

GRACE IN FOCUS

ARE YOU

→ **A SAINT**



OR

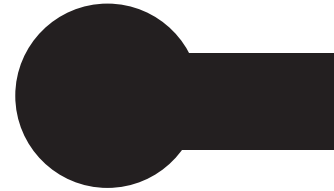
AN A'INT ←

**The Reluctant
Prophet, the Sailors,
and the Great Fish**

**Morbid
Ministry**

**The Importance
of the Judgment
Seat of Christ**

In This Issue



4 The Reluctant Prophet, the Sailors, and the Great Fish

Bob Wilkin

God's servants are flawed. Jonah proves that God can use reluctant believers to accomplish His purposes. This article contains excerpts from the upcoming *Grace Old Testament Commentary, Vol. 2, The Prophets*, which we aim to release at the May 2027 annual conference.

7 Morbid Ministry

Kathryn Wright

The Cadaver Synod of AD 897 was so bizarre that it is hard to believe it really happened. But it did. Human pride and a desperate desire for control are timeless and global. Even Christianity has not been free of the disastrous consequences of selfish ambition.

12 The Logical Fallacy of the Calvinistic Interpretation of 1 John 2:29

Dave Wyant

People are born again, regenerated, by believing in Jesus Christ for everlasting life. While "everyone who is righteous is born of Him" is true, the corollary is not. It is a logical fallacy to say that everyone who is born of God is living righteously. Regeneration is not contingent on good behavior or righteous living. It is logically inconsistent to use verses about living righteously to retroactively impose conditions on eternal salvation.

16 The Importance of the Judgment Seat of Christ

John Claeys

It is a common misunderstanding that everyone will be the same in eternity. All throughout the NT, whether Jesus' words or the Apostles' writings, believers are taught about rewards that will last forever, and a coming judgment exclusively for believers called *the Judgment Seat of Christ*.

19 Looking Through Generational Eyes

Ken Yates

When the people of Israel returned from the Babylonian exile, there were two attitudes toward the rebuilding of the temple: youthful optimism and elderly pessimism. What can believers today learn from these generational outlooks?

22 GES Bible Studies

We are publishing even more Bible studies to accompany our Bible commentaries. This is about more than just books, it's about helping churches and study groups grow together in God's Word.

24 Are You a Saint or an Ain't?

Art Farstad

Are saints uniquely holy people with miraculous abilities? Does a church have the authority to determine sainthood in hindsight? No. All believers are saints, whether we live set-apart lives or not. Believers should live like who we are, saints.

33 The Forever Gift

Zane C. Hodges

This excerpt from *Absolutely Free* presents an unshakeable interpretation of the woman at the well. Living water that, when drunk once, satisfies thirst for all time is a miracle. Water that must be drunk continually is just regular water. Unfortunately, many Christian traditions today fail to teach that everlasting life is the forever gift.

36 Opening the Gospel of John

Andrew P. Bacon

Just like great literature, the Gospel of John utilizes a captivating introduction to draw the reader in. No writing in history has a more effective prologue than the Gospel of John, the only evangelistic book in the Bible.

Editor: Robert N. Wilkin

Design: Debbie Payne

Original Illustrations by Roxann Vidrine (pages 4-6)

Assistant Editor: Sam Marr

Cover Design: Anto Marr

Volume 41, Number 3

© 2026 by Grace Evangelical Society

Address changes? Comments? Prayer requests? Testimonies?

Send them to ges@faithalone.org or write to

Grace in Focus, P.O. Box 1308, Denton, TX 76202.

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



*A higher standard.
A higher purpose.*

38 What's Wrong with Calvinism? Part 2: Calvinism's *L* and *I* are LIabilities

Bob Wilkin

The Calvinist doctrines of Limited Atonement and Irresistible Grace are unbiblical and are at odds with assurance. They exemplify why Calvinism is a "gospel of doubt."

42 Is There a Difference Between Trust and Belief?

Hayden Bray

The words *trust* and *believe* have similar, but not identical, meanings. When we share the promise of everlasting life with people, it is critically important that we use the most accurate words possible. This is especially true when we explain the condition for receiving everlasting life.

45 Do You Give Even When You Have Needs Yourself?

Ken Yates

The believers in Macedonia, who provided assistance for Paul's ministry, set an excellent example for believers in Corinth in the first century and for believers today. Financially supporting Biblically sound local churches and ministries is a way to participate in the good they do. Eternal rewards await.

Letter from the Editor


I started Grace Evangelical Society in June of 1986. This issue of the magazine represents the completion of our fortieth year of ministry.



There have been many milestones:

- Moving from a two-page newsletter to a four-page newsletter.
- Starting our semi-annual journal (1988).
- Starting our annual national conference in 1995.
- Starting Grace Evangelical School of Theology (GESOT) in 1998.
- Publishing *Confident in Christ* in 1999.
- Moving from a 4-page newsletter to a 16, then 32, then 48-page magazine.
- Publishing our commentary on the New Testament in 2010.
- Starting a regular blog and radio broadcasts.
- Translating our blogs into multiple languages.
- Starting regular YouTube video postings, with subscriptions going from 2,000 to our current 16,800.
- Publishing many books, NT commentaries, and Bible study booklets.
- Initiating regular short-term overseas mission trips.
- Restarting our online school with the new name GET Seminary.
- Lord willing, publishing volume 1, *The Torah*, of our Old Testament commentary by May 18 for our national conference. It has been at the printer since mid-March.

I pinch myself all the time. I never expected to be a part of something like GES. My thanks to all of you for your prayers and gifts. Together, we are having an impact for the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Keep grace in focus! 

Robert N. Wilkin

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

The Reluctant Prophet, the Sailors, and the **Great Fish**

By Bob Wilkin



The story of Jonah and the whale is a favorite with children. (It should be noted that the text of Jonah does not say he was swallowed by a whale; *a great fish* is the term used.)

The story of Jonah and the great fish has parallels to the story of Jesus sleeping in the boat while the disciples floundered on a tempestuous sea (cf. Mark 6).

We can learn much from this brief account in Jonah, chapter 1.

The following is drawn from my commentary on Jonah that will be part of

volume 2 of our *Grace Old Testament Commentary: the Prophets*.

**Salvation is of
the Lord** refers to
deliverance from
temporal distress, in
this case, the storm
and the sea.

1:4-9. God is sovereign. He controls everything, including the weather. Even the sea obeys Him. He caused a great storm, which He knew would ultimately lead to Jonah obeying his commission. He used storms in the ministry of Jesus to teach the disciples vital lessons as well (cf. Matt 8:23-27; 14:22-33).

Even seasoned sailors were afraid. They began lightening the ship by

Jonah's three days in the belly of the great fish is a type of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The Lord Jesus rose on the third day.

throwing cargo overboard. But Jonah...was fast asleep, as Jesus was during a similar storm (Matt 8:24).

The captain used the same language that God had used: Arise (cf. v 2). A polytheist, he wanted Jonah to pray to his god for deliverance so that they might not perish (i.e., die).

The sailors believed that this calamity had come upon them because of something someone on board ship had done. These unbelievers responded in a way that many believers today do not. When faced with calamity, we should at least consider that it might be because we are out of fellowship with God (Jas 5:19-20).

The casting of lots was common then and it was still being used in the first century when the apostles cast lots to see whether Matthias or Barsabas was God's choice (Acts 1:23-26). That it fell on Jonah was no coincidence. God controlled this as well.

They concluded that Jonah had done something wrong and so they inquire about him. He admits to being a Hebrew who fears God, the Creator. His claim to fear God is contradicted by his rebellion to this point. However, Jonah surely feared God greatly at that time. He realized he was now in God's hands.

1:10-16. Jonah's words served to heighten the fear of the sailors. They now believed that Jonah's God caused this great tempest.

Possibly they had become monotheists and had come to believe that the God of the Hebrews is the Creator and the Sovereign.

When he told them to throw him overboard to make the tempest cease, they did not immediately comply. These were honorable men who did not want this man's death on their hands. So, they rowed as hard as they could, but to no avail (cf. Matt 8:25).

Giving up any hope of saving themselves, they determined to do what Jonah had told them to do. But first they prayed to the LORD!

They ask Him not to hold them accountable for Jonah's seemingly certain death for they were doing what He wanted.

When they threw Jonah into the sea, it ceased from its raging. The result was that these men feared the LORD exceedingly and they offered Him sacrifices and made vows to Him as well.

Was this pagan superstition or did they come to faith in the God of Israel? The latter was surely the case. However, the bigger question was whether they believed in the coming Messiah for everlasting life. Had Jonah told them about the Messiah? It seems likely that he had and that these men were born again on this occasion. But the text leaves this uncertainty.

1:17. In the Hebrew text, this is the first verse of chapter 2. The expression **three days and three nights** did not mean three



full days (seventy-two hours). Compare Esther 4:16 and 5:1. See also Matt 12:40 where the Lord links His resurrection on the third day with Jonah's being "three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish."

2:1. Jonah now did what he should have done when he first received his commission to go to Nineveh: he prayed.

2:2-9. Jonah's prayer is a psalm of thanks. In fact, most of what he prays can be found in various psalms.

Here was a man so acquainted with God's Word that his prayer was filled with Biblical language. He was praying from **the belly of Sheol** (v 2) in the sense that he was near death.

He thanks God for saving him from a watery grave (vv 3-6). While he was not yet on dry land, he was alive and he knew he would soon be back on land.

This psalm is both a prayer of thanks for the deliverance from the tempest and a thanksgiving for his coming deliverance from the belly of the fish. **Salvation is of the Lord** (cf. 2 Chron 20:17; Ps 18:2; 68:20; Jer 3:23; Lam 3:26; Matt 8:25) refers to deliverance from temporal distress, in this case, the storm and the sea.

The Bible presents God's servants with all their flaws. David, though a man after God's own heart, committed adultery and murder and had his flaws as a father. Abraham was God's friend, yet he passed his wife off as his sister on two different occasions. Jonah was used by God to save a million or so Ninevites from premature death, but because he found the Ninevites and their culture repugnant, he initially disobeyed God's commission to go to them.

There were many ways God could have gotten Jonah to obey Him. The one He chose was



remarkable and very memorable for both Israel and the Church. In addition to getting Jonah back on track, pagan sailors were confronted with the God of Israel and were possibly born again through the ministry of the reluctant prophet.

Jonah's three days in the belly of the great fish is a type of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The Lord Jesus rose on the third day.

Sadly, many pastors and Bible scholars now teach that the story of Jonah is a parable. In their minds, there was no great fish. Jonah was not literally swallowed and delivered onto land three days later. It's just a children's story, like

Hansel and Gretel or Cinderella.

Jonah is not a fairy tale. The account of Jonah and the great fish really happened. It is just as certain as the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. Our God is an awesome God who does great miracles. If your pastor believes that Jonah is a parable, you might want to find a new church. ■



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

Morbid Ministry

By Kathryn Wright

THE POPE AND THE CADAVER

A lesser-known episode in church history, the Cadaver Synod, occurred in AD 897 when Pope Formosus was put on trial. During his papacy, Italy experienced significant political unrest. Two influential factions of nobility competed for the pope's endorsement of their preferred candidate to become king. One faction supported an Italian ruler, while the other favored a German candidate.

At that time, the Catholic Church held the power to determine who would rule. The pope had the authority to legitimize a king, even one from outside Rome. Pope Formosus aligned himself with the German faction. Notably, the factions were not split on theological grounds, but on political and self-serving ones.

Following Formosus's death, his successor, Pope Stephen VI, who was aligned with the rival faction, sought to eliminate Formosus's legacy. He ordered that Formosus be put on trial, that his papal acts be declared null and void, and that his authority be revoked. However, there was a little problem: Formosus was already dead.

In a truly disturbing display of political vengeance, Stephen VI had Formosus's corpse exhumed, dressed in his papal vestments, and

placed on public trial at the Archbasilica of St. John Lateran in Rome. Accounts of the trial portray Stephen screaming accusations at the corpse. A deacon was assigned as Formosus's ventriloquist spokesman, responding to Stephen's accusations as though he were Formosus himself.

