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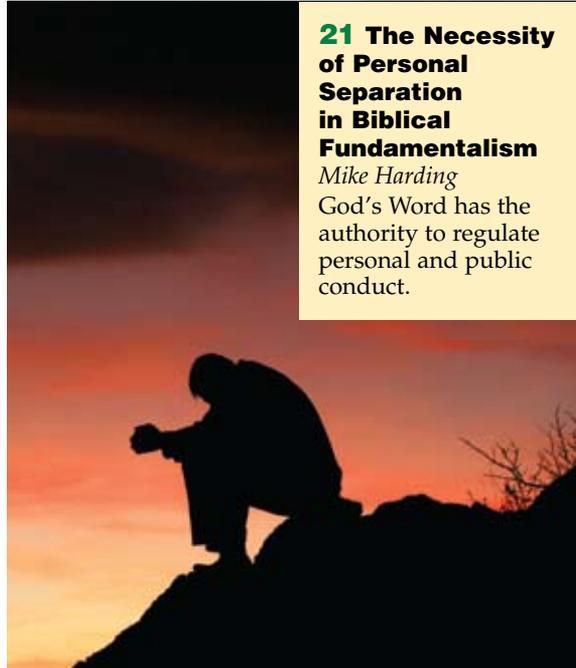
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# Mail Bag

## We want to hear from you!



Let us know what you like or don't like about *FrontLine*. Address your comments to **Managing Editor, *FrontLine*** 2801 Wade Hampton Blvd, Suite 115-165, Taylors, SC 29687. or send them by e-mail to [info@fbfi.org](mailto:info@fbfi.org).

You may request that your letter not be published or that your name be withheld, but anonymous letters will not be accepted.

**D**ear *FrontLine* Magazine,  
Yes, your magazine has been quality, Bible-centered reading!

It seems like each magazine is "just what I need" and "timely" as to when I read the articles.

I read and reread it from cover to cover. I have only been a subscriber for one year and wish I had ordered your magazine much earlier than this.

Some of the authors have preached in our church (Independent Baptist Church, Bolingbrook, IL, with Pastor David Shoaf), and therefore I know some of these authors, which makes the articles even more special!

Thank you so very much!!

*Mary Thomas  
Crest Hill, IL*

**T**hank you for such an informing magazine. The covers are lovely and fit the theme of the articles.

*Norm and Nan Fechtner  
Camarillo, CA*

**W**e had been discussing (in my Sunday school class) what to do when disasters happen, what the church's role was, etc. Then your magazine came this month [Nov/Dec 08] all about what our response should be. Thank you for that—it has been a big help.

*Judy Anderson  
Floyd, VA*

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## The Awkwardness of Necessary Offense

*But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*  
—1 Corinthians 1:23–24

**H**aving publicly prayed “in the name of Jesus,” or “in Christ’s name,” and then having been rebuked for it by someone who “just feels that it is inappropriate,” or that it is “disparaging to the faith of those who do not believe the same as you do,” the truth of the verse quoted above has brought personal strength. When we pray in Jesus’ name, we do not do so with the primary intent of casting a stumblingblock in the path of a Jewish person. We do not do it to verify to the skeptic that we are foolish people. We do it out of love for and loyalty to Christ. Years ago I adopted this response to these rebukes, “I certainly wouldn’t want to force you to accept my personal convictions, but surely you would expect me to be true to them, wouldn’t you?”

More awkward is the increasingly frequent concern expressed by a fellow believer—not just a believer from within the widely diverse community of admitted Evangelicals, but from the Bible-believing, even Fundamentalist, community—that unbelievers or immature believers are turned away in droves because of the offensiveness of separatist, Baptist Fundamentalists. The assumption, and even the argument made to defend it, is that separatism itself is an unnecessary offense, that calling oneself a Baptist is unnecessarily provocative to non-Baptist Bible

believers, and that Fundamentalism is an archaic term that only serves to dredge up controversies from the past. If this view is right, there is no necessary offensiveness.

Of course, unnecessary offensiveness is sin, but must the obligatory disclaimers bind us into a fear of offense that hinders the gospel? No. Perhaps you have seen Charlie Rose’s interview of Rick Warren on PBS. It has been discussed online and referred to in recent books. My son and I actually saw it the night it was broadcast. After being pressed repeatedly by Charlie Rose to simply state what he believed was the spiritual state of the Muslim or Jewish “man of peace” with whom Warren intended to partner in his humanitarian efforts abroad, it was obvious that Warren was either going to have to state the offense of the gospel or deny it. Rose was polite, but insistent, that Warren just tell him where the Muslim or Jew would go when he died unless he trusted Christ as Savior.

As Warren stalled, my son said, “He’s not going to say it.” Here was a man whose ministry has been built on the principle of avoiding offense, being asked to state the offense of the gospel itself. “OK...OK...OK...” His awkwardness was intense. He finally said something to the effect that “the Jewish man is betting on the Ten Commandments,” and that “the Muslim is betting on the five pillars of Islam.” Then, with the courage of an unapologetic smile, he affirmed, “Charlie, I’m betting on Jesus.” That

was it. Decades of inoffensive strategy to position himself to give the gospel to untold millions, followed by a vague statement of confidence in Jesus. Rose had asked, pointedly, “Will they go to Heaven if they do not trust in Christ?” Warren’s commitment to

being inoffensive would not allow him to state the simple truth, “No.” Therein lurks the danger.

Ultimately, no matter how patient we are, how softly we speak, how sweetly we plead, when they find out what we really believe—what the Bible really says—they will have to choose the truth or reject it. Rare is the man who will adamantly reject the gospel

while longing to keep the one witnessing to him as a friend. It does happen, of course, but rarely. I witnessed to a high school chum until he died in his late fifties. We were both lost when we met, and I had been saved when we were in our twenties. I gave him the gospel often and plainly. At one time he asked in mild frustration, “How can you possibly believe that?” and then argued for evolution. When e-mail became available, I tried to witness to him that way. His response was finally, “Never mention this to me again.” Of course, I did.

Near the end of his life, he sensed a need for something more, and sought refuge in the Roman Catholic Church. Its ritual and otherworldly atmosphere seemed to meet a need, for a time. He went so far as to think that a peculiar prismatic phenomenon on his disposable camera had

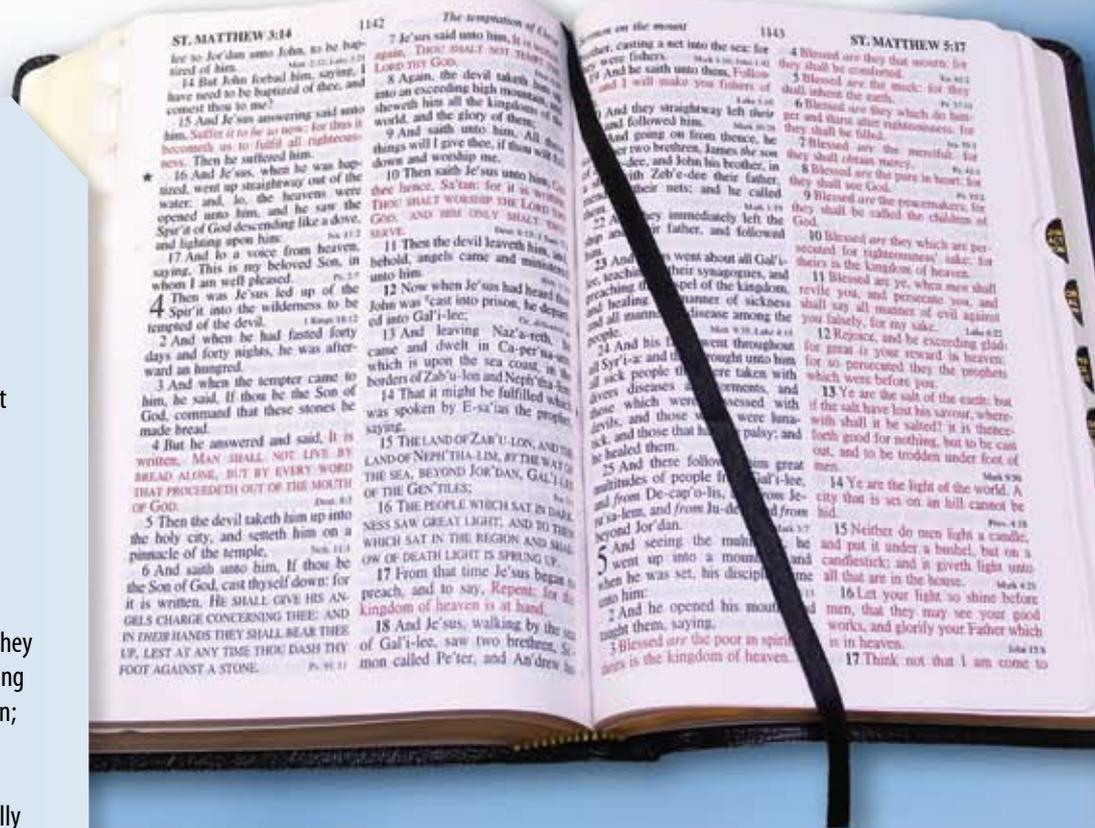
*Rare is the man who will adamantly reject the gospel while longing to keep the one witnessing to him as a friend.*

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# What Is the Gospel?

## Resolution Regarding the Definition of the Gospel

We believe and boldly affirm that the “good news” of the Christian gospel is founded upon the bloody, sacrificial, vicarious, and substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross for our sins, His burial, and His bodily resurrection. All who receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior by means of repentant faith are justified (declared righteous) solely on the grounds of His shed blood. Necessary implications of these truths include that all human beings are Hell-bound sinners; that they are incapable of atoning for their sins, meriting justification, or contributing to their salvation; and that apart from a personal unreserved trust in the theanthropic Christ (God-man) and His cross-work, each of us will be eternally judged by God. Additional implications of the Christian gospel which cannot be denied are Christ’s miraculous virginal conception/birth and sinless life as well as His absolute equality with the Father and distinctive personality in the Triune Godhead (John 1:12; 2 Cor. 15:1–3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:21–26; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2; Phil. 2:5–11).



The word *evangel* means *gospel*. Therefore, to be *evangelical* is to be defined by the gospel. At minimum, those who claim to be Evangelicals should have a very clear idea of what the gospel is.

Within today’s Evangelicalism, however, the content of the gospel is the subject of significant disagreement. Many contemporary Evangelicals are attempting to create an understanding of the gospel that is much more inclusive than the message of personal salvation. While these Evangelicals do not always deny a personal gospel (and some are fervently committed to it), they think that the gospel must also deal with other issues, including problems of a psychological, social, and environmental nature. What they proclaim is neither simply a personal gospel nor a social gospel. It is a both/and gospel.

The basic argument for the both/and gospel is that sin has done more than to disrupt our personal relationship with God. It has disrupted the inner integrity of each individual, resulting in the disintegration of emotional wholeness. It has disrupted the relationship between humans, resulting in oppression and exploitation. It has disrupted our relationship to the created order, resulting in the ruination of nature through human abuse. According to proponents of the both/and gospel, a meaningful gospel must address each of these issues directly.

A common maxim of the both/and gospel is that the gospel is not (only?) about getting people to Heaven when they die it is about getting Heaven onto earth right now. The mechanism through which this heavenly arrival is supposed to occur is the Kingdom of God. According to

the theory, the Kingdom is already present in the world, particularly among the people of God. Therefore, the main business of God's people is to put the Kingdom on display by modeling emotional wholeness, social justice, and environmental concern.

To be clear, those who incorporate social elements into the gospel do not necessarily deny that personal sin has condemned individuals. Nor do they necessarily deny that the gospel includes the element of personal redemption through the propitiatory death of Jesus. What they do, however, is to place their emphasis upon the psychological, social, or ecological dimensions of the gospel. The effect of this shift is to diminish the importance of personal sin and personal redemption. Some of the more extreme advocates of the both/and gospel display a profound reluctance to engage in personal evangelism, substituting social engagement for direct proclamation.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the advocates of this "enlarged" gospel rarely appeal to 1 Corinthians 15. This failure is unfortunate, because 1 Corinthians 15 is the key Biblical passage for understanding the content of the gospel. It is the one passage in which a New Testament writer deliberately aims to tell us what the gospel is.

As Paul explains it, the gospel revolves around two historical events: the death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. Each of these events is supported by empirical evidence: the death of Jesus is demonstrated through His burial, and the resurrection is confirmed by the testimony of the eyewitnesses. Each event also has far-reaching theological implications.

The death of Jesus was "for our sins." This statement implies that we were sinners, that our sins condemned us to a horrible fate, and that we could do nothing to help ourselves. It implies that the guilt of our sins was imputed to Christ. It implies that Christ was a qualified substitute for sinners, a truth that carries with it an understanding of His theanthropic person and His virgin birth. The sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice implies that salvation is applied "by grace, through faith."

The resurrection of Jesus also carries significant implications. The risen Christ is the first-fruits and guarantees the resurrection of His people. He is the Head of a new humanity, over which He stands as the second man and the last Adam. The resurrection is proof of the victory of Jesus, evidence that He has triumphed and that death is a defeated enemy.

The apostle Paul saw the death and resurrection of Jesus primarily as the solution to personal sins. Personal transgressions, not social structures, were at the root of the problems the Corinthian church was facing. Personal guilt—the violation of God's just law—is the fundamental difficulty with which Paul is concerned wherever he teaches about salvation. For Paul, personal redemption was not merely

an aspect of the gospel, it was the gospel itself.

So what should we make of the "gospel of the Kingdom"? Did not John the Baptist and Jesus preach the Kingdom itself as the good news? Did their preaching not imply the full blessing of the Kingdom in all of its emotional, social, and environmental dimensions? Or did Jesus preach a different gospel than Paul?

John and Jesus did indeed preach the imminent Kingdom as good news. This Kingdom was not good news for everyone, however. John warned certain teachers that, for them, the Kingdom meant impending judgment (Matt. 3:7–12). The Kingdom could be good news only for those who were personally just. For the guilty, the Kingdom had to be bad news, for there can be no Kingdom without justice, and there is no justice without judgment.

For guilty people (and that includes all of us), the Kingdom is good news only if guilt can be removed. The arrival of the Kingdom is precisely what dooms us unless we can be forgiven. We will never get to the point of enjoying the emotional, social, and environmental benefits of the Kingdom apart from personal redemption through the blood of Jesus. In other words, the gospel of the Kingdom includes and can exist only by means of the gospel of personal salvation. As Jesus Himself makes clear, entrance into the Kingdom is entirely contingent upon personal repentance and faith (John 3:1–21).

What the both/and gospel has done is to take the secondary effects of the gospel and to put them in the place of the gospel itself. Think of it this way: suppose you have been experiencing distressing physical symptoms such as fatigue and severe nausea. You go to the doctor, who diagnoses you as having parasites living in you and consuming your blood. By way of treatment, however, the doctor prescribes only stimulants for your tiredness and antacids for your nausea.

You would not think much of such a physician. You would look for a doctor who wanted to do more than treat the symptoms. You would want to find a healer who

## AS PAUL EXPLAINS IT, THE GOSPEL REVOLVES AROUND TWO HISTORICAL EVENTS: THE DEATH OF JESUS ON THE CROSS AND HIS RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD.

could remove the parasites. You would rightly regard your fatigue and nausea as secondary issues.

What the advocates of the both/and gospel do is exactly what you would not want a physician to do. They have invented a system for treating symptoms, but they have neglected the fundamental disease. Until the guilt of personal sin is erased, psychological, social, and environmental wholeness will remain an illusory dream. No amount of wrongly-founded optimism can help us sinners until our sin is forgiven and our guilt removed.

Even though both/and Evangelicals do not deny personal redemption, they certainly diminish its importance. Because they put the symptoms in the place of the disease, they end up diluting the gospel—and a diluted gospel is one that is robbed of its power. The irony is that, in their concern to treat the symptoms of sin, the Evangelicals “of

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the Left” fail to deal with the very thing that produces the symptoms: personal guilt. When they have finished their treatment, the parasite is still alive and well.

The gospel of the Evangelical Left is like a Picasso painting in which objects are recognizable but everything is out of proportion. This treatment of the gospel takes things that belong in the background and moves them into the

foreground. It takes things that ought to be in sharp focus and blurs them. The result is a lack of clarity about what our need is and what Christ has done to meet it.

People can tamper with the gospel in more than one way. Some have denied the gospel outright. Others have denied the gospel implicitly by denying some truth that is essential to it. Still others have demeaned the gospel by refusing to recognize its role as the boundary of Christian fellowship.

The both/and perspective tampers with the gospel in a different way. On the one hand, it dilutes the gospel by adding to it. On the other hand, it often displaces the gospel by placing greater importance upon its supposed psychological, social, or emotional components than it does upon personal repentance and salvation.

Tampering with the gospel is not a matter that we should ever take lightly. To cloud the gospel is a serious thing. Therefore, we must evaluate the both/and gospel as a serious error rather than a minor mistake. We cannot afford to leave this error unaddressed, for if we value the gospel we must do all that we can to ensure that it is articulated clearly.

Dr. Kevin Bauder has served as president of Central Baptist Theological Seminary of Minneapolis since 2003. He holds a DMin from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and a PhD from Dallas Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Debra, live in Crystal, Minnesota.



