

# GRACE (in) FOCUS

LUKE 13:24

Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

to Enter the Kingdom?

Also in this issue...

To Delight a King, Walking on Water, Hearing What You Want to Hear, Mentor-Mentee Models, Focused vs Flexible Free Gracers, Blowing It, Campus Ministry Under Siege, Running with Endurance, and more.

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# Letter from the Editor

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I turn seventy-two on May 22 (DV). I'm thrilled that God has given me a long run with GES. I started GES in 1986. In two years, we will hit our fortieth anniversary.

None of us know how much time we have left. I hope to remain full-time with GES for another three to five years. Then, I hope I can work part-time into my mid to late eighties. Or even into my nineties if the Lord tarries and my health holds out.

But we at GES are prepared for succession. Several people are available to take over the leadership when I step down. And our new seminary is grooming leaders to take over the ministry twenty or more years later.

The GES board has had plans for my successor for over a decade.

I've been privileged to sit under godly men such as Zane Hodges, Charles Ryrie, Earl Radmacher, John Walvoord, and Art Farstad. They all influenced my life. And they are all with the Lord now.

Our aim at GES is that each of those who receive our materials would be certain of their eternal destiny and prepared to rule with Christ in the life to come. He is coming soon. His reward is with Him. If we persevere, we will hear Him say, "Well done, good servant." And He will give us authority

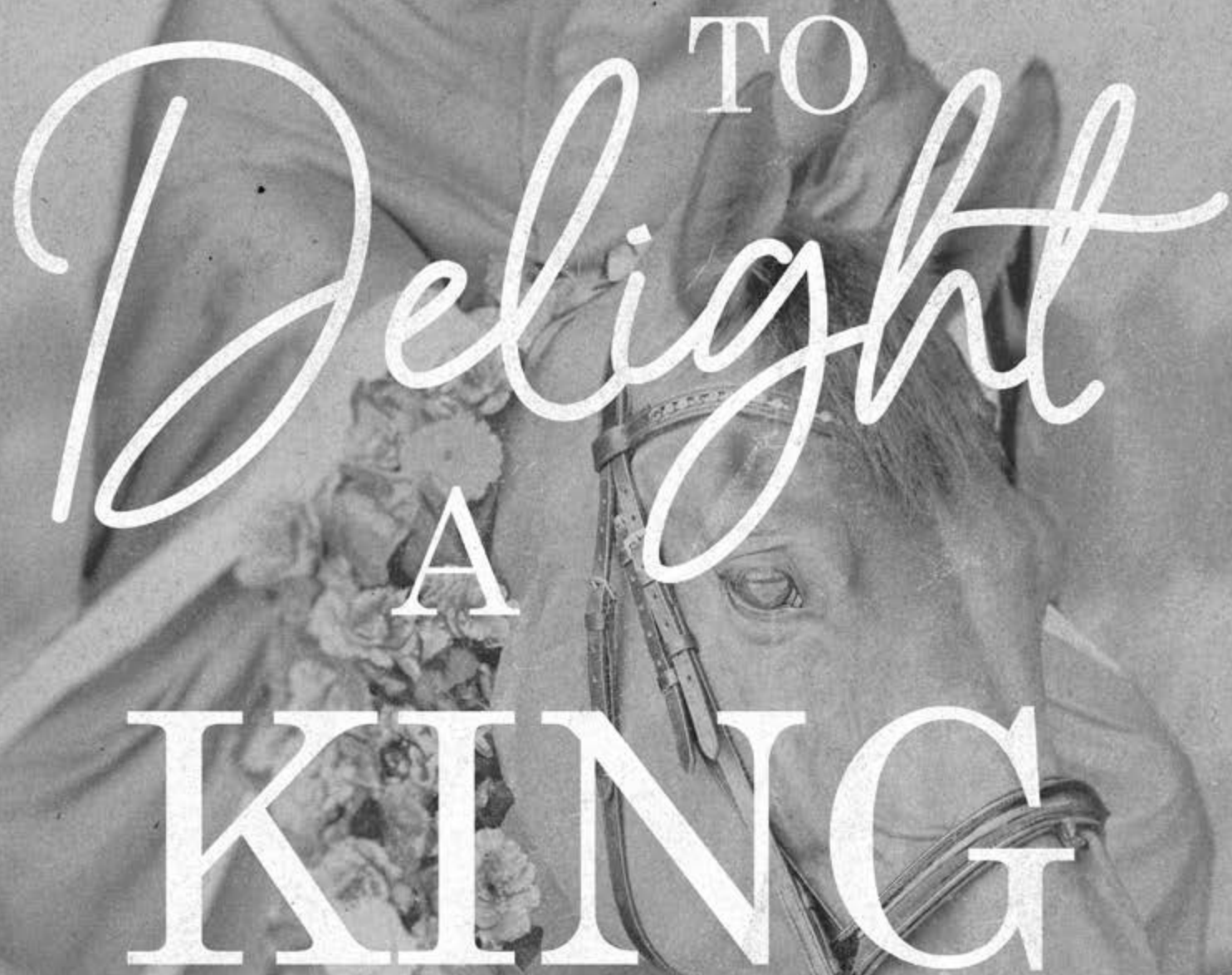


to rule in His kingdom. We want that for each of you. We want your life to count for Christ.

As Earl Radmacher famously said, "This life is training time for reigning time." We desire to come alongside local churches everywhere and help believers train well for the kingdom to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Wilkin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert N. Wilkin



TO  
*Delight*  
A  
KING

KATHRYN WRIGHT

## Princess Problems

The Book of Esther is a bit of a conundrum for many Bible students. It reads almost like a fairytale. A Jewish Cinderella is crowned queen and saves the Jewish people from the evil villain Haman. Add a goofy sidekick and an epic music number, and we'd have a Disney film. To complicate matters, the book is also known for its silence about God. Because the narrative neither mentions the Lord nor records anything the Lord says, some Biblical scholars say that Esther shouldn't be in the Bible.

Furthermore, Esther is never quoted in the NT, making it especially difficult to apply to the Church. The Church is not the Nation of Israel. Our nation is not in exile under Persian rule, and even if it were, the Lord has not promised to save our nation from genocide. In addition, despite the romanticized versions of the book, believers are not fairy princesses, and neither was Esther. This is not a love story. She was forced to marry a pagan king, which sounds more like a Grimm's fairy tale. Prosperity Gospel proponents might appeal to this book to support their view that faithful believers will receive health and wealth, but that is not the book's point.

However, all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for us today (2 Tim 3:16-17), and the OT has been given as an example for us (1 Cor 10:11). Therefore, there are things we can learn from this book and principles we can apply today. In particular, Chapter 6 of Esther provides us with profound principles that apply to every dispensation. This article will explore some of those principles.

## Plot Points

While living in Persia, a faithful Jew named Mordecai uncovers a plot to kill the Persian king Ahasuerus. Mordecai exposes

the would-be assassins and saves the king's life. (2:21-23). However, Haman, a powerful and evil government official, has made plans to hang Mordecai (5:9-14). Things look bleak for Mordecai and the Jewish people.

In Chapter 6 the story takes a startling and ironic turn. Ahasuerus, while reading from official records, finds out about Mordecai's previous help in exposing the would-be assassins and saving his life (vv 1-2). Ahasuerus asks what has been done to honor Mordecai for his help. When he finds out that nothing has been done, he summons Haman, and asks:

“What shall be done for the man whom *the king delights to honor?*” (emphasis added).

Haman doesn't know that the king is referring to Mordecai. Haman, assuming that the king is referring to him, says to himself:

“Whom would *the king delight to honor* more than me?” (emphasis added).

In his arrogance, Haman believes that he is honorable and that the king desires to praise him. Therefore, he tells the king:

“For the man whom *the king delights to honor*, let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn, and a horse on which the king has ridden, which has a royal crest placed on its head. Then let this robe and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that he may array the man whom *the king delights to honor*. Then parade him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him: ‘Thus shall it be done to the man whom *the king delights to honor!*’” (6:7-9; emphasis added).

Haman provides in detail all that he desires the king to do for him. However, in a masterful twist of irony, the praise and honor go to Mordecai. The king commands Haman to do all that he has described to the very man Haman was plotting to kill. In verse 11, Haman does exactly what he described, but to Mordecai, proclaiming to the people:

“Thus shall it be done to the man whom *the king delights to honor!*” (emphasis added).

The chapter ends with a foreshadowing of Haman’s death, for he will soon hang from the gallows that he planned to use on Mordecai.

## Principles and Promises

Several principles that are also reflected in the NT can be gleaned from this passage. First, all that is done in the dark will be brought to light, both good and bad. While Mordecai’s good deed was initially hidden, it was ultimately revealed, and he was honored. Similarly, Haman’s evil deeds were later exposed, and both men received their just reward. Speaking to the disciples concerning times of persecution, the Lord said:

“Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known” (Matt 10:26).

In a similar vein, in Luke 12, the Lord adds:

“Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops” (Luke 12:3).

While we are not guaranteed vindication during our lifetime, as Mordecai experienced, we do know that when the Lord returns, He will bring all things to light. It should be noted that while Haman is an example of an unbeliever whose evil deeds are exposed, the same is true for unfaithful believers. The Lord will not be mocked. Whatever a man sows, so shall he reap (Gal 6:7-9). This is a universal statement, applicable to both unbelievers and believers. While an unfaithful believer cannot lose eternal life, he can lose the rewards that come from following the Lord (2 Tim 2:12; Luke 19:22-24; Matt 24:48-51).

A second principle found in this passage is that those who seek to exalt themselves will ultimately be humbled, while the humble will be exalted (Luke 6:20-23; Matt 5:1-10; 1 Pet 5:5-6). Haman sought to glorify himself and to defame and destroy Mordecai. His assumption that the king wanted to praise him demonstrates the self-righteous attitude that eventually brought about Haman’s downfall. This principle is also reflected in the NT.

The Apostle Peter makes similar claims in his first epistle. He speaks of the praise, honor, and glory with which the Lord will reward faithful believers when He returns (1 Pet 1:7). Writing to persecuted believers, Peter acknowledges that faithful believers will face reviling and defamation for their good conduct (1 Pet 3:13-17). Mordecai is an OT example of what faithful believers can encounter in the world.

Unbelievers will mock and ridicule those who do good. Of course, Haman is an example of such a person. He saw Mordecai’s faithfulness as evil and even sought to have the man executed, along with all the Jewish people. He plots against and reviles Mordecai while seeking power and praise for himself. However, 1 Peter promises that the Lord will one day vindicate those who show faithfulness to their true King.

