

SPECIAL ZANE HODGES MEMORIAL ISSUE

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INTRODUCTION

Zane C. Hodges went to be with the Lord on November 23, 2008 at the age of 76. He has a long history with this journal (see below), including having written 19 articles and having served as Associate Editor for many years.

The journal articles he has left us are profound, timeless, ground-breaking, and thought-provoking.

We chose eleven of his journal articles, many of which deal with assurance of salvation. We also chose one of his newsletter articles since it fits well with the other articles, and since it was one of Zane's most personal.

The articles were written between 1988 and 2005. Five of these articles were written after Zane had a devastating heart attack that nearly took his life in 1997.

As we put this issue together we were struck afresh by what he wrote. We hope you will share our joy as you read this memorial issue.

WHY A WHOLE JOURNAL WITH ARTICLES BY ZANE C. HODGES?

GES Owes Its Birth to Zane Hodges

I arrived at Dallas Theological Seminary in the Summer of 1978 as green as they come. I was Free Grace, but I really couldn't defend it from Scripture very well.

Within three semesters I had heard about a professor who had a unique method of exegeting the New Testament. He had a unique name too: Zane Hodges. Thus in my fourth semester I

took my first course from Zane, on the Book of Hebrews. I was hooked.

What captured my attention was the way in which he harmonized Scripture. He did not study a passage in total isolation from what he knew from other Scriptures. Indeed, he amazed me when he answered questions in class since it was clear that he had already considered how other texts related to the one he was studying. I can't recall anyone stumping him during the Q & A.

His Free Grace views were an encouragement to me. But what I learned is that the view is much broader than I thought at the time. I came to see that the doctrine of eternal rewards is an integral part of Free Grace theology, as is the doctrine of temporal chastisement.

I ended up taking courses from Zane on Acts, Hebrews, James, 1-3 John, and textual criticism. He was also my first reader, or advisor, on my masters's thesis and doctoral dissertation, both of which dealt directly with Free Grace issues (perseverance and repentance, respectively).

I was on campus in early 1985 to finalize details surrounding my doctoral dissertation. I saw a notice that referred to a *conference on the gospel* to be held later that year. Two main speakers were listed, both DTS professors: Zane C. Hodges and S. Craig Glickman.

Several months later I found out the conference was canceled due to insufficient response. That struck me as ridiculous. People needed to hear what Zane and Craig had to say. *I* needed to hear what they had to say.

I had been a member of the Evangelical Theological Society since 1982. The idea of having a similar sort of organization for Free Grace people began to take shape in my mind after I learned of the cancelation of that gospel conference. By the summer of 1986, I sent out the first GES newsletter.

In January of 1987, there were several regional meetings of GES people. One was in Dallas at Zane's church, Victor Street Bible Chapel. He took a prominent role in that meeting.

GES Owes Its Growth and Development to Zane Hodges

Zane was one of the first board members of GES. From 1987 until 1995 he was an integral part of the board. He helped

formulate many of the policies that have guided this ministry ever since.

I doubt we ever would have started a journal without the involvement of both Zane and his good friend, Dr. Art Farstad. I had no experience in writing or editing for a journal, but they had plenty. Art was the first editor of the journal and Zane served as the first associate editor.

In the early years I relied heavily on Zane to help me with articles (newsletter and journal) I was writing. But even after I stopped receiving his edits on a regular basis, he was always there to discuss passages or articles with me.

WHY DID WE SELECT THESE SPECIFIC ARTICLES?

Reading all these articles together, and reading them again (many of them I had not read in over a decade) had a powerful impact on me. If you have read all these articles before, you should be prepared to be surprised by the power they have to move you again, especially when read together. I highly recommend reading all these articles in a short period of time, certainly a week or less. By doing so the cumulative impact of these articles will hit you in a way that magnifies the effect of the independent articles.

WE BELIEVE IN ASSURANCE OF SALVATION (*JOTGES*, AUTUMN 1990)

At the 2006 GES Annual Conference a dispute arose over the issue of whether a person had to believe that what he receives by believing in Jesus is *everlasting*. It appeared that over one-third of those present believed that a person could be born again who had never believed that his salvation could not be lost.

At the time some people were suggesting that this was a new teaching by Zane Hodges and others. Yet sixteen years earlier, in this 1990 article, Zane clearly made that very point under the heading, "Assurance Is an Inseparable Part of Saving Faith" (see pp. 22-25).

This article has an excellent discussion of assurance by faith in what Jesus promised, totally apart from our works. In the

conclusion, Zane even briefly touches on the danger of making trust in Christ something different than believing in Him.

**ASSURANCE AND WORKS:
AN EVANGELICAL TRAIN WRECK
(GRACE IN FOCUS, MARCH-APRIL 1994)**

In this article Zane began by discussing the view of assurance held by John MacArthur, who adopted a Puritan view. Then in an amazingly personal touch, Zane discussed a conversation he had with Dr. Campbell, then the President of DTS. He told Dr. Campbell that some DTS faculty at the time were contradicting the seminary's statement on assurance.

