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# FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

God  
With  
Us



# God With Us



## FEATURES

- 6 The Presence of God in Scripture**  
*Brian Collins*  
If separation from the presence of God is a consequence of sin, then the restoration of the presence of God must be a chief part of redemption.
- 8 The Presence of God in the Tabernacle**  
*Brian Collins*  
Consider that the tabernacle would not have been built had God not been willing to dwell among His people.
- 10 The Presence of God in the Psalms**  
*Joel Arnold*  
The Psalms record the prayers, worship, anguish, and joy of hearts yearning for God's presence.
- 12 God with Us in Jesus Christ**  
*Aaron F. Young*  
The whole of the Bible is about Jesus Christ.
- 14 The Holy Spirit as the Indwelling Presence of God**  
*Kent Ramler*  
The coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples would be even better than having the physical presence of Jesus with them on the earth!

- 16 Future Hope and Present Holiness**  
*Ken Endean*  
What is it about that anticipated eternal home that energizes you?

## DEPARTMENTS

- 5 Mail Bag & News from All Over**
- 20 On the Home Front**
- 21 Regional Reports**
- 23 Wit & Wisdom**  
*David Atkinson*
- 24 Beliefs and Practices by Categories of Truth**  
*David C. Innes*
- 26 At a Glance**  
The Story of David, Part 4  
*Layton Talbert*
- 29 Newsworthy**  
*Robert Condict*
- 31 On Language & Scripture**  
*Mark L. Ward Jr.*
- 34 Climb to Glory**  
*John C. Vaughn*
- 38 Simplicity Made So Difficult**  
*Jerry Sivnksty*

We would like to thank Dr. Brian Collins for coordinating this issue of *FrontLine* magazine.

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**Bible scholars have long discussed what the major themes of the Bible are.** God is, of course, at the center of the Bible. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to mankind. In revealing Himself to man God also teaches us about ourselves as we relate to Him.

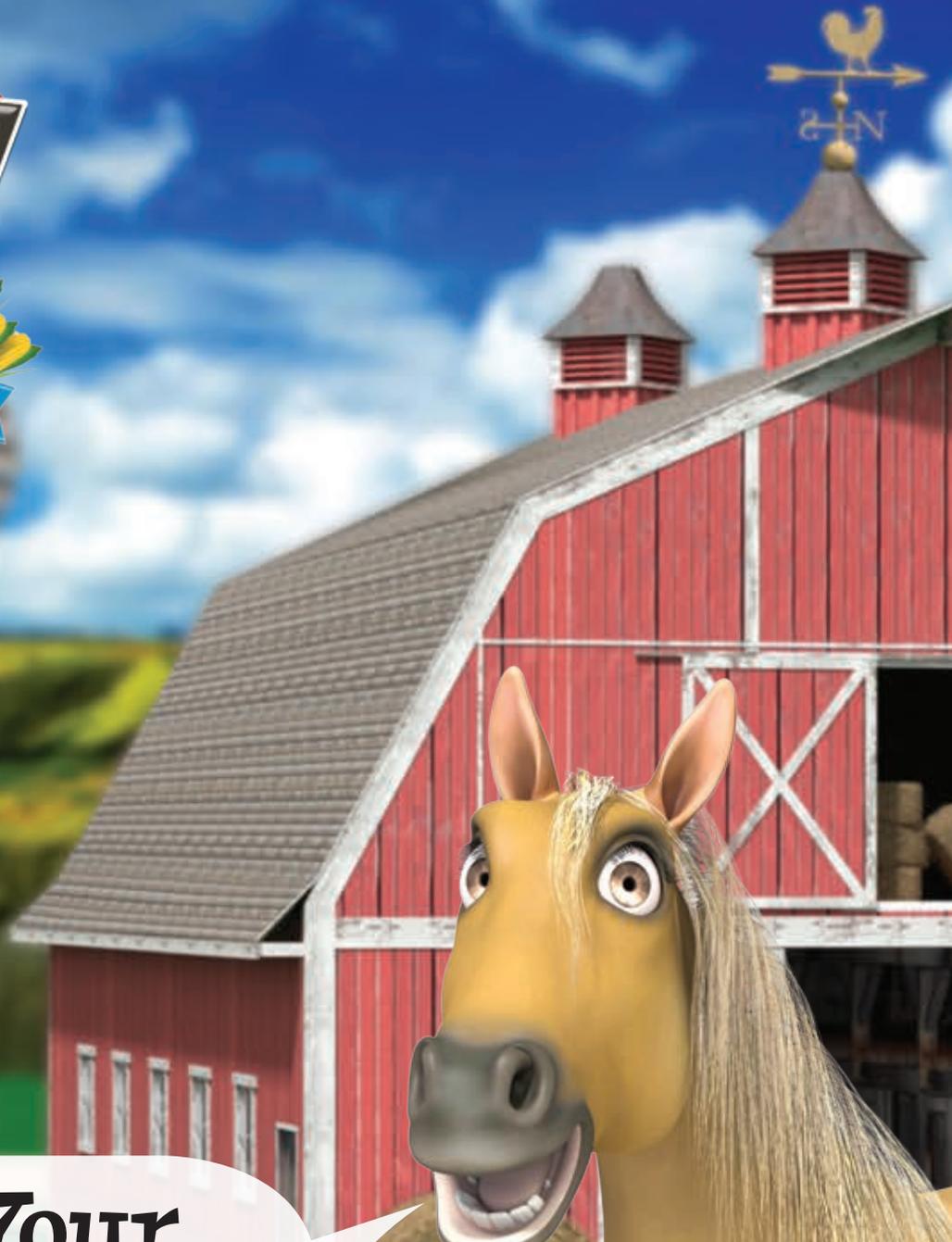
But what are the major themes of this revelation? Chief among them is the revelation of God's main purpose for all that He does: the declaration of His own glory. That this is God's chief goal is magnificently argued from Scripture text after Scripture text in Jonathan Edwards's *The End for Which God Created the World*. But as Paul teaches in Romans, sinners "glorified him not as God, neither were thankful" (Rom. 1:21). Sin brings about the need for redemption so that one day "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10–11). The mention of Christ as Lord raises another important theme that runs from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22 and which was at the center of Jesus' own preaching ministry: the kingdom of God. Redemption is fully accomplished when Jesus reigns from Jerusalem as God and Man in one person. Glory, redemption, and kingdom could be identified as the three central themes of Scripture.

Other important themes attach to these three. For instance, the plan of redemption and the establishment of God's kingdom are accomplished through a series of covenants that God makes with man. Thus "covenant" is a major biblical theme. (Some people associate the word "covenant" primarily with covenant theology, but a quick glance through section two of Dwight Pentecost's *Things to Come* reveals that the biblical covenants are essential to dispensational theology.)

The theme of God's presence, the subject of this issue of *FrontLine* magazine, ranks right up with these others as one of the major themes of the Bible. Though God's ultimate goal in all things, including redemption, is His own glory, God has chosen to get glory for Himself not only by punishing sinners but also by reconciling sinners to Himself. Sin brought about a breach between God and man. It separated sinful man from the thrice-holy God. Thus a chief part of redemption is bringing mankind back into the presence of God.

This issue traces this theme throughout Scripture. I begin the issue with a survey of how the theme of God's presence develops throughout Scripture, as God works out His plan of redemption step by step. I then follow this survey with a study of how the tabernacle and temple symbolized God's presence among His people. Joel Arnold then examines the importance of God's presence in the worship of Israel as expressed in the Psalter. Though these Old Testament expressions of God's presence have been surpassed in the New Testament, Joel notes ways that these Psalms can still be used by Christians today regarding the greater manifestations of God's presence that we enjoy today. With Aaron Young's article we turn to Jesus Christ, who is God-with-us in reality and not just in symbol. We might think, however, that there has been some regression in God's plan of redemption since Jesus ascended to heaven after His earthly ministry, but Kent Ramler's article on the presence of God in the indwelling Holy Spirit reminds us that it really was to our benefit for Jesus to go away for a time and bestow His Holy Spirit upon us. God still has more in store for His people, however. Ken Endean's article directs our eyes to the future as we anticipate living in the presence of God for eternity.

We hope this issue will enable you to rejoice in the great privilege we have to draw near to our God through Jesus Christ in His Spirit.



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**A**s you may have noticed from my name, I am French, and I live in France. I was led to the Lord ten years ago by my friend Jim, a member at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville. Last year Jim gave me an issue of *FrontLine*, and I appreciated it very much. Recently it came to my mind to subscribe to it.

*Vincent Dormieux  
Herblay, FRANCE*

**M**ay God bless you, *FrontLine*. . . . For me it is wonderful and amazing to read a kind of magazine like that. I appreciate all the Biblical principles that . . . this magazine . . . [teaches] us.

. . . I have been in prison and almost go home. . . . I wonder if you might be willing to help me to get the publication. I will appreciate.

I am from Los Mochis, Sinaloa, Mexico, and . . . [am] willing to share the Word of God in my country. . . . I know I have to be ready to learn a good biblical principal, and I believe, *FrontLine* . . . is a good tool for me. I hope so that you may [make] possible the subscription.

*Jorge Rosas  
California City, California*

**O**n the [www.jobs.sc.gov](http://www.jobs.sc.gov) site there are at least three jobs posted for chaplains in the Department of Juvenile Justice across the state. . . . It looks like the applications will close soon, but I thought you might know of men who may be interested. Perhaps other states also post opportunities like this.

*Peggy Alier  
Greenville, SC*

**O**ur church is changing. CCM is infiltrating. When questions are raised, "That is just a matter of preference" is the reply. Dress standards are being relaxed. I was shocked when [there was] a proposal that we change our constitution to allow social drinking! There is no organized visitation, and soul winning is not mentioned anymore. The people who gave their lives to buy our property and build our buildings are leaving. We never hear anymore that Christ is coming soon or have any help from the pulpit in understanding what is happening in America or the Middle East. It is all about reaching people in their 20s and 30s and "building the kingdom." I hear this same thing from friends and relatives in other churches. Can *FrontLine* help us understand what is happening?

*From an anonymous reader*

Continued on right

On Sunday, September 20, the congregation of Farmington Avenue Baptist Church in West Hartford, Connecticut, voted to extend to **Jeremy Sweatt** a call



to be the third pastor of this historic New England congregation. With both humility and joy he has accepted their call. The Lord's guiding hand has been seen clearly over the past several weeks as he and his wife have walked through this process together with the church family at FABC. Reneé and Jeremy covet your prayers for us as we launch out into this new ministry. Also, please be in prayer for Community Baptist Church in Canton, Georgia, the church the Sweatts planted and pastored for thirteen-and-a-half years, as they navigate the transition and seek the Lord's leading for their next pastor.

**Duncan Johnson** teaches at Foundation Baptist College in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, where he and his wife, Meg, attend Meadowlands Baptist Church with their two children. In addition to teaching college classes on the Bible, Duncan serves at the church as an adult Sunday school teacher.



Mail Bag (Continued from left)

*Editor's reply:* We get e-mails and calls on this almost every week. We plan to publish an issue of *FrontLine* in 2016 that will discuss this new movement.

In an effort to explain the reasoning behind efforts to promote "cultural engagement," the following is an excerpt from an announcement forwarded from Grand Canyon University, a Christian college, explaining why they will now provide benefits to same-sex couples:

If providing benefits to all who are legally married enables the University to continue ministering to its employees and their families within an increasingly complex cultural context, then we will gladly provide benefits. We hope that in doing so we will be permitted to withdraw from fruitless culture wars that tend to yield more heat than light and more hostility than genuine cultural engagement.

Our readers are reminded that one of the founding principles of Neo-Evangelicalism was its frustration with the loss of genuine cultural engagement because of principles of biblical separation.

# The Presence of God in Scripture

Bible scholars have tried for many years to discern the central theme or themes of Scripture. They have difficulty settling on a single theme. The Bible is like a precious gem that can be viewed from many different angles. Or it is like a rich tapestry in which many threads are woven to make a beautiful whole. Nevertheless, certain threads stand out, and the presence of God is one of these outstanding scriptural themes.

As soon as the man and his wife sin, they flee from the presence of God. They hear the LORD God walking in the garden, something that was probably a regular occurrence,\* and

they hide themselves “from the presence of the LORD God” (Gen. 3:8). Adam and Eve’s flight from God’s presence is underscored by their exile from Eden, the place where they used to walk with God (Gen. 3:22–24). Nor is this consequence of sin limited to the initial couple. Cain too, after his sin and the subsequent judgment, “went out from the presence of the LORD” (Gen. 4:16).

If separation from the presence of God is a consequence of sin, then the restoration of the presence of God must be a chief part of redemption. Hints of this are provided in the opening chapters of Genesis. Enoch stands out among the early generations because he “walked with God” (Gen. 5:22, 24). Noah also



is described as a man who “walked with God” (Gen. 6:9). God also appeared to and spoke with Abraham, whom the Bible identifies as the “Friend of God” (James 2:23; cf. Isa. 41:8). But the nearness of God during the patriarchal period is limited to particular people at particular times.

### **The Tabernacle and the Temple**

While the people of Israel are encamped before Mount Sinai, God makes a tremendous statement. He tells Moses, “Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them” (Exod. 25:8). For God to establish a permanent symbol of His presence among His people is one of the greatest blessings that God could give to a people since the exile of man from Eden. The whole tabernacle is designed to emphasize that God’s presence is there.

When Solomon dedicates the temple, the permanent house to replace the tabernacle, he marvels that God would deign to dwell among His people (1 Kings 8:12–13). Yet several times he recognizes that God dwells in heaven and no earthly building can contain Him (1 Kings 8:27, 30, 34, 36, 39, 43, 45, 49). Solomon recognized that glorious as the temple was, it was still merely pointing ahead to a future, fuller dwelling of God with His people.

The Israelites treated the temple not as a great blessing but as a talisman that provided them with protection. Surely God would never let anything happen to His dwelling place (Jer. 7:4). But the people’s sin separated them from God. Ezekiel saw in a vision the throne of God rise up from its place in the temple, and the glory of God passed over the threshold of the temple and left the house of God empty of God’s presence (Ezek. 10). When the people returned from exile, they rebuilt the temple, but the chief symbol of God’s presence, the Ark of the Covenant, was missing.

### **The Incarnation and the Church**

God’s intentions for His people, however, were far more glorious than the restoration of the ark or a building. The prophet Isaiah predicted that a virgin would “conceive, and bear a son” who would be named “Immanuel,” or God with us (Isa. 7:14). Matthew reveals that this promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:23). When John wrote, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14), he is evoking language the Old Testament used of the tabernacle. The incarnate Word dwelt or tabernacled among His people just as God dwelt among His people in the tabernacle (Exod. 25:8). The tabernacle and temple were the place where God’s glory resided (Exod. 40:34–35; 1 Kings 8:10–11; cf. 1 Sam. 4:21–22); thus when people saw the incarnate Word they saw His glory. The phrase “full of grace and truth” recalls Moses’ plea for God’s presence to accompany

the people of Israel into the land. Moses asked at that point to see God’s glory. God granted his request and proclaimed His name before Moses and declared that He is full of “goodness and truth,” a Hebrew phrase that translates into Greek as “grace and truth.”