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## Resolution Regarding Fundamentalism and Culture

Whereas true believers have always functioned actively within the culture in which they find themselves,

And whereas Jesus Christ clearly indicated that true believers must live in the world but not of it,

And whereas believers have been directed by God not to be lovers of the worldly system that surrounds them or to revisit the past sinful lifestyles from which they were saved,

And whereas Scripture clearly defines the thoughts, values and behaviors associated with those lifestyles,

And whereas sins previously not named among believers such as the use of alcohol as a beverage, premarital sex, adultery, homosexuality, profanity, vulgarity, immodesty, and much more are now not only viewed unashamedly by believers as entertainment but also practiced without shame among those who name Christ,

And whereas present-day Fundamentalism has been dismissed as a product of the culture,

The FBFi denies that Fundamentalism is simply a product of culture but affirms that it is the result of Biblical truth applied to culture. We assert that true believers must interact with culture while separating from its sinful values and practices. Such an interaction will demand a deep understanding of the Word of God, a true humility and submission to the Holy Spirit, and a willingness to sacrifice any object, habit, or affection that might displease or dishonor the Savior. Fundamentalists must guard against an anachronistic set of rules that fails to see the true intent of Scripture and creates a caricature of New Testament Christianity. At the same time, Fundamentalists must be honest with themselves about the presence of worldliness within our own churches and individual lives and not forsake true holiness under the guise of a false Christian liberty. We cannot have true revival without an attending holiness, and we will not truly reach the world without the power of God that accompanies true revival.

# Is Fundamentalism a Cultural Phenomenon?

One criticism leveled against Fundamentalists is their refusal to engage the culture. Sociologist Alan Wolfe writes, “When believers refuse to engage the culture, their opponents dismiss them as fanatics, frustrated people rendered insecure by the dilemmas and opportunities of modernity.”<sup>1</sup> Implicit in this complaint is resentment toward Fundamentalists for being unsociable: they are generally an intolerant people who do not mix well with their culture. Interestingly, this same complaint was directed against first-century believers by Roman hedonists.

It is true that historically Fundamentalists have refused to tolerate, let alone participate in behavior that exalts sensual pleasure and denigrates Christian values. The criticism is perennial, and understandably so, since sincere Christians have taken seriously the Biblical admonition to love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. They love and are loved by God, whose values are theirs and whose commands they seek to obey. And those living for the world have hated them for it.

### At Odds with a Depraved Culture

From earliest times Christians have been distinguished by their exemplary lives in contrast to a depraved culture. A second-century Christian apologist testified to the pagan tutor Diognetus that “Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind either in locality or in speech or in customs . . . neither do they use some different language. . . . [They] follow the native customs in dress and food and the other arrangements of life.” In other words, they adapted culturally to acceptable standards of behavior.

So what set them apart and made them despised? A godly behavior requiring separation from evil practices: “They marry like all men and they beget children, but they do not cast away their offspring. They

have their meals in common, but not their wives. They find themselves in the flesh, and yet they live not after the flesh." These Christians made a distinction between living in the world and being of the world because they belonged to a city "whose builder and maker is God." They realized that their "existence is on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven." And they lived like it. The paradox of that earthly existence was the fact that although "they love all men, they are persecuted by all. . . . They are reviled, and they bless; . . . doing good they are punished as evil-doers."<sup>2</sup> This has been the historical lot of obedient God-fearing Christians. And this is the heritage of Fundamentalists whose wish has been to emulate their valiant ancestors, who, if alive today, would join their Fundamentalist counterparts by rejecting homosexuality and same-sex marriage, abortion, fornication, and a myriad of other moral evils that have become acceptable practices in secularist and idolatrous cultures. Therefore, in these respects we may identify Fundamentalism, insofar as the movement is a pattern of primitive Christianity, as a cultural phenomenon. That is, because of its belief system, Christianity has been phenomenally at odds with a culture that has made it the object of derision and persecution. Indeed, the Bible makes it clear that such opposition should be expected (Matt. 5:11, 12; John 15:20; 2 Tim. 3:12).

### Unnecessarily Anachronistic?

A second and in some cases a valid criticism against Fundamentalists is their persistence in holding to anachronistic mores that are culturally outdated. These would include prohibitions that for some seem no longer relevant, such as issues regarding facial hair for men and pants for

a moral evil, such as the drug or rock culture? And are the lyrics doctrinally sound? If it is true that people define their identity by what they wear and the music they listen to, would it not be appropriate for Fundamentalists to define themselves by the best standards possible in any given culture? Without becoming dowdy in style or pharisaical in attitude, Fundamentalists should look for ways to inculcate behavior in both dress and music that glorifies God, and not resign standards in order to "fit in" to the culture.

Another cultural problem involves the media. Today, the video rental store, TV, and the Internet have made it much easier to bring Hollywood, with all its graphic sex and violence, into the Christian home. With ease of access has come a corresponding tolerance of and even acquiescence to the world's values.

But we must realize that the culture is becoming increasingly pornographic and resist the temptation to condone or excuse it. The problem can even affect hermeneutics when we begin to place so many cultural conditioners on Scriptural prohibitions to the point that holiness becomes only a metaphor for "super sainthood." It may be worthwhile to return to the sayings of the Fundamentalist fathers to find out exactly how they viewed worldliness before the advent of modern media, which has given us a world of entertainment immeasurably more corrupt than theirs.

### How Much Change Is Appropriate?

Culture is always changing, and for that reason Fundamentalists must continually ask the question of how much they can change without sacrificing Biblical standards (or change governed by Biblical standards). After all, the fundamental change that God expects is that we become more like Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). We have come a long way (happily!) from corsets and suit vests (the acceptable dress for nineteenth-century Victorian Fundamentalists). Styles have changed, but the criteria early Fundamentalists used to determine them should remain: (1) any cultural change is unacceptable if it means surrender to moral or spiritual declension; and (2) any change must be governed by time-

less truths, serve divine intent, and complement divine attributes, particularly God's holiness.

A third complaint against Fundamentalist Christians is that they appear dispassionate regarding those victimized by the ethical and moral inequities that plague most societies, such as racial injustice, political corruption, and poverty. Their refusal to participate in ecumenical dialogue for resolution of cultural problems betrays a lack of concern, so the argument goes. But the mission of the church, according to divine directive (Matt. 28:19, 20), is not to reform society but to confront its members with the claims

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women. It may have been appropriate to proscribe these during the cultural revolution of the 1960s and '70s, when the rebellious hippie movement was in full swing, but they no longer have the same association.

However, the Scriptural standard has not changed: it is still *modesty*, i.e., a style of dress that maintains standards of decency and moderation. Music styles have also changed, leaving Fundamentalists confused as to what is appropriate. Subjectivity and personal taste seem to play a much larger role in worship than they once did. Yet standards of selectivity must still govern choices: Is the music associated with

of Christ and compassionately offer a gracious gospel that has the power not merely to reform but to regenerate.

In waging war against various forms of destructive humanism, from Modernism to Postmodernism, Fundamentalists have realized that a gospel of human rehabilitation is not the solution to social ills. Society's main problem is sin, and the only effective answer to sin is forgiveness through the penal vicarious atonement of the God-man Jesus Christ. Unlike many Evangelicals who attempt to use the world's methods to win the world, Fundamentalists recognize that only the unadulterated gospel of Christ can transform lives and consequently impact society for good. A major problem of American Evangelicalism is that it has allowed the culture to alter its faith instead of using a Biblical faith to alter lives for God.

### Stance of the FBFI

For the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International (FBFI) to be viable we must adhere militantly to separation from all forms of ungodliness, but we must also remain separated unto sound doctrine for the sake of the gospel. The FBFI must have local church leaders who quite simply emphasize the movement's genius—the *fundamentals of the Christian faith*, without which there is no true Christianity and no true church. It must stress the point of persistent indoctrination through careful exposition of Biblical truth while exposing and repudiating its counterfeits.

One of the strangest perversions in the history of Christianity is occurring in this twenty-first-century post-modern relativistic culture: such diverse groups as feminists, Roman Catholics, emergents, open theists, universalists, homosexuals, social gospelites, civil rights liberationists, and Third-Wave Charismatics are claiming the Evangelical label. And, more seriously, they are getting by with it. The reason is that doctrine has been replaced with attractive, inoffensive pragmatics. "Gone is the language of sin and damnation. Forgotten are all the doctrinal differences that were once of burning importance."<sup>3</sup> Consequently, the umbrella of Evangelicalism has become so broad and the evangel so elastic that nearly anything professing a Christian

"connection" may be included. Evangelicalism is no longer defined in terms of doctrine but by some vague existential experience "with Jesus" and narcissistic user-friendly "worship celebration." In response to this enormous travesty, Fundamentalism must mount a countercultural assault on Evangelical impostures by carefully and boldly articulating the exclusive revelation of an inerrant Bible.

It has not been, nor should it be, the culture that dictates the direction and strategies of Fundamentalism. The movement was born in the crucible of conflict and maintained by the careful exposition of doctrine from church pulpit, conference platform, and classroom podium, in opposition to a culture at enmity with God. Fundamentalists, to be successful in combating the enemies of righteousness, to be consistent with their historical heritage, and to be true to their identity and convictions, must not use the carnal weapons of a culture corrupted by evil, but weapons supplied by the Holy Spirit.

The only effectual offensive weapon available to the church that God has promised to bless is the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Its doctrines must be proclaimed knowledgeably, uncompromisingly, and passionately. It is doctrine upon which the Fundamentalist movement was founded; it is doctrine by which it has and should be defined; it is doctrine that directed its progress and its neglect, which has permitted both excess (into side issues) and regress (into carnal self-reliance); and it is doctrine (or the neglect of it) that will determine its destiny.

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<sup>1</sup> *Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith* (New York: Free Press, 2003), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Statements taken from the *Epistle to Diognetus* in *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. J. B. Lightfoot (reprint of 1891 Macmillan ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), pp. 253–54.

<sup>3</sup> Cited from jacket cover of *Transformation of American Religion*.

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## Resolution Regarding Limited Participation

Whereas the Scripture admonishes believers generally to maintain fellowship with one another in the love of Christ and in the bond of peace,

And whereas the Scripture also commands believers, individually and collectively, to separate themselves from professing believers who persist in disobedience to the clear teachings of the Word of God,

And whereas Christian individuals and ministries that otherwise enjoy fellowship with one another in the Lord may still disagree over sincerely held convictions, over questions of ministry philosophy, and over judgment as to the prudence of various courses of action,

And whereas such disagreements may be significant and may limit the degree to which individuals and ministries may participate together in various aspects of the work of the ministry,

And whereas the Bible establishes the pattern of respect for the soul liberty and responsibility of individuals and local churches as to matters not clearly determined by Scripture,

Now, therefore, the FBFI urges God's people:

To respect the liberty of Christian individuals and ministries to limit their participation in projects or activities provided that the particular exercise of this liberty does not violate Scripture;

To avoid labeling such limited participation as separation and to avoid giving the impression in its exercise that other believers or ministries are in sin or are spiritually inferior;

To avoid limiting participation based solely on personal or group preferences as opposed to sincerely and reasonably held principles; and

To practice diligently, forcefully, and lovingly the obligation to separate from believers and ministries that persist in disobedience to clear Biblical mandates or precepts.

# Separation versus Limited Participation Is There A Difference?



Pastor Robert Corso is facing a hard decision. Another Bible-believing pastor in his town has asked him to participate in a joint youth outreach emphasis. The difficulty is that Pastor Corso has some significant differences with the other church in terms of ministry philosophy and the practice of youth ministry. Although he does not wish to throw stones, he does not feel comfortable participating in the event. Pastor Corso is sure that some of his church members believe that he should publicly separate from the other church. Other members would see nothing wrong with participating, given that the gospel is more important than a church's "parochial interests."

Although there are times when a church must unequivocally separate itself from individuals and ministries, many times a pastor is faced with a situation like the one above. He does not believe that he has clear enough Scriptural warrant to publicly declare another ministry or minister to be "in sin," but he does not think it prudent to involve himself too closely with that ministry or a particular project. The question is whether he has the leeway to limit his participation without officially separating from the other ministry. Are there such things as prudential limits on association that are different in nature from Biblical separation?

### Theological Basis for Prudential Limits on Association

There are many issues about which we can and should be dogmatic because the Bible speaks plainly concerning them. There are other issues that we disagree on due to personal preference. Candor requires us to admit, however, that there are also disagreements that are neither clearly matters of right or wrong nor clearly matters of personal preference or opinion. These may involve ministry philosophy, theological systems, prudence, and personal or group standards.

There are many examples that fall within this third area. A believer may decide not to participate with fellow believers in certain amusements or other activities because he does not think they are wise or God-honoring. Christian parents may place restrictions on their children that are not placed on other children in their church. Church leaders may feel the need to caution their members against the potential dangers associated with a certain Christian movement, however well-meaning it may be. For those responsible for the care of others, whether parents or pastors, such practices make common sense. The question remains, however, whether they are Biblically justifiable. Two principles commonly called Baptist distinctives<sup>1</sup> form the basis for personal and ecclesiastical liberty in this area.

### *The principle of soul-liberty and the importance of conscience*

*Soul liberty* is the belief that the individual believer's conscience is not bound in matters of faith by the opinions or dictates of others. Soul liberty is sometimes misunderstood to mean that a Christian has the freedom of conscience to believe whatever he or she wants to believe without consequence. This is not the case. Where the Scriptures are clear, all believers must submit. Neither does soul liberty mean that believers are not to be subject to the rule of legitimate authorities in practical matters. It does mean, however, that a Christian's conscience is answerable to the Word of God, not the dictates of men.<sup>2</sup>

One implication of soul liberty is the fact that we owe respect to one another when we disagree. One responsibility that comes with soul liberty is that believers must seek to live according to their convictions.<sup>3</sup> Paul makes this point very clear in his discussion of dietary restrictions and special holy days (Rom. 14). Since the Old Testament dietary restrictions no longer applied to the believer, the brother who retained compunctions about such things was "weak" in the faith in that he lacked a mature understanding of New Testament theology. Nevertheless, in the case where the brother is incorrect in his assessment, Paul insists that he not be pressured into violating his conscience, because to do so would be sin.<sup>4</sup> If conscience is so important even when it is not fully informed, how much more should it be respected when based upon an arguably valid ethical or prudential concern?<sup>5</sup>

Related to the concept of soul liberty is the Baptist distinctive that a local church is a voluntary association of regenerated persons. Although a believer has a spiritual obligation to join himself to a local assembly, he is not assigned to one as in a parish system. He, therefore, has the liberty to make this choice based on his conscience and the degree of accord between the ministry in question and his sincere Biblical convictions.

What is true of individual Christians is also true, in varying degrees, of those who are in authority over others. Parents, pastors, and Christian school administrators have an obligation not simply to enforce explicit Biblical commands but also to practice Biblical wisdom when it comes to those under their charge. This authority varies according to the relationship between the persons involved. Pastors are not parents

of their members. Neither do they have the right to bind the consciences of those under their authority apart from clear Biblical precept. Nevertheless, their shepherding responsibility does give them authority in the church.<sup>6</sup>

### *The principle of the autonomy of the local church*

A central feature of congregational polity as practiced by Baptists and others is the independence of the local church. The local assembly retains the right and responsibility to manage its own affairs free from the control of any other ecclesiastical body. Local churches may cooperate in various ways to advance the Kingdom. However, each church is free to participate or not as it understands its responsibility to the Lord.<sup>7</sup> Churches must decide what missionaries to support, what activities to become involved in, and what colleges to recommend to their young people. In some cases these decisions are mandated by Bible precept. In other cases they are matters of prudence. In such cases the church can and should make distinctions based on its understanding of Scripture and its sense of its mission and convictions.

### **The Fundamental Difference between Separation and Limited Participation**

This article is neither a defense nor a comprehensive explanation of the doctrine of separation from a professing believer. Nevertheless, one must observe some basic tenets of the Bible's teaching on that subject to distinguish it from prudential limits on association.

## **LOCAL CHURCHES MAY COOPERATE IN VARIOUS WAYS TO ADVANCE THE KINGDOM. HOWEVER, EACH CHURCH IS FREE TO PARTICIPATE OR NOT AS IT UNDERSTANDS ITS RESPONSIBILITY TO THE LORD.**

Several Bible passages form the foundation for the practice of separation from a fellow believer. This article will assume a basic familiarity with the passage and will also assume without argument that the texts genuinely teach the requirement to separate from a fellow believer in appropriate circumstances.<sup>8</sup> The passages in question are Matthew 18:15–20; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15; and Titus 3:8–11. These passages embody several central principles concerning separation from a disobedient Christian—principles which stand in stark contrast with the concept of limited participation.

### *Separation demands a clear Scriptural justification*

The first pertinent characteristic of these passages is that they all require a clear Biblical basis for separation. In each case there is clear, Biblically defined wrongdoing on the part of the offender. In Matthew 18 Christ says that if a brother sins we are obliged to go to him privately to try to resolve the matter. The process of taking one or two witnesses, bringing the matter before the church, and finally expelling the offending brother also implies that the sinfulness of the brother's action is not in doubt. In 1 Corinthians 5:11 Paul commands the church not to keep company with a professing Christian who is "a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner." The behaviors listed here are violations of clear Biblical norms for Christian living. Second Thessalonians 3:6 commands us to withdraw ourselves from every brother who "walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received" from Paul. It also mandates that we refuse to keep company with those who do not live in accordance with Paul's word in the epistle (v. 14).

Another important passage in this regard is Titus 3:8–11, in which Paul instructs Titus to constantly affirm teaching that promotes good works on the part of the believers. By contrast he is to avoid "foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law." In this context Titus is further to reject a "heretick" after warning him once or twice. In this context, the term appears to refer to someone who contentiously causes divisions over pet doctrines and interpretations.<sup>9</sup> For present purposes, whatever the particular problem, Paul affirms that the basis for withdrawing from such a person is our knowledge that he "is subverted" and is sinning (vv. 11–14).

