

UPLOOK

JAN-FEB 2006

Assess the Need • Catch the Vision • Take the Challenge

NO HALF MEASURES

MICHAEL
ATTWOOD
New Column
for Preachers

RANDY
HORN
Special
New Believer's
Column

REPENTANCE

FAITH

REDEMPTION

SUBSTITUTION

PROPITIATION

JUSTIFICATION

RECONCILIATION

The entrance of Thy words
giveth light; it giveth
understanding unto the
simple. Psalm 119:130

The Doctrines of Salvation



We are told in Scripture that God specifically calls two things by their names—His stars (Ps. 147:4) and His sheep (Jn. 10:3). That's not the only link between the first and new creations.

No Half Measures

"How great is His goodness..." (Zech. 9:17).

Astronomers call it the Great Wall. And it's not in China. Light from Earth would take 200 million years to reach it. If we sent a probe, it would get there, well, never. Because the Great Wall is moving away from us faster than we can travel.

And what is it? Scientists tell us that there are at least 100 billion galaxies in the universe (although that estimate keeps growing). Quite frankly, one star is awe-inspiring enough. But God didn't make just one. Or one thousand. Or one million. He created billions of galaxies each consisting of millions or billions of stars, the overwhelming majority of which only one Man has ever seen. And galaxies are by no means the largest structures in the universe. Galaxies close to one another form groups of galaxies. If the group is large enough, it's called a cluster. And if it is larger still, it's designated a supercluster. But what if several superclusters were found together? What would you call it? Astronomers called it the Great Wall—a sheet of stars 15 million light years thick, 250 million light years tall, and half a billion light years from end to end.

Through the centuries, over and over, man has been certain that his observations have "almost reached" the end of the universe. And we've always been wrong. The latest estimates put the universe somewhere over 156 billion light years across. Don't worry. It's a lot bigger than that.

But why create such a massive universe? Why fill it with so many stars? What's the point? Psalm 19:1 tells us the point: "*The heavens declare the glory of God.*" They tell us of a transcendent God who has never done anything in a mediocre manner. There are no half measures with the Lord. So it is with the creation. And so it is with the new creation.

This issue of *Uplook* contains a brief look at some of the lofty words (and seven little ones) God uses to describe our salvation. But so many terms have been left out. We haven't been able to address regeneration (the gift of new life from above). No mention has been made of adoption (the concept that not only have we been made members of God's family, but we have been given a place of honor in it). And what of predestination (the glorious assurance, based on the purposes and power and promises of God, that each and every Christian will, in the end, be conformed to the image of His Son)? Then there's redemption. Election. Sealing. And, in the end, glorification. We could go on all day. We could go on all year. We could go on forever. And we will! For "*in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*" (Eph. 2:7). There are no half measures in the terms of our salvation.

And there are no half measures in the extent of our salvation. It is vast enough to be offered to all men—"*For God so loved the world*" (Jn. 3:16); Christ "*gave Himself a ransom for all*" (1 Tim. 2:6); the Lord is "*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*" (2 Pe. 3:9). And it is immense enough to stretch from eternity to eternity.

But above all, there are no half measures in the cost of our salvation. Religion hears "cost" and thinks of good works or money. But the Bible speaks of an unimaginably higher price: "*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold ... But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*" (1 Pe. 1:18f). The terms and extent of our salvation are unbounded because the cost was infinite: "*He ... spared not His own Son*" (Rom. 8:32).

U P L O O K

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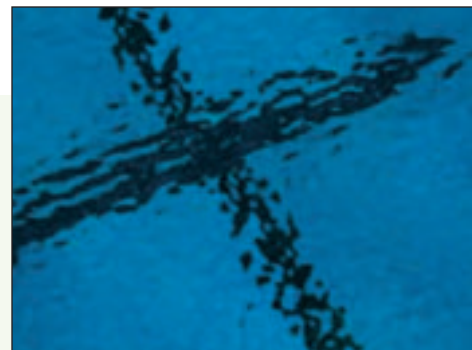
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NEW LIFE IN HIM *From seed planting to fruit growing*



First Steps: Baptism

Have you had your happy funeral?

“**M**ake ’em, Mark ’em, Mold ’em” were the words the elderly preacher used one Sunday morning. As a young believer, I was intrigued by the meaning of each part of his crude outline. His text was from Matthew 28:19-20.