Predictably, the corpse was found guilty. It was stripped of its vestments, three fingers were removed from the right hand (previously used for blessings), and the body was first buried in a cemetery for foreigners, then exhumed again and thrown in the Tiber River. Public backlash was swift, leading to widespread outrage in Rome. Ultimately, Stephen VI was imprisoned and later strangled to death.

Much could be said about this surreal and disturbing story. Narrowly speaking, it is a grim example of the corruption in the Catholic Church. While it is a favorite tactic of modern proponents of Catholicism to legitimize the Catholic Church due to its rich history, one does not have to dig too deeply before finding

the theological rot within its archives. More broadly, however, the incident illustrates mankind's proclivity to justify ambition and power through religious office—a phenomenon not unique to the Catholic Church. At no point does it appear that the church leaders sought to determine the right course of action according to the Word of God.

Believers who
sacrificially
follow the Lord's
example will
reap an
abundant life
now and
forever.

The central questions did not concern righteousness or God's will. Instead, they involved control over Rome and the consolidation of power. Religious leaders prioritized their own interests and political allegiances over service to the Lord. The outcome was a judicial proceeding lacking legitimacy, centered on a corpse. The papacy became a manifestation of human ambition rather than ministry.

THE HIGH PRIEST AND THE DEATH SENTENCE IN JOHN 11

This episode recalls the context of John 11. As in the 897AD Cadaver Synod, Israel was also experiencing political instability. Although Rome maintained the ultimate authority, Jewish religious leaders retained some influence in Jerusalem. Political unrest was pervasive, and these leaders recognized that their positions were threatened by the possibility of rebellion against Roman rule. Against this backdrop, Jesus performed miracles, attracting considerable attention. If the populace acknowledged Him as King, it could incite rebellion, a scenario the Sanhedrin sought to prevent. Jesus was viewed as a liability, and something had to be done. This concern is revealed in John 11:48-50. Though they did not yet bring Jesus in for trial, the religious leaders discussed what to do about Him:

48 "If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, **and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.**"

49 And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all,

50 nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and **not that the whole nation should perish**" (emphasis added).

The Lord's later arrest and trial were political decisions intended to preserve positions of power. Of course, the best thing that could have happened would have been that everyone believed in Him. Instead, this was seen as a problem. As high

It was
"expedient" that
they
allow one
innocent man
to die rather
than risk
Roman
intervention.

priest, Caiaphas evaluated the situation and concluded that it was "expedient" that they allow one innocent man to die rather than risk Roman intervention. Though this showed some concern for the nation on the part of the leadership, the text reveals that their motives were equally fixated upon their "place" or positions. Caiaphas's concern was not truth or justice, but political stability. It was better to sacrifice Jesus (whom, because of their hardness of heart, they did not believe to be the Christ) in order to preserve the system.

Nearly nine centuries later, Pope Stephen VI took a similar approach. By exhuming and condemning the corpse of Pope Formosus, Stephen aimed to eliminate a rival and consolidate his own faction's power. Both episodes serve as cautionary examples: When spiritual authority is driven by ambition and self-interest, even the most egregious actions can be rationalized under the guise of serving "the greater good." Although the Cadaver Synod was deeply troubling, it pales in comparison to the moral corruption that culminated in the mock trials and execution of Christ.



Le Pape Formose et Etienne VI (The Cadaver Synod)
by Jean-Paul Laurens 1870

THE STEWARD AND THE TOMB IN ISAIAH 22

In Isaiah 22, the prophet provided another example of what happens when leadership operates with worldly ambition. In the midst of a series of burdens pronounced against nations and cities, Isaiah paused to focus on two individual leaders. Collectively, these figures represented a microcosm of covenantal blessing and cursing, revealing the Lord’s response to both corrupt and faithful leadership within Israel.

The initial oracle addressed Shebna (Isa 22:15-19), the steward of the royal household, a position second only to the king. Like the pope and the high priest, Shebna misused his authority for personal aggrandizement rather than serving those under his care. He leveraged his position to construct an elaborate sepulcher, or tomb, *on high*.

In essence, Shebna prioritized building a tomb for himself over serving the living.

In response to Shebna’s arrogance and self-serving behavior, the Lord declared that He would violently remove the steward—tossing him away like a ball—and cast him into a distant land (vv 17-18). The imagery is intentionally graphic, emphasizing divine disgust toward self-exalting rulers (cf. Matt 23:12; 24:48-51). Instead of securing honor, Shebna would become a shame to his master’s house (Isa 22:18) and would be pulled down from his position of authority (v 19). As with both Pope Stephen VI, who later died in prison, and the religious leadership of Israel in AD 70, power grasped becomes power lost.

In contrast, the Lord elevated Eliakim, explicitly referring to him as “My servant” (v 20). Unlike Shebna, Eliakim exemplified humility and servanthood. Because he did not pursue personal

interests, he was entrusted with greater responsibility. Reflecting later New Testament teachings (Mark 10:42-45; Phil 2:5-11), Isaiah characterized godly leadership as being rooted in servanthood rather than ambition. Eliakim was therefore rewarded with the robe of Shebna, and the key to the house of David (Isa 22:22; Rev 3:7).

At no point
does it appear
that the church
leaders sought
to determine
the right course
of action
according to
the Word of
God.

While Shebna was “the shame of [his] master’s house” (v 18), Eliakim became “a glory to his father’s house” (v 23). Faithful stewardship thus confers honor, not only upon the servant, but upon those he represents, whereas greed and ambition result in shame. Although Shebna did not exhume corpses, his legacy is defined by a monument to death. Therefore, whether through a cadaver or a tomb, those who base their lives on worldly definitions of success ultimately create ministries characterized by the macabre.

FROM SERVICE TO SEPULCHER

Like Shebna and Eliakim, believers in the church age may bring either glory or shame to the Lord through their service (1 Cor 3:12-15; 2 Cor 5:10). An individual’s life or ministry divorced from servanthood will inevitably become lifeless. As the Lord warned His disciples, those who wish to gain the world will lose their lives (Mark 8:36-37).

Of course, this does not mean the believer will be sentenced to the lake of fire. No believer will (John 5:24; Rev 20:15). Rather, believers who seek the things of the world will lose all they build (Luke 12:16-21), while those who sacrificially follow the Lord’s example will reap an abundant life now and forever. Caiaphas, Shebna, and Pope Stephen stand as sober reminders that when leadership becomes about power, it does not merely fail; it becomes a monument to death.

Whether that be manifested in the trial of a cadaver, the construction of a sepulcher, or the execution of the Son of God, the result is the same. Ministers can become so transfixed by the things of this world that their legacies will be the antithesis of the desires of God and of the abundant life He offers those who serve Him. When spiritual leaders turn toward worldly success, it is sure to follow that their work will become associated with the morbid—perhaps even a cadaver. ■



Kathryn Wright and her husband, Dewey, live in Columbia, SC. She is the GES missions coordinator, women's conference speaker, writer, and Zoom teacher.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT GES?



Jeff Spencer sent these great hats to all the GES staff. Also, notice Bob's 2026 Marathon shirt



Some of the Berean Memorial congregation after Bob spoke in March



These are the speakers at the regional in Tallahassee. Starting the third from the left: Kathryn Wright, Loren Faul, Marino Martinez Sr., Ken Yates, Ken White, Marino Martinez Jr.



The crowd at the Tallahassee regional taking part in singing prior to the conference

The Logical Fallacy of the Calvinistic Interpretation of 1 John 2:29

By Dave Wyant

Reformed Theology uses the acronym TULIP to teach its beliefs regarding salvation. The *P* in this acronym represents the Calvinist doctrine known as *the Perseverance of the Saints*. John MacArthur summarized the doctrine of perseverance succinctly when he said, “The mark of true justification is perseverance in righteousness to the very end.”ⁱ Among other passages, Calvinists like MacArthur use 1 John 2:29 as a proof text:

The regenerated believer necessarily makes a practice of righteousness, as the apostle John says, “Everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him” (1 John 2:29).ⁱⁱ

This article evaluates the logical validity of the Calvinistic interpretation of

When a person believes in Jesus for eternal life, he is eternally secure.



1 John 2:29 as support for the Reformed doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints.

One of my favorite books is *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, by C. S. Lewis. Four young siblings are sent to the English countryside to live with an eccentric old professor. While exploring his museum-like mansion, Lucy, the youngest of the four, discovers the enchanted land of Narnia behind a wardrobe door. When she tells her older siblings about her adventures in Narnia, they conclude that she is losing her grip on reality. The two oldest siblings, Peter and Susan, decide to inform the wise professor of the situation. However, their genuine concern for their sister is met with a startling response:



“Logic!” said the Professor half to himself. “Why don’t they teach logic at these schools? There are only three possibilities. Either your sister is telling lies, or she is mad, or she is telling the truth. You know she doesn’t tell lies and it is obvious that she is not mad. For the moment then and unless any further evidence turns up, we must assume that she is telling the truth.”ⁱⁱⁱ

After firmly rebutting the children’s objections, the professor grouses, “I wonder what they do teach them at these schools.”^{iv} It’s one of my favorite scenes in the book. Logic is an important aspect of interpretation, whether it’s interpreting a life situation or a written text.

Is John MacArthur’s interpretation of 1 John 2:29 correct? The Apostle John wrote, “everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him” (1 John 2:29). MacArthur concluded that this

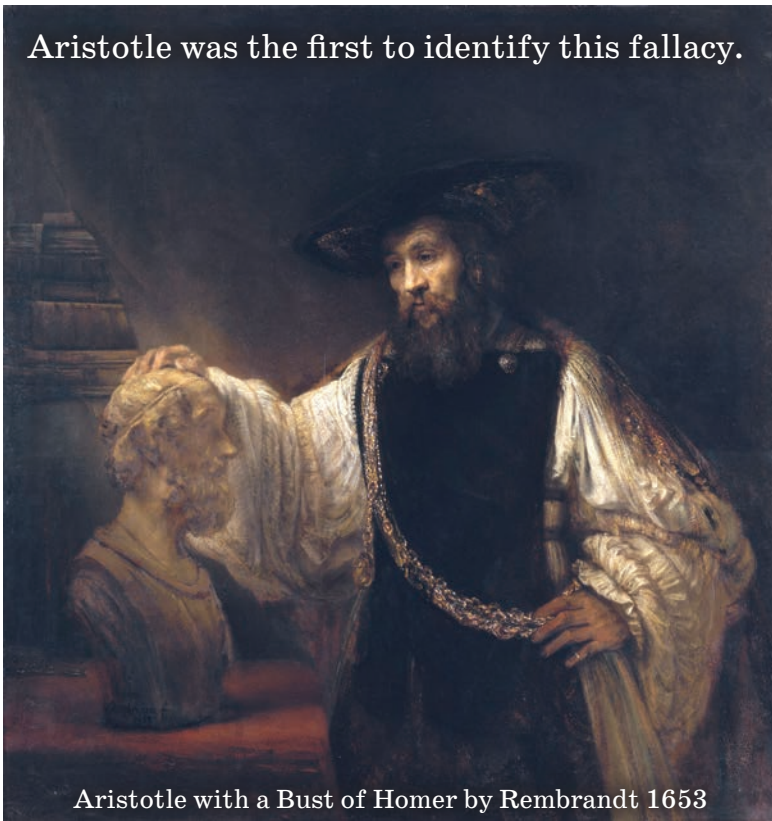
verse teaches the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints: “Those truly born again...will display characteristics of God’s righteousness.”^v We know that what the Apostle John wrote is the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God. However, is MacArthur saying the same thing John the Apostle said? Do both statements mean the same thing? Does MacArthur’s conclusion follow logically from the Apostle John’s statement?

The only necessary condition for regeneration is faith in Christ alone apart from good works.