# The Lord desires to reward His faithful children and will therefore delight in honoring those who have served Him...

In Luke 14, the Lord urged a believing Pharisee to serve the lowly and to be a servant, saying:

“For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 14:11).

Once again, we see this truth when we consider the example of an unbeliever like Haman. However, believers should take note as well. Though they will be in the kingdom forever, Christians who seek to exalt themselves in this life will be put to shame at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10; 1 John 2:28; Mark 8:34-38).

A third principle that can be gleaned from this passage in Esther is found in the repetition of the phrase, “*the king delights to honor.*” This phrase is used six times, making it worthy of some attention. It speaks of a king’s joy in honoring someone honorable. Even a pagan king like Ahasuerus saw Mordecai’s actions and found them praiseworthy. Because of this, he was delighted to honor Mordecai. It brought the king joy to give credit where credit was due.

This also speaks of a truth we find in the Scriptures regarding the doctrine of rewards, as well as the character of Christ. The Lord also desires to reward His faithful children and will therefore delight in honoring those who have served Him, especially in times of

difficulty. Such rewards will not be given to all believers. He knows our works (1 Cor 3:8-15; Rev 2:2, 9, 13; 3:1,8), and He will one day test those works to determine their worth. Those found faithful will be rewarded for what they have done. While faithful believers are not guaranteed justice in this world, we are promised that at the Lord’s return, those who overcome will be praised and publicly heralded as those whom the King delights to honor.

Just as Mordecai was dressed in royal robes to show his status, the faithful saints in eternity will have attire that reflects their righteous deeds (Rev 3:4-5; 19:8). Just as Mordecai was publicly praised before the people, the overcoming believer will be publicly confessed by the Lord before the Father (Matt 10:32). Just as Mordecai was ushered into the city square with full honors, an abundant entrance into the kingdom will be given to those who diligently follow the Lord in this life (2 Pet 1:10-11). Mordecai serves as a mere foreshadowing of all that the King of Kings will do for those in whom He delights.



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# Walking on Water:

A LESSON IN PLEASING GOD, MATTHEW 14:22-33



By Bill Lee

One of Jesus Christ's best-known miracles was walking on water. It occurred during the night following the day that He fed the five thousand on the northeast coast of the Sea of Galilee. What is less known is why He did it. He had a reason. The Lord Jesus Christ had a purpose in every miracle He performed. Chapter 6 of John's Gospel hints at His purpose.

The people Christ fed that day were trapped in a subsistence lifestyle. They rarely ate their fill, but that day they did. In fact, they had leftovers—twelve large baskets' worth. John 6:15 tells us that the crowd was about to turn into a mob bent on taking Jesus Christ by force and making Him their King. They visualized being fed miraculously every day. Things were about to get ugly. John explains that Jesus had the disciples take a boat

and head back to Capernaum while He went up the mountain to pray. I guess He knew that the crowd would focus on Him while the disciples got away. Later that night, after most of the people had fallen asleep, He went down to the water and went to meet the disciples. I think He walked on the water because taking a boat would have alerted the crowd and because walking was faster.

When Christ caught up with the disciples in the boat, He performed another miracle. He made it possible for Peter to walk on the water with Him. You'll want to look at Matt 14:22-33 and read the account for yourself. The details are important. Matthew reports that the men were frightened when they first spotted Jesus in the distance. Having worked as a commercial fisherman on the East Coast, I can tell you that being out on the water in



the dark with an uncooperative sea can get interesting. Seeing someone approach the boat by walking on the water made the situation even more terrifying for the disciples.

Matthew 14:24 says they were *in the middle of the sea*. That means they were in deep water. This rules out the argument of some skeptics that Jesus was wading along the shore in shallow water. Furthermore, Matthew says that it was during the fourth watch, around 4 a.m. Mark 6:48 says it looked as if the Lord would pass the disciples by. That tells us that He was some distance from the boat. He was, however, close enough to hear them, and He called out to reassure the men that there was no danger. That is when Peter decided that he wanted to walk on water just like Jesus Christ.

Now consider carefully what Peter said in Matt 14:28: “Lord, if it’s You, command me to come to you on the water.” While the sentence begins with a conditional clause, it is really an affirmation and a request. Peter meant: “Lord since it is You, command me to come to You over the water.” The keyword here is *command*. It tells us that Peter was asking the Lord to make it possi-

ble for him (Peter) to walk on the water. Peter knew that it wasn’t within his power or faith to make it happen; only Jesus could do that. And Jesus Christ’s one-word reply was, in fact, a command: “Come.” The Lord wanted Peter to experience walking on water.

He was pleased that Peter asked. We know this because that is what the Scriptures say. Hebrews 11:6 says, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

Jesus was pleased with Peter for asking to walk on the water with Him. He is pleased when we believe Him. It is the basis on



which we receive everlasting life (John 3:16; 11:25-26; Eph 2:8-9).

So, what happened? Let's review. Peter's faith was not what held him up. It was Jesus Christ's power. Jesus Christ had commanded him to walk over to Him, and, in obedience, Peter did so. Peter had walked to within arm's reach of the Lord when he started to sink. My guess is that since it was night, Peter's focus was on making it over to the Lord in the dark. Once he made it to Christ, he started looking around, and that's when he got into trouble.

Peter was in a scary situation. He was walking on water! He stumbled in his faith. Jesus Christ's response was to rescue him. His question, "Why did you doubt?" was likely intended to get Peter to analyze what had happened. So, let's examine what Peter did.

Did Peter believe Jesus would keep him safe when he stepped out of the boat? Of course, he did! Getting out of that boat in rough water at night was unnatural. Did he later doubt? Yes. And Jesus still held him up.

Peter did not go under the water. Gravity is fast. In just a fraction of a second, he should have been underwater. But he didn't sink; the Lord kept him afloat. Peter had time to ask for help.

And here is the really important lesson, the really big idea: Jesus' command to come was also a promise. When the Lord said, "Come," He took responsibility for keeping Peter safe. Peter was likely uneasy the whole time, but fear in and of itself was not a problem. What the believer does with fear can be. For Peter, fear became a problem when it led to his doubting.

But Peter's later doubt could not and did not nullify Christ's promise.

That is why we are secure in the promise of everlasting life once we believe in Jesus for that life (John 3:16). Later doubts cannot undo the promise. When we believe Jesus' promise concerning everlasting life, He assumes full responsibility for fulfilling His promise.

God is also pleased when we believe Him for the small things. Peter's walking on water wasn't a great work of personal sacrifice, evangelistic outreach, or service to the needy. He believed God would watch over him while he imitated what Christ was doing. We need to realize that believing God for our daily bread pleases Him. Believing He will deliver us from evil pleases Him. Believing any of His promises pleases Him.

And there is another big benefit to believing. Peter's little adventure resulted in all those men in the boat worshipping the Lord (Matt 14:33). Believing God leads us to worship. Worship is the proper response to every interaction with God. ■



Bill Lee is Pastor of Trego Community Church in Trego, Wi.

# WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT GES?



Bob with his spiritual father, Warren Wilke



Boise Regional: Ken's old Army friend, Jack (left) and his wife, Cindy, along with GES Seminary students Bo Ford (back left), and Sam Marr (far right)



Boise Regional: Ken, the Kabel family, the Ritchie family, Kathryn, and David Janssen



Kathryn Wright speaking to women at the Boise Regional



Online meeting of the Old Testament Commentary Authors and editors on March 18



# STRIVE TO ENTER THE KINGDOM? MATTHEW 7:13-14

BY BOB WILKIN

A reader sent in this question:

Hello. Thanks for your articles. I genuinely believe in salvation by faith alone, by trusting in Jesus Christ as God and His atoning death/blood for the forgiveness of sins.

However, one Scripture that has always confused me is Matthew 7:13-14. What does Jesus mean when He says we need

to strive to enter the narrow gate and that the way is hard? Does that seem to imply an intense struggle to be saved?

In other words, how does Matthew 7:13-14 square with Romans 6:23, Galatians 2:16, or Romans 5:1?

Thank you in advance for your response.

The Lord Jesus did refer to entering by the narrow gate in Matt 7:13-14. But the text does not mention *striving*. The questioner is thinking of Luke 13:24: “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.”

The reader asks a super question when he asks how to square *striving to enter* with other clear verses that teach justification by faith alone, apart from works (Gal 2:16; Rom 5:1). Whenever we perceive one passage as contradicting another, we need to ask how the two can be harmonized.

Some think that Matt 7:13-14 concerns discipleship rather than salvation from eternal condemnation. They understand “the way which leads to life” to refer to the path of discipleship that leads to abundant life. However, in this context, it is more natural to understand the phrase as referring to how to enter into everlasting life (cf. Matt 18:8-9; 19:16-17).

If everlasting life and justification are in view, we know the sole condition is faith in Christ (John 3:16; 5:24; 6:47; Gal 2:16; Rom 5:1).

Could faith alone in Christ for everlasting life be the narrow gate?

Do some people need to strive to believe Jesus’ promise of everlasting life (e.g., John 3:16)?

Yes, and yes.

Most people on Earth today reject the faith-alone message. Even most professing Christians!

Coming from another religion might make you uncomfortable attending church or talking with a Christian about Christ. The faith-alone message might seem like nonsense to you.

The same is true, as well, if you come from most Christian traditions. You would be uncomfortable attending a church that proclaims the faith-alone message.

The word translated *strive* is *agonizomai*. We get the word *agonize* from it. It is used seven times in the NT. It is translated as *fight* in John 18:36; 1 Tim 6:12; and 2 Tim 4:7. Paul used it to refer to *competing* for a prize in 1 Cor 9:25.

It is translated as *striving* in Col 1:29 and *laboring fervently* in Col 4:12.

Striving/fighting/competing is not required in order to be born again. The Lord never said that. But for most in His legalistic Jewish audience, striving was, in a sense, necessary in order to come to belief in Jesus' promise of eternal life.

The Lord rebuked some legalistic Jews, saying, "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).

Their problem was not that they searched the Scriptures (cf. Acts 17:11). It was that they were searching with closed minds. They were not seeking to find God's way to eternal life. They were seeking to understand what the greatest commandments were so that they could best gauge the likelihood that they would gain kingdom entrance.

Does that sound familiar? Isn't that the way many people in Christendom search the Scriptures? Aren't many seeking to check their works against Scripture? Don't they base their assurance and that of others on how obedient they are?