As I read the verses, I learned that “Make ’em” connected with the words, “*teach all nations.*” The idea was to “make ’em” Christians by providing opportunities for all to accept Christ as their Saviour.

“Mark ’em” had to do with water baptism in the words, “*baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*”


“Mold ’em” referred to strengthening believers to live in obedience to the Word of God by “*teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*” The order of Matthew 28:19-20 showed that baptism was the first step of obedience a believer took after becoming a Christian. This order was clearly supported elsewhere in Scripture: Acts 2:38; 2:41; 8:12-13; 8:36-38; 9:18; 10:45-47; 16:14-15, 30-33; 18:8. It was also clear that baptism was a direct command from the Lord Himself.

As I read these verses, this matter of water baptism convicted me. I had falsely professed to be saved at an early age. This was motivated by a desire to impress the elders, my parents, relatives, and my Christian peers. Not only did I agree to be baptized, but I also participated in the Lord’s Supper each Sunday in my unsaved condition.

I was 16 years old when I could no longer live my double life. I was ashamed I had been baptized as an unbeliever. Physically sick with guilt, I began to quietly pass up the loaf and the cup at the Lord’s Supper. I vowed that I would not again partake of these emblems until this matter was settled between me and God. One night, in the quietness of my bedroom, I prayed to God that He would save me. I

claimed God’s promise that salvation was available to everyone by His grace. I earnestly acknowledged to God that I believed Jesus Christ died for my sins and that He rose again triumphant over sin and death. I settled it that night, but sadly, told no one. I was too embarrassed over the lie I had lived for years. I realized that the baptism I had earlier experienced was not believer’s baptism, but little more than a public dunking. Should I continue my silence or correct the matter with a scriptural baptism?

The preacher’s message taught me that baptism was a “marking” by a public declaration of association with Christ. During the persecution of the early church, it literally made believers such “marked men” that some paid with their lives. Biblically, it was a visible act of obedience associated with repentance (Acts 2:38), discipleship (Mt. 28:19-20), and identification with Christ in His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-6). It was anything but quietly keeping this new life to one’s self. How could I ignore such a direct command of the Lord Jesus Christ by remaining silent? It was difficult to admit, but I requested the elders that I might be baptized “again” and follow the order I had learned in Scripture.

Have you obeyed the Lord’s command since you became a Christian? Baptism was one of the first steps of obedience following salvation for New Testament saints. Sometimes it even occurred “*the same hour of the night*” (Acts 16:33). I have spent the last 35 years on the third part of the old preacher’s outline—having my life molded by the Word. Where are you in the preacher’s outline? If you have been made a Christian by the grace of God? Have you been marked as such by baptism? Are you being molded by obedience to God’s Word? —RANDY HORN 

Triple Oops

Former editor served small portions of humble pie.

Our careful readers graciously point out when we are exposing our fallability. Three recent cases in point:

- In the October issue highlighting the Good News team, we misspelled Robert Clingan's last name.
- In the Nov/Dec issue, we assumed that the World Soccer Cup *outreach* was to be in Germany. The competition is in Germany, but the outreach booklets are available for distribution in North America. Contact: lem5@juno.com
- Some readers who are quite certain of the date of creation were concerned about the age of Turkey being listed as 7500 BC. Our apologies to those who found this to be, in the words of one correspondent, "baffling [to] their minds."

PLEASE NOTE: NEWS SUBMISSIONS News items for *Front Lines* must be submitted at least two months in advance of issue requested. Selected news items will be carried for two issues (if time permits). The editor reserves the right to determine those items best suited for the magazine and to edit length of submissions. Editorial decisions are final. Photos accepted, but will only be used if there is room. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for photos you wish returned. Please send your news items to: frontlines@uplook.org

LEESBURG MEN'S CONFERENCE

Brooksville Bible Chapel is planning a Men's Conference to be held at Camp Horizon in Leesburg, FL on Feb 17-18. Evan Davis (OH) will be the speaker with Titus as his text. **Contact:** Ed Anderson 352-382-4638 email: andersedw@cs.com

HOLIDAY, FL BIBLE CONFERENCE

Holiday Gospel Assembly's annual Conference is Feb 17 from 7:30AM-9PM and Saturday from 10AM-3:30PM. Dinner served Sat. at noon. Speakers: Ben Sutton (MB), Keith Keyser (PA). Theme: "The Priestly Work of Christ." **Contact:** Lee Cappiello 727-845-4572 email: ecappiello@tampabay.rr.com

WORKERS CONFERENCE IN GEORGIA

The 55th Southeastern Workers Conference is planned for Feb 20-22 at Believers Gospel Chapel, 3565 Peach Orchard Rd., Augusta, GA. Theme: "The Mind of Christ: In Him, In You" Speakers: Malcolm Horlock (Wales), Rudy Jackson (NC), Jonathon Peck

(NC), and Tom Taylor (PA). **Contact:** Warren Hylton 706-737-0427 email: warrenhylton@knology.net.

