

GRACE (in) FOCUS

HERE
COMES
..... THE

S O N

Was Paul Uncertain?

Christ's Credibility

Why Does God Allow Suffering?

Am I One of the Elect?

The Prophet Jeremiah

Does Grace Promote Sin?

How Powerful Are Politics?

And much more!

In This Issue...

Letter from the Editor Bob Wilkin	3	Christ Is Credible, Part One: His Claims and the Disciples' Corroboration Dix Winston	20
Was the Apostle Paul Uncertain of His Eternal Destiny? (1 Corinthians 9:24-27) Doug Potgeter	4	Biblical Ha-Ha Moments, Part 2 Marcia Hornok	24
What's Been Happening at GES?	7	Bookstore	28
Here Comes the Son: Learning from the Church at Philadelphia Philippe R. Sterling	8	More of What's Been Happening at GES?	33
Am I One of God's Elect? Bob Wilkin	12	Top 5 Changes I'm Making in My Spiritual Life Summer Stevens	34
Politics Ain't As Powerful As We Think (John 19:12-13) Ken Yates	14	What About Those Guys? (Jeremiah 12:1-6) Ken Yates	38
Why Does God Allow Suffering? Lucas Kitchen	18	How I Was Transformed Nancy Rempel	42
		Voice from the Past: Does a Biblical View of Grace Actually Promote Sin? Bob Wilkin	45

Editor: Robert N. Wilkin, Ph.D. Typesetting and Design: Matthew Simmons.
Executive Assistant: Bethany Taylor. Order Fulfillment: Mark Gray. Director of
GES Missions: Ken Yates. GES Missions Coordinator: Kathryn Wright.

Volume 38, Number 2
© 2023 by Grace Evangelical Society

Address changes? Comments? Prayer requests? Testimonies?
Send them to ges@faithalone.org or write to
Grace in Focus, P.O. Box 1308, Denton, TX 76202.

Grace in Focus is a bimonthly magazine about the gospel, assurance, and
related issues. For your free U.S. subscription sign up on our website or send
your name and address to P.O. Box 1308, Denton, TX 76202. If you would like
to make a tax-deductible donation to offset the costs of printing and postage,
it would be greatly appreciated.



Letter from the Editor



I get letters and emails all the time from people who have a hard time finding a church that clearly proclaims the promise of everlasting life that is by faith alone, apart from works. While there are many places in the U.S. and Canada where that is true, the difficulty in finding a church that is clear on the gospel grows exponentially in Europe, Asia, Israel and the Middle East, Central America, South America, Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. We suggest either starting your own church in your home or moving to a location where there is a solid Bible-teaching church. If you decide to start your own Bible study or church, our materials can help.

Hard copies of our magazine reach people all over the U.S. The magazine is also read online by people all over the world.

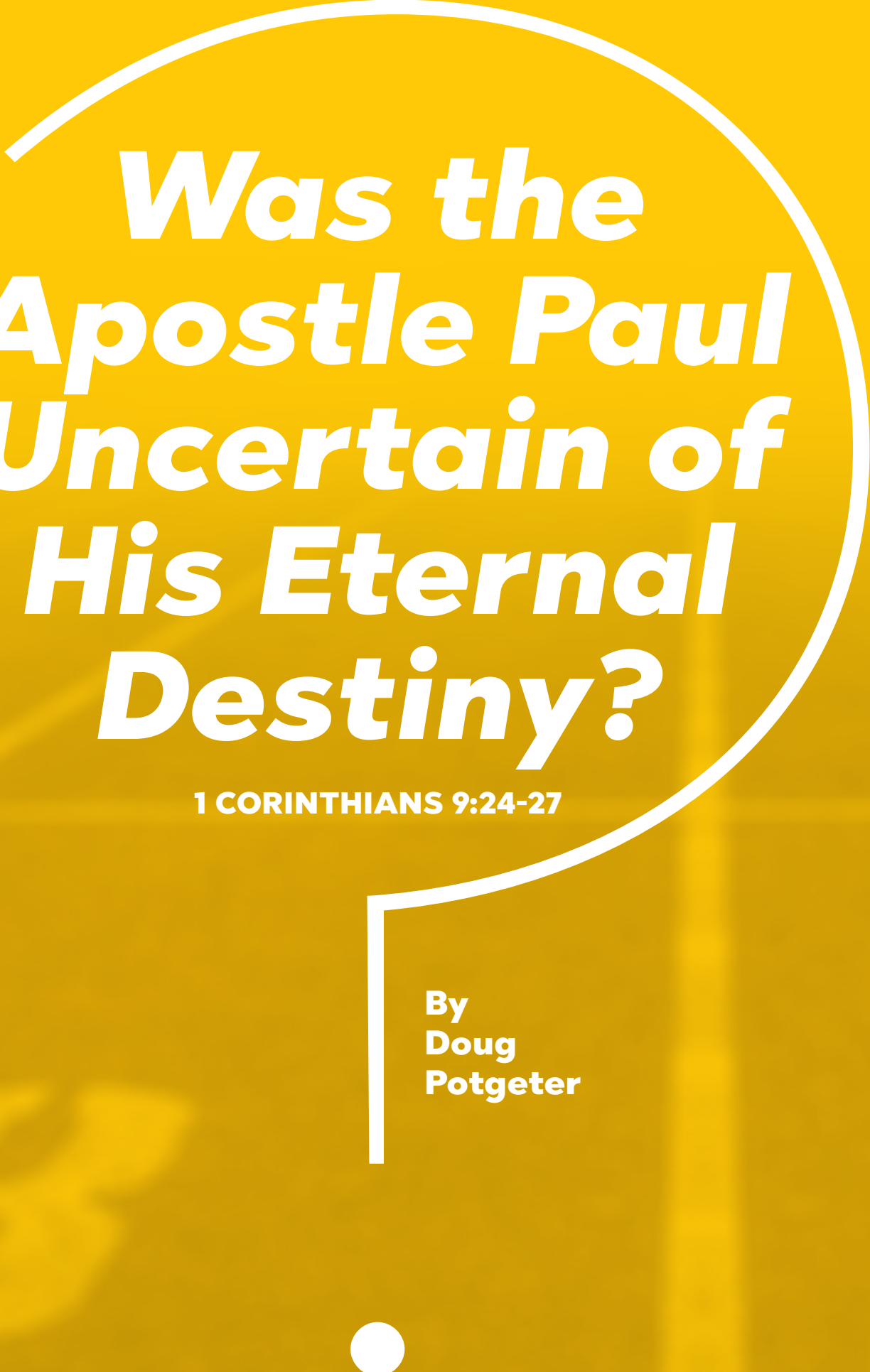
Grace in Focus magazine is a ministry of the Grace Evangelical Society (www.faithalone.org). Our purpose is to aid local churches around the world in

the proclamation of the free gift of everlasting life and the related yet distinct issue of discipleship and eternal rewards.

Are you viewing our five-minute videos on the Grace Evangelical Society YouTube channel? Each Monday and Friday at noon we release videos by me and by Ken Yates. We also have daily podcasts available on our website (under *Grace in Focus* Radio) and on Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, Spotify, and YouTube. There are also daily blogs and thousands of searchable free articles on our website.

The Lord Jesus is coming again soon. May we all be watchful until that time. If we are faithful, we will hear Him say, “Well done, good servant” (Luke 19:17). Paul said, “If we endure, we will reign with Him” (2 Tim 2:12). But no matter what, if we have believed in Jesus for everlasting life, then we will be with Him forever (1 Thess 5:10). Everlasting life is ever-lasting life. Thank God for that! Maranatha.

Robert N. Wilkin



Was the Apostle Paul Uncertain of His Eternal Destiny?

1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27

**By
Doug
Potgeter**

Some theologians today claim that the Apostle Paul was uncertain whether he would make it to heaven. The passage they use to support this claim is found in 1 Cor 9:24-27, where Paul wrote:

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it... Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified (1 Cor 9:24, 26-27).

One leading Calvinist, in his commentary on this passage, explains the reason why Paul disciplined himself:

Such discipline is exercised because Paul, after preaching to others, does not want to be disqualified from receiving the prize of eternal life.¹

Later on he comments...

The need to run the race to the end did not fill Paul with doubt or shake his confidence. Instead, the admonition to run the race stimulated him to continue in the faith, and his perseverance bolstered his confidence that he would receive final salvation. Those who do not persevere reveal that they were not genuine (11:19); thus perseverance is the mark of a true believer.²

It seems, in a very subtle way, this writer is claiming that the Apostle Paul was uncertain of his eternal destiny. In his view, the need to run the race to the end did not *fill* Paul with doubt. Apparently, he just had *some doubts* as to whether or not he would “re-

ceive the prize of eternal life.” And these doubts were meant to motivate him to continue running the race.

Another Calvinist theologian, in a sermon on 1 Cor 9:24-27, said:

If [Paul] quit running, if he said, “I’ve had enough of this life of service; I’m through with following the path of obedience to my heavenly call; I’ll try to hang on to Christ for the forgiveness of my sins, but I’m done with doing what he says”— if Paul quit like that, and never came back, he would be lost. He would not get the prize of salvation.”³

Clearly, this teacher believes that if the Apostle Paul did not persevere to the end, then “he would not get the prize of salvation.” But is that what Paul meant? Was he fearful of being eternally lost if he stopped running the race? Did he believe that his faithfulness was a condition for eternal life? Did Paul view *salvation* as a prize to be won?

Another scholar, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, explains,

The immortal crown to be won (9:25) is not a good job-approval rating as an apostle, but salvation. It can be won only if one exercises self-control and abstains from many things that may bring physical delight but ultimately will doom success in the contest.⁴

According to this scholar as well, the Apostle Paul was striving to win salvation. He was exercising self-discipline so that he would make it to heaven. But is this what Paul intended to communicate?

I believe several considerations show the inadequacy of such an interpretation: the context, the word *disqualified*, and Paul’s faith-alone gospel presented in other passages.

THE CONTEXT ISN'T ABOUT THE PROMISE OF EVERLASTING LIFE

In 1 Corinthians 8 Paul began answering a question about eating meat offered to idols, and his discussion spans chapters 8-10. Some believers in Corinth wanted to exercise their “right” to eat meat offered to idols without any concern for the impact it could have on others. In chapter 9, Paul lists his “rights” (e.g., the right to be cared for materially by local churches) and then explains why he does not take advantage of those rights: that he might advance the gospel in every way possible.

Paul’s concern in chapter 9 is with advancing the gospel by refusing to take advantage of his rights and by adapting culturally wherever he can. There is nothing in the context about winning salvation from eternal condemnation.

THE WORDS DISQUALIFIED AND PRIZE

The primary word that causes some to think Paul doubted his eternal destiny is the last word of chapter 9: “disqualified.” What was Paul afraid of being disqualified (or disapproved) from?

Verse 24 tells us that the goal of running the race is to win *the prize*. In verse 25 Paul indicates that the prize is an imperishable crown. The word translated as *prize* is *brabeion*, which refers to an “award or prize for exceptional service or conduct, prize, reward.”⁵ It seems unmistakable that if Paul is talking about obtaining entrance into heaven, then salvation is dependent on enduring good works. But that contradicts the faith-alone message. Jesus said, “he who believes in Me has everlasting life” (John 6:47). He did *not* say, “he who serves me exceptionally to the end will win everlasting life.”