So in Jesus God dwelt with man in a way that He never had before. Jesus, God and man, lived, walked, and taught among His people. This is why Jesus could refer to the temple of His body (John 2:21). He was God and man. This may make the ascension of Jesus seem like a retrogression. But Jesus assured His disciples that it was not: “It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away the [Paraclete] will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (John 16:7; cf. 7:39). The farewell discourse in John links the giving of the Spirit with the continued presence of God among men. No more will the Spirit dwell with God’s people. Now He will “be in you” (John 14:17). Because of Jesus’ work in atoning for and sanctifying His people, God’s people are no longer excluded from the Holy Place. They become the temple itself. God, in the Person of the Spirit, dwells within them. Paul calls the church and the individuals who comprise it the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). Christians, as the church, are “builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22). We are “an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:21).

We do not comprehend what a privilege we have to be the temple of God and to enjoy God’s indwelling Presence. This is a privilege that not even Adam and Eve had, one which God’s people in the Old Testament could have hardly envisioned. It is why it such a serious matter to grieve the Holy Spirit. And yet there is more to come.

Ezekiel had a vision of the departure of God from the temple. But that was not the last word that God gave Ezekiel. God also gave Ezekiel a vision of God returning to His temple. The last words of his book are the promise “the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there.” The fulfillment of that promise is found in descent of the New Jerusalem to the restored earth. In the apostle John’s vision of this event he hears “a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev. 21:3). When this happens we will be with the one in whose “presence is fulness of joy” (Ps. 16:11; cf. Rev. 21:4).

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\* The form of the Hebrew verb may indicate that this was a habitual action (Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17, New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. R. K. Harrison [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 192; Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 427–29).

# The Presence of God

The tabernacle, and the temple that followed, was the preeminent symbol of God's presence with His people. God makes clear this symbolic significance of the tabernacle from the initial command to build it: "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Exod. 25:8). The symbolism of God dwelling with His people runs into the details of the tabernacle construction. The whole tabernacle is designed to emphasize that God's presence is there.

## The Tabernacle Furnishings and Practices

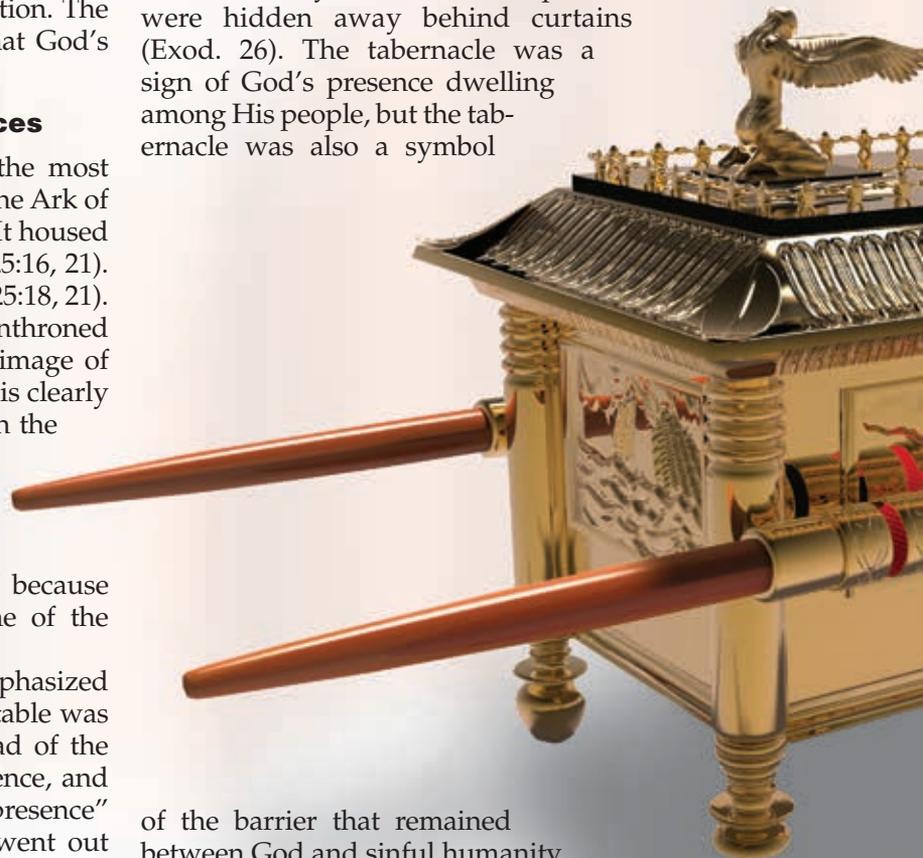
The first piece of furniture mentioned is the most important piece of furniture in the tabernacle: the Ark of the Covenant. The ark had multiple purposes. It housed the Ten Words of God, given on Sinai (Exod. 25:16, 21). It was the place of atonement for Israel (Exod. 25:18, 21). But most significantly it symbolized Yahweh enthroned between the cherubim (Ps. 99:1). There is no image of God; only the cherubim are represented. But it is clearly the place of God's presence, for from "between the two cherubims" God will meet with and speak to Moses (Exod. 25:22). Later revelation confirms that the ark symbolized the throne of God, for Jeremiah prophesied that the ark would not even "come to mind" because Jerusalem itself will replace it as "the throne of the LORD" (Jer. 3:16–17).

The next piece of furniture, a table, also emphasized the presence of God with His people. On this table was laid what may be literally translated as "bread of the face" (Exod. 25:30). The "face" indicated presence, and the Hebrew word for "face" is translated "presence" in some instances. Genesis 4:16, "And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD," is an instance of this. This bread is therefore called by some the "bread of the Presence." The bread was probably given this name because it was laid in the Lord's presence in the Holy Place. Twelve loaves of bread were laid on the table each Sabbath (Lev. 24:5–8). The bread therefore symbolized that the twelve tribes of Israel lived in the presence of God. The priests ate this bread in the Holy Place each Sabbath (Lev. 24:9), and this meal symbolized the fellowship of God with His people.

The lamp is mentioned next. It is designed to look like a tree, with branches, buds, blossoms, and flow-

ers. The significance of the tree-like lampstand is more difficult to determine precisely. One commentator suggests, "It may have represented Israel as a tree standing before God (Jer. 11:16; Hos. 14:6; Ps. 52:8)."<sup>1</sup> Others have suggested that the tree represents the tree of life.<sup>2</sup> If this is the case, the lamp indicates that the tabernacle is a representation of Eden, where mankind had unfettered fellowship with God.

Yet these symbols of God's presence were hidden away behind curtains (Exod. 26). The tabernacle was a sign of God's presence dwelling among His people, but the tabernacle was also a symbol



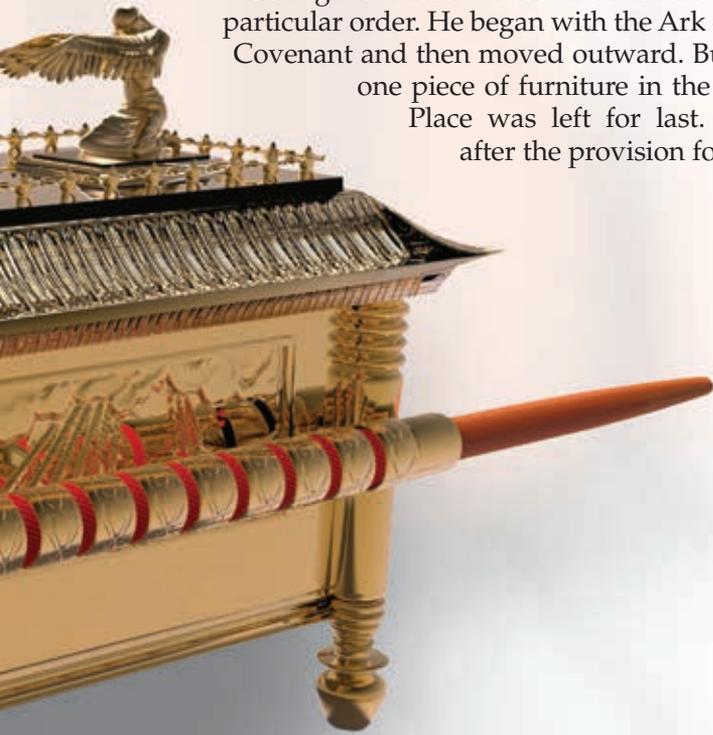
of the barrier that remained between God and sinful humanity. Just as cherubim guarded the garden of Eden after the first sin, so cherubim woven into the curtains symbolically guarded the tabernacle from unauthorized intrusion (Exod. 26:1, 31). The only access to God that the people had was through the offering of substitutionary sacrifices on the bronze altar (Exod. 27). Jewish people could approach God by bringing their sacrifices into the court of the tabernacle, but they were still kept away from God by not being permitted to progress further into God's dwelling place.

Instead, the priests bring the people into the presence of God. This is symbolized by the twelve stones on the

# in the Tabernacle

high priest's ephod and by the two stones on his shoulders. The colors of fabric on the ephod match those of the curtains on the interior of the Holy Place. In this way the priest brings some of the Holy Place out before the people (Exod. 28). And yet even with the priests the distance that sin puts between man and God is emphasized by the elaborate consecration necessary for the priests to carry out their function (Exod. 29).

God gave Moses these instructions in a particular order. He began with the Ark of the Covenant and then moved outward. But the one piece of furniture in the Holy Place was left for last. Only after the provision for sac-



rifices and consecrated priests are presented does God turn our attention to the altar of incense, which represents the prayers of God's people ascending to God (Exod. 30:1–10). It is only after provision for sin is made that God will meet with His people.

## Violation of God's Commands

Yet while God is giving Moses the instructions for a dwelling place to be built among the people, the people are violating the commandments that God had just given them. Israel violated God's Word, just as Adam and Eve had done. The judgment for sin also includes a withdrawal of God's presence. God told Moses that He

would not consume the people and that He would bring them to the land in fulfillment of his promises—but He would not go with them. Yet to escape destruction and receive the land but not to receive God was a shattering judgment—it was “evil tidings” (Exod. 33:4).<sup>3</sup> In the face of this judgment, Moses appealed strenuously for God to go up with His people: “If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence” (Exod. 33:15). God responded in grace and committed Himself to dwelling with His people: “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest” (Exod. 33:14).

The confirmation of this promise is given in Exodus 35–40. A cursory reader of Exodus may find these chapters somewhat tedious because they repeat much of the material about the tabernacle already given earlier in the book. But consider that the tabernacle would not have been built had God not been willing to dwell among His people. It would have been inappropriate to build the symbol when the reality had been denied them. But the detailed and repetitious description of the building of the tabernacle testifies to the glorious truth that God was not going to merely send an angel before them into the Promised Land. God Himself would go with them, and they could build His dwelling place to set up in the midst of their own.

The worst consequence of sin is the separation it brought between man and God, and the greatest blessing of the gospel is the restoration of God's presence to believers. God's instructions to Moses to build the tabernacle reveal God's mercy in initiating the restoration of His presence. Yet the barriers and altars revealed that sin had erected no small barrier between God and man. The full restoration of God's presence would come with great sacrifice.

Brian Collins is a member of Mount Calvary Baptist Church and a Bible Integration Specialist at BJU Press, both in Greenville, South Carolina.



<sup>1</sup> Duane A. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 560.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: B&H, 2006), 577; Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1991), 19; cf. Garrett, 560.

<sup>3</sup> In the same way if one could escape hell and gain heaven without God, that too should be viewed as a devastating judgment.

# The Presence of God in the Psalms



In his helpful book *The Theological Messages of Old Testament Books*, Robert Bell proposes the theme of the Psalms—“spiritual worship of the true God . . . providing God’s pattern of worship and praise for the faithful” (222). If the Pentateuch details how it is possible to dwell with God and the historical books discuss how Israel squandered that blessing, the Psalms record the prayers, worship, anguish, and joy of hearts yearning for God’s presence. But what does that really look like and what does it mean for us?

## **The Lord of Hosts Is with Us**

From Israel’s birth as a nation, it had a special relationship with Yahweh. As Psalm 78 recounts, Israel’s God delivered them from Egypt, established them in the

Promised Land, and delivered them from their enemies. In fulfillment of His promises to the nation, the very ground they inhabited was a demonstration of God’s special favor. Hence, numerous psalms extol the beauty of the Promised Land or speak even more specifically of Jerusalem (Pss. 68:15–21; 87:1–3; 122:1–9; 125:1–2).

Yet nothing declared the presence of God more explicitly than the temple, and no other place or specific thing recurs so often in the Psalms. Physically just a collection of wood and stone like all buildings, the temple was far more than that alone for God’s people. Here they sacrificed, worshipped, and listened to God’s words; as such this place represented their fellowship with Him (Pss. 63:2; 65:4). When God promised to dwell in their midst, the temple was exactly that—the dwell-

ing of God, placed quite literally in their midst (Pss. 26:8; 76:1–2; 84:1–12; 132:13–18; 135:21).

### God Is Our Refuge

The most basic result of God's presence was safety. Psalms uses the words "refuge," "protect," "safety," or "deliver" 136 times, over four times more frequently than nearly every other book. Of course, this relates directly to the temple as a strong symbol of that reality. But this confidence is specifically the assurance that if God is present, His people can rest securely. This is apparent in frequent expressions regarding putting trust in God (Pss. 5:11; 11:1; 16:1; 18:2, et al.) or in poetic descriptions, piling up word upon word—"rock," "fortress," "deliverer," "my God," "strength," "trust," "buckler," "horn of salvation," and "my high tower" (Ps. 18:2).

This, for example, is the logic of Psalm 46—God's people are safe in the face of everything nature or wicked men can do to them because God is on their side: "The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." Or, similarly, Psalm 91 assures us that "there shall no evil befall" the person who "dwelleth in the secret place of the most High."

### Who Shall Abide in Thy Tabernacle?

But clearly this security does not belong to every person. Who can rightfully claim God's presence and protection? Asking who is worthy to "dwell in thy holy hill," Psalm 15 lists specific practical manifestations of obedience—walking uprightly, working righteousness, speaking the truth, and many others. Temple or no temple, only such a person has the right to dwell with God.

But those who do walk righteously can expect great joy in His presence. Hence the psalmist confesses that "one thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple," and we look forward to dwelling "in the house of the LORD for ever." One day in the temple carries the joy of a thousand elsewhere; serving as a doorkeeper for the house of God far exceeds any other job offer elsewhere (Ps. 84:10).

But the sad truth, of course, is that by their disobedience, the people of Israel squandered these blessings. Just as they had been warned, the result was captivity in a foreign land and separation from the land of blessing (Pss. 74:2–8; 78:60–64; 79:1–9; 80:14–16). Living as captives in a foreign land, they longed for the temple (Pss. 137:3–8; 138:2) as they earnestly awaited the day when they could return (Ps. 126). Because of God's eternal commitment to the nation, they were at least able to return to the land of His blessing (Ps. 126).

