But she was justified or declared righteous *before God* when she believed in Israel's coming Messiah (see Heb 11:31 where she is contrasted with "those who did not believe," and Rom 4:1–5).
6. The expression "faith without works is dead" does not mean *faith without works is not faith*. Faith is faith whether it is applied or not. "What does it profit?" is the question which begins v 14 and ends

⁵ See Bob Wilkin, "Another View of Faith and Works in James 2," *JOTGES* (Autumn 2002): 3–21.

v 16, the verse immediately preceding the expression, “faith without works is dead.” It is dead in the sense that it is *not profitable*. It does not profit the believer who is able to help the needy in his church, but chooses not to, nor does it profit that needy brother or sister.

7. James 2:14–26 is contextually tied to Jas 2:1–13, where James urges fellow Christians to “not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality” (2:1). They were kowtowing to wealthy visitors, but dishonoring the poor ones (2:2–4). Yet James clearly speaks of their faith in Christ. James 2:2–4 is parallel with Jas 2:15–16.

Schreiner is aware of this interpretation and dismisses it with a few short comments. He says that those in “the Free Grace movement...have come up with a novel interpretation of James 2, for they claim that the words ‘justify’ (*dikaioō*) and save (*sōzō*) do not refer to eschatological salvation...Instead, James refers to...being saved from a life shorn of God’s blessing and power.”⁶

What is wrong with this interpretation?

In the first place, Schreiner misrepresents the Free Grace understanding of *sōzō* in Jas 2:14. We do not believe it means “being saved from a life shorn of God’s blessing and power.” It means more than that. God actively judges (i.e., curses) indolent believers: “As righteousness leads to life, so he who pursues evil pursues it to his own death” (Prov 11:19; cf. 10:6, 27, 29; 11:17, 27; 12:12; 14:11).

We hold that all five uses of *sōzō* in James concern temporal salvation from physical death or from events which if left unchecked will result in premature death. Compare Jas 1:21; 2:14; 4:12; 5:15, 20.⁷ To be saved from premature physical death is not “being saved from a life shorn of God’s blessing and power.”

⁶ Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 192.

⁷ In Jas 1:21 the author commends “beloved brethren” (1:19) who have been born again by God’s Word (1:17–18) to receive the implanted word which is able to save their lives from physical death (cf. 1:15). Salvation from physical death is also in view in Jas 4:12 where “to save and to destroy” refers either to extending or curtailing one’s life as 4:13–15 shows. And in Jas 5:19–20 where if one of the “brothers” should “wander away from the truth” and another brother “turns him back,” then he saves the straying brother’s life from death. Even Jas 5:15 and “the prayer of faith [which] will save the sick,” refers to healing that takes imminent death out of the way. James 2:14 fits this temporal salvation understanding as well.

In the second place, Schreiner's claim that all five uses of *sōzō* in James (and indeed in the entire NT) refer to "eschatological salvation" from eternal condemnation is completely unsupported. Tellingly, Schreiner does not back up that assertion with Biblical or lexical evidence. On the contrary, diligent readers will find that well over half of the uses of *sōzō* in the NT refer to deliverance from illness, physical death, or temporal difficulties. I will limit myself to twenty-one obvious uses of *sōzō* that contradict Schreiner's claim:

"Lord, save us, we are perishing" (Matt 8:25, the disciples in danger of drowning).

"Lord, save me" (Matt 14:30, when Peter was walking on water, took his eyes off Jesus, and began to sink into the angry sea).

"Your faith has saved you" (Jesus' words to many people He healed; see Matt 9:22; Mark 5:34; 10:52; Luke 7:50; 8:48; 17:19; 18:42).

"Save yourself...come down from the cross" (Matt 27:40, people mocking Jesus on the cross; see also Luke 23:37, 39).

"Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him" (Matt 27:49).

"Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour" (John 12:27; see also Heb 5:7).

"All hope that we would be saved was finally given up" (Acts 27:20, talking about shipwreck and drowning).

"Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved" (Acts 27:31).

"The centurion, wanting to save Paul..." (Acts 27:43).

"God...saved Noah" (2 Pet 2:5, referring to the ark; see also 1 Pet 3:20).

"The Lord...saved the people out of the land of Egypt" (Jude 5, referring to physical deliverance from Egypt and slavery during the Exodus).

While the word *justify* is often used in the NT to refer to being declared righteous by God (e.g., Acts 13:39; Rom 3:20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:5;

5:1; Gal 2:16; 3:8, 11, 24; Titus 3:7), it also is used on many occasions to refer to vindication before men. Notice the following examples:

“Wisdom is justified by her children” (Matt 11:19; Luke 7:35).

“Even the tax collectors justified God” (Luke 7:29; see also Rom 3:4).

“Wanting to justify himself, he said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” (Luke 10:29).

“You are those who justify yourselves before men...” (Luke 16:15).

“For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God” (Rom 4:2; compare Jas 2:21).

“I am not justified by this” (1 Cor 4:4).

“[Jesus was] justified in the Spirit” (1 Tim 3:16).

Not only does the NT itself show that *sōzō* often refers to temporal deliverance and *dikaioō* often refers to vindication before men, but so does the leading lexicon of NT Greek.

BDAG indicates that *sōzō* means “1) to preserve or rescue from natural dangers and afflictions *save, keep from harm, preserve, rescue ...* 2) to save or preserve from transcendent danger or destruction, *save/preserve from eternal death* from judgment, and from all that might lead to such death, e.g. sin, also in a positive sense *bring Messianic salvation, bring to salvation ...* 3) Certain passages belong under 1 and 2 at the same time. They include Mk 8:35=Lk 9:24 (s. 1a and 2a β above) and Lk 9:[56] v.l., where *sōzein* is used in contrast to destruction by fire from heaven, but also denotes the bestowing of transcendent salvation.”

BDAG lists meanings in descending order. In other words, the leading Greek lexicon says that the primary usage of *sōzō* is “to preserve or rescue from natural dangers and afflictions.”

BDAG lists the meanings of *dikaioō* as “1) to take up a legal cause, *show justice, do justice, take up a cause...2) to render a favorable verdict, vindicate ...* 3) to cause someone to be released from personal or institutional claims that are no longer to be considered pertinent or valid, *make free/pure ...* 4) to demonstrate to be morally right, *prove to be right, passive of God is proved to be right...*”

Given this abundant Biblical and lexical evidence for temporal definitions of *sōzō* and *dikaioō*, Schreiner's claim that these definitions "aren't found in the rest of the New Testament" is patently false. Given that major oversight, perhaps Schreiner should not be charging Free Grace exegetes with "desperate exegesis"?

Schreiner's one proof that faith is not mental assent, Jas 2:14–26, does not prove his point. Indeed, it goes against his point.

III. DEFICIENT FAITH IN MATTHEW, JOHN, AND PAUL

The second section in Schreiner's proof that good works are needed for *final justification* is what he calls "deficient faith" in Matthew, John, and Paul.

A. DEFICIENT FAITH IN MATTHEW

The only evidence Schreiner cites in Matthew is the parable of the four soils (Matt 13:20–23). Unfortunately, the author's discussion is inadequate. According to him, only the last soil has saving faith; the rest have deficient faith. He says, "Only the last soil *truly* receives the seed."⁸ And he says soils two and three, "exercise a kind of faith" but that "true faith is a *persevering* faith."⁹

But where do we see these ideas taught in the text?

The second soil "hears the word and at once receives it with joy." The Lord continues, "But since they have no [depth of] root, they last only for a time." The Greek words translated *they last only for a time* in the NIV are *proskairos esti*, literally, *it is for a time* or *it is short-lived*. The point is, life has begun. The seed germinated as the Lord said in the telling of the parable (not mentioned by Schreiner): "they immediately sprang up" (v 5). A seed can only spring up out of the ground if life has begun. Since the seed is the saving message, as Schreiner himself says, the life must be everlasting life.¹⁰

⁸ Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 194, emphasis his.

⁹ *Ibid.*, emphasis his.

¹⁰ In the Lukan version of the parable the Lord specifically says of the second soil, "[they] believe for a while" (Luke 8:13). What they believe is the saving message (Luke 8:12), hence they are saved.

The third soil also is said by our Lord to have germinated and sprouted: “some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them” (v 7). Obviously, there would be nothing to choke unless the seed had germinated and sprung up.¹¹ It too had life, that is, everlasting life.

Schreiner thinks the fact that only the fourth soil brought forth mature fruit means only the fourth soil persevered in faith. Yet in the Lukan version we learn that the third soil “brought forth no fruit *to maturity*” (Luke 8:14, emphasis added). The words “to maturity” are telling. In contrast to the second soil (compare Luke 8:13 and Matt 13:21), the third soil continued believing to the end. Yet even the second soil believed and germinated.

The parable of the four soils actually works against Schreiner’s position. There is nothing *deficient* about the faith of the second and third soils. Both result in new life.

B. DEFICIENT FAITH IN JOHN

Here Schreiner cites three passages: John 2:23–25, 8:30–59, and 1 John 2:19. Each passage is only given cursory attention by the author.

Schreiner admits that those in John 2:23 “believed in (*episteusan*) Him.” He then says, “John hints, however, that their belief was not genuine, for even though they believed in Jesus, the trust wasn’t mutual. Jesus didn’t believe in or entrust (*episteuen*) himself to them.”¹²

Didn’t the Lord say that *whoever believes in Him has everlasting life* (John 3:16; 5:24; 6:35, 47; 11:26)? If inspired Scripture says they believed in Him, then they are born again.

The key to understanding this passage is to realize that the fact that Jesus did not *entrust* Himself to them is a discipleship matter, not a justification matter.

Not every new believer is ready to receive deeper revelation about Christ, or to endure persecution for His name. If a believer is committed to confessing Him, the Lord causes him to grow. But the new believers in this passage were not ready to confess Jesus publicly. Note the repetition of the word *man* (*anthropos*) in John 2:25 and 3:1. Nicodemus

¹¹ Compare the same parable in Luke, “the thorns sprang up with it and choked it” (Luke 8:7). The words “with it” show that the third soil sprang up as well.

¹² Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 194.

is an example of a secret believer (compare John 7:50–51; 12:42–43; 19:38–39).¹³

Concerning John 8:30–59, Schreiner again admits that John tells us Jesus addressed “those who believed (*pepisteukotas*) in him (8:31).”¹⁴ Yet he fails to cite v 30 where John said, “As He spoke these words, many believe in Him.” Again, this is *pisteuō eis auton*, the same words used in John 3:16 and throughout John’s Gospel to refer to those who are born again. Schreiner misses the fact that those who speak in vv 33ff are not the new believers of vv 30–32. We know this for certain because in vv 45 and 46, verses not mentioned by the author, the Lord directly says, “you do not believe Me.” So unless John in vv 30–31 is contradicting what Jesus said in vv 45–46, Jesus is addressing two different groups.

The best way to understand this passage is to see there was a large crowd present. Some people in the crowd came to faith in Him, as John tells us. But most people did not believe in Him, as the Lord Jesus tells us. So we have two groups: the minority who believed, and the majority who did not. Thus the people mentioned in 8:30–32 are distinct from the larger unbelieving group in vv 33–59.

First John 2:19 does not mention believing in Jesus. Thus it is unclear why Schreiner even brings it up.

John’s Gospel and his first epistle underscore that anyone who believes in Jesus has everlasting life. There is no special faith required to be born again, contra Schreiner.

C. DEFICIENT FAITH IN PAUL

Though Paul wrote thirteen epistles, we receive but one paragraph from the author to prove that he too teaches there is a type of deficient faith. He selects only two examples, Demas and Hymanaeus.

Demas was one of Paul’s trusted co-workers for a time (Col 4:14; Philem 24), but Paul later said, “Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2 Tim 4:10). In the first place, Paul does not indicate whether Demas stopped believing. In the second place, it is certain that Paul would not allow an unbeliever to be his co-worker (let alone one he twice mentions favorably).

¹³ For more information about the theme of “secret believers” in John, see Bob Bryant, “The Secret Believer in the Gospel of John,” *JOTGES* (Autumn 2014): 61–75.

¹⁴ Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 195.

Schreiner does not comment on either passage which concerns Hymanaeus (1 Tim 1:18–20 or 2 Tim 2:17–20). He says that he “must have shown some promise as a leader in the church, for Paul gave him a position of responsibility” but that “his later actions proved, however, that his faith wasn’t genuine.”¹⁵ Once again, why would Paul give this man a position of responsibility if he was an unbeliever? And why is doctrinal defection proof one is not a believer? Paul does not say that.

A reasonable conclusion from these texts about Hymanaeus is that doctrinal defection is possible for a born-again person and so we should be on guard against that. Schreiner’s reading is that doctrinal defection is impossible for the born-again person so we need not be concerned about it. That turns Paul’s concern about both Demas and Hymanaeus on its head.

IV. A LIVING, ACTIVE FAITH

This section goes over some of the same ground cited above, this time focusing on synonyms for faith. Schreiner summarizes his point in this section as follows: “Faith obeys, keeps, abides, follows, comes, enters, goes, eats, drinks, loves, hears, and sees.”¹⁶

Certainly in John’s Gospel eating, drinking, and coming to Jesus are all figures of faith in Him. To drink the living water is to believe in Him (compare John 4:10–14 with John 6:35). To eat the bread of life is to believe in Jesus (John 6:35–40). To come to Jesus is to believe in Him (John 5:39–40; 6:35).

It misses the point of the comparison to say that faith actually comes, eats, and drinks. It is not that faith *does* those things, but that faith *is* those things. They are synonyms for believing in Jesus.

Schreiner equates faith in Jesus with following Him. But if salvation is by faith, and faith is following, then conversion is linear. One is not born again at a point in time, but over one’s lifetime of following Him.

Similarly, to say that saving faith *obeys* is to teach works salvation and a linear view of conversion. John 3:36, the text cited by the author, actually undercuts his point. There John the Baptist says, “He who believes [*ho pisteuōn*] in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe [*ho apeithōn*] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on

¹⁵ Ibid., 196.

¹⁶ Ibid., 198.

him.” I agree that *ho apeithōn* can legitimately be translated “he who disobeys.” However, this is contrasted with “he who believes.” That is, since God commands everyone to believe in His Son, failure to do so is disobedience. To suggest that John 3:36 means that *whoever obeys the commandments of God over his lifetime until death has everlasting life* is to badly distort one of the most beautiful and beloved verses in the Bible.

As both the upper room discourse and John’s first epistle show, “abiding” is a discipleship concept. To suggest, as the author does, that belief abides is to mix justification and sanctification. The same is true when Schreiner argues that faith loves. Thus if someone is not loving others wholeheartedly, he must not have faith. And if he doesn’t continue to love others wholeheartedly, he must not have faith either.

V. SOLA FIDE DEMANDS GOOD WORKS FOR SALVATION

The heading, “*Sola Fide* Demands Good Works for Salvation,” is striking. The main reason it is striking is because the Apostles made it clear that justification is by faith alone, *apart from works*. See Paul’s statements of that very truth in Rom 4:1–4; Eph 2:8–9; and Titus 3:5.

Saying that justification by faith alone demands works *for salvation* (i.e., in order to be saved from eternal condemnation) is like saying that an absolutely “free” college scholarship demands good works in order to gain and retain it. But if you have to work to get a scholarship (e.g., by practicing and playing football 40 hours a week, or studying 40 hours a week so you can retain a GPA over 3.5), then you earn the scholarship. You may not be paying for your school with cash, but you are paying for it with labor. In which case, the scholarship isn’t free. A scholarship is only absolutely free if it is given apart from any works you have to do.¹⁷

Saying that good works are required “for salvation” is a departure from the old Calvinist position that good works are the necessary fruit of salvation. Here good works are not the *result* but the *means* to salvation.

To prove his point Schreiner looks at texts from Matthew, John’s Gospel and First Epistle, Paul, and James.

¹⁷ That is, by the way, what some politicians are now proposing. They are not suggesting high school students must work to earn a scholarship. They are suggesting that the federal government will scholarship any and all students who wish to go on to college.

A. MATTHEW

Matthew's Gospel is not evangelistic in nature. It is a discipleship book.¹⁸ Yet Schreiner thinks he finds proofs here that good works are demanded for salvation from eternal condemnation. He cites two passages.

First he cites Matt 7:15–23. He makes a great observation here that many miss. In Matt 7:15–20 the saying, “You will know them by their fruits,” refers not to *believers*, but to false prophets: “False prophets are recognized by their fruit (Matt 7:15–20).”¹⁹ He errs, however, when he then says regarding those who say “Lord, Lord” but who are rejected for kingdom entrance:

Confessing that Jesus is Lord doesn't guarantee entrance into the kingdom, for the kingdom is restricted to 'the one who does the will of My Father in heaven' (7:21)...They will be excluded from the kingdom if their lives are given over to their own selfish will and to evil actions.²⁰

The problem with these people is that they present their works as the reason they should get into the kingdom. They are not expecting kingdom entrance simply based on faith in Christ for the everlasting life He promises. Indeed, they do not mention His promise of life or their faith in Him.

Schreiner does not mention other uses of the expression “the will of my Father.” But it is clear that “the will of the Father” concerning kingdom entrance is *believing in His Son* (John 6:39–40; see also Matt 21:28–32 and the linkage of believing John the Baptist's preaching concerning Jesus with doing the will of the Father).

Second, Schreiner cites Matt 25:31–46, the judgment of the sheep and the goats. He calls this “a memorable scene of the final judgment.”²¹ Yet this text does not concern the final judgment, i.e., the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11–15). At that judgment all the unbelieving dead will be raised and brought there. But in the judgment of the sheep

¹⁸ R. T. France says, “Matthew designed his Gospel to be of practical value in the teaching and leadership of the church” (*Matthew*, Tyndale Series [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985], 21; see also 17, 20). Likewise, Leon Morris favorably cites Stendahl who calls Matthew “a handbook for teaching and administration within the church” (Matthew [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992], 5).

¹⁹ Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 199.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 200.

²¹ *Ibid.*

and the goats, the Lord is only looking at Gentiles who have not died during the Tribulation. Among these are believers (sheep) and unbelievers (goats).²²

At the end of the Tribulation the only believers who will survive it will be those who endured in the faith as the Lord said at the start of the Sermon (Matt 24:13, 22). “Inheriting the kingdom” (Matt 25:34) refers not simply to getting into it, but to ruling in it. Compare Matt 19:29 (“inheriting eternal life”), Gal 6:8–9 (“reaping everlasting life”), and 2 Tim 2:12 (“if we endure, we shall also reign with Him”).

B. JOHN’S GOSPEL AND FIRST EPISTLE

Schreiner cites John 3:36 and the expression “he who does not obey the Son shall not see life” (NASB).²³ Yet that saying is preceded by “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life.” The issue is belief or unbelief. Unbelief can rightly be called disobedience since the Father commands all to believe in His Son (Matt 3:17; 17:5; Mark 9:7; John 6:39–40).

He says, “First John is even more emphatic about the necessity of obedience [for salvation]. Those who want to be ensured of their new life must keep Jesus’ commands (1 John 2:3).”²⁴ Yet 1 John 2:3 says, “By this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.” Knowing Christ is not the same as being born again. One is born again by faith. One can only know Christ in His experience by walking in the light of God’s Word (1 John 1:7–9). This is a fellowship issue, not a relationship issue.

²² Lou Barbieri entitled Matt 25:31–26, “The Coming Judgment on Gentiles” (“Matthew,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, eds John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck [Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor, 1983], 2:80). He adds, “This is not the same as the great white throne judgment, which involves only the wicked and which follows the Millennium (Rev. 20:13–15). The judgment of Gentiles will occur 1,000 years earlier...” (p. 80). Similarly, William MacDonald calls this section, “The King Judges the Nations” (*Believer’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Art Farstad [Dallas, TX: Thomas Nelson, 1995], 1299). He adds, “The nations, or Gentiles (the Greek word can mean either)...will be judged according to their treatment of Christ’s Jewish brethren during the Tribulation” (p. 115). Note Jesus’ mention of what the sheep *did for Him* and what the goats *did not do for Him*. Later when asked He indicates that helping “My brethren” (vv 40, 45), that is, Jewish believers during the Tribulation, was helping Him.

²³ Schreiner does mention a few other texts in the Fourth Gospel, but none of them are in contexts explaining what one must do to have everlasting life (John 3:20–21; 14:15; 15:14).

²⁴ Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 201.

Schreiner understands 1 John 3:9 as teaching that “sin no longer rules and reigns in their life.”²⁵ Yet that makes no sense in light of 1 John 1:8, 10 and 5:18. Believers certainly shouldn’t let sin reign in their mortal bodies (Romans 6). But they might. And some do. A better understanding of 1 John 3:9 is that it means that the born-of-God part of us never sins—at all. We are sinless in our new life (what some call *the new nature*).²⁶

The author ends this section trying to back track on what he has been saying: “The obedience that saves, then, doesn’t qualify us to be members of the people of God. It indicates that we are truly trusting in Christ, that we are members of his people.” Notice the words, “the obedience that saves.” According to Schreiner, it is not *faith alone* that saves. It is *obedience* that saves.