Paul is not talking about missing entrance into heaven if he fails to persevere; he is talking about missing out on eternal rewards due to a failure to endure. This is a completely separate issue from entrance into heaven, which is a free gift.

PAUL’S FAITH-ALONE GOSPEL

In many passages, Paul clearly demonstrates that a person is saved by faith alone (see Acts 16:31; Rom 3:28; 4:5; 5:1; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8-9; 1 Tim 1:16) and that salvation is a gift (Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). If in 1 Corinthians 9 Paul was suggesting that he was unsure of his eternal destiny because he didn’t know whether or not he would persevere, then he was plainly contradicting himself in the passages cited above.

Paul said he believed on Jesus *for eternal life*, and he viewed himself as an example for others who would believe (1 Tim 1:16). He was sure of his eternal destiny and that of all who believe on Jesus for eternal life (Acts 16:31; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8-9; 1 Tim 1:16; 2 Tim 1:12). Since the Scriptures cannot contradict themselves, we know Paul was not expressing doubts about his eternal destiny. The uncertainty Paul was expressing in 1 Cor 9:27 was in regard to whether or not he would persevere in order to win the prize of ruling with Christ. But this has no bearing on his certainty of his eternal destiny.

While we cannot know if we will persevere to the end, our eternal destiny is something about which we should have no doubt—because Jesus promised that the one who simply believes on Him has eternal life. ■



Doug Potgeter lives in Holland, MI with his wife of ten years, Hannah. He loves to read and spend time with his wife and four boys.

- 1 Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 2018), p. 181.
- 2 Ibid., p. 197.
- 3 John Piper, “Olympic Spirituality: Beyond the Gold,” *Desiring God*, 30 June 2022, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/olympic-spirituality>.
- 4 David E. Garland, “Paul’s Self-Discipline: An Example from the World of Athletics,” *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), p. 444.
- 5 BDAG, p. 183.



The GES board at their January meeting



Bob's new class on answering Bible questions



Kathryn's Zoom class for Free Grace Women

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT GES?



The new journals with a slightly updated look



Bob's marathon medal looks oddly similar to some guy who descended Mt. Sinai with a tablet.



Vista Ridge Bible Fellowship



Basketball tryouts at Berean Memorial Church

HERE COMES THE SON

Learning from the Church at Philadelphia

by Philippe R. Sterling



Jesus judged the church at Philadelphia that was faithful (3:7-13).

“Here Comes the Sun” was written by George Harrison and was featured on the Beatles’ album *Abbey Road* in 1969. The lyrics reflect his relief at the arrival of spring and the temporary respite he was experiencing from the band’s business affairs.

*Here comes the sun
Here comes the sun, and I say
It’s all right*

I’ve titled this article on Jesus’ letter to Philadelphia as “Here Comes the Son.” Jesus is coming soon. What effect should it have on my thoughts and actions when I realize that Jesus is coming soon?

DESTINATION

Philadelphia was founded about 189 BC at a junction of the approaches to the regions of Mysia, Lydia, and Phrygia in Asia Minor. It was called “the gateway to the East.” It also was called “little Athens” because of the many temples in the city. Many believe the city was built by and named in honor of Attalus II Philadelphus of Pergamum. He intended it to be a center of missionary activity for the Hellenistic way of life.

Volcanic activity caused earthquakes from time to time. A devastating earthquake in AD 17 leveled twelve cities of Asia Minor, including Philadelphia. The emperor Tiberius rebuilt the city after the earthquake. In gratitude, the city changed

its name to “New Caesar.” Later the name *Philadelphia* reappeared.

The church at Philadelphia was one of the strongest of the seven congregations of Revelation 2-3. Outwardly, it was small. But inwardly, it was a dynamic and faithful church. The letter contains no censure and is full of commendation.

PORTRAYAL OF JESUS

Jesus described Himself as holy and true. Jesus is holy in His character, His words, His actions, and His purposes. “The Holy One” is a common title for the Messiah. He also personifies truth.

Jesus held the key of David. The background of this imagery is Isa 22:15-25. Assyria had invaded Judah, and the Jewish leaders were trusting Egypt, not God, to deliver the nation. One of the treacherous leaders was Shebna, who was using his office for his own gain. Shebna was removed from office, and a faithful man, Eliakim, was put in his place and given the keys of authority. He held the office of key-holder in the king’s palace. His office gave him full authority to act on behalf of the king. If he unlocked a palace door, it remained unlocked. If he opened a palace door, it remained opened. Eliakim foreshadowed Jesus, the ultimate Key-holder, the dependable Administrator of the affairs of God’s people. He opens and closes doors. He also has the keys of hades and of death (Rev 1:18).

PRAISE FOR THE CHURCH

Jesus had a thorough knowledge of the situation in Philadelphia. Before He finished His acknowledgement of their works, He immediately injected words of encouragement. As He thought of the quality of their works, He took the unique step of expressing His support.

He put before them an open door. William Ramsey explained the expression in terms of Philadelphia's geographic position at the eastern end of the valley leading up onto the great central plain. As the "keeper of the gateway to the plateau," it had been given a unique opportunity to carry the good news concerning Jesus and the promise of everlasting life to the cities of Phrygia. Jesus still puts open doors before faithful believers for the proclamation of the life message and the making of disciples even in difficult places. For example, when the Communists took over in China, they cracked down on the churches. In spite of crackdowns, believers have continued to multiply in China. The word of God is not bound (2 Tim 2:9).

Philadelphia had "little strength" (v 8). The city was relatively small compared to the other cities of Asia Minor. Its greatest distinction was that it was strategically located on the Roman road. As believers went east or west, they would have open access to Europe and Asia. The church at Philadelphia had only a "little strength," but our Lord promised to do great things through them. It is not the size or strength of a church but its faithfulness which determines its fruitfulness. This church not only believed the Word of Christ, but they also obeyed it. They were a small group of people, and yet they stood boldly for Christ.

The believers experienced persecution from the local Jewish synagogue (verse 9). The false religionists who persecuted believers will one day bow before them and know that Jesus loved them.

Jesus promised to keep them "from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth." The Lord sometimes protects a faithful church from tribulation in this age and will rapture all believers before the Tribulation.

The "hour of trial" could refer to a time of trouble that the entire Roman world would undergo in the readers' lifetimes. Jesus assured believers in Philadelphia that they would have His protection during that time of turmoil.

The apostle John went on to describe in Revelation 6–19 the Tribulation that will encompass the earth before Jesus returns to establish His kingdom. Revelation 3:10 is consistent with the promise that believers will not go through the Tribulation but will be taken to be with Christ before it begins (1 Thess 1:10; 4:13–5:11). The statement "I am coming quickly" strengthens this understanding. John Niemelä provides a grammatical analysis of Rev 3:10 that disconnects the promise from the command to persevere. He gives this punctuation of the text (note the first period, which is a comma in most texts): "I have loved you, because you have kept my command to persevere. I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world" (John C. Niemelä, "Revelation 3:10 and the Rapture: A New Departure," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* (Spring 2017), 37).

CRITICISM OF THE CHURCH

There is no criticism of this church. Jesus highly approved of the church.

PENALTY OR REWARD

There are no penalties for this church. Many rewards have already been mentioned.

EXHORTATION

Jesus said, "I am coming quickly" (see 22:7, 12, 20). The Lord's coming for believers can occur at any time. This provides an encouragement for faithfulness.

Jesus went on to exhort, "Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown" (cf. 2:25). In essence, He was telling them that they were doing great and to keep up the good work! Not holding fast would result in the loss of a crown. A crown represents rule and authority in the kingdom of Christ.

We are to hold fast what we have so that no one will take our crown. Don't forfeit your crown. Eternal life is a free gift and cannot be lost, but the reward of ruling with Christ forever requires faithfulness to the end (cf. 2:10).

PROMISE TO OVERCOMERS

Most of this letter is composed of promises. Jesus went on to promise several eternal rewards to the overcoming believer.

The overcoming believer will be "a pillar in the temple of My God" (3:12). We know from Rev 21:22 that in the New Jerusalem, "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." This reward could involve a special nearness to God the Father and God the Son and a prominent supportive position in the administration of the New Jerusalem and of the new creation. The following phrase "he shall go out no more" (3:12) could indicate the permanence of the position.

The symbolism would be meaningful to people who lived in constant danger of earthquakes. These pillars will never be shaken. There will never be a need to flee the city.

Ancient cities often honored great leaders by erecting pillars with their names inscribed on them. God's pillars are not made of stone. His pillars are faithful people who bear His name.

Jesus will write three names upon the overcoming believer: the name of the Father, the name of the

New Jerusalem, and His name. God's name reveals facets of His person. There are facets of the person of the Father and of the Son which have not yet been made known, but which Jesus will make known to the overcomer. We may wonder why the overcomer would also carry the name of the New Jerusalem. Some are given the "key to a city" to honor their connection to that city. Having the name of the New Jerusalem would reflect the overcomer's special connection to the city.

GENERAL ADMONITION

The letter ends with the general admonition, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." This indicates that the instructions and promises of our Lord to these local churches are not limited to any particular era of church history. Rather, the instructions and promises are applicable to all the churches of the church age.

CONCLUSION

What Would Jesus Say (WWJS) to the faithful church: "Hold fast. I'm coming soon, and I will reward you." ■■



Philippe Sterling is the pastor of Vista Ridge Bible Fellowship in Lewisville, TX. He and his wife of 45 years, Brenda, live in Denton, TX, near their daughter, Sarah, son in law, Ben, and grandkids.

Am I One of God's Elect?'

By Bob Wilkin

The Calvinist doctrine of unconditional election is meant to be a wonderful comfort to people. Back in 1978 I was on staff with Cru at NC State University. I remember hearing the Campus Director from the University of Carolina speak on the doctrine of election. I don't recall having heard about it before then. He was speaking to the area staff, and he was very animated. His eyes were radiating joy. He thought we should be thrilled to know that God elects some to everlasting life and condemns the rest to eternal condemnation.



Even with no theological education, I saw flaws in his teaching. I did not see evidence in Scripture that God elects people to everlasting life. And I did see evidence in Scripture that God loves the entire world so much that He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for the sins of everyone (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2).

I could not see how what he was saying was encouraging. If he was right, then none of us could be sure that we were saved. We'd all have to wonder if we were one of the lucky chosen ones.

In the Bible, election is to service, not eternal destiny. God chose Abraham to be the father of His chosen people, Israel. All Jews are part of God's chosen people. Even unbelieving Jews are chosen ones.

Judas was one of twelve men chosen to be Jesus' disciples. Judas never came to faith. But he was chosen.

Jerusalem is God's chosen city. It will one day be the capital city of both Israel and the world.

Paul was chosen to be an apostle. Matthias was chosen to take the place of Judas.

After a group of Jews rejected Paul's evangelistic message about the Lord Jesus Christ, he said, "You judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life" (Acts 13:46). He did not say, "God judged you unworthy," or "God did not choose you." He said that *they were culpable for rejecting the free gift of everlasting life*.

When speaking to legalistic Jews, the Lord Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:39-40). He said they were *not willing*. He did not say that they were *not chosen*. His use of *unwillingness* as the criterion for not having life makes no sense if God elects some and not others to everlasting life.

The good news is that God draws all people to Himself and allows them to respond or not respond to His drawing. He is drawing all via the creation (Psalm 19; Romans 1). He sends His messengers all over the world with the message of everlasting

life. All who seek Him find Him (Matt 7:7-11; Acts 17:27; Heb 11:6).