### I Will Be Exalted among the Nations; I Will Be Exalted in the Earth!

So how does this relate to us? Most of us are Gentiles, after all. It can be quite tempting to shortcut exegesis in

Psalms, applying statements about Israel and Jerusalem to eternity or directly identifying the temple as the church. But how should we apply these truths as New Testament believers?

1. Gentiles or not, *we have also received great and precious promises*. If the nation's blessing and hope was a land, we have received, even more splendidly, the promise of reigning with Christ in a new heaven and earth. Israel saw that every word God had promised was fulfilled. So will we. Israel responded to that fact with joyful praise. So should we.

2. But the most immediate parallel is that *the temple is in fact within us*. Just as God's presence filled the temple and there He showed His glory in a special way, the New Testament reminds us that we are the temple of the Holy Ghost. If Old Testament believers found comfort, security, and joyful worship at the thought of a physical building in Jerusalem, should not our praise be only fuller and more complete? Finding refuge in God's presence, we might sing with the psalmist that "the LORD of hosts is with us" or rejoice together with Paul, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Likewise, we would be sobered by the requirement for "clean hands, and a pure heart" to approach our God, recognizing God's New Testament demand that we "be . . . holy for I am holy."\*

But that points us to the ultimate basis of our hope, for who can claim to be holy by his own standing? And yet, in spite of our depravity, every believer is a saint—a "holy one"—on the basis of the only Person who ever lived a sinless life. As Israel heard the promise of God dwelling in their midst, we have received Him—Emmanuel. Israel had a temple; we are one. Israel witnessed thousands of sacrifices for sin; we have eternal redemption in the final sacrifice of Jesus Christ and need no other. Israel rejoiced at the promise of God with them; we are in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 3:3–4), He in us (Rom. 8:10; Col. 1:27), and we are one with Him (John 17:21; Rom. 6:3–11).

Therefore, the joy, the blessing, and the security of God's presence spilling forth in the Psalms is also ours. Not the land and not the temple, but the Messiah Himself. And as a result, we can joyfully sing together with Him, "in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11).

This is the heritage of those whom God has redeemed for Himself. This is the miracle of the presence of God.

Joel Arnold lives in the Philippines with his wife, Sarah, their two boys, and their baby daughter. He teaches theology at Bob Jones Memorial Bible College and writes regularly at [RootedThinking.com](http://RootedThinking.com).



\* We should, of course, recognize that there will be a physical fulfillment of the promises of a land for Israel and the rebuilding of the actual, physical temple. That does not eliminate the concomitant reality that God also dwells in our midst and that He has extended blessings to us as well—blessings that in many cases share an immense amount in common with the original promises to Israel.

# God with Us in Jesus Christ

Have you ever been introduced to someone whom you were not quite sure about at first, but who “grew on you” after some time to the point at which he or she became a good friend? It is good to meet people of whom you grow fonder; it is always disappointing to meet people who head in the opposite direction in your relationship with them! Each time we are introduced to someone, we examine his or her face, smile, interests, speaking, and so on so that we might get to know

who the person really is on the inside. As we get to know him or her, we can expect those inner characteristics to display themselves in various situations.

Likewise, God introduces us to Jesus Christ in His Word. The whole of the Bible is about Jesus Christ (Luke 24:25–27, 44–47; John 5:39, 46–47). God designed the Gospels and Epistles to introduce and explain clearly His Person to us. The four Gospels’ emphases present the perfectly balanced picture of Him. Of those, John displays the glory of Jesus, God in the flesh who dwelt among us (John 1:14), by carefully selecting the miracles performed by Jesus to lead us to believe in His Person and His work

(John 20:30–31).

God also directly conveys to us through Matthew that the Child who is born of a virgin is named “God with us” (Matt. 1:23). Matthew also records that Jesus divinely chose His ministry to consist of basically two main stages: (1) conveying His Person and (2) conveying His work. After the events preparing for Jesus’



public ministry (baptism, temptation, and selecting the disciples), Herod imprisons John the Baptist. When Jesus hears this, “From that time [He] began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:17). Here Jesus takes up John the Baptist’s message in His speaking, but He also takes up the added task of conveying who He is in word and deed. After much time with the disciples, Jesus gives them a test to see who they think He is (Matt. 16:13–20). The disciples arrive at the right conclusion: Jesus is clearly the Messianic King, Immanuel in the flesh. Jesus then begins to unfold the second aspect of His ministry in Matthew 16:21: “From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” The two aspects of Jesus’ ministry are clearly laid out by the phrases “from that time”: He wants others to grasp His Person, then to grasp His work.

Before asking the disciples if they have comprehended who He is, Jesus accelerates His “class-time project” with the disciples in rapid-fire succession of events chosen to display who He is: God, the Great King of the Kingdom of God who is with us (Matt. 14–16; Mark 6–8). By Matthew 14 the disciples had already been confronted numerous times through words and deeds with Jesus’ Person. They had heard Jesus teach with the authority of God (Matt. 7:28–29; Isa. 52:6) and demand a love and loyalty that only God Himself deserves to have (Matt. 10:37; Deut. 6:4–5). The disciples observe that Jesus doesn’t have to be physically present to heal a centurion’s servant, because He is omnipresent (Matt. 8:5–13; Ps. 139:7–10). But of the events in Matthew 14 through 16, three particularly serve as good reminders of “Jesus with us.”

### **Jesus Is God, Our King and Protecting Shield**

In Matthew 14:22–33 the disciples are in a boat on the Sea of Galilee during a storm when Jesus comes to them, speaks to them, allows Peter to walk on the water, and calms the storm. This incident is reminiscent of an earlier incident when Jesus calmed a storm (Matt. 8:23–27). Jesus’ sovereign authority over all of nature is something that only God, the King of the universe, can exhibit (Ps. 107:23–30).

Paul mentions that he experienced “perils in the sea” (2 Cor. 11:26). Sometimes our perils are actually physical,

and others are the storms of the trials of life in which we tend to fear for our life, health, safety, and for the same for those we love. In all such storms Jesus says to us, “Be of good cheer.” Then He tells the reason we are not to be afraid: “It is I” (Matt. 14:27). The Captain of our salvation is also the Captain of the boat of our lives; He will bring us safely to shore, protecting us all the while in our perplexities. Newton wrote, “With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm.” Jesus’ protection makes all the difference. You may feel that you are sinking during your storm with no help in sight. Remember that Jesus arrives in the middle of the storm, and remember what Spurgeon said—that Peter was nearer his Lord when sinking that he was when walking. May the storms of life draw us closer to our God, King, and Protector who promises that “when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee” (Isa. 43:2). May we, like the disciples, respond with repeated, grateful worship, which only God Himself deserves (Isa. 45:22–24).

### **Jesus Is God, Our King and Powerful Strength**

Matthew 14:34–36 and 15:21–31 reveal what Jesus did throughout His ministry: heal people of numerous physical and spiritual conditions. God has the power to do what no one else can (Job 42:2; Jer. 32:17).

Often in our situations in life, we find ourselves without strength and perhaps, like Paul, “insomuch that we [despair] even of life” (2 Cor. 1:8). Perhaps we even find ourselves (or others) like the Canaanite woman: further than arm’s length from God and wondering whether Jesus could or would help one so far removed. But God’s Word tells us to keep coming to God our Strength with persistent worship (Matt. 15:25), then “stand still and see the salvation of the LORD” (Exod. 14:13; 2 Cor. 12:7–10).

### **Jesus Is God, Our King, and Providing Supplier**

Matthew 15:32–39 records Jesus’, against all odds, providing food to 4000 people (reminiscent of 5000 He fed in Matt. 14:13–21). Jesus can and is willing to provide meals for hungry people who do not know Him. Will He do less for you?

Have you experienced the Lord’s protection, power, and provision? If so, stop and worship Him, “God with us,” who promises to be with us to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20).

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# The Holy Spirit as the Indwelling Presence of God



For over three years Jesus' disciples had the unprecedented privilege to spend their days in the very presence of God. Thousands of years had passed since the initial promise from God to Adam and Eve that the seed of the woman would come to crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). John the Baptist, the greatest of all prophets (Luke 7:28), had declared that Jesus was the Lamb of God who had come to take away the sins of the whole world (John 1:29)—the very sin that had separated man from the presence of God. They participated in miraculous healings and experienced firsthand the power of the Almighty Creator.<sup>1</sup> Oh, how they must have rejoiced that God was beginning to restore His physical presence with His people!

One night, however, that elation turned to panic. Jesus began to prepare His disciples for His departure to a place where they could not come (John 14). He would be leaving them on this earth. One asked about how they would know

their way. Another questioned whether they would be able to know the Father anymore. Their security, comfort, teacher, leader, healer, and friend would no longer be with them. The very presence of God seemed soon to depart. The hours between the crucifixion and resurrection must have been the longest and darkest ones known to mankind.

Jesus assuaged their fears before heading to the Garden of Gethsemane. He taught them that it was necessary for Him to depart. Then, and only then, could He send the Holy Spirit to come to them (John 16:7). This One would “teach [them] all things,” especially with regard to Jesus and His words (John 14:26). He would also be responsible to guide the disciples into all truth and show them things to come (John 16:13). Jesus was leading His disciples to believe that the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them would be even better than having the physical presence of Jesus with them on the earth! In order for that assertion to be true, this Spirit would have to be God and would have to be united to them in an even more intimate fashion.

## The Holy Spirit Is God

The Holy Spirit exercises divine attributes. For example, He is omniscient (1 Cor. 2:10–11). Both the Old and New Testaments teach that He is omnipresent. David declared that there is no place where man can flee from the Spirit's presence (Ps. 139:7), and Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit would dwell in the hearts of all His disciples (John 14:17). Furthermore, the Spirit of God is omnipotent (Zech. 4:6; Job 33:4). And finally, the Spirit is truth (1 John 5:6) and eternal (Heb. 9:14), attributes that belong only to God.

Scripture uses divine titles synonymously with the Holy Spirit. Paul identifies the "voice of the Lord" in Isaiah's vision (6:1–13) as the Holy Spirit speaking (Acts 28:25–27). The author of Hebrews equates the Holy Spirit with Yahweh as the one who revealed to us the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31–34 with Heb. 10:15–17). The "Spirit of the LORD" is equivalent to the "God of Israel" (2 Sam. 23:2–3). In 1 Corinthians, Paul refers to our bodies as "the temple of God" (3:16) and later refers to them as "the temple of the Holy Ghost" (6:19). In his second epistle to the Corinthians, Paul states, "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (3:17). Then in the last verse of that epistle, Paul views the Holy Spirit on an equal level with the Father and the Son (13:14). Peter also views the Holy Spirit and God as the same. The apostle asks Ananias why he lied to the Holy Spirit, and in the next verse declares that he has indeed lied to God (Acts 5:3–4).

Most importantly, however, Jesus Himself identifies the Holy Spirit as God. In the Great Commission, He uses the singular "name" to refer to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost equally—signifying three persons yet one being (Matt. 28:19). Furthermore, when instructing His disciples on the night of His betrayal that the Father would send another Comforter in His place, Jesus chose to use the words "another Comforter," implying that this new arrival would replace a Comforter already present.<sup>2</sup> The Greek word is not only used to describe the Holy Spirit here as our "Comforter" (cf. John 14:26) but is also used to describe Jesus as our "advocate" (1 John 2:1). "Comforter" today may give more of sense of "consolation," whereas the Greek word means much more. It has the sense of someone who is a friend to guide, strengthen, encourage, and aid us.<sup>3</sup> In John 14, both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are also identified as truth (vv. 6 and 17). In fact, throughout his Gospel, John records several parallels between the work of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, it would not be an encouragement for the Holy Spirit to replace Jesus if He were any less than their Master. According to Jesus' own testimony, the Holy Spirit is an equal replacement for Himself.

Today the Holy Spirit brings every believer one step closer to God's ultimate goal of restoring mankind to the full enjoyment of His presence.

## The Holy Spirit Indwells Believers

Today the Holy Spirit brings every believer one step closer to God's ultimate goal of restoring mankind to the full enjoyment of His presence. Jesus is Emmanuel—God with us. The Holy Spirit is not simply God with us; He is God in us (John 14:17).

This indwelling of the Holy Spirit is for all believers. Some might argue that Jesus was speaking specifically to His disciples in John 14

and that they were granted special privileges. Paul makes it very clear, however, that the Holy Spirit indwells all believers. He reminds the Corinthians that they are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God is continuously dwelling in them (1 Cor. 3:16). Later, Paul reiterates this stunning truth that their body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in them (1 Cor. 6:19). These are believers that Paul had described as "carnal" and had chastised as being envious and full of strife and divisions (1 Cor. 3:1–3). The rest of the epistle continues to paint a grim picture of a church full of believers who are suing one another, selfish, immoral, proud, and lacking in knowledge of basic doctrine such as the resurrection. Yet even though they are ignorant and full of sin, the Holy Spirit is still indwelling them. Furthermore, Paul goes so far as to say that if the Holy Spirit is not dwelling in a person, that person does not belong to God (Rom. 8:9). The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is the privilege of every believer.

This indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer begins the moment he puts his faith in Christ. When Cornelius and his family believed the word that Peter preached unto them about Christ, the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 10:44). Peter would later refer to that event as the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:15–16). Later Paul would expound the truth that all believers are baptized in (or by) the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). The one-time act of the baptism in the Spirit at salvation initiates a lifelong indwelling by the Spirit.

As wonderful as the indwelling of the Spirit of God is, God has even better things in store for His children. Paul declares, "[The Holy Spirit] is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:14). Just as the temple of the Old Testament pointed toward a greater New Testament experience, so also the experience of believers today with the indwelling presence of God is a mere shadow of things to come. The presence of the Holy Spirit is merely a down payment (earnest), a small percentage of the whole experience that God intends. One day the unbridled joy of God's people at fully experiencing God's presence will result in the eternal praise of His glory.

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Continued on page 28

# Future Hope and Present Holiness

## The Presence of God for All Eternity

*This world is not my home,  
I'm just a-passing through. My treasures  
are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue.<sup>1</sup>*

What excites you about your eternal home? Those of us who have placed our trust in the gracious atoning work of Christ through faith alone have confidence that Christ is preparing a place for us. So, what is it about that anticipated home that energizes you?

Is it the expectation of relief from the pain and sorrow that permeate this world and afflict individual lives? Or maybe it is the anticipation of the glad reunion with family and friends who have gone before? Could it be the prospect of discussing theology with Peter and Paul or Moses and David? Or is it the excitement of reaching our eternal home, the delight of being in the presence of God and no longer seeing through a glass darkly? The underlying question is, "Are you more excited about the place or the Person?" When Jesus told His disciples, "I go and prepare a place for you," He did not stop there. He promised to come again, "that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3).