To later say obedience indicates that “we are truly trusting in Christ” is hard to understand. Was Peter not a believer when he denied Jesus three times? Were he and Barnabas not believers when “they were not straightforward about the truth of the Gospel” (Gal 2:14)? Are we to understand that Judas was “truly trusting in Christ” since he followed Jesus for three and a half years?

C. PAUL

Here Schreiner cites Romans 2 and Gal 5:19–21 and 6:7–9.

He only devotes one paragraph to Romans 2. There he says, “Paul emphasizes the necessity of good works *for final salvation*. God repays each person ‘according to his works’ (Rom 2:6).”²⁷ He does acknowledge my position: “Some have taken these verses to be hypothetical.”²⁸ That is, someone living a sinless life *could* be saved on that basis. But none ever have. We have all fallen short of God’s glory. Hence, the offer of salvation on the basis of works is hypothetical.

Schreiner rejects that view saying, “but the conclusion of Romans 2 shows that the hypothetical reading isn’t convincing, for we see that those who obey do so because of the work of the Spirit in them (2:26–29).” He suggests that the works are “the result of the supernatural work

²⁵ Ibid., 202.

²⁶ See, for example, Zane Hodges, *The Epistles of John* (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999, 2015), 140–44.

²⁷ Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 202, emphasis added.

²⁸ Ibid.

of the Spirit in their lives. Hence their obedience doesn't earn or merit eternal life but is the result of the new life they already possess."²⁹

His view puzzles me. What he calls "final salvation" requires good works. And Schreiner says final salvation is "God repay[ing] each person 'according to his works' (Rom 2:6)." Payment for work done is not justification by grace through faith. According to Paul in Rom 4:4, "Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt." Then in Rom 4:5 he says, "But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness." His understanding of Romans 2 is directly contradicted by Rom 4:4–5 which he does not discuss here. (Of course, it is also contradicted by Rom 3:21–28; Gal 2:16; and Eph 2:8–9).

How does he harmonize his view that the people doing the good works "already possess eternal life" with Rom 2:7 which says "eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality"? If Rom 2:7 is not hypothetical but actual, then eternal life is not a present possession, but is something which is received after someone perseveres to the end of life in doing good.

Nothing in Rom 2:26–29 shows that the hypothetical view is wrong. Indeed, vv 26-27 must be hypothetical in light of Rom 3:21–28 and 4:4–5. And Rom 2:28–29 points at faith in Christ, not works of the law.

Concerning Gal 5:19–21 and Gal 6:7–9 Schreiner says, "Sowing to the Spirit, then, is imperative to obtain eternal life, while those who sow to the flesh will experience the final judgment."³⁰

Here again Schreiner is teaching a linear view of conversion. Notice that he says that one does not obtain eternal life at the moment he believes in Him. Instead he says that one will obtain eternal life in the future if he sows the Spirit in this life.

Sowing and reaping are the language of farming. That is the language of hard work. Contrast that with Eph 2:8–9 and salvation which is past tense ("you have been saved") and which is "not of works, lest anyone should boast."

In Gal 5:9–21 and 6:7–9 Paul is speaking of a possible future reaping of fullness of everlasting life. While all believers have and always will have everlasting life, only those who sow to the Spirit will reap a full experience of that life forever.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 203.

D. JAMES

Here Schreiner once again discusses James 2. This time, however, he does concede that some understand the justification of Abraham and Rahab as being *before men* and not *before God*. He says, “Theologically, this solution is on the right track, but lexically it isn’t convincing.”³¹ Schreiner gives no lexical reason for it not being convincing. On the contrary, see the evidence I provided above which shows that *dikaioō* indeed can and does refer at times to vindication before men.

Schreiner cites as proof of his view James’s mention of Gen 15:6 in Jas 2:23. Yet what he fails to note is that James is not pointing to Gen 15:6 when he speaks of Abraham being justified by the offering up of Isaac. James is referring to Genesis 22, which occurred decades after Abraham was justified before God. Compare Rom 4:2, “For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.” To whom then, might Abraham have something to boast about? Men, of course. Abraham’s offering up of Isaac is considered within Judaism and Christianity to be the greatest act of piety ever. James (and Paul) are saying that Abraham was justified, that is, vindicated, before men when he offered up Isaac.

VI. CONCLUSION

At the start of Chapter 16 in the book *Faith Alone—The Doctrine of Justification*, Schreiner says, “The New Testament clearly teaches that bare faith cannot save, and that works are necessary for final justification or final salvation.”³²

He says this repeatedly in Chapter 16. That statement is not some slip up on his part. That is what he is arguing the Bible teaches and the Reformers taught.

However, the expression “bare faith” is synonymous with “faith alone.” How can justification be by faith alone and yet not by bare faith? How can good works be required for justification if the only condition is faith?

So according to the author, the doctrine of justification by faith alone really means that the person who follows and obeys Christ and produces

³¹ *Ibid.*, 205.

³² *Ibid.*, 191.

an abundance of good works will reap final justification and final salvation. Or, stated oppositely, the person who stops following and obeying Christ will not reap final justification and final salvation. Chapter 16 is a call for the reader to keep working hard for the Lord so that he might be rewarded with final salvation and final justification.

I know that Dr. Schreiner is a gifted scholar, but respectfully, his position on justification by faith alone makes no sense. For whatever reason, he is advocating a position that is at odds with the Bible.

AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF THE LORD’S LOGION ON THE “SALVATION OF THE *PSYCHĒ*”¹

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I. INTRODUCTION

In Matt 16:25–26 Jesus is speaking to His disciples and makes the following statement:²

For whoever wants to save his *psychē* will lose it; but whoever loses his *psychē* for My sake will find it. For what will a man be profited if he gains the whole world and forfeits his *psychē*? Or what will a man give in exchange for his *psychē*?

The phrase “salvation of the *psychē*” is found in five other passages in the Gospels. Two of those are in the parallel accounts of Mark 8:35–37 and Luke 9:24–25. The other occurrences are in Matt 10:39, Luke 17:33, and John 12:25.³ The repetition of the phrase indicates its importance for the Lord.

The phrase is also important because many commentaries give the phrase the meaning of “salvation from eternal damnation.”⁴ The word

¹ Editor’s Note: This article is a condensed version of Jerry Pattillo’s Th.M. thesis, written in 1978, while a student at Dallas Theological Seminary. The footnotes are as they appeared in the original thesis.

² This statement is referred to as the “logion” in this thesis and simply means “saying.”

³ It will be argued later that the phrase in Matthew 16 is used metaphorically. There are some passages, such as Luke 6:9, where a similar phrase is used literally. This thesis, however, will only deal with the metaphorical uses of the phrase.

⁴ See, for example, R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1961), 643–46.

psychē in these commentaries is understood to refer to the immaterial part of man which transcends his earthly life. Thus the phrase which speaks of saving the *psychē* means the preserving of the person for life after death, and when it speaks of losing the *psychē* the reference is to the state of eternal damnation in hell. If this is the case, these passages tell the reader what is required for eternal salvation.

The interpretation that holds that it is talking about eternal salvation presents a serious theological problem. The phrase generally occurs within a context of suffering. In Matthew 16, Christ says that those who wish to follow Him must be willing to suffer with Him and deny themselves. If the phrase and this context are interpreted as soteriological, then one must conclude that a requirement for salvation is the willingness to deny everything and follow Christ, even if it means suffering. A person who does not follow Christ to this degree is not saved. This seems to contradict passages such as John 3:16 and Eph 2:8–9, where simple faith in the gospel alone is the only requirement for salvation. Most commentaries ignore this problem.

It appears that there are only two ways to solve this dilemma. One can redefine the requirements for salvation. For example, the word “faith” in verses like John 3:16 can be said to include the idea of denial and suffering. The other option is to look at the phrase “salvation of the soul” in a non-soteriological sense. This article will argue that the phrase should be interpreted in a non-soteriological manner.⁵ If done so, the apparent conflict in the requirements for salvation will be eliminated.

II. COMMON INTERPRETATIONS

Some commentaries are unclear on the meaning of the phrase.⁶ Commentaries that do comment on the meaning usually understand it in one of two ways. Some see it completely within a soteriological framework. They understand Christ to be talking about the salvation of

⁵ Editor’s note: The term “soteriological” can have a temporal meaning as deliverance from physical dangers. But here Pattillo uses the term to refer exclusively to eternal salvation.

⁶ For example, Bernard in his commentary on John in the ICC series is unclear on the meaning of the phrase when he states that “the true life of man is achieved only through sacrifice.” It is difficult to determine what he means by this statement. J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, ed. A. H. McNeile, ICC, 2 vols (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), 2:433.

an individual from eternal damnation to eternal life. Others, however, take the view that the saying is a statement that Christ makes to His disciples, who were Christians, concerning the way to obtain a richer future life with eternal rewards.

It should be noted that this article treats the word "Christian" and "disciple" as meaning different things. A disciple is a Christian who totally follows Christ. But there are also Christians who are not willing to follow Christ to this degree, even though they have believed in Him for everlasting life. Thus, the second view is stating that the logion is a reward for those Christians who fall in this special class of being "disciples." All other Christians forfeit this reward. An attempt is made in this article, when referring to the second view, to only quote those writers who make a distinction between a "disciple" and a "Christian." There are some commentators who appear to support the second view because they focus on the reward aspect of the logion, but these commentaries will be omitted if it cannot be determined that they make this distinction.⁷

Lane is an example of one who sees the logion in a soteriological sense. In Mark 8:35–37, he interprets the whole context as referring to salvation for eternal life. The call to "follow" Christ in v 34 does not possess the technical meaning of "discipleship," but refers to the common commitment to Jesus that all Christians have. On the paradox of 8:35, Lane says that Jesus warns us that the man who seeks to secure his own existence brings about his "destruction." Paradoxically, the one who yields his life to Jesus "safeguards it in a deeper sense." His soteriological understanding of the logion not only comes through with the phrase "safeguards it in a deeper sense," but also in his understanding of the word "destruction." Lane says that there is a "distinction between eternal loss and salvation."⁸

Lenski also takes the logion in a soteriological manner. He takes the whole context of Matt 16:24–27 in that sense. To deny oneself in 16:24 refers to Christian conversion. To deny oneself is to enter into a new

⁷ For example, Tasker seems to support the reward view when he states that a man must find his true self in order to receive a reward on the day of judgment. But it cannot be determined whether he means that only some Christians receive rewards or all Christians receive them. R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), 161.

⁸ William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans., 1974), 307–308

relationship with Christ. To “save the *psychē*” means to secure for it what this world affords. A man need not die to lose his *psychē*, for he loses it when he fails to secure salvation.⁹

It appears that Lenski also sees two different meanings in the word *psychē* in Matt 16:25–26. In v 25 he says that the *psychē* makes the body alive. This is the physical meaning of the word. But in v 26, Lenski says it refers to the immaterial part of man.¹⁰ Lane evidently holds the same view, but does not point it out specifically.

Allen is not as clear and precise in his definition of the logion, but he, too, takes it in a soteriological sense. He says that the phrase in Matthew 16 means that if a man were to shrink back from martyrdom, he would “save” his physical life but would “lose” the higher life of his soul.¹¹

Others take the logion as referring to a reward that Christians who are faithful disciples of Christ will receive. Hodges sees the context of Luke 9:23–27 as one of discipleship. Christ is addressing believers and tells them what they must do if they want to follow Him as disciples. Hodges plainly states that discipleship is not a requirement for initial salvation. If Jesus is giving the requirements for eternal salvation here, nobody would ever have assurance that they had met such requirements.¹² Instead, Christ is seeking to discover how many of those who had believed in Him would stick by Him through His suffering. He tells them what it would cost to follow Him. To be His disciples would require suffering.

However, being a disciple will result in a great reward. The reward is the salvation of one’s *psychē* for eternity. Hodges seems to equate this salvation with one’s capacity to enjoy his environment as determined by the positive or negative development of his own character. To save one’s *psychē* in the present life is to enjoy the present life to the fullest, but that would hinder the development of one’s character and thus lessen one’s ability to enjoy the future life in the Kingdom. But to lose one’s *psychē* in the present is to forfeit the enjoyment of the present life in order to develop one’s character with the result that future enjoyment of the Kingdom is enhanced. This is the reward for discipleship.

⁹ Lenski, *St. Matthew’s Gospel*, 643, 646.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 418–19.

¹¹ Willoughby C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 182.

¹² Zane C. Hodges, *The Hungry Inherit* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1972), 72–73.

Hodges says that nothing in the existence of a man is eternal except the man himself. The believer is called to cultivate himself, rather than the world in which he lives. He must learn the lessons of life by entering into its most precious secrets if he wants to be prepared to enjoy the Kingdom of God. The issue for the disciple is not "what did you have," but "what did you become?"¹³

Unger supports the reward for discipleship view. He briefly comments on Matt 16:24–26 and states that Peter and the other disciples did not understand Christ's sudden prediction of His sufferings and death. They needed to be instructed in the rigors of true discipleship and rewards at the Second Coming when the King and His Kingdom would come to Israel.¹⁴

The view that the logion refers to eternal salvation has profound theological problems. It does appear to add the necessity of works to salvation. At first glance, the view that the logion deals with requirements of discipleship is to be preferred.

III. THE MEANING OF *PSYCHE*

The key to understanding the logion is to understand the meaning of the word *psychē*. The common definition of the term is "soul, life," but the term "soul" can be misleading since the common English meaning of it is the "immaterial essence" of man.¹⁵

However, in the NT it is very questionable if it refers to the total immaterial essence of man. If it does not, the soteriological view of the logion is not possible.

In the LXX, the Greek translation of the OT, the word *psychē* occurs 680 times. In 650 of those occurrences, the Hebrew word is *nephesh*. It is clear that the translators understood *psychē* to be a reflection of this Hebrew word. The word has various shades of meaning. One lexicon

¹³ Ibid., 76, 80.

¹⁴ Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1966), 400–01.

¹⁵ *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 4th rev. ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1979), 901; *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam, 1969), s.v. "soul."

lists ten major categories of meaning.¹⁶ One is that it can mean the substance of man that keeps him alive, or simply “life.”

The point of this usage is that the body and the “soul” are combined to make a living human being. The soul is the substance that makes a body become alive. The OT does not make clear what happens to the soul at death. The soul is wrapped up with a material body, and it gives life to the body. Nothing can be said about the existence of the soul in an immaterial state.¹⁷

The word in the OT can also carry the meaning of an individual man, or self. It can refer to an individual person. The word can be used to describe a person who is either dead or alive.¹⁸ In Job 9:21, for example, the word is best translated “myself.”

A third meaning is the seat of one’s appetite. The appetite can be, for example, hunger or thirst. This is connected to the immaterial part of man, but it does not refer to the totality of man’s immaterial nature, but only a small part of it, namely his appetite.¹⁹

A final major nuance of “soul” in the OT is the seat of emotions and passions. Some of these emotions are joy, sorrow, love, hate, and desire.²⁰ This meaning of the word, like the previous one, can also be connected to the immaterial part of man, but only as an aspect of it and not the total immaterial substance of man.

While there are other uses of the word “soul” in the OT, they are rare. These four major uses are the primary ones. In none of the uses can it be said that it refers to the immaterial substance of man. At the most, it only refers to one aspect of it.

IV. THE GREEK BACKGROUND OF *PSYCHE*

The Greek uses of *psychē* would include the ones discussed above, found in the OT uses of *nephesh*. However, in the Greek world *psychē* did come to refer to the whole immaterial substance of man. The first use of *psychē* as the immaterial substance of man is hard to pinpoint;

¹⁶ *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907, 1978), 659–61.

¹⁷ Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker, 2 vols (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1964), 2:135.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:137.

¹⁹ BDB, 660.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

however, by around 500 BC we find the idea that the body is the tomb of the soul. It is the essential core of man that can be separated from his body and does not share in the dissolution of the body.²¹

This use of *psychē* as the essential core of man was probably made most popular in the writings of Plato.²² He also thought of the body as the tomb of the soul and as the source of impurities in the soul. Plato's writings are probably the primary reason why *psychē* became connected with the total immaterial substance of man. The main difference between this Platonic use of *psychē* and the previous uses, which one finds for the word in the OT, can be seen in the connotation that each use assumes about the nature of man. Although *nephesh* had various nuances, it was always viewed in reference to the totality of man.

The Platonic use of *psychē*, however, focuses upon man as a dual object. The Greeks began to view the "soul" as alive after death, whereas the Hebrews would not make that distinction. The Hebrews saw man as a unitary organism.²³

Since the concept of the *psychē* as an entity that exists after death arose with the Greeks and not from the Hebrew Scripture, it is very questionable whether the NT writers used the word in this manner. However, we must look at the nuances of the word as used by the NT writers. Did they use it to refer to the immaterial nature of man?

V. THE NEW TESTAMENT USE OF *PSYCHE*

The word *psychē* occurs 102 times in the NT. Since it is a reflection of the Hebrew word *nephesh*, it is not surprising that it has many shades of meaning. One lexicon says that the many meanings often make it "impossible to draw hard and fast lines between the meanings of this many-sided word."²⁴ For the purpose of this discussion four major uses and one minor use will be defined.

²¹ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 9:611.

²² Zane Hodges, class notes of student in 226 General Epistles, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 1976.

²³ Glenn E. Whitlock, "The Structure of Personality in Hebrew Psychology," *Interpretation* 14 (1960): 9–10.

²⁴ BAG, 901.

Since these five uses do not include the Greek use of *psychē* as the total immaterial substance of man that transcends his earthly existence, and since this meaning is often read into the word, a brief discussion will look at the possibility of *psychē* having this meaning in the NT. The NT uses the word *psychē* in the following ways:

A. IN REFERENCE TO THE PHYSICAL LIFE

There are many instances in the NT in which *psychē* refers to the literal physical life of an individual. This nuance appears to be different from any of those cited above for *nephesh*. This use of the word occurs in Matt 2:20; 20:28; Mark 3:4; 10:45 and Luke 6:9. Taking Luke 6:9 as an example, Christ encounters a man with a withered hand and asks those in the synagogue whether or not is it permissible to save a man's "soul" on the Sabbath.

The fact that Jesus uses the word *psychē* here in the physical sense is proven by the fact that the issue is whether or not He can *physically* heal this man's hand. John also uses *psychē* in a physical sense in his many references to Christ laying down His *psychē* for Christians (John 10:11, 15, 17; 15:13; 1 John 3:16). This nuance of *psychē* is also used in Pauline writings referring to the physical life of Elijah, Paul, and Epaphroditus (Rom 11:3; 16:4; Phil 2:30).

B. IN REFERENCE TO INDIVIDUAL PERSONS

Many times *psychē* is used simply as a way of saying a "person" or "persons." In Acts 2:41 Luke records that there were three thousand "souls" baptized on the day of Pentecost. In Rom 13:1 Paul says that every "*psychē*" is to be in subjection to the government. The word is also used in this sense in Acts 2:43; 3:23; 7:14; 27:37; 1 Pet 3:20; and 2 Pet 2:14. This nuance of *psychē* as a substitute for an individual is a reflection of one of the nuances of *nephesh* cited above.

C. IN REFERENCE TO THE REFLEXIVE "SELF"

Arndt and Gingrich point out that many Semitic languages use *nephesh* in a reflexive sense.²⁵ Since *psychē* corresponds to *nephesh*, one may look for this nuance of *psychē* in the NT. It does appear that this is the case, and would be the third major use of *psychē*. In John 10:24, the

²⁵ Ibid., 902.

Jews ask Jesus how long they themselves (their *psychē*) would be kept in suspense concerning His identity.

Paul uses this sense of the word in 2 Cor 1:23 when he calls God as a witness to himself (his *psychē*). Other passages that appear to use the word in this sense include Matt 11:29; 26:28; Mark 14:34; Luke 12:19; 14:26; John 12:27; 2 Cor 12:15; Heb 12:17; and 3 John 2.²⁶

D. IN REFERENCE TO THE INNER SELF WHICH EXPERIENCES PLEASURES AND SORROWS

The fourth and final major use of *psychē* in the NT is in reference to the inner self within an individual that experiences the joys and sorrows of life. This use approaches the Greek use of *psychē* as the immaterial part of man in that this use is one aspect of man's immaterial nature. However, it does not refer to man's total immaterial being. In addition, it is not separated from the total nature of man. This use is seen in Luke 12:19-23. The rich man has stored many goods so that his *psychē* can rest, eat, drink, and be joyous. In Matt 6:25, the *psychē* receives the benefits of eating and drinking. The *psychē* experiences joy or sorrow in Matt 12:18; 26:38; Mark 14:34; Luke 1:46; and Heb 10:38.

E. IN REFERENCE TO A LIFE-GIVING SUBSTANCE

One minor use of *psychē* should be noted. Like *nephesh*, in Acts 20:10 *psychē* seems to refer to the substance that gives life to an individual. In this verse Paul states that Eutychus's *psychē* is in him. The presence of the *psychē* was an indication of life.