To answer these questions, it is necessary to compare the two statements, paying careful attention to the order of their clauses. There is an important difference between them. After reversing the order of the clauses in the apostle’s statement, MacArthur then deduced the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints—that is, that genuine believers will be righteous in their practice to the end of their lives. However, when John MacArthur reversed the order of the clauses in the statement made by John the Apostle, he committed the logical fallacy known as *affirmatio consequentis*, or affirming the consequent.

Affirming the consequent is a deductive fallacy in which one concludes that the antecedent of a conditional statement is true solely because its consequent is true. This is its textbook definition: “Affirming the consequent is a formal fallacy that occurs when one argues from the truth of the consequent of a conditional statement to the

Aristotle was the first to identify this fallacy.



Aristotle with a Bust of Homer by Rembrandt 1653

The key to identifying this as a logical fallacy is to ask whether other explanations are possible.

truth of its antecedent.”^{vi} Here is what this logical fallacy looks like in the form of a syllogism:

Major Premise: P, then Q
Minor Premise: Q
Conclusion: Therefore, P

The consequent is affirmed in the minor premise. The conclusion is false: “This argument is invalid because the truth of Q does not guarantee the truth of P.”^{vii} In other words, the logic doesn’t necessarily flow in the opposite direction.

The classic example that illustrates the logical fallacy of affirming the consequent is: “If it is raining, then the grass is wet. The grass is wet. Therefore, it is raining.” The key to identifying this as a logical fallacy is to ask whether other explanations are possible. There may have been a heavy dew the night before. Someone may have watered the lawn. This argument is logically invalid because it commits the logical fallacy of affirming the consequent. MacArthur’s argument for his interpretation of 1 John 2:29 is invalid for the same reason.

John the Apostle said, “Everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.” John MacArthur affirmed the consequent when he reversed the logic, “Those truly born again...will display characteristics of God’s righteousness.”^{viii} The logic doesn’t flow in the opposite direction. Here is MacArthur’s argument in the form of a syllogism:

Major Premise: Those who persevere in practicing righteousness are born again
Minor Premise: I think I will persevere in practicing righteousness
Conclusion: Therefore, I think I’m born again

In this argument, the major premise is the Calvinistic interpretation of 1 John 2:29.^{ix} The minor premise is the Calvinist’s hope that he will persevere. The conclusion of this argument is the Calvinistic doctrine of assurance based on the Perseverance of the Saints. By saying, “Those truly born again...will display characteristics of God’s righteousness,”^x By reversing the order of what John the Apostle said in 1 John 2:29, John MacArthur makes assurance impossible.

However, is MacArthur saying the same thing John the Apostle said? Do both statements mean the same thing? Does MacArthur's conclusion follow logically from the Apostle John's statement?

The two statements do not mean the same thing. MacArthur's flawed reasoning produces an incorrect interpretation of 1 John 2:29.

This flawed reasoning has devastating repercussions. This invalid form of reasoning unwittingly adds works to faith as a condition for regeneration.

The only necessary condition for regeneration is faith in Christ alone apart from good works (John 3:16; Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8-9). When a person believes in Jesus for eternal life, he is eternally secure (John 5:24; 10:25-30). It is possible and desirable for regenerated people to practice righteousness. But whether they do or not has no bearing on the fact that they are, in fact, regenerate. Righteous living is neither the cause nor the proof of regeneration. Many unregenerate people do good works for various reasons. Regenerate people can and do fail, sometimes terribly. The Bible is full of tragic examples of believers who did not finish well. King Solomon died an idolater (1 Kings 11:1-10). Nadab and Abihu were Jewish priests who ate the covenant meal with Moses at the top of Mt. Sinai in God's presence (Exod 24:9-11). However, they did not persevere in righteousness and met a terrible end (Lev 10:1-3).

The reality that someone has been born again does not guarantee that he will practice righteousness. "To infer the antecedent [practicing righteousness] from the consequent [regeneration] of a conditional is invalid, since the consequent may be true for reasons other than the antecedent."^{xi} A person is born again because he believes in Jesus for eternal life, not because they practice righteousness. The logic does not

flow in the opposite direction. The next time you hear someone say that a genuine believer must persevere in righteousness and cannot fall away, you can explain that this faulty doctrine is based on faulty logic. "I wonder what they *do* teach them at these schools." ■



David Wyant is the pastor of Bethel Church of the Brethren in New Middletown, OH, an adjunct professor at SES and GES Seminary, and a part-time hospital chaplain. He has a PhD in Biblical Studies from Baptist Bible Seminary and an MDiv from Moody Theological Seminary. He lives with his wife, Lynn, and their cat, Pixi, in Youngstown, OH.

ⁱ John MacArthur, Jr., *Saved without a Doubt*, MacArthur Study Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 149.

ⁱⁱ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 588.

ⁱⁱⁱ C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (New York: Collier Books, 1970), 45.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 1957.

^{vi} Patrick J. Hurley, *A Concise Introduction to Logic*, 11th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012), 362-63.


^{vii} Irving M. Copi and Carl Cohen, *Introduction to Logic*, 13th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2009), 246-47.

^{viii} MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 1957.

^{ix} Calvinists wrongly claim that since the Greek verb *poieō* is in the present tense, 1 John 2:29 should be translated, "everyone who continues to practice righteousness." They claim that this incorrect translation proves the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints.

^x MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 1957.

^{xi} Graham Priest, *Logic: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).



The Importance of the Judgment Seat of Christⁱ

By John Claeys

A large number—perhaps a majority—of Christians believe that everyone will be the same in Christ’s kingdom.

Such thinking is wrong! Earl Radmacher related this anecdote:

A few years ago, I heard a seminary graduate with a doctorate state in a Sunday school class that when we get to heaven, we will all be equal there. I know of nothing further removed from the truth. There will be no equality in heaven. If there were, then the whole doctrine of rewards would mean absolutely nothing, and it would be utterly stupid for Paul to say, “I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others I myself should become disqualified” (1 Cor 9:27).ⁱⁱ

Dr. Radmacher was correct. In the kingdom of God, we will not all be equal.ⁱⁱⁱ After all, would it

Suffice it to say that if you prepare well for this future judgment, you will be very glad you did!

seem fair and just to you if a believer who rarely goes to church and does not serve the Lord were to have the same eternal experience as the Apostle Paul, who suffered beating, stoning, imprisonment, shipwreck, deprivation, numerous dangerous situations (see 2 Cor 11:24-28), and eventual martyrdom because he served the Lord Jesus Christ? I think not.

At one time, early in my Christian life, I would have agreed with the Sunday school teacher with a doctorate. In fact, shortly after I believed in Jesus for everlasting life, a coed I knew well told me she had recently heard that Christians will one day be judged based on how faithfully they followed Jesus. I quickly retorted, “Of course, that isn’t true!”

One’s eternal
experience will
depend on how one
has lived with regard
to God’s Word.

How wrong I was! The more I studied the Bible, the more I saw the truth that believers are accountable. In fact, I wrote my master’s thesis at Dallas Seminary on “The Judgment Seat of Christ as a Motivation for Christian Living.” Now, forty years later, I can say that the concept of the Judgment Seat of Christ (the Bema) can be found on nearly every page of the Bible.^{iv}

The Judgment Seat of Christ is coming, and we *must* prepare for it! Unfortunately, not every believer will heed this critical message. Those who do not will one day deeply regret it— and that is a great understatement. After all, one’s experience

for all eternity will be announced at the Bema.

Randy Alcorn thinks of life “in terms of a dot and a line, signifying two phases. Our present life on earth is the dot. It begins. It ends. It is brief. However, from the dot, a line extends forever.”^v Psalm 39 reveals the brevity of life (as symbolized by Alcorn’s dot):



LORD, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am. Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, and my age is as nothing before You; certainly every man at his best state is but vapor (verses 4-5).

Alcorn's line represents a believer's experience in God's everlasting kingdom. What one does in the dot will have eternal results. The Judgment Seat of Christ will reveal the depth and value of a believer's everlasting experience, based on what happens in the dot.

Everyone who has believed Jesus Christ for everlasting life will be in God's kingdom. But each person's experience in His kingdom will depend on how faithful he has been with what God has given him. Or, to put it another way, one's eternal experience will depend on how one has lived with regard to God's Word.

God calls each of His children to read, study, and live by His Word. If you do and are open to what God teaches, you will see that Scripture repeatedly teaches about the Judgment Seat of Christ and the importance of preparing for it.

There will be no excuse on that day. A believer cannot say, "Well, I didn't know about the Judgment Seat," or "I didn't know I needed to prepare for it." The Lord has clearly revealed it in His Word. In fact, plain common sense would say that since God has granted everlasting life as a gift—a gift that cost Jesus everything so that it can be given free of charge to the one who receives it—there must be a responsibility to serve the One who made this payment on our behalf. This responsibility has nothing to do with entering the kingdom of God; kingdom entrance is guaranteed the moment one believes in Jesus for everlasting life. However, as children of God, we should seek to please our Father and know that obedience brings blessing, while disobedience brings consequences.

The more I studied
the Bible, the more
I saw the truth
that believers are
accountable.

How important is the Judgment Seat of Christ? It will reveal your everlasting experience. If you have prepared well for it, you will be immensely rewarded—forever—by the One who gave Himself for us. This reward will affect every aspect of your eternal experience. Suffice it to say that if you prepare well for this future judgment, you will be very glad you did!

To prepare for that assessment, it is critically important to understand it.

God wants to open your eyes to the truth and importance of this subject. It can motivate you to work toward having a greater experience in the kingdom. Learning about the Judgment Seat

of Christ should move you to greater service for Him. ■



John Claey's holds degrees from the University of Northern Iowa (BA in English) and Dallas Theological Seminary (ThM in New Testament Greek) and has pursued doctoral work at Phoenix Seminary. He is also the author of *The Impending Apocalypse, A New World Coming*, and *Unveiling Eternity*, a three-part series on eschatology. He and his wife, Connie, have been married 40 years and have two sons.

¹ Editor's note: This article is drawn from the "Introduction" of the new book, *The Judgment Seat of Christ*, by John Claey's. It should be available at the GES annual conference, May 18-21, 2026.

² "Believers and the Bema," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 8, no. 14 (Spring 1995): 35.

³ I use *kingdom of God* rather than *heaven* here because our eternal home will not be heaven; it will be on earth. It will begin with Jesus' thousand-year reign on the present earth. Our home will then continue on the new earth in the new universe. For more on these concepts, see John R. Claey's, *A New World Coming: Experiencing a Radically Different Future in the Kingdom of God* (Longview, TX: 289Design, 2016); John Claey's, *Unveiling Eternity: Discover Your Forever Future* (Tyler, TX: Self-published, 2023); and John Claey's, *Revelation: The Road to Reward* (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2025), 411-496.

⁴ *Bema* is the Greek term for *judgment seat*.

⁵ *The Law of Rewards: Giving What You Can't Keep to Gain What You Can't Lose* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Books, 2024), 43.

Looking Through Generational Eyes

By Ken Yates

INTRODUCTION

About 600 years before Christ, the nation of Israel was taken into captivity in Babylon. The Babylonians had destroyed their temple. The Jewish people would remain in Babylon for seventy years until the Persians, who defeated the Babylonians, allowed the Jews to return to their homeland. The book of Ezra records some of the events surrounding that return.

Ezra 3 describes how the returning Jews laid the foundation for a new temple. The multitude who saw it reacted in different ways.

THE YOUNGER FOLKS

Most people in the crowd had lived their whole lives in Babylon. The only temples they had seen were dedicated to idols. Babylon would have been full of such temples.

When the Jews were told that they could return to the Promised Land, they understood that prophecy was being fulfilled. People saw that the true God—the God of Israel—was acting on their behalf. He was a powerful God, unlike the detestable false gods of the temples in Babylon.

For the first time in their lives, they would have a place to practice their religion. Laying the foundation and constructing this building would provide a place to honor their God. They would be able to offer sacrifices for their sins. It was the sins of their fathers that had caused the captivity.