Are you one of God's elect? You are if you are Jewish. But there is no such thing as being elected to everlasting life.

Has God chosen you for some occupation? I suppose we will find out things like that at the Bema. In this life we don't know whether we should be a doctor, lawyer, plumber, painting contractor, pastor, missionary, housewife, teacher, or archaeologist. We get education and we learn what we like to do. We then choose a path in life and seek to please God through it. When we appear before Christ at the Bema, we may learn that God was working behind the scenes to move us in a certain direction. I call that *God's unseen hand*. We may learn that His first choice for us was to be a doctor. Or pastor. Or plumber. Or architect. Or housewife. Or senator.²

The Lord Jesus said that *whoever believes in Him will not perish but has everlasting life*. *Whoever* means *whoever*. I love the song, "Whosoever Surely Meaneth Me." Amen. ■



Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He lives in Highland Village, TX, with his wife of 46 years, Sharon. He is an avid race walker and marathon walker.

1 This article originally appeared as a blog on November 15, 2022.

2 I agree with the position of Gary Friessen in his book *Decision Making and the Will of God*. Among thousands of choices we make, we choose what our occupation will be. We may change career paths many times. Whether we make the best decisions or not is impossible to know in advance. We can know that we are choosing something that God does not forbid (like harlot, hit man, drug dealer, etc.). And we can know that we've chosen an acceptable occupation. But we can't be sure that we can glorify God more as a doctor than as a lawyer. Even if we are convinced that we can glorify Him best as a doctor, what kind? There are many types of medical doctors. If we are in fellowship with God, then we seek to choose the best over the better or the good. But as long as we pick that which is pleasing to God, we can know that our choices are God-honoring.

**POLITICS
AIN'T AS
POWER-
FUL AS WE
THINK**

(JOHN 19:12-13)

By Ken Yates



INTRODUCTION

Politics has a bad reputation today. Our leaders are accused of not doing what is right, but simply letting their politics dictate their decisions. The approval rating of members of Congress is below 20%, and it has been as low as 9%. By comparison, 47% of Americans have a very favorable or mostly favorable view of the IRS.

Of course, it is not only people in the United States who feel this way about politicians. The detrimental effects of politics can be seen in every country around the world. It has always been that way. In the life of Jesus Christ, we can see glaring examples of what politics can do. One such occasion was when He stood trial before the most powerful politician in His country, a man named Pontius Pilate.

PILATE HAD A BAD REPUTATION

Pilate ruled over the Jews who lived around Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel. Understandably many did not like him. He was a foreigner, a Roman in particular, and the Romans had conquered the nation approximately 100 years before he assumed his position. Many would have naturally resented the fact that he was the face of their conquerors.

Part of his responsibilities included collecting taxes from the Jews. These taxes would be sent to Rome. Obviously, this was a bone of contention among the people. Citizens often resent paying taxes, and it would be so much worse if those taxes were sent to another country. Especially if that country was the home of their enemy.

Pilate had great authority over those he ruled. He had the power to sentence people to death and no doubt made many decisions of which the people did not approve. In Luke 13:1, we are told he actually killed some Jews who were practicing their religious obligations. As governor of Judea, he appointed the high priest of the Jews, even though Pilate was not even Jewish. Historians say this was a corrupt practice, with those having the ability to bribe the Romans with large amounts of money obtaining this supposedly holy position. Pilate also had control of the sacred clothes of the high priest, without which the high priest could not perform his God-appointed duties.

As a Roman, Pilate wanted to promote the worship of the Roman emperor, which was considered blasphemous to the Jews. There are accounts of him trying to introduce images of the emperor into Jerusalem, which was against Jewish sensibilities. Another report by historians describes how he took money set aside for religious purposes in the temple to pay for some of his building projects. When the Jews complained, he had some of them clubbed to death and others trampled to death by the horses of his soldiers.

All this paints a picture of a man who would not have been well liked by those he governed. But it is also clear that he was not overly concerned about what they thought of him. He was more than willing to flex the muscle of his power over the Jews. He

had no problem even killing those who resisted him. He had a well-deserved reputation for cruelty.

But that was only part of the picture.

PILATE WAS ALSO A POLITICAL CREATURE

Even though Pilate had a great deal of power over the Jews he ruled, he could not simply do everything he might want to do to them. His position was a political one. He had been appointed by Rome, and he ultimately had to answer to them about how well he ruled over Judea. There was also his immediate political boss just north of him in Syria to whom he was responsible.

Both the Roman ruler in Syria and Caesar in Rome expected Pilate to keep the peace. They looked to him to do so, in order that the tax money would continue to flow into the capital of the Empire. Pilate could not make such terrible decisions that the Jews would revolt against Rome and quit paying taxes. While he may not have cared for the feelings of the Jews and treated them with disdain, he had to be somewhat cautious not to provoke them to the point that it would threaten his position. He knew that the Jewish leaders had already complained to his political superiors about some of his decisions and actions.

If the Jews complained too often, or if they caused problems in Judea regarding the smooth operation of the region, the political fortunes of Pilate might change. He could be removed from his position in Judea if the authorities in Rome thought someone else could do a better job.

POLITICS IN THE TRIAL OF THE LORD

When one looks at the trial of Jesus before Pilate, he sees what power politics has. All the Gospels record this trial. Never in the history of the world has there been a more unjust verdict. Jesus was declared guilty and sentenced to death, even though a more innocent man has never lived.

It is so strange to read about the trial. Pilate repeatedly says that Jesus is innocent. He tries everything he can to set Him free. He knows that the

Jewish leaders are jealous of Him. His wife even tells him that the Lord is righteous and that Pilate should do no harm to Him. Even when he passes a guilty sentence, he tells those present that he washes his hands of the matter, showing them that he wanted to give a verdict of acquittal.

When one looks at the history of Pilate, he may ask himself why Pilate acted this way. In the past, he had often ruled with an iron hand, not caring what the Jews thought. But here he is, doing their bidding, even though he does not want to do so. He is seen as weak and imploring those he rules over to be reasonable and to let him do what is right. It seems so out of character.

The reason is simple: politics. Ancient historians tell us that right before the trial of Jesus, a powerful political ally of Pilate had been executed in Rome because that ally was seen as a traitor against Caesar. This man had evidently been responsible for Pilate being in his position. Pilate worried that Caesar might look upon him with suspicion as well.

When Pilate wanted to let Jesus go, the Jews said, “If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar’s friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar” (John 19:12). Jesus was accused by the Jewish leaders of claiming to be the King of the Jews. But Caesar claimed to be the king of the Jews. Pilate understood their threat. If he let Jesus go, the Jews would let Caesar know of his disloyalty to the authorities in Rome. His political position would be in serious jeopardy.

When Pilate heard this, he condemned Jesus to death. He even let Barabbas, an obviously guilty murderer, go free in order to satisfy the Jews. How corrupt could this verdict be? Once again, politics won and justice lost. And, it would seem, politics trumps everything.

POLITICS IS A TOOL IN THE HANDS OF GOD

The power that political concerns exercise over the affairs of mankind does not apply to God. In fact, He uses politics to accomplish His purposes. It was the will of the Father that His Son die for the sins of the world. This would allow the Son to give eternal life to all who believe in Him for it. God used the corruption of the political climate in first century Rome and Judea to bring about the sacrifice needed for His people. Pilate thought he was saving his political career when he put Jesus to death. God used it to save millions upon millions of people around the world.

That should be a great encouragement for every believer. We look around at the corrupt politics that govern our lives and feel that we can only shrug our shoulders and lament at the injustice and sin around us. But God is in control. He is preparing the world for the soon return of the King. He even uses the political intrigues we see to do that. He did it in the first century, and we can rest on the fact that He is doing it today.

Politics played a role in the King’s death. But that death was followed by His resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of the Father. The politics of earth places men like Pilate in charge of people’s lives. But such things will not prevent Christ from taking His throne and ruling over everything when He returns. ■



Ken Yates is a retired Army chaplain (Lt. Col). He has many theological degrees, including a Ph.D. from D.T.S. in New Testament. He leads the GES international ministry, cohosts the daily podcast, and assists Bob in all aspects of the GES ministry. His new book, *Elisabeth*, is a powerful testimony to the power of God manifested in a Christ-centered family. He and his wife, Pam, live in Columbia, SC.



Why Does God Allow Suffering?

By Lucas Kitchen

I have received the question pretty often, “How could a loving God allow all the suffering in the world?” This question makes it sound as if God is sitting by with His enormous arms crossed, staring down indifferently. Or maybe He’s not staring down at all but is occupied with something else. It’s as if the questioner is suggesting that God is just not all that into us.

The simple answer is that God loves us so much that He gave us volition.

Volition is *the faculty or power of using one’s own will*. It’s as if God chose to enter a creative partnership with every human being (see Prov 16:9). This partnership is designed to allow man his own creative decisions while being directed by God. You could think of it as an apprenticeship. Man holds

the paintbrush while the Master Painter stands near, ready to help direct each stroke. However, man quickly abandoned the *God-guidance* part. It’s as if man elbowed the teacher, grabbed the canvas, and ran for the bushes. As my wife used to say when she was a kid, “I can do it myself.” It grieves God to see mankind trample the canvas He’s given us. Early on God even regretted making man because of his capacity for sin (Gen 6:6). After all, the canvas was crafted in the image of God Himself (Gen 1:27).

Even though God could rip the canvas out of our hands and fix its muddy image, He doesn’t. He’s so committed to the creative partnership that He has chosen to allow humans their volition, even when their volition drains their own lives (Rom 1:24).

It's the volition of man that causes the suffering of the world. One second the God-hater complains, "How could God allow suffering?" God could end suffering, but He would have to revoke His gift of volition to do it. As soon as God did this, the God-haters would change their tune to say, "How can a loving God take away our free will?" The fact is that God-haters will hate God no matter what He does.

The ability to suffer is a gift to God's children.

Suffering increases a believer's ability to experience God's glory in the future kingdom. If there were no obstacles, then His children would never grow. If there was no opportunity to grow, then we would have no chance for greater reward and closer fellowship with Christ. As strange as it sounds, suffering is a gift from God for those who have believed in him. For those who are God's children, suffering is a chance to earn amazing eternal rewards (Rom 8:17b; Jas 1:2-5).

A coach is only as good as the suffering he makes his players endure.

Let's imagine that you have joined the football team. Despite the fact that you have amazing athletic potential, the coach never lets you take the field during practice or games. At first you appreciate not having to sweat, run laps, and suffer heat exhaustion. It doesn't take long to realize that even though you're missing out on the suffering of practices, you really want to be part of the action.

After months of sitting on the bench in frustration, you go to your coach. When you ask him why he never lets you play, he says, "I don't want you to get hurt and then to suffer. If I let you practice or put you into the game, you will probably get hurt, possibly very badly. I'm sparing you all that pain."

You would rightfully be mad at the coach. You chose to go out for the team and play. You know the risks. You want to play, even though you realize you might get hurt and hurt badly.

In the same way that allowing his players to suffer in practice makes for a good coach, God allows us to suffer because He's a good God. He has positions of responsibility for faithful believers in the future kingdom. Obedient Christians suffer in order that we might be prepared to take up positions of

leadership in His kingdom (2 Tim 2:12). From this perspective, we see that He allows us to suffer because He loves us and wants to see us succeed. He lets us suffer because He is good.