F. IN REFERENCE TO THE IMMATERIAL NATURE OF MAN

It is very questionable whether the Greek use of *psychē* as referring to the total immaterial nature of man, and used by Plato and others, is found in the NT. Arndt and Gingrich include this meaning under the category of "the 'soul' as the seat and center of life that transcends the earthly,"²⁷ but it is very difficult to prove that the passages that Arndt and Gingrich cite under this category use *psychē* in this manner. In all the passages cited, except possibly one, this meaning of *psychē* must be

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

read into the passage. There is not one single passage in which the context defines *psychē* as being a transcendent immaterial substance.

The only possible exception is Matt 10:28, where God is said to be able to destroy the *psychē* in hell but the *psychē* cannot be destroyed by men. The use of *psychē* as the total immaterial substance of man is certainly possible here, but if this is the only clear use with this meaning out of 102 uses of *psychē* in the NT one might look for another meaning here as well.

It is also possible that all of the passages cited by Arndt and Gingrich in this category use *psychē* as the total immaterial nature of man, but one must ask whether or not this is the most probable use. Is it more probable that a common meaning from secular Greek (that *psychē* is the total immaterial nature) should be read into *psychē*, or should the exegete interpret it in a manner that is consistent with the majority of the uses of *psychē* in the NT and OT? The latter option seems to be the most plausible.

G. CONCLUSION

There are four major and one minor use of *psychē* in the NT. It refers to the physical life, individuals, the reflexive “self,” the inner self which experiences the pleasures and sorrows of life, as well as the life giving substance. It does not seem probable that it has the meaning of the total immaterial substance of man in the NT, even though some have read that meaning in some passages. Due to its wide range of meaning, in any given passage one must not read into the word a fixed meaning. The meaning of *psychē* in each occurrence, including in the logion under question, must be determined by the context. Specifically, one should not read into the word the English concept of “soul” as the total immaterial nature of man, especially since this concept originates in secular Greek. It is very questionable whether the Bible uses *nephesh* or *psychē* in this manner.

VI. THE MEANING OF THE LOGION IN MATTHEW 16, MARK 8 AND LUKE 9

Not only does the soteriological interpretation of the logion have the theological problem of adding works to the free offer of eternal life, it generally reads into *psychē* the meaning of the transcendent immaterial nature of man. Since this meaning is very questionable, it is necessary to look for another interpretation. It does appear that the view of the logion as a reward for faithful discipleship has a lot of merit.

In order to give a proper meaning to the logion, one must make a detailed study of the context. Since the two common interpretations given to the logion are that it is either soteriological or that it is a reward for faithful discipleship, the question needs to be asked which interpretation the context supports. There are at least three contextual indications that prove that Jesus is discussing rewards for faithful service.

A. THE AUDIENCE

The first indication is the spiritual level of the audience Jesus is addressing. Both Mark and Luke seem to indicate that Jesus is speaking to both the multitudes and the disciples when He gives the logion (Mark 8:34; Luke 9:24). One might conclude, since Jesus is also speaking to the multitudes, that He is offering eternal life to unbelievers. However, two factors indicate that Jesus is addressing believers.

First, His message here is vastly different from clear salvation messages. With Nicodemus in John 3 and the woman at the well in John 4, Christ offers eternal salvation as a free gift to those who believe in Him. Nowhere when talking to them does He state that one must take up a cross for eternal salvation.

A second and more important factor which proves Christ is addressing believers is that Matthew states that Christ is addressing His disciples (Matt 16:24), and omits the multitudes. This indicates that Jesus' words were directed toward and applied to the disciples.

The disciples had already believed in Him (John 2:11), so Christ must be talking about more than the requirements for eternal salvation. Christ seems to be addressing the disciples and all the multitude present as believers, and He is instructing them in the requirements for those who want to totally follow Him, which is a step beyond initial saving faith. Even Lane, who interprets the logion as soteriological, states that

the multitude represents believers.²⁸ Since Christ is addressing believers, the context indicates that Christ is not talking about eternal salvation in the logion. This, in turn, would support the rewards interpretation.

B. THE REWARDS VIEW EXPLAINS THE PARADOX

The second contextual indication in support of the rewards viewpoint is that it is the only view that can adequately explain the paradox through which Christ spoke to the multitude. Christ's statement that "whoever should want to save his *psychē* will lose it; but whoever should lose his *psychē* on behalf of me will save it," seems to be a contradiction of terms. It is obvious that this statement cannot be understood in the literal sense if *psychē* refers to the physical life. One cannot literally die and save his physical life at the same time. One must look for a deeper, metaphorical sense.

In interpreting the paradox, one must be consistent in interpreting the parallel elements in the same manner. That which a person wants to save in the first half of the paradox must be the same as that which a person loses in the second half. To make it simpler, the paradox can be divided into four clauses as follows:

Clause 1. For whoever should want to save his *psychē*

Clause 2. will lose it;

Clause 3. But whoever should lose his *psychē* on behalf of Me

Clause 4. he will save it.

If the saving of the *psychē* is physical in clause 1, then it must also be physical in clause 3; if it is metaphorical in clause 1, then it must be metaphorical in clause 3. If the losing of *psychē* is physical in clause 2, then it must be physical in clause 4; if metaphorical in clause 2, then it must be metaphorical in clause 4. All four clauses cannot be interpreted in the physical sense, because the paradox would not make sense. Thus, the possibilities for interpretation that remain are as follows:

1. Clauses 1 and 3 are physical, and clauses 2 and 4 are metaphorical
2. Clauses 1 and 3 are metaphorical, and clauses 2 and 4 are physical
3. All four clauses are metaphorical

²⁸ Lane, *Mark*, 306.

The second possibility is not very logical. No matter what metaphorical meaning is given to clauses 1 and 3, it is questionable to assert that one's desire will determine whether or not one's physical life will continue as clauses 2 and 4 state. Thus only possibilities 1 and 3 remain to explain the paradox.

The reward for faithful discipleship view is correct because that view is the only one that adequately explains the paradox. If clauses 1 and 3 refer to one's physical life, and clauses 2 and 4 refer to eternal salvation, then the same theological problem exists of eternal salvation obtained by works or by a willingness to totally follow Christ, which are doctrines foreign to Scripture. If all four clauses are interpreted metaphorically as referring to eternal salvation, the statement does not make sense. It would read, "whoever wants to eternally save his live will lose it eternally, but whoever wants to lose his life eternally will eternally save it." If all the clauses are used metaphorically, then it is most likely that they are given the same metaphorical meaning. The view that the logion refers to a reward for faithful discipleship adequately explains the paradox.

C. THE CONTEXT DEALS WITH REWARDS

A third contextual indication supports the rewards view as well. In the context, Christ seems to be talking about rewards. In Matt 16:27, Jesus says that when He returns He is going to recompense every man according to his deeds. Mark and Luke state that Christ is going to be ashamed of those who are ashamed of Him.

First Corinthians 3:12–15 seems to indicate that some believers will receive much reward while others will not. In Mark and Luke, the discipline directed toward those who are not rewarded is not that they are cast out from the presence of Christ, but only that He is ashamed of them. Hodges points this out:

But some were there of whom He was ashamed! He said nothing of casting them out, nothing of banishing them from Him, only that He was ashamed of them, amidst the splendor all around. If they were there, they had to possess the gift of life.²⁹

It has already been seen that in at least clauses 2 and 4, *psychē* cannot refer to physical life. The uses of *psychē* that indicate an individual

²⁹Hodges, *The Hungry Inherit*, 78.

person or to the substance that makes a body alive may also be ruled out because they would not make sense in the paradox. That leaves only the uses of *psychē* in the reflexive sense or in reference to that part of man which experiences joys and sorrows. The use of *psychē* in the reflexive sense, however, would really not satisfy the requirement of a metaphorical meaning required by clauses 2 and 4. In the passages cited above where *psychē* is used in a reflexive sense, one sees that it is just another way of referring to an individual. It is never used in a metaphorical sense. But such a sense is necessary in clauses 2 and 4.

However, the reflexive use of the word is relevant when it comes to the English translation. Following the paradox, Mark and Matthew use the phrase “his soul” (*psychē autou*). In Luke, the phrase is omitted and the reflexive “himself” (*eauton*) is used. “His soul” must have the same meaning as “himself.” Thus, the reflexive “himself” translation is used. However, a deeper metaphorical meaning can also be given to the word.

The only use of *psychē* that remains is that it refers to that part of man that experiences the joys and sorrows of earthly life. However, when one inserts this meaning directly into the logion, the meaning seems illogical because one cannot actually lose that part of himself which experiences joys and pleasures, he can only lose the experiences themselves.

However, *psychē* here can be a metonymy of the subject.³⁰ If the *psychē* is the part of man that enjoys the joys and pleasures of life, here it is substituted for the joys and pleasures it experiences. To save the *psychē* would be to cling to and keep the joys and pleasures connected with one’s existence. To lose the *psychē* would mean to give up the enjoyment of the joys and pleasures connected with one’s earthly life. It seems that Jesus is using *psychē* as a metonymy of subject in the logion. It refers to the pleasures that the *psychē* enjoys.

If all four clauses are understood metaphorically, the logion can be understood as saying that the man who saves his *psychē* by enjoying all the pleasures of this age to its fullest measure, will lose his *psychē* eternally because he will lose the ability to enjoy the pleasures of the age to come. The man who loses his *psychē* in this age by giving up the pleasures of this age for the sake of Christ and His gospel will be able to enjoy the pleasures of the age to come. That which a man saves in this age, he will lose for eternity. That which he gives up in this age, he will

³⁰ E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1968), 538.

receive back for eternity. The salvation of the *psychē* is a reward for those willing to give up the pleasures of this age for Christ. Those who do not receive this reward will not be able to enjoy the age to come like those who do receive it. The salvation deals with one's ability to enjoy pleasure in the age to come.

The character of the man who saves his *psychē* in this age can be described as selfish and disobedient. That character will not exist in the age to come. Such a Christian will thus have nothing to show for his time spent in this age since he focused on temporary things. While he will be transformed into the image of Christ (1 John 3:2), he will suffer real loss in that age.

The character of the man who loses his *psychē* in this age for Christ is sacrificial and obedient. Such characteristics will endure into the age to come. He will be for eternity what he became in this age. One saves his privilege to enjoy eternity based on the kind of character he developed in this age. Thus, in essence, it can be said that one will save or lose "himself" for eternity based on his actions in this age. "Himself" is a metonymy of the subject, where it is used for all that a man enjoys.

But in a second sense it stands for the character of the man, since the ability of the man to enjoy the age to come depends upon the character he has developed. The man who saves himself in this age by enjoying its fullest pleasures at the expense of Christ's work will lose himself in the age to come because he will not be able to enjoy its pleasures since he did not develop a character able to enjoy it. But the man who loses himself in this age by giving up its fullest pleasure for the purpose of Christ's work will in effect be saving himself for the age to come because he will enjoy that age to its fullest since he developed a character able to do so.

VII. CONCLUSION

The logion is found in a context where Christ is addressing believers. Therefore, it cannot be soteriological in nature. The view that it refers to a reward for faithful discipleship has much merit since the context is one that deals with rewards, deals with totally following Christ, and satisfies the requirements of a metaphorical meaning within the paradox.

The use of *psychē* as that part of man that experiences joys and pleasures of earthly life is very logical within the context. The believer who clings to the pleasures in this age will suffer loss in the Kingdom because

he will not have developed a character able to enjoy the Kingdom to a greater degree. The believer who loses the pleasures in this age for the cause of Christ will develop a character able to enjoy the kingdom to its fullest. Thus, a believer can decide whether or not he will save “himself” for this world or for the Kingdom. The meaning of the logion in regards to the “salvation of the *psychē*” in the eternal sense is the preserving of the pleasures one will enjoy in eternity. This salvation, then, concerns rewards for faithful discipleship. To fully enjoy the privileges and pleasures of the Kingdom, one must lose his soul.

These ideas are expressed by Hodges:

The self-sacrificing pathway of discipleship is in reality self-preserving, for it leads to self-fulfillment in the kingdom of God. The self-seeking pathway is self-destructive, leaving behind it nothing but the shell of the person who lives on earth.³¹

The logion is a very direct statement that passes judgment on the quality of life that one lives today. If one really grasps the concepts in this logion, then many of the crucial decisions one makes in life as a servant of God can be made more intelligently. If one decides to keep his experiences of pleasures in this age, then he will lose them in the age to come. If one decides to give up those pleasures for the sake of Christ, then he will receive them back in the age to come. Each Christian can decide now what kind of person he wants to be for eternity, and that decision will determine the “salvation of the *psychē*.”³²

³¹ Zane C. Hodges, class notes of author in 226 General Epistles, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 1976.

³² Editor’s Note: The original author of this thesis has suggested that if the reader is interested in reading more about the salvation of the soul, he should obtain a book that was originally published in 1912 as a commentary on the book of Hebrews. It was republished after the thesis was written in 1978 and was not available at that time. See Philip Mauro, *God’s Pilgrims: Their Dangers, Their Resources, Their Rewards*, (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle, 1989).

THE PENTECOSTAL RESPONSE (ACTS 2:27–47)¹

H. A. IRONSIDE

...Now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost...” (Acts 2:37–38).

This brief portion of the book of Acts is one that requires very careful and thoughtful examination. A great deal of controversy has raged around it, and very many serious misconceptions have been drawn from it, so I ask that you fix your attention very particularly upon the text as I seek to expound it.

The Apostle Peter had just preached his wonderful sermon setting forth the life, the death, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had particularly emphasized the fact that the Lord Jesus came to the nation of Israel in accordance with Old Testament prophecy as their Messiah, the One they had been looking for down through the centuries, but they failed to recognize Him when He came. They rejected Him and delivered Him over to the Gentiles to be crucified, but Peter concludes with the triumphant word. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, who ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

We need to remember that the word “Christ” means “The Anointed” and is the equivalent of the Hebrew term *Mashiach* or Messiah. Our Lord Jesus is God’s anointed King. Men said, His own people said, “We will not have this Man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14). But God has

¹ Editor’s Note: Acts 2:38 has always been a hotly debated verse. The first time I heard the views expressed in this article was when I read the commentary on Acts by H. A. Ironside that was written in 1943. Reprinted here is the first part of his discussion on Acts 2:37–47, which he entitled “The Pentecostal Response.” Basically, he points out that the Jews who were told to be baptized and to repent were already regenerate. This regeneration took place in v 37. For Ironside, repentance here is not a part of saving faith and clearly comes after the reception of eternal life. In addition, this section is addressed to the nation of Israel as a whole.

raised up from the dead the One whom the nation rejected and He has confirmed His Messiahship to Him in resurrection. He has declared Him to be Lord and Messiah.

Now the effect of Peter's message was tremendous. We are told "there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men." He was addressing himself not to the ribald crowd that had been in front of Pilate's judgment hall who cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him"; but addressing primarily the devout Jews who were awaiting the coming of the Messiah, also a number of proselytes from the nations who had the same sincere expectations. And when these honest men heard Peter's proclamation, we read, "They were pricked in their heart." This was the work of the Holy Ghost. He so carried the message home to their hearts that they were deeply stirred.

There was no attempt to deny what Peter said. On the contrary, they accepted the message.

Let us be very clear about that. Having accepted the message we can be very sure of this—they were already born of God. The Apostle Peter tells us in the first chapter of his first Epistle, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever...And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

These people had heard the gospel. They were pricked to the heart, they were deeply exercised; they believed the message, and that implies necessarily they had received divine light and were regenerated. They turned to Peter and the rest of the apostles and cried out in sore distress, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Now, I want you to notice this. Their cry was not the same as the question of the Philippian jailor of which we read in the 16th chapter of this book. These brethren did not say to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what must I do *to be saved?*"² That was not in their mind at all; but they said, "Men and brethren" (and you will see from the very term of address used that they recognized their brotherhood with the men who had been preaching)—"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

What is involved in that question? I think it is very easy to understand. These, as I said, were devout men. They had been waiting earnestly, believingly, for the Messiah. Peter has just shown them the Messiah

² Emphasis added.

has come. What has happened? The nation has rejected God's anointed King. They have refused Him whom God sent to deliver them. When Pilate asked, "Shall I crucify your King?" they answered, "We have no king but Caesar." These men were troubled—the King for whom they had been waiting had come; He had been rejected. They expected Him to set up His kingdom; but He had gone away to heaven. God had seated Him on His own throne; but what about this nation He was to reign over? What were they to *do*? They really meant to ask, "Men and brethren, in view of the fact that our King has already come and our people did not realize it and He has been crucified, rejected, what, then, are we going to do?" Do get the point. It was not a question with them simply of their individual salvation. They were not considering that alone. *It was a question as to the fate of the nation to which they belonged.* What was to happen? What next? What shall we do? Is there any way the Christ who has been rejected can appear again and the people be given another opportunity? Is there any way by which the sentence can be revoked? What shall we do?

Peter said, "One thing you can do is repent." Repent! What does that mean? "Repent" means literally a change of mind—a change of mind that involves not only looking at things differently from an intellectual standpoint, but involves complete moral reformation, complete change of attitude, and so Peter says, "Repent, change your attitude." They showed what their attitude was when Christ was presented to them and they spurned Him. Now he says, "Change your attitude." Instead of spurning Him, instead of rejecting Him—receive Him! It is true He has gone away from earth, that He is not here to establish His Kingdom, but He still lives and is exalted at God's right hand. Repent. Right about-face!

Instead of going on as a part of the nation that rejected Him, change your mind, and separate from the apostate group by taking your stand for Christ.

“JESUS FOR YOU”— GERHARD FORDE ON PROCLAIMING THE PROMISES OF GOD

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I. INTRODUCTION

It is no secret that Western society has become increasingly secular.¹ The world has become disenchanting.² The ancient cathedrals are empty. Many churches, especially mainstream ones, are slowly dying. And there are even calls to banish theology—once considered the queen of the sciences—from university studies altogether.³ The fact is, for many people, God seems very distant, if not completely absent. Why? What happened?

According to Lutheran theologian Gerhard Forde (1927–2005), it was because “God has been explained to death.”⁴ Instead of proclaiming God’s promises to the people, churches have turned to endless explanations about God’s nature that have had the counterproductive effect of making Him seem even more remote. According to Forde, we must recover the church’s proclamation in order to call people to faith in Christ.

¹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007).

² Alister McGrath, *The Reenchantment of Nature: The Denial of Religion and the Ecological Crisis* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2002).

³ As Richard Dawkins quipped, teaching theology is as illegitimate in a university setting as “the study of leprechauns.” See “Theology has no place in a university,” <http://old.richarddawkins.net/articles/1698>. Accessed February 10, 2015.

⁴ Gerhard Forde, *The Preached God: Proclamation in Word and Sacrament*, eds. Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 34.

This article will present Forde's theology of proclamation, including its presuppositions, means, form, and content, and it will end with a critique and application of it from a Free Grace perspective.

II. THE ABSENCE OF GOD

Why has it become increasingly difficult to believe in God? To answer that question, Gerhard Forde pointed to a distinction Martin Luther made in *The Bondage of the Will* between *God-preached* and *God-not-preached*. This was Luther's odd, but memorable, way of distinguishing between what God has revealed about Himself (which should be preached) and what He has kept hidden about Himself (which should not be preached).

According to Luther, there are some theological problems that should not be meddled with because God has not revealed the answers to us and does not intend to. We can reverently adore these divine mysteries, but we are not to engage in endless speculations about them, and they should not be the subject of our preaching.⁵ As Luther said, "God in His own nature and majesty is to be left alone; in this regard, we have nothing to do with Him, nor does He wish us to deal with Him."⁶ We have nothing to do with the hidden God. This is God-not-preached.

Instead, what we have to "deal with" is God as He reveals Himself to us in His Word and through Jesus Christ. That is what Luther called God-preached.

Forde thought Luther's distinction between God-preached and God-not-preached helped explain why so many people find it hard to believe in God. With secularism on the rise, Christian philosophers and theologians have used ingenious arguments involving modal logic, possible worlds, and analogies of being to prove that God is metaphysically necessary. Others have sought to redefine the classical picture of God in order to make Him more acceptable to contemporary values in the belief these redefinitions of God are the only "pastoral" solution to the problem of God's absoluteness. If God seems less threatening and more like us, maybe people will believe in Him (or Her!).

⁵ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming, 1957), 169.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 170.

But according to Forde, all these attempts to describe (or to re-describe) God in the abstract only exacerbates the problem of unbelief. Not only are these explanations too sophisticated for most people to understand, even when they are intelligible they “tell us more about what God is *not* than what God *is*.”⁷ For example, teaching that God is *timelessly eternal* tells us that God does not experience time as we do. But that does not give us something positive to believe about God; it only confirms how different He is from us. People are left with the feeling that God is even more abstract and distant than He was before.

And what is even worse, Forde argued that some people are actually *terrified* by God-not-preached because He is so impersonal and absolute. For some, it is frightening to think that God has the power to do as He wills with creation, including what to do with our eternal destiny. In light of His naked sovereignty “we are left with nothing—no significance, no freedom, no place to stand.”⁸ God-not-preached seems to threaten our very existence.