## **THESE PASSAGES . . . MEAN THAT WE MAY SEPARATE FROM A BROTHER ONLY IF HE IS DOING WRONG AS DETERMINED BY THE APPLICATION OF CLEAR BIBLICAL STATEMENTS OR PRINCIPLES.**

These passages, as well as the overall teaching of the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, mean that we may separate from a brother only if he is doing wrong as determined by the application of clear Biblical statements or principles. Mere disagreement, however sincere, as to the wisdom of a course of action or practice does not justify separation. On the other hand, Christians and churches alike regularly decide for reasons of prudence or conscience to avoid participating in certain activities, supporting certain ministries, or promoting certain emphases. Similarly one may be very uneasy with the direction of another believer or ministry. Many times one cannot say with certainty that such concerns can meet the standard of proof required for Biblical separation.<sup>10</sup>

### *Separation is obligatory*

If there are Scriptural grounds for it, then separation is not optional. In each of these passages the instructions to the believer are given in the form of imperatives. To fail to separate in such cases is itself disobedience to the Word of God. There appear to be variations in the process. In the case of an individual dealing with a sinning brother, he must go to him before proceeding to further steps of discipline, because the passage emphasizes the desire for restoration. In the case of a leader confronted with a contentious, divisive member, he should warn him once or twice before rejecting him. If a professing believer is living openly contrary to the commands of Scripture and Christian purity, then the church is to withdraw fellowship from him and put him out. In all cases, however, the responsibility to separate in appropriate cases is not left to preference or opinion. Separation from a Christian brother in case of clear, willful, and persistent disobedience is not optional; it is mandatory.

By contrast the decision to participate or not to participate in something that makes me uncomfortable is an individual decision. Two brothers or two churches might come to different conclusions about the matter.

### *Separation aims to bring the wrongdoer to repentance*

Given that a brother or sister is in clear violation of God's Word, the most loving thing that we can do is to work for his or her restoration. Restoration in such cases demands repentance. Therefore, both our words and our actions must communicate, however kindly, "You are in sin, and you must repent." There is no room to "agree to disagree" or simply to avoid talking about an unpleasant situation. Restoration is at the center of Christ's instructions in Matthew 18 ("thou hast gained thy brother"). Paul also makes it clear that the result of the withdrawal of fellowship is that the erring brother should "be ashamed" (2 Thess. 3:14) and presumably repent. In 2 Corinthians 2:1–11, Paul instructs the church regarding restoring a repentant brother who had been disciplined by the congregation.

By contrast, in cases that are not Biblically definite one might find a brother's course of action unwise and admonish him to that effect. Nevertheless, such cases do not warrant an insistence that the brother repent. One might say or think, "I believe you are going down a wrong road, and I cannot in good conscience go with you. Nevertheless, we all have to give an account to the Lord Jesus, and I pray that He will guide you in His will."

### *Separation is public*

In at least some cases, the process of discipline begins in private, and the circle of exposure expands only insofar as necessary to bring about the desired repentance. Nevertheless, if the brother is stubborn, then the command is to tell it to the church, with expulsion as the next step.

Once the matter has come to the point of separation, the entire congregation knows about it. It is, at least as far as the Christian community is concerned, a public matter. A response that allows brethren to simply part ways while keeping the reason for the breach personal is inconsistent with the purposes of separation—the restoration of the believer through group admonition and the protection of the public testimony of the assembly.

### *Separation involves significant disassociation*

Although there may be some variation in the degree to which we avoid a person from whom we separate, it is clear that the break that we must make is very significant. It involves treating him “as an heathen man and a publican” (Matt. 18:17); “put[ting] away” the person (1 Cor. 5:13); not eating with him (1 Cor. 5:11); rejecting him (Titus 3:10); and refusing to keep company with him (2 Thess. 3:6).

By contrast, the decision not to participate in an activity or not to join an association, for example, is limited in scope. It does not prevent personal fellowship or mutual encouragement. Neither does it necessarily imply that believers or ministries who disagree about certain things cannot participate together in other areas. One is certainly not entitled in these cases to treat the brother with whom one disagrees as an unbeliever or even to insist he is disobedient. In fact, one may need to take pains to indicate that, while there is a strong disagreement, there is still mutual esteem as fellow servants of Jesus Christ.

The above distinctions show that the kind of limited participation being discussed in this article is not simply different in degree, but it is also different in kind from Biblical separation. Separation from a disobedient brother must be based on clear Biblical commands or principles, is mandatory, is public, is significant, and is designed to bring about repentance. On the other hand, nonparticipation arises from personal convictions or conscience, is based on prudence, may be limited in scope and public exposure, and often allows the disagreement to remain.

### **Examples of Nonparticipation**

Two examples, one Biblical, and one historical, help illustrate the principles being discussed. Luke records that Paul and Barnabas had a serious falling out over John Mark. Although there are various views on who was right in the underlying dispute, I believe that both Barnabas and Paul had a point. John Mark should have been accorded a chance at rehabilitation in the missionary task. Later on, Paul states that John Mark had become useful to him in the ministry—this not to mention John Mark’s authorship of the second Gospel. On the other hand, the journey that Paul had planned probably was too demanding for the young man. What would have happened to John Mark if he had abandoned the work a second time? Moreover, the Lord led Paul to Timothy, a man perfectly suited to be his protégé. In any case, Paul and Barnabas’s pointed disagreement as to ministry philosophy and practice led them to go in separate directions. Although it does not serve the Spirit’s purpose for Luke to settle the disagreement, the result was the advancement of the gospel through the formation of two mission teams in place of one.

Church history also supplies an example in the case of Adoniram Judson. Commissioned as a Congregational missionary, Judson came to the Baptist position on believer’s baptism while studying the Scriptures on his sea voyage to the field. Being a man of integrity, he wrote the Congregational mission board to offer his resignation and sought the sponsorship of the Baptist agency. Judson was no “hyper-separatist”; however, he understood that his Congregationalist supporters had sent him out as a Congregational missionary and had the right to expect that he would in that capacity plant Congregational churches.

### **Dangers Associated with Limited Participation**

There are several dangers involving the misapplication of the principles that we have discussed. The first two come from blurring the line between separation

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and prudential limits on participation. First, in an attempt to avoid difficult or awkward situations a pastor might decide just to avoid interacting with a sister ministry, when in reality loving confrontation and, if necessary, separation are Biblically mandated. A church might think and affirm that it is practicing Biblical separation when in reality it is simply avoiding the other ministry and not fulfilling its Scriptural duties. A second danger is separating from a brother or ministry without clear Scriptural warrant. Although there may be latitude to limit participation with another ministry due to a good-faith disagreement or matters of wisdom, publicly separating in such cases would be schismatic.

Other dangers arise from a failure to discern correctly when one should limit participation. Parents can be overly protective on the one hand or negligent on the other in regulating the associations of their children. Individuals can be either overly rigid in personal practices at the expense of fellowship with other believers, or they can fail in their responsibility by always going along with the group. Finally, churches, through their leaders, can sometimes be overly scrupulous or nervous about associations while at other times ignoring their responsibility to maintain in good faith their doctrines and practices. In the end, as in other areas of practical theology, decisions must be arrived at through the application of Biblical principles and spiritual discernment.

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<sup>1</sup> While all the Baptist distinctives as a group serve to distinguish baptistic churches from others, a variety of the individual distinctions are shared by various groups.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 14:12: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

<sup>3</sup> With regard to the use of the term *convictions* in this article, unless the context indicates otherwise the term has the general sense of something of which one is convinced, a sincere belief. Convictions may vary in importance and may be held with different levels of certainty. They are not necessarily something for which one is willing to die. Nevertheless, a conviction is different from a preference, which by definition has no greater moral authority than the will or desires of the one who holds it. As used here, a conviction is the result of a sincere desire and effort on the part of the one holding it to determine what is right, whether or not others come to the same conclusion. Therefore, convictions have moral force for the one who holds them.

<sup>4</sup> The brother who exercises his liberty should not look down on the one who has a compunction about it, and the brother who refrains should not judge as an evildoer his brother who does not share his compunction (Rom. 14:23).

<sup>5</sup> For example, Paul gave several circumstances in which a believer should refrain from eating meat offered to idols. It is certainly wrong if it somehow involves the believer in pagan worship (1 Cor. 10:18–22). Similarly one should refrain if it would lead a brother into idolatry (1 Cor. 8).

<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 13:17.

<sup>7</sup> Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 1078–79; Kevin T. Bauder, "Baptist Church Cooperation—Part I" "In the Nick of Time, Church History," *Sharper Iron*. <http://www.sharperiron.org/2008/05/20/baptist-church-cooperation>.

<sup>8</sup> See Fred Moritz, *Be Ye Holy: A Call to Christian Separation* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 1994), 71–87; Mark Sidwell, *The Dividing Line: Understanding and Applying Biblical Separation* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1998), 55–68; Ernest Pickering, *Biblical Separation: The Struggle for a Pure Church* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1979), 217–24.

<sup>9</sup> See Moritz, pp. 80–81.

<sup>10</sup> This fact does not imply, however, that these decisions are arbitrary or based on mere personal preference. Rather they rest upon one's understanding and application of Biblical principle and the exercise of God-given wisdom. By way of analogy, a criminal defendant must be found guilty "beyond a reasonable doubt," whereas a civil lawsuit over the same alleged wrongdoing need only be proven "by a preponderance of the evidence."



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# Separatist, Baptist Fundamentalism

## Resolution Regarding Separatist Baptist Fundamentalism

Whereas the history of the FBFI evidences clear and unbending commitment to the fundamentals of the faith without which New Testament Christianity cannot exist,

And whereas the FBFI remains absolutely committed to its identity as Baptist both in doctrine and in practice,

And whereas the practice of separation is a Biblically mandated response to unbelief and disobedience to the faith,

And whereas these principles are based upon Scripture and are therefore normative, regardless of the surrounding culture or theological climate,

The FBFI reaffirms its commitment to maintain and preserve separatist Baptist Fundamentalism both now and for as long as this fellowship shall exist.

The FBFI reaffirms its position and core value as promoting separatist Baptist Fundamentalism. Historically, Fundamentalism has been identified by an adherence to the fundamentals of the faith as identified during the Fundamentalist/Modernist controversies of the early twentieth century. From its inception Fundamentalism has not only held those doctrines known as the fundamentals but has also contended for them when necessary and battled any doctrinal position that would oppose or threaten them. In its purest form, Fundamentalism is a deep commitment to and willingness to contend for the clear teaching of the Word of God.

We readily recognize that not all Fundamentalists are Baptists. Early Fundamentalists included Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, Baptists, and many more. They fought royally the corruption of theological liberalism within their own denominational structures.

We recognize that while the theological battles of the past continue today in various forms, new doctrinal corruptions have recently arisen that are of equal import with the fundamentals of previous generations. Such corruptions would include but not be limited to issues commonly known as the Open View of God; the New Perspective on Paul; the Social Gospel; the redefining of marriage; and various corruptions of bibliology such as the denial of inerrancy and the elevation of particular versions or texts above the original autographs of Scripture.

### Separate

Separatism was not an early identifying mark of a Fundamentalist. The battles raged within the denominational structures over control of mission boards, colleges, seminaries, and, depending on the denominational structures, church buildings and individual churches themselves. When it became clear that the Modernists would maintain control of the denominational structures, Fundamentalists had a clear choice—stay and cooperate or leave. Cooperation meant compromise, so they separated. Separation eventually became an identifying mark of Fundamentalism because obedience to the Scriptures in the circumstances demanded it. The FBFI affirms the separatist practices of Fundamentalists as a correct and faithful response to those who would compromise the faith once delivered to the saints. We do not condemn our early Fundamentalist leaders for remaining and fighting. Stewardship of the institutions founded and built by faithful believers demanded that they make every effort not to abandon valuable resources to compromise. But we also commend them for separating once it was clear that those resources were lost.

Separation took a new angle with the rise of New Evangelicalism. Under the leadership of such men as Ockenga, Carnell, and Graham, some Fundamentalists sought to re-establish relationships with the Modernists and remake Fundamentalism in a kinder, gentler, and more academically respected form. To the Fundamentalists of the 1940s and '50s this practice was a clear violation of many direct commands of Scripture. It also confused the message of the gospel. So the line was drawn between the two groups. They became Fundamentalists and New Evangelicals, later called "Evangelicals." Even today these terms can be confusing. Some use the term "Evangelical" to describe the whole of believers not categorized as theologically liberal. Others use the term to describe the group that would claim neither theological liberalism nor separatist Fundamentalism.

The FBFI affirms the necessity of separation both from unbelief (theological liberalism) and from brothers walking in false unity with those who deny the faith. The first group denies the faith by proclamation; the second denies it by through confusing association.

Another type of separation was at work during the rise of Fundamentalism. While the northern groups separated primarily over theological issues, Baptists, especially in the South, separated over worldliness as well. While separation over lifestyle issues was not considered an identifying mark of Fundamentalism everywhere (especially among the northern groups), it was seen so by some. It would be hard to argue that one is faithful to the Word of God while he is clearly living in worldliness. There has never been a consensus in Fundamentalism on the specifics of certain issues of entertainment, dress, or music, but there has been the clear understanding that true Bible believers seek to actively apply Biblical principles to every area of life and that they desire to be morally distinct from the sinfulness of the world around them.

While we would maintain that in the present environment all true Fundamentalists are separatists, we also would assert that not all separatists are Fundamentalists. History offers many examples of divisive groups that separated over issues clearly not justified by Scripture. The racism of supremacist groups and the primitivism of the Amish and some Mennonites are issues completely distinct from the driving forces of separation in Fundamentalism. It is for this reason that those who carry the mantle of early Fundamentalism now must call themselves Biblical Fundamentalists to draw a distinction between themselves and radicals of all faiths.

While being firmly committed to our doctrine, practice, and history as Baptists, the FBFI clearly recognizes that not all Baptists are Fundamentalists. The two granddaddy denominations among the Baptists would serve as examples. Most within the Southern Baptist Convention would not identify themselves as Fundamentalists (even if they hold to the fundamentals). The American Baptist Church (the former Northern Baptist Convention) has long ago identified itself wholeheartedly with the liberalism of the early Modernists.

## Independent

We are independent Baptists, identifying with the early English Baptists and with the distinctives commonly held

among almost all Baptists. These would include the affirmation of the Bible as sole authority for faith and practice, the autonomy of the local church, the priesthood of every believer, two offices of pastor and deacon, individual soul liberty (and responsibility), the separation of church and state, two ordinances (the Lord's supper and baptism), and a saved, serving church membership. Baptists have generally practiced congregational church government and have condemned sacramentalism even in the ordinances they claim are Biblical. There is no recognition of the communication of grace in the ordinances practiced by Baptists. We have always seen the ordinances as entirely symbolic.

The doctrine of the autonomy of the local church among independent Baptists has especially allowed our churches to grow and multiply free of the constant political battles within broader denominational structures. This is perhaps one great reason that a significant majority of those claiming the name Biblical Fundamentalist today also claim the name Baptist.

This autonomy is not without its deficiencies. The inability to regulate doctrine from one church or school to the next has allowed extremism to exist in generous amounts among those who claim to be Baptist Fundamentalists. This would include, but not be limited to, text and translation issues as well as skewed forms of church government. While the New Evangelicals sought academic and intellectual recognition, some Fundamentalists have become extremists in the other direction. It is not necessarily a sin to be ignorant, but there is a certain sinfulness in willful ignorance, and it is deeply sinful to be proud of it.

While we certainly have an appreciation for those within other denominational circles who were or continue to be Fundamentalists, we, as the FBFI, boldly and without apology continue to identify ourselves as Baptists and faithfully teach the Biblical distinctives that define us as such.

**We are Fundamentalists**, clinging doggedly to the fundamentals of the faith and contending for them if need be. We will continue to examine attacks both old and new on Biblical orthodoxy and boldly defend in preaching, print (electronic and otherwise), and in practice.

**We are Baptists**, proudly claiming the history and ecclesiology of those who have identified themselves as Baptists for nearly five hundred years, and even more so with the New Testament Church whose practice we seek to follow.

**We are also separatists**, recognizing that every NT church must clearly define how it will relate with other faith groups in its local community and around the world. We will draw clear distinctions of fellowship and cooperation between ourselves and those who would deny the fundamentals. We will confront as necessary those who claim the fundamentals while walking in disobedience in this area.

Kevin Schaal is a church planter and pastor in Glendale, Arizona. He and his wife, Sandy, are the parents of five children. He also serves as the chairman of the Resolutions Committee of the FBFI.



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# SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

## First Partaker

### Of Inestimable Worth

It very well may be that the world many of us have known most of our lives is gone forever. The events of less than a decade, since September 11, 2001, have altered not just our existence in the United States but the face of civilization globally. This has stunned many Christians. Despite their knowledge of Scripture, their professed pilgrim character (*This world is not my home, I'm just a-passing through . . .*), and their supposed enthusiasm for the imminent return of Christ, the fact is that they've sunk deep roots into contemporary culture. For years, perhaps all of their adult Christian lives, they prioritized many of the same playthings and the carefree existence that their worldly neighbors did. These obsessions are now threatened. The worldly wells of prosperity and security are quickly drying up, leaving thousands of professing Christians shaken, neurotic, and angry. They're arming, hoarding, and protesting in unprecedented numbers. The world staggers, and their alarm is great.

It isn't that Christians shouldn't care about the culture at all. In fact, if they are blessed to live in a society allowing them a lawful voice in its governance, they should rejoice to have a personal civil stewardship to exercise faithfully. They should also value the temporal benefits which follow when the righteous increase and bear rule (Prov. 29:2). They should contribute to national security, work for an educated populace, encourage sane fiscal policy, and contend for justice for all.

But I want to raise the question of just how important a sound local church is. On the scale of relative values, where does it rank by comparison with other institutions? What is the worth of my local church by

comparison to my community's banks, its local government, its hospitals, its schools, its fine arts? These other organizations grab the headlines. They hold the community's attention and magnetize most of its energies, time, and support. Judging by many standards—visibility, attendance, resources, respect, and apparent influence—the local church ranks near the bottom of the societal values scale.