Some in the crowd were believers in the coming Messiah. To them, the temple's being rebuilt in fulfillment of prophecy was a sign that God would also fulfill the promises concerning the Christ. He would one day come and establish His kingdom. Israel would be elevated above the other nations. To these Jewish believers, the laying of the temple's foundation was an exciting event.

The Prophet Ezra records that most of the people in the crowd responded in that way. They played musical instruments, sang, and praised the Lord. In their songs, they proclaimed that God was good. They shouted with joy (Ezra 3:10-11).

They were thrilled that God was moving and that they would have the opportunity to show the nations how great their God was. He had disciplined them, but He was longsuffering and had forgiven them. He had shown them mercy (v 11). The believers would also be able to tell the nations about the coming Christ. He would one day come to the temple they were building.

But not everyone in the crowd had that attitude.

THE OLDER FOLKS

A small group of people in the crowd reacted very differently when the foundation was laid. Ezra identifies this group as those who were “heads of the fathers’ houses, old men who had seen the first temple” (v 12).

God is at work.
Let’s be faithful with
the work He has
given us to do in
the time we’re
living in now.

Men in their eighties would have seen the temple that the Babylonians had destroyed. With its interior completely overlaid with gold, its exterior lavishly decorated with gold, and even its furniture and utensils incorporating gold, the first temple had been the most magnificent building in the world—the pride of the nation. People from other countries traveled to Israel just to see it. These old men had seen the first temple in all its splendor.

I suppose that when they heard that the temple would be rebuilt, they expected God to provide materials for a similar building. He was all-powerful. He had fulfilled His promises to bring them back from Babylon. He could certainly replace the old temple with one just like it.

But when these elderly people saw the foundation of the new temple, they realized this was not the case. The new temple would be a poor man’s version of the old one. They were a small, poor people. They could not afford the gold and silver that Solomon had used when he built the first temple. These old people realized what was lost, and they missed the glorious past.

Imagine their disappointment! While the young people brought out musical instruments and sang and shouted for joy, Ezra says that the old folks “wept with a loud voice.” It was quite a scene. Most of the people in the crowd were happy, but those who weren’t happy were downright depressed. Ezra says that while it was a very noisy assembly, it was impossible to tell which noises were from joy and which were from weeping (v 13). Which group of people, the old or the young, had the proper attitude?

LOOK AT THOSE GUYS!

Each group thought the other group was crazy. A young person blowing a trumpet would have looked at an old person weeping and wondered what his problem was. Why were the old people raining on their parade? God had done a miraculous thing. He had demonstrated His mercy and power to His people. They were doing His work. At last, the Jews would have their own temple.

The young would have thought that there was just no pleasing the old folks. The elderly loved to talk about how life was in earlier days and how much better it was then. They were unable to see the golden opportunity now before them.

These old people
realized what was
lost, and they missed
the glorious past.
Imagine their
disappointment!

Why were they complaining? Why couldn’t they be happy? Why couldn’t they give their full support to what was going on?

The old would have looked at the young people dancing and singing and concluded that they were naïve. The country had been down this road be-

fore. Their ancestors, too, had had a temple they were proud of, and it was much better than this one. But their ancestors had turned their backs on God, and He had punished them severely. It would not be long before the sounds of music and instruments would fade. The older folks were not as optimistic about the future. They wanted the younger people to be aware of the dangers they faced.

Besides, it was so much better back then; it really was. The foundation of this new temple was pathetic. If the nation could not be faithful to the Lord with Solomon's Temple, how would this new building inspire the Jews in the years to come? In the future, when visitors to Jerusalem saw this temple, they would not be impressed with the God of Israel. This new temple was nothing to be proud of.

BOTH WERE RIGHT

Each group could learn from the other. The old could be encouraged by the young. They could see the joy and motivation in them. God was at work among the nations. He was fulfilling His word. Christ was coming. All of Israel should work together to be a light to the world. The old folks should not put a damper on the enthusiasm and privilege of the returning Jews. The joy of the young people could be contagious.

But the young could also learn from the old. The enthusiasm and joy of youth are not substitutes for wisdom and experience. The old could warn them of the pitfalls that lay ahead. They could teach the young about the covenant the nation had with God and how their fathers had failed to keep it. If their ancestors, despite all the privileges they had enjoyed, had acted that way, this new generation could do the same. The old could tell the young that a temple does not guarantee faithfulness and blessings, but obedience does.

LESSONS FOR US

We can be like the Jews in Ezra 3. When young people are exposed to the theology of grace, they get excited—like wanting to break out with shouting and music. They learn, for the first time, that they have eternal life that can never be lost. They know they can live their lives in a way that has eternal consequences as they desire rewards in Christ's coming kingdom. They are exposed to Free Grace teaching. They're excited!

But older grace folks might not share their enthusiasm. They might talk about how it used to be. "Grace schools have disappeared." "The older teachers were so much better than the ones we have now." They look at the state of things now and conclude that it will only get worse. "These young people are naïve," they say.

Let's benefit from each other. For us older folks: let's encourage the young (and ourselves!). God is at work. Let's be faithful with the work He has given us to do in the time we're living in now. For younger folks: Understand that older guys and gals have wisdom and experience you don't have. You can learn from them. They're not just a bunch of hateful stick-in-the-muds. They can help you base your enthusiasm on reality.

If we do, we can be unified in raising "a joyful shout" (Ps 100:1) as we serve the Lord together, waiting for His soon return. ■

The believers would also be able to tell the nations about the coming Christ. He would one day come to the temple they were building.



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, *Mark: Lessons in Discipleship*, is a wonderful explanation of Christ's call to discipleship. He and his wife, Pam, live in Columbia, SC.

GES


GRACE
EVANGELICAL
SOCIETY

BIBLE STUDIES

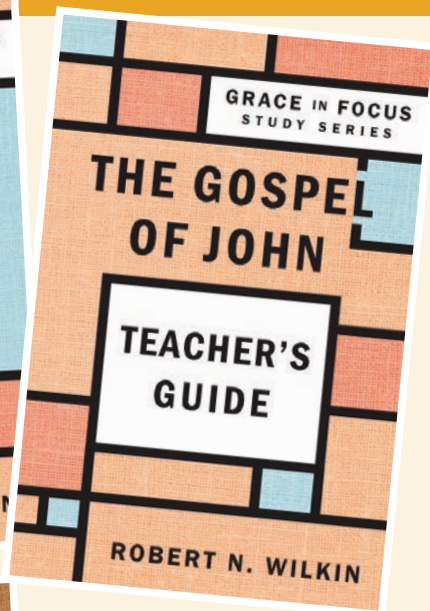
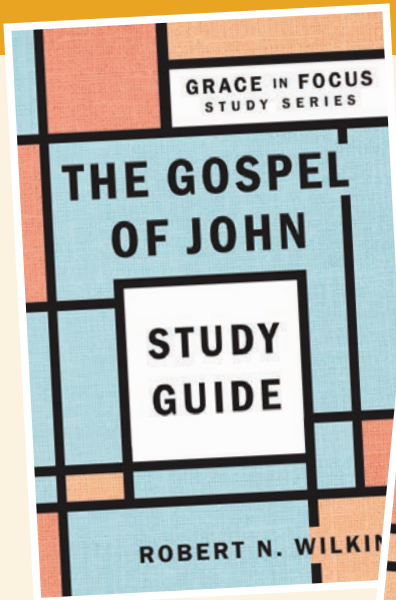
GES has now published Bible studies on three books of the NT (John, Hebrews, Revelation). The studies on Revelation and Hebrews will come out in May at our annual conference. They are essentially adaptations of our commentaries on those books. These studies are so exciting because they combine two very important parts of GES's ministry: providing good Bible teaching and supporting local churches. While these studies are great for personal use, our goal is to have leaders and teachers use these books to help facilitate fruitful discussion and encourage deeper understanding of God's Word. We want to see home churches and Bible studies grow and thrive.

Individuals are nurtured through the milk of the Word and local bodies of believers are no different.

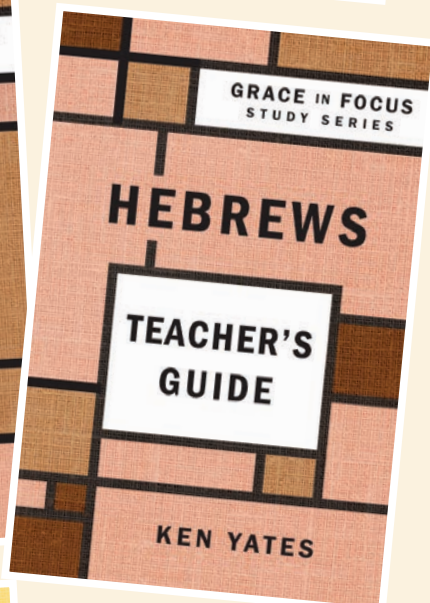
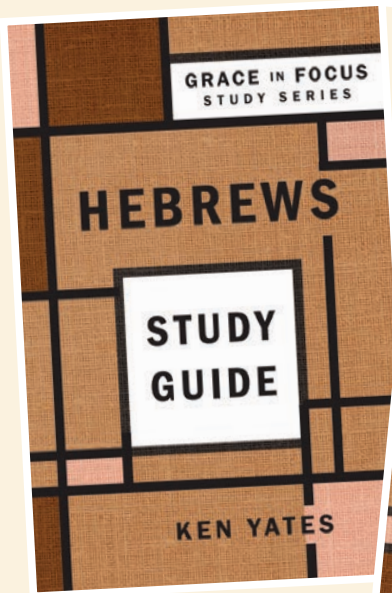
We plan to publish at least one new Bible study every year, and we want your help. If you have used or are using any of the current studies, please send us your feedback. We want to know what areas we can improve to make future studies even better. If you lead a Bible study or Sunday school class, ask your members to write down their thoughts. You can email your feedback to sam@faithalone.org or you can mail them to our PO Box.

Thank you for being a part of this ministry. We hope these Bible studies help you keep *grace in focus!* 

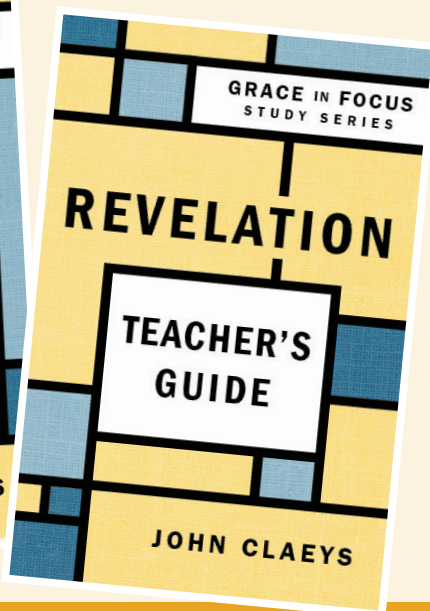
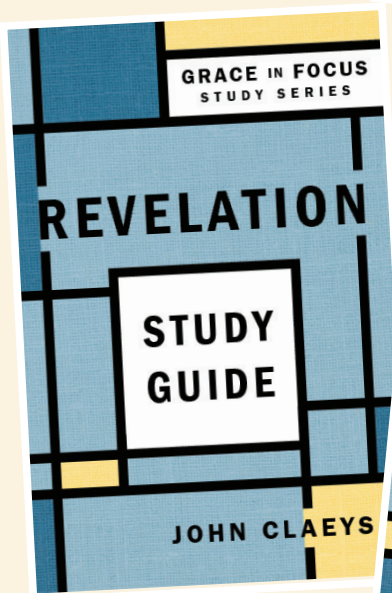




The Gospel of John is the only book in the Bible written to tell unbelievers what they must do to have everlasting life: Believe in Jesus for everlasting life.



Hebrews is about reigning with Christ in His kingdom. Studying this book and its difficult warning passages should bring understanding and peace to the believer.



Revelation is the only book in the Bible that promises a blessing to those who read it. This study guide will help you get on the road to reward and live like an overcomer.