In the end, these uncertain speculations about God in the abstract do not lead to faith. “Instead of a word from God we hear theological opinions about God.”⁹ And people find it very hard to stake their lives on an opinion.

Given these problems, how does Forde propose that we bridge the gap between man and God, and between unbelief and belief?

Instead of offering even more sophisticated speculations about God-not-preached, God Himself needs to enter into the discussion and speak to us directly. “The only solution to the problem of the abstract, naked, absconding God is the proclamation: God preached.”¹⁰

III. WHAT PROCLAMATION IS NOT

Before exploring what Forde thought proclamation was, let us first try to understand what he thought it was not.

⁷ Gerhard O. Forde, *Theology Is for Proclamation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 16, emphasis added.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

A. PROCLAMATION IS NOT SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

According to Forde, proclamation is not the same thing as doing systematic theology. For one, there is an important grammatical difference between the two. Systematic theology belongs to what Forde calls “the sphere of secondary discourse.”¹¹ What makes it secondary discourse is that systematic theology is usually written as third-person, past-tense,¹² “words *about* God.”¹³ Consequently, systematic theology gives us information about God. While that is very important to have, mere information has a serious limitation.

Forde compares systematic theology to a book about love. Books about love serve an important function insofar as they can help us understand what it means to love someone. But writing a book about love is not the same thing as telling your daughter that you love her. *Books about love are no substitute for the proclamation of love itself.* The same point can be made about systematic theology. Information is not the same as proclamation.

However, Forde says that systematic theology should lead to proclamation. Systematic theology “attempts to put things in order, to focus, to lend coherence, and to measure the church’s discourse on the basis of established norms, scripture, the creeds, and confessional documents.”¹⁴ If done well, systematic theology should make proclamation “*the necessary and indispensable final move in the argument.*”¹⁵ For example, systematic theology gives us information about the atonement, forgiveness, and eternal life. What will you do with that information? For Forde, it must lead to proclamation. But systematic theology itself is not identical to proclamation.

B. PROCLAMATION IS NOT EXEGESIS

Proclamation is not the same as doing Biblical exegesis. When a preacher studies a Biblical passage he identifies its genre and context within a book. He looks at style, grammar, and word choices. Then the

¹¹ Ibid., 3.

¹² Ibid., 41.

¹³ Ibid., 2, emphasis his.

¹⁴ Ibid., 3.

¹⁵ Ibid., 5, emphasis his.

preacher can begin to draw out the theological meaning and practical applications of the passage.

But like systematic theology, all of these studies can stay at the level of secondary discourse and only give information about the Biblical texts. Although there is no doubt that Biblical exegesis supports proclamation and should ultimately lead to it, the two are not identical. The Biblical exegete may spend all his time relating the historical and cultural details about the life of Abraham, for example, and never reach the level of proclaiming the Biblical promises to the congregation.

C. PROCLAMATION IS NOT PREACHING

Forde also distinguished between proclamation and preaching. When a pastor preaches a sermon, he may do a number of things that do not count as proclamation. He can spend the time talking about the history of God’s actions, or explain the grammatical and historical meaning of a verse, or draw out the systematic implications of a particular belief.

In other words, preaching, like systematic theology, can confine itself entirely to speaking *about* God without ever speaking *for* God. The preacher can speak about a text, without addressing the congregation, or the individual, with God’s promise to them.

IV. WHAT PROCLAMATION IS

So what makes proclamation a unique form of discourse, different from Biblical exegesis, systematic theology, and preaching? In this section I develop six aspects of Forde’s theology of proclamation.

A. THE GRAMMAR OF PROCLAMATION

Forde argued that a distinguishing mark of proclamation is its *grammar*. Writers and preachers often like to employ the pronoun “we” as a polite way to include themselves in the admonition made in the sermon. However, as J. C. Ryle cautioned, using “we” leaves a congregation “in a kind of fog.”¹⁶ In order to cut through it, we must use a *direct style* of preaching that involves “the practice and custom of saying, ‘I’ and

¹⁶ J. C. Ryle, *Simplicity in Preaching* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of the Truth, 2010), 14-15.

‘you.’”¹⁷ This is precisely the kind of direct address that Forde thinks distinguishes proclamation from other types of discourse.

As I noted above, systematic, Biblical, and historical theology are all forms of third-person “words *about* God.” By contrast, proclamation is first-person “words *from* God.”¹⁸ That is the key difference between proclamation and all other types of theological discourse.

Forde claims that in proclamation, God Himself speaks to the people through the preacher. The preacher actually and truly speaks for God, in His name, on His authority, announcing the “present-tense, first-to-second person unconditional promise authorized by what occurs in Jesus Christ according to the scriptures.”¹⁹ A direct address from God grabs peoples’ attention.

B. THE SHAPE OF PROCLAMATION

According to Forde, there is an important fact about man that influences the nature of what is proclaimed. As a Lutheran, Forde believed strongly in the bondage of the will, but his definition of that bondage is atypical. He thought the will was bound to reject God’s absolute sovereignty and predestination for belief in free-will: “We *will* not accept an almighty God and so are bound by our own will to construct a theology of freedom.”²⁰ Because of the bondage of the will, we prefer theologies that emphasize our self-control, self-determination, and free-will instead of trusting God to make sovereign decisions about our eternal destinies. “In effect we say to God, ‘God, I cannot trust you with my destiny, therefore I must claim at least enough freedom to control it myself.’”²¹

Given this interpretation of the bondage of the will, Forde believed that proclamation cannot be an offer, negotiation, or an “an appeal to free choice.”²² Why not? Because according to Forde the gospel is not a negotiation. God is not a salesman who is desperate to cut a deal with

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Forde, *Proclamation*, 2, emphasis his.

¹⁹ Ibid., 2.

²⁰ Gerhard O. Forde, *Where God Meets Man: Luther’s Down-to-Earth Approach to the Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1972), 24, emphasis his.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Forde, *Proclamation*, 55.

a potential customer. God is not somebody who comes “hat in hand begging, ‘Won’t somebody believe in me?’”²³

Instead, the proclamation is an unconditional *announcement* of God’s purposes in Christ and of what He has done for us on the cross, whether we believe it or not.

C. THE CONTENT OF PROCLAMATION

What is the message to be proclaimed? Here we come to the heart of Forde’s theology. Even among Lutherans, he was infamous for his emphasis on the doctrine of justification. Here is one example of Forde urging other Lutherans to return to the core message of justification:

Let us be radicals...radical preachers and practitioners of the gospel by justification by faith without the deeds of the law. We should pursue it to the radical depths already plumbed by St. Paul, especially in Romans and Galatians, when he saw that justification by faith without the deeds of the law really involves and announces the death of the old being and the calling forth of the new in hope... We should realize first of all that what is at stake on the current scene is certainly not Lutheranism as such. Lutheranism has no particular claim or right to existence. Rather, what is at stake is the radical gospel, radical grace, the eschatological nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified and risen as put in its most uncompromising and unconditional form by St. Paul.²⁴

But in order for the message of justification by faith alone to count as proclamation, the preacher must stop talking about it and actually present Jesus given *for you*. As Forde himself preached, “you are just, for Jesus’ sake!”²⁵ That is the essence of the message.

Proclaiming justification is not a third-person retelling of Jesus’ history, or an explanation of how justification works in principle, or a treatise on the histories of the justification controversies. All of those studies have their proper place. But they are not proclamation. In order

²³ Ibid., 56.

²⁴ Gerhard O. Forde, *A More Radical Gospel: Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism*, eds. Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 8.

²⁵ Gerhard O. Forde, *The Captivation of the Will*, ed. Steven Paulson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 87.

for proclamation to occur, the preacher must proclaim that Christ died *for you*, was raised *for you*, forgives *you* and justifies *you*.

D. THE RESPONSE TO PROCLAMATION

Since proclamation is a first-person address, it should elicit a first-person response from the hearer. He must either confess, pray, praise, worship,²⁶ or above all, believe or reject the promise.

Forde's paradigmatic example of proclamation is the absolution. In the Lutheran tradition (and many other Christian traditions) the person confesses his sins to the preacher. The preacher then pronounces forgiveness upon him, saying "I absolve you."²⁷ According to Forde, the absolution is powerful because it is unconditional and personal. There is no doubt about who is doing the absolving (God) and no doubt about who is being absolved (the one confessing). The preacher does not pronounce a general absolution upon someone, somewhere, based upon God's mercy in general. He actually looks at the person directly, addresses them by name, and pronounces their forgiveness in Christ.

For Forde, this is how to pierce the fog of unbelief and how to make an otherwise abstract God present to unbelievers. When God speaks to you personally, the message is hard to ignore. The hearer must take a stand one way or another.

E. THE POWER OF PROCLAMATION

Forde believed it was essential to recover proclamation because as a word from God, it has God's own creative power to accomplish what it promises. In other words, Forde tied proclamation to the doctrine of creation:

These words are the creative words of God. Just as God once said, "Let there be light," and there was light. He didn't consult the darkness as to whether it thought it needed the light. The darkness would never admit to that. So God speaks to show his righteousness. The words are intended to do what God's Word always does, to create out of nothing, to call something new into being, to start

²⁶ Forde, *Proclamation*, 2.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

a reformation. God, that is, has decided just to start over from scratch. So listen up!²⁸

Critics have dismissed the doctrine of justification as a mere “legal fiction.”²⁹ That complaint betrays a lack of appreciation for the doctrine of creation. There is nothing fictitious about the power of God’s Word to create out of nothing and to raise the dead to life. And it is astounding to think that He accomplishes this new creation through the preacher. As Forde writes, “The concrete moment of the proclamation is the doing of the mighty act of God in the living present. It is not a recital of past acts, but the doing of the act itself now.”³⁰

There are two ways the proclamation works on the hearers. These two ways correspond to the distinction between law and gospel. What do law and gospel do to us?

When preachers proclaim the law, *hearers are put to death*. As Paul said, the law is the ministry of death (2 Cor 3:7, 9). The law accuses.³¹ It reveals sin. It provokes sin (Rom 7:5). It increases sin (Rom 5:20) and convicts us of sin (Rom 3:20). And as we are convicted, the law serves to kill the old man. That is the effect of the law on those who hear it.

Additionally, when preachers proclaim the gospel, *hearers are brought to life*. The one who responds in faith to the proclamation of justification by faith in Christ, apart from works, is born again (John 3:3; 1 Pet 1:23). The gospel puts an end to the accusations of the law.³² It unites the believer to Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom 6:3-5). Before, there was only an old Adam (Rom 6:6), but the proclaimed Word creates a new man (Eph 4:24) and a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). The power of the proclamation is the power of God’s creative word to actually kill and make alive, changing the people who hear it.

²⁸ Forde, *Captivation*, 87.

²⁹ For example, Catholic apologist James Akin wrote, “Catholics go beyond this and say that God gives us more than merely forensic righteousness—that the righteousness he gives us is more than a legal fiction, more than just an accounting procedure. Instead, when God justifies us he actually constitutes us in righteousness.” See “Justification in Catholic Teaching.” See <http://www.ewtn.com/library/answers/justif.htm>. Accessed February 12, 2015.

³⁰ Forde, *Proclamation*, 35.

³¹ Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, 15.

³² *Ibid.*, 16.

F. THE METHOD OF PROCLAMATION

According to Forde, the promises of God are proclaimed through the spoken word and through the sacraments.³³

It is easy to understand why proclamation comes through the spoken word. The preacher (or any Christian) can speak the promises of God, in a first-person, me-to-you, direct discourse from the speaker to the hearer.

But according to Forde, the sacraments proclaim the same message as the spoken word in a non-verbal manner. For example, baptism is God's message that *you* (the baptized) are buried and raised with Christ. The Lord's Supper is the message that Jesus died and made atonement for *you* (the one partaking of the bread and wine).

Forde is careful to point out the sacraments are not "magic." They only become saving when they "succeed in creating faith."³⁴

If sin is basically unfaith, baptism is the remedy for sin because it creates faith. It gives faith something to believe, to hold to, and so saves from sin. It is a Word of God addressed directly and concretely to us. It has our name on it. There is no mistake about to whom it may be addressed.³⁵

Given their faith-creating nature, Forde says the sacraments are an *evangelical* necessity, but not a *legal* one.³⁶ They are not a *legal* necessity in the sense of being conditions for having eternal salvation. The sacraments are not works that man must do to justify himself before God. Rather, the sacraments are *evangelical* necessities in the same sense that preaching is an evangelical necessity. You can't believe the gospel until you have heard it and understood it. Faith needs an object and the sacraments provide that object. They are tangible expressions of God's promises that people can see, feel, and taste, leading them to faith.

According to Forde, the sacraments are also crucial for assurance. Without having external sacraments to believe, Forde fears that that faith will have nothing to believe but the subjective experience of believing itself. As he says, "Faith is called forth by the sacramental Word.

³³ Forde, *Radical Gospel*, 13.

³⁴ Forde, *Proclamation*, 164.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 166.

³⁶ Forde, *Preached God*, 133.

Faith is precisely a faith in the God who comes in the sacrament. Faith depends on, clings to, stands on, just this externality. Otherwise it feeds on its own internality.”³⁷

When faith turns in on itself to an internal experience, it necessarily turns away from Christ’s external and objective promises, and attempts to ground assurance on subjective feelings of being saved or having believed enough. This can only result in doubt, loss of assurance, and possibly loss of faith. Forde argues the sacraments prevent this kind of downward spiral into morbid introspection by grounding our assurance in God’s external promises and actions for us.

The sacraments also teach us that salvation is something that we receive as a gift. The sacraments comes from outside of us, from the hands of the preacher who acts as God’s representative, and is given to us personally. This emphasizes to the person who is baptized or who receives the Lord’s Supper that they are called to believe that Jesus’ saving work was done for them personally, “for you,” and to receive eternal salvation as a gift from God.³⁸ And so, God uses the sacraments in an evangelistic way. They call people to faith in Christ’s promises, and to be assured those promise are true “for me.”

V. APPLICATION TO FREE GRACE THEOLOGY

Since Forde is a Lutheran, and there are few in the Free Grace movement who belong to that tradition, any number of differences could be raised between the two schools of theology. I will leave it for the readers to read the footnotes to understand why Free Grace theology would take issue with Forde’s understanding of divine determinism,³⁹ the bondage of the will,⁴⁰ the nature of baptism,⁴¹ and election.⁴² However, the Free Grace movement can benefit from Forde’s theology of proclamation in

³⁷ Forde, *Proclamation*, 162.

³⁸ Forde, *Preached God*, 137.

³⁹ Ron Rosso, “God’s Sovereignty and Man’s Free Will: Another Look,” *Grace in Focus Magazine* (Jan/Feb 2014): 19-20

⁴⁰ Zane C. Hodges, “Man’s Role in Conversion,” *Grace in Focus Newsletter* (September 1993).

⁴¹ Art Farstad, “We Believe In: Water Baptism,” *JOTGES* (Spring 1990): 3–9; Lanny Thomas Tanton, “The Gospel and Water Baptism: A Study of Acts 2:38,” *JOTGES* (Spring 1990): 27–52 ; Lanny Thomas Tanton, “The Gospel and Water Baptism: A Study of Acts 22:16,” *JOTGES* (Spring 1991): 23–40.

⁴² Robert N. Wilkin, “The Doctrine of Election Reconsidered: Election to Service Not to Eternal Life,” *JOTGES* (Autumn 2012): 3-22.

four ways. All four serve to highlight the nature and power of preaching Christ's promises.

First, Forde's analysis shows that preaching and believing the historical details about Christ's life and mission are not the same thing as proclaiming and believing the promise of life. Free Grace theologians can agree with Forde that doing Biblical, systematic, and historical theology, while important, is not identical to proclaiming the promise of life.

Second, although Free Grace theologians will not necessarily agree with Forde about the bondage of the will, they can agree that faith in Christ for eternal life is not a matter of *deciding to believe*. While people have the freedom to search for God, to look for new evidence, to consider arguments for or against a position, and to listen to the proclamation (Luke 10:38-42), faith itself is not a decision so much as an involuntary response.⁴³ People believe the gospel because they are *persuaded* that it is true, not because they *decide* that it is true.

Third, Free Grace theologians can agree the object of saving faith is not their own (internal) act of faith, but Jesus' (external) promise of life. In moments of doubt, we do not look to our subjective experiences to see whether we have "truly believed." Instead, we look to the objective promise of the Word of God (e.g., John 3:16) and believe it. Baptism and the Lord's Supper can serve as non-verbal depictions of that same work and promise, but only if their meaning is made clear. People must understand that believing the promise, not participating in the sacraments, is necessary for eternal salvation.

Fourth, Free Grace theologians can agree that saving faith is faith in what Christ has done *for me*. It is not belief in what Jesus had done *in general*, without being assured that it is true *for me*. Saving faith includes the assurance that by virtue of His death *for me* on the cross He gave *me* eternal life and He justified *me* by faith alone, apart from works.⁴⁴

⁴³ The idea that faith is not a choice is not unique to Free Grace theology. See Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 16–17.

⁴⁴ Protestants traditionally defined faith as *notitia* (understanding), *assensus* (assent), and *fiducia* (trust). But there are two different interpretations of "trust." The first understands it in terms of doing good works. To quote John M. Frame, trust is "subjection to Christ as Lord, a willingness to obey. As James 2:14–26 says, faith must be living faith, obedient faith, faith that works, or else it is dead" (*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013], 953). This is a serious misinterpretation of James (cf. Robert N. Wilkin, "Another View of Faith and Works in James 2," JOTGES [Autumn 2002]: 3–21; Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistle of James: Proven Character Through Testing* [Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999, 2015], 59–72). But even more devastatingly, if works are a necessary condition for eternal salvation, then salvation is by

In sum, Forde correctly challenges us to prioritize our preaching. Instead of spending our time devising elaborate explanations about God’s hidden nature, endlessly speculating about divine mysteries, or engaging in controversies about historical theology, in short, instead of concentrating on God-not-preached, we must concentrate on God-preached. That is, preachers must speak for God, in His name, and proclaim His promise of life directly to the congregation. An unbeliever can dismiss a preacher’s abstract speculations about God as mere opinion. But when an unbeliever hears a word directly from God, addressed to him by name, about what Jesus has done for him, then God’s Word can be set free to pierce the fog of secularism and to call that man to faith in Christ for eternal life.

works. And if salvation is by works, we can never know if we have done enough works to be saved, meaning we can never have assurance of salvation. The second view is that “trust” means assurance that the promises of God are not just true in general, but true “for me” (cf. *Heidelberg Catechism*, Q. 21). This seems to be Forde’s view.

IS OUR UNDERSTANDING OF BAPTISM ALL WET?

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I. INTRODUCTION

Recently, Bob Wilkin wrote a book that looked at how many words in the Bible are misunderstood.¹ Perhaps another Bible word that is often misunderstood is *baptism* and its cognates: *baptize* and *baptist*. We will look at the use and meaning of this word group. The discussion will begin with a review of the meaning of the underlying Greek words and examine their usage. Afterward, I will classify and examine the various kinds of baptisms presented in the New Testament (NT). Finally, some of the more difficult passages in the NT which contain these words will be considered.

II. THE BAPTISM WORD GROUP

As the title of this article suggests, when many people think of baptism they immediately consider it to be a reference to water baptism. However, the NT presents a somewhat different and more varied picture. While many consider the word *baptism* only in reference to a rite or ritual using water, the NT presents the subject in a much broader manner.

There are five words in this word group and each one requires discussion.

¹Robert N. Wilkin, *The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible* (Corinth, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2012).

A. *BAPTŌ* (AND *EMBAPTŌ*)

First, is the verb *baptō*, which means to dip, to dip into dye, to dye, to color or to stain.² It is used only three times in the NT. In each case it refers to dipping something in a liquid. In Luke 16:24, the rich man who is in Hades cries out to Father Abraham begging him to have Lazarus *dip his finger* in water to cool his tongue because of the agony he was experiencing in the fire. In John 13:26, Jesus identifies his betrayer as the one whom he gives a morsel that was *dipped in oil* or drippings from the meal. In Rev 19:13, *Jesus' robe is dipped in blood* indicating the robe had been dyed or colored red. In each of these instances, *baptō* is used to describe something that was dipped briefly into something. Despite being part of the word group, *baptō* does not have much bearing on the subject of baptisms in the NT.

B. *BAPTIZŌ*

The second verb is *baptizō*, which has generally been transliterated (i.e., baptize) in most Bible translations. This is unfortunate since it has caused many to think of water baptism in the majority of its occurrences. But the verb is a flexible one with two primary meanings. First, it means to immerse, to submerge, to dip, or to cleanse by washing.³ The second meaning is to identify something with something else.⁴

Baptizō was used to describe a submerged ship or one that had sunk,⁵ or clothing that had been soaked.⁶ It was also used by Homer in the *Odyssey* to describe the tempering of a sword. When the hot metal was plunged into water, the sword was “baptized” so that the soft molten metal cooled and became hardened.⁷ The Greek poet Nicander (c. 200 BC) used both *baptizō* and *baptō* in a recipe for making pickles. According to the recipe, to make a pickle, the raw vegetable is first dipped (*baptō*) into boiling water and then immersed (*baptizō*) into

² BDAG, electronic via Bible Works 9.0.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Gene Cunningham, *The Basics* (Hot Springs, AR: Basic Training Bible Ministries, 1990), 82-83; W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*; via Logos Libronix Digital Library System 3.0.