*"The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits" (2 Tim. 2:6)*

We can't expect unregenerated people to prize the church any more than they value Christ. Scripture reveals that the unredeemed *walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened. They are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart* (Eph. 4:17, 18). But God informs Christians in multiple passages of Scripture that the Church of Jesus Christ is glorious beyond comparison with any other earthly institution. Not merely that it *should be*, if only Christians would begin to magnify it rightly. But that it *already is*, by virtue of what Christ has done.

This is why no Spirit-taught Christian preoccupies himself with the condition of the world. In direct proportion to the degree to which his inner being has been transformed through the renewing of his mind, his earnest attention is elsewhere. He's preoccupied with another sphere. That sphere is the church. Not in the abstract, as the Church invisible, but concretely and practically, as the Church of Jesus Christ conspicuously identifiable in terms of individual churches, especially his own.

The world's reeling affords what is perhaps an unprecedented opportunity to challenge church members to recalibrate the value of their local church. That opportunity calls those of us who are pastors to persuasively indoctrinate Christians through a radically Biblical ecclesiology that will clinch a new conviction that a sound local church is a treasure of inestimable worth.

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## Consider Its Maker

The Bible's seminal statement on the church is our Lord's declaration, *I will build my church* (Matt. 16:18). There are at least five pieces of information revealed for the first time in this assertion, two of which are especially important for this study.

The first is that Jesus Christ is revealing that the Church will not grow by the same ordinary means by which He makes the sun shine and fruit flies buzz—that is, through His general, providential superintendence of creation. Instead, He is declaring that in the case of this new project, the Church, He will be the Builder personally.

This startling truth, disclosed here for the first time in Scripture, is subsequently recorded as a historical fulfillment in the events of Pentecost. It was the ascended Christ Himself who poured out the Holy Spirit on the one hundred and twenty awaiting disciples (Acts 2:33) and thus baptized them into the one body (1 Cor. 12:13) which is called His Church (Eph. 1:23). But Christ's personal work of advancing this new creation did not terminate with Pentecost. *The Lord was adding together daily those who were being saved* (literal translation of Acts 2:47). But what about today? Is the Lord still doing the work personally that establishes and grows local churches?

superintendence of all other institutions and conventions, whether they be civil, charitable, economic, educational, social, or even religious. Local churches which are truly Christian are the unique products of His making in the earth. Where they exist He is at work. Any Christian whose mind has been newly taken with this one glorious truth will soon reshuffle his estimations of the significance of nations, wars, and economic collapse. These events will now appear important primarily for the effects that they prove to have upon the spiritual vitality of local churches.

But there's even further evidence in Matthew 16:18 of the Church's unique worth. It concerns the matter of its ownership.

## Consider Its Possessor

While I was still in seminary, my wife and I used to travel over a hundred miles to minister in a local church east of Charlotte, North Carolina. One weekend our decrepit, sputtering excuse for a car gave a final, valiant heave and threw a rod through the side of the engine's crankcase. Mercifully, a church member rose to the rescue with the loan of his own shiny, late-model vehicle to use throughout the next week while I shopped for something to replace our dead Chevy. But though grateful for the loan, I didn't sit in it entirely easily all week. The possibility of a dent or even a scratch tormented my mind. Never did a car receive such coddling for a week as did that one. And before returning it, I washed, vacuumed, and dusted every square centimeter, filling the tank just minutes before taking it back. I'd never treated a car like this before. But then, I'd never borrowed someone else's. The simple fact that it wasn't mine motivated a whole new level of conscientious care.

Christians who are indifferent to the condition of their local assembly seem to forget who the actual Possessor of their church is. We would all do well from time to time to reprocess Jesus' first statement about the Church. It includes His firm, possessive claim: *My church*. Not even Paul, planter and pastor of many churches, claimed any ownership over them. To the believers of Ephesus, where he had planted what became one of the first century's most significant ministries, he writes that the Church is *His body* (1:23). And closing his letter to the Romans, he sent them greetings from *all the churches of Christ* (16:16).

With what care, then, ought Christians to look after the local church of which they are members, but which belongs entirely to Jesus Christ. How demeaning to Him it is when they are careless stewards of the spiritual state of His estate.

I once visited the Sunday morning service of a historic church pastored by a world-renowned Evangelical preacher. His message was excellent. From where I was seated in the balcony I could see down on the top of the pulpit where his notes lay. They were carefully typed out. As he spoke it soon became apparent that he had labored to craft their wording to be clear and conquering. But as I wandered through the building after the

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Two decades after Pentecost the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians to set them straight about who was actually the effectual worker behind the growth of their local church. It was Christ who sent him to the Corinthians to preach the gospel to them (1 Cor. 1:17). He and Apollos and Peter were *servants of Christ* as they labored in Corinth and elsewhere (1 Cor. 4:1). And as they labored, none of them could be credited with what happened. *I have planted*, he explained, and *Apollos watered; but God gave the increase* (1 Cor. 3:6).

No other institution on earth is said to be the object of this kind of immediate Divine intervention, not even our beloved country, the United States of America.

This fact by itself ought to awaken complacent Christians to the gripping realization that Christ's interest in the Church, and therefore *their* church, is unique in world affairs. Christological activity in the life of churches is unmatched by His ordinary, sovereign

service, I was dismayed to discover dirty carpets, peeling paint, and smelly stairwells. Of course, a church's primary focus is people, not buildings, but I wondered why that church's deacons didn't evidently share their pastor's concern for the condition of their ministry. Didn't they realize that their slovenly attention to its condition reflected upon the ministry of their pastor, and, more importantly, upon the validity and power of the Word that he preached?

In a similar way Christians who are complacent about the state of a local church reflect negatively upon Jesus Christ, its magnificent Owner. He's world renowned! The community and the culture must be confronted with this startling, eye-opening reality. This can be done, in part, by the way in which church members attend to the financial, physical, and spiritual condition of their local church. Nothing less is worthy of Christ's ownership of it.

### **Consider That Christ Is Present**

There's a third Scriptural consideration that magnifies the inestimable worth of a local church. It's found in the New Testament's second statement about the Church, Matthew 18:17–20.

Jesus disclosed to His earliest disciples that the presence of even one church in any geographical location guarantees His own presence at that very spot in the earth. Wherever believers assemble in the name of Jesus, though they be ever so few (Matt. 18:16) or meeting in little more than a private home (Rom. 16:5), the glorious Lord over all creation is present as their Head to direct their organic existence as nothing less than His Body within that community (Eph. 1:22, 23). He actually reveals that He personally *walks among* His churches (Rev. 2:1).

This meant that in the first century, ancient pagan metropolises such as Philippi, Thessalonica, Ephesus, Corinth, and even Rome were unknowingly and immeasurably favored with the active presence of God in the person of His Son. In churches planted in those communities He had drawn near and was abundantly available to their populaces with grace and truth (John 1:17).

In other words, if anyone were to ask, "What's so special about a *local* church?" one of the most spectacular answers is that its presence brings Christ near to an identifiable community of people at a specific point in its history. God has come to them. For however many years that church functions there, it serves that town as *the mirror that reflects the whole effulgence of the Divine character. It is the grand scene of the display of the Divine perfections* (Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, 1).

It is this display of the divine character of Christ that creates the possibility that people within that community may be brought to glorify the *Father which is in heaven* (Matt. 5:16) when they are compelled to acknowledge that He is most certainly with that church (1 Cor. 14:25). Consequently, there is now the possibility that they themselves may be redeemed by His Son. Is there any other earthly institution existing in our towns

and cities that is capable of diffusing such a transforming effect upon the whole community, of displaying that Christ is personally present at a definite location in its streets whenever a certain, small subset of its populace gathers there for worship?

### **Consider Its Effect on Christians**

If we turn from the local church's significance to the entire community and focus now on its effect upon Christians, its value escalates sharply. That church provides the redeemed with their primary means of progressive transformation into the very likeness of Christ. This effect is priceless, for He is our only archetype of perfect humanity. To the degree that we approximate Him, we are complete human beings. Complete human beings are contented human beings. Most importantly, they satisfy their Creator because they bear the image of His beloved Son. But apart from a church's ministry, the possibilities for this growth into His likeness are severely checked.

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***In other words, if anyone were to ask, "What's so special about a local church?" one of the most spectacular answers is that its presence brings Christ near to an identifiable community of people at a specific point in its history.***

Please don't misunderstand. You might mature in some ways even if you were Robinson Crusoe on an island and without anything more to minister to your needs than a solitary Bible. But without a church, that growth would always be limited. That's because progress in most Christian perfections requires other believers with whom to interact.

For instance, how would you develop your own spiritual gifts for selfless service without other Christians to whom to minister? Selfless service was one of the cardinal virtues of Christ. *Even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto*, He informed His self-seeking followers, *but to minister* (Mark 10:45).

Someone might argue, "But I can minister selflessly to lost people too. Isn't that just as Christlike as ministering to Christians?"

Certainly no one would argue against that. But the overwhelming majority of the ministry explained and urged in the New Testament is not ministry of the gospel to unbelievers, but ministry of one's spiritual gifts to other Christians. And it's mutual. Not only do I need other Christians to minister to, but I desperately require their ministry to me. This is why Paul can argue irrefutably that none of us can say even of members of Christ who seem to us to be least necessary, *I have no need of you* (1 Cor. 12:21). My growth and your growth depends

to a great degree upon what *every joint supplieth, according to the effectual* [or “proper”] *working in the measure of every part* (Eph. 4:16). Yet there’s something even more important at stake in having a local church within which to minister.

If we carefully study the New Testament’s premier passage on the effect Christians are to have on one another with their spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:7–16), we discover that God’s design is for the entire Church to grow into a single Christlike body. In other words, God desires that each one of us bear the image of His Son, but, even more importantly in His whole scheme of redemption, that the entire Church mature into the *measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ* (Eph. 4:13). That requires all the members of the Body. Or, to get it down to the local level, it takes every member of the local assembly to create a comprehensive portrayal of Christ to one another and to the community.

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## ***No other earthly institution provides this same kind of mutually perfecting ministry, not even one’s own family.***

Think of it this way: every cell in my body has my own unique DNA. In a certain sense, every one of my unique cells is a “me,” not a “you.” But it’s through the combination of all the billions of cells that I am which other people actually see of me. They don’t see my cells, though every one of them is uniquely “me,” but they see the “Me” that all the cells together have produced. So it’s vital that all my cells play their respective parts in providing for all my other cells. If they don’t, then the “Me” that people see will not be entirely representative of the unique person that all my cells are in combination. Just a few renegade cancer cells, for instance, can quickly be the ruin of me.

This is the point that Paul is making in Ephesians. Christ has created a Body which is *one new man* (Eph. 2:15). The passage’s emphasis is on the *one*. There is *one* new man, made up of Jews and Gentiles. The body of this one new man is His Church, and He is this one new man’s Head.

Every local church is to strive to be this one body in miniature. Of the macrocosm (the Church), it is to be a microcosm (a church). But to do this, the members must provide one another’s spiritual needs. If they don’t, then the Christ whom people in that community see will be a distorted image. It will not represent Him truly. He will be defamed. He will not have glory. He will be a blemished Christ.

No other earthly institution provides this same kind of mutually perfecting ministry, not even one’s own family. Family life is such that certain virtues are already instinctive in what Scripture calls *natural affection* (2 Tim. 3:3) or are simply necessary to household happiness. However, it is a far greater challenge to one’s

growth to display those same virtues consistently toward various people to whom one has no earthly ties whatsoever, and from whom, in fact, one would have remained alienated in nearly every conceivable way until bound together with them in Christ within a local church.

Even valuable parachurch ministries almost always lack some of the necessary elements for comprehensive spiritual growth. For instance, they do not typically practice the ordinances. Then there is the fact of their specialization. They purposely focus upon only certain aspects of spiritual work. Christians should not expect to find the entire palette of ministry possibilities in organizations designed to specialize.

This factor of specialization leads to the necessity of most of a parachurch ministry’s personnel possessing certain spiritual gifts to a high degree. Generally this requires that they’ve had specialized training. In the parachurch setting there simply cannot be much ministry entrusted to children, teens, new converts, or even average Christians with modest gifts.

Then when it comes to the recipients of a parachurch’s ministry, beneficiaries must pay for what they receive or it must be provided by outside sources (generally local churches).

Thank the Lord for the many fine parachurch ministries that have contributed immeasurably to the growth of all of us. We could never repay the debt we owe to them. Nevertheless, a local church does what even all of them in combination cannot do.

A church, for instance, charges no entrance fees, tuitions, or dues. Scripture admonishes all church members to give, but the amount is left entirely to the discretion of each, and whether he gives or not, the church’s ministry to him continues unabated week after week.

Then, apart from the pastor (or other staff), no one is remunerated for his services. In fact, each member is challenged to volunteer more and more of his energy, time, and material resources without thought of earthly reward. This means that in extreme circumstances, such as those created by persecution or impoverishment, a local church can actually flourish with next to nothing materially. It can meet and minister indefinitely in a home, in a cave, or even in fields with nothing but God’s sky overhead.

In addition, every believer, no matter how unskilled, undeveloped, or unlovely is welcomed with open arms. Once a member, each is regarded simply as another sister or brother in Christ. No one’s family name, standing in society, educational achievements, occupation, or wealth lifts him above his brethren. The bank president exists at the same level as his tellers. The athlete who is a household name is simply Brother So-and-So.

Finally, each member, no matter how young, unskilled, or newly come to the faith can minister in some way within a local church. And—are we ready for this? —it will actually contribute to the spiritual growth of older, more gifted members to humbly submit themselves to these less able brothers’ and sisters’ sincere efforts to be a blessing!

To be continued. 

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Mark Minnick is pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, where he has served on the pastoral staff since 1980.

# Bring . . . the Books

## Things That Cannot Be Shaken

Recently I came across this small but refreshing work coauthored by K. Scott Oliphant and Rod Mays. Oliphant teaches apologetics and theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, and Mays coordinates Reformed University Ministries, an outreach to university campuses. I certainly differ with these men on many points, but I was deeply stirred and spiritually encouraged by the book they wrote, and I want to pass that blessing along to you. *Things That Cannot Be Shaken* (Crossway Books, 2008) is available for under fifteen dollars. My copy is well marked and underlined, and I'm sure yours will be as well!

One of the most captivating things about the book is its structure. Each chapter unfolds a stanza or a line of John Newton's hymn "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken." The authors introduce the book by reminding the reader that, "in the midst of a world sometimes overly enamored with the new and with change, we hope that those 'things which cannot be shaken' (Heb. 12:27) will become our only hope, that in the words of Newton, 'solid joys, and lasting treasure' will become the defining character of our walk with Christ" (p. 16).

The first chapter develops the familiar line in the first stanza of Newton's hymn, "He Whose Word Cannot Be Broken." The authors introduce the reader to the devastation wreaked on culture by the questioning and eventual abandonment of absolute truth. Moderns, including many who claim to be believers, have chosen to define life in either empirical or rationalistic terms. Truth is personally determined based on how one feels or what one thinks. Against all of this is a Word that has been spoken and that cannot be broken. Scripture has this solidity and authority because it "has its roots in God speaking through his various agents in history. It has its climax in God speaking through his Son. It has its focus in God speaking in every work of Holy Scripture, which is, itself, God's own speech. . . . No current trends, no sophisticated arguments, no intense temptation has the power to break that Rock. If it is on Christ the solid rock we stand, then we are always and everywhere protected from such onslaughts in the shadow of his mighty wings" (pp. 43-44).

Chapter two speaks to our tendency to suppress the claims made by the "Word That Cannot Be Broken" on our daily living. Consequently, because we refuse to drink from the "Streams of Living Water" and instead drink polluted water from ruined, broken cisterns of our own making, our lives are barren of any real satisfaction. However, this soul thirst can be quenched as we return to the living water of God's Word, for, as Newton wrote, "Who can faint while such a river ever flows their thirst t'assuage?"

In the third chapter we are reminded that God's children have not been left to wander this barren land alone. Instead, "round each habitation hovering" is

the very presence of God! The writers observe, "It is the presence of God that makes the people of God distinct from all the other people on the face of the earth" (p. 83). Further, "to understand the intensity of God's holy presence with us is to move a long way toward subduing 'this thing of darkness' that remains in us" (p. 84). And God brings this about in His children by testing them through His providential leading, guiding, feeding, and providing. "It was a special providence designed to show if there was, indeed, a relationship of heart-felt obedience present between the Lord and His people, or if their relationship to him was only skin-deep" (p. 88).

Chapter four confronts the reader with the reality that he is a "blessed inhabitant of Zion" because he has been "Washed in the Redeemer's Blood." As such, he is now to wage war on the side of right and truth rather than to remain entrenched in the very sins from which he has been so gloriously washed. The heart of this war involves a daily commitment on the part of a redeemed person to kill sin in his life! "Consequently, though washed, though fully forgiven, though counted righteous in the eyes of God, we are still involved in a life-long process of killing the sin that remains, so the life that is becoming ours will be more fully evident" (p. 124).

The final chapter provides the motivation for such a life. This motivation is grounded not in the fading pleasures for which the worldling lives but rather in the "solid joys and lasting treasure" which only God's children know. Like Israel we remember the wrong things! Instead of remembering the glorious work that God has done on our behalf, we are driven by the memory of what we had in Egypt! A wrong memory about the past blinds our vision of the future and clouds our sight in this present life. This clouded vision causes us at times to exchange the lasting treasure for the fleeting, cheap substitutes offered to us by this passing-away world. However, if we will set our hearts and our sight on what is eternal and not what is earthy, then we will find those solid joys and lasting treasures of which Newton wrote.

*Things That Cannot Be Shaken* is designed to shake us out of the spiritual complacency to which we are all prone. In brief but powerful chapters, the authors dig into the depths of our soul and expose the un-Biblical thinking so often found there. And in confronting that thinking, the reader is brought also to see the solid ground upon which God intends him to stand that he might have a life that won't be shaken! May each of us stand on that ground. 