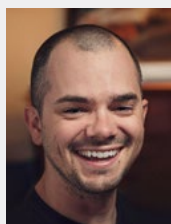
Finally, God will rescue believers from suffering in an ultimate reboot of the cosmos (Rev 21:1-4). In this earth 2.0, God plans for there to be *no more suffering*. The suffering of the former world (our current home) will have accomplished its purpose of maturing the believers who will reign with Christ. The new earth, where believers will live, will be free of pain and suffering.

God laid down a heavy price to save you. He gave His Son Jesus for you. He wants to give everyone eternal life (1 Tim 2:4). But His desire for everyone to have it doesn't mean He will get what He wants (contra Calvinism). Volition, remember. He won't force anyone to enter the kingdom of heaven. He invites all who wish to be in the kingdom to believe in Jesus, its future King (John 3:16.) Whoever believes in Jesus, the Giver of eternal life, has eternal life.

Your salvation is secure if you've believed in Christ alone for eternal life. You can never lose it. Now it's time to let the suffering in your life grow you toward rewards in the future kingdom of God. As Jesus said, "store up treasures in heaven" (Matt 6:20). Christians, you have an amazing opportunity to earn rewards in the future by how you respond to suffering now.

If you've never believed, it's time. God guarantees eternal life for anyone who simply believes in Jesus for that life (John 11:25-26). Do you believe this? If you do, then you have eternal life.

How could anyone think that God is just not that into us? He's so into us. ■



Lucas Kitchen is an American author of both Christian fiction and nonfiction, and the Director of Free Grace International. He lives in Longview, TX, with his wife and three kids.



Christ Is Credible,

PART ONE: HIS CLAIMS AND THE
DISCIPLES' CORROBORATION

BY DIX WINSTON

O*ne Solitary Life* is a popular and well-read poem about Jesus Christ. It is attributed to James Allan Francis, (1864-1928) a Canadian pastor:

He was born in an obscure village
The child of a peasant woman
He grew up in another obscure village
Where He worked in a carpenter shop
Until He was thirty

He never wrote a book
He never held an office
He never went to college
He never visited a big city
He never travelled more than two hundred miles
From the place where He was born
He did none of the things
Usually associated with greatness
He had no credentials but Himself

He was only thirty-three

His friends ran away
One of them denied Him

He was turned over to His enemies
And went through the mockery of a trial
He was nailed to a cross between two thieves
While dying, His executioners gambled for His clothing
The only property He had on earth

When He was dead
He was laid in a borrowed grave
Through the pity of a friend

Nineteen centuries have come and gone
And today Jesus is the central figure of the human race
And the leader of mankind's progress
All the armies that have ever marched
All the navies that have ever sailed
All the parliaments that have ever sat
All the kings that ever reigned put together
Have not affected the life of mankind on earth
As powerfully as that one solitary life



There is only one thing wrong with this poem. It is heretical.¹

There are two huge attributions missing. Re-read it. Can you find what is missing?

It does not describe Jesus of the Gospels. It never mentions His claim to be God or His resurrection from the dead. It's a good eulogy, but bad theology!

Jesus repeatedly and in different ways claims to be God incarnate. And these claims are corroborated by His closest intimates, the disciples. This article examines His claims and the disciples' corroboration.

THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST²

He Claimed to Be God

There are those today who say Jesus never claimed to be God. Of course, there are those today who have never seriously read what Jesus said in the NT. On numerous occasions He claimed outright

that He was God. The chosen name for God in the OT was Yahweh or Jehovah. When Moses asked what God's name was, He replied in Exod 3:14, "I Am Who I Am." In John 8:58, Jesus rocked the Jews with the statement, "Before Abraham was, I AM." The Jews then tried to rock Him to sleep with stones because they understood that He was claiming to be one and the same with the One who spoke to Moses, the great I Am.

He Claimed Equality with God

Secondly, He claimed equality with God by professing to be able to do only what God could do: forgive sins. In Mark 2:5-11, Jesus said, "My son, your sins are forgiven you." The scribes were scandalized by this claim, asking, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

But He did not stop there in claiming the prerogatives of Deity. In John 5:25, 29, He said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of

God; and those who hear will live. . . . and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

He Claimed to Be Messiah-God

The OT predicts a coming Messiah or King for the nation of Israel. He is revealed in the OT as God Himself. The prophet Isaiah calls the Messiah “the mighty God” (Isa 9:6). In Mark 14:61-64, in a hostile interchange with the high priest, Jesus is asked if He is the “Christ,” which is Greek for “Messiah.” Jesus responds, “I Am.” The high priest understood that He was claiming to be God and invoked the charge of blasphemy, which called for capital punishment.

He Claimed Worship Reserved Only for God

The Jews understood from the OT that worship was only to be given to God. Yet throughout the Gospels Jesus unhesitatingly accepted the worship of those with whom He interacted (Matt 8:2; 9:18).

He Claimed Equal Authority with God

The Jews revered and worshiped the words of God. It was His special revelation of Himself to them. Jesus puts Himself on equal authority with the God of the OT by giving equal weight to His words. He said, “You have heard that the ancients were told, You shall not commit murder...But I say to you...” (Matt 5:21-22). Of course, the ancients were the Jews of the OT, and the phrase “You shall not commit murder” is from the Ten Commandments. But here Jesus claimed that His words and admonitions should now be heeded.

He Claimed His Name in Answered Prayer

Prayer was the privilege the people of the OT had before a personal God. In the NT, Jesus is giving an intercessory instructive on prayer in the new millennium. They were to ask in His name: “If you ask anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:14). In other words, He was the “middleman” required to make it happen.

So, we see that Jesus was claiming something that no Jew had ever claimed before—namely, that He was God.

THE CORROBORATION OF THE DISCIPLES

It is always humbling to ask those closest to describe how you come across to them and other people. Many times our friends have a more accurate picture of us than we do. So what did those closest to Christ think of Him? It turns out they thought the same thing about Him as He thought of Himself, namely that He was God! The following points this out.

By Attributing Other Titles of Deity to Christ

The apostles referred to Jesus using divine titles. They called Him “the first and the last” (Rev 1:17), the “true light” (John 1:9), the “Chief Shepherd” (1 Pet 5:4), the one who gives “forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31), and the one “who will judge the living and the dead” (2 Tim 4:1). It should be noted that not once did Jesus ever correct their use of these terms as being inaccurate or misapplied. He willingly accepted their perception of Himself.

By Accepting Him as the Messiah-God

In the OT, Isaiah the prophet said of the Messiah, “For I am God, and there is no other... to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath.” The Apostle Paul understood this to be referring to Jesus Christ. For he said of the Christ, “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:10-11).

By Attributing God’s Power to Him

The apostles said that Jesus had God’s power to raise the dead (John 11:38-44) and to forgive sins (Acts 13:38). He is even named as the primary agent in the creation (John 1:2; Col 1:16). Raising the dead, forgiving the penitent, and creating the world are acts no mere mortal is capable of. But Jesus was no mere mortal in the eyes of His followers.

By Associating Jesus with God's Name

The name of Jesus is equally used with the name of God in prayer and benedictions: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal 1:3). He, along with the Holy Spirit, is given equal weight in the Trinitarian baptismal formulae, “in the name [singular] of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19).

By Considering Jesus Superior to the Angels

The followers of Christ understood He was superior not only to humans but to angels as well. This rank or status stemmed from His role as God's only begotten Son. “For to which of the angels did He ever say, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you’? ... But when He again brings His firstborn into the world, He says, ‘Let all the angels of God worship Him’” (Heb 1:5-6).

Both the claims of Christ and the corroboration of His followers lead any objective and open-minded individual to come to the same conclusion about Christ as Christ and His followers had, namely that He was claiming to be God.

Once again, there are individuals today who are not willing to concede this point. Not wanting to revere Him, but wishing to respect Him, they will only go as far as conceding that although He was not God, He was a good man. C. S. Lewis lucidly lays into those who would respect Him as a good man but not revere Him as the great God:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish things that people often say about Him: “I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would rather be a lunatic – on the level with a man who says he is a poached

egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.³

Pastor Francis rightfully notes many things making the life of Jesus one solitary life. But in leaving out His many claims to be God incarnate and the disciples' corroboration of those claims, he puts Christ in the company of many other great human teachers. As Lewis points out, “He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” Had Pastor Francis included these claims, He could have entitled the poem, “ONE SINGULAR (denoting or referring to just one person or thing) LIFE!” Jesus alone credibly makes those claims. His credentials for those claims are in part two of this article. ■



Dix is the senior pastor of Crosspoint Community Church in Centennial, Colorado. He and his wife, Cynthia, recently had their first grandson, Gunnar Titus. Dix is unashamedly Dispensational and Free Grace!

- 1 Editor's note: Dix is using hyperbole here. It would be heretical if the poem *denied* Jesus' deity or His bodily resurrection from the dead. It does not. However, Dix makes a great point. As wonderful as this poem is, it is missing two fundamental truths—the deity of Christ and His bodily resurrection.
- 2 For a fuller explanation of the sections “The Claims of Christ” and “The Concurrence of His Disciples,” see Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 129-32.
- 3 C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan, 1952), 55-56.



BIBLICAL

HA- HA!

MOMENTS

Part 2

by Marcia Hornok



Serious Bible study reveals God's character and ways. But looking for God's sense of humor, as well, has serious benefits. Perhaps He inserted 1 Chronicles 26:18 as a bit of comic relief, knowing that the KJV would translate it: "At Parbar westward, four at the causeway, and two at Parbar."

In Part 1 we considered *Mocking Humor*, *Sarcasm*, *Laugh-out-Loud Moments*, and *Battlefield Humor*. My favorite example from this last category is the account, in 2 Kings 6, of Elisha's messing with people's eyesight.

ELISHA VS THE SYRIAN ARMY

The king of Syria suspected that a spy was in his ranks since his raids into Israel were constantly foiled by Israel's knowing where the Syrians would strike. A servant informed him of Israel's secret weapon: "Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom" (2 Kings 6:12). Based on the servant's information, the Syrian king sent a vast army to surround the city of Dothan and capture Elisha.

When Elisha's servant saw the Syrian forces, he must have done the math—two vs. thousands!—and panicked. So Elisha told him that there were more with the two of them than with the Syrians. When Elisha prayed that God would open the servant's [spiritual] eyes, the young man saw that "the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (2 Kings 6:17).

Next, Elisha asked God to strike the Syrian troops with blindness. He then volunteered to guide them to the person they were seeking (namely, himself), but actually led them right into the king of Israel's hands. At that point he prayed for their sight to be restored.

The king of Israel got excited and said to Elisha, "Shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?"

Elisha said, "No, feed them!" So the king prepared a great feast and then sent them back home. The Syrians did not invade Israel again.

IRONY

I don't know if Samson's exploits were more comedy or tragedy. When trapped in the city of Gaza at midnight, he escaped by simply uprooting the heavy gates and posts and carrying them up the hill (Judges 16:3).

Why didn't the Philistines guess the secret of his strength? If Samson looked like most Bible storybooks picture him, his huge muscles were a given. He was probably of average build, and his long ponytail didn't give him away. How ironic that such a man could be so strong! Nothing but his own lust for women could best him. When blinded and no longer able to see a woman's beauty, he began to see God clearly.

God used irony to question Jonah's priorities. How could he mourn over a plant that died, yet not care about 120,000 children (as well as all the livestock) who would have perished if Nineveh had been destroyed? (Jonah 4:11).