ARE YOU → A SAINT OR AN A'INT ←



By Art Farstad

However, we should not merely become set apart *from evil*, but we should be positively set apart and dedicated *to God*.

Editor's Note: The following excerpt is taken and edited from one section of Dr. Farstad's article, "We Believe in: Sanctification," in the Autumn 1992 issue of the Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society. It was also published in the May-June 1993 issue of Grace on Focus.

Many well-meaning Christians are not well taught on this supremely important and practical subject. A common phrase heard in Christendom (and sadly even by supposedly evangelical Christians) is "I'm a *Christian*, but I'm no *saint*." The idea is that while we can expect a



Sanctification involves a believer's conduct and character. It is both *negative* and *positive*.

person to go to church, give money, and avoid the grosser sins, we don't expect too much more.

Actually, if you're not a *saint*, you're not *saved*! Don't misunderstand this: we are *not* saying that if you're not very *saintly*, you're not saved.

First Corinthians is addressed to the church "at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Cor 1:2). Yet just read the epistle! The Corinthians were proud, divisive, litigious, careless and selfish at the Lord's Supper and *agape* (love feast), and permissive of gross sin (incest) in one of the believers.ⁱ

Why would Paul call the Corinthians "saints" if they were so unsaintly? The answer lies in the different usages of the root words that are used for *sanctification* in both Testaments.

English, unfortunately for us, used Anglo-Saxon-based words (*holy*, *holiness*) and Latin-based (*sanctify*, *sanctification*, *saint*, *saintly*) to

translate the same cluster of words in the original. In the OT, the words are from the Semitic root *qdsh*. In the NT, they translate words with the *hagi* root.ⁱⁱ The basic meaning of all these words is the same: "to set apart for a special use." In contexts of "sanctification," this will be for a good use, and one for God's will and pleasure.ⁱⁱⁱ

Sanctification involves a believer's conduct and character. It is both *negative* and *positive*. Too many conservative Christians accentuate the negative, as in the somewhat light-hearted (but often accurate) summary of some people's idea of sanctification: "I don't drink, don't smoke, don't chew, or run with those who do."

To be sure, there is a strong negative side to the doctrine. We *are* to be separated or set apart from evil. First Thessalonians 4:3 speaks of progressive sanctification as having to do with turning away from immorality that is so rampant in today's culture, as it was in the days when the NT was written.



Why would Paul call the Corinthians “saints” if they were so unsaintly?

However, we should not merely become set apart *from evil*, but we should be positively set apart and dedicated *to God*. In OT times, a person could sanctify his house (Lev 27:14), part of his field (Lev 27:16), or his firstborn (Num 8:17). If OT believers could do so, surely we NT believers should be able to set apart our homes, cars, and possessions, for God’s use! We can dedicate our children through prayer and a consistent example. In the final analysis, though, they will have to consecrate their *own* lives to Christ’s holy service. ¹



Art Farstad earned a Master of Theology in Old Testament and a Doctor of Theology in New Testament from Dallas Theological Seminary, where he also taught Greek for five years. He was the editor of the *New King James Version*, the *New Scofield Study Bible*, and the *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*. He passed in 1998.

¹ There was no suggestion that the incestuous man was unsaved, but rather that he might be removed in death if he didn’t change his ways (cf. 1 Cor 5:5; 11:30).

ⁱⁱ For example, in English, the word *hagiography* refers to a biography of a saint. This double set of root words needlessly complicates things, although giving a richer vocabulary than possessed by any other tongue.

ⁱⁱⁱ That the word doesn’t always mean “make saintly” is clear from the fact that the Hebrew root *qdsh* is used for those set aside to be cult prostitutes!

More of

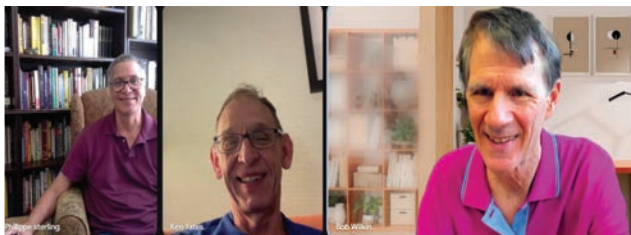
WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT GES?



Board meeting: Left to right (Walt, Bob, Dan, Brad, Scott, and John)



Ken met with Jerry, Laura, and Billy Bell on Feb 6



Meeting of OT Commentary editors discussing shift to Volume 2



Bob and Ken recording radio

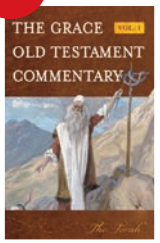


One section of Bob's Greek 206, Exegesis of Tough Texts, Spring 2026

THE BOOKSTORE

40% off
retail on bulk
orders of
10+ copies

NEW



The Grace Old Testament Commentary, Vol. 1: The Torah

Ed. Robert N. Wilkin

This is the first of a three volume set on the entire OT. This volume contains Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

USD \$35.00

Hardcover • ca. 452 pages
Code: gotc

NEW



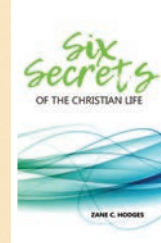
Hebrews: Partners with Christ, Study Guide

Ken Yates

Focused Free Grace Bible study on Hebrews

USD \$10.00

Student Guide • 120 pages
Teacher's Guide • 100 pages
Code: hsg / hstg



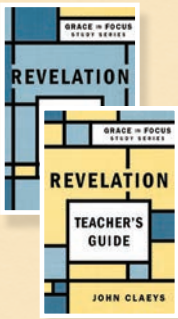
Six Secrets of the Christian Life

Zane C. Hodges

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

USD \$6.00

Softcover • 100 pages
Code: ssl2



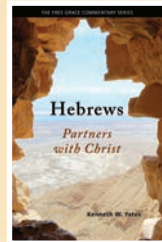
Revelation: The Road to Reward, Study Guide

John Claeys

Focused Free Grace Bible study on Revelation.

USD \$10.00

Student Guide • 125 pages
Teacher's Guide • 102 pages
Code: rsg/rstg



Hebrews: Partners with Christ

Kenneth W. Yates

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

USD \$20.00

Softcover • 244 pages
Code: hpwc



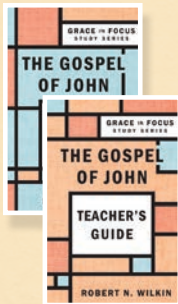
Faith Alone in One Hundred Verses

Robert N. Wilkin

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

USD \$15.00

Softcover • 296 pages
Code: fav



The Gospel of John Study Guide

Robert N. Wilkin

Focused Free Grace Bible study guide on the Gospel of John.

USD \$10.00

Student Guide • 114 pages
Teacher's Guide • 88 pages
Code: gojs / gojt



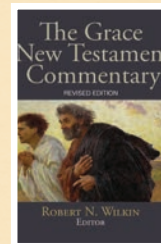
The Epistles of John

Zane C. Hodges

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

USD \$15.00

Softcover • 273 pages
Code: 1-3john



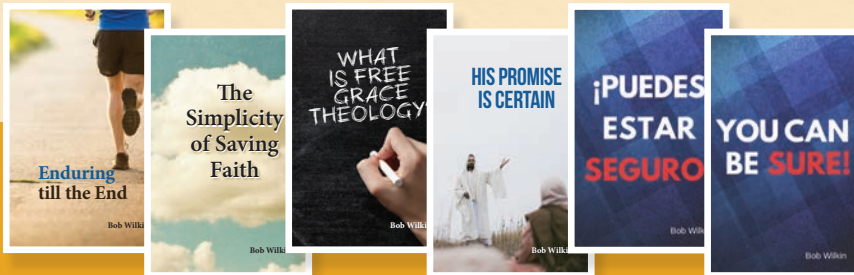
The Grace New Testament Commentary (Revised Edition)

Ed. Robert N. Wilkin

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

USD \$35.00

Softcover • 658 pages
Code: gntc



Booklets

Enduring till the End / Code: ete

His Promise Is Certain / Code: hpc

The Simplicity of Saving Faith / Code: sff

What Is Free Grace Theology? / Code: fgt

You Can Be Sure! / Code: ycbs

Puedes Estar Seguro / Code: ycbs-sp

Individually \$0.35/EACH -OR- Pack of 25 \$8.00 (\$0.32/EACH)

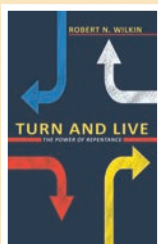


The Gospel Under Siege: Faith and Works in Tension

Zane C. Hodges

What is the relationship between faith and works?

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 266 pages
Code: gus2

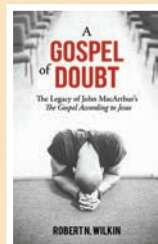


Turn and Live: The Power of Repentance

Robert N. Wilkin

What is the nature and purpose of repentance?

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 158 pages
Code: tal

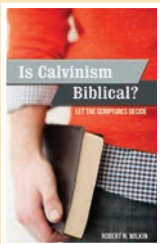


A Gospel of Doubt: The Legacy of John MacArthur's The Gospel According to Jesus

Robert N. Wilkin

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

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 305 pages
Code: agd



Is Calvinism Biblical? Let the Scriptures Decide

Robert N. Wilkin

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

USD \$10.00
Softcover • 166 pages
Code: icb

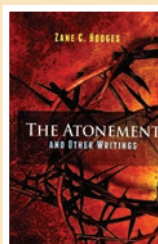


Absolutely Free: A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation

Zane C. Hodges

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

USD \$15.00
Softcover • 272 pages
Code: af2



The Atonement and Other Writings

Zane C. Hodges

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

USD \$10.00
Softcover • 116 pages
Code: atm



1 & 2 Peter and Jude Commentary

Zane C. Hodges

Encouraging, enlightening, and energizing commentaries on eternal rewards.

USD \$22.00
Softcover • 254 pages
Code: 12petjd



Current Issues in Inerrancy

Robert N. Wilkin

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

USD \$8.00
Softcover • 70 pages
Code: cii



Revelation: The Road to Reward

John Claeys

Claeys wonderfully explains one of the most important Bible books on eschatology and eternal rewards.

USD \$30.00 \$25.00
Hardcover • 526 pages
USD \$25.00 \$20.00
Softcover • 526 pages
Code: revh/rev



Tough Texts: Did Jesus Teach Salvation by Works?

Hodges & Wilkin

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

USD \$15.00 \$10.00
Softcover • 174 pages
Code: tt



The Gospel Is Still Under Siege

Robert N. Wilkin

Know how to defend the gospel against all assaults.

USD \$15.00 \$10.00
Softcover • 145 pages
Code: gus2

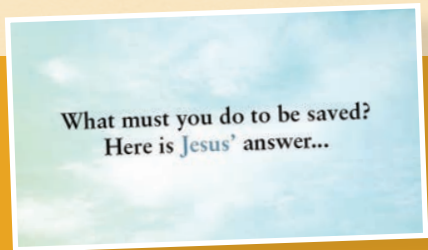


What Is the Outer Darkness?

Zane C. Hodges with Robert N. Wilkin

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

USD \$14.00
Softcover • 112 pages
Code: wod



Available in Spanish too!

Evangelism Business Cards

USD \$15.00
Box of 250 cards
Code: ebc

SALE

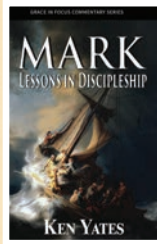


Grace in Eclipse: A Study on Eternal Rewards

Zane C. Hodges

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

USD ~~\$15.00~~ **\$10.00**
Softcover • 168 pages
Code: gie2



Mark: Lessons in Discipleship

Ken Yates

Exegetical & practical commentary on Mark's Gospel.

USD **\$25.00**
Softcover • 606 pages
Code: MLD



Faith in His Name

Zane Hodges

Though only through John 6:21, this commentary on John's opening chapters by Zane Hodges is a must-have. Fantastic insights.