“. . . when  
thou comest,  
bring with thee  
. . . the books”  
(2 Tim. 4:13)

Dr. Sam Horn is vice president of Ministerial Training and dean of Graduate Studies at Northland International University in Dunbar, Wisconsin. He also serves as senior pastor of Brookside Baptist Church in Brookfield.

Many believers are interested in prophetic sections of Scripture. The Lord often uses prophetic passages to challenge their minds and stir their hearts. However, such passages can be difficult to interpret. One well-known prophetic passage that preachers commonly misinterpret is Daniel 2. The phrase translated “the thing is gone from me” found in Daniel 2:5 and 8 is commonly misinterpreted to teach that King Nebuchadnezzar has forgotten his dream. For example, in *A Dozen Diamonds from Daniel*, Raymond Barber writes, “He has now dreamed a dream. In the palace is concern at what may happen next, for the king has forgotten his dream.” In *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Joyce Baldwin writes, “There is every likelihood that Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten the details of the dreams that had been haunting him.”

There are two key words in this phrase. The first word is the Aramaic word translated “thing.” Barber and others assume it refers to the king’s dream. Instead, it refers to the king’s decree. The Aramaic word (*millah*) is commonly translated “word, matter, or affair.” It appears in Daniel 2:5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 17, 23; 3:22, 28; 4:31, 33; 5:10, 15, 26; 6:12, 15; and 7:1, 11, 16, 25, 28. Some translations interpret this word rather than translate it. For example, the NASB interprets the word to mean “the command.” Perhaps a better method of treating this phrase would be to translate the word accurately and then provide a footnote indicating its reference to the king’s decree.

The second key word is “gone.” This Aramaic word occurs only in Daniel 2:5 and 8. William Holladay’s lexical entry translates it as “promulgated.” It apparently means “to promote or to make widely known.” Hence, translating this word as “gone” refers to something sent forth. Some writers interpret this word to speak of a sense of certainty or determination. For example, in *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, John Walvoord translates the phrase “‘the thing is certain with me,’ or ‘fully determined.’” In other words, the king is earnest about his intentions to destroy his advisors if they do not tell him both the dream and its interpretation.

The context of Daniel 2 also underscores that Nebuchadnezzar has not forgotten his dream. For example, Nebuchadnezzar’s advisors inform the king that if he will “tell his servants the dream,” then they will “shew the interpretation of it” (Dan. 2:7). Notice, Nebuchadnezzar responds by acknowledging that he understands they “would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me.” In this context, gaining time becomes significant because of the king’s impending judgment upon his advisors unless they meet his demands. Moreover, in Daniel 2:9 Nebuchadnezzar accuses his

advisors of preparing “lying and corrupt words to speak.” He adds, “Tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof.” In other words Nebuchadnezzar has purposely withheld the details of his dream to assure that his advisors’ interpretation is accurate. Apparently, this dream has greatly rattled King Nebuchadnezzar’s heart (Dan. 2:1), and he deeply desires to know its true interpretation. In *A Commentary on Daniel* Leon Wood writes “Nebuchadnezzar, in requiring the men to tell the dream was testing them. They should prove the accuracy of the interpretation by revealing the contents of the dream.” In *Daniel*, Gleason L. Archer Jr. writes, “Apparently Nebuchadnezzar had already decided on an unheard of test of their magical abilities to interpret his dream. Before they explained its meaning, they would have to give its contents. He apparently reasoned that, if they had the powers of divination they claimed, they ought to be able to relate what he had dreamed—for surely their gods would know this and be able to pass it on to their devotees. If, however, he simply related the dream to them at first, then they might come up with some purely human and essentially worthless conjecture. He was interested, not in speculations, but in supernatural disclosure.”

The response of Nebuchadnezzar’s advisors provides additional information. They react by expressing contempt towards Nebuchadnezzar for asking something so impossible of them, expressing that “there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh” (Dan. 2:11). Nebuchadnezzar responds to their contempt with even greater anger. In fact, he becomes so angry that he issues an immediate command “to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.” Many believe his command includes gathering all his wise men for a mass execution. Of course, it is through this broader command that Daniel enters upon the scene.

Notice what Nebuchadnezzar asks Daniel when he is brought before him: “Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?” (Dan. 2:26). One cannot help noticing that Daniel has some fun with this situation by contrasting the advisors’ inability with God’s ability to provide what the king desires (Dan. 2:27, 28). Daniel then reveals the detailed dream and its interpretation to King Nebuchadnezzar. Ultimately, the mighty King Nebuchadnezzar extols Daniel’s God as “a God of gods, and a Lord of kings.” As the king meditates upon what would transpire in his kingdom, God provides a dream that unfolds future events well beyond Nebuchadnezzar’s day unto the very end times. ☞

“Rightly  
dividing  
the Word  
of Truth”  
(2 Tim. 2:15)

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This column is part two of a three-part series on reading. Part one focused on the importance and benefits of reading. Parts two and three will cover suggestions for reading.

### Do Not Neglect God's Word

"Personally, I have to bless God for many good books . . . but my gratitude most of all is due to God, not for books, but for the preached Word."<sup>1</sup>

"Nothing is more futile than time spent reading religious and pious books, if the Bible is neglected, and yet many do that very thing because it is easier."<sup>2</sup>

"Make careful choice of the books which you read: let the holy Scriptures ever have the preeminence. Let Scripture be first and most in your hearts and hands and other books be used as subservient to it."<sup>3</sup>

Martin Luther said, "The Bible is now buried under so many commentaries, that the text is nothing regarded. . . . Never will the writings of mortal man in any respect equal the sentences inspired of God. We must yield the place of honor to the prophets and the apostles, keeping ourselves prostrate at their feet as we listen to their teachings. I would not have those who read my books, in these story times, devote one moment to them which they would otherwise have consecrated to the Bible."<sup>4</sup>

"It is probably true that the invention of printing with movable type was a direct cause of the reformation—which then led to four centuries of intermittent heroism, martyrdoms, evangelism, missions, and sainthood. All that has now been reversed. I have a strong suspicion that our high-tech replacement for the printed page has more than a little to do with the declining number of expositors, the declining number of missionary candidates, the rise of the Entertainment Church, and the near-universal love for the world among professed Christians. We have paid a high price for our toys. Brethren, it seems time to get back to our books, and most of all the Book."<sup>5</sup>

### Choose Your Books Wisely

"Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested: that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention."<sup>6</sup>

"If we complain to our doctor of a general lethargy, he may well ask us about our diet and our appetite. . . . To some extent our 'intake' and our 'output' are closely related. The same is true of 'intake' and 'output' in the Christian life. Christian history, biography and personal experience show us that Christians who read have tended to be stronger Christians than they otherwise would have been. . . . In fact, what we discover in

many biographies is that those who have been the greatest Christian activists have also been the most prolific producers of and readers of Christian literature."<sup>7</sup>

"Few people today realize the urgent need for 'taking heed' unto what they read. Just as the natural food which is eaten either helps or hinders the body; so the mental food we receive either benefits or injures the mind, and that, in turn, affects the heart. . . . Christian reader,

if you value the health of your soul, cease hearing and quit reading all that is lifeless, ununctionless, powerless—no matter what prominent or popular name is attached thereto. Life is too short to waste valuable time on that which profits not. Ninety-nine out of every hundred of the religious books, booklets, and magazines now being published, are not worth the paper on which they are printed! Take heed what you hear—and read!"<sup>8</sup>

Richard Baxter states that while reading you should ask yourself the following questions: "Could I spend this time no better? Are there better books that would edify me more? Are the lovers of such a book as this the greatest lovers of the Book of God and of a holy life? Does this book increase my love to the Word of God, kill my sin, and prepare me for the life to come?"<sup>9</sup>

"Young men! There are evil companions to be avoided! The workhouse, the lunatic asylum, the prison, the gallows, the bottomless pit, all, all, attest the truth of this, by the millions they have swallowed up in their jaws of destruction! Evil companionship has ruined . . . more characters, more fortunes, more bodies, and more souls, than almost anything else that could be named. Young men! Evil companionship is one of your first and most pressing dangers. Character assimilates to that which surrounds it. You must take your character, to a certain extent, from your companions. Do not have bad companions! . . . With much the same emphasis do I warn you against bad BOOKS. There are books that inflame the imagination and corrupt the taste—that by their excitement unfit the mind for the sober realities of life—or by continuous light entertainment, indispose the mind for what is serious and holy. These are all to be avoided. In some respects bad books are more mischievous than bad companions, since they are more accessible, and more constantly with us. They can be more secretly consulted, and lodge their poison more abidingly in . . . the imagination, the intellect, and the heart! A bad book is a bad companion of the worst kind, and prepares for bad companions of all other kinds!"<sup>10</sup>

*"To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, 'A window shalt thou make in the ark.'"*

*Charles Spurgeon*

## Read Biographies of Famous Missionaries and Pastors

Jim Elliot, who gave his life while trying to reach the Auca Indians, was largely shaped through the reading of Christian biography. “I see the value of Christian biography tonight, as I have been reading Brainerd’s Diary much today. It stirs me up much to pray and wonder at my nonchalance while I have not power from God. I have considered Hebrews 13:7 just now, regarding the remembrance of certain ones who spake the Word of God, ‘consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith.’ I recall not the challenge of Goforth’s Life and *By My Spirit*, read in the summer of 1947, the encouragements of Hudson Taylor’s *Spiritual Secret*, and *The Growth of the Soul*. There are incidents which instruct me now from the reading of J. G. Paton’s biography, read last winter. And now this fresh Spirit-quicken history of Brainerd. O Lord, let me be granted grace to ‘imitate their faith.’”<sup>11</sup>

## Think While You Read

“I would earnestly impress upon you the truth, that a man who is short of apparatus can make up for it by much thought. Thinking is better than possessing books. Thinking is an exercise of the soul which both develops and educates. . . . Without thinking, reading cannot benefit the mind, but it may delude the man into the idea that he is growing wise. . . . Thought is the backbone of study, and if more ministers would think, what a blessing it would be!”<sup>12</sup>

## Read with Purpose

“Reading without purpose is sauntering, not exercise. More is got from one book, on which the thought settles for a definite end in knowledge, than from libraries skimmed over by a wandering eye.”<sup>13</sup>

“Reading, in the case of mere miscellaneous readers, is like the racing of some little dog about the moor, snuffing everything and catching nothing; but a reader of the right sort finds his prototype in Jacob, who wrestled with an angel all night, and counted himself better for the bout, though the sinew of his thigh shrank in consequence.”<sup>14</sup>

## Vary Your Reading

“I am convinced that we ought to keep up a fair acquaintance with contemporary literature. If we know nothing of the books that our congregations are reading, they will soon learn to think of us as intellectual foreigners—strangers to their ways and thoughts, ignorant of a large part . . . of their lives. You will not misunderstand me. Your strength must be given to grave and continuous studies. You will fence round the prime hours of the day and keep them for hard work, or else you will be lost. But the humblest cottage should have a flower-bed as well as a potato plot.”<sup>15</sup>

“It is better that we should always tackle something a bit beyond us. We should always aim to read something different—not only the writers with whom we agree, but those with whom we are ready to do battle. And let us not condemn them out of hand because they do not agree with us; their point of view challenges us to examine the truth and to test their views against Scripture. And let us not comment on or criticize writers of whom we have heard only second-hand, or third-hand, without troubling to read their works for ourselves. . . . Don’t be afraid of new ideas—and don’t be carried away with them either.”<sup>16</sup>

“If you are reading in order to become a better reader, you cannot read just any book or article. You will not improve as a reader if all you read are books that are well within your capacity. You must tackle books that are beyond you, or . . . books that are over your head. Only books of that sort will make you stretch your mind. And unless you stretch, you will not learn.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>1</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *The Early Years* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1981), 87.

<sup>2</sup> Howard Kelly quoted by Wilbur Smith, *Profitable Bible Study* (W. A. Wilde Company, 1939), 82–83.

<sup>3</sup> From an article printed in the Banner of Truth (Issue 11, June, 1958). Richard Baxter, *Advice on Reading*, [www.puritansermons.com/baxter/baxter30.htm](http://www.puritansermons.com/baxter/baxter30.htm).

<sup>4</sup> *The Table Talk or Familiar Discourse of Martin Luther*, trans. by William Hazlitt (David Bogue, 1848), 369.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Delnay, *Faith Pulpit* July/August 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Lord Bacon quoted in Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), 47.

<sup>7</sup> Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Read Any Good Books?* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), 2.

<sup>8</sup> A. W. Pink in a sermon entitled “On just such husks do the religious swine feed,” based on Mark 4:24.

<sup>9</sup> See note 3.

<sup>10</sup> J. A. James, sermon Prov. 13:20, “The Young Man’s Friend and Guide through Life to Immortality.”

<sup>11</sup> Jim Elliot, quoted in Elisabeth Elliot, *Shadow of the Almighty* (Harper, 1989), 108.

<sup>12</sup> Helmut Thielicke, *Encounter with Spurgeon* (Fortress, 1963), 199.

<sup>13</sup> Lord Lytton quoted in R.W. Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Hodder & Stoughton, 1890), 70.

<sup>14</sup> R. W. Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Hodder & Stoughton, 1890), 71.

<sup>15</sup> Dale, 102.

<sup>16</sup> Muriel Ormrod quoted in J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Moody Press, 1994), 102.

<sup>17</sup> Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book* (Simon and Schuster, 1972), 339. ☞

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# The Necessity of Personal Separation in Biblical Fundamentalism

## Resolution Regarding Personal Holiness

Whereas the Scripture consistently commands us to practice personal holiness,

And whereas the nature of personal holiness grows out of the very nature and character of God,

And whereas many professing believers have significantly departed from aspects of personal holiness commanded by the Scriptures and practiced by Bible believers for centuries,

And whereas God calls us to be salt and light in the world,

And whereas we recognize that failure in this area is a problem in our own lives and our own churches,

We call on all who name the Name of Christ to recommit themselves to a life of purity and distinction from the sinfulness of the world. This purity must flow from a deep love for our Lord Jesus Christ and a gratitude for the great work He has done for us in salvation. Such holiness must not be corrupted by the excesses of false liberty or the arbitrary boundaries of a passionless legalism. We must seek a deep and committed relationship with Jesus Christ that captivates every thought, dominates every activity, and brings every aspect of our lives under His loving Lordship.



Paul declares that all Scripture is “profitable” or “useful” (2 Tim. 3:16) in the sense of yielding a practical benefit (1 Tim. 4:8; Titus 3:8). The Scriptures construct our faith by establishing correct belief (“doctrine”), convict by exposing incorrect belief (“reproof”), correct by exposing incorrect behavior (“correction”), and counsel in order to establish right behavior (“instruction in righteousness”). Sound doctrine includes the moral implications which necessarily result from genuine faith in the truth: “For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:10).

In regard to personal separation from the world, God’s Word corrects. “Correction” (2 Tim. 3:16) is used in the sense of “setting something right,” most likely with reference to conduct.<sup>1</sup> God’s Word has the authority to regulate personal and public conduct. Attitudes and behavior among “Christian” young people toward things once considered wrong and sinful are gradually changing. There has been a noticeable shift in attitudes toward smoking, drinking alcoholic beverages, objectionable movies, questionable entertainment, rock music, modern dancing, gambling, sexual involvement outside of marriage, androgyny,<sup>2</sup> and public immodesty. James Hunter, in *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation*, considers certain aspects of this shift as “moral repositioning.”<sup>3</sup> Generally speaking, there has been a decline in personal separation from the world in Evangelical colleges and universities, among Evangelical preachers and leaders, and among everyday Christians. Richard Quebedeaux, a self-professed New Evangelical, admits in *The Worldly Evangelicals* that “Evangelicals are making more and more compromises with the larger culture.” He adds that “Evangelicals have become harder and harder to distinguish from other people,” pointing out that Christian

“business people, professionals, and celebrities have found it necessary (and pleasant) to travel the cocktail-party circuit in Beverly Hills.” Lastly, he mentions with approval that “Evangelicals have often discovered the pleasure of alcohol and tobacco while studying and traveling in Europe.”<sup>4</sup> The status of these traditional taboos has undergone alteration in Christian circles. They are regarded less as sins that displease God and are described only in terms related to their dysfunctional or unwise character. In some respects Fundamentalism lags about ten to fifteen years behind such Evangelical trends.

### A Lack of Commitment

What has contributed to this decline? I suggest that a lack of commitment to the doctrinal and ethical message in the Scriptures carries much of the responsibility. Words such as “sin,” “guilt,” and “wickedness” are being replaced with euphemisms such as “mistake,” “estrangement,” “maladjustment,” “indiscretion,” or “imprudence.” “Sin,” in today’s religious world, is no longer against God but against oneself. Selfishness, rather than being the essence of all sin, has become the goal of redemption. Ministers appeal to self-interest in their preaching because they know that self is what really motivates people. Human need now beckons the unfulfilled to receive “wholeness” at the foot of the cross. The regression is from the Biblical position that says, “I’m not OK, you’re not OK,” to the popular notion of the seventies—“I’m OK, you’re OK”—culminating in the current self-esteem craze,—“I’m OK, I’m OK”—a kind of schizophrenic Pelagianism.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, sin has not been a popular subject for Christian authors or pastors. A virtual paucity of writing and preaching on the subject exists today. The Scriptures correct these popular misconceptions regarding sin by exposing the extent that human nature has been spoiled and impeded by the effects of sin. Sin is any lack of conformity to the moral law and character of God, either in act, disposition, or state (Rom. 5:12–14; 7:22, 23; James 4:11, 12). If people are invited to accept Jesus Christ just to have their needs met, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to expect something more of them later.