If you have ever shared the faith-alone message, you know that most people reject it. Most are happy to tell you *why you are preaching a false gospel*. They will charge you with cheap grace and easy believism.

Maybe you could tell them that the narrow gate is the faith-alone, apart from works, way. You could ask them if they are willing to ask God if the faith-alone message is true. Are they willing to read the Gospel of John and meditate honestly on what they find? Is striving to find the truth out of the question for them?

Thomas Edison took fourteen months to get a working light bulb. He tried thousands of filaments that didn't work before finding one that did. He had to strive to find the right filament. His striving was certainly work.

But striving to enter by the narrow way is not work. This striving does not involve turning from sins and doing good works. It involves being open to believing in the Lord Jesus Christ for the gift of everlasting life. That message may seem heretical to people. They may hate it, as Saul of Tarsus did. The striving needed is prayer and openness to the Word of God.

For years, Martin Luther strove to be justified before God by his works. He turned from his sins, sought to live a holy life, went on pilgrimages, taught the Scriptures to others, and confessed his sins to other priests. It was all to no avail. Then, while meditating on Scripture, he realized that justification is by faith alone, apart from works.

If the legalist is open to the truth, then his legalistic striving will eventually give way to the realization that everlasting life is a gift given to all who simply believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.


I find it odd that many are willing to strive to enter into life by doing everything except praying and studying. They turn from their sins, commit their lives to Christ, and begin on the path of discipleship. They give their money. But these people who will seemingly do anything to gain everlasting life are unwilling to consider that their view may be wrong. They are unwilling to simply come to the Lord Jesus that they may have life (John 5:40).

Don't be afraid to ask people if they are willing to strive in order to gain everlasting life if the striving involves prayer and study of the Gospel of John. Ask them if they are willing to believe the faith-alone message.


There is no other way to be born again. If people are not willing to believe in Jesus for the gift of everlasting life, then their need is to become willing. That may take striving. Striving to find the truth is a good thing. ■



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# Hearing What You Want to Hear



By Ken Yates

**A**ll of us have a worldview. Many factors contribute to how we see the world. These factors usually include our parents, education, employment, and people with whom we spend most of our time. Our worldview causes us to interpret things the

way we do. Two people can hear the exact same words and interpret those words to mean completely different things.

When this happens, at least one of the people involved has misinterpreted what was said. A humorous example of this happened recently.

## The Original Meaning of the Words

Ronald Reagan was president of the United States from 1981–1989. He was known as the Great Communicator, owing, in part, to his having been an actor before he entered politics. He was a staunch conservative. As such, he loathed the growth of government. He thought that the stronger a central government became, the less free the citizens would be. He became a hero of those who want a small federal government.

In 1986, he was speaking to people in a farming community and told them that many of their problems were the result of governmental interference. This clearly reflected his political views. I'm old enough to remember that on this occasion he delivered one of his most memorable quotes. He said:

I think you all know that I've always felt the nine most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the government, and I'm here to help.

This is a funny line. Almost forty years later, people who argue for limited government can quote those nine words. They understand that Reagan was speaking sarcastically. The original audience laughed at those words. They knew that Reagan's worldview was that no governmental official ever did anything to help. If such an official ever said that to you, the only appropriate course of action was to run in terror!

## That Is Not What I Hear

What would a person with a completely different worldview think about those nine words? Suppose somebody grew up believing that a big central government was a good thing, and that the bigger government was, the better off the people were. How would he interpret the words: "I'm from the government, and I'm here to help."?

Recently, we found out. The Education Secretary of the United States, Miguel Cardona, was speaking at the Western Governors' Association about what the federal government was going to do to help with education in their states. He quot-

ed Ronald Reagan and said that the former president said, "I'm from the government, and I'm here to help." Cardona didn't understand that Reagan meant that those words were terrifying! Cardona thought Reagan was saying that government was the source of good for the people.

In other words, Cardona interpreted Reagan's words to mean the exact opposite of what Reagan intended. Cardona thought that quoting Reagan's words would be a source of comfort to the people in the audience. But Reagan had actually meant that those words would produce nightmares!

A conservative would hear Reagan's words and laugh. Cardona heard those words and saw them as a serious call to grow the power of government. No doubt, Cardona had a different worldview from Reagan's. His parents, friends, education, employment, and background taught him that government was the solution, not the problem. Reagan would have told the governors to allow the local school systems and parents to address the problems they faced. Cardona believed Washington, DC and his department would do a better job.

The same principle applies to how we interpret the words of the Bible. Two people can read the exact same words and come to completely opposite interpretations. A person's background will determine his interpretation. However, just as in the case of Reagan and Cardona, there is only one correct way to understand those words.

## Two Different Theologians

A Free Grace believer will look at the New Testament and realize that eternal life is received by faith alone. Works play no part whatsoever in the gift. You cannot lose eternal life because of a lack of good works. Nor does the presence of good works prove that one has eternal life. We have assurance of eternal life because of the promise of Christ, not because of doing good works. Good works affect Christian growth and rewards. Some Christians experience great spiritual growth, while other believers fail miserably.

A Lordship Salvation proponent sees things in a completely different way. Good works are necessary in order to prove that one is saved. We cannot

have assurance of eternal life; instead, we must constantly evaluate ourselves to see how we are doing. All true believers grow spiritually by doing good works. There are no believers who fail miserably.

These two ways of seeing the Scriptures are, of course, polar opposites. Each springs from the person's Biblical worldview—the result of what they have been taught, what church or churches they have attended, and other background factors.

As in the case of Reagan and Cardona, theologians will hear certain words and come to radically different interpretations. The question is: Which Biblical worldview will lead to understanding those words correctly?

Luke 18:22 and 1 John 5:13 are a couple of passages we can use as test cases.

## You Lack One Thing

In Luke 18:18-23, the Lord has an encounter with a rich young man. The man wants to know what good work he must do to make it into the kingdom of God. He claims that he has kept all the commandments, including loving his neighbor as much as he loves himself. This young man just wants to know if there is something he has left out. He is very proud of his religious accomplishments. If he were to give himself a report card on how many good works he has done, he would give himself an A. He just wants to make sure he will get an A-plus.

The Lord tells him that he lacks one thing (v 22). He needs to sell all that he has and give the proceeds to the poor. The young man becomes *sorrowful*, obviously unwilling to follow Jesus' instructions.

How does a Lordship Salvation proponent interpret this account? He would say that this man was almost good enough. If this rich young guy wanted to believe, he had to do one more good work. But he was not willing. Since he wouldn't sell all and give to the poor, he was not at the point where he could believe. He loved his riches too much. The one thing he lacked was that he was not ready to forsake all to make it into heaven. This guy was a

good man. He kept all the commandments but one. It is a tragedy that he needed to do only one more thing but fell short of his goal by inches.

The Free Grace believer interprets the account very differently. Immediately before meeting this man, Jesus says that the only way to make it into the kingdom of God is to receive it as a gift (v 17). The rich young man was, in fact, not good. He did not keep any of the commandments and was lying when he said he did. He could not "do" any good work to earn eternal life. The one thing he lacked was faith in Christ for eternal life (John 3:16).

When Jesus told him to sell everything he had and give the proceeds to the poor, He was not telling him that if he did one more good work, he would be good enough to enter the kingdom. The Lord was showing him that he did not keep the commandment of loving his neighbor as much as he loved himself. In truth, he didn't keep any of the commandments.

The NT teaches that we are saved from the lake of fire by grace through faith, and that works add nothing to that salvation (Eph 2:8-9). The way many Lordship Salvation people treat what the Lord says in this account is both comical and sad. The Lord is telling the man that he is not good, and that he will never be good enough. But Lordship Salvation teachers take these words and understand the Lord to be saying: "You are good, but if you want to be good enough, do one more thing. You can do it!"

Miguel Cardona would be proud of these theologians for taking Christ's words and making them say the exact opposite of what was intended!

## Assurance of Eternal Salvation

In 1 John 5:13, John says that he writes to his readers so that they might know that they have eternal life. Lordship Salvation folks, however, say we cannot know whether we have eternal life. We must constantly look at our works for some measure of assurance. Since we don't know whether we will always keep doing good works, we cannot have assurance that we will be in the kingdom.



How do they hear these words of John? Well, they look at the whole book of 1 John. John talks about doing good works, such as confessing your sins, loving your fellow believers, loving God, not doing what Satan wants you to do, and being grounded in good doctrine. Lordship Salvation folks believe John is saying that if those reading his letter will do all these good works, they can know, in a relative sense, that they have a good chance to make it into the kingdom. But they must keep doing the good works.

The Free Grace guy hears these words in a different way. In the verses immediately before verse 13, John says that God has given eternal life to all who have His Son Jesus Christ (vv 11-12). We have His Son when we believe in Him (v 13). The believer has assurance that he will be in the kingdom because God has promised that he already has eternal life. Works do not determine our assurance. The grace and promise of the Lord do.

If John could hear what many do with his words in 1 John 5:13, he would be amazed. Like conservatives who heard Miguel Cardona's gaffe, he would wonder how they could have twisted his words like that. These teachers make John say the polar opposite of what he intended. John wanted his readers to have assurance of their eternal salvation because that assurance is not based on our good works. The believer in Christ knows he will be in the kingdom. But Lordship Salvation teachers say that John is telling us we must look at our good works. We can't have assurance, but there will be some days when we'll feel pretty good about ourselves if we keep doing good things.

## Conclusion

Every one of us is influenced by our background. Our backgrounds determine how we interpret what we see and hear. We need to be aware of these factors. They can cause us to misinterpret what we read.

Cardona had been taught that the government is the answer to all our problems. When he read Reagan's words, "I'm from the government, and I'm here to help," Cardona gave a hearty "Amen!" and boldly quoted these words of the Great Communicator. He thought he had an ally in Reagan. Students of Reagan only shook their heads and laughed.

The same thing happens when people come to the words of Scripture and deny the grace that the Scriptures teach. They have been taught that works are necessary to make it into the kingdom and that faith in the promise of Christ is not enough.