⁵ Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* via Bible Works 9.0

⁶ BDAG.

⁷ Cunningham, *The Basics*, 82-83.

a vinegar solution.⁸ Both verbs suggest dipping something into liquid. However, the first dip is quick while the second one is lengthier. Over time a change results in the vegetable. By soaking in vinegar the vegetable becomes a pickle. One thing that should be clear from these ordinary uses of *baptizō* is that it refers to an immersion of some kind, usually into some kind of liquid.

In the NT, the idea of immersion is prominent in a host of passages. The most common example of this usage is water baptism: e.g. Matt 3:6, 11, 13–14, 16; 28:19; Mark 1:5, 8–9; Luke 3:7, 12, 16, 21; 7:29–30; John 1:25–26, 28, 31, 33; Acts 1:5; 2:38, 41; 8:12–13, 36, 38; 9:18; 10:47–48; 11:16; 16:15.

Baptizō was also used in a figurative sense to describe identification with something or someone. The Spartans used the verb in this manner. They would “baptize” their spears before a battle by dipping them in blood. This process did not change the physical characteristics of the weapon, but it served to identify it as a battle spear or one that had tasted blood and was ready for battle.⁹

This identification motif is also used frequently in the NT. The most prominent examples are: the baptism of Moses (1 Cor 10:1–2); the baptism of the cross (Matt 20:22–23; Mark 10:38–39; Luke 12:50); the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; Rom 6:3–4; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:5; Col 2:12); and finally the baptism of fire (Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16). These will be discussed later in this article.

C. BAPTISMA

The next word in the group is *baptisma*. This noun describes the act of baptizing or immersing, hence, baptism or immersion.¹⁰ Like the cognate verb, the word is also used for an identification.¹¹ While it has

⁸ James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1996, via Logos Libronix Digital Library System 3.0.

⁹ Cunningham, *The Basics*, 82–83.

¹⁰ Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*.

¹¹ This noun is peculiar to Christian writings according to BDAG, Thayer, Kittel, and Moulton and Milligan. In fact, Moulton and Milligan observe that the peculiarity to the NT and church writings is natural due to the manner in which the cognate verb *baptizō* was used in the NT. See James H. Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), via Logos Libronix Digital Library System 3.0.

been mostly transliterated as *baptism*, we can only wonder why translators have not translated the word as *immersion*, *soaking*, *submersion*, or by some other synonym. In the NT, *baptisma* is used in reference to the baptism of John the Baptist, Christian water baptism, the baptism of the cross, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

As we will see, the baptisms of the cross and Holy Spirit are real identifications. In the first instance, Jesus is identified with the cross and His substitutionary death for the sins of the entire world. In the baptism of the Holy Spirit, every church-age saint is identified with Jesus Christ by being placed into permanent union with Him, which includes being placed into His body. It should be obvious that these two uses of *baptisma* describe identifications or immersions of a kind that is completely different than being immersed in water!

D. *BAPTISMOS*

Another noun used in the NT is *baptismos*. This noun describes washing or cleansing.¹² It was used to describe ritual purification washings under Jewish law and tradition.¹³ The word is used in this manner in Mark 7:4, 8, and Heb 9:10. It is also used in Heb 6:2, although this usage may not necessarily refer to ritual purification, but rather fellowship cleansing received for confession of sins. These are the only uses of the word in the NT.¹⁴

E. *BAPTISTĒS*

The final word in our group is *baptistēs*, which describes one who performs baptisms. Hence, a translation would simply be “baptist” or “immersionist.” This word is used only to describe John the Baptist (Matt 3:1; 11:11–12; 14:2, 8; 16:14; 17:13; Mark 6:24–25; 8:28; Luke 7:20, 28, 33; 9:19). The verb *baptizō* was also used to describe John (i.e. John the Baptizer; Mark 1:4; 6:14).

John’s role illustrates well the identification aspect of this word group. After all, John was “John the Identifier.” John’s role was the prophesied forerunner of Messiah. It was his job to identify the Messiah for the nation Israel. John identified Jesus as the Messiah when he pointed

¹² BDAG, 165.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ These are the only uses according to the Majority Text. The Critical Text omits the word in Mark 7:4 but includes it in Col 2:12.

out Jesus as Israel's Passover Lamb (John 1:29). This identification was consummated with the water baptism of Jesus, which John performed (John 1:30-34).

F. CONCLUSION

What should be obvious is that baptism is more than a ritual whereby a person is immersed in water. Likewise, to baptize someone means more than immersing him or her in water. If our understanding of baptism is confined to water baptism, then our understanding is all wet! There are baptisms in the NT that involve things other than water (e.g. Holy Spirit; fire; the cross; and Moses). These baptisms do not involve water, but nevertheless are real and indicate identifications that have genuine significance. When one reads the Bible and comes across the words baptize, baptism or baptist, he or she should consider reading the text by replacing those words with identify, identification, or identifier. In many instances, it will help in understanding the passage.

III. KINDS OF BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

There are two kinds of baptisms presented in the NT. One is ritual baptism. This is the kind most people think of when the subject of baptism arises. In a ritual baptism, a person is identified with something (e.g., water), but the event itself is only a rite. For example, when someone is baptized in water, the person is immersed in it. The identification is with water and the immersion means nothing by itself. The significance of the rite is based upon what it represents.

In contrast, there are baptisms presented in the NT where a person is identified with something or someone and the identification is real. It is not a ritual, rather it is attached to a real person or event.

There are four different real baptisms presented in the NT. To make identification easier, names have been ascribed to each real baptism based on the respective NT text. We will also review the various ritual baptisms as well.

A. THE BAPTISM OF MOSES (1 COR 10:1-2)

In the Baptism of Moses the children of Israel (i.e. the Exodus generation) are identified with Moses and become united with him. As a result, they passed through the Red Sea from slavery into freedom. It is important to note that not one of them got wet! Over two million Jewish slaves were identified with God's deliverer (Moses) and became free men.

In Heb 11:29, it says that "By faith they passed through the Red Sea..." It was the belief of Moses that made the passage possible. Their union with Moses made possible their deliverance. So here we see a real identification that carried real consequences with it. Paul cites this example for the Corinthians to urge them to consider their identity with their deliverer, Jesus Christ.

**B. BAPTISM OF THE CROSS (MATT 20:22-23;
MARK 10:38-39; LUKE 12:50)**

This baptism refers to the death Jesus would experience through scourging and crucifixion on the cross. Jesus was identified with God's will to suffer and die on the cross for all the sins of mankind. So in this baptism, Jesus is immersed in death and identified with the work He must do on the cross to resolve the sin problem once and for all. Jesus expressed distress about this baptism. For Jesus, this baptism was an ordeal that He was about to undertake. It was a real event that Jesus endured.¹⁵

**C. BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (MARK 1:8; LUKE
3:16; JOHN 1:33; ACTS 1:5; 11:16; ROM 6:3-4;
1 COR 12:13; GAL 3:27; EPH 4:5; COL 2:12)**

The baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs at the moment a person believes in Jesus Christ for everlasting life. In the baptism of the Holy Spirit, every believer is baptized, immersed, or placed into union with Christ and becomes a member of His body (1 Cor 12:13). All who have been placed into the body of Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit are clothed with Christ and His righteousness (Gal 3:27). Believers are now in Christ. Believers have been taken, as it were, from the common group of humanity, that is, who they are in Adam. They are separated

¹⁵ This is a unique baptism just as Jesus' sufferings and death were unique!

from that group and placed in Jesus Christ. This is unique and special. We are no longer in Adam, but in Christ.

Consequently, every church-age saint is identified with Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit so that he or she can walk in newness of life (Rom 6:3–4). There is unity produced by the baptism of the Holy Spirit because there is only one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one belief, one God and Father, and one baptism or identification (Eph 4:4–6). In other words, NT saints are only identified with Christ one time. God only needs to do it once!

In addition, the baptism of the Holy Spirit introduces something new: Jews and Gentiles together in one body. Thus, this baptism applies only to church-age saints. Old Testament saints were never placed into union with Christ. We know this because both John the Baptist and Jesus predicted the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16). It was not a reality at the time their predictions were uttered.

D. BAPTISM OF FIRE (MATT 3:11; LUKE 3:16)

The Baptism of fire identifies those subject to it with judgment and destruction. It is found in only two passages (Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16), which are parallel accounts. John the Baptist is speaking to the crowd as well as to the Pharisees and Sadducees. John says, “as for me I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

There are three baptisms in view in John’s statement. One is his water baptism for repentance; the other two are predictions about coming baptisms (with the Holy Spirit and with fire). Interestingly, these last two baptisms appear to be set in contrast to each other. Also, it should be noted that John is speaking to a Jewish audience. Those Jews who believe in Jesus as Messiah for everlasting life will experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit once it becomes operative after Jesus’ resurrection.

In contrast, the Baptism of Fire alludes to judgment and destruction. This is the judgment of the nation Israel for rejecting the kingdom offer by Jesus the Messiah. Consequently, the nation will be identified with judgment and destruction. This is clear from Matt 3:12 in which an agricultural illustration is given. John says that Jesus, in regard to His kingdom, will “gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the

chaff with unquenchable fire.”¹⁶ The implication is that if the national Jewish leadership rejected Jesus as Messiah and His kingdom offer, Israel would be destroyed and the Jewish people scattered. It turns out the Jewish leadership, in fact, rejected Jesus as Messiah and His kingdom offer when they attributed His attesting miracles to Beelzebub (Matt 12:24). Consequently, the nation was destroyed in AD 70.

There are some who suggest that the Baptism of Fire is an identification of unbelievers with eternal punishment for rejecting Christ. While possible, this view seems to conflict with the context of the Gospel accounts. John the Baptist was addressing a Jewish audience concerning Jesus the Messiah and His kingdom offer that was being made at that time. It seems unnatural to extrapolate eternal punishment from that setting.

E. RITUAL BAPTISM

In the NT, all of the ritual baptisms are water baptisms. However, there are three distinct water baptisms so we will examine each one separately.

1. Water baptism for repentance and forgiveness of sins.

The water baptism for repentance and forgiveness of sins was performed principally by John the Baptist (Matt 3:6–14; 21:25; Mark 1:2–8; 11:30; Luke 3:3–18; 7:29–30; 20:4; John 1:23–34; 3:23; 10:40; Acts 1:5, 22; 10:37; 11:16; 13:24; 18:25; 19:1–5). The water baptism that John the Baptist performed was to and for the Jewish people. It was a call for the nation to turn from their sins in preparation for the coming Messiah and His kingdom. The OT law mandated such a confession since the kingdom brought with it fulfillment of the four unconditional covenants to Israel (e.g. Lev 26:40–45).

So this water baptism was to prepare the Jews for the coming King and His kingdom. It was a picture of identification with the kingdom and Messiah’s reign. John the Baptist was the forerunner tasked with pointing out the Messiah to the Jewish people. John baptized so that the Jewish people would recognize the Messiah and be ready for His coming. For example, in John 1:31 John the Baptist said, “I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came

¹⁶ This statement suggests that Jesus will regather Israel for His kingdom when they will universally believe in Him as Messiah, to which numerous other passages attest.

baptizing with water.” This baptism was a visible confession representing identification with Messiah and His kingdom.

2. The water baptism of Jesus Christ.

This baptism is found in Matt 3:13, 16; Mark 1:9; and Luke 3:21. The water baptism of Jesus was unique. It was a picture of the Lord’s identification with God the Father’s will and plan for His life. Jesus came as Messiah to Israel and to die for the sins of the world. Jesus’ baptism points to Him as the “Coming One” (Mark 1:7). Even though Jesus had no sins to confess, He was baptized by John in order to identify Himself with the sins of the Jewish people (c.f. Matt 1:21). He was also anointed by the Holy Spirit and identified with the nation Israel as the promised Messiah (John 1:31).

3. The water baptism of believers.

This baptism is found in Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38 41; 8:12–13, 16; 8:36; 9:18; 10:47–48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16; and 1 Cor 1:13–17. The water baptism of believers is a ritual which portrays the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is exclusively for church-age saints. This baptism is a public declaration and identification with Jesus Christ. It signifies becoming part of His body and being in union with Him forever. As noted, most of the data for this baptism is found in the Book of Acts, which describes many accounts of this particular ritual.

There are some who suggest that this baptism is not a required ritual. However, the command found in Matt 28:19 is clear. Jesus commanded His disciples to make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is clear that this baptism is a water baptism because that would be the only type of baptism the eleven disciples would be capable of performing. This is also validated by their obedience to this command as witnessed in the Book of Acts.

There are several observations that should be considered about water baptism. First, water baptism occurred during a transitional period. The nature of the Book of Acts is transitional and many accounts of water baptism are mentioned therein. It records events that were pre-church-age and events that happen during the church-age. It describes the situation for the Jewish people and the nation Israel who had just crucified their Messiah. These Jewish people were under the judgment

of the unpardonable sin in which the nation and Jerusalem would be destroyed. The Book of Acts also describes the church becoming one body made up of both Jews and Gentiles. So the descriptions of water baptism in Acts must take these transitional things into account.

Another observation is that there is a transition from the baptism of John the Baptist (for repentance) to the church-age saint's water baptism. As Acts 19:1–5 attests, there were believers who were baptized by John the Baptist but who had not received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They were subsequently baptized again. The point is that John's baptism was temporary. Once the nation of Israel rejected Jesus as Messiah, the baptism of John lost its significance. With the introduction of the church-age, a new water baptism was instituted.

Taking into consideration the transitional nature of Acts, the reader can more clearly understand baptism in the book. There is a general progression for water baptism. Belief in Christ for everlasting life is followed by the reception of the indwelling Holy Spirit. This, in turn, is followed by water baptism. It should be noted that in accounts associated with Gentile believers, there was no requirement to repent of sins prior to baptism. That was required for Jewish believers only. Once again, this shows the transition from Israel to the church and from John's baptism to the church-age saint's baptism.

Finally, we observe the manner in which water baptism was performed. In the many NT examples, immersion completely into water was the only method employed. Immersion is also consistent with the meaning of the primary words used to describe water baptism: *baptizō* and *baptisma*.

IV. SELECTED NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES

There are several passages dealing with baptism that warrant separate discussion due to their unique nature or circumstances.

A. ACTS 19:1–5

This passage is best understood in light of the transitional nature of the book of Acts. The account begins with the Apostle Paul coming to Ephesus where he finds some disciples. Paul asks them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered that they had not

“heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” Paul then asks “Into what then were you baptized?” Paul wants to know about their identification.

Their reply was they were baptized by John the Baptist. At this point we can make a few observations. First, these disciples are most likely Jewish. Also, they had missed or forgotten what John had predicted about the Messiah (i.e. that He would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire). Paul summarizes succinctly the baptism John performed in Acts 19:4 when he says, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” We can see from Paul’s statement that John’s baptism was designed to orient the Jewish people to the coming Messiah. They needed to believe in Messiah for everlasting life and needed to repent of their sins in order to be in harmony with God in preparation for the kingdom.

However, as Acts 19:5 shows, John’s baptism lost its significance after Messiah was rejected by the nation Israel.¹⁷ Accordingly, these disciples were then baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. This was necessary so that as Jews they could be publicly identified with Jesus as Messiah. Consequently, it is illegitimate to use this passage today either to teach that water baptism is necessary to receive everlasting life or to receive the Holy Spirit.

B. ACTS 2:38

Peter is speaking to a Jewish crowd. These Jews needed to repent and be baptized as a public confession (identification) with Jesus Christ, whom they had previously rejected as Messiah and crucified. This was unique to that particular generation of Jewish people. Luke highlights this for us in Acts 2:40 when he records Peter’s exhortation, “Be saved (escape) from this perverse generation.” The manner in which these Jews could escape the coming judgment on their nation was to believe in Jesus for everlasting life and then to publicly identify with Him through water baptism.¹⁸

The water baptism of the Apostle Paul (a Pharisee) was similar (Acts 9:18; 22:16). When Paul tells of his encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road, the comment in Acts 22:16 has a strong Jewish tinge

¹⁷ Alberto S. Valdes, “The Acts of the Apostles,” *The Grace New Testament Commentary* (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 1:579.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 493–94.

to it. He is instructed to be baptized, wash away sins, and call on the name of the Lord. It is clear in Acts 9 that Paul had eternal life prior to his water baptism.

In a similar manner, the Jews in the latter days are to call on the name of the Lord for deliverance or rescue from Gentile persecution (Matt 23:39; Zech 13:9). When they call upon Him for rescue they will already have believed in Jesus as the Messiah and received eternal life.

C. 1 CORINTHIANS 1:12-17

This passage shows that, like any ritual, water baptism can be abused. The Church in Corinth managed to abuse both NT rituals: baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Corinthians manifested division and quarrelling by claiming spiritual superiority based on the person who baptized them. They had placed emphasis on church leaders instead of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were following a messenger instead of the One who sent the messenger.

Needless to say, Paul rebukes them for this erroneous attitude and reveals his gratitude for not having baptized very many of them. He then tells them that he did not come to baptize, but to proclaim the good news. At least two things are clear by Paul's statement. One is that water baptism, a ritual, is not necessary to obtain eternal life. The other is that the word of God is more important than pride in one's water baptism.

D. MARK 16:16

In this verse Jesus is instructing His disciples about their mission to evangelize the world. Jesus then says, "He who has believed and has been baptized will be saved, but he who has not believed will be condemned." There have been many who use this verse to support the view that water baptism is a condition for receiving everlasting life. However, there are several reasons why that is not true.

A person only receives everlasting life by belief alone in Jesus Christ alone for it. There is overwhelming Biblical support for this. For example the Gospel of John describes many instances of Jesus evangelizing and not once does He mention water baptism as a condition for receiving everlasting life. Water baptism is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible as a condition for receiving everlasting life. In the passage, Jesus mentions that condemnation results only from not believing. Thus a

person is not condemned for failing to be baptized.¹⁹ Finally, those who import water baptism as a condition for receiving everlasting life do so by assuming that the verb “will be saved” refers to “eternal salvation” or everlasting life, which it does not.

There are two questions that must be answered in order to understand what Jesus says in Mark 16:16. First, what baptism is in view, and second, what does Jesus mean by “will be saved?”

It is best to understand *baptized* as referring to water baptism since its lack is not a basis for eternal condemnation. That would not be true if it was a reference to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. However, that assumes eternal condemnation is meant when Jesus mentions condemnation. If condemnation includes both temporal and eternal aspects, then water baptism is still the best understanding. This is apparent when we compare Mark’s reporting of the great commission (Mark 16:15) to Matthew’s (Matt 28:19). In Matthew’s version the disciples are instructed to baptize those whom they evangelize.

The verb “saved” is in the future tense (i.e. “will be saved”). Likewise, the verb for *condemned* is also a future tense. The use of the future tense suggests a future realization of being saved or condemned. Everlasting life is a present possession so that would eliminate *saved* and *condemned* as references to eternal salvation or eternal condemnation. After all, when a person believes in Jesus for everlasting life, he or she has it!

Jesus likely had Jewish people in mind when He uttered the words of Mark 16:16. Water baptism would have been a visible and public declaration by a Jewish person of belief in Jesus as Messiah whom the nation Israel had previously rejected. Such a Jewish believer would have been saved from the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in AD 70. This corresponds well to what happened approximately 40 days later at Pentecost and Peter’s sermon to Jews in Jerusalem (c.f. Acts 2:1–40). Peter’s warning (“Be saved from this perverse generation”) in Acts 2:40 is reminiscent of Jesus’ words in Mark 16:16.

E. 1 CORINTHIANS 15:29

This verse says, “Otherwise, what will they do who are being baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized

¹⁹ Barry Mershon, Jr., “Mark,” *The Grace New Testament Commentary* (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 1:218.

for the dead?” This is perhaps one of the more obscure passages in the Bible. Many explanations have been offered for its meaning.

Perhaps the best explanation for this verse is as follows.²⁰ At the time Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, there was fierce persecution against those who took a public stand for Jesus Christ. This persecution was especially vicious at the time of a person’s water baptism. It often happened that those who publicly proclaimed their belief in Jesus Christ through water baptism were killed shortly thereafter. However, did this stop others from receiving everlasting life and taking their place in water baptism? Not at all! There were always new converts coming along to fill the ranks of those who had been martyred. As they stepped into the waters of baptism, they were being baptized for (or in the place of) those who had been martyred. Thus, the dead refers to those who died for their bold stand for Jesus Christ. As a result, Paul argues that it would be foolish to be baptized to fill the ranks of those who had died if there is no such thing as a resurrection from the dead. It would be like sending replacement troops to fill the ranks of an army that is fighting a lost cause. Why then be baptized for the dead? Paul’s comment in verse 30 seems to support this since he mentions being in danger all of the time.