PHOENIX CONFERENCE

Palms Bible Fellowship, Phoenix AZ, is planning their annual Conference Mar 3-5. Mike Attwood (GA) will be speaking. Theme "Reverence for God." **Contact:** David Wright 480-225-1683 email: davidwendywright@msn.com

EMMAUS AT IROQUOINA

Camp Iroquoina holds their annual men's retreat on Mar 11. Emmaus will present the topic, "How to make your life count for God." Set aside this time to study God's Word. Fri and Sat night accommodations available. **Contact:** Mark Thomas 570-967-2577 email: campiroquoina@epix.net

CONFERENCE IN GRAND RAPIDS MI

The Northwest (Grand Rapids, MI) assembly's annual conference is planned for Mar 17-19. Speakers: Dan Smith (IA) and Mike Fitzhugh (MI).

Children's program. Held at White Hills Bible Church (3900 E. Fulton, GR). Accommodations available. **Contact:** Robert Snow 616-785-4096

FAMILY CONFERENCE

Brooksville (FL) Bible Chapel is planning a Family Conference Mar 25-26. The conference begins at 10:00AM Saturday and lunch will be served. Skip Elliott (SC) will be the speaker and his topic will include: *The Principle of Prayer, The Purpose of Prayer, The Power of Prayer, The Passion of Prayer*. **Contact:** Ed Anderson 352-382-4638 email: andersedw@cs.com

WEEKEND IN THE WORD

James Comte (ON) is invited speaker for a conference to be held Mar 31-Apr 2 at Willow Valley Conference Center in Lancaster, PA. Topic: "How Big is Your God?" Conference begins Friday at 7 PM and concludes with meetings and a noon meal on the Lord's Day with the Monterey assembly. Saturday evening dinner and sacred concert

FRONT LINES *continued*

Nearly 200 attendees
from a prior
Vessels of Honor
conference



planned; area assemblies invited. Cost for weekend is \$230. **Contact:** Mark Kolchin, PO Box 305, Lanoka Harbor, NJ 08734 email: knowtheword@com-cast.net or www.knowtheword.com

IMPACT 2006, WINDSOR ON

"Impact 2006," a conference for youth age 13 up to college-aged adults, is planned for Fri Mar 31–Sun Apr 2 at Oakwood Bible Chapel, Windsor, ON. The theme is "Keep yourselves in the love of God"—Jude 21. Expected speakers are Jon Glock (IA), Gary Goodkey (ON), Steve Yuille (ON) and Jodi Greenstreet (ON). Cost is \$20 before Mar 12 and \$30 after. **Contact:** Register at www.oakwoodbiblechapel.org oakwoodimpact2006@hotmail.com

DALLAS AREA CONFERENCE

The Dallas Area Conference is scheduled for Apr 7-9, Lord willing. Charles Fizer (IA) and Joe Mikhael (ON) will minister the Word. Meetings held at Wheatland Bible Chapel, 1303 W. Wheatland Road, Duncanville, TX. **Contact:** John Daniels 972-424-9889 john_marilyn_daniels@verizon.net

TORONTO EASTER CONFERENCE

The Toronto Easter Bible Conference will be held, Lord willing, Apr 14-15. Expected speakers are Mike Attwood (GA) and Dr. Joe Mikhael (ON) **Contact:** Charles Tempest 905-892-2792 email: charlietempest@hotmail.com

GRANVILLE EASTER CONFERENCE

The Granville Easter Conference, sponsored by seven local assemblies, will be held Apr 14-16 at Granville Chapel, 5091 Granville St., Vancouver, BC. Speakers: Jonathan Brower (VA) and Keith Keyser (PA). Children's pro-

grams Fri and Sat afternoon. **Contact:** Norman Chandler 604-271-1083 email: jeannormanc@yahoo.ca