We might hear such wrong understandings, shake our heads, and laugh. But such misinterpretations twist the Word of God. We may wonder how people can get it so wrong, but it is no laughing matter. ■



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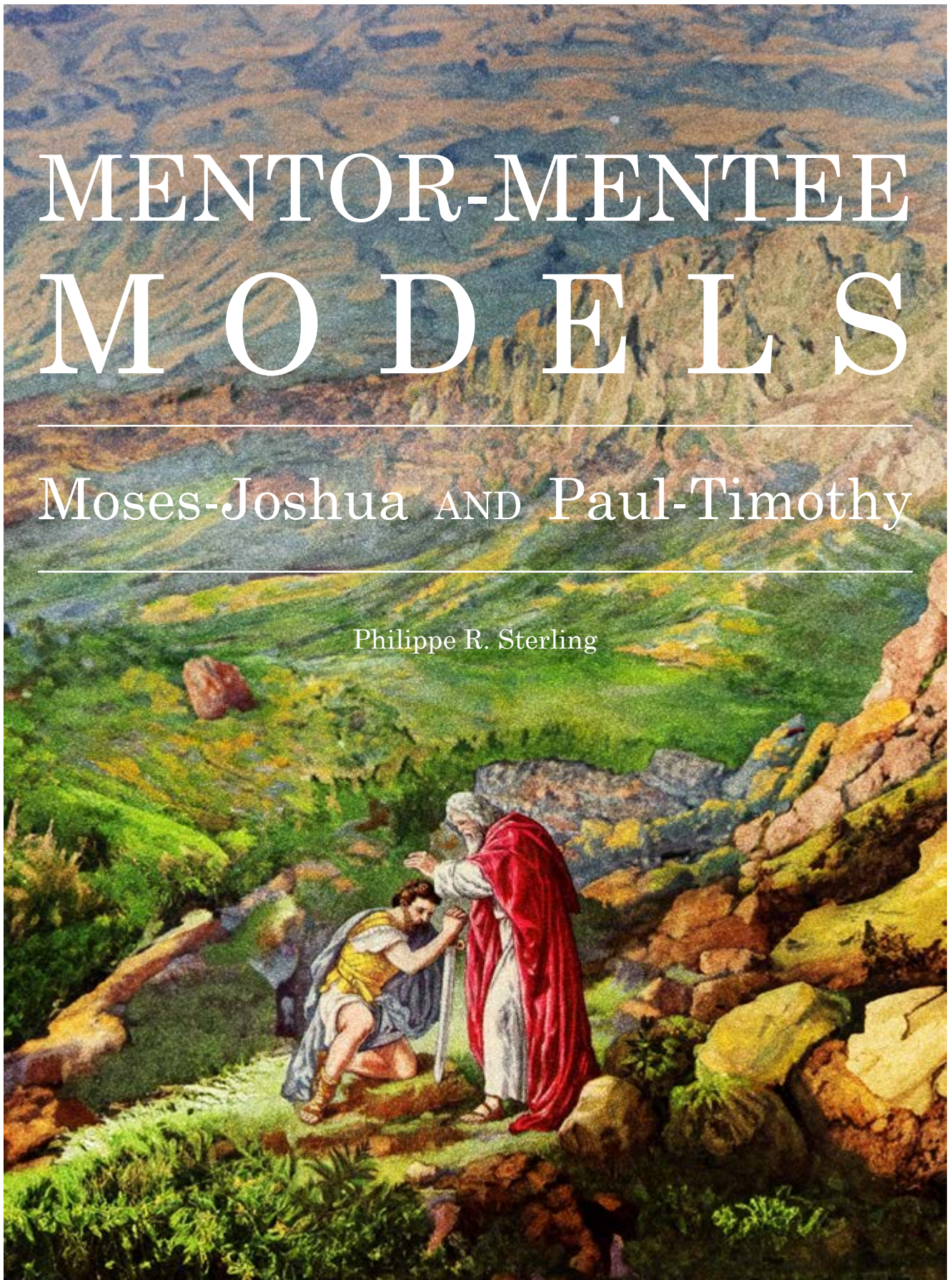
# MENTOR-MENTEE MODELS

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Moses-Joshua AND Paul-Timothy

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Philippe R. Sterling



**T**he word *mentor* comes from *The Odyssey*. While Ulysses was away fighting in the Trojan War, he placed his son Telemachus under the tutelage of a sage named Mentor. The personal name has become a term meaning someone who trains a less experienced associate.

Mentoring is widely employed in business, education, and other fields. My wife has been an educational diagnostician. Every year, she was assigned one or more novice diagnosticians to mentor. I served as a ministry mentor to a young man in a seminary program. He also had an academic mentor and a spiritual life mentor. There is a large industry offering seminars and books to help mentors develop their mentoring skills.

Other processes share aspects of mentoring. There is coaching. The trades have long used apprenticeship. Of course, in the Bible we have discipleship.

We can differentiate between discipleship and mentoring. Discipleship is a general process to help believers grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and to begin to serve Him. Mentoring is a specific process to help believers develop their service and leadership skills. As such, mentoring is a specialized subset of discipleship.

The word *mentor* is not found in the Bible, but the practice appears in both the Old and New Testaments. We find many examples of cross-generational mentoring that provide principles for our practice today. We'll consider the examples of Moses and Joshua in the OT, and Paul and Timothy in the NT. We'll see that the process they model is relational, experiential, and instructional.

## Moses and Joshua

Several events in the lives of Moses and Joshua (as reported in Exodus and Numbers) illustrate elements of the mentoring relationship.

### 1. MOSES SENT JOSHUA TO BATTLE WITH AMALEK (EXODUS 17:9-14)

Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill

with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek...And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed...But Moses' hands *became* heavy; so they took a stone and put *it* under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands...and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this *for* a memorial in the book and recount *it* in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."

Moses told Joshua to lead the battle against Amalek. He believed him capable of leading. A mentor can assign important tasks to a mentee.

God told Moses to recount His present and future acts to Joshua. The battle foreshadowed what God would do in the future under Joshua's leadership. A mentor should encourage a mentee to have an ongoing dependence on God.

### 2. MEETING WITH GOD (EXODUS 24:12-13; 33:11)

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them." So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God...

So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.

When Moses met with God on Mount Sinai, he brought Joshua along. Joshua was an assistant who went with him to a divine appointment. Joshua was also there when God met with Moses at the tent of meeting outside the camp. A mentor should invite a mentee to key events, especially those focusing on God.

### 3. MODELING HUMILITY AND PROVIDING CORRECTION (NUMBERS 11:26-30)

But two men had remained in the camp: the name of one *was* Eldad, and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they *were* among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, and said, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, *one* of his choice men, answered and said, “Moses my lord, forbid them!” Then Moses said to him, “Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord’s people were prophets *and* that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!” And Moses returned to the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

Moses continued to mentor Joshua. One lesson concerned humility. When Joshua wanted to restrain those who prophesied in the camp, Moses corrected him. The text calls Joshua “Moses’ assistant.” A mentor should correct a mentee as needed.

### 4. CHANGE OF NAME (NUMBERS 13:8; 14:6-9)

When Moses sent twelve men from the twelve tribes of Israel to survey the land of Canaan, Joshua represented the tribe of Ephraim. Before Moses sent Joshua to survey the land, his name was Hoshea, Hebrew for *salvation*. After his display of faith in God, Moses called him *Joshua*, Hebrew for *Yahweh is my salvation*. A mentor can affirm the faith of a mentee with a descriptive name or nickname.

### 5. LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION (NUM 27:18-20; SEE ALSO DEUT 31:7-8, 23; JOSH 1:1-9)

And the Lord said to Moses: “Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom *is* the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight. And you shall give *some* of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient.”

Finally, God instructed Moses to pass on to Joshua the responsibility of leadership. Moses honored Joshua before the people, challenged him, and reminded him that God would be with him.

Moses prepared Joshua for leadership. Who will succeed us in serving God should be of great importance to us. God chooses the person, but we can help prepare the one God might choose. The day came when Joshua had to lead the people without Moses. He was well prepared. When the time comes, a mentor should pass on the leadership role to a mentee.

#### *Some Key Principles of Mentoring from Moses-Joshua*

- » Assign important tasks
- » Encourage dependence upon God
- » Invite to key events
- » Model humility and provide correction
- » Affirm faith
- » Pass on the role of leader

Are there some younger believers you could mentor?<sup>1</sup> Look for strengths in their lives that you can help develop further. Affirm the ways that you see God using them in His work. Prepare them for leadership.

## Paul and Timothy

Paul selected Timothy for mentoring on his second missionary journey through Derbe and Lystra. He was a young man with a good reputation.

Timothy traveled with Paul and Silas to Macedonia and Greece. Paul sometimes sent Timothy to encourage the believers in the cities where they had planted churches. Paul’s confidence in Timothy grew to the point that in Phil 2:20-22 he wrote:

For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character, that as a son with *his* father he served with me in the gospel.

Here are two of the many lessons we can learn from the mentoring relationship of Paul and Timothy:

## 1. BE SELECTIVE ABOUT WHOM YOU MENTOR (ACTS 16:1-3; 2 TIM 2:2)

Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, *the* son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father *was* Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took *him* and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek...

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Paul based his choice of Timothy on what others reported about him. Paul would later encourage Timothy to instruct faithful men who would also be able to teach others.<sup>2</sup> Not everyone qualifies for a mentoring relationship. A mentor should commit to a mentee who will faithfully learn from him and pass on what he has learned to others in a multiplying way.

## 2. APPROACH MENTORING AS AN INVESTMENT THAT WILL SPAN GENERATIONS

Paul's training of Timothy was personal, experiential, and instructional. He entrusted him with greater and greater responsibilities. He wrote letters to encourage him, instruct him, and challenge him. Timothy became Paul's trusted son in the faith. When it came time for Paul to depart this life, he wrote his final letter to Timothy.

## Conclusion

Many consider Hippocrates the "Father of Medicine." Here is a portion of the text of his famous "Hippocratic Oath" (ca. 400 BC, translation from Greek by Francis Adams, 1849):

*I swear by Apollo the physician, and Aesculapius, and Health, and All-heal, and all the gods and goddesses, that, according to my ability and judgment, I will keep this Oath and this stipulation—to reckon him who taught me this Art equally dear to me as my parents, to share my substance with him, and relieve his necessities if required; to look upon his offspring in the same footing as my own brothers, and to teach them this Art, if they shall wish to learn it, without fee or stipulation; and that by precept, lecture, and every other mode of instruction, I will impart a knowledge of the Art to my own sons, and those of my teachers, and to disciples bound by a stipulation and oath according to the law of medicine...*

Hippocrates was committed to passing on his knowledge of medicine to the next generation of physicians. He formed relationships with students he could mentor.