## SCRIPTURE GIVES MUCH COUNSEL REGARDING THE RIGHTEOUSNESS SO DESPERATELY LACKING IN CHRIST’S CHURCH TODAY.

Secondly, God’s Word “trains” or “disciplines in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). The training is designed to produce conduct whereby “righteousness” becomes a reality in the life of the believer. Holiness literally means “to cut,” “to separate,” or to be “set apart” as sacred by God’s presence.<sup>6</sup> It refers to the majestic transcendence of God by emphasizing the distinction between the Creator and the creature. It also means that God is separate in His being from all that is evil, impure, and defiled. Righteousness entails moral integrity of action and disposition according to God’s perfect standard of holi-

ness. The term is used here in the simple sense of “right conduct” (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22; Rom. 6:13; 9:20). Such training or discipline is designed to bring one’s behavior into conformity to God’s holiness.

### God’s Love and His Holiness

Generally, God’s love is emphasized today in Evangelical circles much more than His holiness and righteousness. God is love (1 John 4:7–16). Nevertheless, God’s love is governed by His holiness; otherwise, His love would be reduced to capricious sentimentality. God’s holiness necessitates His judicial wrath against that which is opposed to His character and commands. Psalm 97:10 says, “Ye that love the LORD, hate evil.” God hates “every false way” (Ps. 119:104), “vain thoughts” contrary to His Law (Ps. 119:113), “lying” (Ps. 119:163), “a proud look,” “wicked imaginations,” and factious men who are heretical schismatics (Prov. 6:17–19; 1 Cor. 3:17). God “[hates] all workers of iniquity” (Ps. 5:5). The psalmist himself says that he “hated the congregation of evil doers” (Ps. 26:5). The dictates of Biblical separation and conformity to Christ are summarized in several passages: “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good” (Rom. 12:9); “Hate the evil, and love the good” (Amos 5:15); “And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts . . . for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD” (Zech. 8:17).

Scripture gives much counsel regarding the righteousness so desperately lacking in Christ’s church today. The apostle John addresses this issue in his first epistle. The term “world” (*kosmos*) is mentioned six times in 1 John 2:15–17. The “world” in this context refers to a system or network of ideas, activities, and purposes. In this sense the world is an organized system of evil ordered against God at every point. Paul says, “The world by wisdom knew not God” (1 Cor. 1:21). He speaks of the “princes of this world” who crucified the Lord of Glory (1 Cor. 2:8). James declares that “friendship” with the world is the height of infidelity with God (James 4:4). God tells His people plainly, “Love not the world” (1 John 2:15), “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11), and “be not conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2). The world is at total cross-purposes with God, because it is “not of the Father.”

According to Dr. Rolland McCune, the term *kosmos* emphasizes the present, meaning the present arrangement of things. The world is the current secular mindset with its ever-changing values, symbols, goals, and priorities. It always emphasizes the “now.” Thus, the world is transient, always on the move, and “passing away.” It believes in “change” for its own sake and the “becomingness” of all things. As such, the world is humanistic, being structured by autonomous man and his “I’m worth it” philosophy. It consists of the desires of modern man’s sinful, fleshly, and prideful nature, his self-esteem and self-fulfillment syndrome. Worldliness includes both those outward activities and inward affections for and attachment to some aspect of the present arrange-

ment of things. This includes the world's thought patterns, amusements, fads, habits, philosophies, goals, friendships, practices, and lifestyles.<sup>7</sup> First John 2:15–17 enumerates three aspects of the world which is conditioned by fallen humanity. First, John characterizes the world and its current age as the "lust of the flesh." Grammarians describe this expression as a subjective genitive. John is speaking of the flesh's passionate desires. The "flesh" is a complex of sinful attributes that comprise the sinful nature.

How does the believer combat worldliness in regard to the intellectual, volitional, and emotional aspects of this complex of sinful attributes called the flesh? First, Paul says, "make [no] provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14). The word "provision" carries the idea of "forethought," which literally means "to have a mind before." The apostle commands believers not use their intellect sinfully in order to discover various ways to fulfill the desires of the flesh. A man must yield to the Spirit of God and refuse to exercise a fleshly intellect by making forethought to sin. In addition, believers are admonished to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). Contextually, Paul is concerned with the influence of other people who are succumbing to fleshly activity (2 Cor. 6:14–7:2). In this case, believers are not to enter into a spiritual yoke or union with those whose lives are characterized by the fleshly nature where it would be impossible to avoid being negatively influenced and having one's "temple" defiled.

### **The Misuse of Liberty**

Finally, the people of God are not to abuse or misuse their liberty in Christ as an occasion to fulfill the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:13). In this present age believers are not under the Mosaic Law as a governing constitution for the New Testament local church. However, every command and principle rooted in the unchanging character of God, the created order, and repeated or adjusted in the NT carries over into each new, succeeding dispensation. In this sense, the Law of Moses remains a corroborative witness to the will of God for believers in the NT church age. Paul's concern here is that believers not abuse their new standing in Christ by using the grace of God as a cloak for sinful, fleshly behavior. Paul revolted against such perverted thinking. Freedom from the Mosaic Law does not imply freedom from NT commands, principles, precepts, directives, prohibitions, or standards.

Second, John mentions "the lust of the eyes" as an integral part of "all that is in the world." This entails the sinful cravings and desires stimulated by what is seen. The grammatical construction could be considered a genitive of means, namely, that the eyes are the means by which sinful desires are stimulated. Fleshly lusts are aroused by that which enters the mind by means of the senses. In a day of billboard advertising, movie and television screens, computer monitors, and eye-catching magazine spreads, this aspect of the world is predominant. The world is filled with men who are exercising their fallen nature willfully, mentally, and emotionally. Others are looking upon the experiences, accomplishments, and creations of men exer-

cising their fallen nature, and through their senses they are being enticed (James 1:14, 15).

Third, and perhaps the most insidious of all, John describes the world as characterized by the "pride of life." There is a devilish progression from what one wants to what one has and boastfully displays. Pride parades the spirit of the braggart who extols his own virtues and possessions. The genitive "of life" portrays an attitude of boastfulness and hollow self-exaltation. The goal of these fleshly desires is the celebration of earthly life in its possessions, achievements, indulgences, and self-promotion. Ultimately, John refers to men whose lives are filled with the self-congratulation of an independent life resting in self-sufficiency. It is the making and maintaining of an image of which the world approves. Wherever there is this arrogance of lifestyle, this image that "all is well and prosperous with my life without God," there is "the pride of life."

Now the world will hear any minister who speaks of the world: "They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them" (1 John 4:5); therefore, it is imperative that we instruct ourselves and others from the Word of God on how to remain personally separated from the world while serving Christ in the world. How does one obey God's command not to love the world? By the "renewing of the mind" in the Word of God. This renewing of the mind is evidenced by the choices that people of the faith make every day. By faith believers seek God's will through the Word of God in every decision (James 4:15). By faith believers reject worldly wisdom (1 Cor. 3:18).

### **Directives for Personal Separation**

Specific directives for personal separation from worldly attitudes and actions include the moral commands, precepts, and directives of God's Word (Exod. 20:1–17; 1 Cor. 5:9–13; 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:16–21; Eph. 5:1–7; 2 Tim. 3:1–5). In addition, God lays down numerous principles by which believers are to make wise decisions regarding their behavior in the world:

#### 1. The principle of enslavement (self-control).

1 Corinthians 6:12: "All things are lawful unto me [Corinthian slogan of antinomianism<sup>8</sup>], but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."

1 Corinthians 9:27: "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection."

#### 2. The principle of offense.

Romans 14:13–16: "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. . . . Let not then your good be evil spoken of."

1 Corinthians 10:32: "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God."

Continued on page 32

## On John the Baptist

God dramatically began new revelations with the public ministry of John the Dunker (Luke 3:2–22). There had been no direct revelation through a chosen prophet in the nation for some four hundred years. Divine activity, both in connection with the birth of John and with the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, alerted the nation that marvelous fulfillments were about to take place.

Four features are important in appreciating the contribution of John's ministry in preparing the people for great changes. The Lord directed John to introduce two new and different practices and to predict two astonishing tasks to be accomplished by the Messiah. Two were in connection with water, the immersion and the significance of immersion. Two stressed the soon-to-be-fulfilled ministry of the Messiah, far superior to anything of the past.

John introduced a new and distinctive form of public symbolic immersion in which one lowered the body of another completely under water and raised that body up out of the water. That form persisted for centuries, first known as the immersion of John, and later called Christian immersion. The new picture portrayed by the new form was that of death to an old way of life and the beginning of a new life. It was done publicly, as one's response to the preaching of the Word of God.

That which God directed John to introduce was called "the baptism [an immersion] of repentance for the remission of sins" (Luke 3:3). John urged people to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance and not depend just on their birth as descendants of Abraham (Luke 3:8–14). Many received his message and made the decision to repent, to turn from unacceptable ways, and to declare themselves publicly as committed to walk according the way of the Lord. The act of immersion was a public witness to their inner response to the preaching of John.

Jews lived under the Law of Moses. John came presenting new procedures but not new standards. The standing of these repentant Jews before the Lord was just the same as that of true believers through previous centuries. Although the form was new, the form itself did nothing special for those who submitted to it. Their heart response corresponded to repentance under the Law. There was no new way of cleansing or forgiveness proclaimed by the form of immersion or by the public testimony employing the form.

What had been distinctive for the physical seed of Abraham was a physical circumcision. That which characterized the spiritual people of God, however, was the circumcision of the heart. The form introduced by John was physical in nature. What was important was the heart repentance. It involved a faith response to God's Word, a choice to accept the truth of God, and a willingness to witness before others this inner decision.

God's predictive purpose in the preparatory ministry of

John the Immerser was twofold. The most obvious one was that he was appointed to identify the Messiah. Scriptures had foretold much of the coming of a Messiah. John was given the unique privilege of seeing and announcing this One and His work (John 1:19–36), saying clearly: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, 36). The Messiah was divinely identified when He came to John for immersion (Luke 3:21, 22). Proclaiming Him as the Lamb of God raised His work far above that of any animal sacrifice in the Mosaic system. He was a perfect Lamb, without blemish, provided by the Lord God. As to His person and His work, He was far superior to John.

The second predictive purpose assigned to John was the declaration that this One about to appear would bring a far greater divine reality, one that was like unto the form John had been directed to introduce: "I indeed baptize [immerse] you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize [immerse] you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Luke 3:16). Fulfillment of His task as Lamb would be on the cross. His Spirit immersion (commonly called Spirit baptism) would take place at Pentecost. His death would be supremely important for the salvation of humans of every dispensation. His immersion with the Spirit would be of dispensational importance, forming a new "body" to function in a new way through the church age.

No wonder Jesus rated the ministry of John superior to all the OT prophets (Luke 7:28)! He faithfully introduced a symbolic form that is crucial to properly comprehending God's work among men. He emphasized the spiritual significance of that immersion as more significant than the physical form. He predicted the soon-to-take-place redemptive work of the promised Messiah. He predicted also the marvelous new alignment of true believers to be introduced shortly thereafter. John was faithful in his actions and his proclamations. His faith faltered once, however, and he sent "two of his disciples to Jesus saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" (Luke 7:19, 20). The miracles Jesus performed provided an indisputable answer (Luke 7:21–23).

As great as John was, Jesus could declare, "but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (Luke 7:28). The work of John the Dunker was exceedingly important. The task Jesus has for each of His Own today is important in the sight of God. The benefits and privileges we enjoy in this church age are greater than anything John could have imagined. Let each of us fulfill our assigned task as faithfully as John.

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## Honoring Mom—and the Lord

Kimberley Stanley

Mother's Day is a big deal in Mexico. They observe it on May 10, regardless of the day of the week. Commerce and education come to a grinding halt on that day, I learned with chagrin at the school where I taught, just so everybody in the country can return to his hometown to spend time with his precious *mamá*.

At church on the second Sunday in May, somehow my Mexican siblings in the Lord knew it was Mother's Day in the USA, and they applied the pressure: "Aren't you going to call your mother?" I guess they thought it was the least I could do, since I had the audacity to be so far away from home. And there was, of course, the Biblical mandate, ever since the Ten Commandments, to "honour thy father and thy mother."

A minor glitch in the "phone home" plan: I didn't have a telephone or easy access to one. I did have an arrangement with our missionary pastor to use the phone at the Bible institute downtown to make long-distance calls, which meant a twelve-block walk on the dirt streets, uphill most of the way, to catch a bus that would take me downtown. And we were already into the sweltering summer of northwestern Mexico's Sonora Desert. It was *hot*. But I finally gave in to the pressure to call Mom, probably, I will admit, more to appease my friends than to please my Lord.

Fernando and his wife and young children lived along the bus route and routinely had to walk to church when their truck was broken down. We walked together that day as we left the church; they asked about my new living quarters, and I told them about my air cooler. In my previous home, I had run the cooler through the window; my new setup required the addition of an elbow duct to direct the air downward from the roof. Just that week I had called some workers to have a duct made, but they didn't show up to do the job. Brother Fernando said, "Oh, I have one in my back yard—we'll see if it'll work for you." When we arrived at his house, we looked it over, and I thought it would be just the right size.

I took a long, hot, bumpy, un-air-conditioned bus ride downtown to the Bible institute, delighted about my "fortune" in finding the needed elbow duct, free of charge. I called both Mom and Gram, who were happy to hear from me. And I asked, month after month, but those two calls never appeared on the institute's phone bill.

A secular view would see the provision of the cooler duct and free phone calls as mere "happy coincidence"

or "good luck." Well, I never met any Mexicans who just happened to have cooler ducts sitting in their back yards. Telmex, the national phone monopoly, was notorious *not* for omitting charges, but rather for padding people's bills with calls they had never made. It humbled me . . . when I concluded that *God* had given me these blessings.

Exodus 20:12 reads, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." Part of honor is deference, "a yielding or submitting to another's judgment or preference out of respect or reverence." They never demand it, but I'm pretty sure it's Mom's and Gram's preference to hear from me on Mother's Day, wherever in the world I may be. Does it cost so much to yield to their preference?

God spells out clearly in His Word many, many things He wants His children to do or not do; the Ten Commandments are one reference point. Maybe it's not always my top priority to love God completely, keep His day holy, tell the truth, and not covet. But to treat God with the honor and respect due to Him, I need to yield to His preferences.

Then I consider that many of God's mandates are two-part and include rewards for those who keep His commands.

- Proverbs 3:5, 6: When I trust in the Lord with all my heart, He promises to direct my paths.
- Matthew 6:33: When I seek first God's Kingdom, He promises to supply my needs.
- Philippians 4:6, 7: When I make my requests known to God, He promises His peace will keep me through Christ Jesus.

How much do I miss of the fullness and blessings God wants to give me as His child, only because I selectively decide which of His commands I will obey, as if the Bible presented a salad bar of options for me to choose or reject?

I want to take God at His Word. I want to obey His commands and prove His promises to be true. Just for starters, may His Spirit stir me always to honor Mom and Gram and thereby honor and glorify Him, for long days upon the land . . . in the desert or wherever He leads me.

Kimberley Stanley taught English in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, for six years while serving as a member of Iglesia Bíblica Betania (Bethany Bible Church).

Purity and spiritual eyesight go together.  
—Wayne Van Gelderen Sr.

The situation [regarding liberalism in the Northern Baptist Convention] will never be cured by designation [of funds]. . . . What shall we do then? Either correct the entire policy or divide.  
—William B. Riley

What the liberal theologian has retained after abandoning to the enemy one Christian doctrine after another is not Christianity at all.  
—J. Gresham Machen

The God of the fundamentalist is one God; the God of the modernist is another. . . . The inherent incompatibility of the two worlds has passed the stage of mutual tolerance.  
—*Christian Century* magazine

The real enemies of Israel were the *Betweenites*: Found not with the enemies against Israel nor with the armies fighting for Israel.  
—Charles H. Spurgeon

Modernism has never built a Baptist college or established a Baptist magazine or created a publication society or a theological seminary. It has squatted them all.  
—Richard V. Clearwaters

Two attitudes formed within the [Northern] Baptist Convention with relation to the problems caused by liberalism. One approach was the softer one—complain, speak out, but try hard to maintain the denominational unity. The other approach was more militant . . . and more separatistic in character.  
—Ernest Pickering

The Puritans wished to remain within the Church of England and purify it. Yet there were some who were impatient at the conservative attitude of the church leaders. They withdrew into independent organizations. These became known as the Separatists.  
—Edward B. Cole

You know, Dr. Pierce, as well as I, why the Northern Baptist Convention took the action they did [at the Washington Convention in 1926]. It was because they wanted to get the money from Fosdick's church. This was the reason they passed the resolution that does not require baptism to be a prerequisite to church membership.—Ford Porter to Earl V. Pierce of the NBC

Baptized with the "new baptism" [immersion or "dipping"] along with eight others, Obadiah Holmes took the irrevocable step toward separation or schism from New England's official way.  
—Edwin S. Gaustad

When a Southern Baptist professor of systematic theology becomes a faculty member at a Jesuit institution, it is time for Bible-believing Baptists to take note of the times.  
—G. Archer Weniger, 1966

There is a Protestant Establishment. And this Protestant Establishment is resourceful, energetic, intelligent and powerful. It is dedicating itself to this Ecumenical Revolution with all the abandonment, single-mindedness and determination of a Hitler and a Lenin. The Revolution's leaders tell us that the Ecumenical Revolution is the only hope of a collapsing world.  
—Noel Smith, 1968

Compiled by Dr. David Atkinson, pastor of Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer, Indiana.

## International Baptist Missions

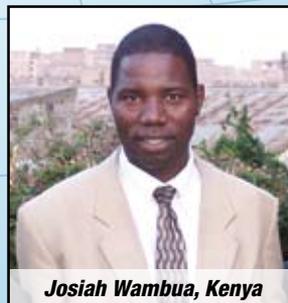
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## **FBFI North Central Regional Meeting January 26–27, 2009**

Our annual regional meeting was well attended and well received. Approximately ninety registrants and several hundred area church members enjoyed the opening service on Monday, January 26, at Beth Eden Baptist Church in Denver, Colorado. Dr. Jim Efaw, the pastor of Beth Eden, gave a short challenge along the theme of “Keeping the Heart.” Dr. Stephen Jones, president of Bob Jones University, preached the keynote message to a filled auditorium, and God richly blessed.