Zane then cited two examples of reviews written by Dr. Darrell Bock in 1989 and Dr. Robert Pyne in 1993 in which they expressed the very view of assurance that Zane had told Dr. Campbell was being taught.

Zane was then given a copy of Pyne's class notes on assurance in an effort to prove to him that Dr. Pyne was not teaching anything contrary to the seminary's statement. In this article Zane quotes from these notes, showing that Pyne indeed contradicts the statement.

**THE NEW PURITANISM PART 1:
CARSON ON CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE
(JOTGES, SPRING 1993)**

The Puritans were the English branch of Reformed theologians. The Puritans argued that one could not have assurance simply by believing in Jesus, but that instead one must look to his works to have some measure of conviction that he might actually be a believer.

Here Zane starts a short series on *the new Puritanism*. He selects famed exegete and theologian D. A. Carson as his lead example. This article is beautifully done. I especially enjoyed the conclusion. There Zane shows that Carson, when speaking of assurance and perseverance, "comes close to double-speak" (p. 50). Zane was being gracious here. Carson was indeed guilty of double-speak.

**THE NEW PURITANISM PART 2:
MICHAEL S. HORTON: HOLY WAR
WITH UNHOLY WEAPONS
(JOTGES, AUTUMN 1993)**

The other new Puritan Zane chose to discuss was Michael Horton. Since he had much to say about Horton, Zane broke the discussion into two parts. In this first part Zane points out false statements and distortions that Horton makes. One thing that jumps out of this article is the discussion of the Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Zane actually prints a transcript of part of the exchange between Anne Hutchinson and the Deputy Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The transcript surprised me with its vitality. Reading it moves you back 250 years and lets you see the Free Grace issue played out then as well. And it is clear that the issue was not that Mrs. Hutchinson was teaching that the Christian is without laws or commands. The issue was that she did not believe that assurance was based on one's works.

**THE NEW PURITANISM PART 3:
MICHAEL S. HORTON: HOLY WAR
WITH UNHOLY WEAPONS
(JOTGES, SPRING 1994)**

Though he is criticizing Horton once again, Zane's tone in this article shifts slightly when he reports about Horton's Bible church background (pp. 74-78). But he goes on to show that when he, like Horton, faced similar misgivings over some of what he had been taught about sanctification, Zane did not resort to Puritanism, but to further study of the Word of God. Horton's sojourn led him to reject the notion of imperatives in the Christian life. One might easily pass over this line in Horton. Yet once Zane points it out, it is clear that Horton has allowed a theological position to blind him to some important truths of Scripture.

WE BELIEVE IN REWARDS (*JOTGES*, AUTUMN 1991)

Here is a fantastic introduction to the doctrine of rewards. Zane begins by answering objections that some Free Grace people have. Some think that the doctrine of rewards contradicts the grace of God. Selfishness, another concern some have with this doctrine, is skillfully dispatched by Zane as well.

To round out the discussion, Zane shows that the doctrine of rewards is not the only Biblical motivation to obey God. He discusses love and gratitude, God's temporal discipline, and God's temporal blessings.

As I read this article again, I was struck by how much my teaching on rewards has been influenced by this short article.

REGENERATION: A NEW COVENANT BLESSING (*JOTGES*, AUTUMN 2005)

One thing this article illustrates is that Zane Hodges did not simply memorize doctrines taught to him: he studied the Scriptures to see if what he had been taught was exactly right (Acts 17:11). I recall being taught about the New Covenant at Dallas Theological Seminary and being left with lots of unanswered questions. One of the biggest of these questions is how the New Covenant could be for Israel, yet we in the Church partake of its blessings.

The explanation given here is simple, clear, and Biblical.

Another major question largely left unanswered in seminary was how people were saved in the OT. Zane here does a masterful job of answering that question as well, showing that the new birth is a New Covenant blessing, and that even before the New Covenant was established, God regenerated people "in anticipation of the sacrificial work of Christ" (p. 96).

This is an amazing article. Read it carefully and read it more than once.

**JUSTIFICATION:
A NEW COVENANT BLESSING
(JOTGES, AUTUMN 2006)**

Once again, Zane shows the power of meditating on the Word of God. Instead of repeating politically correct statements on justification and forgiveness, Zane explores what the Bible actually says. His comparison between forgiveness and justification is truly outstanding.

Within the discussion of forgiveness and justification is a super discussion of the so-called *final judgment* of believers. He shows that there is no *final judgment* for Christians. He even discusses how the Judgment Seat of Christ is far different than the Great White Throne Judgment.

**LEGALISM: THE REAL THING
(JOTGES, AUTUMN 1996)**

Many people do not realize that our first national conference was not held in 1996. Of course, we have advertized our conferences that way, with the 2009 conference being the 14th annual conference. However, that is because 1996 was the first year in which we started having *consecutive* annual conferences.