BALDWIN KANSAS CONFERENCE

An Open Platform conference is planned Apr 22-23 at Gospel Chapel, Third and Chapel Streets, Baldwin, KS **Contact:** Ray M. Jones 785-594-3374 email: rmjones@idir.net Ken Keane 785-594-3520 email: kenkeane@myvine.com Gospel Chapel, PO Box 45, Baldwin City, KS 66006

CHICAGO AREA CONFERENCE

The Chicago area Spring Conference will be held, Lord willing, Apr 28-30 at the Palos Hills Christian Assembly, 10600 S. 88th Ave., Palos Hills, IL. Speakers expected are Harold Summers (BC), Alan Parks (SC), and Mike Attwood (GA). Special sessions for children. For accommodations, contact: Rich Battaglin 708-599-9407 email: paloschristians@hotmail.com

LIMON, CO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Limon (CO) Bible Chapel, 385 J Av., will have its annual conference Apr 29-30. Speakers: Keith Trevolt (KS) and George Farber (IA). Accommodations and meals. PO Box 1208, Limon CO 80828 **Contact:** 719-775-9788 or 719-346-8547

LADIES MISSIONARY CONFERENCE

The 29th Annual Ladies Missionary Conference, Windsor, ON, co-sponsored by ladies from Oakwood & Turner Road Bible Chapels, is planned for Sat May 6 at 9:30 AM. Nursery & lunch will be provided. Speakers: Rosy Cavenaugh from Mexico, Marj Robbins (QC) and a team of ladies report-

ing on their visit to Ireland. **Contact:** Jan Gillis 519-967-7015 email: neilgillis@sympatico.ca

CONFERENCE IN INDIANA

The annual Spring Conference at the Gospel Chapel, 321 Cliff Dr., Logansport, IN, is to be held May 6, Lord willing. Expected speaker: Ross Ragland (MO). Refreshments at 9:30AM with sessions at 10 and 11AM. Lunch provided. Brother Ragland will also speak Sunday morning. **Contact:** Ralph Garver 574-722-1012 email: Leegar@Lneti.com

VESSELS OF HONOR 2006

A Young Adults Conference convened by East Tulsa Bible Chapel will be held on the campus of Park University, Parkville, MO, May 26-29. The theme: "Reaching Out to a Lost World." General session speakers: Jonathan Peck (NC), Steve Price (KS), and Mike Attwood (GA). Seminar speakers, along with general speakers, are Craig Rolinger, Nancy Rolinger and Warren Henderson. **Contact:** Jim Lindamood 918-663-1121 email: jimlindamood@vesselsofhonor.org Dan Moffitt 918-744-6484 email: danmoffitt@sbcglobal.net www.vesselsofhonor.org

RAMSEUR BIBLE STUDY

Brethren in the Ramseur/Randleman area of NC are planning a school year of classes through May 2006. These classes are to be held at Ramseur Gospel Chapel one Saturday a month. **Contact:** Mike Moody 336-824-5525 email: mcjmoody@yahoo.com

YORK BIBLE STUDY PROGRAM

The York Bible Study Program, which is completing its 18th year, meets on

the second Saturday of each month until May in York, PA. There are four teaching sessions and lunch is provided. **For information:** Spread the Word at 717-767-2900

NEW WORK IN STOCKTON, CA

A new assembly is meeting in the Stockton, CA area. Their address is 5718 Krissi Ct. Stockton, CA 95209. **Contact:** Zrebric Humphrey 209-957-4048 email: humpcdt@pacbell.net Eugene Briones 209-957-8740

BIBLE LANDS STUDY TOUR

Please join us on a trip to Israel as we travel and learn more about our Lord and His land. This twelve-day trip will take us from Dan to Beersheba Mar 26-Apr 7. **Contact:** Rex Trogdon 704-542-4882 email: Rextrogdon@carolina.rr.com

GROWTH IN ORLANDO

Several families from Hiawassa Bible Chapel, Orlando FL, have been meeting regularly for prayer, praise and planning and have set Mar 26 to begin breaking bread as the New Testament Believers' Fellowship in Clermont, FL. Clermont is nw of Orlando on US 27. They welcome others visiting or living in the Clermont area. **Contact:** Buck Matthews 407-469-2087 Lanny Evans 407-469-2712

GEORGETOWN, TX FELLOWSHIP

Visitors traveling near Austin, TX are welcome to a small home fellowship at 312 Ashwood Lane, Georgetown, TX. Georgetown is 26 mi south of Austin. **Contact:** Edwin & Mary Ellen Meschkat 512-868-6909 emeschkat@aol.com or Orville Pierce 512-863-8335

COMMENDATION

The Christians at Calvary Bible Chapel in Clinton Township, MI are happy to commend brother Thomas Frederick Bell to the grace of God and the work of the Lord in discipleship and evangelism. Thomas expects to serve the Lord with The Ezekiel Project and in other ways as the Lord may lead. Thomas is in happy fellowship in the assembly and it is with joy that the saints issue this commendation.