The biblical description of the heavenly glories that exist stretches the bounds of human comprehension. Ezekiel's vision speaks of a cloud with flashing fire, and within the fire, multi-winged and multi-faced creatures. He goes on to describe wheels within wheels. The Book of Revelation gives an astonishing depiction of an eternal city of gold with a foundation of every precious jewel and gates of pearl leading to a street of pure gold transparent as glass. Certainly this description pushes the limits of human comprehension! Earlier in the same book we read of a crystal sea before the heavenly thrones.

### **Don't Miss the Point**

Yet one might contemplate the majesty of the place and fail to grasp the point. Even more than the impressiveness of the city is the awe-inspiring presence of the Creator. Revelation declares that the city is illumined by the glory of God, and the Lamb is the light (21:23). Ezekiel makes clear that the splendor is the glory of the Lord (1:28). So



while Scripture provides descriptions to pique the interest of Christ-followers, the imagery of such splendor should not divert us from the Savior. Revelation 21:3 states, “God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” Our musings on recorded representations of such glory must focus on the Lord of glory.

Such accounts challenge us to honor the Lord and anticipate being in His presence. Even in the midst of great pain and personal tragedy, Job’s confidence was that “though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold” (Job 19:26–27).

The psalmist David testifies of the joy in the presence of the Lord when he declares, “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (16:11). The passage speaks of security and satisfaction. David anticipates the fullness of joy in the presence of God. He expresses the expectancy of eternal pleasure at His right hand. In the next psalm he continues his eternal anticipation, noting the satisfaction that will come when he wakes in God’s presence: “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Ps. 17:15). Here on earth we are never totally satisfied. Momentary satisfaction fades and elation subsides. The new purchase that brought contentment gives way to discontentment with time—sometimes a very short time, when a new model comes out. The warmth of fellowship fades as those dear to us depart, whether it be leaving our presence or leaving this earth. But when we awake in His presence, “we will be fully and permanently satisfied!”<sup>2</sup> With such a prospect, death is not an adversary.

In the same way, Paul considers his remaining on earth needful for ministry, even though death was more desirable for the prospect it offered (Phil. 1:21–23). Those who inhabit heaven, the eternal kingdom of God, will live in a state of complete happiness. Everything that brings sorrow and pain here will be gone. “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more . . . crying” (Rev. 21:4). There will be an eternal absence of tears for any reason.<sup>3</sup> Beyond that, heaven will be a place of unending love and learning.

### **A Relationship, Not Just a Location**

So how does one prepare for eternity? Eternal life is not merely a location but is primarily a relationship: “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Those who know the Lord are even now living their eternal life. At death that relationship goes to a more intimate level when one becomes absent from the body and present with the Lord. Paul’s perspective on life and ministry was that while remaining here was more necessary, he considered death as gain. That is only true when “to live is Christ.” While on earth his ambition was “that I may know him” (Phil. 3:10). He admonished believers to “set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” The admonition was to have one’s affection where God is present. Why? Because Christ is our life (Col. 3:1–4).

Continued on page 37

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# SOUND WORDS

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

## First Partaker

### So as to Make It a Pleasure

In the last issue of *FrontLine* I wrote on the subject of family worship, a truly vital topic. After sharing something of my own family's ups and downs with the practice over the years, I devoted a sizable portion of the article to sampling the convictions of highly respected ministers from the past. Since writing that article, I've continued to ferret out historical sources on the subject and have come to think that it hasn't been that long ago in church history that a minister who did not conscientiously lead his family in daily worship would have been deemed seriously remiss, if not unfit for his office. I trust that isn't an uninformed generalization. What evidence I've been able to muster, and there's a considerable amount that surfaces when one goes looking for it, seems to support that conclusion nearly unanimously.

But the point of that article, and of this one, isn't negative. It's to encourage a happy resurrection of daily, Spirit-filled family gatherings that intentionally erect an altar to God's magnificent supremacy in our homes. In the words of one eighteenth-century minister, family religion is either on the throne or under foot in our houses. There's not a one of us who doesn't want to be able to say truthfully with Joshua, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (24:15). Family worship is the very best of ways to attempt to give our Lord His throne and to promote His service by every member of our household.

#### An Inspiring Example

The fullest, most detailed account of a minister's family worship practices of which I'm aware is that which Matthew Henry records about his father's approach. His father, Philip, was a Nonconformist pastor in the north-

east of England, up near the Welsh border below Chester. Matthew wrote a lengthy biography of his father, published in 1698 and later enlarged by J. B. Williams. In it he relates at some length what he and his siblings experienced as their father conducted daily family worship and prepared them for Christian adulthood.

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

This last summer I read an even more intimate account of Philip Henry's life, taken largely from personal journals which were still extant in the 1880s. Though he had been ejected from his pastorate in Worthenbury, he continued to prepare messages. He was also a farmer, having received property and livestock from his deceased father-in-law. His journals are filled with records of plowing, planting, and harvesting; buying and selling of horses, cattle, and sheep; putting in new orchards, getting up the season's hay, cutting timber, repairing buildings and farm implements, hiring servants, etc., etc. It's really impossible to conceive of how busy and burdened he was with the ordinary affairs of life. And yet the account that Matthew gives of their family worship habits could give the impression of a leisurely life with few of the kinds of demands which we today can so easily use to justify our having no time to gather our family for Scripture reading and prayer. Philip's daily life was demanding and exhausting, but he didn't merely "find time" for family worship—he arranged his time so that worship in the home was at the center of everything else the family did.

Matthew's telling of how his father conducted family worship is too lengthy for me to include all of it. But the majority, lightly edited and given subtitles, is here for our inspiration. Matthew said that his father managed it all, *so as to make it a pleasure*. I trust that what you read here will give you a vision of what that could be like in your home.

#### Praying with His Wife

He and his wife constantly prayed together

#### Inside

Bring . . . the Books—Key books for the pastor's study . . . . .	5
Straight Cuts—An exegetical study . . . . .	6
Windows—Themed sermon illustrations . . . . .	7

morning and evening. Never, if they were together at home or abroad, was it intermitted. From his own experience of the benefit of this practice, he would take all opportunities to recommend it to those in that relation, as conducing very much to the comfort of it, and to their furtherance in that, which he would often say is the great duty of yoke-fellows; and that is, to do all they can to help one another to heaven. He would say that this duty of husbands and wives praying together is intimated where they are exhorted to live as heirs together of the grace of life, that their prayers, especially their prayers together, be not hindered (I Peter 3:7). This sanctifies the relation, and fetcheth in a blessing upon it, makes the comforts of it the more sweet, and the cares and crosses of it the more easy, and is an excellent means of preserving and increasing love in the relation.

Many to whom he hath recommended the practice of this duty have blessed God for him and for his advice concerning it. When he was abroad and staying overnight with any of his friends he would mind them of his rule, that *they who lie together, must pray together*. In the performance of this part of his daily worship he was usually short, but often much affected.

### Family Worship

Besides this, he made conscience and made a business of family worship in all the parts of it. In it he was uniform, steady, and constant, from the time that he was first called to the charge of a family, to his dying day. His doctrine, from Joshua 24:15, was that family-worship is family-duty. He would say sometimes, *If the worship of God be not in the house, write, "Lord, have mercy upon us," on the door; for there is a plague, a curse in it.*

How earnestly would Mr. Henry reason with people sometimes about this matter, and tell them what a blessing it would bring upon them and their houses and all that they had! He that makes his house a little church shall find that God will make it a little sanctuary. It may be of use to give a particular account of his practice in this matter because it was very exemplary.

### Time

As to the time of it, his rule was, the earlier the better, both morning and evening. In the morning, before worldly business crowded in, *Early will I seek thee*. He that is the first should have the first. Nor is it fit that the worship of God should stand by and wait while the world's turn is served. And also early in the evening before the children and servants began to be sleepy. Therefore he would have prayer at night before supper in order that the body might be the more fit to serve the soul in that service of God.

He always made family worship the business of every day, and not, as too many make it, a bye-business. This being his fixed principle, all other affairs must be sure to give way to this. And he would tell those who objected that they could not get time for it, that if they would but put on Christian resolution they would not find the difficulty so great as they imagined. After awhile their other affairs would fall in easily and naturally with it. Nay, they would find it to be a great preserver of order and decency in a family, and it would be like a hem to all their other business to keep it from unravelling.

### Practices

The performances of his family worship were the same morning and evening. He observed that under the law, the morning and the evening lamb had the same meat-offering and drink-offering (Exodus 29:38–41).

He always began with a short but very solemn prayer imploring the divine presence and grace, assistance and acceptance. He particularly begged a blessing upon the word to be read, in reference to which he often put up this petition, *That the same Spirit that inspired the Scripture would enable us to understand the Scripture, and to make up something to ourselves out of it that may do us good*. Esteeming the word of God as his necessary food, he would sometimes pray in a morning that our souls might have a good meal out of it. He commonly concluded even this short prayer, as he did also his blessings before and after a meal, with a doxology, *To him be glory. . . .*

He next sang a psalm. Commonly he sang David's Psalms in order. His usual way was to sing a whole psalm throughout, even if it were a long one, and to sing quickly yet with a good variety of proper and pleasant tunes. Everyone in the family had a book, and by this means he thought the duty more likely to be performed in the spirit and with the understanding. He would say that a scripture ground for singing psalms in families might be taken from Psalm 118:15, *The voice of rejoicing and of salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous*, and that it is a way to hold forth godliness, like Rahab's scarlet thread (Joshua 2:17), to such as pass by our windows.

He next read a portion of Scripture, taking the Bible in order. He would sometimes blame those who only pray in their families but do not read the Scripture. In the tabernacle the priests were every day both to burn incense and to light the lamps; the former figuring the duty of prayer, the latter the duty of reading the word. Sometimes he would say, *Those do well that pray morning and evening in their families; those do better that pray and read the Scriptures; but those do best of all that pray, and read, and sing psalms.*

He advised the reading of the Scripture in order; for, though one star in the firmament of the Scripture differ from another star in glory, yet wherever God hath a mouth to speak we should have an ear to hear. The diligent searcher may find much excellent matter in those parts of Scripture which we are sometimes tempted to think might have been spared. How affectionately would he sometimes bless God for every book, and chapter, and verse, and line in the Bible!

What he read to his family he always expounded. He exhorted all ministers to do so as an excellent means of increasing their acquaintance with the Scripture. His expositions were not so much critical as plain, practical, useful and such as tended to edification, and to answer the end for which the Scriptures were written, which is to make us wise to salvation. And herein he had a peculiar excellence, performing that daily exercise with so much judgement, and at the same time with such facility and clearness, as if every exposition had been premeditated. His observations were many times very pretty and surprising, and such as one shall not ordinarily meet with. When sometimes he had hit upon some useful observation that was new to him he would say afterwards to those about him, *How often have I read this chapter, and never before now took notice of such a thing in it!*

He had his children write down these expositions. These collections, though but broken and very imperfect hints, were afterwards of good use to them and their own families.

The chapter or psalm being read and expounded, he required from his children some account of what they could remember of it. Sometimes he would discourse with them plainly and familiarly about it, in order that he might lead them into an acquaintance with it and impress something of it upon their hearts.

He then prayed, always kneeling, which he looked upon as the fittest and most proper gesture for prayer. He took care that his family should address themselves to the duty with outward expressions of reverence and composedness. He usually fetched his matter and expressions in prayer from the chapter that was read and the psalm that was sung, which was often very affecting, and helped much to stir up and excite praying graces.

In family prayer he was usually most full in giving thanks for family mercies, confessing family sins, and begging family blessings. Very particular he would sometimes be in prayer for his family. If any were absent they were sure to have an express petition put up for them. He used to observe that Job offered burnt-offerings for his children according to the number of them all, an offering for each child (Job 1:5). So some-

times in praying for his children he would put up a petition for each child. He always observed, at the annual return of the birthday of each of his children, to bless God for his mercy to him and his wife in that child; the giving of it, the continuance of it, the comfort they had in it, etc. with some special request to God for that child. Every servant and sojourner, at their coming into his family and their going out, besides the daily remembrances of them, had a particular petition put up for them according as their circumstances were. The strangers, that were at any time within his gates, he was wont particularly to recommend to God in prayer with much affection and Christian concern for them and their needs. He was daily mindful of those that desired his prayers for them, and would say, sometimes, *It is a great comfort that God knows who we mean in prayer, though we do not name them.* Providences concerning the country, as to health or sickness,

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***His doctrine, from Joshua 24:15, was that family-worship is family duty. He would say sometimes, If the worship of God be not in the house, write, "Lord, have mercy upon us," on the door; for there is a plague, a curse in it.***

good or bad weather, or the like, he commonly took notice of in prayer, and would often beg of God to fit us for the next providence, whatever it might be. Nor did he ever forget to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

He always concluded family-prayer, both morning and evening, with a solemn benediction after the doxology: *The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be with us, etc.* Thus did he daily bless his household.

Immediately after the prayer was ended, his children together, with bended knee, asked blessing of him and their mother; that is, desired of them to pray to God to bless them: which blessing was given with great solemnity and affection. If any of them were absent, they were remembered, *The Lord bless you and your brother; or, you and your sister that is absent.*

This was his daily worship, which he never altered nor ever omitted any part of, though he went from home never so early, or returned never so late, or had never so much business for his servants to do. He would say that sometimes he saw cause to shorten them, but he would

never omit any of them. For if an excuse be once admitted for an omission, it will be often returning. He was not willing, unless the necessity were urgent, that any should go from his house in a morning before family worship. Upon such an occasion he would mind his friends, *prayer and provisions never hinder a journey.*

He managed his daily family-worship so as to make it a pleasure and not a task to his children and servants. He was seldom long, and never tedious in the service. The variety of the duties made it the more pleasant so that none who joined with him had ever any reason to say, *Behold, what a weariness is it!* Such an excellent faculty he had of rendering religion the most sweet and amiable employment in the world. And so careful was he, like Jacob, to drive as the children could go. If some good people that mean well would do likewise, it might prevent many of those prejudices which young persons are apt to conceive against religion, when the services of it are made a toil and a terror to them.

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#### Catechizing

On Thursday evenings, instead of reading, he catechized his children and servants in the Assembly's Catechism, with the Proofs. Or sometimes he used a little Catechism, concerning the matter of prayer, published in the year 1674, which they learned for their help in the gift of prayer. Or else they read, and he examined them in some other useful book.

On Saturday evenings, his children and servants gave him an account what they could remember of the chapters that had been expounded all the week before. This he called *gathering up the fragments which remained, that nothing might be lost.* He would say to them sometimes, as Christ to his disciples, *Have ye understood all these things?* If not, he took that occasion to explain them

more fully. This exercise, which he constantly kept up all along, was both delightful and profitable, and being managed by him with so much prudence and sweetness, helped to instill into those about him betimes the knowledge and love of the Holy Scriptures.