The book of Esther may contain more ironies than any other portion of Scripture. King Xerxes wanted to honor Mordecai and asked Haman how to do it. Haman mistakenly thought himself to be the honoree. But the actual honoree was Mordecai the Jew—whom Haman despised because of Mordecai's refusal to bow to him—and Haman's idea backfired. In fact, this event is the story's turning point.

The entire book has a chiastic structure¹ and never mentions God, yet that very absence speaks volumes. God can be most at work when we see Him least, and He faithfully preserves His people. The irony of Esther 6:13 is unmistakable. Haman's friends and his wife, Zeresh, were not main characters in the story, nor were they God-followers; they had even advised Haman to build a gallows for Mordecai's execution. So it is ironic that the book's theme comes from Zeresh's mouth when she says, in essence, "You cannot prevail against the Jews."

Ironically, Haman was executed on the gallows he built for Mordecai, while Mordecai assumed Haman's position in the kingdom, along with acquiring his estate.

Consider the irony in Matthew 28:11-15. While the eleven disciples did not initially believe that Jesus had risen from the dead, the guards at the tomb certainly did. And the chief priests and elders believed it, too, when the guards reported the resurrection to them; otherwise, they wouldn't have bribed the soldiers to spread the misinformation that Jesus' body had been stolen.

More irony can be noted in examples of extremes, such as worshiping the thing made rather than the Maker (Romans 1:25); those with physical sight being spiritually blind (John 9:39); the "foolishness" of spiritual truth surpassing worldly wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:20-29); God's treasure in jars of clay (2 Corinthians 4:7); saving one's life by losing it (Mark 8:35); the last first and the first last (Matthew 20:16). Can you think of more?

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Jacob tricked his father by impersonating Esau, then was, in turn, tricked by his father-in-law, who had Leah impersonate Rachel. Laban changed Jacob's wages ten times, but God compensated him by honoring Jacob's genetic modification plan of using stripped tree branches (not very scientific!) (Genesis 30:29-43).

Joseph's looks, language, and demeanor as an Egyptian ruler fooled his brothers, but he understood their conversations among themselves, so much so that it made him weep. When he finally told them, "I am Joseph," they were disturbed. Perhaps he asked them to come closer so he could convince them by showing he had the sign² of the covenant (Genesis 45:3-4).

David feigned madness in order to outsmart Achish king of Gath. He "scribbled on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva run down into his beard." The ruse worked, and King Achish said that he had enough madmen without adding this one. (1 Samuel 21:10-15, NASB).

I don't know why King Jehoshaphat agreed to King Ahab's plan to join him in war against Aram and to wear his royal robes, while Ahab disguised himself as a warrior. When Aram's king discerned that Jehoshaphat was not the king they were after, they didn't pursue him. Ironically, a random arrow struck King Ahab in a joint of his armor, and he died (1 Kings 22).

Jesus was mistaken for a ghost. Twice. Once when He walked on the water (Mark 6:49), and again when He rose from the dead (Luke 24:37). At the tomb, Mary mistook Him for a gardener, and the Emmaus disciples thought Him just another traveler. He was not deceptive when He pretended not to know the awful things that had happened in Jerusalem that weekend (Luke 24:19). He asked, "What things?" in order to prompt their observations. Then He thrilled them with the best Old Testament survey ever given.

COMEDY OF ERRORS

Aaron tried to explain how the golden calf came about: "I simply threw [the gold jewelry] into the fire—and out came this calf" (Exodus 32:24). Yeah, right!

Poor Rhoda, the servant girl, was sent to the gate where someone was knocking. Had the authorities come to arrest all the believers hiding in the house? When she announced that it was Peter, the believers who were gathered at Mary's house argued with her, even though they had been praying. They said she was "beside herself" or that she had, perhaps, seen Peter's angel (implying that Peter had been executed). Meanwhile, the so-called angel kept knocking, probably wondering why no one would let him in (Acts 12:12-17).

Then we have men who lost their shirts—and more. There is, for example, the young man who, when Jesus was being arrested, escaped his own arrest by leaving his clothing in the hands of his would-be captors and running away naked (Mark 14:51-52). Then there were the seven brothers who tried unsuccessfully to cast out a demon in the name of "Jesus whom Paul preaches." The demon said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" Then he overpowered all seven of them, and they "fled out of that house naked and wounded" (Acts 19:15-16).

Eutychus falling to his death while Paul preached well past midnight has a happy ending (Acts 20:7-12). Not a humorous story, but which of us has not fallen asleep during a long sermon? We can identify with Eutychus—as well as with many of these true-life Bible characters.

As serious students of God's Word, we Free Gracers love it and live it because we love and live for the Author. What's more, we enjoy Him, and He delights in us and often makes us laugh. ■



Marcia is Ken's grateful wife, serving with him in Utah where he pastored for 39 years and they raised six children. Now they enjoy 13 grandkids. Her latest work is a guilt-free Bible study of Proverbs 31.

1 Adapted from *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, David A. Dorsey (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic), 1999, p. 163.

2 Genesis 17:10-11.

GES NATIONAL
CONFERENCE

VITAL FREE GRACE ISSUES

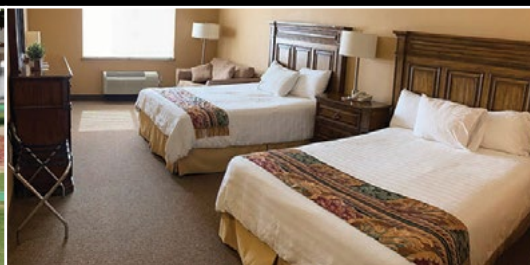
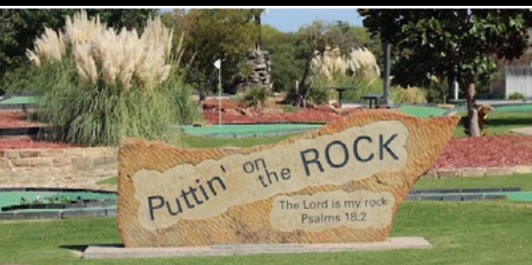
2023

MAY 22-25

CAMP COPASS
DENTON, TX

HOTEL/MOTEL/RV HOOKUPS
CAFETERIA • LAKE LEWISVILLE
FISHING • CAMPFIRE
MINI GOLF • BASKETBALL

REGISTER AT [FAITHALONE.ORG/EVENTS](https://faithalone.org/events)



THE BOOKSTORE

40% off
retail on bulk
orders of
10+ copies

GO TO WWW.FAITHALONE.ORG TO SIGN UP FOR FLASH SALES!

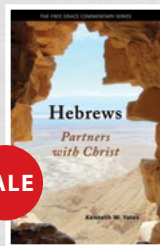


Faith Alone in One Hundred Verses

Robert N. Wilkin

Written in a devotional style, this book guides the reader through the overwhelming evidence for salvation by faith alone.

USD \$18.00
Softcover • 296 pages
Code: fav



SALE

Hebrews: Partners with Christ

Kenneth W. Yates

This verse-by-verse commentary explains how Hebrews encourages believers to persevere so they will rule with Christ in His kingdom.

USD \$22.00 \$15.00
Softcover • 244 pages
Code: hpwc



Is Calvinism Biblical? Let the Scriptures Decide

Robert N. Wilkin

Wilkin compares the five points of Calvinism against twelve key verses.

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 166 pages
Code: icb

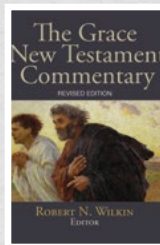


The Epistles of John

Zane C. Hodges

First John is all about fellowship with God, not tests of eternal life. Second and Third John are also explained in this valuable commentary.

USD \$8.95
Softcover • 312 pages
Code: 1-3john



The Grace New Testament Commentary (Revised Edition)

Ed. Robert N. Wilkin

This one-volume edition has hundreds of corrections and includes Zane Hodges's *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*.

USD \$35.00
Softcover • 658 pages
Code: gntc



Turn and Live: The Power of Repentance

Robert N. Wilkin

What is the nature and purpose of repentance?

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 158 pages
Code: tal



Six Secrets of the Christian Life

Zane C. Hodges

Hodges sets forth some basic principles for growing in Christ. Second Edition, with study questions.

USD \$12.00
Softcover • 100 pages
Code: sslcl



The Gospel Under Siege: Faith and Works in Tension

Zane C. Hodges

What is the relationship between faith and works?

USD \$16.00
Softcover • 266 pages
Code: gus2

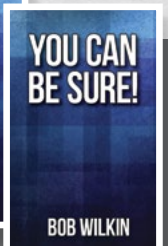
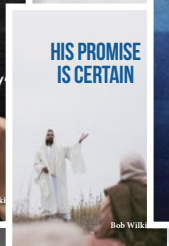
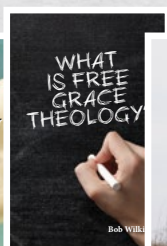
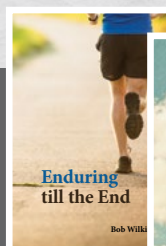


First Peter: The Salvation of the Soul

Zane C. Hodges

As you read through First Peter, you will better understand God's desire to save your soul.

USD \$10.00
Softcover • 106 pages
Code: 1pet



Booklets

Enduring till the End / Code: ete

His Promise Is Certain / Code: hpc

The Simplicity of Saving Faith / Code: ssf

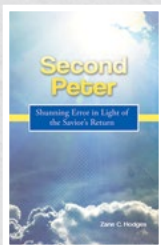
What Is Free Grace Theology? / Code: fgt

You Can Be Eternally Secure / Code: ycbes

You Can Be Sure! / Code: ychs

Puedes Estar Seguro / Code: ychs-sp

Individually \$0.25/EACH -OR- Pack of 25 \$5.00 (\$0.20/EACH)

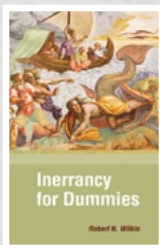


Second Peter: Shunning Error in Light of the Savior's Return

Zane C. Hodges

Second Peter is about growing in holiness in light of the Second Coming.

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 142 pages
Code: 2pet



Inerrancy for Dummies

Robert N. Wilkin

Wilkin explains "true inerrancy," and how to resolve alleged discrepancies in the Bible.

USD \$7.95
Softcover • 70 pages
Code: ifd



The Journey of Faith: Sermons on Hebrews

Zane C. Hodges

The Epistle to the Hebrews is about the incredible journey of faith.

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 212 pages
Code: jof



Tough Texts: Did Jesus Teach Salvation by Works?

Hodges & Wilkin

Zane and Bob discuss clear up Scriptures that seem to teach salvation by works.

USD \$18.00
Softcover • 174 pages
Code: tt



Eternal Rewards: It Will Pay to Obey

Lucas Kitchen

A graphical exploration of rewards in Heaven.

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 280 pages
Code: er

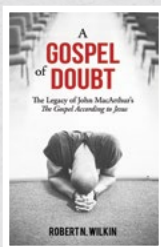


What Is the Outer Darkness?

Zane C. Hodges with Robert N. Wilkin

Zane and Bob discuss all three occurrences of the phrase "the outer darkness" in Matthew.

USD \$14.00
Softcover • 112 pages
Code: wod

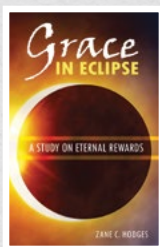


A Gospel of Doubt: The Legacy of John MacArthur's The Gospel According to Jesus

Robert N. Wilkin

Wilkin shows how to move from doubt to a gospel of assurance.