F. 1 PETER 3:21

In looking at this verse we must keep in mind that Peter is writing to Jewish believers in Jesus the Messiah. Peter begins by associating baptism with the experience of judgment of the flood and Noah’s ark, which he had just mentioned. Peter tells us that baptism is not washing the dirt off of our bodies or the removal of sins from the flesh, but that it now saves. He clearly draws an analogy of baptism to Noah’s ark, not the flood.²¹ Noah’s ark was immersed in water during the flood, but those in it were saved from its destruction. So Peter is drawing an analogy to water baptism for these Jewish believers as it also saves in a temporal manner.

The baptism that Peter has in mind is water baptism. It corresponds to the situation in Acts 2:1–40. These Jewish saints can be saved from the judgment and destruction of AD 70 if they publicly profess belief in

²⁰William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 1807.

²¹Gary Derickson, “The First Epistle of Peter,” *The Grace New Testament Commentary* (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 2:1161.

Jesus as Messiah by being baptized. As a result, they would no longer be identified with the nation (Israel) under judgment, but would be identified with Jesus and thereby saved from the destruction. They would, as it were, be like Noah and his family who were saved from the ravages of the flood.

These Jewish believers had a choice to make. Do they want to be identified with Jesus Christ or the nation of Israel that had rejected her Messiah? One identification leads to destruction and loss, while the other being delivered from it.

V. CONCLUSION

In case we become all wet in our understanding of baptisms, it is imperative that we consider a few applications. Once a person is identified with Jesus Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that person is forever in union with Jesus Christ. That union is permanent and cannot be lost, forfeited, broken, undone, or destroyed. It is a work of God the Holy Spirit and He does not make mistakes! Consequently, the believer is eternally secure in the most vital relationship in life. Our eternal security should free us to live lives free from insecurity.

Being identified with Jesus Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit means we have a new identity. Thus, Christians who grasp this truth need never have an identity crisis! In addition, this new identification enables one to live a new life apart from God's wrath (Rom 6:4). This union provides great potential for living.

As we learn from the Corinthian example, believers should place emphasis and value on real baptisms and realize that ritual is only ritual. Hence, ritual should not be given greater weight or significance than it deserves. Christian baptism is not a condition of everlasting life. The sole condition for regeneration is faith in Christ (John 3:16). Christian baptism is an aspect of discipleship. Water baptism is a first step in following Christ (Matt 28:18–20).

Also, believers should not place any special significance on the person who baptizes them. The focus should be on God, Jesus Christ, and God's infallible message, not on a messenger. As the Corinthian example also shows, too often the messenger becomes more important than who the messenger is supposed to represent.

Finally, this brief study of baptisms attests to the Jewishness of the Bible. We should not forget that the culture, customs, and authors of the Bible were Jewish. In fact, our Savior was a Jew in His humanity. We should not forget these factors as we read and study the Bible.

BOOK REVIEWS

Are You Saved? The Orthodox Christian Process of Salvation. Fifth Edition. By Barbara Pappas. Westchester, IL: Amnos Publications, 2006. 63 pp. Paper, NP.

Evangelicals often ask questions like, “Are you saved?” “What is meant by salvation?” and “What must I do to be saved?” But these questions are not normally asked by Eastern Orthodox parishioners. As William S. Chiganos explains in the introduction, “Until relatively recently, most of our faithful avoided such discussions because of lack of knowledge about the subject of salvation” (p. 11).

One can only imagine the spiritual darkness of a church where most of the “faithful” lack knowledge about the subject of salvation.

In any case, Barbara Pappas, a member of the Religious Education Commission of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago, wrote the booklet to shed light on those questions. Unfortunately, she only succeeds in showing how contradictory and legalistic the Orthodox doctrine of salvation is.

The booklet is divided into three chapters.

The first chapter, “God’s Divine Plan,” begins with the question, “Are you saved?” Pappas describes the events leading to the fall of Adam and Eve and defines salvation as “the return to assurance of eternal life with God in the idyllic state that surrounds Him” (p. 17). Along the way, she makes some good statements. For example, here is what she says about the Mosaic Law:

The purpose of this “Mosaic” Law was to define sin by outlining perfection, that which was required to return to the presence of God. This experience would show man that he could never earn salvation on his own. Adam and Eve had one commandment to keep; now there were ten. In addition, there were 613 laws, each of which had to be kept precisely—to break one was to break them all...Man was caught in a never-ending cycle: he would inevitably break a law, bring the required offering, and go out and break another. This futile repetition continued until—finally—Jesus Christ offered Himself as the last living sacrifice on behalf of all mankind...God allowed His people to feel the

hopelessness of trying to save themselves through the Law”
(pp. 18–19).

This is a good summary of the purpose and effect of the law. It demands perfection. It makes us realize that we are not perfect. It teaches us that it is impossible to save ourselves by works. Hence, Pappas goes on to write that we can only be saved by faith.

...all who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and accept and confess that He is their Lord and Savior, the promised Messiah Who provided the way to the eternal Kingdom, will receive the gift of salvation... (p. 22).

This isn't the clearest way of expressing things. Pappas is right to say that salvation depends on *believing in Jesus*. But adding the words “and accept and confess that He is their Lord and Savior” can be confusing. What do those terms mean? How much accepting and confessing must you do to be saved?

The object of saving faith could be clearer too. It is true that Jesus is the Messiah. It is also true that He provided the way to the eternal kingdom. But what are we believing in Him *for*? Is it that He will save us if we are good enough, or have tried hard enough, or have done enough good works? Are we trusting Him to give us a fair chance at working our way to heaven?

What Pappas does not tell us, but what the Gospel of John does tell us, is that we are to believe in Christ *for eternal life* (e.g., John 3:16; 3:36; 5:24).

Pappas's next statement is flatly contradictory. She starts by affirming that Christians are “redeemed once and for all from the effects of sin, not by their own efforts but by virtue of being a part of Christ.” But how does one become part of Christ? She answers, “through Baptism, Eucharist, *and a life of faith*” (p. 22, emphasis added). What does it mean to live “a life of faith”? Pappas clearly means living a life of obedience and good works. So despite what she wrote earlier about the futility of saving ourselves by obeying the law, it turns out that faith in Jesus isn't actually enough to be saved. We also need good works: “Scripture is very clear in making the point that we cannot just profess faith and thereafter feel confident of salvation. Faith must be proved by a life lived according to the word of God because *faith without works is dead*” (Jas 2:20; p. 22). She goes on: “Scripture promises that *if* we participate in this struggle for spiritual growth to the extent that we are able, we will

be allowed to enter *into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ*" (pp. 22–23). No behavior, no entrance.

Do you see the contradiction?

Earlier, Pappas said that it was hopeless to try to save ourselves by works. Now she says that we can only be saved by struggling for spiritual growth (i.e., by struggling to do good works). So which is it? Is it futile to struggle to save ourselves by works or is it necessary?

The contradiction is made all the worse when Pappas quotes Leo the Great as saying that the gospel *actually requires more* than the OT law did. Although Christ fulfilled the law, and some aspects of the OT law "have been taken away" yet:

"...in the moral order there was no change in the precepts of the Old Law; rather *many of them were enlarged* through the Gospel teaching, that they might be clearer and more perfect teaching us salvation than they were when promising us a Savior" (p. 24).

It is hard to believe that Pappas, who already described the futility of trying to save oneself under the OT law, now claims it is possible to be saved by following (or struggling to follow) the precepts of the gospel, which she admits *the gospel is actually more demanding* than OT law! That's like a weight lifter complaining that it would be impossible for him to press 300 pounds because that's too heavy, and then claiming that he *can* press 1200 pounds. The statement doesn't make sense. If you can't save yourself by obeying the OT law, then you certainly can't save yourself by obeying the NT law which is far more difficult.

How is the NT law harder to obey? Consider the OT commandment, "Thou shalt not murder." I'm happy to say that I've never transgressed that commandment. But now consider Jesus' enlargement of that law:

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, '*You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.*' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matt 5:21–22).

Have you ever been angry? Have you ever called anyone a fool? Then I've got bad news for you—you aren't good enough to save yourself.

Whether it is given by Moses on Sinai or by Jesus on the Mount of Olives, all law has the same purpose—it reveals our sin, *but it cannot save us*: “Therefore by the deeds of the law *no flesh will be justified* in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:20, emphasis added).

The plain fact is, we cannot be saved by our own works. We are only saved by faith in Christ. That is our only hope. No one is “justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ,” Paul told the Galatians, for “by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified” (Gal 2:16). Pappas seems to affirm this truth, then spends the rest of the booklet denying it. She doesn’t distinguish between salvation and discipleship. So she reads discipleship and rewards passages as giving us the conditions for eternal salvation.

Although Pappas began by lamenting how little Orthodox people know about salvation, sadly, this booklet will only leave them more confused. Better for Orthodox people to simply read the Gospel of John, and Paul’s letters to the Galatians and Romans, for a clear understanding of how to be saved.

I recommend this booklet for Evangelicals who want to learn more about Eastern Orthodoxy, but would not recommend it as a source for understanding salvation.

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Bewitched: The Rise of Neo-Galatianism. By David R. Anderson. N.P.: Grace Theology Press, 2015. 384 pp. Paper, \$15.95.

The back cover of the book says that this book “proposes that *all serious Christians* struggle with legalism in one form or another, although they may not be aware of it. Whether *Catholic, Arminian, Calvinistic, or otherwise*, legalism is a daily struggle” (emphases added). Then he adds, “The same problems plaguing the new Christians in Galatia can be found *in every Christian group* today” (emphasis added). Anderson is addressing his book to Roman Catholics, Arminians, Calvinists, and all flavors within Christendom. Evidently by “all serious Christians”

Anderson means *all serious professing Christians*. He does not indicate anywhere in the book that he considers Catholics and Arminians to be born again (though he does say, “I suspect there are believers...from most groups who name the name of Christ,” p. 162).

Anderson makes it clear that the sole condition of justification before God is faith in Christ, not faith plus works (see, for example, pp. 49–74, 87–100, 162). However, as we shall see below, the author is unclear as to what faith is, and he fails to clearly explain *precisely what someone must believe about Jesus* in order to be justified.

The emphasis of this devotional commentary on Galatians is on the deadly effects of legalism in terms of sanctification, not legalism in terms of justification.

JOTGES readers will appreciate his rejection of perseverance as a condition of regeneration (pp. 67, 73), his statement that “the salvation of James 2:14–26 is not justification salvation” (p. 99), his comment that Rom 1:16–18 concerns sanctification (p. 163), his distinguishing between the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Great White Throne Judgment (p. 161), his indicating that inheriting the kingdom in Gal 5:19–21 refers not to entering the kingdom but “to our rewards in the kingdom” (p. 204), and his explanation that “reaping everlasting life” (Gal 6:8–9) refers to reaping a more abundant life now and in the life to come (pp. 234–41).

Now for an area of concern.

JOTGES readers will be especially interested in how Anderson defines faith. He says, “most scholars recognize that faith involves the entire psyche of a person, his mind, his emotions, and his will” (p. 90). That is contrary to Gordon Clark’s *Faith and Saving Faith*. Many Free Grace people, for example, Zane Hodges, have argued with Clark that faith is merely intellectual, with no necessary emotional or willful component. Anderson may be alluding to Clark, Hodges, and others like them when he says, “Some don’t want to go this far. They would say that faith is just a matter of the mind” (p. 90).

Anderson’s view raises questions. What sort of emotions do I need to tell me that I believe that George Washington was the first President of the United States? What is the willful component in believing that two plus two equals four? Or, in terms of the new birth, what sort of emotional component and what sort of willful element do we need to be born again?

The author also argues that believing in Jesus is a choice. Speaking about “the justification equation,” Anderson indicates that “when we take conscious choice away, we also excise love from the process” (p. 91). This is confusing on multiple levels. Is justification a process? Is love for God a condition of justification? Is belief in Christ a choice?

Explaining the supposed willful component of saving faith, Anderson says, “with our will we make a *commitment* to the claims of Christ” (p. 91, emphasis his). What does he mean by *commitment*? What sort of commitment? And what does he mean by “the claims of Christ”? What claims, plural, does he have in mind? He does not elaborate, other than he goes on to say that this commitment is not a commitment “to follow all the commands of Christ” (p. 91), which he rightly says is a commitment which no one can fulfill. No one follows all the commands of Christ.

There is a bit of help a page later when the author says, “faith is simply a commitment to trust the claims of Christ” (p. 92). But even that is vague. What claims are in mind? And what does he mean when he speaks of *a commitment to trust* those claims? Clearly that is different than simply intellectually believing the claims. So how is it different?

In an appendix on faith Anderson discusses the issue of whether assurance is of the essence of saving faith.

Anderson indicates that one need not believe in the doctrine of eternal security in order to be born again (p. 344–45, note 171). Indeed, he says that “by making faith something subjective, now the person must examine his faith to see if he had the right kind of faith. Did you have assurance when you believed? If not, you did not have the right kind of faith. More self-doubt and introspection ensues” (p. 345, note 171).

Yet Anderson is confusing categories. The issue is not *the right kind of faith*. The issue is *the right object of faith*. If a person believes in works salvation, he lacks belief in eternal security. That is, he lacks belief in what the Lord Jesus Christ promises, everlasting life that can never be lost (John 3:16; 5:24; 6:35, 37, 39; 11:26). Such a person would answer the Lord’s question, “Do you believe this? (John 11:26), with a resounding *No*, since he does not believe that the believer “will never die [spiritually].”

In addition, the issue is not “Did you have assurance when you believed?” Believed what? The issue is do you have assurance of your eternal destiny *right now*? Regardless of what someone believed in the

past, assurance of everlasting life is based only on what one believes right now.

Nor is believing Jesus' promise of everlasting life in order to have that life somehow "subjective." It is objective as John 3:16; 5:24; 6:35; and 11:26 all show.

In that appendix Anderson also gives a bit more explanation on his view of faith. He says, "Biblical faith is operative at the purest level when we cannot see our way. If we can see it, we don't need faith, by definition" (p. 345). So if your eyes are open in a room with lights on, don't you believe the lights are on? You can see they are on. And you believe they are on.

When Thomas saw the risen Lord and spoke with Him, he believed that He had risen. His seeing did not mean he did not believe. It is what led him to believe.

Anderson's statement that "faith is the ability to trust what we cannot see" (p. 345) is confusing. So if I can see the stars and the sky and that leads me to believe that God exists, is that not really belief?

I checked on amazon.com and there are four glowing reviews of this book. I'm sure there are many who will find it to be well worth having.

If you are looking for a commentary which gives detailed discussion on the text of Galatians, this book is probably not for you. The author is like a pilot in a small plane who is flying over a large ranch. You get to see glimpses of the whole ranch. But you don't really get much in terms of details.

In light of what Anderson says about faith, I would only recommend this book for well-grounded believers.

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Keeping Your Cool When Your Anger Is Hot. By June Hunt. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2009. 296 pp. Paper, \$12.99.

Author June Hunt is a well-known Christian counselor and speaker. I have heard her on radio and in person and have been impressed with her graciousness, humility, and Biblical knowledge. She is also a very

talented writer. Each chapter in *Keeping Your Cool* begins with a Bible verse. In the Epilogue she presents a song that she wrote about controlling anger. She also provides a link where the reader can hear her sing it. She is a talented musician.

In this well-written and informative book, she compares anger to fire. Her illustrations are excellent. It is obvious that she has done a large amount of research about fire science and is very knowledgeable about fire and about human anger. She has a knack for explaining Biblical truth with concrete illustrations that are vivid, engaging and practical. I would recommend this book to pastors and teachers just for the illustrations as well as the practical insights about anger and some tips on how to handle it. Having said this, however, I hasten to add that the book has both minor and serious problems.

First, there are minor problems. One is that there is no index. Also, references for Scripture passages are, at times, in the text, and on other occasions the reader must consult the endnotes. There is the confusing and indiscriminate use of quotation marks (e.g., “pit” and “wrote down” in Chap. 1 and “best friend” in Chap. 3). A final small problem is that the quoting of *The Message* as Scripture gives the book an amateurish feel.

The major problems, however, are not in format but in three areas. The first is that the author indiscriminately mixes secular psychology with Biblical truth. She refers to one of her clients and to “...countless others who struggled with low self-esteem...” (p. 155). In the account of “Lily” we find one who, though she had formerly lived in sin, had “abandoned the rebellious, self-destructive path she had started down and devoted herself instead to a life of service to God.” Hunt says that her family forgave her and helped her develop new values and friends. Hunt’s main concern with Lily is that Lily never forgave *herself* (italics hers). She refers to 1 John 1:9, but “self-forgiveness” is not in that passage (pp. 151–53).

Unfortunately, she also alludes favorably to an atheist psychologist, Abraham Maslov. She refers her readers to one of his articles for a more complete understanding of his “Hierarchy of Needs.”

A second major problem is that Hunt has an unscriptural plan of salvation. Rather than simply believing in Christ for eternal life, we read a plan that sounds like a firefighter’s advice for those whose clothing is on fire: stop, drop, and roll. We are to stop running our own life. We are

to drop and bow our head with a humble heart. We are to roll away the stone guarding our hearts and give Jesus control over our life. Hunt also gives us a salvation prayer, asking Jesus to forgive us of our sins and be the Lord and Savior of our lives as we invite Him in (pp. 161–62).

The third major problem is that the author gives misleading impressions. An author may give tacit approval to someone by quoting or using him as an example to follow without any caveat. In addition to Maslov, Hunt quotes and uses as examples those who are not Bible believing Christians and who could lead immature and undiscerning believers astray. She favorably quotes a Jesuit contemplative mystic (p. 145). She uses a Mexican-American labor leader, César Chavez, as an example to follow because his mother was a “devout Christian” (p. 219).

As mentioned above, it is possible that a reader can gain some good illustrations from this book. However, because of the minor and major problems contained in it, I would not recommend it to anybody who is not well grounded in Free Grace Theology.

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The Gospel of Grace and Truth: A Theology of Grace from the Gospel of John. By Michael D. Halsey. Duluth, MN: Grace Gospel Press, 2015. 339 pp. Paper, \$15.95.

Halsey, as the subtitle suggests, is writing a Biblical theology of John’s Gospel. As such what he aims to do is discuss the way in which key issues are treated in John’s Gospel.

He has chapters dealing with “John’s Theology of the Bible” (pp. 65–83), “John’s Theology of Jesus Christ” (pp. 85–123), “John’s Theology of the Holy Spirit” (pp. 125–163), “John’s Theology of Angels” (pp. 165–77), “John’s Theology of Man” (pp. 177–204), “John’s Theology of Salvation” (pp. 205–249, the longest chapter), “John’s Theology of the Church” (pp. 251–291), and “John’s Theology of Last Things” (pp. 293–319).

No indication is given as to the source of this work.

The strengths of this work are: Halsey’s views are conservative; he presents a view of salvation that is by grace through faith and apart from

works; he clearly distinguishes between justification and sanctification; most chapters begin with interesting anecdotes that illustrate a spiritual truth; and there is a Scripture index.

The weaknesses of the work are: Halsey does not discuss the secret believer motif in John's Gospel; he does not explain or discuss John 2:23–25, 8:30–32 (he touches on 8:30–32 on pp. 234–36, but without discussing the problem of the change of referent in vv 33–59), or 12:42–43; he suggests that the purpose of John 1–12 is evangelistic, but that John 13–21 has a discipleship purpose (pp. 45–46), thus undercutting the evangelistic purpose of the whole book (John 20:30–31), and arbitrarily separating Jesus' death and resurrection (John 18–21) from the evangelistic portion of the book.

I recommend this book for those who are looking for a Biblical theology of John's Gospel. As it is not a commentary, those looking for a commentary on John should look elsewhere. However, there is much helpful information here.

Robert N. Wilkin

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Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Corinth, TX

Simply Tuesday: Small-Moment Living in a Fast-Moving World.

By Emily P. Freeman. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2015. 256 pp. Paper, \$14.99.

Emily Freeman is a Wall Street Journal best-selling author. Her writing is personal and gracious. She uses charming stories from her own life and home, and is not afraid to laugh at herself and share less than flattering personal tales. In addition, she comes across as a lovely young woman who cares deeply about her relationship with Christ. Without a doubt, her book will resonate with many readers who live busy lives.

The main point of the book is that our souls can be held hostage by busyness and society's expectations. We are told we need to dream and do things in ever-bigger ways. However, Freeman says we should realize that Christ is at work in us in small ways. We can experience Him in these small things and do it one Tuesday at a time, with Tuesday being used because it is the most ordinary day of the week.

Her premise is appealing and at times even Biblical. She wishes to instill in her readers the importance of “small” living. She speaks of our need to allow God to meet us even in the small moments of life, and reminds us that Jesus’ life revolved around small things, such as the family He lived with and to whom He chose to reveal Himself after the resurrection (p. 37).