USD **\$10.00**
Softcover • 147 pages
Code: fhn

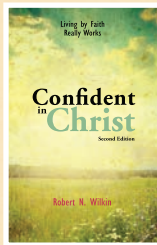


The Hungry Inherit

Zane C. Hodges

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

USD **\$10.00**
Softcover • 160 pages
Code: thi

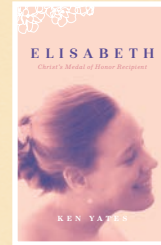


Confident in Christ (Second Edition)

Robert N. Wilkin

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

USD **\$15.00**
Softcover • 278 pages
Code: cic2

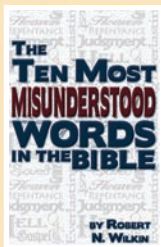


Elisabeth: Christ's Medal of Honor Recipient

Ken Yates

Ken writes of the impact Elisabeth's life and death had upon him.

USD **\$12.00**
Softcover • 151 pages
Code: eli



The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible

Robert N. Wilkin

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

USD **\$15.00**
Softcover • 221 pages
Code: ten



Romans: Deliverance from Wrath

Zane C. Hodges

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

USD **\$25.00**
Softcover • 488 pages
Code: rom



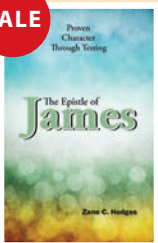
Secure and Sure

Robert N. Wilkin

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

USD **\$10.00**
Softcover • 252 pages
Code: sas

SALE



The Epistle of James

Zane C. Hodges

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

USD ~~\$10.00~~ **\$7.00**
Softcover • 128 pages
Code: jas

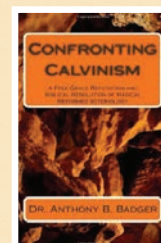


El Tribunal de Cristo y Las Recompensas Eternas

Ken White

La enseñanza de que las obras de los creyentes serán juzgadas para determinar sus recompensas aparece a través de todo el Nuevo Testamento y, por eso, es muy importante.

USD **\$5.00**
Softcover • 83 pages
Code: tdc



Confronting Calvinism

Anthony B. Badger

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

USD **\$25.00**
Softcover • 397 pages
Code: cc



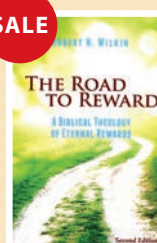
A Free Grace Primer

Zane C. Hodges

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

USD **\$22.00**
Softcover • 571 pages
Code: fgp2

SALE



The Road to Reward (Second Edition)

Robert N. Wilkin

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

USD ~~\$10.00~~ **\$7.00**
Softcover • 200 pages
Code: rr2



Grudem Against Grace: A Defense of Free Grace Theology

Robert N. Wilkin

Wilkin responds to Grudem's critique of Free Grace.

USD **\$15.00**
Softcover • 144 pages
Code: gag

Booklist

Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society

- \$18.50 (renewal) / \$10.00 (new or gift subscription) Multi-year options available on website.

The Grace New Testament Commentary

- Revised Edition, \$35.00

The Grace Old Testament Commentary

- Volume 1: *The Torah* \$35.00 **NEW**

Anthony B. Badger

- *Confronting Calvinism*, \$25.00
- *Free Grace Theology on Trial*, \$25.00

John Claeys

- *Revelation: The Road to Reward*, Hardcover ~~\$30.00~~ **\$25.00**; Softcover ~~\$25.00~~ **\$20.00**
- *Revelation: The Road to Reward, Study Guide*, \$10.00
- *Revelation: The Road to Reward, Teacher's Guide*, \$10.00

Steve Elkins

- *The Roman Road Revisited: New Vistas on the Road to Resurrection Living (2nd ed.)*, \$15.00
- *Keys to Kingdom Greatness: An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*, \$20.00

Zane Hodges

- *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, \$22.00
- *Absolutely Free (2nd ed.)*, \$15.00
- *The Atonement and Other Writings*, \$10.00
- *The Epistle of James*, ~~\$10.00~~ **\$7.00**
- *The Epistles of John*, \$15.00
- *Faith in His Name: John*, \$10.00
- *A Free Grace Primer*, \$22.00
- *Grace in Eclipse*, ~~\$15.00~~ **\$10.00**
- *The Gospel Under Siege*, \$15.00
- *Harmony with God*, \$10.00
- *The Hungry Inherit*, \$10.00
- *Jesus, God's Prophet*, \$6.00
- *The Journey of Faith: Sermons on Hebrews*, \$15.00
- *Luke (Vol 1)*, \$9.00
- *Luke (Vol 2)*, \$9.00
- *Power to Make War*, \$5.00
- *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*, \$25.00
- *Six Secrets of the Christian Life*, \$6.00
- *Spiritual Lessons from the Life of David*, \$10.00
- *Tough Texts: Did Jesus Teach Salvation by Works?* \$15.00
- *What Is the Outer Darkness?*, \$14.00

Shawn C. Lazar

- *Beyond Doubt: How to Be Sure*, \$15.00
- *Chosen to Serve: Election Is to Service*, \$20.00

Bill Lee

- *Grace Recovered*, \$10.00

Laurence Vance

- *The Other Side of Calvinism*, \$30.00

Bob Wilkin

- *Confident in Christ (2nd ed.)*, \$15.00
- *Current Issues in Inerrancy*, \$8.00
- *The Gospel of John Study Guide*, \$10.00
- *The Gospel of John Teacher's Guide*, \$10.00
- *The Gospel Is Still Under Siege*, ~~\$15.00~~ **\$10.00**
- *A Gospel of Doubt: The Legacy of John MacArthur's The Gospel According to Jesus*, \$15.00
- *Faith Alone in One Hundred Verses*, \$15.00
- *Grudem Against Grace: A Defense of FGT*, \$15.00
- *Is Calvinism Biblical?*, \$10.00
- *The Road to Reward (2nd ed.)*, ~~\$10.00~~ **\$7.00**
- *Secure and Sure*, \$10.00
- *The Ten Most Misunderstood Words in the Bible*, \$15.00
- *Turn and Live: The Power of Repentance*, \$15.00

Kenneth W. Yates

- *Elisabeth: Christ's Medal of Honor Recipient* \$12.00
- *Hebrews: Partners with Christ*, \$20.00
- *Hebrews: Partners with Christ, Study Guide*, \$10 **NEW**
- *Hebrews: Partners with Christ, Teacher's Guide*, \$10 **NEW**
- *Mark: Lessons in Discipleship*, \$25.00

Books in Spanish

- **Ken Yates:** *Elisabeth: Receptora de la medalla de honor de Cristo*, \$12.00
- **Ken White:** *El Tribunal de Cristo y Las Recompensas Eternas*, \$5.00
- **Ken White:** *Seguridad Eterna*, \$4.00
- **Bob Wilkin:** *¿Es bíblico el calvinismo?*, \$10.00

3 Ways to Order

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



ORDER FORM

Prices effective from 5/01/26 - 6/30/26.
 Refunds / Exchanges only within 60 days of purchase date.



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

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

Acct.# (if you know it) _____

BILLING ADDRESS (If different from Shipping Address)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

Acct.# (if you know it) _____

METHOD OF PAYMENT (circle one): Cash Check Money Order Credit Card

Send Check or
 Money Order to:
 Grace Evangelical Society
 P.O. Box 1308
 Denton, TX 76202

Credit Card Information: Visa MasterCard

CREDIT CARD # _____

EXP. DATE _____ CSC# (3 digit code) _____

NAME ON CARD _____

CODE	TITLE	QTY	PRICE	AMOUNT

EXTRAS

Extra copies of this magazine are available for \$1/ea, while supplies last. Call for cost of shipping and handling. Foreign subscription prices are \$40 per year to Canada, and \$60 per year for all other countries.

SHIPPING USPS (U.S. Addresses)

FREE on all orders of \$10 or more.
 UNDER \$10:
 \$4.00 first item.
 \$2.50 for second item.

SHIPPING UPS:

\$0-\$20 \$12.75
 \$21-\$50 \$16.75
 \$51+ 30%

SUBTOTAL	
SHIPPING	
DISCOUNT for REVIEW*	
DONATION	
TOTAL	



The FOREVER Giftⁱ

By Zane C. Hodges

Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw” (John 4:13-15).

It is surprising that the simple reality the woman at the well understood immediately—that one drink would forever quench her thirst (John 4:15)—is often lost from sight in the Christian church. Of course, there are many who directly deny its truth. Instead, they insist, the water of life can be lost through serious disobedience or through departure from the faith. A person who has once possessed it may need to obtain it again.

But in so saying, they flatly contradict the Lord Himself.

But others do not quite say this. What they do say, in effect, is that the drinking itself must go on and on. And they add that if the drinking ever stops, it never really began! But the confusion here is enormous. The simplicity of the Savior’s offer is lost sight of completely.



Therefore, in a moment of time, we obtain both perfect acceptance before the bar of God's justice as well as full membership in His family.

The concept just mentioned is found quite commonly in Lordship Salvation. According to some of its proponents, if someone “really believes,” they will keep on believing to the end of life. And if this supposed faith fails, it was not true faith to begin with.

This view of things is utterly unknown to the Bible. Nevertheless, there are many who have been confused by this kind of teaching. It is necessary, therefore, to look at the Savior's words more closely...

The imagery of a drink of water is so pointedly clear in the Biblical story. Jesus possesses the water. He gives a drink of it to the Samaritan woman, and it is hers forever. Indeed, it transforms her inwardly. From then on, she will possess an inward fountain, or “spring,” whose supply of water is as unending as eternity itself.

Here again, we meet the miracle of regeneration. The life-bearing Word of God accomplishes an

inner transformation when it is received in faith. The reception takes place at a point in time—it is like taking a drink of water. But the effects of that drink are unending.

Or to put it another way, the water of life is received once, and it is possessed forever. It is a forever gift!...

But many evangelicals are out of tune with the Biblical perspective. In Scripture, saving faith is a simple and uncomplicated issue...

At the precise instant that a man or woman believes in Christ, eternity itself invades human experience and transforms our inner beings into something wonderfully and permanently new.

How perfectly the songwriter has captured this truth when he says:

Born of the Spirit, with life from above
Into God's fam'ly divine;
Justified fully through Calvary's love,

O what a standing is mine!
And the transaction so quickly was made,
When as a sinner I came,
Took of the offer of grace He did proffer,
He saved me, O praise His dear name!

Heaven came down and glory filled my
soul,
When at the cross the Saviour made me
whole;
My sins were washed away
And my night was turned to day—
Heaven came down and glory filled my
soul!

—John W. Peterson
“Heaven Came Down”

Let there be no mistake about it. The Bible teaches exactly that kind of wondrous transaction.

The Biblical picture of the saving experience is masterful in its clarity and simplicity. A single, one-time appropriation of God's gift results in a miraculous inward transformation that can never be reversed.

Since this is true, we miss the point by insisting that true saving faith must necessarily continue. Of course, our faith in Christ should continue. But the claim that it absolutely must, or necessarily does, has no support at all in the Bible...

The Bible predicates salvation on an act of faith, not on the continuity of faith. Just as surely as regeneration occurs at a point in time for each individual, so surely does saving faith.

That is why, in the case of Abraham, the moment of his justification is historically fixed. It is in the precise historical circumstances described by the context of Genesis 15 that we read: “And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6).

So, according to the Biblical record, it was on this occasion—and on this occasion only—that Abraham was justified by faith. The statement of Gen 15:6 is utterly unique in the Scriptural account. Nothing like it is to be found anywhere else in the inspired narrative of the patriarch's life.

Nor should we expect there to be. After all, both justification and new birth are unrepeatable events, just as is the faith that appropriates them. Both events occur at the same point in time for every Christian, and that particular historical moment is also the moment of saving faith.

Through justification, we acquire the very righteousness of God, which is credited to us on the basis of faith alone (Rom 3:21-22). Through regeneration, we acquire the very life of God, which is imparted to us likewise on the basis of faith alone. Therefore, in a moment of time, we obtain both perfect acceptance before the bar of God's justice as well as full membership in His family.