#### The Lord's Day

The Lord's Day he called and counted the queen of days, the pearl of the week, and observed it accordingly. Whatever were the circumstances of his public opportunities, his family religion on that day was the same. His common salutation of his family or friends on the Lord's Day in the morning was that of the primitive Christians, *The Lord is risen; he is risen indeed.* His chief business on that day was to celebrate the memory of Christ's resurrection. He took care to have his family ready early on that day, and was larger in exposition and prayer on sabbath mornings than on other days. He would often remember that under the law, the daily sacrifice was doubled on sabbath days; two lambs in the morning, and two in the evening. He had always a particular subject for his expositions on sabbath mornings; the harmony of the evangelists several times over, the scripture prayers, or the Old Testament prophecies of Christ. He constantly sung a psalm after dinner and another after supper on the Lord's Days. And in the evening of the day his children and servants were catechized and examined in the sense and meaning of the answers in the Catechism. Then the day's sermons were repeated, commonly by one of his children when they were grown up and while they were still with him. The family gave an account what they could remember of the word of the day, which he endeavored to fasten upon them as a nail in a sure place. In his prayers on the evening of the Sabbath he was often more than ordinarily enlarged, as one that found not only God's service perfect freedom, but his work its own wages and a great reward. In that prayer he was usually very particular, in praying for his family and all that belonged to it. It was a prayer he often put up, that *we might have grace to carry it as a minister, and a minister's wife, and a minister's children, and a minister's servants, should carry it, that the ministry might in nothing be blamed.* He would sometimes be a particular intercessor for the towns and parishes adjacent. How have I heard him, when he hath been in the mount with God in a sabbath evening prayer, wrestle with the Lord for Chester, and Shrewsbury, and Nantwich, and Wrexham, and Whitchurch, etc., those nests of souls, wherein there are so many that cannot discern between their right hand and their left in spiritual things, etc. He closed his sabbath work in his family with singing Psalm 134 and, after it, a solemn blessing of his family. ☞

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Dr. Mark Minnick serves as senior pastor at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina. To access Dr. Minnick's sermons, go to <http://www.mountcalvarybaptist.org/pages/sermons/>.

# Bring . . . the Books

*The Man God Uses*  
by Oswald J. Smith

Oswald J. Smith was a prominent voice of Fundamentalism in Toronto during his earthly ministry from his ordination in 1918 until his homegoing in 1986. He was saved at the age of sixteen during a revival campaign led by R. A. Torrey. Initially ordained in the Presbyterian Church of Canada, he resigned when conflict arose over his passion for evangelistically styled meetings. From there he planted two churches. He is most known for his work in the People's Church in Toronto, begun in 1928.

Smith attended the Toronto Bible Training School, Manitoba Presbyterian College, and McCormick Seminary in Chicago. He preached over 12,000 sermons and penned 1200 poems, one hundred of which have been set to music.

*The Man God Uses* is a collection of seventeen devotional manuscripts that bleed out Smith's passion. His style is reflective of the writing and preaching style from which he hails. The order of the work is designed to ground its readers in the call to sanctification. R. E. Neighbor, who writes the introduction, appropriately reflects Smith's heartbeat when he writes,

The Church has swung loose from its mooring at Immanuel's land, and has drifted far out into the sea of worldliness. The Bible doctrine of Sanctification may have been bandied about by eradicationists, but it bears a message that saints surely need. Sanctification is the will of God. There is no excuse for the Christian to live in subjection to either the world, the flesh or the devil. Christ will lead the believing and yielding soul into the "train of His triumph."

From sanctification he moves to separation, then to Spirit-filling. He ends with his passion—the need of the evangelist and the plight of lost souls. The book is not long. Each chapter could be read devotionally. His passion for music is clearly seen. He intersperses appropriate hymn texts with his own thoughts in a complementary and worshipful fashion.

Since the format is devotional, allow me a couple of extended quotations to get the flavor of his encouragement. In addressing how he had yearned to be a man after God's own heart, he writes,

I saw as I had never seen before, that the big thing was not the work that I was doing, the books I was writing, the sermons I was preaching, the crowds that gathered nor the success achieved; but rather, the life I was living, the thoughts I was thinking, heart holiness, practical righteousness; in a word: my transformation, by the Spirit, into Christ-likeness.

Smith asks convicting questions about the preaching of the man God: "Are you proclaiming man-made

sermons or God-given messages?" "Do I merely say prayers, or do I pray?"

Part of the allure of this work is the practical illustrations supporting his intended point. He illustrates the separated life this way: "Suppose a woman were to live with her husband on Sunday, and then spend her time with other men during the rest of the week, and on Sunday return to her husband, what would you think of her?"

His chapter on sanctification will be controversial to some. He takes pains to demonstrate what he does and does not mean before proceeding. He then distills sanctification to three steps: (1) separation, (2) dedication, and (3) filling (separation from, dedication to, and filling with).

From chapter nine on, Smith focuses on his passion—the reaching of the lost. He starts with the issue of Christ's Lordship—urging from Luke 14:33 the renunciation of all things that are more to be grasped than the mission. In chapter twelve Smith urges those in ministry not to run toward the goal of universal success but to remember that our calling is to seek out those whom God is calling after His own name (Acts 15:14).

While Smith does not give the evidence of academic rigor, he clearly reflects a life and ministry spent in God's presence and practical counsel for others to follow. His work is adamantly not for pastors alone. He considers the challenges he lays out to be for all of God's people. While the book is out of print (the first edition came out in 1932), used copies are available in used bookshops or online. 

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

Dr. Robert A. Conduct is senior pastor of Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church in Baldwin, Maryland.



Join us for the  
**96<sup>th</sup> FBFI Annual Fellowship**  
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**CREATIONISM**

Years ago I visited two Bible colleges, both of which had a hallway boasting plaques listing graduates who had gone to the mission field each year. I was struck by the sad reality that the lists consistently shrank as the years progressed. Is sending missionaries becoming a thing of the past? Numerous factors foster this perspective, including economic recession, global unrest, and reduced mission budgets. In addition, the pool of potential missionaries seems to have dwindled with decreased enrollment in Christian schools and colleges as well as the reduced size of ministerial classes. Many lament these apparent trends, wondering where the “good old days” have gone. Despite the bleak outlook, we must resist the temptation to allow contemporary circumstances to overshadow divine truth. God’s Word emphasizes that effective missionary service is both initiated and empowered by God. As believers we have the privilege and responsibility to yield ourselves as His servants. Therefore, we must allow these biblical truths to call us to faith and action in supporting the spread of the gospel in the world today.

In Matthew 9:38, Jesus said, “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will **send** forth labourers into his harvest.” Elsewhere He noted, “My father is the husbandman.” Most commentators agree that the Lord of the harvest refers to God the Father. Christ calls on His disciples to pray to the Lord of the harvest, so that He will send more laborers into His needy harvest field. It is **His** harvest, and **He** sends laborers. The Greek word here for “send” is *ekballo*, meaning “to eject, expel, or thrust forth.” While harsh in meaning, the word conveys the realities experienced by the one who is unsettled, nudged, and eventually pushed out of his or her comfort zone into God’s service. God has a loving but powerful way to motivate His servants to get into His service.

The Second Person of the Trinity also plays a fundamental role in the sending process. In John 17:18, Christ prayed, “As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also **sent** them into the world.” The Greek word here for “sent” is *apostello*, similar to the noun *apostolos*, meaning “apostle,” or “one sent forth.” The various nuances of *apostello* indicate that Jesus’ sending involves being (a) separated or called unto service, (b) guided into a place of service, and (c) dismissed or set at liberty to serve. In a sense, this is the most thoroughly descriptive word about being sent. Jesus said in Matthew 4:19, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” As we walk with Christ, He transforms us into fishers of men. He guides us to souls, opportunities, and places of service.

Acts 13:1–4 offers an account of the first mission-

aries being sent out. Specifically, this passage highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in missions. The Holy Spirit first **separated** them (*aphorizo*, meaning to set off by a boundary, to limit, to exclude or appoint). The Spirit of God is very much involved in setting a man apart for full-time ministry. Once God has miraculously revealed His calling to the ministry, He then **sends** (v. 4) (*ekpempo*, meaning to dispatch). The Holy Spirit leads, guides, or assigns His servant to a specific place of service. Here, God uses the servant’s gifts to glorify Himself, much like God led Philip into the desert in order to win the Ethiopian eunuch to Christ. God’s Spirit at times leads His servants to “strange” places in order to call out a people for His name.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit actively participate in the process of sending God’s servants into the fields. In Acts 13:3 Luke sheds light on the role of the church in the process. The Greek word for “send” in verse three is *apoluo*, meaning to “free fully, to relieve, release, dismiss, or set at liberty.” The spiritually sensitive and responsive church joins God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in sending laborers. The Holy Spirit opened the eyes of the church and its leadership to see the calling of God upon Barnabas and Saul. They were so burdened, yielded, and committed to the Savior’s evangelistic cause that they willingly joined in the sending process. They no doubt released Saul and Barnabas from their local responsibilities and supported them in prayer and finances to fulfill God’s calling upon their lives.

The Lord of the harvest has not changed. If we are not seeing missionaries sent, perhaps it is time that we pray more earnestly that God will send forth laborers into His harvest. Sending will no doubt require a breaking and yielding of hearts to leave careers, comforts, and riches to go to the mission field. It also must involve the church’s yielding to God’s calling to sacrificially send His servants as laborers into the harvest. The variety of Greek words used to describe the sending of laborers reveals the thorough working of God and the necessary yielding of His servants to fulfill the Great Commission.

The question is really not, “Is God still sending missionaries?” but rather, “Are we, as the church, still supporting the work of the Lord?” God continues to call laborers; our responsibility is to go, support, and pray for those who enter the harvest. Let’s pray for a revival of missions in these last days. Let’s pray for a revival of our first love for Christ, for the gospel, and for souls. Today is still the day of salvation, and God is well able to save and send! 

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

“The most urgent need in the Christian church today is true preaching; and as it is the greatest and the most urgent need in the church, it is obviously the greatest need of the world also.”<sup>1</sup> Perhaps no more cogent statement was ever made concerning the imperative of preaching than the above observation by Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones over four decades ago. Even the most casual observer of the moral and ethical conduct of men and women today must admit that the world is in a miserable state of affairs. While mankind may not yet have reached the zenith of sinful debauchery found among the citizens of the antediluvian world in the time of Noah, or the degree of moral decadence characteristic of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, it surely must be near the point of spiritual apogee from God. What will it take to bring civilization back to God but the acknowledgement and acceptance of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ (Rev. 14:6)? How then shall men come to acknowledge and accept this gospel? It is through the medium of preaching—that vehicle which God has ordained to manifest His Word to men (Titus 1:3). Jones succinctly remarks, “What is it that always heralds the dawn of a Reformation or a Revival? It is renewed preaching; not only a new interest in preaching but a new kind of preaching. A revival of true preaching has always heralded these great movements in the history of the church.”<sup>2</sup>

### Preach Christ

Bill Bennett possibly narrowed the definition of preaching to its irreducible minimum when he entitled his book on preaching *Thirty Minutes to Raise the Dead*. Of course, preaching is much more than a defined limitation of time to quicken that which lies in a state of lifelessness. Bennett quotes Andrew W. Blackwood, who declared, “Preaching should rank as the noblest work on earth.”<sup>3</sup> John Broadus agrees: “Preaching deserves the highest excellence since it is the chosen instrument of the Savior of the world, who Himself came preaching.”<sup>4</sup> Jesus affirmed He was the theme of preaching when He declared, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). Again, He attested He was the fulfillment of that great Messianic passage in Isaiah chapter 61 by quoting this text in the synagogue at Nazareth and proclaiming, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:21). Christ further sealed the centrality of His place in the Scriptures when He expounded the Old Testament Torah before His disciples: “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. . . . And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were

written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:27, 44).

If Christ is the theme of the Bible, and if the greatest need in the world is the need for true preaching, then it is imperative that we preach Christ. James Black states, “In its simplest and most diluted form, preaching is telling someone else about Jesus Christ, and opening out the mind and will of God.”<sup>5</sup> Philip the evangelist answered the Ethiopian eunuch’s query about the identity of the prophet’s subject in Isaiah 53 by preaching Jesus unto him from the same text (Acts 8:35). Paul declared to the Corinthians that it was Christ he preached (1 Cor. 1:23). It was Charles Spurgeon who, upon being chastised because all of his sermons sounded alike, retorted, “That is correct. Wherever I take my text, I make a bee-line to the cross.”

### Preach to Listening People

James Black observed that “preaching presupposes an audience” and “behind all preaching, during our preparation in the study or in the execution itself, there should be *the shadow of a listening people*.”<sup>6</sup> As he prepares his sermons, the preacher must ever have his audience in mind. In his delivery he must constantly observe his listeners and draw their attention to the pulpit. If he preaches as a man with a message on fire, he will have no problem keeping his people focused on that which he is giving them to meet the needs of their souls. The old axiom is true: “If you want to attract and arrest the attention of a crowd, start a fire.” D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, writing of the authority of the pulpit, said that “what is needed in the pulpit is authority, great authority. The pew is not in a position to determine the message or method or dictate to the pulpit. . . . The pulpit is to make its assessment, and it is to do so with authority. The greatest need in the Church today is to restore this authority to the pulpit.”<sup>7</sup>

In a sense the pulpit is holy ground, a Mount Sinai, to the listening congregation. The listener’s reaction to the preached word may vary from silence to spontaneous jubilation. While the response to the message may sometimes be surprising or unsettling to the preacher, he may take comfort in the fact that the Word itself has struck a nerve in the heart of the listener. Philip Schaff writes about such responses to the sermons of Chrysostom the “Golden-Mouthed” preacher: “In the pulpit Chrysostom was a monarch of unlimited power over his hearers. His sermons were frequently interrupted by noisy theatrical demonstrations of applause, which

“To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, ‘A window shalt thou make in the ark.’”

Charles Spurgeon

he indignantly rebuked as unworthy of the house of God.” A footnote explains these responses: “This Greek custom of applauding the preacher by clapping the hands and stamping the feet . . . was a sign of the secularization of the church after its union with the state. It is characteristic of his age that a powerful sermon of Chrysostom against this abuse was most enthusiastically applauded by his hearers!”<sup>8</sup>

## Preach to Be Understood

A sermon, in order to be effective, must be understood. One of the greatest compliments I received about my own preaching was from the lips of a child who said to me, “Pastor Jeffers, I like your preaching because I can understand it.” Both Martin Luther and Philip Henry understood the importance of simplicity in sermon delivery when they wrote, respectively, “To preach simply is a great art. . . . Christ understood it and practiced it. . . . He speaks of the ploughed field, of the mustard seed, and uses only common comparisons from the countryside.” “Let your preaching be plain. Painted glass is most curious; plain glass is most perspicuous.”<sup>9</sup>

Apart from the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, there is perhaps nothing better in a sermon than an illustration to allow the truth of a message to be understood. Spurgeon declares, “Illustrations . . . will greatly help to make a way to enter; and that they will do it by catching the ear of the careless and the inattentive.”<sup>10</sup> An Arab proverb says, “He is the best speaker who can turn the ear into an eye.”<sup>11</sup> I especially remember one visitor who sat under my preaching one Sunday morning and listened intently to the message. He returned home after the service and gave his life to Christ. His understanding of his need for salvation was in part due to an illustration I gave of a computer crashing and losing all of its important files. This caused him to reflect upon the loss of all his good works he was going to present to God after his death to assure his entrance into heaven. The illustration simply opened the shutters of a window to shed light upon the gospel truth I had preached. In another example of the power of illustration, Dr. H. D. McCarty refers to J. Sidlow Baxter:

He recounts the story of watching a caterpillar move through the English grass seeking sustenance. A croquet set had been used the previous evening and the painted sticks were still in place. The caterpillar approached the first stick, climbed to the top, raised up on his tiny “feet” seeking the juicy leaves, but discovered nothing was there! He climbed down, moved further along the ground and encountered the second stick. This one also was climbed and the futile exercise was repeated. He finally climbed down again with nothing to sustain or strengthen him. . . . Sidlow mused to himself of the perfect picture before him of fallen man seeking life! The sons of Adam climb thousands of “painted sticks,” find nothing, and start the empty process all over. It is only when

we climb “the tree of life” offered by the Savior . . . rather than the “sticks painted by men” . . . that we find the nourishment, illumination, and confidence of our Lord’s inexhaustible feast of truth.<sup>12</sup>

A sermon may be preached without using illustrations, but their addition may be used as windows to illuminate truth which may otherwise remain obscure.