Moses and Joshua and Paul and Timothy modeled being mentors and mentees in the area of spiritual leadership. Let us adopt their personal, experiential, and instructional mentoring model to prepare the next generation of Free Grace believers. Be a mentor. Seek a mentor.<sup>3</sup> ■



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1 Editor's note: Every parent can and should mentor their children. Sunday school teachers and Bible study leaders have a mentoring role. Elders and pastoral staff are to mentor future leaders. All of us can mentor someone in the faith.  
2 Editor's note: Timothy oversaw the church elders in Ephesus. Most likely the *faithful men* of 2 Tim 2:2 were the elders. The *others* of 2 Tim 2:2 might refer to the next generation of elders the current elders would mentor.  
3 Editor's note: Even mentors benefit from ongoing mentoring.

FOCUSED

FREE GRACE

(VERSUS)

FLEXIBLE

FREE GRACE

CAN TWO WALK TOGETHER? PART 2<sup>1</sup>

BY MIKE LII

## V. Fundamental Theological Differences as a Consequence of the Two Essential Differences (Eternal Life and Assurance)

### A. THE NATURE OF THE FAITH THAT SAVES

Many Flexible Free Gracers view assurance of eternal life as optional for saving faith because they understand *faith* as including something more than the Focused Free Grace definition: a persuasion or conviction that some proposition is true. These Flexible Free Gracers define *faith* as an act of the will or a deliberate decision (e.g., “make a decision for Christ” or “decide for Jesus”). When faith includes an act of the will or a decision, there is the possibility of saving faith without assurance of eternal life. You can ask Jesus to save you and/or you can make a decision for Jesus without being persuaded of the truth of His promise of everlasting life to all who believe in Him.

If faith includes a decision or an act of the will, then Jesus’ saving message to Martha in John 11:25-26 may be misunderstood as follows:

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who ~~believes in~~ **decides for** Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and ~~believes in~~ **decides for** Me shall never die. Do you ~~believe~~ **want to decide for this?**” (original text struck through and added text in bold)

### B. FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES REGARDING REPENTANCE: MUST WE DESIRE MORAL REFORM TO BE SAVED?

Regardless of their various definitions of *repentance*, Focused Free Gracers are unified in rejecting the notion that a desire for moral reform is a condition of salvation. Focused Free Grace sees even a desire for moral reform as a work; therefore, faith in Jesus does not include a desire for moral reform. Some Flexible Free Gracers inadvertently present

works salvation messages by including works in their definition of *repentance*, then making repentance a requirement for salvation.

For some Flexible Free Gracers, the repentance required for salvation includes a moral change or a change of moral direction. A willingness to change one’s moral direction or make a moral change is a work. Changing one’s sinful attitude to a proper attitude and direction is a work. There are no essential differences between the Flexible Free Grace and Lordship Salvation views of repentance. Both view repentance as a requirement for salvation and both see repentance as including a willingness for moral change or a change in moral direction. The saving message in John 6:47 might thus be misunderstood as follows:

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me **and repents by being willing to make moral change** has everlasting life.” (added text in bold)

## VI. Other Theological Differences as a Consequence of the Two Essential Differences (Eternal Life and Assurance)

### A. MEANING OF SAVIOR

Focused Free Grace understands the term *Savior* to refer to Jesus as the One who provides, for everyone who believes in Him, an unconditional, guaranteed, forever salvation from hell and the lake of fire. One is not believing in Jesus as Savior if one believes he must work in order to be saved, to prove that he is saved, or to stay saved.

Many Flexible Free Gracers typically summarize their gospel message as believing in Jesus as God and Savior. But one should ask, “What do they mean by *Savior*?”

In Flexible Free Grace, one is believing in Jesus as Savior if one believes in a Savior who provides a salvation conditioned upon works or perseverance, or a salvation that may be lost. Although they may

use the term, there is also no need in Flexible Free Grace to believe that Jesus is “my” Savior. If I am unsure of my salvation, then how can I call Jesus “my” Savior? In order to get eternal life according to Flexible Free Grace, one need only believe that Jesus is the Savior of those for whom He died, which does not have to include oneself.

## **B. ARE THERE MULTIPLE SAVING MESSAGES?**

Focused Free Grace has a single saving message: “Believe in the Jesus of the New Testament for everlasting life.” However, is the deity, death, and resurrection of Jesus the only saving message presented by Flexible Free Gracers? No.

For some Flexible Free Gracers, multiple saving messages are possible. According to some Flexible Free Gracers, one can, without actually believing in Jesus for eternal life, unknowingly receive eternal life as a result of believing any of the following messages or performing any of the following actions:

- » Jesus is God, died on the cross and rose again.
- » Jesus has been sent by God.
- » Jesus is coming again.
- » Fear God, give glory to Him and worship Him.
- » Ask God for mercy as a sinner.

## **C. FLEXIBLE FREE GRACE: CHURCH HISTORY PROVES THAT WORKS SALVATION MESSAGES ARE SAVING MESSAGES**

One cannot believe both in Jesus for everlasting life and in the need to work for one’s salvation. For this reason, Focused Free Grace considers both overt works salvation messages and Lordship Salvation messages to be non-saving messages.

If one does not believe in eternal security, then one is not believing in Jesus for eternal life. When you speak with individuals who reject or doubt eternal security, it is apparent that they consider works a condition for receiving eternal life. In their minds, works are necessary to either become saved, prove their salvation, or stay saved. However, if eternal security is an unnecessary addition

to the gospel, as Flexible Free Grace teaches, then works salvation messages become acceptable saving messages.

Because Roman Catholics, Calvinists, Arminians, and other Protestants who believe that works are required for salvation also believe that Jesus is God and Savior (in the Flexible Free Grace sense), some Flexible Free Gracers see these groups as believing the gospel. However, these groups do not teach believing in Jesus specifically for assured everlasting life. It is impossible to believe in Jesus for everlasting life while simultaneously believing that one needs to work in order to gain, prove, or maintain one’s salvation.

## **D. ROLE OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN IN EVANGELISM**

Since the Gospel of John very clearly teaches that one needs to believe in Jesus for the gift of eternal life, Flexible Free Grace downplays the role of the Gospel of John in evangelism. Some Flexible Free Gracers question whether other books of the Bible might also have been written for evangelism or whether the entire Book of John is for the purpose of evangelism. However, these views directly contradict John’s clearly stated purpose in 20:30-31:

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in **this book**; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name (emphasis added).

Notice that the Apostle John has chosen the signs written in his book—not just portions of his book, but the entire book, even the events recorded in 13-17—to lead people to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Based on John 11:25-27 to “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” is to believe that Jesus guarantees eternal life to all who believe in Him for that life.

No other book in the Bible has a stated purpose of evangelism. It is shocking that those who profess to believe in Free Grace would seek to downplay the Gospel of John’s role in evangelism. John’s



Gospel is simply our best tool for making the saving message clear to unbelievers, because that is the purpose for which God intended it.

## VII. Conclusion

There are two essentially different views of Free Grace. For Focused Free Grace: (1) Believing in Jesus for everlasting life is an essential component of the saving message, and (2) one who believes in Jesus for everlasting life knows for sure they have it (in other words, assurance is of the essence of saving faith). These are the two pillars, the foundational elements, of Focused Free Grace theology. These are what divide Focused Free Grace theology from any other theological system that claims to be Free Grace. Without both (1) belief in Jesus for everlasting life and (2) the assurance of everlasting life as the essence of saving faith, you no longer have Focused Free Grace theology.

In contrast, in Flexible Free Grace Theology: (1) Believing in Jesus specifically for everlasting

life is an unnecessary addition to the saving message, and (2) a person can believe in Jesus without knowing for sure that they have everlasting life (in other words, assurance is optional for saving faith).

Caution: Though eternal life as both content and assurance are optional for Flexible Free Gracers, this does not mean they will never present eternal life or include assurance when evangelizing. Flexible Free Gracers sometimes sound just like Focused Free Gracers in their teaching. Flexible Free Gracers may include eternal life when the audience is receptive but leave out eternal life and assurance if they might be stumbling blocks either to one's believing in Jesus' deity, death, and resurrection or to pressing for an act of the will or a decision for Jesus.

From these essential differences regarding (1) the content of the saving message and (2) assurance, we have two very different systems of Free Grace Theology, summarized in this chart:

	Focused Free Grace	Flexible Free Grace
Eternal Life (Eternal Security) in the Gospel Message	Essential	Optional
Eternal Security	Salvation issue	Discipleship issue
Assurance of Eternal Life is	Of the essence of saving faith	Optional to saving saith
Eternal Life	Object (content) of saving faith and result of saving faith	Result of saving faith but not necessarily the object (content) of saving faith
Definition of Faith / Believe	Persuasion or conviction of truth	For some, includes an act of the will or a decision
Repentance as Desire for Moral Reform	Never required for salvation	For some, required for salvation
Jesus as Savior	Eternal and irrevocable salvation for me	Temporary or revocable salvation. No need for "my" Savior

Number of Saving Messages	One: "Believe in Jesus for everlasting life."	For some, multiple.
Works Salvation / Lordship Salvation messages	Non-Saving	Saving
Gospel of John for Evangelism	The exclusive book	Not the exclusive book

The resulting differences between Focused Free Grace and Flexible Free Grace are great. Furthermore, Scripture includes a warning about denying Jesus' saving message (His guarantee of everlasting life to all who believe in Him). In 1 John 2:22, the Apostle John writes:

Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.

Recall that, based on John 11:25-27, to believe "that Jesus is the Christ" is to believe that Jesus guarantees everlasting life to every believer in Him. The Apostle John identifies as liars and antichrists those who deny the saving message that Jesus is the Christ, making a departure from this message serious and grave.

There have been increased calls for unity within the Free Grace movement despite theological differences regarding Jesus' saving message. Those who call for unity typically dismiss the doctrinal differences discussed in this article as being minor, inconsequential details. However, given these

differences, are Flexible Free Grace and a Focused Free Grace ministry like GES compatible for the purpose of joint ministry?

To answer that, please consider the message of Amos 3:3.<sup>2</sup> Although the context involves the Lord and the Nation of Israel, this author believes it is applicable to the deep theological differences between Focused and Flexible Free Gracers:

Can two walk together, except they be agreed? ■■



Mike Lii is a finance attorney. He and his wife, Letitia, a member of the GES board, and their son, Payton, live in Dallas and serve at several Free Grace churches. Mike and Letitia also run the Zane Hodges Library online (zanehodges.org).

- 1 This is an abridged version of an article that is available in *The Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*,
- 2 This author wishes to credit Bob Bryant for the application of this verse in the context of joint ministry.