The next day included messages from Dr. John Vaughn, president of the FBFI, and Dr. Stephen Jones. Workshops were also conducted. Pastor Mike DeVries of Northern Ridge Baptist Church, Broomfield, Colorado, spoke on the subject “Preachers Need the Gospel Too.” Mr. Pat Odle of Faith Baptist Bible College in Ankeny, Iowa, spoke on “Why We Are Losing Our Teens.” Also, Mr. Dan Lucarini, author of *Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement*, spoke on “The Sovereign Grace Music Issue.”

We also conducted a satellite fellowship meeting in Cody, Wyoming, on November 10–11, 2008, at First Baptist Church with Pastor Jim Barrick. This meeting was attended by several who drove many miles. This host church did an outstanding job.

## **NYC Regional Meeting February 22**

We had a tremendous first FBFI NYC Regional Meeting held at Bethel Baptist Fellowship in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn. Pastor Jim Bickel hosted the fellowship, and Dr. John Vaughn, the president of the FBFI, was our keynote speaker. Dr. Vaughn shared a his-

tory of our fellowship and then preached from Hebrews 10:25 on the importance of encouraging one another through such times of fellowship. He said that “Fundamentalists are willing to stand for, live by, and suffer for the Fundamentals.”

We had pastors attend from around the city and even from Buffalo, New Jersey, and the Bear Mountain region. The attendance was excellent with



about 60 total.

After the preaching our church folks from Heritage Baptist Church prepared a “Trinidadian Feast,” and everyone enjoyed the time of fellowship together. Dr. Vaughn mentioned to me that this meeting was a model fellowship meeting because men were truly connecting and encouraging one another during the day. It was a huge blessing to have Dr. Vaughn preach to us, and our church



also was also blessed by his ministry on Sunday morning—and again on Sunday night as he spoke on our radio broadcast. He then spoke at Pastor Bickel’s church on Wednesday night with great blessing from God.

## **Arizona Fellowship March 2–3**

The Arizona Fellowship of the FBFI was held at Tri-City Baptist Church in Tempe, Arizona, on March 2–3, 2009. Dr. Mike Sproul hosted the conference, where there were thirty-five registered. *Looking Unto Jesus . . .* was the great theme of the two days.

There were some wonderful times of sharing together in prayer, singing, preaching, and fellowship. It was great to have a number of younger pastors attend. A church planter from the west side of the Valley of the Sun spoke in one of the services, and Pastor Les Heinze was a great blessing to all as he spoke in three different services. On Monday evening of March 2 about 275 attended. The conference was a great time of encouragement, and hearts were challenged and blessed through the working of God’s Spirit.

## The Challenge of Not Fainting in God's Work

In 2 Corinthians 4:1 the apostle Paul declared under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." The overall ministry of Paul was one of reconciliation. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:19, "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." What a wonderful ministry we all have in preaching the Lord Jesus Christ so mankind can be reconciled to the Lord! Paul not only stated this marvelous ministry that we all have but also declared, "As we have received mercy, we faint not."

Many years ago when I was a senior in college, I was burdened by the Lord to start a church in Anderson, South Carolina. I knew as a freshman in college that the Lord had called me to be an evangelist. However, I felt that if I were going to spend my life with pastors, I should know the heart of a pastor; what better way to do this than by starting a church? Well, I did not know that you were supposed to have some financial support to do this. I just stepped out by faith! I had no contacts, no financial support, no families, and no building. I drove to Anderson and began to drive around seeking for the Lord to guide me, and He did!

I met a man, Mr. King, who owned the Shell Oil Company. He drove me around Anderson in his white Cadillac and pointed out buildings. He said to me, "You can rent this building for four hundred dollars

a month." I could not afford four dollars a month! I was a senior in college! Finally, I turned down every building he showed me because the cost of rent was too high.

The next week I received a phone call from Dr. Gilbert Stenholm. He told me, "Jerry, there is a banker in Anderson who called and wants to discuss with you the possibility of getting a building to start a church." I could hardly believe it! So I drove to Anderson and met Mr. Woodson of the First Federal Savings and Loan. He said, "I like your spirit and attitude of wanting to start a church; therefore, I am going to let you use a building without paying any rent or electricity." To say the least, I was overwhelmed.

Then he said, "Would you like to see the building?" I was so excited and exclaimed, "Yes!" So we walked out of the bank and across the street to a little pink building right beside the West Earle Pool Room. My heart sank to my feet. Of all the colors on a building, this one had to be pink! Then Mr. Woodson asked me, "Do you want to use it?" What could I say? I could not turn it down because I could not afford to rent anything else. I told him I would take it and thanked him. (The first thing I did was to get rid of the pink paint.) Well, I had a good friend make me a pulpit for five dollars. Then the Rescue Mission gave me some folding chairs. By the way, the building would hold only forty people. There were no classrooms and no bathrooms!

My wife and I began to go out and witness to people and invite them to our new church. I am from the hills

of West Virginia and was not used to Southern ways. I had never heard of grits, sweet tea, fried okra, or black-eyed peas. Neither was I used to Southern people. Up North, if you invite a man to church, he will either cuss you out and tell you he will not come and slam the door in your face, or he would say, "Yes, I will be there!" . . . and he would be there. That is what I was used to. I was not familiar with what I call, "Southern ethical kindness." My wife and I would invite people in Anderson to come to our services, and they would say, "Where are y'all located?" We said, "On West Earle Street beside the West Earle Pool Room." They said, "What time does your service start?" We said, "Ten o'clock." They said, "We will be there!" Bunch of liars! No one showed up!

For ten weeks I preached basically to my wife. She never raised her hand and never came down the aisle for any decision! On the tenth Sunday, I brought a good friend of mine and his wife, Bennie and Laura Moran. Bennie taught Sunday school at ten o'clock. At eleven o'clock, no one came, and I got so discouraged that I took off my coat and walked to the pulpit and said, "Well, I guess the Lord does not want me to start this church." I said, "Bennie, do you know some place where we can eat?" He said, "Yes." I was walking out of the church and had one foot in the church and one foot on the sidewalk when. . . .

To be continued in the next issue.

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Written and Compiled by Dr. Layton Talbert

## 2 THESSALONIANS—PERSEVERANCE DURING

### Background

First Thessalonians, as we discovered in the previous column, encourages *holiness and hope amid hard times because of the certainty of Christ's coming*. Second Thessalonians, written from Corinth, is the other side of the coin. Both Corinth and Thessalonica were important ports, so direct sea traffic between the two cities would have been regular. How soon after 1 Thessalonians was 2 Thessalonians written? Suggestions range up to a full year between these letters. A period of a few months would accord with the likelihood that the carrier of 1 Thessalonians provided, on his return, the report of current issues in the Thessalonian church that prompted this second epistle.

### Historical Occasion

Since writing his last letter to them, Paul had received more news about the believers in Thessalonica (perhaps, as stated above, from the bearer of the first epistle upon his return), some good and some not so good. On the positive side, the believers were prospering spiritually. Their faith continued to grow, as did their love for one another (1:3); and they were remaining steadfast despite persecution (1:4). On the negative side, there are two major issues Paul feels constrained to address.

**(1) Doctrinal Misinformation**—It appears that Paul already had forgery foisting off false doctrines in his name relating especially to the coming of the Lord (2:2, 3a). Note the central location of this issue in the epistle (2:1ff.), introduced by a lengthy assurance regarding His coming and judgment (1:4b–10), and followed by the opening words of 2:1, *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .* This is the topic that is foremost on Paul's mind as he writes; it is the issue that he is immediately concerned to address and correct.

**(2) Disorderly Behavior**—The doctrine of the coming of Christ is central to Paul's concern in this epistle, but final words—the last thoughts with which we leave someone—also carry considerable weight. The lengthy closing exhortations regarding “disorderly brethren” (3:6–15) point to another matter of considerable urgency as far as Paul was concerned.

The subject of the Lord's coming occupies 40% of 2 Thessalonians (330 of 823 words). The subject of the disorderly brethren occupies the second largest amount of space—19% (154 words). These are the two single largest foci of the letter. Some commentators see these two problems as interconnected. They argue that misconceptions

about the coming of the Lord (the problem addressed in chapter 2) led some members of the assembly to be lazy or irresponsible (the problem addressed in chapter 3)—i.e., that the doctrine of imminence (incorrectly applied) produced indolence. The connection between these two topics is not impossible. However, it is important to note that Paul himself indicates no relationship whatsoever between these two issues. “No cause and effect relationship between these two problems is asserted in these epistles” (Hiebert). The epistle appears to address them as two distinct issues.

### Key Words And Concepts

**Coming of the Lord**—This dominant topic is described by four different words.

- **Apocalypse**—1:7, lit., “in (at) the *revelation* of the Lord Jesus”
  - The emphasis of this word is on the sudden uncovering of what was covered, the revealing of what was concealed, the unveiling of what was hidden from sight.
- **Erchomai**—1:10, “when he shall *come* to be glorified”
  - The emphasis of this word is on the actual arrival.
- **Parousia**—2:1, 8, “the *coming* of our Lord,” “the brightness of His *coming*”
  - This word emphasizes the official visit of a king or emperor, with all the ceremony that attends such a state visit.
- **Epiphany**—2:8, “the *brightness* of his coming”
  - This word emphasizes striking splendor, breathtaking brilliance, glorious grandeur associated with the appearance of a stunningly arrayed dignitary or even a god.
  - The word occurs 6x in the NT, always of Christ's coming.

Two of these words also occur with reference to the appearance of the Man of Sin (*apocalypse* in 2:3, 6, 8; *parousia* in 2:9). The use of the same words to describe the coming of Christ and the coming of Antichrist fits with the counterfeit nature of the Man of Sin.

**Judgment**—The first two chapters bristle with references to judgment in connection with the Coming of the Lord.

- 1:5—righteous judgment of God
- 1:6—God will recompense those who trouble believers
- 1:8—in flaming fire taking vengeance
- 1:9—punished with everlasting destruction
- 2:3—the Man of Sin is the son of perdition [destruction]

# THE DELAY OF CHRIST'S CERTAIN COMING

- 2:8—the Lord will consume him with the breath of His mouth
- 2:8—the Lord will destroy him with the brightness of His coming
- 2:10—his followers will perish
- 2:12—they will all be condemned who did not believe the truth

## Commands Regarding the Disorderly

- “Command”—3:4, 6, 10, 12
  - Cf. “traditions,” 2:15; 3:6
- “Disorderly”—3:6, 7, 11 (cf. 1 Th. 5:14)

## Content Outline

The contents of the letter consist of two major segments sandwiched between the opening and closing salutations.

### 1:1–4—Opening and Thanksgiving

#### 1:5–2:12—DOCTRINE: The Coming of the Lord

- 1:5–12—Comfort Amid Tribulation and Persecution: The Coming of the Lord will bring recompense and reward.
  - Confident rejoicing in their progress and endurance amid persecution (1:5, 6)
  - Confident anticipation of the certain Coming of Christ to end all persecution (1:7–10)
  - Confident prayer for spiritual success (1:11, 12)
- 2:1–17—Comfort amid Confusion and Consternation: The Coming has not yet occurred.
  - Correcting false doctrine about the chronology and the condemnation connected with the Coming of Christ (2:1–12)
    - The Coming is the connecting link between 1:5–12 and 2:1–17 (with only a brief prayer bridging the two).
  - Clarifying their exemption from the condemnation of the Coming of Christ and encouraging their enduring faithfulness (2:13–17)
    - The transition from 2:1–12 to 2:13–17 is seen in (a) the contrast between the *unbelief* of Antichrist’s followers (2:12) and the *belief* of the Thessalonians (2:13), and (b) the failure of Antichrist’s followers to be *saved* (2:12) and the *salvation* of the Thessalonian believers (2:13).

#### 3:1–16—DIRECTIVES: Prayer and Purity

- 3:1–5—Solicitation to prayer and accompanying encouragements (3:1–5)
- 3:6–16—Command to purity in fellowship, practice, and doctrine (3:6–16)
  - Note the repeated emphasis on “command” and “obey” (3:6, 12, 14)

## 3:16–18—Conclusion

Since 3:6–16 is such a hotly debated text in the area of separation, some concluding observations are in order. The entire context zeroes in on one specific issue—*disorderliness* (vv. 6, 7, 11; cf. 1 Thess. 5:14). The term refers to *being out of rank, out of order*. The particular manifestation of disorderliness that Paul addresses here is described in terms of being *idle loafers, meddling moochers*. Should we conclude, then, that idleness is the only brand of disorderliness from which we are commanded to separate? Or should we regard this as just one specific example and historically-occasioned application based on a known problem in Thessalonica at that time? In other words, is this single example all Paul had in mind, or is this “tradition” just one example of the “traditions” Paul charged them to hold in 2:15?

One popular study Bible notes, “Here [Paul] required separation so that obedient Christians were not to fellowship with habitually disobedient believers. This is further explained at v. 14” where the command not to keep company refers to “social interaction. Blatantly disobedient Christians were to be disfellowshipped (v. 6) to produce shame and, hopefully, repentance if they refused to obey the Word of God” (*MacArthur Study Bible*).

The breadth of the terms “traditions” in 2:15 and apostolic teaching in 3:14 imply that the example of “idleness” that Paul cites is just that—one example. In other words, 2:15 and 3:14 indicate that 3:6–13 is intended to be paradigmatic, not limited to one isolated kind of disobedience. It is a perverse kind of legalism to argue that idleness is the *only* kind of “disobedience” or “disorderliness” from which Paul intends his readers to separate. (It would be akin to a Jew who, with scrupulous attention to the letter of the law in Deut. 24:20, 21, concludes that since he grows *dates* rather than the olives or grapes specified in the text, he is exempt from the requirement to leave a gleanings of his harvest for the poor.) If Paul commanded separation from merely idle believers, how much more incumbent is separation from doctrinally, morally, or behaviorally aberrant believers.

According to 3:14, believers are to separate from anyone who does not obey the apostolic word in this epistle. *Those words include the apostolic command to separate*. The best that can be said of a believer who separates from the disorderly brother but will not separate from another who refuses to separate from the disorderly brother is that he is still disobeying Paul’s

Continued on page 38.

# The Necessity of Personal Separation in Biblical Fundamentalism

Continued from p. 23

## 3. The principle of God's glory.

1 Corinthians 6:20: "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

## 4. The principle of a Biblically educated conscience.

Romans 14:23: "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

## 5. The principle of Christ's name (authority).

Colossians 3:17: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

## 6. The principle of corruption by association.

1 Corinthians 15:33: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."

## 7. The principle of peace in the Body of Christ.

Colossians 3:15: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful."

## 8. The principle of edification.

Romans 15:1, 2: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification."

In summary, then, separation from the world grows out of the very character of God and His exclusive right to first place in all things; it is an expression of God's eternal holiness (Isa. 6:1-3). God could demand no other behavior in this regard and be consistent with Himself. Therefore, He demands that all people who name the name of Christ be like Him in character and conduct (Matt. 5:48; 1 John 2:1-4). It remains the responsibility of every believer and Christian organization to refuse to compromise His character by any association or endeavor, attitude or attempt that breaks down the absolute distinction between righteousness and sin, God's people and Satan's people, "day people" and "night people" (1 Thess. 5:1-11), obedient Christians and disobedient Christians, light and darkness, truth and error, right

and wrong, or good and evil.<sup>9</sup>

Mike Harding is senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Troy, Michigan.

<sup>1</sup> This Greek term is used only once in the NT (BAGD, p. 282).

<sup>2</sup> "Androgyny" means the removal of male and female characteristics, roles, or dress.

<sup>3</sup> James Davison Hunter, *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 59-62.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Quebedeaux, *The Worldly Evangelicals* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), pp. 12, 14, 118.

<sup>5</sup> Pelagianism, a heresy that began early in church history, denies the depravity and moral inability of the human will (Millard Erickson, *Where Is Theology Going?*, pp. 147-55).

<sup>6</sup> Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, reprint ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 871.

<sup>7</sup> Rolland McCune, "Handout on Biblical Separation," Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary.

<sup>8</sup> Antinomianism (literally, "against law") is the title given to the view which espouses that because believers are under grace they are not bound by the ethical/moral principles and commands of God's Word, including their sound and skillful application; therefore, Christians may sin with virtual impunity because God's grace abounds. This view is refuted in Romans 6:1, 2.

<sup>9</sup> McCune, "Handout on Biblical Separation," DBTS.

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## American Religion

*USA Today* ran a front-page article reporting on the ARIS (American Religious Identification Survey) that was released March 10 of this year. What made this article front-page newsworthy are the dramatic shifts that are measured in American religious expression since the poll began eighteen years ago. Those claiming any association with religion dropped more than 11% in the last eighteen years. Growth by birth and immigration has added 50 million adults to the US population, yet almost every US denomination has lost ground.

Fifteen percent of Americans claim no religious affiliation. This statistic grew from 8% in 1990. This category now outranks every other denomination except for Catholics and Baptists. Mainline Protestants lost the most ground in the last eighteen years, losing 5.8% of the population. Baptists declined 3.5% and now hold only 15.8% of the population. Mormons remained the same, while the Charismatics and Muslims grew .3%.

One spin-off article commented, "For some, faith is more of a 'fashion statement' than a commitment." Forty percent of the "no religion" group indicated they had no religious initiation as a child. Fifty-five percent of that same group said they would not have a religious ceremony to mark their wedding, and sixty-six said they did not expect

to have a religious funeral.