USD \$22.00
Softcover • 305 pages
Code: agd



Grace in Eclipse: A Study on Eternal Rewards

Zane C. Hodges

How does the doctrine of rewards relate to the saving message?

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 168 pages
Code: gie2



The Hungry Inherit

Zane C. Hodges

The burden of this work is to clearly distinguish between salvation and discipleship.

USD \$10.00
Softcover • 160 pages
Code: thi



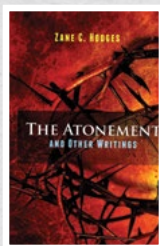
SALE

Absolutely Free: A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation

Zane C. Hodges

This book explains how popular theologies confuse faith and works, salvation and discipleship, eternal life and rewards.

~~USD \$20.00~~ **\$12.00**
Softcover • 272 pages
Code: af2

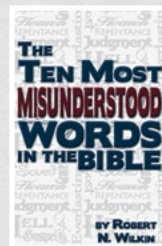


The Atonement and Other Writings

Zane C. Hodges

This book collects three hard-to-find shorter works by Hodges: *The Atonement*; *Jesus, God's Prophet*; and *Did Paul Preach Eternal Life*?

USD \$15.95
Softcover • 116 pages
Code: atm

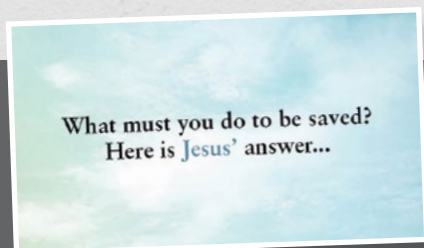


The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible

Robert N. Wilkin

An exploration of Biblical terms everyone knows, and yet few understand.

USD \$10.00
Softcover • 221 pages
Code: ten



Available in Spanish too!

Evangelism Business Cards

USD \$15.00
Box of 200 cards
Code: ebc



Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society
100+ pages. Two issues each year. Scholarly yet practical articles and reviews.

USD \$18.50 / \$9.25
for new or gift subscriptions.
Code: jotges



Chosen to Serve: Why Divine Election Is to Service, Not to Eternal Life
Shawn Lazar

Is Biblical election about eternal life or service to God?

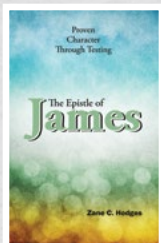
USD \$18.00
Softcover • 284 pages
Code: cts



Salvation and Discipleship

This book clears up the confusion on the often-overlooked distinction between salvation and discipleship.

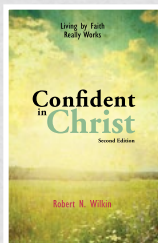
USD \$15.00
Softcover • 208 pages
Code: sd



The Epistle of James
Zane C. Hodges

This is the best commentary available on James. The section on James 2:14-26 has helped thousands understand this pivotal passage.

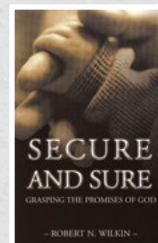
USD \$15.00
Softcover • 128 pages
Code: jas



Confident in Christ (Second Edition)
Robert N. Wilkin

This book examines sixteen "tough texts" from the NT that are often used to teach salvation by works.

USD \$22.00
Softcover • 278 pages
Code: cic2



Secure and Sure
Robert N. Wilkin

Assurance of eternal life is one of the most important, and for many, elusive truths. You can be secure and sure.

USD \$10.00
Softcover • 252 pages
Code: sas



A Free Grace Primer
Zane C. Hodges

Collects three of Hodges's books, The Hungry Inherit, The Gospel Under Siege, and Grace in Eclipse.

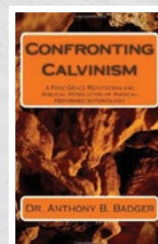
USD \$20.00 \$12.00
Softcover • 571 pages
Code: fgp2



Romans: Deliverance from Wrath
Zane C. Hodges

Romans teaches us about deliverance from temporal wrath and slavery to sin.

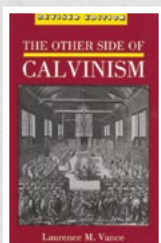
USD \$24.99
Softcover • 488 pages
Code: rom



Confronting Calvinism
Anthony B. Badger

A detailed refutation of the Five Points of Calvinism from a Free Grace perspective.

USD \$24.95
Softcover • 397 pages
Code: cc



The Other Side of Calvinism
Laurence M. Vance

Historical and critical Biblical analysis of the philosophical speculations and theological implications of Calvinism

USD \$29.95
Hardcover • 800 pages
Code: osc



Harmony with God
Zane C. Hodges

Repentance is one of the most misunderstood doctrines in the church today. If you have questions about repentance, read this book.

USD \$10.00
Softcover • 133 pages
Code: hwg



Grudem Against Grace: A Defense of Free Grace Theology
Robert N. Wilkin

Wilkin responds to Grudem's critique of Free Grace.

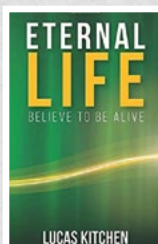
USD \$15.00
Softcover • 144 pages
Code: gag



The Road to Reward (Second Edition)
Robert N. Wilkin

Robert N. Wilkin takes us through the Biblical doctrine of eternal rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

USD \$9.95 \$5.00
Softcover • 200 pages
Code: rr2



Eternal Life: Believe to Be Alive
Lucas Kitchen

This easy-to-read book gives an entertaining and illustrative view of the concept of eternal life and what you must do to receive it.

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 300 pages
Code: el



Power to Stand: An Exposition of Jude
Zane C. Hodges

God gives every believer the power to stand, so as not to fall away.

USD \$9.00
Softcover • 76 pages
Code: pts

Booklist

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

- \$18.50 (renewal) / \$9.25 (new or gift subscription)
Other options available on website.

The Grace New Testament Commentary

- Revised Edition, \$35.00

Anthony B. Badger

- *Confronting Calvinism*, \$24.95
- *Free Grace Theology on Trial*, \$24.95

Steve Elkins

- *The Roman Road Revisited: New Vistas on the Road to Resurrection Living*, Out of print.
- *Keys to Kingdom Greatness: An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*, \$19.95

Zane Hodges

- *Absolutely Free* (2nd ed.), ~~\$20.00~~ **\$12.00**
- *The Atonement and Other Writings*, \$15.95
- *The Epistle of James*, \$15.00
- *The Epistles of John*, \$8.95
- *Faith in His Name: John*, \$15.00
- *First Peter: The Salvation of the Soul*, \$10.00
- *A Free Grace Primer*, ~~\$20.00~~ **\$12.00**
- *Grace in Eclipse*, \$15.00
- *The Gospel Under Siege*, \$16.00
- *Harmony with God*, \$10.00
- *Here Walks My Enemy: The Story of Luis*, \$5.00 (hardcover), \$3.00 (paperback)
- *How to Be the Spouse God Wants You To Be*, \$6.00
- *The Hungry Inherit*, \$10.00
- *Jesus, God's Prophet*, \$5.95
- *The Journey of Faith: Sermons on Hebrews*, \$15.00
- *Luke* (Vol 1), \$8.95
- *Luke* (Vol 2), \$8.95
- *Power to Make War*, \$8.95
- *Power to Stand: An Exposition of Jude*, \$9.00
- *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*, \$24.99
- *Second Peter: Shunning Error in Light of the Savior's Soon Return*, \$15.00
- *Six Secrets of the Christian Life*, \$12.00
- *Spiritual Lessons from the Life of David*, \$10.00
- *Tough Texts: Did Jesus Teach Salvation by Works?*, \$18.00
- *What Is the Outer Darkness?*, \$14.00

Lucas Kitchen

- *Eternal Rewards: It Will Pay to Obey*, \$15.00
- *Eternal Life: Believe to Be Alive*, \$15.00
- *Salvation and Discipleship*, \$15.00

Shawn C. Lazar

- *Beyond Doubt: How to Be Sure*, \$15.00
- *Chosen to Serve: Election Is to Service*, \$18.00

Bill Lee

- *Grace Recovered*, \$9.95

C. Gordon Olson

- *Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism*, \$20.00

Lawrence Vance

- *The Other Side of Calvinism*, \$29.95

Bob Wilkin

- *Confident in Christ* (2nd ed.), \$22.00
- *A Gospel of Doubt: The Legacy of John MacArthur's The Gospel According to Jesus*, \$22.00
- *Faith Alone in One Hundred Verses*, \$18.00
- *Grudem Against Grace: A Defense of FGT*, \$15.00
- *Inerrancy for Dummies*, \$7.95
- *Is Calvinism Biblical?*, \$15.00
- *The Road to Reward* (2nd ed.), ~~\$9.95~~ **\$5.00**
- *Secure and Sure*, \$10.00
- *The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible*, \$10.00
- *Turn and Live: The Power of Repentance*, \$15.00

Kenneth W. Yates

- *Elisabeth: Christ's Medal of Honor Recipient*, \$11.95 **NEW!**
- *Hebrews: Partners with Christ*, ~~\$22.00~~ **\$15.00**

For more titles and
exclusive online sales
go to **www.faithalone.org**

1. By phone (940-270-8827)
2. Online at faithalone.org/bookstore.html
3. Or complete the order form below



Prices effective until April 30, 2023
Refunds / Exchanges only within 60 days of purchase date.



(No PO Boxes if order is over \$30)

NAME _____

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE ZIP

PHONE

EMAIL

Acct.# (if you know it)

(If different from Shipping Address)

NAME _____

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE ZIP

PHONE

EMAIL

Acct.# (if you know it)

Cash

Check

Money Order

Credit Card

**Send Check or Money
Order to:**

Grace Evangelical Society
P.O. Box 1308
Denton, TX 76202

Credit Card Information:

Visa

MasterCard

CREDIT CARD #

EXP. DATE

CSC# (3 digit code)

NAME ON CARD

[illegible]

EXTRAS

Extra copies of this magazine are available for \$1/ea, while supplies last. Call for cost of shipping and handling. Foreign subscription prices are \$28 per year to Canada, and \$48 per year for all other countries.

SHIPPING USPS (U.S. Addresses)

FREE on all orders of \$10 or more.

UNDER \$10:

\$4.00 first item.

\$2.50 for second item.

SHIPPING UPS:

\$0-\$20	\$12.75
----------	---------

\$21-\$50	\$16.75
-----------	---------

\$51+	30%
-------	-----

SUBTOTAL

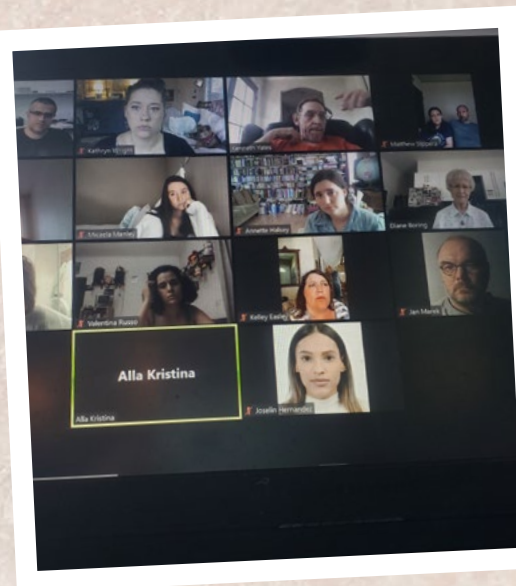
SHIPPING

DONATION

TOTAL



"One more," he says for the 30th time



Ken and Kathryn's Zoom class



"Grace tape." Even in our packaging, we're sharing the Gospel.