# Are Eternal Rewards Secure? Part 1

By Bob Wilkin

Jeff raises a great question:

Do you think a believer earns a reward each time he does a good deed in Jesus' name (or to honor God). In other words, as he lives each day, does he lay up gold, silver, and precious stones in heaven for the good he does?

But if we earn rewards this way, is it biblically accurate to say they are secure? That a bad deed tomorrow won't cause a believer to lose a reward that was earned yesterday?

Though some rewards, such as getting to hear Jesus say "well done" and reigning with Christ, are reserved only for those who finish well, are there rewards for good deeds a believer has done throughout his life that he can't lose once they're earned?

Everlasting life is secure when we believe in Christ (John 3:16; 5:24; 6:35; 11:26). But what about eternal rewards?

Some eternal rewards are secure the moment we do them.

Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt 6:19-21). Notice that He said this treasure is secure. It won't be destroyed or stolen. The Lord does not condition this treasure upon perseverance.

Matthew 6:19-21 describes instant winners.

That passage (compare Matt 6:1-18) shows that eternal rewards are only given for our good deeds *if our motives are proper*. Many other verses indicate that the Lord will judge our hearts (1 Cor 4:5; Gal 1:10; 1 Thess 2:4). Motives matter.

Let's say that Jeff does twenty good deeds on Monday, but he also does some bad deeds. While

we are accountable for all our deeds, good and bad (2 Cor 5:10), we reap eternal rewards for all the good deeds. Bad deeds do not negate the rewards of good deeds.

He is also right that the secure deeds are called "gold, silver, and precious stones" by Paul in 1 Cor 3:10-15. Those are not good works per se. They are *works that have eternal value*. We may do something that we think is a good work, but that God considers "wood, hay, and straw." Those works are works that lack eternal value.

I remember a comment by Zane Hodges about 1 Cor 3:10-15. After saying that the wood, hay, and straw were not bad deeds, but deeds lacking eternal value, he gave the example of a ski trip for a youth group. He said that most of that trip would just be recreation. Only on the occasions when counseling and teaching and encouragement was going on would there be works of eternal value.

Jeff's last paragraph addresses a second type of reward. Some rewards—in fact, most rewards—require endurance to the end of our Christian lives. They are not secure until one finishes the race. Compare 1 Cor 9:24-27 with 2 Tim 4:6-8. Paul said, "If we endure, we shall reign with Him" (2 Tim 2:12a).

The perseverance prizes include ruling with Christ, receiving His praise and approval, special white garments, hidden manna, the fruit of the tree of life, and a special white stone with the Lord's nickname for you on it (cf. Matt 24:45-51; 1 Cor 9:24-27; 2 Tim 2:12; 4:6-8; Rev 2:7, 17, 26; 3:4-5, 12, 21).

We do not know what treasure in heaven will be. It might be an unspecified reward if *treasure* is meant figuratively. Or it could refer to literal treasure of some sort. If there is an economy in the kingdom, possibly we will have monthly allowances based on the treasure we laid up (cf. Phil 4:17). We would use that money to glorify the Lord Jesus.

There are two other questions that arise from Jeff's question. Will we give our rewards back to the Lord (Rev 4:10)? And will rewards only be for the Millennium? We will answer these two questions in Part 2. ■



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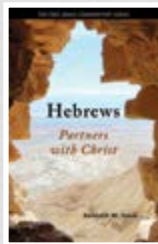


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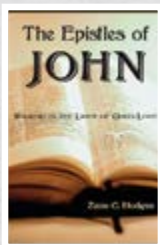


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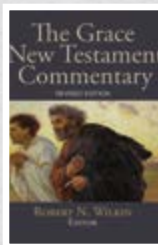


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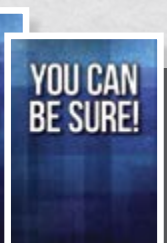
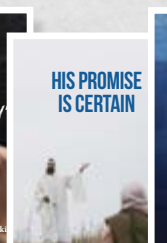
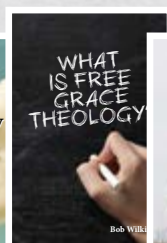
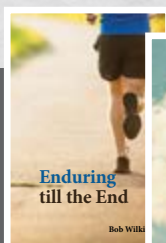


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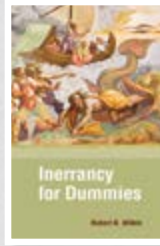


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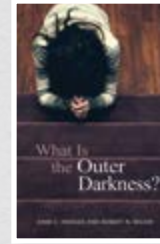
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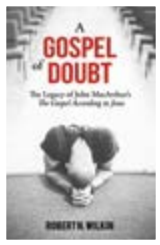


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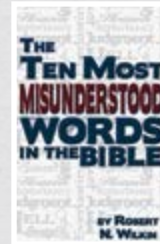


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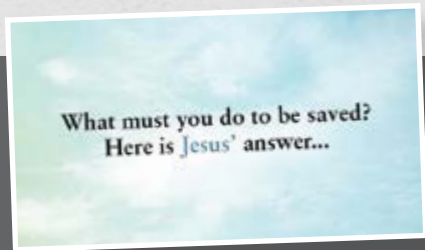


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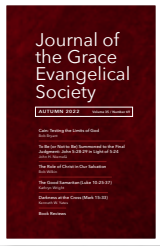
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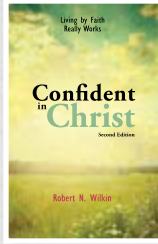


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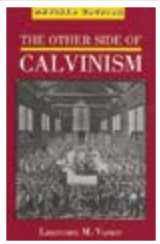


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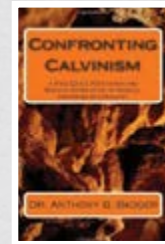


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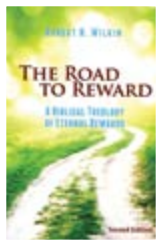


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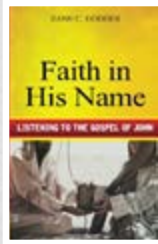


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## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

### MONDAY

- Ken Yates**, *Preaching the Gospel Without a Word* (1 Pet 3:1-7)  
**J. B. Bond**, *What to Do While We Wait for Jesus* (1 Pet 4:7-11)  
**Steve Thurman**, *Shepherding the Flock, Submitting, and Being Humble* (1 Peter 5)  
**Ken and Bob**, *Answering your Bible, theology, and practical questions*

### TUESDAY

- Bob Bryant**, *A Birdseye View of 1 Peter*.  
**David Janssen**, *Preparing for a Grand Kingdom* (2 Pet 1:1-11)  
**John Claeys**, *At the End of the Day* (2 Pet 3:10-12)  
**Bob and Ken**, *Dispensationalism and Free Grace*

### WEDNESDAY

- Bob Vacendak**, *Noah, Baptism, and a Good Conscience* (1 Pet 3:15-22)  
**Paul Carpenter**, *His Promised Return Is Certain* (2 Pet 3:1-9)  
**Philippe Sterling**, *Salvation of the Soul: Make Your Life Count Forever* (1 Pet 1:3-9)  
**Bob Wilkin**, *How to Long for the Pure Milk of the Word* (1 Pet 2:1-3)

### THURSDAY

- John Niemela**, *The Author Distribution Model for Canonicity* (2 Pet 3:16)

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# Free Grace College Campus Ministry Under Siege

By Jack Stevens

“You’re not teachable!” Lately, I’ve heard that frequently. In meetings with pastors and campus leaders who have been in the ministry for almost fifty years, I’ve been repeatedly told that my understanding of salvation is “just surface level,” “overly simple,” and “unbiblical.” I’m seen as a wayward heretic, and I’ve experienced heavy criticism for my beliefs, even to the point of losing a close friend.

What view of mine elicits such a harsh response? It is that salvation is gained only by believing in Jesus for eternal life and that assurance is of the essence of saving faith. He will never break His promise of everlasting life (John 3:16). We are saved by grace through faith and apart from works (Eph 2:8-9).

My critics say that if you are really saved, you’ll change, and that if you don’t get your act together, go to church, and stay on the straight and narrow after conversion, then you never had eternal life to begin with. I’ve talked with hundreds of college students about the promise of life. I’ve met with campus ministry leaders and pastors. I have observed that belief in assurance, grounded on Jesus’

promise alone, is becoming extinct, especially on college campuses.

*The Great Dechurching*, by Jim Davis and Michael Graham (published in August 2023), has a lot to say about the waning of Christianity in our country. The book reports a study that found that in the past twenty-five years, forty million people have left Christianity. About twelve percent of the population of the United States has become disenchanted with the church and has largely taken the next generation with it. As a college student at a public university, I have seen this firsthand, and I believe that a large part of the reason is that there is no assurance, no life, and—especially—no grace in the church.

Some friends and I have started a ministry on our university campus. We set up a small fire outside the dorms and hand out s’mores to whoever comes walking by. Many students like to hang out and talk, so we share the message of life and give the Gospel of John to anyone who’s interested. When the weather is nice, anywhere from sixty to a hundred or more people stop by in a single night,

and the friendly atmosphere on campus makes many people open to discussing Jesus.

One of the main questions I like to ask is: “Do you know for sure where you will go when you die?” In talking to hundreds of students, few have answered this question affirmatively. But the shocking thing is that most of the time, people follow their answer by saying, “Oh, I know I’m going straight to hell.” And then, often, they laugh at that idea. This flippant treatment of their eternal future deeply saddens me. In digging further, I find that these people often have a background in the church, have seen the emptiness of religion, and have walked away from it. When I asked those who said they would go to heaven what made them sure, only four people have told me they would go to heaven because they believed in Jesus for eternal life. Only four students out of hundreds I’ve spoken with have Bible-based assurance of their salvation. This is incredibly sobering.

On Tuesday nights, we often intercept kids who are coming from different campus Bible studies. I’ve talked to many who are carrying their Bibles from the group meeting. Incredibly, those from the Bible studies are the ones who object the most to the Biblical message of life! They almost always attach works after conversion to their explanation of salvation. They are involved in church and Bible study, yet they do not have assurance. They turn out to be our biggest critics and say that eternal life is not gained by simply believing in Jesus but rather by faith plus repentance.

One night, an older man approached our fire and handed out pamphlets. He turned out to be a local pastor. He was inviting students to come to his church. I was in a deep conversation with a student about how belief in Jesus is sufficient for eternal life. The pastor cut into the conversation. He immediately corrected me and said that repentance was needed in order for faith to be real. He said you must have the fruit of the Spirit and a changed life to have assurance.