However, Freeman takes it too far. She associates smallness with spiritual infancy. I am not sure how she reconciles her thoughts on this matter when Paul rebukes his readers for not growing into mature believers in 1 Corinthians 3.

Freeman also places a lot of emphasis on the concept of the Kingdom. After quoting Luke 17:20–21, she comments that even though we think of heaven as beyond the clouds, it may not be far up at all. In fact the Kingdom of God is here and now and heaven is simply one inch off the ground (p. 13).

I do not understand what she is saying. She seems to be equating the coming Kingdom to a fairy tale and feels that our attention should be on the present world instead of a future Kingdom. It is confusing because she also says that we know the King of our Kingdom will one day come (p. 241). Her use of Luke 17 is without regard to the context and it seems to this reviewer that she has something she wants to say and finds a Scripture that she believes fits her thesis.

Readers of the *JOTGES* will notice that she mentions rewards in passing. She comments that what begins small and in secret may end in glory. However, this glory has a shape in the here and now, in the Kingdom that exists now. It will reap a harvest in the Kingdom that is coming (p. 219). Most of the book seems to alternate between the here and now Kingdom and the future Kingdom interchangeably with no Scriptural references.

The value in the book is that it reminds Christians that we can be caught up in the culture in which we live. The world values things done on a big scale. But God often uses small things for His glory. We can certainly become too busy in our lives and equate busyness with pleasing God. The book also has many good illustrations. If a reader is looking for those things this is a quick and enjoyable read.

However, we do not hear God’s Word in small things. To grow spiritually we must go to God’s Word. In *Simply Tuesday* the reader will find

a lot of ideas based upon opinion that may or not accurately reflect what Scripture says. It is not a book that exegetes the few Scriptures cited.

To this reviewer an interesting aspect of this book is that it is well received among Christians. No doubt, part of that is due to the great writing ability of the author. But it seems that much of what is being said is open to interpretation, perhaps purposefully. The idea that heaven is one inch off the ground can mean one thing to one reader, and another thing to a second reader. Each can have it mean whatever they want it to mean. This fact, along with the lack of exegesis of any kind in a best-selling Christian book, makes one wonder if it is an example of how postmodernism is creeping into the church. For somebody looking for a clear statement of Biblical truth concerning the small things in life, this book is not the place to go.

Kathryn Wright
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A Gospel of Doubt: The Legacy of John MacArthur's "The Gospel According to Jesus." By Robert N. Wilkin. Corinth, TX: Grace Evangelical Society. 305 pp. Paper, \$22.00.

John MacArthur wrote *The Gospel According to Jesus (TGAJ)* in 1988. It has been very well received in the evangelical world. A new edition was published in 2008. It is safe to say that when it comes to the Lordship Salvation debate, this book is the most well-known and read.

When it was originally written, Zane Hodges, perhaps the most well-known Free Grace proponent, considered writing a specific rebuttal to the theology in *TGAJ*. Instead, Hodges wrote a book entitled *Absolutely Free!*

This book by Wilkin is a direct response to MacArthur's book. Even though it has been over 25 years since *TGAJ* was first published, Wilkin's response is needed due to the massive influence it continues to have.

Wilkin's book responds to *TGAJ* in a chapter-by-chapter format. Thus, it is easy to follow. In each chapter, Wilkin explains what MacArthur teaches and gives a Free Grace response. Wilkin consistently points out that Lordship Salvation is a gospel of doubt. If anybody accepts what MacArthur says about the gospel, they will accept a gospel that does not provide assurance of salvation. In fact, Wilkin states that it is impossible

to have assurance of salvation if one accepts MacArthur's gospel (p. 146). In one footnote, Wilkin mentions that in every chapter MacArthur teaches that the professed Christian should doubt his or her salvation (p. 131). Wilkin specifically points out that if a person believes in the gospel proclaimed by MacArthur in *TGAJ*, he will not have believed in the Biblical gospel (p. 149).

In this book, Wilkin also points out on numerous occasions that *TGAJ* teaches that faith in Jesus alone is not sufficient. MacArthur does this by saying that true faith includes works. These works include things like turning from one's sins, obedience, taking up a cross, and perseverance. Wilkin says this is a denial of the Biblical gospel.

Even though Wilkin disagrees with MacArthur on the gospel, he makes it clear that he has no personal animosity towards MacArthur. He points out that MacArthur holds many Biblical positions (p. 11). In addition, MacArthur is zealous for good works, loves God, is concerned about people, and is an outstanding preacher (p. 261). Throughout the book, Wilkin states that he wants MacArthur and those who have accepted Lordship Salvation to return to a Biblical understanding of the gospel. No works are necessary for salvation and when a person believes in Jesus Christ for eternal life they have assurance of that salvation.

Wilkin states that MacArthur is often inconsistent in what he says about the gospel. MacArthur seems to say in some places that salvation is simply by grace through faith. Then he will immediately add works to it (p. 110). There is a great deal of double speak in Lordship Salvation. For example, MacArthur says that salvation is both free and costly (p. 148).

In addition, when discussing many texts in the NT, MacArthur will add things that are not in the text. For example, he adds the requirement of being sorry for one's sins and guilt over those sins as being necessary in order to be saved. He does this in his discussion of the first soil in the Lord's parable of the four soils (p. 121). Of course, Jesus does not mention these additional requirements.

Wilkin's response is that one should not interpret the Bible based upon his theological tradition as MacArthur does. Instead, he calls the reader to be like the Bereans of Acts 17:11 and search the Scriptures to see if their theological positions are correct (p. 139). In many cases, MacArthur does not cite Scripture to support his views. He simply makes pronouncements (p. 146).

Wilkin states that the issues addressed in *TGAJ* to which he responds are of extreme importance. Even though it is unintentional, Lordship Salvation is guilty of the same type of willful sin that the author of Hebrews addresses in Hebrews 10. It maintains that the shed blood of Christ is not sufficient to pay for our sins. We must contribute to our salvation by taking up our crosses and follow Christ until death (p. 180).

The book ends with the same appendices that end *TGAJ*. The first appendix deals with what other writers of the NT said about the gospel. The second addresses how Christendom has understood the gospel in the past. The third lists a number questions from readers that MacArthur answered.

This is an outstanding book. It discusses many of the parables of the Lord as well as passages like James 2. Even if a person is not familiar with the Lordship Salvation and Free Grace debate, this book will be very informative. Wilkin takes the teachings of the Lord that MacArthur discusses and does what MacArthur does not. He looks at the context of these teachings and gives a Biblically based understanding. It is a breath of fresh air to see once again that the Lord offers eternal life completely free. Assurance is part of that offer. This book is a reminder that the truth is not always found in what is the most popular view of the day. Due to the great amount of influence that *TGAJ* has had on the evangelical church, Wilkin's book provides an excellent refutation to a gospel that distorts the free offer of eternal life. I highly recommend this book.

Kenneth Yates

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

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The Swedish Pietists: A Reader. Edited and trans. by Mark Safstrom. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015. 237 pp. Paper, \$28.00

From the early 1880s to the beginnings of the 20th century, the Lutheran state churches in Scandinavia experienced a spiritual awakening comparable to those in America. Two of the most important leaders in that movement were the Swedish preachers Carl Olof Rosenius (1816–1868) and Paul Peter Waldenström (1838–1917). Their devotional journal *Pietisten* (“The Pietist”) turned what was once a contemptuous

term for fanaticism, into a source of pride among those who claimed a born-again experience.

Theologians sometimes draw a distinction between being *sacramentalized* (i.e., being baptized as an infant and introduced into the “exterior form of regulations and customs” of the church, p. 33) and being *evangelized* (i.e., hearing and believing the gospel). Faced with the nominalism of their state churches, the Pietists sought to evangelize the sacramentalized people of the Lutheran state churches, leading them to the indispensability of a “new life, awaked and sustained by the Spirit of God” (p. 33). And they often had to do so outside the bounds of the officially sanctioned churches, through para-church ministries that published devotional materials, organized revival meetings, and formed home and foreign missions activities (p. 25).

Readers of this journal will benefit from this book for three reasons.

First, they will strongly identify with the Pietist desire to go beyond mere formalism in religion, to be born-again. Even though this born again experience was as confusing to Nicodemus as it is for much of the world, “it is precisely this inward transformation of the heart that cannot be understood by those who have not themselves been born anew, nor can they believe it to be true” (p. 30).

Second, readers will also have a deep sympathy for the Pietist’s love for the Bible. The Pietists were forced to meet in illegal “conventicles” (what we would call small groups or house churches) to worship and study the Bible together (p. 221).

Third, readers will be interested in how Pietism relates to the Lordship Salvation controversy. Although the history of Lordship Salvation is often traced to the Puritans, there is also an important Pietistic element, which was transplanted to America through Scandinavian immigrants. The Pietists not only properly emphasized the importance of a lived faith, they sadly made a lived faith the criterion for being saved. Here is a typical passage describing a conversation between Waldenström and a young man, where the young man bases his salvation on God’s free grace, while Waldenström argues you need works to either be saved, or to know you are saved:

“He had just heard a sermon on good works, which had not pleased him. ‘I do not have any good works,’ he said. ‘Then neither are you a Christian,’ I answered. ‘Yes, indeed,’ he said, ‘A Christian I am, without any good works, by free

grace alone through faith in Jesus.’—‘But faith without works is dead,’ I added, ‘and a dead faith certainly makes no one into a Christian’... ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘I would never claim that I am anything other than an ungodly sinner, and that my salvation rests solely on the foundation of God’s free and pure grace.’—‘Now then,’ I added, ‘but if you are an ungodly sinner, then you have no salvation to expect at all, but instead are headed for condemnation, however much you might appeal to the pure foundation of God’s free grace’” (p. 99).

For Waldenström, as for other Pietists, there was an expectation that a regenerate life would inevitably result in behavior modification. Without a change in behavior, there could be no assurance of salvation.

The Swedish Pietists: A Reader is recommended for people interested in Christian history in general, and in the history behind Lordship Salvation in particular.

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Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Corinth, TX

Should Christians Fear Outer Darkness? By Dennis Rokser, Tom Stegall, and Kurt Witzig. Duluth, MN: Grace Gospel Press, 2015. 503 pp. Paper, \$19.95.

Though the title suggests this book is about the expression *the outer darkness*—found only in Matt 8:12; 22:13; and 25:30—in reality the book more broadly discusses *Should Christians Fear the Judgment Seat of Christ* (the Bema)? There is actually very little in this book about the three outer darkness passages—less than 50 pages (pp. 96–99; 103–115; 129–35; 139–42; 146–59).

However, the question of whether believers should fear the coming Bema is an excellent one and I’m glad to see a book on this subject.

The main points of this book are clear enough, though it takes a lot of reading to get down to them. They include:

- believers should not fear the Bema, except in the sense of having reverential awe (e.g., pp. 125, 216–17, 365),

- believers never experience God's wrath in this life, only His chastisement (e.g., pp. 343–65),
- all believers are overcomers as described in Revelation 2–3 (e.g., pp. 417–70),
- all believers will rule with Christ, not just some (e.g., p. 200), though some will rule over more cities than others (e.g., pp. 200–202),
- all believers will hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (e.g., p. 481),
- there will be no punishment at the Bema (e.g., pp. 11, 23–59, 173–79, 366, 395),
- the Bema will be a time of commendation and no one will be rebuked (e.g., pp. 174–79),
- all believers will be found blameless (p. 226),
- the only negative consequences at the Bema will be shame and loss of reward, which the authors regard as something to be avoided, but not something to be concerned about (e.g., pp. 173–79, 402),
- the third servant in the Parable of the Talents is not a servant of Christ, but is an unbeliever bound for eternal condemnation (e.g., p. 140),
- the five foolish virgins in the Parable of the Ten Virgins are unbelievers who will miss the kingdom (e.g., pp. 126–29),
- the unjust servant of Matt 24:45–51 is not a servant of Christ, but is an unbeliever who will be cut in two in the sense that he will be cast into the lake of fire (e.g., pp. 123–26),
- the outer darkness in the three Matthew passages refers to the lake of fire (e.g., pp. 96–99, 103–115, 129–35, 143),
- and the right to eat of the fruits of the tree of life is for all believers (e.g., pp. 438–45).

The authors assert, “All believers will reign with Christ in the Kingdom (Rev 2:26–27; 20:4, 6; 22:5)” (p. 200). A bit later they add, “Faithful believers can also expect to receive from Christ diverse positions of privileged service and rulership in the Kingdom (Matt 19:28; 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 2:26–27; 20:4, 5; 22:3, 5)” (p. 220). Since all believers will reign and they say only faithful believers will reign, they clearly believe that all believers are faithful believers to some degree (though see pp. 55–57 and pp. 223–26, which seem to contradict the idea that all believers will rule and will be found faithful). They even mention

2 Tim 2:12—“if we endure, we shall also reign with Him, if we deny Him, He will also deny us”—after that quote just cited. Thus they seem to believe that all believers will endure in faith and good works, though at times they deny that.

I was surprised at what is not discussed in this book of over 500 pages. There is almost no discussion of the Lord’s approval or disapproval (*dokimos* and *adokimos*). The concept is only briefly mentioned on just three pages (pp. 198, 199, and 215).

Philippians 2:12, which speaks of working out your own salvation “with fear and trembling” receives no discussion (though the verse is mentioned in a list on pp. 31–32). Since it mentions *fear and trembling*, something believers supposedly do not experience now nor will experience at the Bema, one would think this verse must be discussed.

The AWANA verse, 2 Tim 2:15, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,” receives no consideration.

The relation of the shed blood of Christ and the cross of Christ to the Bema receives almost no attention (only on p. 47 when they discuss 2 Cor 5:14), though it is clearly a vital Bema issue in passages like Rom 8:31–39; 1 Cor 11:17–34; 15:1–11; 2 Cor 5:14; Heb 10:1–39; 1 John 3:16; and many other texts. Note: the death of Christ is briefly considered in relation to redemption on pp. 269–95, but not in relation to the Bema. In addition, the authors argue that the blood of Christ does not take away the sins of the entire world (see, for example, pp. 258–59; 282–84). In their view the unbeliever will be condemned because of his sins, not simply because of his unbelief. In their view only when one believes in the finished work of Christ (an expression that occurs about ten times on pp. 28, 31, 44, 91, 189, 194, 198, 201, 258, and 263) does Christ’s blood take away one’s sins (e.g., p. 279; see also pp. 271, 278).

The Parable of the Minas in Luke 19:11–27 is not discussed, except in passing on page 200. Nothing is said about the enemies who hated Jesus and didn’t want Him to reign over them; about the third servant; or about the fact that the enemies will be judged separately from the three servants and that the enemies, unlike the servants, will be slain.

The closely related passage, the Parable of the Talents in Matt 25:14–30, is discussed in several places. Yet nowhere do the authors explain why no number of cities is mentioned in the Talents and why the commendations are identical there, but not in the Parable of the Minas.

The idea of ruling with Christ receives little attention in this book.

Nor do the authors discuss the issue of assurance of everlasting life. They mention it in passing on page 342, where they indicate they reject the idea that “assurance is based on a satisfactory walk.” Yet they say that all believers will rule with Christ and only the faithful will rule. If all believers are faithful, then wouldn’t a believer who is not faithful at this time, or who wonders if he is faithful, have reason to doubt if he is born again?

It is also odd that nowhere in the book do they clearly lay out what one must believe to be born again. In another work Stegall lays out five essentials that one must believe. *Yet those five essentials are not laid out anywhere in this work.* The closest they come is by giving one essential, saying that “entrance into the Kingdom” is gained “through faith alone in Christ’s finished work” (p. 201; see also pp. 44, 189, 194).

The key arguments that show that those cast into the outer darkness are believers were not mentioned or discussed in this book. For example, the expression “the sons of the kingdom” only occurs twice in Matthew, once in Matt 8:12, “the sons of the kingdom will be cast into the outer darkness,” and once in Matt 13:38, “the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom,” that is, “the righteous who will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt 13:43). If in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares the sons of the kingdom are believers, why are the sons of the kingdom unbelievers in the only other use in Matthew? In two short sentences they say, without defense or explanation, that while in Matt 8:12 the expression “the sons of the kingdom” refers to unbelievers, in Matt 13:38 it refers to believers (p. 100). Nor do they mention these are the only two uses of that expression in Matthew.

The authors say that the third servant in the Parable of Talents is sent to eternal condemnation. Yet they do not explain how it is that the third servant was a servant of Christ in this life and that he had been given a stewardship by the Lord and yet he was unregenerate. Nor do they explain how in the closely related Parable of the Minas the third servant enters the kingdom and is not associated with the enemies of Jesus. His judgment ends before the enemies are brought and judged and slain. The third servant in Luke 19:20–26 is not slain. Their view makes these two parables contradict each other.

Why is the improperly dressed guest in the Parable of the Wedding Feast at the feast at all? How did he get in? All kinds of people were

invited, but rejected the invitation to come. This man accepted the invitation. He is even called “Friend” (Matt 22:12). Their explanation seems to be that “to attend without having on a wedding garment was an act of utter refusal of the king’s gracious gift (of a wedding garment)” (p. 109). But then are there two types of unbelievers, those who accept the invitation and attend the wedding and those who do not accept or attend? Why did some unbelievers get into the wedding feast at all? One would think that either all unbelievers would be present or none.

Why are the five foolish virgins called *virgins*? And why do those five foolish virgins have oil for their lamps? Their lamps do burn, showing they have oil. What they lack is an additional supply of oil *to keep their lamps burning*. Plus doesn’t the fact that all ten virgins are anticipating the Lord’s soon return suggest they are believers? None of this is discussed (see pp. 126–29).

If believers never experience God’s wrath (pp. 241–51, esp. 250), then why are there so many verses that warn the believing readers of that very fact? A concordance study of the word *wrath* (*orgē*) in the NT shows many verses which do not fit their view (e.g., Rom 1:18; 5:9–10; 13:4–5; Heb 3:11; 4:3; Jude 21). Note especially, “But if you [the believing readers in Rome] do evil, be afraid; for he [human government] does not bear the sword in vain; *for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil*” (Rom 13:4, emphasis added).

It is disturbing that some of the views in this book are exactly the views of Lordship Salvation. All believers are overcomers. All believers will hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” The third servant in the Parable of the Talents is sent to eternal condemnation as are the five foolish virgins. The servant who was doing well and thinks, “My master is delaying his coming,” and then falls away, represents an unbeliever who for a time served Christ and looked forward to His return, but then later proved he was unregenerate by beating his fellow servants and drinking with the drunkards (Matt 24:45–51). While I understand that they are not arguing for Lordship Salvation, their views in places are consistent with Lordship Salvation and people who buy their views may be more open to the Lordship Salvation position.

JOTGES readers may be bothered in a few places where ungracious words are used toward men like Zane Hodges, Jody Dillow, Don Reiher, Rene Lopez, and myself. The authors say things like, “These interpretations of Luke 12:46–47 are *a travesty and utterly contrary* to the way in

which God deals with His own children” (p. 125, emphasis added); “*It may be hard for you to believe but* there are those Free Grace advocates who actually teach that these ‘evil servants’ are believers whom the Lord will cut in two when He returns” (p. 123, emphasis added); “*this false teaching* of outer darkness for unfaithful believers...” (p. 53, emphasis added); “*practical absurdity* [of a first century Christian being rebuked by Christ at the Bema]” (p. 55, emphasis added); “*The doctrinal aberrations dealt with in this book* [concern] Christians being punished after the Rapture” (p. 11); “*It is nothing short of astounding* to hear advocates of God’s free grace boldly asserting that believers today must still pay a portion of the penalty for sin” (pp. 258–59, emphasis added).

There is a Scripture index, which is very helpful. However, the lack of a Subject index is disappointing.

I commend a desire to keep believers from being paralyzed by fear of the Bema. I agree that unfaithful believers will not miss the Millennium, will not weep for 1,000 years, and will not be excluded from the New Jerusalem. However, I am puzzled by the desire of the authors to remove all fear of the Bema other than the awe we will feel at appearing before Christ (pp. 216–17).

I cannot recommend this book. The exegesis is poor. Many vital issues are barely discussed or not discussed at all. And it leads readers in the direction of Lordship Salvation.

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Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society
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Knowledge and Christian Belief. By Alvin Plantinga. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015. 144 pp. Paper, \$16.00.

Alvin Plantinga explains there are two kinds of objections to Christianity: *de facto* and *de jure*. The first kind of objection says we shouldn’t believe in Christianity because it is factually false. The second kind of objection says we shouldn’t believe in Christianity because it is *irrational* to do so, whether we can show it is factually false or not. Most Christian apologetics deals with *de facto* questions, offering arguments and evidences in defense of the Christian faith. In *Knowledge and Christian Belief*, a summary of his much longer *Warranted Christian*

Belief, Plantinga addresses the second kind of objection, asking, do Christian beliefs enjoy justification, rationality, and warrant?