CHANGES AT PITTSBORO

After serving as administrators of Pittsboro Christian Village for fifteen years, Dave and Norma Dewhurst have left the ministry to retarget their lives. They are traveling the country in a RV, assisting ministries with their administration experience in camping and health care. The Andover (MA) Bible Chapel reaffirms their commendation. Contact them at 919-542-3151 or by mail at 307 Paul Revere Drive, Forest VA 24551. Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Baker have moved onto the village property. Gerald, with an extensive background in administration, will be managing the ministry. Please pray for the Bakers and the Dewhursts.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Victory Christian School
Victory Christian School in St. Louis, MO is seeking an Administrator/Principal beginning with the 2006/2007 school year. This challenging position as principal will lead the K-8 program of 150 students as it enters its 32nd year. If you are a motivated individual with the qualifications and desire to serve the Lord in this capacity, please e-mail your request for an application

to Application@VCSMO.org

Horton Haven Christian School
Horton Haven Christian Camp is looking for someone to take responsibility for the supervision of the health care aspect of their camp ministry. **Contact:** Matt Phelan, Executive Director, Horton Haven Christian Camp, Box 276, Chapel Hill, TN 37014 email: mjphelan@united.net

OUTREACH IN DENMARK, SWEDEN

A Rotary convention will be held in Copenhagen in June and volunteers are needed to give tracts out to delegates from 130 countries. Help is also needed in Germany at the World Cup outreach. **Contact:** Stan Engle 405-236-LIFE email: sgengle@aol.com www.Lifehouse.org

PROMOTED TO GLORY

Horace Ekins
Horace Ekins, elder at Westgrove Gospel Chapel, Edmonton AB, was translated from earth to Heaven Oct 14, 2005. *"Absent from the body, present with the Lord"* (2 Cor. 5:8). Westgrove Gospel Chapel was Horace's center of service for His Lord after moving from Red Deer, AB. He and his wife, Marie, were active in church ministry as well as evangelical outreach. Hospitality is well remembered by local believers and those who visited.

Buena Wells Booker

Buena Wells Booker, 77, entered the Lord's presence on Dec 15, 2005. Buena was predeceased by her husbands Clarence L. Wells and full time worker R. James Booker. She was in fellowship with the believers at Florence Bible Chapel, SC since 1951.

Hamas Seeks Legitimacy

Terrorists in Palestine fail to repudiate their objective to destroy the Jews

"I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord. Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time that their iniquity had an end" (Ezek. 35:4-5).

In October of 2005 during a publicly broadcast speech, Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's said—among other things—that Israel should be “wiped off the map.” There was the usual immediate negative reaction from some nations, but Ahmadinejad remained unrepentant, referring to his initial remarks as “just” and claiming, according to the BBC, that criticism of him did not have “any validity.” He added helpfully that, “My words are the Iranian nation's words.”

Surprisingly, one of his sharpest critics at the time was Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat. Speaking to the BBC, Mr. Erekat said, “Palestinians recognize the right of the state of Israel to exist and I reject his comments. What we need to be talking about is adding the state of Palestine to the map and not wiping Israel from the map.”

Less than three months later, Mr. Erekat's seemingly moderate position was tested at the ballot box where the Palestinians—nearly 80 percent of whom voted—chose overwhelmingly to install Hamas as the new governing Palestinian Authority. Voters clearly understood—as many outside Israel seemingly do not—that Hamas is a terrorist organization responsible for more than 60 suicide bombings since the year 2000 and has been complicit in the murders of hundreds of innocent Israelis. Hamas is proudly and publicly committed to the destruction of Israel and the death of Jews everywhere.

It is now the *de facto* policy of the democratically elected Palestinian Authority's leadership that the state of Israel should not exist; that the only solution to the presence of Jews in “Palestine” is not mediation or compromise, but Jihad.

In 1988, the Hamas charter—among any number of chilling quotations—included this gem in Article Seven:

The Day of Judgment will not come about until Moslems fight the Jews, when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. The stones and trees will say O Moslems, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.