MORE OF
**WHAT'S
BEEN
HAPPENING
AT GES?**



A few of the weekly 5-minute videos we're producing now. Thousands are being reached!





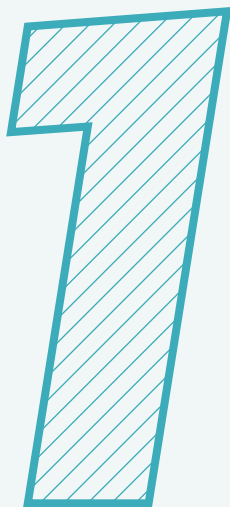
Top 5 ***Changes I'm Making in My Spiritual Life***

BY SUMMER STEVENS

Though I've been a Christian most of my life, there are seasons when I've felt like I've needed to dig into different spiritual practices for growth and nourishment. Sometimes it's been memorizing large passages of Scripture or doing group Bible studies or praying the Psalms. The Holy Spirit has been faithful to meet me in these places. But then sometimes, knowing my heart so well, He draws me elsewhere.

I've been reminded of other spiritual practices lately. They're certainly not new—not to me in my many years of walking with Jesus, or new in the history of the saints. But they're new in this season of life with all my children getting older. I'm not physically running after toddlers grinning at the top of the staircase, but I'm coordinating cross country meets and football games and when it's my turn for the carpool.

Here are the top five changes I've been making in my spiritual life.



MEDITATION *(Not the Weird Kind)*

Even some of my good Christian friends have raised an eyebrow when I've told them I'm doing more meditation. Though other religions have hijacked it, I'm talking about a thoroughly Christian intentional focus on God and His Word that David describes in the Psalms.

Our world moves so fast and there is always something grabbing for our attention. I got out to pump gas and was startled to see a miniature TV playing (pretty interesting) ads or news clips on the gas pump. Have you been tempted to check your email or social media while waiting at a traffic light? When was the last time you saw someone reading a magazine while waiting at the doctor's office?

Screens have eliminated those quiet moments—the transitions—in our days. There are studies that prove that people do their best problem solving in the shower. Why? Because they're not distracted by screens! Meditation allows a few minutes a day where we can carve out time without interruption to focus on God—to think deeply on a passage of Scripture, or talk to Him, or hear from Him before the rush of the day begins. Even five or ten minutes a day has made a big difference in my overall sense of calm and my feeling of connectedness to Jesus. There are apps you can download to lead you in a Christian guided meditation, or simply take a phrase from God's Word and prayerfully consider the character of God.



JESUS STORIES

I was in my late 20s when I had a realization that I didn't really know the personality of Jesus. It's easy to relate to someone's failures and mistakes, but of course we can't relate to Jesus that way. Sometimes I felt like I knew the personality of the Apostle Paul or King David better than my Savior.

I've recently started mentoring a young woman in her early 20s, and the Holy Spirit brought to mind my early struggles with knowing Jesus. So recently, in our weekly meetings, we've started doing Gospel studies specifically focused on the character and personality of God. Together we read a story about Jesus a few times through, and then start making a list of all our observations (time of day, who spoke first, details given, etc.). When we've exhausted the observations and we feel like we understand the passage and its context, we finish the statement: "Jesus is..." Some passages reveal a dozen or more insights into the personality of Jesus. Jesus is strategic. Jesus is fearless. Jesus is funny. Jesus is generous. Jesus is purposeful.

It's been awesome to study the Bible for the purpose of knowing Jesus—not only for ourselves, but for a great answer when talking to someone about Him: *Let me tell you about my Jesus. He's kind and creative and surprising.*



3

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

I read a sort of autobiography of C.S. Lewis, and he said that his perfect day would involve a two-hour walk! I love to run, but running requires a lot of motivation. I've found that I never have to talk myself into going for a walk. Walking gives me a chance to clear my head, talk to God, think through problems, and enjoy the beauty of the day. And I like the fact that this practice is close to the heart of God. Even in the very beginning of creation, God walked in the Garden in the cool of the day (Gen 3:8). Jesus took long walks through olive groves, along dusty roads, up mountaintops, and on the sea (Matthew 21, Luke 24, Matthew 17, Luke 8). He used the time to teach and to find solace. I think we could adopt Jesus' practice of walking to the benefit of our spiritual life.



EASY INTERCESSION

Years ago in seminary, a professor shared his prayer list method. He took a sheet of computer paper, folded it in half lengthwise, and then in half again. Open up the paper and you have four sections, and of course four on the other side, for a total of eight. Label one section “daily” and the other seven with a day of the week. List your urgent prayer requests or people close to your heart in the daily section, and assign the other things or people in your list to a specific day. You might feel like only praying for your friends once a week isn’t enough—so add them to your daily list, or simply pray more when God brings them to mind. But at least you know that you’re remembering to intercede for government officials, pastors and elders, ministries, missionaries, or extended family on a regular basis. Sometimes I feel so bogged down by urgent needs that I forget to pray faithfully for these people or groups. Returning to this method has helped.



MORE ZZZZZs

I’m naturally a night owl. Having children with school schedules and a husband who loves mornings has made getting up early more practical. However, I look forward to the evenings when everyone goes to sleep, and the house is quiet, and no one has a question or needs a drink of water, and I can just wind down. I really love this time. But if I love it too much, then I sabotage the next day. The real discipline (for me) in waking up early starts the night before. I have to go to bed on time to be alert enough to do my morning meditation and prayer, and have energy for a walk, and be mentally engaged when I’m meeting with people and studying Scripture. ■■



Summer Stevens is married to Nathanael and they have five children. She has a Master’s in Biblical Studies from Dallas Theological Seminary and enjoys running (but mostly talking) with friends and reading good books to her kids.



WHAT ABOUT THOSE GUYS?

(JEREMIAH 12:1-6)

By Ken Yates



Sometimes when I read about certain people in the Bible, they seem to be super-human. One of those people is the prophet Jeremiah. His ministry was one of suffering. The Lord asked him to do many things that were very difficult. There is a reason he is known as the “weeping prophet.” I look at his life and conclude that I couldn’t have done what he did, and I don’t understand how he was able to make such sacrifices.

I get a little bit of comfort, however, when I read that at least on one occasion, he was a little bit more like me. It is recorded in Jeremiah 12. Jeremiah knows that most of the people in his country hate him because he faithfully preached the word of God to them. But in chapter 11, the Lord tells him that even the people in his small hometown are plotting to kill him. This seems to drive Jeremiah to a crisis of faith.



TAKING THE LORD TO COURT

Jeremiah says that he wants to plead his case to the Lord. He acknowledges that the Lord is righteous, but he looks at his life and can't understand why the Lord is allowing certain things. Specifically, he does not think it is righteous that the wicked around him prosper. Why are they so happy (Jer 12:1-2)?

Perhaps Jeremiah is thinking about the people in his hometown who are wanting to kill him. The Lord has told Jeremiah not to marry. He would have no children. Especially in the ancient world, children were considered some of the greatest blessings a man could have. Those who wanted him dead were enjoying many things. We can imagine that they had successful businesses of various kinds. Jeremiah, on the other hand, does not. He is occupied with doing the things the Lord has commanded him to do.

Jeremiah points out, as he pleads his case with the Lord, that the Lord allows such men to experience such blessings. God has planted them in the land like fruit bearing trees. Their blessings seem to pour forth, like the produce of a healthy tree planted by a flowing river. This is the case even though their hearts are far from God. They have no concern for the things of the Lord.

God does not deal with Jeremiah in this way. He puts the prophet to the test. The prophet goes through all kinds of difficulties as a result of that testing. The Lord wants to know if Jeremiah's heart will remain faithful to Him (12:3). But hasn't Jeremiah shown that faithfulness? Why is there a need for God to bless His enemies so abundantly and withhold so many blessings from him?

Then Jeremiah asks a completely understandable question.

WHY NOT PUNISH THEM NOW?

As a prophet of the Lord, Jeremiah knows that there will be a resurrection of the dead. He knows that there will come an eternal kingdom in which the promised Messiah will reign. He also knows that God will reward believers for their faithfulness when they enter that kingdom. But Jeremiah has questions about what he is seeing in his present circumstances.

Why doesn't God punish the evildoers of his day *now*? Their sin is causing such havoc

in the country of Judah. Their actions hurt other people. If Jeremiah is thinking about the conspirators in his hometown, they are even threatening his life. And he is a prophet doing the Lord's work.

The Lord had the power to put an end to this. Jeremiah wants Him to take these wicked men out and kill them like sheep that are slaughtered. After all, such men live as if God will never hold them accountable (12:3-4). Wouldn't such a punishment be a warning to

people living wickedly today and make them more willing to listen to the message Jeremiah proclaimed?

As I said, Jeremiah seems like a superhero for what he endured. I can relate to him here more than I can in the other parts of his book. I think I can understand how he felt. Even today, when we see the evil all around us, it is natural to wonder why so many who excel in such evil experience so many earthly blessings. Even though we realize they will give an account of their actions before Christ, either at the Judgment Seat of Christ if they are believers or the Great White Throne Judgment if they are unbelievers, why does God allow them to prosper that way here and now?

Perhaps we have all thought like Jeremiah did on this occasion. Lord, I would love to see a lightning bolt come out of the sky and strike a few of these people.

Jeremiah, of course, knows the answer to the turmoil he is facing when he thinks about certain people around him. He knows that God is going to judge the nation for its sin. The blessings they are enjoying will soon end if they don't repent. The Lord is being gracious towards them, giving them the opportunity to do so. Jeremiah is simply losing patience, as probably most of us would have done had we been in his shoes.

But it appears the real problem Jeremiah has concerns his own lot in life. Is it really necessary for him to go through all the difficulties he is going through? It would be easier to accept what he is seeing if things went a little more smoothly in his case. Why does God make things so hard for him? Jeremiah, after all, is the good guy here.

Jeremiah gets his answer.

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Jeremiah wonders why the Lord is dealing so harshly with him. What possible purpose could his difficulties have, especially in light of how easy the enemies of the Lord have it?

What the Lord tells him is probably not what Jeremiah wants to hear. God tells him his lot in life is going to get worse. He compares Jeremiah's current difficulties to running with men. When you run with other men, you get tired. That is what Jeremiah is experiencing.

But in the future, he will get more tired. The Lord will have him run with horses. That is much harder, indeed.

Then, the Lord gives him another illustration. His life in the present can be compared to walking in a land full of peace. There is no danger. The path is clear. In the future, he will be told to walk in the tall grasses that

surround the Jordan River after it has flooded. In the time of Jeremiah, lions would hide in the brush. Walking there was not only very difficult, it was much more dangerous (12:5).

Jeremiah wonders why his life is so hard. The Lord tells him that he hasn't seen anything yet.

The point is clear. The Lord puts Jeremiah to the test through difficulties because He knows His prophet would face even more difficult days ahead. His trials are preparing him for the future. They are teaching him endurance. They are toughening him up.

We know the rest of the story. Jeremiah would indeed be called to run with horses and walk in the region of a flooded Jordan, figuratively speaking. He would see his people die of famine, disease, and war. He would see parents eat their children because

they were starving. He would see his nation conquered by the Babylonians, the temple of God destroyed, and those that survived taken

away as slaves. God was preparing him for his ministry in those days.