## Preach in the Spirit

A final word about the imperative of preaching is that our messages should be delivered under the power or unction of the Holy Spirit. Jones asserts that “nothing but a return of this power of the Spirit on our preaching is going to avail us anything. This makes true preaching, and it is the greatest need of all today—never more so. This ‘unction,’ this ‘anointing’ is the supreme thing. Seek it until you have it; be content with nothing less.”<sup>13</sup> If a man does not have the unction of the Spirit upon his preaching, his congregation will be the first to notice. Bill Bennett remarks, “I heard of a church in which a certain deacon often prayed publicly, ‘Lord, please unctionize our pastor.’ After hearing this prayer several times, the pastor asked the deacon one day, ‘What do you mean by unction?’ The deacon replied, ‘I don’t know what it is; but whatever it is, I know you ain’t got it.’”

If we ever question the imperative of preaching, it may be good to remind ourselves of the immortal words of Hugh Latimer, a man who was fearless in his preaching and martyred for his faith on October 16, 1555: “Take away preaching and take away salvation. . . . Preaching is the thing the devil hath wrestled most against. . . . This office of preaching is the only ordinary way that God hath appointed to save us all.”<sup>14</sup> ☞

<sup>1</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 24–25.

<sup>3</sup> Bill Bennett, *Thirty Minutes to Raise the Dead* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson), 18.

<sup>4</sup> John Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, quoted by David L. Larsen, *The Company of the Preachers*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Kregel), 47.

<sup>5</sup> James Black, *The Mystery of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>7</sup> Lloyd-Jones, 158–59.

<sup>8</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 938.

<sup>9</sup> Larsen, 1:158, 277.

<sup>10</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 396–97.

<sup>11</sup> Black, 66.

<sup>12</sup> E. A. Johnston, *J. Sidlow Baxter: A Heart Awake* (Grand Rapids: Baker), 239–40.

<sup>13</sup> Jones, 315, 325.

<sup>14</sup> Larsen, 179.

# Regional Reports

## NYC Regional Fellowship September 15, 2015

Special thanks to Pastor Kent Sager and Grace Baptist Church in Franklin Square, Long Island, for hosting our Fellowship in September. We enjoyed a precious time of fellowship and were encouraged by Army Chaplain (CPT) Michael Barnette as he shared a dynamic testimony. Dr. Ron Allen preached from Romans 15 on “The Focus of Gospel Mission.” We enjoyed a catered breakfast and a delicious luncheon prepared by our Heritage Baptist Church Food Ministry Team.

Present were faithful church members, pastors, church planters, and missionaries who gathered to

enjoy the day together.

Chaplain Barnette reminded everyone, “You are vital to the Kingdom of God—absolutely necessary to what God is doing. Teach the people of God the Word of God. Teach the next generation to love God!”

Pastor Allen preached from Romans 15, driving home the truth, “We need to be engaged in what is near and dear to the heart of God. The grace of God and the call of God justifies us being bold in sharing the gospel of God!”



## New Mexico Regional Fellowship October 15–16, 2015

Pastor Scott Snyder and the Northwest Baptist Church of Albuquerque, New Mexico, hosted this year’s Fellowship. Regional Director Dan Mauldin

welcomed those who were able to attend. Northwest Baptist Missions Director Ron Ehman and Mike Privett both spoke, and good fellowship was enjoyed by all.



Continued on page 32

# CHURCH DIRECTORY



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Christ's coming is a banner across the sky: "God is king over everything!" The famine is over. The feast is set. And you're invited. —Jeff Myers

The incarnation takes all that properly belongs to our humanity and delivers it back to us, redeemed. —Thomas Howard

A loving Brother is born to us, a wise Master, a safe Leader, a just Judge, in order that there may be glory to God in the highest. —John Hus

The preposition "by" in Hebrews 1:2 carries the force of the preposition "in." God has in these last days spoken unto to us *in* His Son. —William R. Newell

What shall I render to Thee for the Gift of gifts, thine own dear Son, begotten, not created, my redeemer, proxy, surety, substitute—His self-emptying incomprehensible, His infinity of love beyond the heart's grasp! —Puritan prayer

Both Simeon and Anna waited for the consolation of Israel and the redemption of Jerusalem. Where was the consolation of Israel? It was first in the arms of Mary, and thirty-three years later it was . . . hanging on a cross. —Bruce Scott

He came in complete human form to meet a universal need in a way that is adequate for all times and places and is without parallel or substitute. —H. D. Lewis

The birth of Jesus is the sunrise in the Bible. —Henry van Dyke

How many observe Christ's birthday! How few, His precepts! O! 'tis easier to keep holidays than commandments. —Benjamin Franklin

But we will tomorrow think of Christ's birthday: we shall be obliged to do it, I am sure, however sturdily we may hold to our rough Puritanism. And so, "Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Do not feast as if you wished to keep the festival of Bacchus; do not live tomorrow as if you adored some heathen divinity. . . . Celebrate your Savior's birth; do not be ashamed to be glad, you have a right to be happy. —Charles Haddon Spurgeon, December 24, 1854

Rejoice, that the immortal God is born, so that mortal man may live in eternity. —John Hus

The times and seasons are not essential, and I sit in judgment of no person who chooses not to commemorate a time or a season. Let every man be persuaded in his own mind. And this is not a plea for agreeing with me. It is a plea for recognizing that *what we sometimes fear to be hangovers of heathenism are, in fact, recovery of the biblical principle which heathenism has perverted.* —Ed Panosian, Ph.D., *Balance*, December, 1998

Day-spring from on high, be near! Day-star, in my heart appear! —Charles Wesley

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



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# Beliefs and Practices by Categories of Truth

This second of three charts is presented to provoke serious thought as to the level of authority we attach to our preaching and teaching. Some people may have differing opinions as to some of the assigned categories, but it should become very evident that much of our preaching and teaching is outside the realm of that which is genuinely fundamental.

Column 1 truth is both fundamental and essential. The more column 1 truth is emphasized the more unity there

will be among brethren. The more columns 3 and 4 are emphasized, the more strife and division there will be. Though very important, column 2 truth is not fundamental. Column 2 truth must necessarily be addressed as it gives us the ability to define our identity as Baptists and to function as churches in many practical and necessary ways. Though we may be strongly convinced, it should not be taught and preached with the same level of authority as the fundamental truth in column 1.

<b>Column 1</b> <i>Very Clear Biblical Statements</i>	<b>Column 2</b> <i>Logical Conclusions Based on Very Clear Biblical Statements</i>	<b>Column 3</b> <i>Speculation—Informed and Uninformed Personal Opinions</i>	<b>Column 4</b> <i>Petty Personal Preference</i>
Inspiration of Old and New Testament Scriptures	Denominational distinctives	How God preserves His Word—in which manuscripts and translations*	Extended applications concerning manuscripts and translations
Preservation of God's Word	Mode of baptism	Traditions of individual local churches	Other specific applications of standards of dress and conduct
God exists eternally in three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit	The security of the believer in Christ	Applications of standards of dress and conduct	Personal preference in fashion
Man's creation by a direct act of God	Premillennial, pretribulational Rapture of the church	Choice of education of children—public, Christian, or homeschool	Styles of preaching
All men are sinners	Offices in the local church	Dietary choices	Personality divisions
Virgin birth of Christ	Form of church government	When the New Testament church began	Architecture and design of the church building
Deity and true humanity of Christ	Dispensational view of Scripture vs. covenant theology	Applications of church government	Extended applications of church government—how things ought to be done
Substitutionary death of Christ as a full payment for our sins	Views on marriage, divorce, and remarriage	Extended applications of beliefs about marriage, divorce, and remarriage	Kinds of church ministries and outreaches
Vicarious atonement for sin by the shedding of His blood	Role of women in the church	Forms of worship—formal vs. informal, etc.	Holiday celebrations
Bodily resurrection of Christ	Standards of dress and conduct	Extended applications of election and predestination	Christmas trees
Salvation by faith alone in Christ alone totally apart from works	Standards of church music	Applications of Sabbath vs. Lord's Day	Many other extended applications from Column 3
Personal return of Christ for His own	Open or closed communion	Many other extended applications of Column 2 truths	
Preaching of the gospel to the entire world	Election and predestination		
Discipling of believers	Sabbath vs. Lord's Day		
Baptizing of believers	"Christian" vs. Biblical counseling	* These conclusions are based almost exclusively on extrabiblical sources—archaeology, history, textual research, and scholarship—which places all of this in the realm of human ideas and opinions. There does not exist anywhere a clear statement of Scripture to settle these matters which are being so hotly debated by good and godly men.	
Observance of the Lord's Supper	Extended applications of Biblical morality		
Love toward and unity with obedient believers	Healing in the atonement		
Separation from disobedient believers and from apostate unbelievers	Cessation of sign gifts		
Biblically mandated morality	Location of the physical blood of Christ		
	Many other applications of Column 1 truths		

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Written and Compiled by Dr. Layton Talbert

## THE STORY OF DAVID, PART 4:

**D**avid's cautious withdrawal from Saul (1 Sam. 18–20) became a flight for his life—rather, a succession of flights which occupy the rest of the book. One of the most distinctive features of this part of David's life is *movement*. It's tiring reading because he's on the run all the time. The narrative reads like a succession of images on a tapestry that make up a larger story in pictures. Chapters 21–23 record a series of mini-events that occur in nine different locations. Chapters 24–26 mark off three incidents in three locations: David's dealings with the ingrate Nabal, on whom he almost avenged himself (25), sandwiched between two occasions with Saul, on whom he refused to avenge himself (24, 26). The most concise summary of this entire segment of narrative is 23:14b—"Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand."

God is using David's difficulties to shape him into a leader. And the first requirement for a leader of God's people is to know how to get provision and direction from God. That's what's going on, beginning in chapter 21. David is experiencing the provision of God (21:1–9) and the protection of God (21:10–15). He is learning how to lead and care for others (22:1–2), including his own parents (22:3–4). And he is experiencing firsthand both the vagaries of human gratitude (23:1–12) and the value of true friendship and covenant loyalty in what turns out to be the last meeting between David and Jonathan (23:16–18).

### Learning to Lead

David is learning to lead. And no one is fit to be a leader of God's people who does not, or will not, be a seeker and follower of God. One indicator that this is happening is the events recorded in these chapters. But there's another indicator. This section of the narrative is remarkable for all the other Scripture penned during this time *by David*. Note the subtitles to the following psalms:

- Psalm 59 = 1 Samuel 19:11
- Psalm 56 = 1 Samuel 21:11
- Psalm 34 = 1 Samuel 21:15
- Psalm 142 = 1 Samuel 22:1a
- Psalm 57 = 1 Samuel 22:1; 24:3
- Psalm 52 = 1 Samuel 22:23
- Psalm 63 = 1 Samuel 23:14
- Psalm 54 = 1 Samuel 23:25a

These psalms, read in those historical contexts, are windows into David's soul in circumstances of personal

danger and duress, betrayal, and heartbreak. What do you do in circumstances like these? You talk to God like David did. David was such a remarkable man because he trusted so thoroughly in a remarkable God. But not all the time.

### David's Faithlessness

First Samuel 27–31 ushers us into the last year-and-a-half of David's exile. It was a period over which might be hung the banner, "If we are faithless, God remains faithful." This section is another series of alternating scenes. The narrative flows with all the skill and artistry of a well-executed film. David moves to Philistia, is given the city of Ziklag, and settles into a dubious career of deception (27). Philistia prepares for war against Israel while Saul consults the medium of Endor (28). David is rescued from the horns of a dilemma when the Philistine lords reject his assistance in battle before marching off to war with Israel (29). Meanwhile, David returns to find his home (Ziklag) ravaged and sets out on a mission of rescue and revenge (30). Finally, the battle the reader has been waiting for since 28:1 brings the deliverance David has been waiting for ever since Saul first hurled a spear at him (31).

Chapter 27 sounds strange to the ear of anyone who has come to know David. Something doesn't feel right, and several factors rub the reader the wrong way. First, what is he doing *settling* in Philistia, the land of Israel's inveterate enemies? Second, the last time he was there didn't go well (21:10–15); how is he surviving there now? The answer is, by leading a "double life." He has employed deception on occasion before for survival, but this is different; this is a whole lifestyle of deception.

The best answer may lie in a simple literary observation. If you read David's part of the narrative (27:1–28:2 and 29:1–11, skipping 28:3–25 which shifts to Saul's story), you should notice that something is missing in chapter 27. Actually, two things are missing—one expressed and the other unexpressed. The first thing that's apparent is David's *operational loss of confidence in the promises of God* (27:1, "I shall perish some day by the hand of Saul"). David begins making decisions and plans based on reasoning that is utterly impossible because it is completely contrary to God's words. He's forming conclusions that contradict Yahweh's record of protection over the past several years, conclusions that contradict the promises of Yahweh and about him, conclusions that contradict the confidence of others in those promises, such as Jonathan (23:17), *Saul* of

# LEARNING TO LEAD, LEARNING TO TRUST

all people (24:20), and Abigail (25:28–30)—a confidence that David had ample reason to rest in (25:38–39a).

The other missing element is unexpressed throughout this segment of the narrative—it is *the absence of any direct reference to the Lord*. God is mentioned only once, and that’s by Achish—not David and not the narrator. This is no mere argument from silence. Historical narratives often hinge on what they do *not* say as what they do say. Two classic examples of that are the narratives of Joseph and of Esther.