And all of this is absolutely free and absolutely permanent. “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom 11:29).

There is no return trip. ■

A single, one-time
appropriation
of God's gift
results in a
miraculous inward
transformation
that can never be
reversed.



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 is drawn from Chapter 5 (pp. 47-57) of the book *Absolutely Free*. It has been slightly edited.

Opening The Gospel of John

By Andrew P. Bacon



It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” With those words, Charles Dickens opened his classic novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*. “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife,” is the opening sentence of Jane Austen’s novel, *Pride and Prejudice*. “It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen,” opens George Orwell’s *1984*.

Each of these opening lines draws the reader in, giving clues to the message and content of the book. “Best of times” and “worst of times” hints at the historical background of that book. “A single man... fortune... in want of a wife” hints at the themes of marriage, class, and society. “Cold... clocks... striking thirteen” hints at a dystopian world. The most widely distributed, best-selling book of all time is no different. The Gospel of John, in its opening lines, draws the reader in, hinting at its message and content:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and

without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shined in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it (John 1:1-5).

The Apostle John—Jesus’ bosom buddy—wrote these words by inspiration of the Holy Spirit to draw in the widest audience possible: unbelievers from every walk of life, across every cultural and social context, from the first century through today.

In the very first verse, we are introduced to a Person: *the Word*. He was *in the beginning* of time and history and was not only *with* God, but also *was*—and is—God. That statement must have puzzled John’s unbelieving readers (John 20:31). But it must have also piqued their interest, just as all great opening lines have done.

At the beginning and end of John’s final book, Revelation, he would record Jesus’ declaration that “I am the Alpha and the Omega” (Rev 1:8; 22:13). In Greek manuscripts of Revelation, the text reads *the Alpha and the Ω*. *Alpha*, the first Greek letter, reminds the reader of the related first Hebrew

The reader can begin to see that Jesus, the Source of physical life, is also the Source everlasting life.

letter, *aleph*.¹ Ultimately, all Scripture testifies of Him—the Word Himself who became flesh.

“All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (1:3). The Logos 21 translation (found in the Living Water booklets) renders the verse’s second clause: “...and apart from Him not one thing was made that has been made.” Later in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul gives this description of the One introduced in John 1: “He is... the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible... All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist” (Col 1:15). The author of Hebrews writes, “through whom [Jesus] also He [God] made the worlds” (Heb 1:2).

“In Him was life” (John 1:4). This is the One who commanded: “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb... the fruit tree...Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth...Let the earth bring forth the living creature....Let Us make man in Our image” (Gen 1:11, 20, 24, 26). Later in John’s Gospel, this same One will cry out: “Lazarus, come forth!” (John 11:43). The Word, in whom was life, had the power to create life in the beginning, has the power to raise one back to life, and will exercise that same power in the last day. In the last day, the Word—Jesus Christ—will raise to life again all who have believed in Him for everlasting life (cf. John 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24-25).

Later, in his first epistle, John would write: “...our hands have handled... the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen... and declare to you that eternal life...” (I John 1:1-2). The author of the Gospel of John—who physically felt, touched, and saw the Word for himself—invites his readers to encounter the Word for themselves through his first-hand account.

In the beginning
was the Word,
and the Word
was with God,
and the Word
was God.

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). Like flipping on the light switch in a dark room, hope was activated in a dark and hopeless world. Hope arrived in the Word, who became flesh, and the life in Him is a shining beacon. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it” (1:5). Other renderings of “did not comprehend it” include “did not grasp it,” “has/did not overcome it,” and “has never extinguished it.” Just as the darkness in a room has no chance against the light from a switch, the darkness of this world has no chance against the shining beacon of hope found in the Word, Jesus Christ. After all,

He was the One who originally commanded, “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3).

At the beginning of his Gospel, the Apostle John, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gives clues to its message and content. The reader is introduced to the Word, Jesus Christ the Creator. Then, in what some call *the pinnacle of the Prologue*, John 1:12-13 clearly states John’s primary message: Whoever believes in the Word has been born of God. The reader can begin to see that Jesus, the Source of physical life, is also the Source everlasting life.

As believers in Jesus—the Word, the Source of life—let us boldly invite unbelievers to read John’s Gospel so that they, too, may be drawn into its message of everlasting life. ■



Andrew is a pastoral leader at Blasdell Gospel Chapel, living in rural Buffalo (NY) with his wife and three boys. He is active in preaching, children's camp ministry, and tentmaking in software development.

¹ Editor’s note: We get the word *alphabet* from the first two Greek letters, *alpha beta*. However, those letters were adapted from the first two Hebrew letters, *aleph bet*. While there is a connection between the first Greek and Hebrew letters, the same is not true for their last letters. The last Hebrew letter is *tav*, a consonant, unlike the last Greek letter, *omega*, which is a vowel.

ⁱⁱ NKJV, LOGOS21 and NASB, NIV, and NLT, respectively.



What's Wrong with Calvinism?

Part 2: Calvinism's L & I Are Liabilities

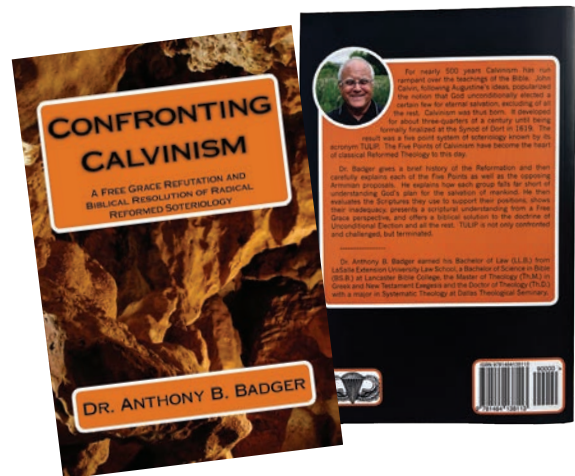
By Bob Wilkin

Limited Atonement Is Lethal

Dr. Tony Badger, author of *Confronting Calvinism*, says this about Limited Atonement:

Of the five points of Calvinism, Limited Atonement is the most rejected. Many people who call themselves Calvinists reject the L in TULIP. So-called four-point Calvinists are called Amyraldian Calvinists after Moses Amyraut (1596-1664). My alma mater, Dallas Theological Seminary, is historically Amyraldian. In the mid-seventies, Dr. S. Lewis Johnson resigned from DTS because he had come to believe in Limited Atonement.

Even though Amyraldians believe in all the points except L, five-point Calvinists rarely consider them Calvinists, classifying them instead as Arminian.

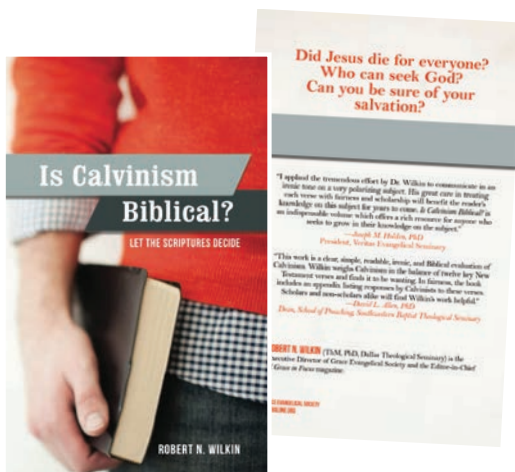


Not a single passage of Scripture in either the Old or New Testament expresses or teaches the notion that Christ's redemptive death on the cross, normally referred to as His Atonement, was limited or confined, either in God's intent or in the extent to which the benefits

Jesus the Messiah is the Lamb of God whose death took away the sins of the whole world, satisfying God's wrath toward all men.

might accrue. Contrarily, the Scripture deliberately and unequivocally teaches that Jesus the Messiah is the Lamb of God whose death took away the sins of the whole world, satisfying God's wrath toward all men, and came to seek and to save those who were lost, not just some of them! (p. 213).

In my book, *Is Calvinism Biblical?*, I consider two verses that disprove Limited Atonement: John 1:29 and 2 Peter 2:1.



John 1:29. “The next day John [the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” The word translated “world” (Greek *kosmos*) here means *mankind, humanity, everyone*.

“The word *kosmos* is used more in John (78 times) than any other book in the New Testament” (*Is Calvinism Biblical?* p. 59). The range of meaning of *kosmos* in John includes: “Planet earth” (p. 59), “The unbelieving system of thought” (p. 60), “The present age” (p. 60), and “All humans of all time” (p. 60). I went on to write,

The last use is the most prevalent. In John's Gospel, *kosmos* usually refers to all humans of all time.

When John the Baptist said that Jesus is “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,” he was not talking about the sins of the planet, or of a system of thought, or of the present age. He was saying that Jesus fulfills the Old Testament sacrificial system and takes away the sins of all humans of all time (pp. 60-61).

When we compare John 1:29 with 1 John 2:2 (“And He Himself is the propitiation [satisfaction] for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world”), the conclusion is unmistakable: The Lord Jesus Christ died for Adam and Eve and all their offspring.

2 Peter 2:1. “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, **even denying the Lord who bought them**, and bring on themselves swift destruction.”

We know from 2 Pet 2:17 that the false teachers about whom Peter prophesies would be unregenerate and bound for “the blackness of darkness forever.” He was not saying that all false teachers are unregenerate. But he was saying that those particular coming false teachers would be. Yet notice that Peter says, “the Lord...bought them.”

One of the subheadings in my chapter on 2 Peter 2:1 is: “If Christ Bought People Who Will End Up in the Lake of Fire, Then the Atonement Is Unlimited” (p. 70). You don't need to get a graduate degree in theology to see that. In fact, getting a graduate degree in theology from a Calvinist school is one of the easiest ways to miss that.

Only by intense indoctrination can anyone be misled into believing that Christ died for only a small percentage of humanity. Anyone who

Jesus fulfills the Old Testament sacrificial system and takes away the sins of all humans of all time.

prayerfully searches the Scriptures (Acts 17:11) will see that Unlimited Atonement is true, and Limited Atonement is not.

CALVINISM'S "IRRESISTIBLE GRACE" IS EASILY RESISTIBLE

Dr. Tony Badger says this about Irresistible Grace:

Not a single passage of Scripture in either the Old or New Testament expresses or teaches the notion that...the Holy Spirit imposes regeneration upon [anyone]...The Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit regenerates—gives eternal life to—anyone who personally believes in Jesus for it (*Confronting Calvinism*, p. 253).

In *Is Calvinism Biblical?* I made this statement about the bearing the fourth point has on assurance of salvation:

While the fourth point might at least seem comforting for Calvinists, it is not. The problem is that Calvinism teaches that Calvinists may think they have been irresistibly drawn, when in fact they have not been. Many people profess faith in Christ. But, according to Calvinism, a large percentage of those who profess faith—even a large percent-

age of Calvinists!—are people who only think that they were drawn and chosen and were beneficiaries of Christ's death.

Calvinism teaches that false professors attend Calvinist churches, get baptized, give money, and even serve as pastors, elders, deacons, and Bible study leaders. Many if not most of them will be sincere. They will look like born-again people. But if they were not actually drawn by God, then their profession will be shown to be false because they will not persevere (the fifth point), and they will spend eternity in the lake of fire, separated from the Lord Jesus and His kingdom.

If irresistible grace is true, then no one, not even a Calvinist pastor or theologian, can be sure that he has been drawn and elected and redeemed by God. Only persevering until death can show that. Thus, according to Calvinism's fourth point, only time will tell whether one has truly been irresistibly drawn to God's grace by the Holy Spirit. After you die, you will find out where you are going. Before then, you can't be sure (p. 78).

Jesus was promising to draw all to Himself. Not 1% or 5% or 10%. All.

In *Is Calvinism Biblical?* I discuss two verses that disprove Irresistible Grace: John 12:32 and Matt 23:37.

John 12:32. The Lord Jesus said, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." John then adds, "This He said, signifying by what death He would die" (v 33).

He is drawing all to Himself, but only some come to Him in faith.