He kept coming to the group to undermine our message!

Eventually, I sat down with him for lunch to discuss our differences.

I also met several times with the leader of a large campus ministry. He, too, tried to convince me that repentance and a changed life were conditions of everlasting life.

It was interesting to see the demeanor of both these ministry leaders change when I disagreed and stated the message of life. At first, both were very nice and complimented me for what I was doing on campus. But after I told them the faith-alone message, they got angry and bulldozed me for the rest of the conversation. From the Scriptures, I clearly presented why salvation is through faith alone, not contingent on works before or after conversion. Both concluded our meetings by saying that I was too young, that I lacked a proper understanding of the Scriptures and salvation, and that I was not teachable.

Because I pushed back on their narrative with evidence from the Bible, they accused me of pride and of clinging too tightly to a surface-level interpretation of God’s Word. Instead of changing their thinking to what the Bible clearly teaches regarding eternal life, they claimed that what I preach is dangerously false. This is all because I refused to add repentance, and therefore works, to the precious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Assurance of salvation apart from works is the key ingredient to having life-filled people in life-filled churches.

Satan clearly doesn’t want this to happen, so he uses established religious people to undermine the message of life. He uses the same tactics with my little campus outreach as he did with the Judaizers who crept into Paul’s churches in Galatia (e.g., Gal 1:6-9; 3:1-4). Because assurance is essential to salvation, we must never give up and never give in to persecution from others who call themselves Christians. We must never relinquish the life-bringing message that even a child can understand and believe. ■



Lord willing, Jack will graduate from the University of Idaho on May 11th. He plans to do a pastoral internship in Nags Head, NC this summer. Starting in the fall, he will be the full-time Associate Pastor at Grace Bible Church in Kamiah, Idaho, while continuing his education through GES Seminary.



# Running with Endurance Toward Eternal Glory

HEBREWS 12:1-2

By Chuck Deveau

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a *cloud* of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us *run with endurance the race* that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (emphasis added).

**T**his captivating photo (left), taken by Dean Mayo, is an inspiring visual for us as Christians. This cloud formation reminds me that our life’s journey is likened to a race run in the energy of daily trust in Jesus Christ. This is not a sprint but a marathon. It begins with a straightforward exercise of faith in Jesus as the Messiah, through which the believer receives the gift of eternal life. The race begins with an act of faith and will be successfully run in the power and principles of this same initial faith. The race began for me nearly five decades ago when I became personally persuaded that Jesus Christ is the sole object of saving faith and the sole Giver of the gift of eternal life—a gift to us but bought by Him at an enormous price!

Perhaps, as suggested by verse 1 of our text, the writer of Hebrews had in mind a thrilling cloud formation like this one when he wrote about the heroes and heroines of faith—many of whom are listed by name in Hebrews Chapter 11—who have run the race of faith before us. But most poignantly, the *cloud of witnesses* points us to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is “the author and finisher of our faith.” He is both the starting point and the finishing line of our race of faith. It is He on whom we must *fix our spiritual gaze* to run a successful, rewardable race and finish strong!

If we take our spiritual eyes off Him, we will falter and even be tempted to drop out of the race altogether (Matt 24:45-51). If we do, we will miss sharing in the Messiah’s joy, which was His trophy—the “gold medal” —at the end of His long,

arduous journey of faith. To complete His journey successfully, He “endured the cross, despising the shame.” When He was finished—with the “gold medal” draped around His neck and with hands scarred by the piercing nails used to crucify Him on a Roman gibbet—He “sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Until He returns and establishes His seat of government in Jerusalem, “the throne of grace” (Heb 4:16) is where He presently resides at “the right hand of the throne of God.” He is the believer’s “merciful and faithful High Priest” (Heb 2:17).

Today, He invites all believers to share in His joy! But we must adhere to the admonitions in verse 1 of this text and *run* our race of faith *with endurance* right up to and through the finish line! Remember, our race of faith is not a sprint. It is an ultra-marathon! It is arduous, and it requires great courage and stamina.

To all my fellow runners in the race of faith: See you at the finish line as we all joyfully collapse into the loving, gracious arms of the King of kings, and maybe, just maybe, hear from His lips, “Well done!” ■



Chuck Deveau is the host of “The Things That Matter” radio broadcast on KRAQ 100.1 FM, Remnant Radio, Sundays at 8:00 a.m. PST. He also serves with Men of Messiah ministries located in La Quinta, Ca.

# Just Accept It: You're Going to

# BLOW IT

By Ken Yates

**E**ternal life is given to the person who believes in Jesus for it. It is a gift that cannot be lost. The believer cannot give the gift back even if he wants to!

Being a *disciple* of the Lord, however, is completely different. A disciple is one who follows the Lord and learns from Him. It is very costly. It involves work and results in suffering to various de-

grees. Some Christians decide not to become disciples because of how difficult it is. They sit down and count the cost and conclude that they don't want to pay that price. They might tell themselves that they know they're going to be in the kingdom, and that's good enough. Sadly, they feel that the rewards of being a disciple aren't worth what they would have to give up in order to become one.



But there's another reason a believer might opt out of being a disciple. A believer can have a low estimation of himself and think that it's useless to even try. When he looks at how difficult discipleship is, he throws up his hands, thinking he'll never be able to do it. He concludes that other believers might succeed in this endeavor, but he is destined to fail in such a noble pursuit.

For those who think that way, I have both good news and bad news. The bad news is: We're going to fail. The good news is: All disciples blow it. That's part of being a disciple. The process requires failure. You can't be a disciple without it. But the Lord will use our failures to make us more like Him and to make us great in His kingdom.

The original disciples teach us these truths. They sure made a lot of mistakes. But the Lord used them anyway, and they will reign with Him forever. The Gospel of Mark uses these guys as examples of what I'm talking about.

## **CALLED TO BE DISCIPLES**

In Mark 1:16-20 and 2:13-17, the Lord calls some men to follow Him in discipleship. Four of them are fishermen. One is a tax collector. He gives them all the same opportunity and uses the same words: "Follow Me!"

These men were already believers when Jesus invited them to be His disciples. John 1:35-42 tells us that the fishermen had already believed in Christ. The parallels between the calling of these men in Mark 1 and the call of the tax collector in Mark 2 show that the latter was a believer as well. The tax collector, Levi, worked in Galilee. Mark tells us that Jesus preached throughout Galilee. Levi had heard the Lord speak and had come to faith.

It would be very strange for these men to leave everything and follow a Man they didn't know. They already knew that Jesus was the Messiah. They had eternal life. Now, the Lord is telling them to pay the price they need to pay in order to follow Him in discipleship. They consider that cost and are willing to pay it.

In the case of the fishermen, they left a lucrative business. It was successful enough that they need-

ed employees. Two of the fishermen worked with their father and were willing to leave these family ties behind. At least one of them was married.

Levi was also financially well off. His job as a tax collector would have made him one of the wealthiest men in the area. Like the fishermen, he left it all behind to become a follower of the One in whom he had believed.

All these men would have been considered fools by many of their neighbors. That thought must have entered their minds as well. None of them were theologians. Was it all a pipe dream that they could be in the inner circle of the King of Israel? What did fishermen know about running an eternal kingdom? Levi, as a tax collector, had been part of a profession that was despised by religious Jews. He had to be surprised that the Lord called him to be one of His close friends. It would be understandable if these men entertained the idea that they weren't up for the task.

They must surely have expected that they'd make a lot of mistakes. The Lord could pick others who would do a much better job. These men followed the Lord for approximately three years. If they had doubts about their chances of success, there were times during those three years when such doubts seemed legitimate.

The Gospel of Mark provides many examples of their failures.

## **LOTS OF STUMBLES**

When these men decided to follow the Lord in discipleship, it was obvious from the very beginning that they had much to learn. They were ignorant concerning Christ's mission. After Jesus performed a number of miracles in Capernaum, they wanted Him to keep doing what He was doing. The people loved all the healings the Lord performed, and the disciples wanted Him to stay there in their hometown. When Jesus withdrew from the town because He didn't want to be seen as simply a miracle worker, the disciples rebuked Him (Mark 1:37). The Lord reminded them that He did not come to do what they wanted Him to do. He came to teach the Nation of Israel that He was offering it the kingdom of God (1:38).



Later, the Lord will begin to speak in parables. At this point, the disciples have spent some time with Him, and He wonders why they aren't able to understand what He's teaching them (4:13).

Immediately after teaching these parables, which taught that He was the King, Christ told the disciples to get into a boat. While they were on the Sea of Galilee, a storm arose. The disciples were afraid that they would die. The Lord had to rebuke them for their fear and lack of faith. They didn't believe He could care for them. To make matters worse, after Jesus calmed the storm, they wondered who He was (4:39-41). They claimed not to know.

The next time the disciples got into a boat, they became afraid once again. This time it was because they saw the Lord walking on the water. By this point, the disciples had been exposed to even more of the Lord's teaching and had seen even more examples of His power. Once again, the Lord had to rebuke them and tell them not to be afraid. They are disciples of the King! Mark tells us what their problem was: The disciples had hard hearts (6:52). Their hearts were not willing to believe the things the Lord was telling them.

This is an ongoing problem with the disciples. Once again, after another of the Lord's teaching sessions, they don't understand what they've heard. Jesus points out that they're still not listening to what He is teaching. They refuse to let go of their man-made traditions. They're acting like unbelievers (7:17-18).

The third time they get into a boat, the Lord has to rebuke them yet again. He points out that their hearts are *still* hard. When it comes to listening to what He says and learning from Him, they're like deaf and blind people (8:17-18).

We immediately see an example of their blindness and deafness: When the Lord tells the disciples that He will die, they refuse to listen. Peter, speaking for the group, tells Christ that He doesn't know what He's talking about. Jesus says that Peter is doing Satan's work (8:31-33).

The disciples continually show their inability to listen and to understand what the Lord teaches them (9:32). They're afraid. They fight among

The good news is: All disciples blow it. That's part of being a disciple. The process requires failure.

themselves. They cause other believers to stumble. They even act like their enemies in the way they treat one another (9:34, 38; 10:32, 41-44).

At the end of the Lord's earthly ministry, the disciples, who have been trained for three years, fail miserably. When Christ is arrested, they all flee in fear. A little while later, Peter swears that he doesn't even know who Jesus is (14:50, 71).