Those hoping for moderation or a public rejection of earlier Hamas policy in the face of their new election victory found little in the way of encouraging signs: “Don't be afraid,” Ismail Haniyeh, a Hamas leader, told the BBC. At a victory news conference late Thursday, however, Haniyeh said Hamas will “complete the liberation of other parts of Palestine.” He did not say which territories he was referring to or how he would go about it.

The *Taipei Times* reported the Hamas victory and included Mr. Erekat's shocked response: “Our lives will never be the same. Today we woke up and the sky was a different color. We have entered a new era.”

Perhaps Mr. Erekat is legitimately shocked or perhaps he—like so many others—veil and deny their hatred of Israel with soft words and vague promises. But in any case, it daily becomes more difficult for a secular observer of world events to explain the Islamic hatred of Israel. It becomes increasingly amusing to view the contortions of many in the media who portray a vote for Hamas as a vote against corruption rather than a vote for war on Israel. There is a supernatural hatred of God's chosen people at work in this world that is hard to deny and even harder to explain absent the clarity of God's Word.

Christians are adjured in Psalm 122 to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Careful students of the Word do just that; but they also understand that there will be no peace until that One comes who will speak peace to the roiling nations in just the same way He once spoke peace to the stormy sea.

—MARK ANDERSON

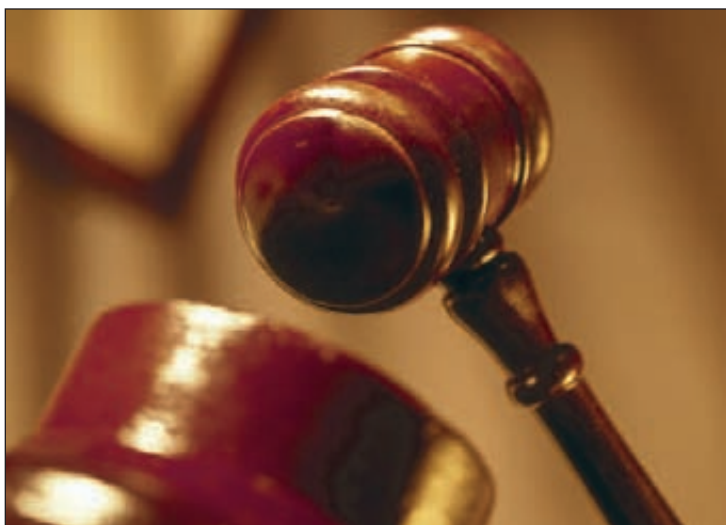


Justification—More than Forgiveness

Our being justified is based on the all-encompassing success of the risen Saviour.

Christ “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 4:25; 5:1)

All who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour are familiar with the doctrine of forgiveness. The redemptive work of Christ includes the forgiveness of sins, which removes the penalty associated with our guilt (Col. 1:14). In Romans 3:19, we read that all the world is guilty before God. The word used for “guilty” carries the thought of “accountable” or “indebted.” When an individual is guilty of a crime, he is indebted to society and to the injured party. This indebtedness may be in the form of a fine, a prison term, or even his life. It is helpful to see that God is not only the righteous Judge who determines man’s guilt, but He is also the injured party against whom man has sinned (Ps. 51:4).



In the seventh chapter of Luke, Jesus told a parable of two debtors. While one of them owed the creditor ten times the amount of the other, they were both in the

same condition of being bankrupt and unable to pay. The creditor frankly forgave their debt and any penalty associated with it. This gracious and free forgiveness removed all fear of judgment and resulted in peace (Lk. 7:50). This is a very vivid picture of God graciously and freely forgiving the sinner his debt to Him.

While the forgiveness of sins is gracious and free, it is not at the expense of God’s righteousness. His righteousness requires that justice be carried out and the penalty paid. Thus the forgiveness we enjoy is not only that of God acting as the offended party, but also the pardon which comes from a righteous Judge. This is only possible because of the propitiatory work of Christ. Atonement is an Old Testament truth which expresses the fact that sins were covered. Propitiation expresses the truth of satisfaction. Our sins are not just covered over, but God has been fully satisfied in regards to them (1 Jn. 4:10). As a result, Christ has been publicly declared to be the mercy seat, or the place at which God and man can meet. God can now pardon us of all our sins while still remaining righteous (Rom. 3:24-26). The more we enter into God’s appreciation of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, the greater will be our peace.