Plantinga's argument is that Christian belief is rational, because it is properly basic. A belief being properly basic means it can be held without evidence. Although many critics of Christianity claim you should proportion your belief to the evidence, the fact is, you cannot have evidence for all your beliefs, because then you would be involved in an infinite regress. Thinking has to start somewhere. Classical Foundationalism (CF) claims that thought begins with properly basic beliefs. Some beliefs are self-evident (e.g., $1+2=3$). Other beliefs are incorrigible (e.g., like our sense beliefs). According to CF, Christian belief is only rational if it comes by way of argument from self-evident or incorrigible evidence, or from propositions derived from that evidence. But as Plantinga points out, CF has a serious problem: it is neither self-evident, nor incorrigible! Hence CF fails its own test of rationality, and is self-referentially incoherent (p. 15).

In chapters three and four, Plantinga proposes an alternative to CF, which he calls the A/C model (after Aquinas and Calvin). On the A/C model, beliefs are properly basic if they are produced by cognitive faculties, operating according to a design plan, that are functioning properly, in a suitable environment, and which are aimed at producing true beliefs. He follows Aquinas and Calvin in proposing that one of those cognitive faculties is a *sensus divinitatis* designed by God to form true beliefs about Him in suitable contexts. In that sense, beliefs formed by the *sensus divinitatis* are as basic as perception, memory, and a priori knowledge (p. 35). Plantinga goes on to argue for an extended A/C model. Not only do we have a *sensus divinitatis*, but the extended model also allows for the Holy Spirit to give people faith in Christian doctrine (e.g., about sin, the atonement, the resurrection, etc). But, since the activity of the Holy Spirit is also a "belief producing process" according to a design plan, these beliefs would also be rational and have warrant (p. 56).

This approach to the rationality of faith actually turns the tables on atheists, for while they would argue that theistic belief is produced by cognitive processes gone wrong (e.g., Freud), on Plantinga's A/C model, it is actually atheistic beliefs that are due to improperly functioning cognitive faculties (p. 37).

Atheists will obviously complain that the A/C model stacks the deck by assuming that Christian belief is true. Plantinga agrees. But he points

out that atheists reject the *sensus divinitatis* because they take atheism for granted (p. 43). But this raises a critical question. There is no neutral way to approach the question of the rationality of beliefs. The disagreement over the *de jure* status of Christian beliefs will depend upon *de facto* questions about our cognitive faculties, which will depend on the truth of Christian theism. As Plantinga says, “any successful objections to the model will also have to be a successful objection to the truth of Christian belief” (p. 68).

Someone could admit that in an ideal situation Plantinga’s A/C model might mean beliefs produced by that process do have warrant. But since there are defeaters to Christian belief—that is, positive reasons for thinking Christianity is not true, such as modern Biblical criticism, religious pluralism, and the problem of evil—it would be irrational to accept Christian beliefs in a basic way (p. 89). The next chapters address these alleged defeaters and conclude that Christian faith is still warranted.

JOTGES readers who are interested in apologetics ought to be familiar with Plantinga. But even though this is an introductory work, the average reader will have a hard time following Plantinga’s argument. It is introductory, but not popular in the way that Josh McDowell writes for a popular audience. Plantinga is doing serious academic philosophy. *JOTGES* readers will appreciate the way Plantinga acknowledges that beliefs are not under our voluntary control (p. 16); that faith is propositional and has an object (pp. 58–59); and that saving faith is faith that the gospel promise is true “for me” (pp. 58–59). Highly recommended for those interested in apologetics.

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Salvation and Discipleship Continuum in Johannine Literature: Toward an Evaluation of the Faith Alone Doctrine. By Sujaya T. James. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2014. 283 pp. Paper, \$179.95.

I met the author in the late 90s while he was working on his doctorate at Dallas Theological Seminary on this very subject. I found him to be a very kind and respectful person. Over the years I've spoken with him on the phone several times and have always enjoyed our interactions.

James dedicates this book "to faith alone teachers and preachers with much respect." In his preface he says, "I hold Faith Alone teachers and preachers with deep respect. I am touched by their love for the Lord reflected in their writings and ministries" (p. vii). The tone of this book is very gracious.

One of the major strengths of this book is also one of its major weaknesses. James extensively cites Free Grace proponents, especially Zane C. Hodges (on 72 pages). He also regularly cites Dave Anderson (9 pages), Charlie Bing (6 pages), Jody Dillow (27 pages), John Niemelä (on 5 pages), and me (on 42 pages). He regularly cites *Grace in Focus Magazine*, *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, and books published by GES. This is very helpful for the reader.

However, James typically cites only the conclusions of an author and not his argument for that conclusion. Worse, he moves from one author's conclusion to a similar statement from another author and then another similar statement from many other Free Grace authors. This piling of quote upon quote becomes confusing because little or no argumentation is given. Then James concludes why the Free Grace view is wrong by citing the conclusions of several scholars who agree with him.

As an example, consider how James handles John 2:23–25. In v 23 John says that "many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did." The author then cites Zane Hodges, Jody Dillow, Dave Anderson, me, Debbie Hunn, Dennis Rokser, and Mike Halsey. We all say that the expression *many believed in His name* clearly refers to saving faith in light of John 1:12–13 which says that anyone who believes in His name is born of God.

Then James says, "Carson rightly underscores, 'Whether or not the faith in any passage is genuine or spurious can be determined only by the context'" (p. 65). That is a bit like saying that the only way we know

what an author means is by reading what he wrote. That comment is essentially worthless. Does inspired Scripture ever tell the reader that someone believed in Jesus when in fact the person did not believe in Jesus? Wouldn't that be the Bible deceiving the reader?

This then leads to a new round of quotes from Hunn, Dillow, Hodges, Anderson, Hixson, Bing, me, and then more quotes from Dillow, Anderson, Hunn, Hodges, me, Hodges, me, and Hodges (pp. 60-70). Then to prove we are wrong James cites a group of scholars who agree with him.

What is lacking in this book is 1) a clear explanation of the arguments made by Free Grace proponents and 2) a careful consideration of the key Scriptures by James himself. Instead, what we get is a lot of quotes. *A lot* of quotes.

James seems to take the view that regeneration occurs over one's lifetime and not at a point in time. I say *seems* because he is not clear on this. But notice these statements by James, especially the last one: "Faith Alone teachers such as D. Anderson and Wilkin [wrongly] teach that it is possible for believers to live in darkness" (p. 39); "[John] insisted that the life the believers possessed manifested itself in such qualities as obeying Christ and loving fellow believers" (p. 131); "The chief problem with Faith Alone proponents' handling of Johannine *menō* [abide] is that for the most part they treat it [abiding in Christ] as expressing a non-permanent concept [i.e., believers might not continue to abide]" (p. 230); "Those who claimed to have fellowship with God and yet walked in darkness were unbelievers" (p. 233); "John does not view a believer's life in a punctiliar [point in time] sense, but in a linear [over the lifetime] concept" (p. 234).

The price of this book, \$179, will prove prohibitive for many readers. In spite of the price, I recommend this book for well-grounded believers who have an interest in Lordship Salvation and Free Grace theology. However, let the buyer beware that because of all the quotes in the book it is not always easy to follow the author's train of thought. Nor is it easy to see *from Scripture* why he thinks Free Grace theology is wrong.

Robert N. Wilkin
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Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society
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Second Peter: Shunning Error in Light of the Savior's Return. By Zane C. Hodges. Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2015. 142 pp. Paper, \$15.00.

This commentary is a compilation of writings on Second Peter that were published in Zane Hodges's newsletter, *The Kerugma Message*.

Hodges spends very little time on introductory matters. But it is clear that he takes a conservative and traditional view of the book. He believes that the book was written by the Apostle Peter shortly before his death (p. 13). In addition, Hodges has a very high view of the inspiration of the Scriptures (pp. 50–52).

As the title suggests, Hodges sees the main theme of the book as encouraging the readers to live godly lives in view of the fact that Christ promised that He would return. The false teachers of Peter's day (and ours as well), denied the promises related to that return. The false teachers Peter has in mind also lived immoral lives. Since they denied the Second Coming of Christ, they saw no need to live holy lives.

It will come as no surprise to the readers of the *JOTGES* that this commentary is written from a Free Grace perspective. Even though Second Peter is a small book of only three chapters, there are verses in it that are widely debated and misunderstood. Hodges, in his typical fashion, explains these verses in a way that does not deny the fact that eternal life is a free gift from God. In addition, he shows the reader the importance of good works in the life of the believer. While good works are not a part of the offer of eternal salvation, there are consequences for immorality for the Christian.

In 2 Pet 1:5–7, Hodges points out that holiness in the life of the believer is not automatic (pp. 20–23). While God has given the believer everything he needs to live that life, the believer must choose to do so and must take advantage of the resources God has given. These resources include the Holy Spirit and the promises of Christ's return.

In one of the most misunderstood verses in the NT (2 Pet 1:10), Hodges argues convincingly that the "call and election" of the believer does not involve eternal salvation. Instead, the Christian has been called and elected to be rewarded in the kingdom and reign with Christ. While all Christians will be in the kingdom, only Christians who live the life described in 1:5–7 will be rewarded in this manner (p. 31).

In his discussion on 2 Peter 2, Hodges discusses the immoral lifestyle of the false teachers. He points out that while a believer can be a false teacher, these particular teachers were not Christians (p. 55). The danger the believing readers faced was that they could be duped by these false teachers. If they did, they would also fall into an immoral lifestyle. These are the ones Peter has in mind in 2:21–22 (pp. 84–87).

In this section, Hodges argues that even believers who have made some advancement in Christian maturity can fall prey to such heresies. A Christian that turns away from what he knows and no longer desires to obey Christ, is worse off than if he had never know what Christ expected of him. It would have been better if he had never started the Christian maturing process at all. Such a Christian is worse off because he will have a deep sense of guilt under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. In many cases this guilt is buried under “new depths of rebellion and/or licentiousness.” In an effort to escape such emotional pain, the Christian slides into even more sin.

In the famous passage found in 2 Pet 3:8–9, Hodges holds that the idea that God wants all men to come to repentance is not a reference to the fact that God wants all men to be eternally saved, even though God does have that desire (p. 104). Instead, the repentance here is a reference to turning from sin. Turning from sin is not a requirement for the reception of eternal life. God wants men to turn from their sin because eventually the sin of mankind will usher in the Great Tribulation. During this period, billions of people will die and God does not desire that to occur (pp. 101–106). God is extremely patient with mankind. It is for that reason that Christ has not yet returned.

This commentary concludes with questions related to each chapter of the commentary (pp. 127–31). There are fourteen such chapters. It is hoped that these questions will help facilitate small group discussions.

The discussions found on the pages are clearly written by one who loved the Word of God. They are based on the context of the individual passages as well as the book as a whole. Once again, Hodges has shown how eternal salvation is by God’s grace through faith alone in Christ alone, but that works are necessary for rewards. There is a great deal of false teaching today concerning these facts. This commentary on 2 Peter is a great help combating both the false teachings found in Christendom, as well as the denial by the world that Christ is coming back. If a person

only owns one commentary on 2 Peter, it should be this one. I give it my highest recommendation.

Kenneth W. Yates

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Columbia, SC

Keys to Kingdom Greatness: An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount. By Steve Elkins. Coppell, TX: Allie Grace Publishers, 2014. 428 pp. Paper, \$19.95.

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) is the longest extended discourse given by Jesus in all of the Gospels. Over the centuries, it has generated more diversity of interpretation than perhaps any of Jesus’ teachings. The author states: “Without exaggeration, there are over fifty widely varying interpretations of the Sermon in print—most of which are simply unsustainable under Scriptural scrutiny” (p. 5).

In his Foreword, Steve Elkins states his purpose of writing: “Because there’s simply not anything available—that I know of—from this particular perspective. We are very convicted that the Sermon is in reference to Christ’s future literal Kingdom and that it most certainly is *not* about Kingdom *entrance*, but Kingdom *greatness*” (p. 5).

Also, he states: “A more important reason for writing on the subject is because so much of the popular literature being pumped out on the Sermon directly contradicts the Gospel of grace. Seeing the Sermon as how one *enters* the kingdom—or how ‘*true entrants*’ *necessarily live*—will only destroy one’s objective assurance of salvation. But if understood as primarily to *believers* (who know they’re saved) and about greatness not *entrance* the Sermon is an amazing short-course on how we’re to live and look at things *now* as we await the King’s return. The King Himself sets forth a whole new mental composition and character, replete with conduct and commands *guaranteed* to make any child of the Father great in the Kingdom...if we’ll take Him up on it!” (p. 5, emphasis his).

Elkins has admirably accomplished what he set out to do, and that is to show conclusively that the Sermon on the Mount is intensely relevant

for believers today; give down-to-earth and practical ways of applying Jesus' words; and open up the text in a clear and understandable way.

This book is not written for everyone. It is not directed towards theologians (though it will challenge them), nor is it directed towards unbelievers (though perhaps an unbeliever might benefit from its contents), but it is directed towards believers who do not necessarily make their livings writing about theology. It is written in a down-to-earth manner that anyone can understand—and abounds with illustrations and applications. These chapters are actually sermons which the author has preached and therefore are abundantly practical. The author's knowledge of the Greek is immediately evident and his careful attention to minute details of Greek grammar is laudable. Yet he writes in a very pastoral and understandable manner. (He always explains Greek terms carefully.)

The book has 32 chapters that break down the Sermon in its order of presentation. The author understands the Sermon as telling disciples of Jesus Christ how to attain greatness in the coming Kingdom of Heaven. This thesis is based on Matt 5:17–19 and particularly v 19: "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called *great* in the kingdom of heaven" (emphasis mine).

The author believes that Jesus is giving us directions today as to how *we*—in the church—can attain this greatness. In fact, his first chapter is immensely important. He shows through Scripture and exposition that, in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus turns decisively to the Gentiles (and the church). Elkins says concerning Matt 21:43, "Prophetically, Jesus is saying, 'The kingdom of God will be taken from you (since you're not believing) and given to a 'nation' (i.e., the entity of the church, largely made up of Gentiles!) producing its fruit'" (p. 15). He also notes Matt 28:19 where Jesus specifically commands the Apostles to go to the Gentiles.

This is a very crucial point. The very qualities that Jesus delineates in the Sermon on the Mount that are necessary for Israel to *reign with Him* are now the same qualities He is looking for in the church that Christians might *reign with Him* in the coming Kingdom.

After laying down a good foundation for his overall point-of-view and interpretation of the Sermon, the author proceeds basically verse-by-verse

to open up the Sermon. Along the way he provides a number of insights into both the Sermon on the Mount and the book of Matthew itself. I was particularly intrigued by his discussion of why four women are included in the genealogy of Matthew (p. 13). His argument is very clear and powerful and opens up a major insight in understanding the purpose of Matthew's Gospel. Except for Mary, they're all righteous Gentiles (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba). And they all had checkered pasts (except for Ruth).

This book is not for speed readers. I found myself going through it chapter-by-chapter while carefully thinking about (and even checking out) what the author had said. And in every chapter the author is strongly, but graciously, challenging the reader to *make application* to achieve kingdom greatness. That is, this is a highly motivating book. It is not for the weak-kneed reader.

It is disappointing that there is no Scripture index. Hopefully the second edition will include this.

I highly recommend this book to the Christian reader—of whatever maturity level he may be. I am planning on getting multiple copies to give away to friends who are otherwise persuaded about the meaning of the Sermon.

Bill Fiess
Richlands, VA

2 Corinthians. Revised edition. By Colin G. Kruse. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015. 287 pp. Paper, \$18.00.

When I checked various Free Grace hotspots in this commentary on 2 Corinthians, I came away very impressed. This is an outstanding commentary that most *JOTGES* readers will find very helpful.

2 Corinthians 3:18. Excellent discussion (pp. 136–37). He says, “Paul’s idea of being changed into his [Christ’s] likeness from one degree of glory to another (v 18b) is better understood to occur while believers are beholding rather than reflecting the glory of God” (p. 136).

2 Corinthians 5:9–10. Kruse says that Paul is discussing rewards for service, not salvation (p. 162).

2 Corinthians 8:9. Super discussion of what it means that “He became poor...that you might become rich.”

2 Corinthians 13:5–7. Kruse says, “The result Paul expected from their self-examination was that they were certainly *in the faith*, and his purpose in urging them to do so was that they would conclude that the one who led them to faith in Christ must be a true apostle” (pp. 280–81). While that is not how I explain those verses, that interpretation is less problematic than many have of these verses.

2 Corinthians 7:10. This is the lone place where I had a major problem with the author’s view. He suggests, “Repentance itself is not the cause of salvation, rather God saves us and freely forgives our sins only when our repentance shows that we have renounced them” (p. 192). That sounds like doublespeak to me. However, this commentary is rarely like that.

Though it is not a Free Grace hotspot, I found I really liked his explanation of “Strive for full restoration” (“Be complete” in the NKJV) in 2 Cor 13:11.

I highly recommend this commentary.

Robert N. Wilkin
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Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society
Corinth, TX

Faith in His Name: Listening to the Gospel of John. By Zane C. Hodges. Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2015. 149 pp. Paper, \$15.00.

The author of this book, Zane Hodges, died in November 2008. He was in the process of writing this commentary on the Gospel of John. At the time of his death, he had only completed the work through John 6:21. That is where the book ends.

Since the commentary only averages approximately 20 pages for each chapter of John it covers, it does not go into great grammatical detail. It is written at the layman level. However, everybody can benefit from the insights contained in it.

Anybody familiar with the writings of Hodges will not be surprised to learn that the commentary is written from a Free Grace perspective. He makes it clear that the Gospel of John proclaims that eternal life is given to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ for that gift. The Gospel of

John is the Gospel of eternal life, and this is the life Jesus came to give (p. 18).

In 1:17, the name *Jesus Christ* is very important. John wants his readers to believe that Jesus is the Christ and thus have eternal life (20:31). *Jesus* is the name of the historic Person, while the word *Christ* is the title that shows He is man's Savior.

To receive Jesus Christ (John 1:12) is to believe in Him for that gift. All who believe in Him become the children of God (p. 19).

From the very beginning of the Gospel, there are those who believe that Jesus is the Christ in this sense. These include John the Baptist, Andrew, Philip, and Nathaniel (1:35–51, pp. 33–38).

Hodges points out that the purpose of the Gospel of John is that the reader would believe this about Jesus (John 20:30–31). John included the miracles that Jesus performed for this very reason (p. 39). In other words, the miracles recorded in John were given to arouse faith in Jesus.

There are eight miracle “signs” in the book from 2:1–20:29. Included in these eight signs is the resurrection of Jesus Himself. Hodges calls this the “consummate” sign of the book (p. 49). After each miracle John speaks of events and discussions that indicate and show the significance of each sign. After each sign people believe.

For example, the first miracle is the turning of water into wine. This was a miracle of transformation. This is followed by the discussion of the transformation of new life that the believer has in Jesus Christ. This spiritual transformation is seen in the discussion with Nicodemus and the woman at the well in John 3–4 (p. 43).

The reader of this commentary will be pleased to see the high regard that Hodges has towards the inspiration of the Scripture. This attitude is seen in the discussion in general, but also in specific details. For example, he states that John did not make an error when he recorded the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Instead, there were two cleansings (p. 47).

Hodges states that according to the Gospel of John, eternal life cannot be lost even if our faith fails (John 3:18, p. 64). In his discussion of the woman at the well, he points out that there are two underlying items of knowledge when it comes to saving faith. One is the offer of eternal life as a gift. The other is that Jesus is the Christ (John 4:10, p. 76).

The second and third signs of the Lord involve the healing of the nobleman's son and the healing at the pool of Bethesda (John 4:46–5:9).

These miracles show the power of the words of Jesus to accomplish whatever purpose He desires without the aid of any additional means (p. 87). Jesus' word can bring physical life. His word can also bring spiritual life.

The fourth and fifth signs are the feeding of the multitude and walking on water. They show that He has complete control over nature and that Jesus can meet the needs of mankind. In the fourth sign, Jesus is the bread of heaven that comes down to give life. In the fifth we see that those who rely on Him safely reach their preferred destination.

In this short commentary, Hodges includes discussions that expound Biblical truths other than those that deal with eternal life and assurance. For example, he points out that the prohibition in the Law of Moses against work on the Sabbath was in reference to one's normal work. Exceptional forms of activity, such as healing a man on the Sabbath, were not the point of the original command (John 5:9–10, p. 98).

Another example is his discussion in John 6:11–13. The Christ and the "Prophet" are two different individuals. If the Jews had believed in Jesus, He would have assumed both roles. Since they rejected Him, the Prophet will come in the person of one of the two witnesses described in Rev 11:3–6 (p. 133).

This short commentary on the Gospel of John is full of insights and sound teaching about eternal life by faith alone in Jesus Christ. After reading it, this reviewer feels confident that the reader will have the same reaction I did. The reader will regret that the commentary ends at 6:21 and that Hodges did not have the opportunity to finish this work. I give it my highest recommendation.

Kenneth Yates

Editor

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

Columbia, SC

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