Even after the Lord rises from the dead, the disciples continue to falter on the road of discipleship. Jesus had told them that He would rise, but they didn't believe it. Mary Magdalene tells them that He is alive, but they reject her testimony. Two disciples on the road to Emmaus also report that He's alive, and the disciples refuse to believe them as well. The Lord has to rebuke them again for their lack of faith and their hard hearts (16:11, 13-14).

These last verses occur in the last chapter of the book. They paint a discouraging picture of these guys. After receiving eternal life, these men, had left all and followed the Lord. They had been taught by Him for three years. But Mark has painted a pretty bleak picture of their success as disciples. If, when they first decided to follow the Lord, they had had second thoughts about how they would do, those thoughts seem to have been well founded.

Maybe we should feel the same way when we look at these men in the pages of the NT. If they blew it, so will we. If men like Peter and John made mistake after mistake, what chance do I have?

Thankfully, the Gospel of Mark does not end with a negative picture of these men.

## THE REST OF THE STORY

After the Book of Mark's brutal picture of the disciples' failures, the book's end is striking. The last verse says that the Lord was working through them and confirming what they preached through various miraculous signs (16:20).

This, of course, looks forward to the Book of Acts. In that book, these men are seen as bold, obedient leaders of the Church. They will form the very foundation of what the Lord will do in the world.

They become examples that all of us should seek to emulate.

The lesson is crystal clear. Mature and productive disciples do not start out that way! The very process of discipleship requires that we make mistakes. We will say dumb things. We will act like the world. I'm sure the original disciples looked back at what happened in the Gospel of Mark and wondered: What were we doing and thinking?! The answer to that question is obvious: Discipleship is a learning and growing process.

## CONCLUSION

Maybe some believing readers have thought about following the Lord in discipleship. They understand that it is a difficult road to travel and that the Lord will ask them to do things they will not want to do. Naturally, they wonder if they're up to the task. They realize there is a high probability that they'll make many mistakes.

Let me remove any doubt. You'll blow it! But the example of the original disciples provides us with a great deal of encouragement. Yes, they did and said a lot of dumb things. But the Lord, in His grace and patience, kept teaching them.

He will do the same for us. We'll do and say a lot of dumb things. But if we abide in Him and His Word, He will make us more and more like Him. He will use our many mistakes to accomplish that goal.

May we, as believers, walk on that road. We know we will stumble, but we're following the One who wants us to succeed. If we rely on Him, we will. ■



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.

More of

# WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT GES?



Ken mugging with some of Bobs racewalking medals at a staff lunch in January



GES intern, Micaela, manning the Georgia conference book table



David Janssen speaking at the Boise Regional conference while wearing Joseph's coat of many colors



Berean Memorial Church, March 10



Ken preparing to speak at the Georgia regional conference



# Short-Sighted Believers (2 Peter 1:9)?

By Zane Hodges

*For he who lacks these things is short-sighted, even to blindness,  
and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.*

The writer of this article has been nearsighted since grade school. My 7th-grade teacher noticed me squinting as I tried to read the blackboard. She shared this observation with my parents, who saw to it that I got a pair of glasses. I have worn glasses ever since, although their style has improved over the ugly wire-rimmed spectacles, which were my first pair. (Not my parents' fault—that's what they wore those days!)

But some believers need a pair of "spiritual spectacles" because, according to Peter, they, too, are shortsighted. After opening his second epistle with a rich statement about God's provision for godly living (2 Pet 1:3-4), Peter exhorts his readers to develop strong Christian character (vv 5-7). He promises that such character development will produce fruitfulness (v 8). But then he adds a warning (v 9).

According to Peter, the character-deficient Christian is "shortsighted." What does Peter have in mind? Since the epistle as a whole lays heavy stress on the reality and certainty of the Lord's coming (see 1:11, 16, 19, and 3:4-14), the Apostle is probably thinking of believers who no longer look ahead to the Rapture. Instead, their vision is severely limited to the here and now.

People who live simply for the present time, or for the present world, are tragically "shortsighted.

But that is not all. A Christian who lacks the qualities mentioned in vv 5-7 is also "blind." Commentators have wrestled needlessly with the supposed tension between calling a person both shortsighted and blind. Even the NKJV attempts to harmonize with the translation, "shortsighted,

even to blindness." But the Greek text does not say this.

In fact, the word order of the original text calls for a translation like this:

For he who lacks these things is blind,  
shortsighted, and has forgotten...

Thus the term *blind* is actually the first-mentioned trait of the character-poor believer, while *shortsighted* is the second.

We may say, therefore, that a person without the vital qualities of vv 5-7 suffers from *spiritual blindness* since he does not see reality, life, or Christian experience as God sees them. He is *blind* to the spiritual truths which he needs to grasp in order to function properly in this present world. Like a blind man, lacking either cane or guide-dog, he trips and stumbles constantly (see v 10!).

But a person who is blind to the spiritual realities of life from God's viewpoint is also *shortsighted* about the future. He is not challenged by the Second Advent to be a better man than he is (see 3:11-14). There is no need to twist these concepts into a formal and physiological harmony. Metaphors need not be physically compatible to be clear and comprehensible. On a spiritual level, a person can be both blind and shortsighted.

And he can also be *forgetful*. So Peter charges that the Christian who lacks the proper character "has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins."

But note! This individual *is* a Christian! He has been “cleansed from his old sins.” This statement by the Apostle makes it unmistakable that he can conceive of a “cleansed” believer as lacking the qualities found in vv 5-7. He deplores the spiritual condition of such a person, but he in no way raises questions about their salvation.

Peter was certainly a spiritual realist even if many modern theologians are not. He does not take it for granted that spiritual growth will occur automatically or inevitably. Indeed, the character development he thinks of cannot occur apart from the believer “giving all diligence” toward that end (v 5). This does not mean, of course, that the believer does this all on his own. God supplies the basic resources and provides help along the way. But Christian growth will not occur apart from our diligent participation.

In what sense does the non-growing Christian “forget” his past cleansing? Both in Greek and English, the word *forget* can also mean “to lack concern for” or “to neglect.” New Testament examples of this significance, with a Greek verb meaning “to forget,” are Phil 3:13 and Heb 6:10; 13:2, 16. The expression used here by Peter (literally, “receiving forgetfulness”) no doubt contains a similar connotation. The blind and shortsighted believer disregards and neglects his past experience of God’s forgiveness.

Even when we remember that we are forgiven people, we have “forgotten” what that means if our lives do not reflect true growth in grace (see 2 Pet 3:17-18).

In summary, then, Peter declares that character-deficient Christians are “blind” at the *present* moment, “shortsighted” about the *future*, and “forgetful” of God’s grace in the *past*.

Shortsightedness, therefore, in a believer, is a symptom of something even more serious: lack of continuing growth in grace. If I am no longer excited by the prospect of the Lord’s return, there will be a flatness to my Christian experience, followed by outright spiritual deterioration (see Matt 24:48-49).

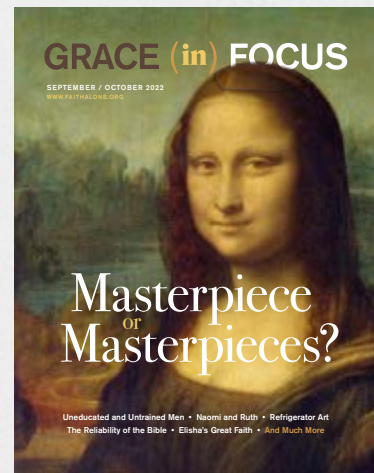
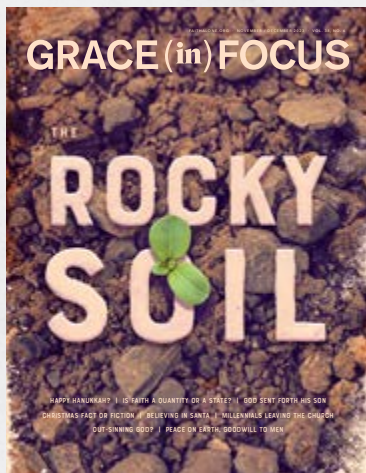
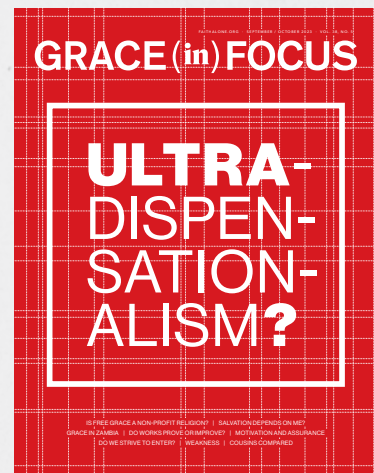
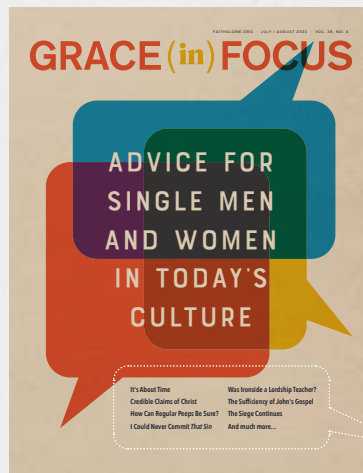
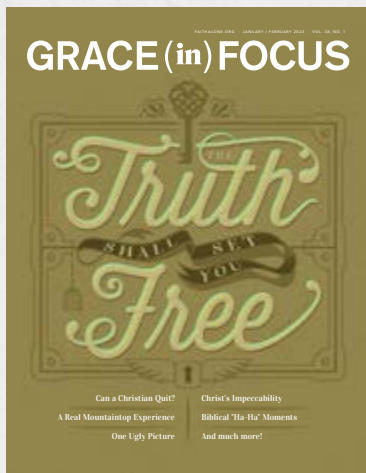
May the Lord keep us “longsighted” for His coming again! ■



Zane Hodges taught New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary for 27 years, authored over a dozen books, and was passionate about the grace of God.

1 This article was published in the May 1992 issue of *Grace in Focus* and is available online at [faithalone.org](http://faithalone.org).

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Mission Moment

# Uganda

**Our Team**



This June, GES is partnering with the Ritchie family, on a mission's trip to Uganda. We will be working at a special needs orphanage dedicated to caring for abandoned children with disabilities. Kathryn Wright will be leading a two-week training course for the staff of the orphanage, highlighting the saving message and the doctrine of rewards. Prayers are appreciated as we strive to share the message of grace around the world.

Left to right: Kaela Ritchie, Kathryn Wright, Jennifer and Carissa Ritchie