This article can be referenced at *USA Today*, March 9, 2009, *Almost all denominations losing ground, survey finds*.

## More on "Established" Religion

The case is entitled *American Atheists v. Davenport*. Atheists are challenging the Utah Highway Patrol, who since the late 1990s have erected crosses near the sites where highway patrolmen have been killed in the line of duty. Germane to the case is the fact that the Highway Patrol Association used neither state nor federal funds nor even state land. The markers were placed on private land with the owners' consent.

The American Atheists complain that these memorials constitute "a state establishment of religion." The case now stands before a federal appeals court.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.becketfund.org/index.php/article/971.html>.

## "Successful Parenting"

The Lifeway Research group conducted a survey of what parents consider to be successful parenting. The survey contacted more than twelve hundred adults with children still under the age of eighteen.

From the article: "According to the study, 25 percent of respondents said the most common definitions of successful

parenting included children having good values; 25 percent defined successful parenting as their children being happy adults; and 22 percent said they would be successful parents if their kids found success in life."

Twenty-nine percent of the Christian respondents said that "faith was not among the most important influences on their parenting."

A fuller picture of the results can be seen Lifeway's new work, *The Parent Adventure: Preparing Your Children for a Lifetime with God*.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/Culture/Default.aspx?id=457896>.

## Poor Birthing Trends

A federal report on birthing trends in the United States reveals more moral concerns. The statistics cover 2007, which saw the largest number of births in US history. The surprise? Forty percent of those births occurred outside of marriage.

One News Now did a poll on why its readers believed the trends have surfaced as they have. 21,439 respondents were given five options for our moral slide: "feminism (1.19%), 'safe sex' education (0.00%), movement away from Judeo-Christian teachings (58.17%), and glorified casual sex by the entertainment industry (30.89%). 1.61% of the respondents indicated none of the above."

Janice Crouse of

Concerned Women for America stated that one of the reasons for this aggressive change in numbers is due to the glamorization of single motherhood and the removal of all social stigma regarding out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/Culture/Default.aspx?id=458082>.

## New Moral Responsibility

The HIV and AIDS Network of the United Church of Christ issued a statement that advocates making condoms available at "faith-based educational settings." A UCC executive stated that this recommendation was "a matter of life and death . . . condoms should be made available to save the lives of young people."

The statement was issued at the Wider Church Ministries board meeting, demonstrating the group's radical departure from its Puritan roots.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/Church/Default.aspx?id=468294>.

## Religious Liberty Offenders

Four days prior to the expiration of the Bush administration, then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice issued a list of the world's worst violators of religious liberty. Her actions ignored the recommendations of a federal commission set up to make recommendations for the addition

of Countries of Particular Concern (CPC). Investigation has revealed that she failed to make the timely efforts required.

Rice's list included the eight previously designated countries of Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Uzbekistan. Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan also received waivers.

The report continued, "The [US Commission on International Religious Freedom]—a nine-member, bipartisan panel that advises the White House and Congress on global religious liberty issues—had urged Rice to add Iraq, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam to the list." USCIRF makes CPC recommendations, but only the Secretary of State decides which countries receive such a designation.

USCIRF "is disappointed that Secretary Rice refused to designate any new countries and that waivers were granted for both Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia," said Felice Gaer, the commission's chairwoman. "Religious freedom conditions in Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia are appalling, and a specific U.S. government response is required."

This article can be referenced at <http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue5383.html>.

### **More Muslims in the White House**

The *Chicago Tribune* recently reported that forty-five resumes have been collected from the most qualified Muslim-Americans for White House consideration. "Among those spearheading the effort is Rep. Keith Ellison (D-Minn.), the first Muslim to be elected to the U.S. Congress. The Congressional Muslim Staffers Association has also helped

## NOTABLE QUOTES

**S**o the task of the authentic Fundamentalist is to take the eternal principles of Scripture and apply them to the real-life situations and cultures and times, allowing these principles to dictate the forms and structures through which he carries out his ministry and the rules and guidelines by which he lives out his life.—Douglas R. McLachlan

**I**t should be noted that the principle of accommodation is not taught in the New Testament. We are not to trim the message or the methods of God in order to win a hearing for our message. The servant of God is to be "rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15).—Earnest D. Pickering

**T**he Christian life is a constant spiritual struggle against the powers of evil and unbelief. But with God's help the believer can overcome all the numerous obstacles. As Satan attempts to shake and destroy Christian faith, to turn believers away from God, he used not only prisons and open persecution, but also the seduction of praises, riches, and false teachings. How important it is not to depart from the narrow Christian path, compromising with the Devil.—Georgi Vins

**I**t now becomes a serious question how far those who abide by the faith once delivered to the saints should fraternize with those who have turned aside to another gospel. Christian love has its claims, and divisions are to be shunned as grievous evils; but how far are we justified in being in confederacy with those who are departing from the truth? It is a difficult question to answer so as to keep the balance of the duties. For the present it behooves believers to be cautious, lest they lend their support and countenance to the betrayers of the Lord. It is one thing to overleap all boundaries of denominational restriction for the truth's sake: this we hope all godly men will do more and more. It is quite another policy which would urge us to subordinate the maintenance of truth to denominational prosperity and unity. Numbers of easy-minded people wink at error so long as it is committed by a clever man and a good-natured brother, who has so many fine points about him. Let each believer judge for himself; but, for our part, we have put on a few fresh bolts to our door, and we have given orders to keep the chain up; for, under color of begging the friendship of the servant, there are those about who aim at robbing the Master.—C. H. Spurgeon

with the vetting process."

J. Saleh Williams of the Congressional Muslim Staffers Association took responsibility for the initiative, stating, "We thought it would put (the president) in a precarious position. We didn't know how closely he wanted to appear to be working with the Muslim American community."

According to the article there are seven to eight million Muslims in America, making up two percent of the population.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.christianpost.com/Society/Politics/2009/04/group-wants-more-muslims-in-white-house-01/index.html>.

### **De-Baptism**

Over 100,000 Britons have downloaded "certificates of de-baptism." These certificates are intended to serve as statements for renouncing the faith of their childhood. Many claim that the decisions they made occurred when they were too young to understand what they were doing. The National Secularist Society will send a parchment copy for 3 pounds (\$4.35). So far they have issued 1500 such certificates.

The certificates are part of the larger "There's probably no God" bus ad campaign, which started as a backlash to Christian ads that were run previously on city busses.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.christianpost.com/Intl/Overseas/2009/03/100-000-atheist-britons-seek-de-baptism-from-christianity-31/index.html>.

Compiled by Robert Conduct, FBFI Advisory Board member and pastor of Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church, Baldwin, Maryland.

*Newsworthy* is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the FBFI.

Pearson Johnson

## Advancing Missions in a Recession

There is little doubt throughout the United States that we are in a financial recession. Many missionaries on the field have been viewing the financial crisis at home with uncertainty, while those on deputation are seeing an increase in “wait and see” responses to their requests for missions support. I would like to make the case that churches *can* advance their missions program through a recession. This time of economic uncertainty can be a time of progress for the missions ministries of our churches for a number of reasons.

**First, the recession has caused us to increase our dependence on God for provision.** We tend to depend too much on our own sufficiency and too little on God’s all-sufficiency in every area of our life. Missions is no exception. I remember my dad saying during times of difficulty that “God owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and it is no trouble for Him to provide for our needs.” God is glorified when we turn to Him in dependence and expectant hope to accomplish His will. The recession is helping us do what we should always be doing anyhow—advance in our dependence on Him.

**Second, the recession has caused us to be more thankful for spiritual realities.** I know of churches who have been forced to make cuts across the board in their budget, yet, even with financial cutbacks, they have furthered their efforts to support missionaries through prayer and encouragement. In these instances, both the missionary’s partnership with churches and their trust in God are advanced.

**Third, the recession has caused us to evaluate our Biblical priorities.** If a church wants to fulfill the mandate of Jesus Christ to “Go . . . and teach all nations” (Matt. 28:19), then they *will and must* find a way to continue advancing in their missions support even in a recession. Every church must be making disciples by planting churches in ever-increasing areas of the world in order to fulfill the Great Commission. When we react to a recession with missions cuts because they are the least painful cuts to make, our abandonment of Biblical priorities is revealed. However, when we persevere through a recession to advance our priorities, then the mettle of our resolve to obey Christ is steeled.

**Fourth, the recession has caused us to evaluate our support priorities.** The prosperity of the last two decades has led to the establishment and expansion of a number of parachurch ministries. These ministries champion good and noble efforts, yet ones that are secondary to the local church’s Biblical mission of planting churches. Support for good ministries may need to be sacrificed for higher priorities. Complicating the situation is the fact that many parachurch ministries have built networks of individual supporters who supply funds for their sustenance. However, in a time of financial belt-tightening, church members will have to make sure they prioritize their giving *through* their local church body for the necessary advance of the Great Commission.

In addition, tight times cause us to evaluate the effectiveness of the ministries or missionaries that we support. Church leaders have to be good stewards of the funds that God has given them. In missions work, as in any other area of the church budget, this responsibility requires hard choices. For the health of the mission to be advanced, cutting may be required.

**Fifth, the recession has highlighted the need for indigenization.** Indigenization is a missions word for making sure foreign ministries are being turned over to the believers in those cultures. Too many foreign ministries—schools, camps, hospitals, orphanages, and churches—are dependent on American dollars for their sustenance. If the dollars stop coming, the ministry ceases to be viable. The recession has reminded us that the goal should be independence for any ministry that we establish, and the current financial climate has provided an impetus to advance ministries toward indigenization.

Can our missions program advance through a recession? Hopefully, in God’s providence and by His grace, God will use these difficult financial times in the lives of our churches to make us more purposeful and dependent on Him in our missions work for the good of the church and for His glory.

Pearson Johnson is the pastor of missions and evangelism at Inter-City Baptist Church. You can e-mail him with questions or comments at [pjohnson@intercity.org](mailto:pjohnson@intercity.org).

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## Civil Air Patrol: A Pastor's Opportunity

On a beautiful summer day in 1996 I stood on the porch of the old terminal building at the Jimmy Stewart Municipal Airport in Indiana, Pennsylvania, and watched a challenging competition taking place between some highly skilled aviators. Another spectator observing the same contest saw my interest in this exhibition of piloting skill and, after introducing himself to me, explained the rules and purpose of what I was watching. Thus began my relationship with Captain Keith Rearick and my introduction to the chaplaincy of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP). When Keith, the local CAP squadron commander, found out I was both a pilot and a pastor, he inquired as to whether or not I would consider joining the local CAP squadron and becoming its chaplain. After learning more of the program and the opportunities it would afford me to expand the boundaries of my own pastoral ministry, I agreed to his request. This was a chance to serve my local community and my country as a citizen and a Christian.

I soon found out that becoming a chaplain in the Civil Air Patrol is a somewhat lengthy process. Chaplain candidates must meet the same religious standards as US military chaplains. They must receive an ecclesiastical endorsement from a national religious official approved by the Armed Forces Chaplains' Board (AFCB) and possess both accredited undergraduate and graduate seminary degrees. The candidate must also be engaged in a vocation acceptable to the AFCB-approved endorser for clergy of his denomination. While I had the necessary ministry experience as well as the undergraduate and semi-

nary degrees required to become a chaplain, my degrees were not from institutions that were accredited at the time of my graduation. In order to have these validated, I applied for endorsement to the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International Commission on Military Chaplaincy. I received invaluable help from Dr. H. Philip Kissinger, the Chairman of the Commission. He spent countless hours on my behalf appealing to key personnel in the Air Force Chaplain Service to accept my endorsement and appoint me as a Civil Air Patrol chaplain. Because of his untiring efforts I was accepted and approved as a chaplain in the United States Air Force Auxiliary on May 12, 1997.

My time as a CAP chaplain has been a richly rewarding experience affording me many ministry opportunities. I have had the privilege of ministering to many cadets and senior members, both locally and statewide. I conduct monthly cadet character development sessions and have had many doors opened up for me to witness to everyone from Wing Commanders to the newest cadet member. I am one of the few chaplains in Pennsylvania who is also a pilot, which has helped me gain respect from fellow CAP pilots and has afforded

numerous occasions across the state to share the gospel. As a pilot chaplain I have flown numerous missions involving search and rescue, drug eradication, homeland security, cadet orientation flights, and mission check pilot sorties. As a CAP chaplain I have been privileged to perform weddings, make hospital visits, attend funerals, and conduct workshops. As the Pennsylvania Group One chaplain, I wrote a monthly chaplain's column entitled *In the Grid*, which was disseminated to CAP and Air Force personnel across the state.

I am fortunate to pastor a church where the members encourage my participation as a chaplain in the Civil Air Patrol. Every year my church invites the CAP members and their families to join them for a special service designated as CAP Sunday. The chaplaincy has afforded me this and other venues to preach the gospel to those who may never have heard it otherwise.

If you are looking for an opportunity as a pastor to broaden your pastoral ministry while simultaneously serving your community and country, let me encourage you to become a member of the Civil Air Patrol. It is a wonderful way to make a positive impact on people's lives for eternity. Incidentally, Captain Keith Rearick, the man who

introduced me to the Civil Air Patrol, and his entire family have become members of my church. The CAP chaplaincy is indeed a rewarding ministry.

Dr. Daryl Jeffers holds degrees from Central Baptist Theological Seminary and Bob Jones University. He pastors Calvary Baptist Church of Clymer, Pennsylvania, and has been an active member of the Civil Air Patrol for thirteen years. He is the recipient of both the Civil Air Patrol Pennsylvania Group 1 Chaplain of the Year and the Northeast Region Chaplain of the Year awards. He and his wife, Janet, have four children.



## At a Glance Continued from pg. 31

directive, since the disorderly brother and the refusing brother are both “not obeying” the apostolic charges in this epistle. This is not “second-degree” separation; it is Biblical separation in simple obedience to the apostolic injunction in this epistle. Nevertheless, the spirit of brotherliness and the goal of restoration must also govern our practice of separation as well (3:15).

### Theme

First Thessalonians was an encouragement to confident, holy living in light of the certainty of Christ's return. Second Thessalonians reckons with the other side of that coin: an encouragement to faithful perseverance in light of the delay of Christ's certain return.

- Perseverance in the face of continuing persecution (1:5–12; note 1:5, 7)
- Perseverance in the face of false eschatological teaching (2:1–12; note 2:2, 3)
- Perseverance in apostolic doctrine (2:13–17; note 2:15, 17)
- Perseverance in prayerful, patient waiting (3:1–5)
- Perseverance in faithful, responsible living [a personal and corporate responsibility] (3:6–15)

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## The Awkwardness of Necessary Offense

Continued from page 5

actually been a Marian apparition sent by God to comfort him at a low point. He thought my comments on Christ were just my experience, not unlike his own religious urge. But he would not tolerate the simple gospel of Jesus Christ. He placed a crucifix in his home, in sympathy for Jesus. But, talk of repentance from sin and simple faith in the death and resurrection of Christ, and he would simply say, "Stop trying to make me a Baptist." Our friendship survived our discussions of salvation, but many others do not. It is not uncommon for the witness himself to be accepted or rejected along with the gospel. I kept my friend for a lifetime, but, as far as I know, I have lost him for eternity.

The Fundamental Baptist Fellowship has drawn from its Statement of Purpose six core values: Loyalty to God and His Word; Uncompromising Fellowship; Balanced Biblical Discernment; Separatist Baptist Fellowship; Great Commission Leadership; Vigilance for Religious Liberty. A year ago resolutions were presented on five of these, and we could not have known then how timely would be the discussion on one of them, "religious liberty," in light of the changes we have seen. We also promised to present resolutions this year on the core value of *Separatist Baptist Fundamentalism*.

This issue of *FrontLine* is built around those resolutions and articles written to develop them further. We appeal to those who are skittish about the term "Separatist Baptist Fundamentalism" to read these articles thoughtfully, to consider whether your concern is for the term or the truth we identify by the term. Our vision "to perpetuate the heritage of Baptist Fundamentalism" and mission in "glorifying God through the uncompromising fulfillment of the Great Commission" are rooted in the "Glorious Gospel of Christ," which is the theme of our Annual Fellowship in June.

That glorious gospel, we are taught, was a great offense to the Jews. They were tripped up by the very idea that Messiah should be crucified. Their unrepentant unbelief bound them to treat the doctrine with scorn. The rest of unbelieving humanity thinks this plan of salvation is folly. That sad conclusion is exacerbated by a genuine folly afoot in Evangelicalism for sixty years. And it has not passed with the rise of men who admit that separation from liberalism and worldliness is Biblical but who suggest by their silence that separation from unrepentant disobedience is a mere anachronism on which the sun has set. We embrace this folly when we hold to the notion that all offense is unacceptable. The glorious gospel of Christ is, to those who reject Christ, an offense itself. There is no need for awkwardness about that necessary offense.



### Notice: Subscription rate adjustment

Continuing increases in production costs and postage require an adjustment in subscription rates for *FrontLine* and FBFI membership. (The current membership allocation for the directory covers less than a third of the cost, not including postage.) All current subscriptions will be honored at the rate paid for the term of the subscription. Effective immediately, new rates will be as follows, subject to periodic increases in the future.

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In order to maintain the current 48-page format and to manage continual postage increases, we are reducing the weight of the paper used in *FrontLine* from 70# to 60# beginning with the July/August issue.

In light of economic realities, these modest changes are appropriate for now, but there are other realities we must address. To keep *FrontLine* in production, we will need for everyone who currently subscribes and appreciates *FrontLine* to stay with us, plus we need for all of our readers to encourage former subscribers to sign up again.

Gift subscriptions for missionaries, new member packets, friends and neighbors will help. There may even be some who would consider a love gift to *FrontLine* Magazine to help us keep it affordable. **It is our business to make *FrontLine* a blessing; why not make it your blessing to keep *FrontLine* in business!**

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