The Greek word translated “draw” in John 12:32 is *elkuō*. That is the same word used in John 6:44. Calvinists say that God is drawing only a small percentage of humanity to Christ. The Lord Jesus said that He is drawing *all* to Himself.

Calvinists claim that *all* refers to all *kinds* of people, such as Egyptians, Indians, Australian aborigines, Inuit, Mauri, Zulu, Slavs, Anglo-Saxons, Arabs, etc. However, that is not consistent with the context or with the rest of the NT. In *Is Calvinism Biblical?*, I wrote:

The word *peoples* is supplied by the NKJV translators. [Other translations read *all people, all men, everyone, or all.*] A more literal translation would be, “I...will draw all to Myself.” Jesus was promising to draw all to Himself. Not 1% or 5% or 10%. All. However, while Jesus draws all, He does not indicate that everyone will come to faith in Him. Drawing makes faith in Christ possible, but not inevitable (cf. Matt 7:13-14; 23:37-39) (pp. 79-80).

Matthew 23:37. This statement by the Lord Jesus contradicts Calvinism’s Irresistible Grace: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”

Notice the words “but you were not willing.” The Lord Jesus wanted to establish the kingdom during the first century for that generation of Jews: “How often I wanted to gather your children...” A hen protects her chicks. The Lord Jesus would have protected Israel against Rome and against all her other enemies. *But they were not willing, so the kingdom has been postponed until a future generation of Jews that will be willing!* (Rom 11:26).

God’s grace is, indeed, resistible. He is drawing all to Himself, but only some come to Him in faith. John 1:11-12 is another passage clearly indicating that though the entire nation of Israel was drawn to Christ, most rejected Him and His promise of life.

CONCLUSION

Limited Atonement and Irresistible Grace are unbiblical. Christ died for the sin of the whole world, not just for some people. God’s gift of everlasting life is easily resistible and, sadly, most resist it.

The *L* and *I* in TULIP are two more reasons that Calvinists are on unfulfilling lifelong quests for assurance. Engelsma calls Puritan Calvinism “a gospel of doubt.” To gain assurance and escape doubt, Calvinists need to search the Scriptures with open eyes (Luke 24:44-45; Acts 17:11). ■



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





Is There a Difference
Between
Trust and
Belief?

By Hayden Bray

The word *trust* does not mean *being convinced* of the truthfulness of a fact or proposition. It implies *confidence that is less than assurance.*

Confusion about the saving message of Jesus Christ has plagued the Church since the days of the apostles. Most commonly, attacks on the grace of God amount to shoe-horning works into the saving transaction, either by front-loading repentance, commitment, and obedience as co-conditions of faith, or by back-loading perseverance until death.

A less obvious obfuscation of the simplicity of the gospel, common to evangelicalism and, surprisingly, even in Free Grace circles, is to substitute *believing in Jesus* for *trusting in Him*.

The problem arises when we substitute *trust* for *belief*. So, what is the difference, and does it matter when it comes to the saving message of Jesus Christ?

The contrast should be obvious. To trust or hope in Jesus (*elpizō*) is naturally related to but not equivalent to believing (*pisteuō*) in Him. The

former speaks of confidence; the latter speaks of persuasion. Let it be plainly stated that one is unlikely to believe something without first trusting its source, especially about matters as lofty as everlasting life or death.

The problem arises when we substitute *trust* for *belief*.

The late Zane Hodges masterfully distilled the problem of using trust in an evangelical context when he spoke at a GES conference years ago:

Trust has a range of meanings, some of which would be synonymous with the word *believe* and some of which would not.

I could say, "I sent Bob Wilkin downtown to deposit my check, and I hope he'll do it. I guess I've got to trust him." That is not the same thing as believing that Bob Wilkin is going to deposit my check.

On the other hand, there are contexts in which the word *trust* is used by us as a synonym for *believe*. But I like the title of the book somebody wrote *Whatever Happened to the Word Believe? Why are we always substituting things for believe?*

I like the emphasis Earl Radmacher gave and that others have given, that we need to tell them what it is they need to believe, and then we won't be fishing around for something that substitutes for the Biblical word *believe*.¹

In John's gospel, *believing in (pisteuō eis) Jesus* is used interchangeably with *believing that (pisteuō hoti) He is the Christ*. In both cases, the object of saving faith is Jesus and His promise.



Why are we always substituting things for believe?

Take, for example, John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever *believes in Him* should not perish but **have everlasting life**” (emphasis mine).

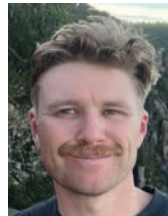
The purpose statement of John’s Gospel is a call to believe, not a call to trust: “but these are written that you may *believe that Jesus* is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may **have life** in His name” (emphasis mine)(John 20:31).

Everywhere that belief in Jesus is called for, it is presented alongside His promise. One cannot believe in Jesus without regard to the promise He offers those who believe in Him. The object of saving faith is both the gift and the gift-Giver (John 4:10). What is not being asked of the unbeliever is a general trust in Jesus or even a degree of confidence in Jesus for salvation.

The inclination to substitute Jesus’ own words with words we think better communicate the saving message is foolish. Do we really think that we can improve on His evangelistic method?

The word *trust* does not mean *being convinced* of the truthfulness of a fact or proposition. It implies *confidence that is less than assurance*. I trust my doctor to do a good job in surgery. But I am not convinced the surgery will be successful. I do not consider that there is a guarantee.

We, as grace people, should be careful to follow the pattern set by the perfect Evangelist, Jesus Christ. We should proclaim the saving message that whoever believes in Jesus has everlasting life that cannot be lost. ■



Hayden is a husband, father, and student of the GES Seminary. He facilitates a focused free grace small-group where he lives in Brisbane, Australia. All are welcome. You can contact him at hlbray91@gmail.com.

¹ See this YouTube short: https://www.youtube.com/shorts/_MkK-LyIodO8.



Do You Give

Even When You Have Needs Yourself?

By Ken Yates

THE CHALLENGE

In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul wrote about an offering he was collecting for poor believers in Jerusalem. He wanted the believers in Corinth to contribute to this offering.

In 2 Cor 8:1-4, he described how other churches had responded. The churches in Macedonia, north of Corinth, had given sacrificially to help their fellow believers in Israel. It had not been easy for them to contribute; Paul pointed out that they had financial needs themselves.

Paul used the churches in Macedonia as an example to spur the believers in Corinth to give sacrificially. The churches in Macedonia should be a challenge to believers today as well.

Giving to poor believers in Israel was difficult for the believers in Macedonia. They themselves were poor and could have easily justified not giving their

resources to others. But they decided to give, even beyond their ability (v 3). In fact, they begged Paul for the privilege of giving to believers who were in worse circumstances than themselves. When they gave, they gave more than anybody would have expected.

Why did they do it? How were they able to overlook their own needs in order to aid brothers and sisters in Christ whom they had never met?

THE MACEDONIANS NEEDED HELP THEMSELVES

Though the Macedonian believers wanted to give, that desire was not only difficult but also made little sense. They needed the money for themselves. They had heard about the great need in Israel, but how could they lay aside their own anxieties? It would have been understandable if they had decided to let others who were in better

financial situations than themselves send money. Giving to the believers in Israel was a noble cause, but nobody would expect them to contribute.

Christ became poor so that we could have eternal life and eternal riches. He became poor so that we could become rich beyond our wildest imaginings.

Even Paul seemed to understand. Evidently, because of their own poverty, he had not asked the Macedonians to give. Amazingly, they had come to him and asked that they be allowed to give.

Their generosity was praiseworthy. Paul tells us how they did it. In their flesh, they would not have given. They would have looked after their own needs. Instead, Paul says, they “gave themselves to the Lord” (v 5).

We could look at that phrase in a very general sense and conclude that the Macedonians simply decided to give because they believed the Lord wanted them to do so. But it involved more than that. They went to Him for help. They wanted Him to give them the faith needed to give, even though they had their own needs. They wanted Him to instill in them the proper attitude toward giving to the poor in Israel. They wanted to give cheerfully and willingly, not out of compulsion (2 Cor 9:7). That would be difficult to accomplish. They could not do it on their own.

But they “gave themselves to the Lord” in the sense that they knew He could effect that change in them. The author of Hebrews says that when believers face difficult times, they can go to Christ to find the grace and help they need (Heb 4:16). I

have no doubt that part of what the Macedonian believers did was to go to the Lord in prayer, asking Him to make them willing and cheerful givers in the midst of their poverty.

No wonder Paul says that God gave the Macedonians the *grace* needed so that they could give to their fellow believers in Israel (2 Cor 8:1). They had approached the throne of God’s grace and found what they needed in order to please the Lord.

But the believers in Macedonia had something else that helped them give sacrificially. They had the perfect example to follow.

THE LORD SHOWED THE WAY

Not only did the Lord give them the grace to give in the midst of their own afflictions, but He also gave them an example to follow. Paul discussed what the Lord did when He saw a need. In verse 9, he said that the Lord became poor so that the Corinthians and Macedonians could, through His poverty, become rich.

Every believer can look to the Lord for guidance in serving others. He died on the cross so that He could give eternal life to all who believe in Him for it. In His death and resurrection, He broke the

They had approached the throne of God’s grace and found what they needed in order to please the Lord.

power of sin so that all who believe in Him could live righteously. Such a life will result in great rewards in His eternal kingdom. Christ became poor so that we could have eternal life and eternal riches. He became poor so that we could become rich beyond our wildest imaginings.

Paul used the churches in Macedonia as an example to spur the believers in Corinth to give sacrificially. The churches in Macedonia should be a challenge to believers today as well.

Paul spoke of the rewards believers can receive for serving others. In giving to the believers in Israel, the Macedonians were sowing in hopes of reaping a great harvest in Christ's coming kingdom (2 Cor 9:6). The Macedonian believers gave the way they did because they wanted to be like the Lord. They wanted His approval when they stand before Him at the Judgment Seat of Christ. If they earned His approval, He will reward them on that day.

The author of Hebrews also spoke about looking to Christ as our example. This is especially true during difficult times. Talking about Christ on the cross, he writes:

...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. (Heb 12:2)

Christ suffered, looking toward the joy of the kingdom over which He would rule forever. We are to look to Him. If we rely on Him, He will carry us through our difficult times, and we will reign with Him.

That is what the Macedonian believers did. They went to Him and asked for the strength to be like Him. He gave so that others could be rich. They wanted to do the same. They were experiencing difficulties, but wanted to give so that others would benefit. Christ was highly exalted. The Macedonians were following His example and could expect a bountiful harvest when they stand before Him.

CONCLUSION

We must be careful not to apply 2 Corinthians 8-9 to every opportunity to support ministries

financially. Some ministries should not be supported because of their unbiblical theology. There are also many scam artists out there.ⁱ

But the Macedonian believers did not have those problems. Paul, the Lord's apostle, was behind the offering for the needy believers in Jerusalem. The Macedonians knew the need was real and that the Lord approved.

Still, it was hard to do. Because of their financial situation, they would need the grace of God. They knew where to go to find it. Jesus Christ was their High Priest who would give them the strength to do what pleased Him. He was also their example *par excellence*.

Every believer will find himself in situations in which it will be difficult to serve the Lord and others. We do not have an apostle here to tell us what to do. But we have the Word of God. When the Word instructs us to do something we are initially reluctant to do, we should do what the Macedonians did.

Look to the Lord. Approach His throne of grace. He will give us the grace and strength to do what should be done. We will gain His approval for doing so. Eternal riches await. ■



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, *Mark: Lessons in Discipleship*, is a wonderful explanation of Christ's call to discipleship. He and his wife, Pam, live in Columbia, SC.

ⁱEditor's note: Ken's point applies both to churches corporately and to individual believers. Churches and individuals are often confronted by people and ministries (including foreign churches) asking for money and assistance. Some of those needs and ministries are legitimate and worthy of support, but many are not.

BELIEVE IN HIM FOR LIFE →



WWW.FAITHALONE.ORG