I am *not* inferring from this that David has forsaken God, or even that God is angry with David. But it is the entire absence of God, or any hint of God’s perspective from the narrator, that makes us unsure what to make of David’s behavior, isn’t it? Don’t we intuitively look for some word from God (or the narrator) to interpret events for us when things don’t feel right? The fact is, the narrator signals a distinct *change* in the telling of the story in chapter 27. In 1 Samuel 20–26, God is mentioned 80 times (that’s over 10 times per chapter on average). Even in the intervening Saul chapter (28), the Lord is mentioned a dozen times. But where is the Lord in chapter 27? Or 29? He has vanished from the narrative.

What are some of the actions that give us some discomfort as we read? First, David moves to and settles in Philistia (27:7). This is interpreted, at least by Achish, as a defection on David’s part (29:3). Second, he lies repeatedly to Achish about his activities. Third, he is apparently exterminating all whom he attacks in order to cover his tracks. We might think this appropriate since he is attacking people that Yahweh originally intended to be wiped out, but the narrator specifically tells us David’s motive for this practice—and it wasn’t obedience to God’s command (27:11). All this ends up placing David in an awkward and dangerous position.

Is David modeling righteous behavior? That’s hard to defend. Why? What’s the narrator’s posture in relating these events? *No comment*. Well, then, what is God doing and saying amid all these unsettling developments and activities? *No comment*. So how *are* we to evaluate David’s activities here? The text seems “sympathetic” to David’s predicament, yet it presents David in a less than blameless light. It’s a picture of what happens when we stop thinking God’s thoughts (27:1). It is David “on his own,” left to his own devices. David was a remarkable man, but he was still a *man*—it is his failures as well as his triumphs for which we appreciate him as a biblical example. Great men

are still mere men, and will disappoint us—which is why our faith should not be in men but in God alone. Difficult circumstances may explain questionable ethics, but they do not excuse them.

It all *begins*—according to a detail that cannot be accidental to the narrative—with what David *says* (literally) to his heart (27:1). How do we avoid panicking into foolish, even disobedient, financial decisions that may end up cornering us into ethically questionable practices? By talking *truth* to ourselves; especially by speaking to ourselves the truth about God and God’s promises.

## God’s Faithfulness to Deliver (29)

David’s charade worked . . . perhaps too well; it forced him into an awkwardly tight spot. Would David have turned and fought against Philistia? Nothing seems more likely if he’d been pressed to it. But even appearing among Philistine troops coming against Saul would surely undermine his credibility. Besides, as we learn in chapter 28, God’s intention for this battle is to remove Saul. The narrator seems to present in these final chapters the two central characters in respective dilemmas of their own making.

Even when we are unfaithful, God remains faithful (2 Tim. 2:13). That means He is faithful to be good, kind, patient, and compassionate to His children because that is His nature as God. But it also means that He is faithful in His wisdom to *chasten* His children because that, too, is His nature as our Father. That is what David experiences in chapter 30.

## God’s Faithfulness to Chasten (30)

The Lord has a way of getting our attention. If He cannot draw us back to grounding our faith in Him, He will drive us to it. David has faced peril from his enemies (Saul). David has faced betrayal by his countrymen (Keilah). David now faces mutiny and death from his own men (30:6).

His reaction is telling and refreshing. The reader breathes a sigh of relief. God is clearly and explicitly back in the picture—David strengthened himself in God (30:6). How? There is only one way to do this. It means *personalizing God*—he strengthened himself in Yahweh *his* God. It means *rehearsing truth*—talking truth to yourself. And it means *utilizing your access to God* (30:7–8).

This is the kind of person God chooses and uses—flawed and failing, but repentant and returning.

## The Holy Spirit as the Indwelling Presence of God

Continued from page 15

<sup>1</sup> The disciples must have marveled when Christ stilled the storm in Galilee, because His actions identified Him as the LORD God of hosts (Pss. 89:8–9; 107:28–30). No wonder they exclaimed, “What manner of man is this!” In fact, John recounts in his Gospel seven specific signs that Jesus performed (including the calming of the storm) proving that He was in reality “God with us.”

<sup>2</sup> The Greek word used in the text is ἄλλος, as opposed to ἕτερος. Older lexicons make a distinction between the two. The former indicates “another of the same kind,” whereas the latter indicates “another of a different kind” (Joseph Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977], 29). Thus, some commentaries would maintain that Jesus’ use of ἄλλος indicates that the Holy Spirit was deity just like Jesus—that the Holy Spirit was a helper “of the same kind” as Jesus (William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John: Two Volumes Complete in One*, Vol. 2 [Grand Rapids: Baker

Book House, 1954], 275). However, more recent commentators dispute such a clear distinction between ἄλλος and ἕτερος. For example, Carson argues that John’s use of these two words in other places in his Gospel does not substantiate such a dogmatic interpretation (D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991], 500). These more recent commentators do not deny that the Spirit is deity just like Jesus. Their point is only that this cannot be proved by the use of the word ἄλλος.

<sup>3</sup> Carson, 499.

<sup>4</sup> “It is worth noticing that, without exception, these functions assigned to the Spirit are elsewhere in this Gospel assigned to Christ. Thus He is in the disciples (14:20; 15:4, 5), He is their teacher (7:14; 13:13). As the Paraclete bears witness, so does Jesus (8:14). Much more could be cited. There is point in Jesus referring to ‘another’ Paraclete (14:16)” (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971], 663).

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## Do Not Offend

The Colorado School of Mines in Golden, Colorado, embarked on a fundraising campaign to help defray the costs of a new athletic facility. A former student and football player, Michael Lucas, donated \$25,000 to the cause. For his donation he was permitted to put a personalized nameplate on one of the lockers in the new facility. It was his desire to inscribe Colossians 3:23—“Whatever you do, work with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,” and Micah 5:9—“Your hand will be lifted in triumph over your enemies, and your foes will be destroyed.”

Even though the school had given no restrictions or guidelines regarding the inscriptions that would or would not be permitted, Lucas’s inscription was denied. Others were permitted to include words such as “whiskey” and “hell,” but the Scripture references were deemed too offensive. Also now restricted are the words “Lord,” “Jesus,” or “God.” Lucas has filed lawsuit against the school.

This article can be referenced at: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/god-lord-jesus-bible-hell-whiskey-colorado-school-of-mines-in-golden-football-name-plate-147343/>.

## Sharing One’s Faith

Chris Routson has been a Christian for about four years. He has made it a matter of lifestyle to share his faith with those around him.

For the last thirteen years, Chris was employed at Precision Strip, a metal processing plant in Middletown, Ohio. On August 27 Chris was relieved of his

position without severance pay or unemployment. The reason for his firing was that two employees were uncomfortable with how he shared his faith with them.

Both employees who complained were lesbian coworkers. In an effort to talk with them he recommended that they view a film that was designed to show people that Christians loved homosexual people while not agreeing with their lifestyle choices.

The first encounter was via Facebook by sending a link. At that time his employer told him he was not permitted to witness in this way because it made someone uncomfortable—even on his own time. The second witness came while at work. Chris is seeking work and representation from the Christian Law Association.

This article can be referenced at: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/christian-man-fired-from-his-job-for-sharing-audacity-film-with-lesbian-co-workers-on-facebook-145829/>.

## Freedom of Speech at University of California

The University of California has proposed a new policy aimed at upholding the “right” of its students and faculty to work or study in an environment that is “free from acts and expressions of intolerance.”

This policy defines intolerance as “unwelcome conduct motivated by discrimination against, or hatred toward, other individuals or groups,” and includes “acts of violence or intimidation, threats, harassment, hate speech, derogatory language reflecting stereotypes or prejudice, or inflammatory or derogatory use of culturally recognized

symbols of hate, prejudice, or discrimination.”

The university insists that the policy is aimed at eliminating attacks on individuals and groups, but does not apply to the free exchange of ideas. The policy did include some examples of what would be considered an intolerant form of speech. Smith writes, “The proposal prohibits any implication that people with disabilities are less capable than able-bodied individuals, prohibits expressing views that any racial or ethnic group is ‘less hardworking or talented,’ and would also prohibit the questioning of a student’s leadership abilities on the basis of religion, sexual-orientation, sex, citizenship and nationality or race.”

This article can be referenced at: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/university-of-california-seeks-to-ban-freedom-of-speech-145385/#wFqXVRiT31AcB8pb.99>.

## The Ecumenical Fallacy

Pope Francis, in an effort to promote Christian-Muslim relations, visited the Sultan Ahmet Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey. Francis removed his shoes and bowed his head for several minutes in the direction of Mecca for a period of silent prayer. He was accompanied by the Grand Mufti of Istanbul.

In a statement before Turkey’s president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Francis opinioned, “It is essential that all citizens—Muslim, Jewish and Christian—both in the provision and practice of the law, enjoy the same rights and respect the same duties. . . . They will then find it easier to see each other as brothers and sisters who are travelling the

same path, seeking always to reject misunderstandings while promoting cooperation and concord. Freedom of religion and freedom of expression, when truly guaranteed to each person, will help friendship to flourish and thus become an eloquent sign of peace.”

This article can be referenced at: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/pope-francis-prays-in-turkeys-mosque-head-bowed-toward-mecca-130449/#hvcj5Gc0IRGEk1EG.99>.

## Remove the Crosses

Eva Brunne is the world’s first openly lesbian Lutheran bishop. She is calling in her congregation in Stockholm, Sweden, to remove all signs of the cross. She also wants them to provide a prayer room that would be welcoming to Muslims. She and her “spouse,” who also is a Lutheran priest, are together raising their young son.

There are too many things wrong with this scenario even to comment. Other Christian leaders in Sweden have criticized her plan. Her best rationalization is rooted in the concept of hospitality. It should be obvious that the Scriptures have had little influence on this situation.

This article can be referenced at: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/worlds-first-openly-lesbian-bishop-to-remove-crosses-build-islamic-prayer-room-in-swedish-seamens-church-147095/>.

## Fired Navy Chaplain Reinstated

Lieutenant Commander Wesley Modder was reinstated to his position as Navy Chaplain and has now accepted a position at the San Diego naval base. Back in February Modder was fired when fellow servicemen

## NOTABLE QUOTES

complained about Modder's views on homosexuality.

The Navy wrote in his "Detachment for Cause" letter that Modder "told students 'homosexuality was wrong,' insinuated that he had the ability 'to "save" gay people,' and 'berated a pregnant student for becoming pregnant while not married.'" The complaint was raised that Modder was intolerant of people with other views and that he discriminated against people of different faith and backgrounds.

On September 3 the case for detachment was rejected. Upon review of his case Rear Admiral David Steindl wrote, "I have found the evidence of substandard performance in this case does not meet the standard of gross negligence or complete disregard of duty under reference."

This article can be referenced at: [http://dailysignal.com/2015/10/27/after-being-fired-for-religious-views-on-sexuality-navy-chaplain-gets-his-job-back/?utm\\_source=heritagefoundation&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=morningbell&mkt\\_tok=3RkMMJWWfF9wsRouvq%2FIZKXonjHpfSx56uokW66%2FIMI%2FOER3OvrPUfGjI4ATstjMK%2BTFAwTG5toziV8R7jHKM10sEQWBHm](http://dailysignal.com/2015/10/27/after-being-fired-for-religious-views-on-sexuality-navy-chaplain-gets-his-job-back/?utm_source=heritagefoundation&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=morningbell&mkt_tok=3RkMMJWWfF9wsRouvq%2FIZKXonjHpfSx56uokW66%2FIMI%2FOER3OvrPUfGjI4ATstjMK%2BTFAwTG5toziV8R7jHKM10sEQWBHm).

### NAE Shifts on Capital Punishment

National sentiment towards capital punishment is shifting. According to a 2014 Gallup Poll, 66% of American still back capital punishment while 33% oppose it. The poll admits that support for capital punishment has been declining over the last twenty years.

The NAE Board of Directors recently released a resolution on capital punishment. "Evangelical Christians differ in their beliefs about capital punishment, often citing strong biblical and theological reasons either for the just character of the death penalty in extreme cases or for the sacredness of all life, including the lives of those who perpetrate serious crimes and yet have the poten-

**O**ur lord the king cannot as a king have any power over this kingdom, temple, tabernacle, house and people of God in respect of the religion to God, because our lord the king's authority is an earthly kingdom. . . . Further, he has no authority as king but in earthly causes. . . . Men's religion to God is between God and themselves. The king shall not answer for it. Neither may the king be judge between God and man. Let them be heretics, Turks, Jews, or whatsoever, it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure.—Thomas Helwys

**T**ry what you hear whether it be according to truth, and take nothing from any man until you have tried it and well digested it by a good understanding. Often examine yourselves and lean not to other men's judgments; beware of falls; endeavor and see that your evidence be good, which is alone the Spirit of God with your own spirit according to the Scriptures. Be much in holy meditation; read the Scriptures carefully. Beware of neglecting or slighting any ordinance of Christ; remember His death often, but take heed lest you make an idol of men or ordinances.—James Manning

**A**s the man began to lay the strokes upon my back, I said to the people, though my flesh should fail, yet God will not fail: so it pleased the Lord to come in, and fill my heart and tongue as a vessel full, and with audible voice I break forth, praying the Lord not to lay this sin to their charge, and telling the people I found He did not fail me, and therefore now I should trust Him forever who failed me not: for in truth, as the strokes fell upon me, I had such a spiritual manifestation of God's presence as I never had before and the outward pain was so removed from me, that I could well bear it, yea, and in a manner felt it not, although it was grievous.—testimony of Obadiah Homes regarding his public beating for his Baptist convictions

**T**hou art coming to a King, large petitions with thee bring, for His grace and power are such none can ever ask too much.—John Newton

**L**et no man think to kill sin with few, easy, or gentle strokes. He who hath once smitten a serpent, if he follow not on his blow until it be slain, may repent that ever he began the quarrel. And so he who undertakes to deal with sin, and pursues it not constantly to the death.—Richard Baxter

tial for repentance and reformation. We affirm the conscientious commitment of both streams of Christian ethical thought."

Dr. Leith Anderson explained the shift in position. "A growing number of Evangelicals call for government resources to be shifted away from the death penalty. Our statement allows for their advocacy and for the advocacy of those of goodwill who support capital punishment in limited circumstances as a valid exercise of the state and as a deterrent to crime."

Interestingly, the shift recognizes the diversity found within the NAE but makes no attempt to reconcile their position with Scripture.

This article can be referenced at: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/national-association-evangelicals-death-penalty-capital-punishment-148135/#6sOVDMoYZdsmPF5e.99>.

### Winds of Change

In a comprehensive Pew Study, the shifting tide of American Christianity was revealed. The percentage of Americans who believe in God dropped to 89% from the 92% that self-identified in 2007. Daily prayer and church attendance also dropped from the 2007 numbers. Those who consider themselves religiously unaffiliated rose from 16 to 23%.

Fifty-four percent of people identifying themselves as Christians now believe that homosexuality should be accepted within society. This is a ten-percent increase from 2007. The report identifies generational forces as being the impetus for the change in public opinion. Public views regarding abortion have not changed with the passage of time.

This article can be referenced at: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/most-christians-in-america-now-support-homosexuality-149078/>.