Forgiveness is the negative aspect of justification. It is the removal of our guilt and the associated penalty. It is based on the death of Christ (Rom. 5:9; Eph. 1:7).

In Romans 4:25, we read that Christ “was delivered for our offences, and raised

again for our justification.” While justification includes forgiveness, it is far more. Some have defined it as “just-as-if-I-never-sinned.” This definition falls far short of defining this blessed truth. This definition leaves one merely in the state of innocence, as Adam was before the Fall. It gives no security or permanent acceptance with God.


Justification is the “declarative act of God by which the believer is declared to be righteous.” This declaration is a result of a change of legal standing before the righteous Judge. It is objective truth. It is what God declares about the believer, not something subjective happening in him. Justification does not make one righteous. It is the declaration that one is righteous, or is constituted righteous. This truth presents the fact that not only has God forgiven the believer, but He has also declared that he is righteous in His sight.

An illustration may be of help in appreciating this distinction. Envision a person who was repeatedly caught shoplifting and was forgiven on each occasion. While this forgiveness kept the penalty of the law from being carried out, it would not mean that he is accepted as a righteous person by the owner. The owner would not hire him under the assumption that forgiving him made him righteous. (One who is righteous practices righteousness, 1 Jn. 3:7.) The individual would never give the owner of the shop as a character reference. In the same way, our forgiveness, while removing the penalty and fear of judgment, does not by itself imply acceptance with God. But God declaring us to be righteous in His sight does.

The positive aspect of justification is associated with the resurrection of Christ. When we see that Christ’s resurrection was itself a “declarative act of God,” we begin to see its importance. In John 16:10, Christ’s resurrection and ascension to the Father is a declara-

tive act of God by which the world would be convicted. The world rejected Christ and His claims. Israel had esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God (Isa. 53:4). Christ’s resurrection not only declared God’s acceptance of His sacrificial death, but also declared that Christ Himself was righteous and the world was wrong in their judgment of Him. In Romans 1:4, the Apostle Paul states that Christ was “*declared*” to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. In Romans 10:9-10, the belief of this truth is not only unto forgiveness, but unto righteousness.

The faith of the believer not only identifies him with the death of Christ, by which the penalty is removed, but also with a risen Lord, who has been declared to be righteous by the resurrection. The believer no longer stands before God in Adam, but in a risen, glorified Christ. Not only are we forgiven, but we are accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6).

May each believer know the rest and joy of such a position. 



MIGHTY LOVE

O joy of the justified,
joy of the free!
I’m washed in that crimson tide
opened for me;
In Christ, my Redeemer,
rejoicing I stand,
And point to the print
of the nail in His hand.

Lord Jesus, the crucified,
now Thou art mine;
Though once a lost sinner,
yet now I am Thine;
In conscious salvation
I sing of Thy grace
Who lifts now upon me
the smile of His face.

—Frank Bottome

Christ our Substitute

"The Son of God...loved me and gave Himself for me."

The words "substitute" and "substitution" aren't found in our Bible. But as the author shows, the idea is everywhere.

A rifle is raised, its sights set on the most powerful man in the nation. Shots ring out and without hesitation Secret Service men pile on top of the president to take the bullets intended for him. Men die in service to their country and the president's life is spared.

The Bible makes it clear in the book of Romans that "for a good man someone would even dare to die." Reading past the divine interruption, "But God," we find the difference in the demonstration of His love: It was "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:7f). How could it be that the Son of God would show such love as to take what we deserve and die for us—sinners?

Peter explains, "Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust" (1 Pet. 3:18). He, the

just, for us, the unjust. It is the substitutionary death of our Saviour. Simply put, Christ died in our place.

The Plan from the Beginning

This theme of substitutionary atonement is unique to God's great salvation and distinct from manmade religions. A brief survey of the Scriptures reveals that this was God's plan from the beginning and fulfilled by our

Saviour. The Lord Jesus said, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mt. 20:28).

Adam and Eve were in the garden with everything they could have ever needed. They had nothing to gain, but everything to lose. This was realized when the first woman ate the first man out of house and home. Adam, with his eyes wide open, chose to rebel and go against God's command. They hid from God

and busily engaged themselves in their fig leaf religion. It didn't work then. It still doesn't!