LESSONS FOR US

This account in Jeremiah's life is a great lesson for believers today. First of all, it shows that the men and women we read about in the Bible are just like us. Even the best of them had questions when their faith seemed to falter. We all have feet of clay. God can use people like us.

The NT teaches us that difficulties in our lives are also used by the Lord to toughen us up, to teach us to endure. James, Paul, and Peter all teach the same truths (Rom 5:3; Jas 1:1-2; 2 Pet 1:6). The Lord knows what we will face in the future. He is in the business of training His children to face those challenges. Jeremiah had the privilege of being used by the Lord in some of the darkest days of Judah's history. Who knows how the Lord may want to use us? He desires that we be ready for the days ahead and gives us the necessary training.

But I think there is something else we can realize when we look at the life of Jeremiah. We have such a great advantage over him.

Yes, he knew about the coming kingdom of God and rewards in that kingdom. But how much did he know about the sufferings of the coming Christ? Whatever he knew, we today have such a clearer picture of them. Jeremiah could not read in the Gospels about the life and passion of the Lord as we can.

That certainly puts our difficulties in perspective. The book of Hebrews tells us that (Heb 12:2-4). When we see the wicked prosper, and we go through hard times, we know that is what Jesus experienced. We can look at Him. Jeremiah was simply told God was preparing him for what he would see. In the same way, God wants to prepare us. But we also see He is making us more like Him. ■■



Ken Yates is a retired Army chaplain (Lt. Col). He has many theological degrees, including a Ph.D. from D.T.S. in New Testament. He and his wife, Pam, live in Columbia, SC.



How I Was *Transformed*

By Nancy Rempel

My body was rigid with tension as I lay in the sweltering heat of another Pakistani spring. Some missionary I had turned out to be.

It was Easter 1995, and we had just dedicated our second baby, Curtis, at the little church in Layyah, Pakistan. I felt like a baby myself as I struggled against the spirit world and the unforgiving environment of west Punjab.

In Pakistan, nothing was standard or straightforward. Or easy.

Meal preparation was an obstacle course of sanitizing vegetables, sifting flour for unwanted objects such as bugs or string, pressure-cooking tough buffalo meat, and rationing luxury items like cheese. Cookbooks from home were useless with their one-can-of-mushroom-soup recipes.

Electricity. The power company doled it out in spurts at its convenience, and seasonal dust storms ravaged electrical lines, plunging us into suffocating heat and darkness. When ceiling fans ground to a halt in the middle of the night, we dragged portable beds and zombie-like children outside to continue sleeping under mosquito nets. If a dust storm was too severe, we lay inside in our sweat, praying for the electricity to return.

Since a reliable hospital was a three-hour drive away on wicked, dusty roads, we self-diagnosed and self-treated most of our illnesses. I remember the drama of trying to decode the small-print Urdu language instructions on a medicine bottle while holding a feverish, listless baby in our arms. Trying

to be an excellent mother but feeling like a dangerous one.

Communication was challenging, whether with a stubborn toddler, a husband with problems of his own, an Urdu-speaking cook with ideas of his own, or a Pakistani friend with unclear motives. Longing to understand and to be understood, I felt as if I was living in a wasteland punctuated by the odd desert flower.

Perhaps nothing tested us more than adopting two Pakistani babies, born to unmarried Muslim girls. We now joke that I got the babies and my husband did the labor. And labor he did, from hospital, to government office, to the court, to the embassy. He pleaded, filled out forms, created forms if necessary, waited in line, paid fees, collected documents, and drove untold miles on bumpy roads, often to be told, “Wait. No. Come back later. I can’t help you. I won’t help you.”

Meanwhile, at home, I mothered the boys and fought off fears that some zealous Islamic leader or official would take the boys away from us.

I worked so hard to make sense of that world. *How do I do the right thing in a culture that is not black and white? How do I show compassion without creating dependency? What made a joke offensive? Whom could I trust to be a genuine friend?* I longed to feel normal. To look competent.

Under all the tangible irritants lay the real culprit—the battle to own my mind. The competition was stiff.

Satan lied, “What if you don’t keep believing in Christ? Is there enough fruit in your life? You’re a liar—a failure.”

People opined, “Well, I feel you should...”

Years of sermons and Bible studies, often contradictory, vied with each other for my convictions.

The battle seemed a little unfair as I learned how to use my sword and shield amidst a relentless hail of arrows. There was no pause button and no end in sight. It was personal, lonely, and humiliating. Who could help me unravel life’s perplexities?

As I lay sleepless in bed on that sultry spring night in 1995, beside a husband who did not know how to help me, my mind whirled like an out-of-date computer trying to keep up. Irrational fears, false guilt, and exaggerated responses plagued me. *I think so-and-so is mad at me. Maybe I shouldn’t have said or done such-and-such. Why can’t I relax? I feel so unstable. Do others see me as a basket case? Will my husband grow weary of my struggles? Will the mission send us home?*

I had come to Pakistan to change the world for Christ. But I was the one who needed to change. “How?” I asked in the darkness. “How do I change?”

Out of nowhere, the opening verse of the twenty-seventh Psalm popped into my mind: “The Lord is my light and my salvation.” *Whoosh.* My mind fled its stuffy confines and latched onto those life-giving words.

“Whom shall I fear?” I was like a prisoner realizing the door of her cell was open.

“*Oh, God, I don’t have to live like this.*” Faith came alive.

“I am not alone in this darkness. You will give me understanding. You will save me from what I cannot identify. And when You are all this to me, whom shall I fear?”

I had veered into the Truth and discovered the nuclear option for which none of my enemies had an answer. As I basked in the Scriptures, the silence on the battlefield was deafening.

My arms, back, and neck relaxed on the mattress. A coolness replaced the sweating. My heart-

beat slowed. Hope emerged. Transformation trickled in. I slept.

In the days and weeks that followed, I memorized all of Psalm 27. If a few thoughts could transform a sleepless night, imagine what the whole psalm could do.

I added Psalm 23 and, over several years, memorized entire books of the Bible. While driving, washing dishes, and putting small boys to sleep I meditated on the Word, pondering to understand, comparing Scripture with Scripture. I got excited about context and the meaning of words, realizing the difference they made. When I was afraid, verses I had memorized flew to my aid.

Consume, memorize, meditate, and be transformed. Rinse and repeat—full-strength doses of God’s Truth for my weakness, ignorance, and confusion.

From flabby and feelings-centered, I conditioned my brain to think Truth, and I developed spiritual muscles. Clinging to Christ in the Word, I stood my ground in the battle.

Over 25 years later, baby Curtis is now a full-bearded, married man. The mission did not “send us home.” In fact, after we evacuated from Pakistan following 9/11, it redeployed us to India, where we served for over fourteen years.

By God’s grace, I am winning the battle to own my mind. I stand guard daily, no longer a prisoner of Satan’s lies. No more tossed here and there by the expectations, opinions, and theologies of others.

I am being transformed by His Word.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom 12:2). ■



Nancy and her husband, Don, served as missionaries in Pakistan and India for many years before relocating to Canada in 2017. They continue to share Christ with Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs in Kelowna, B.C.



VOICE FROM THE PAST

Does a Biblical View of Grace Actually Promote Sin?

By Bob Wilkin*

* This article ran in January of 1989 in what was then called *The Grace Evangelical Society News*, a four-page newsletter. It has been slightly edited.

In the great tradition of dramatic disclaimers, such as the Apostle Paul's in Romans 6:1-14, Shakespeare's in *King Lear*, and Sir Winston Churchill's in his famous Harrow School address, GES says "Never!" A Biblical view of God's grace never promotes sin.

People who hold to Lordship Salvation or works salvation are rarely charged with promoting sin because they don't teach that salvation is a free gift that costs the recipient nothing. Rather, they say that one must buy salvation by paying a heavy price—"all that I am or ever hope to be."

We who hold to a Free Grace view of salvation are often charged with promoting sin since we teach that salvation is a free gift which costs the recipient nothing, and that

one can be absolutely sure of his eternal salvation at the moment he puts his trust in Christ.

The Oxford American Dictionary defines the word *promote* as *to publicize a product in order to sell it or to help the progress of* (p. 535).

We certainly do not publicize so as to sell sin. Nor do we help its progress. Rather, we preach against it.

We warn believers that sin pays terrible wages in this life and in the life to come.

We teach that God disciplines His children, and that the severity of the discipline increases with the degree of sinful behavior. The more a believer sins, the more he invites and receives painful chastising from the heavenly Father (1 Cor 11:30; Heb 12:3-11; Jas 5:19-20).

We point out that believers who indulge in a life of sin forfeit the contentment, joy, and peace that marks the lives of obedient believers (Gal 5:22-23).

We preach and teach the Judgment Seat of Christ. Faithful believers will have much treasure and a special abundance of joy eternally (Matt 6:19-21; Gal 6:7-9). They will rule with Christ (Luke 19:11-19; 2 Tim 2:12). However, by contrast, unfaithful believers will not have much treasure or abundance of joy, and they will not rule with Christ (Matt 6:1-21; Luke 19:20-26; Gal 6:7-9; 2 Tim 2:12; 1 John 2:28). To squander the potential abundance of one's eternal life by living an unfaithful life now means that one will forever be limited to enjoying the minimum amount of joy possible.

The Apostle Paul wrote a number of letters to a church he founded that contained many carnal believers. These believers were living like the unsaved people around them (1 Cor 3:3).

But when Paul wrote them, he did not question their salvation (1 Cor 1:2; 3:1-3). Rather, he affirmed their salvation but told them that those who indulge in sin will forfeit joy, peace, and contentment now and will forfeit rewards in the kingdom (1 Cor 3:10-15; 6:9-11; 9:24-27; 11:30). If even the Apostle Paul couldn't ensure that all of his converts would live holy lives, neither can anyone today.

We, like Paul and the other authors of Scripture, preach and teach against sin. We promote holiness. We simply do not do so in the way Lordship Salvation or works salvation teachers do—by altering the gospel and eliminating assurance. ■



Bob Wilkin is Executive Director of Grace Evangelical Society. He and Sharon live in Highland Village, TX. He has racewalked ten marathons.

If even the Apostle Paul
couldn't ensure that all of his
converts would live holy lives,
neither can anyone today.

GES Now Provides FREE Standard U.S. Shipping!

Shipping has gotten very expensive and very confusing. We've decided to simplify things for everyone. From now until October 31st, all GES shipping for orders of \$10 or more, within the U.S., is FREE. Expedited shipping will still be available for a fee. But standard shipping is FREE. Of course, you still pay for the books. But we pay for the shipping. If this goes well over the next eight months, we hope to make this a permanent policy.

Our aim is to get our materials into the hands of as many people as possible. We think this new shipping policy will help us reach more people.



NONPROFIT
US POSTAGE

PAID

ABERDEEN, SD
PERMIT #200

Grace Evangelical Society

P.O. Box 1308

Denton, TX 76202

Believe in Him for Life

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

ELISABETH

Christ's Medal of Honor Recipient



**Available
NOW**

\$11⁹⁵

In *Elisabeth: Christ's Medal of Honor Recipient*, Ken Yates, Elisabeth's dad and retired Army chaplain, writes of the impact her life and death had upon him. He describes how the grace and power of Christ should make us see that life in a completely unexpected way. The lessons learned from her are lessons any believer can benefit from, especially those going through difficult times.