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

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

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## ON LANGUAGE & SCRIPTURE

### Why You Need a *Biblical Worldview*

I just wrote a book, and you should read it—not because I get royalties (I won't) but because you need what the title advertises. You need a *Biblical Worldview*.

My new book, written with a lot of help from a great team at BJU Press, is called *Biblical Worldview: Creation, Fall, Redemption*. And the goal of the book is to help Christians to view everything in the world through the lenses of the Bible.

Language is one of those things we must view biblically. In the book I try to show what language was created to be, how the fall of man twists language, and what Jesus Christ's death and resurrection have to do with a Christian view and use of language. (This is how every major topic in the book is treated.)

The very first thing to know about language is what it was created to be. But we have to make distinctions. I write in the book, "Language is actually not a creation of God, or not exactly. But it's not a creation of humans either. Language may in fact be part of God's essence; the three persons of the Trinity appear to have used language before the creation of the world (Gen. 1:26). And even today they use it among themselves (John 16:13–15). When God made the first image-bearers, they were invited to share the divine privilege of language."

The next thing to know about language is that it's fallen. I write,

Why are cuss words bad? . . . Bad words are bad, generally speaking, because they take some of the most personal and sacred things in the universe and twist them in the wrong direction. . . . Religious terms used for cursing—names and words such as God, Christ, damn, and hell—take some of the most powerful realities in all human existence and wrench them out of place. The existence of damnation is one of the most terrible realities we know; and the love and authority of Jesus Christ make up the most glorious reality we know. These words belong in serious and reverent places. Cuss words throw these realities in the dirt. Their power is still present, even in the dirt, but it's twisted. People want that power; that's why these words are used by so many—even atheists who deny that Christ condemns anyone to hell.

The last thing to know about language, from the perspective of a biblical worldview, is that Christ's power twists language back into its originally intended shape. The tongue can no man tame, but Christ is no mere man.

If you, like I, wish to apply God's Word to every aspect of your existence, then I humbly offer my book to you: *Biblical Worldview: Creation, Fall, Redemption*. Order it at BJUPress.com.

Dr. Mark L. Ward Jr. works for Logos Bible Software; he formerly worked for BJU Press as a high-school Bible materials writer.



**Central Regional Fellowship  
October 19–20, 2015**

Again this year Pastor Arin Hess and the hard-working folk of Community Bible Church in Norfolk, Nebraska, rolled out the red carpet for us. Men drove from Oklahoma, Kansas, Minnesota, and South Dakota. Traveling missionaries also included the Central Regional Fellowship in their itineraries. We were served hearty meals and snacks during the breaks and after the evening services. Dr. Tom Neiman brought encouraging messages on “Ye Shall Receive Power,” “Some Have Not the Knowledge of God,” and “I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.” John Vaughn unfolded the message of Philemon, developing the conference theme, “Sharing Effective Faith.”

**Caribbean Regional Fellowship  
October 26–30, 2015**

The Calvary Baptist Tabernacle and Calvary Baptist Bible College, under the leadership of Dr. Johnny Daniels, hosted a huge number of delegates from North, Central, and South America; many of the island nations of the Caribbean; and delegates from the United Kingdom and Africa. One of the longest annual meetings held by the FBFI, sessions and meals begin at breakfast time and continue late into the evening. For most who attend, this event is the highlight of the year and is often the only time for fellowship with like-minded brethren. This year those in attendance raised \$1000 for the FBFI memberships and subscriptions to *FrontLine* for Caribbean pastors.

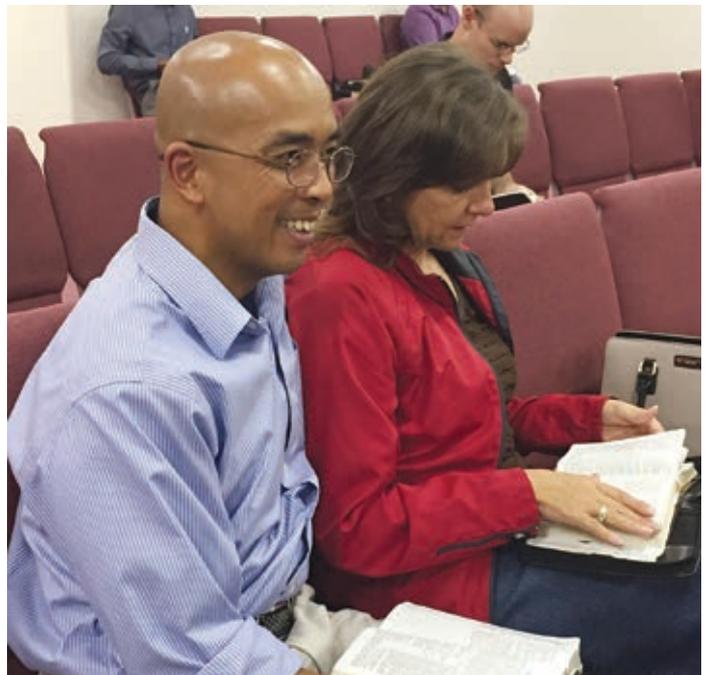
Some of the men from Bolivia, led by Pastor Franz

**Southern California Regional Fellowship  
November 9–10, 2015**

Pastor Ron Smith, the Southern California Regional Director, and Victory Baptist Church hosted another well-attended and greatly enjoyed Regional Fellowship. Dr. Vaughn spoke in the main sessions, and several effective presentations were made by others, such as Jonathan Edwards from the Eagles Nest in Utah. There, he and John Innes have had a long and effective ministry of recovering men who have had nowhere else to turn. As Pastor Smith put it, “When a preacher named Jonathan Edwards is in attendance, it has to be a great meeting!” In addition to those who regularly attend the Southern California Fellowship, there were two new pastors, Dave Cajuat (pronounced ca-he-wat) from Metro Baptist in San Diego and Kit Johnson from Life Point Baptist in Apple Valley. Attendees enjoyed the special music, including a trumpet duet by Chris Schaal and Dale Seaman. We were so glad that Becky Vaughn could come with Dr. Vaughn. This was her first trip to California, and we are sure that the Mojave Desert will prove to have been the highlight of her trip!



Carreon, attended to prepare for the Bolivia Regional Fellowship, which has been held for several years with up to three hundred national pastors in attendance. Each year they have invited Dr. Vaughn to come to Bolivia, but family responsibilities, time, distance, and expenses have not permitted it yet. We are informed that one of the most important resolutions coming out of the Caribbean Fellowship this year was that “Dr. Vaughn needs to raise \$2000 to come to Bolivia to preach in the Bolivia Regional Fellowship during the week of March 14–18, 2016.” Any readers interested in helping with this effort may send gifts to the FBFI Home Office marked “Bolivia” by January 15, 2016.





### **Northern California Regional Fellowship November 12-13, 2015**

Pastor Brent Smith, who heads up the Northern Fellowship, and host pastor Art Zacher, pastor of Berean Baptist in Fairfield, California, provided a rousing and very enjoyable time with friends from our region. Dr. Mark Batory presented the main sessions on the theme of "Modern Missions in a Changing World." His messages were powerful and of great help to all. Dr. John Vaughn presented a workshop on using local church missions trips to develop new missionaries. Pastor Rick Armstrong, a missionary to the Hispanic community, taught us about mentoring young people toward missions. Ron Perry, formerly at Ironwood Christian Camp and now the pastor of Faith Baptist in Folsom, spoke on using technology to bridge the distance between supporting churches and missionaries. Pastor Dennis Blankenship presented a practical workshop on avoiding pitfalls and optimizing opportunities with national missionaries.

The spirit of fellowship was fostered by the servanthood of our hosts, and the evidence of their diligent preparation was very much in evidence. They helped to make this one of our best Regional meetings. Our deep appreciation goes to them and to all who had a part in making this possible. Like our brethren in Southern California, we were thrilled to have Becky Vaughn joining us this year, and we have it on good authority that in spite of the desolate beauty of the Mojave Desert, the highlight of her trip to California was actually her visit to the ice cream shop at Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco!



# Climb to Glory! The 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain



In addition to the loyal service to God and country performed by our many chaplains, many unseen and often unrecognized ministry efforts will be reported only in eternity. For now, those involved in such efforts soldier on at home and abroad motivated by their calling and commitment to serve. Occasionally, schedules and travel plans converge to provide a memorable opportunity for the FBFI Chaplain Endorser (yours truly) to visit one of our chaplains and to participate in a very special event.



Recently, on a trip to western New York to speak at a Men's Retreat, I added a day to the itinerary to travel to



# Division Deploys Again

Fort Drum. There, Chaplain (LTC) Gary Fisher (recently appointed as Division Chaplain for the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division), was preparing for several of his subordinate chaplains to deploy with the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain to Afghanistan. The night I arrived at the Fishers' home on the sprawling military installation, I was delighted to learn that many of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain chaplains were coming over that evening for Chaplain Fisher's fiftieth birthday. It was a great blessing to interact with the men and their wives.



The following morning, I had the honor of visiting with Chaplain Fisher's commanding General and to attend a "Casing the Colors" ceremony.

Since the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division Headquarters was deploying to Afghanistan, the Division flag was furled and encased in a canvas sleeve for transport. On the other hand, the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division Artillery (DIVARTY) HQ was reactivated to remain at Fort Drum, so the DIVARTY flag was removed from its sleeve (case) and unfurled. The ceremony included the 10<sup>th</sup>



Mountain marching band, which passed in review playing a rousing march.

Dignitaries in attendance included the lieutenant governor of New York, state and local elected officials, former and current Division commanders, and family and friends of those who were being deployed. Since Chaplain Fisher is the Division Chaplain, he led the ceremony in prayer and, since I was in attendance as his endorser, I was humbled to be granted VIP status, receiving an honorable mention from the various speakers.

All of this is to the credit not only of the storied 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division but to Chaplain Gary Fisher specifically. Like several other FBFI Chaplains who are continuing their significant and highly decorated careers as effective ministers in uniform, Chaplain Fisher also is widely recognized not *in spite* of his strong stand for Christ and the Bible, but largely *because* of it. These men are examples of how being outstanding officers accompanies the outstanding ministry God has given them to our men and women in uniform.





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## Future Hope and Present Holiness

Continued from page 17

If eternal life is knowing God, and we are already living our eternal life, then we need to be striving to know God. In J. I. Packer’s classic work *Knowing God*, he observes, “Disregard the study of God and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfold, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you.”<sup>4</sup>

So what are we doing to develop that relationship now? What are we doing to better comprehend the incomparable God? Anticipating the promise that we shall awake in His likeness ought to cause us to grow in Christlikeness now.

The New Testament conveys the same idea, that when we see Him, “we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). Ponder that declaration—“We shall be like him; for we shall see him [just] as he [really] is.” In our current condition we do not truly comprehend the magnitude of the transformation that will take place in our hearts and minds and with our glorified bodies.<sup>5</sup>

The resulting application is that everyone “that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3). The hope of God’s eternal presence results in a present purifying endeavor. Hebrews admonishes

believers to strive with an intense effort toward the goal of holiness “without which no man shall see the Lord” (12:14). In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ proclaimed, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8).

So what is your true treasure in that “home beyond the blue”? Is your anticipation focused on a place or a Person? Do you long to be with the Lord and like your Savior? If so, the future anticipation of being in the presence of the Lord will result in the present realization of a purifying relationship—to be like Him.

Ken M. Endean serves the president and CEO of International Baptist College and Seminary in Chandler, Arizona.



<sup>1</sup> Text by Albert E. Brumley (1905–77).

<sup>2</sup> Paul Enns, *Heaven Revealed* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2011), 174.

<sup>3</sup> Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity*, Vol. 3 (n.p., 2010), 425.

<sup>4</sup> J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 14–15.

<sup>5</sup> Enns, 174.

# Simplicity Made So Difficult

**W**hy is it that people want to make difficult that which is so simple? It seems to be the nature of man to do so. Throughout the Scriptures we find this to be true. For example, we have the account of a man in the Old Testament who wanted to be healed of his leprosy, a dreadful disease. Naaman wanted help and sent for a man of God named Elisha to find out how he could be healed. We read in 2 Kings 5:9, "So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha." Now, what did this man of God do? He did not come out to meet Naaman but instead sent his messenger with the message of how he could be healed.

The next verse says, "And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." Here was the prescription for Naaman. First, go! Second, wash in the Jordan River. Third, do this seven times. What would be the result if he did what Elisha instructed? He would be healed; what a simple and yet profound remedy for this leprous man. But how did he respond? Second Kings 5:11 says, "But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper."

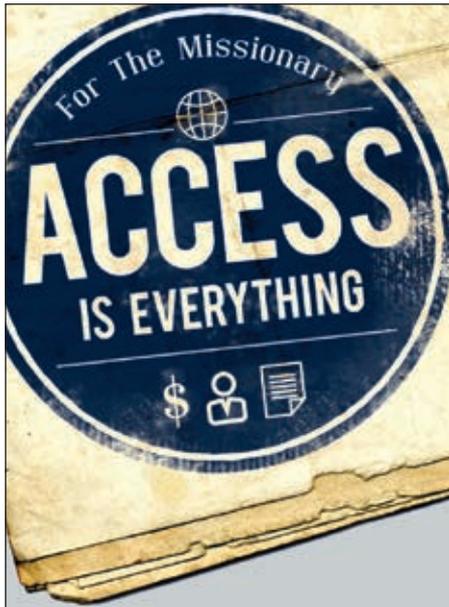
Observe this man's reaction because it is very significant. First, he got angry with the man of God. Second, he refused to change his thinking. Third, he despised the instructions that were given. He wanted to be healed *his way*! He wanted Elisha to come personally and heal him. Naaman had such a high opinion of himself because 2 Kings 5:1 states that he "was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour." Fourth, Naaman voiced his own opinion of how he should be healed in verse 12: "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went

away in a rage." Naaman didn't like the means or method of healing that Elisha had prescribed, so he responded by leaving and throwing a temper tantrum.

But the story doesn't end there. Amazingly, Naaman listened to his servants in verses 13 and 14: "And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" They basically said to Naaman, "Why don't you do what Elisha told you to do?" Then Naaman finally came to his senses. By the way, a person is wise when he listens to the counsel of those who love him, respect him, and show concern for him. Naaman then went to the Jordan River, dipped himself seven times, and was healed—just as Elisha had promised! Naaman's rage turned into rejoicing; he went back to Elisha's house and said in verse 15, "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all earth, but in Israel."

There is a powerful parallel between this account of Naaman and unsaved people today. First of all, they have something far worse than leprosy—they have sin (Gal. 3:22; Rom. 3:23). Second, God has provided a cure for their sin in the Person and work of Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:8). He is the One who shed His blood on the cross for the sins of the whole world. Third, God raised His Son from the dead—Christ is a living Savior! When someone calls upon Jesus to save him, He does. Romans 10:9–10 states, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Do not make difficult what the Lord has made so simple. Just believe the message of 1 John 4:10: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty may be contacted at PO Box 141, Starr, SC 29684 or via e-mail at [evangjivsn@aol.com](mailto:evangjivsn@aol.com).



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