We had a major national conference with over 100 in attendance in Dallas in 1988 at Criswell Bible College. Zane spoke on this topic: "Legalism: The Real Thing." I was moved by his talk then, and when we published it eight years later. Now, as we republish this article, I'm impacted all over again.

Zane's discussion of antinomianism is outstanding. So is his discussion of Fuller's contention in *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum?*

Many Free Grace people are not familiar with the proposed three uses of the Law. Zane explains these and shows why the so-called third use of the Law is not Biblical. The Law of Moses is not the guide for believers today on how we are to live the Christian life.

Acts 15:1, 5 also is discussed by Zane in this article. That discussion is fantastic as well.

This article is a must read for many reasons. Though originally delivered over twenty years ago, it is right on target in 2009 as well.

THE MORALISTIC WRATH DODGER (JOTGES, SPRING 2005)

Romans 2:1-16 has long been problematic for Free Grace people. Zane deals with many of the problems in this article on Rom 2:1-5.

What I particularly loved was his discussion of the word *repentance* (*metanoia*) in Rom 2:4. As he points out, that is the only use of the word in all of Romans. His discussion of repentance in this article is a wonderful primer on the subject.

Zane's discussion of "the day of wrath" is also very helpful.

HOW TO LEAD PEOPLE TO CHRIST PART 1 (JOTGES, AUTUMN 2000)

This article and the second part which followed were based on a 1999 conference message. They caused quite a stir in Free Grace circles. However, the reaction was not immediate. Other than a response we published in our journal by Greg Sapaugh, there was very little written in response for seven years.

In the Spring of 2007 an article appeared entitled, "The Tragedy of the Crossless Gospel, Pt. 1." It was the first of many articles in a series that ultimately became an 800-page book (copyright 2009) whose subtitle is *A Biblical Response to the Crossless Gospel Regarding the Contents of Saving Faith*.

When the first article appeared, I researched the expression *the crossless gospel*. I found that it was used by A. W. Tozer to denounce the Free Grace message because it did not require the unbeliever to take up his cross and follow Christ to be born again.

Now a Free Grace person was using the same pejorative expression, but in a completely new way: to denounce what Zane had written as being heretical. A cottage industry developed as bloggers found new ways to twist and distort what Zane had written.

In this article Zane says that what a person must believe to be born again is that Jesus gives everlasting life to all who believe in Him. He indicated that it was hypothetically possible to believe that and not know about Jesus' death and resurrection.

Reading this article again showed me how far off base these *crossless gospel* charges really are. It is hard for me to understand how a person could make that charge after reading this article. But maybe that is the problem. Critics did not read, or did not carefully read, what Zane wrote. They gained an impression and then set out to slay that impression. Unfortunately, the impression was a false one.

Take care to note Zane's mention of *the gospel* in this article. He clearly and unequivocally says that the gospel is about the death and resurrection of Jesus. That is certainly not a *crossless gospel*. He also has a whole section on "Preaching the Cross" in which he says that "the gospel gives us the wonderful answer" to "why men should trust Christ for eternal life" (pp. 138-139). He concluded that section by saying, "The preaching of the cross greatly facilitates the process of bringing men to faith in God's Son" (p. 139).

That the word *gospel* does not appear anywhere in the text of the Gospel of John is a point Zane made which has yet to receive a reply by his Free Grace critics.

HOW TO LEAD PEOPLE TO CHRIST PART 2 (JOTGES, SPRING 2001)

In Part 2 of this article on leading people to Christ, Zane focuses on various evangelistic invitations. The very first one is inviting people to believe that Jesus died on the cross as a summary statement of what he must believe to be born again: "Whenever I hear that nowadays, I get extremely uncomfortable." Note well that it is not the preaching of the cross of Jesus' resurrection or deity that makes him extremely uncomfortable.

He goes on to show that the Bible repeatedly states the object of saving faith without putting the death of Christ on our behalf as part of the summary statement.

His second reservation is with the idea of inviting people to do a two-step: believe in the facts of the gospel (step 1) and then personally trust Jesus with your eternal destiny (step 2). Note

that Zane emphasizes that “the facts of the gospel” have “instrumental value” “in bringing men to faith in Christ.” Again, Zane indicates that the death and resurrection of Jesus are the facts of the gospel and that those truths are valuable to lead people to faith in Christ. That is not a crossless gospel. It is not a crossless message.

Asking Jesus into one’s heart is a common invitation and Zane Biblically rejects it. Likewise he rejects the invitation to commit oneself to Christ in order to be born again. And he gives additional reasons why *trust* is not an improvement over the Biblical call to *believe*.

He ends with a super discussion of inviting people to believe in Jesus for eternal life, focusing on John 6:35-40.

Ten years later these two articles are very powerful. For those who skimmed them in the past and did not read them carefully, here is an opportunity to see what Zane actually wrote and to check out his arguments from the Word of God.