God had warned them saying, "In the day that you eat of it [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] you shall surely die." In dealing with Adam's sin, God showed in a clear way that sin is grievous and its wages real: the wages of sin is death. He took an innocent animal, shed its blood, and clothed Adam and his wife Eve with its skins. Man's insufficient works were just a cover-up. God's work would require the death of an innocent animal as a substitute. Of course, we see the supreme Sacrifice foreshadowed in this first sacrifice. Both were substitutionary, but only Christ's substitutionary death would pay for their sin.

Time moves on and God's program unfolds. The principle of substitutionary death is seen again. Abraham was told by God to take his son, his only son Isaac whom he loved, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering. On the way Isaac asked his father, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" What answer would he give the lad? Don't miss it. The answer this friend of God gave his son reveals his understanding of the ways of God. Abraham responded, "God will provide for Himself a lamb." When? How? We wait to see.

There, at that moment, with the knife raised to slay his son, the Angel of the Lord called from heaven to Abraham to stay his hand. Abraham looked, and behind him a ram was caught in a thicket. He took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son (Gen. 22:13). The ram was a temporary substitute for the permanent one which would come in God's time. Truly, as the Lord Jesus declared, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he



CHRIST OUR SUBSTITUTE *continued*

saw it and was glad." He rejoiced and was glad? He surely was! His son had been spared. The ram was offered in his place. One day, in that place which Abraham called Jehovah-Jireh, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" would be offered up when God provided for Himself the Lamb in our stead.

Generations later, Jacob was bereaved of Joseph and there was a famine in the land. To survive, Jacob sent his ten sons to Egypt to buy grain. The whole story is intriguing, but our point comes at the end. When told by Joseph, who seemed as a stranger to his brothers, that the only way they could get further help would be to bring their youngest brother Benjamin to Egypt, they returned home to Canaan.

Jacob would not hear of it! He said, "You have bereaved me: Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me." At this point, Reuben made an offer to take the responsibility. "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him [Benjamin] back to you." How would you like to hear your father make a commitment like that? But that was no substitute. They were at a stalemate.

Then Judah, the line through which Messiah would come, offered himself, "I myself will be surety for him" (Gen. 43:9). Judah's words were tested and proven to be sincere. When Joseph declared that Benjamin would remain in Egypt as his slave, Judah stepped up and requested, "Please let your servant [Judah himself] remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad [Benjamin] go up with his brothers" (Gen. 44:33).

There are other places in the Old Testament Scriptures where Christ is foreshadowed as our substitute. The sacrifices (like the Passover) and the scapegoat, point to His being offered in our place while we go free. But His substitutionary death is also taught directly. The prophet Isaiah gives the clearest teaching on this, saying, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one,

to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:5-6).

New Testament Elaboration

Romans 15:4 reminds us that "whatever things were written before were written for our learning." What have we learned of our Lord Jesus who came to take our place? The New Testament reviews our lessons. There is the instance of Caiaphas, the high priest, who stated (though with evil intent), "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish."

Note how John adds commentary to Caiaphas' words, explaining, "Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad" (Jn. 11:50-52).

This truth of the substitutionary death of our Saviour is most succinctly stated by the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "He [God] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." What an offer! What an exchange! Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

*Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood;
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!*

This is our Saviour "who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:6) and "redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13).

When God gave His Son as our Substitute, it was the just for the unjust. Not just any substitute. Not a trade down as the world may try to pull off. A stone for bread, a serpent for a fish, or a Leah for a Rachel. But rather One who was just for those who are unjust.

The world's advertisers often use the slogan: Accept no substitute. The Word of God implores man to do the opposite: to accept Christ, our Substitute!



God made Christ "who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." What an offer! What an exchange! Hallelujah, what a Saviour!



ELDER HELPS *To feed, to take heed, and to lead*

Take Heed to Yourselves

If this fails, it wreaks havoc with the flock.

Elders must “take heed” to themselves, as well as those under their care. This means they must monitor their own conduct and, when necessary, correct each other. If believers generally are to be so “full of goodness and filled with all knowledge” that they are equipped to “admonish one another,” then surely those who take the lead must be open to the same discipline among themselves (Rom. 15:14).

One of the brethren involved in shepherding may hold an executive position in the world and be accustomed to his word being respected and obeyed in a business sphere. He needs to be watchful lest he, unintentionally perhaps, expects the same response from his fellow elders, and does not take kindly to any modification of his ideas. On the part of the other elders, too, there must be care, lest they become so passive that they allow one man to become dominant.

The needs of any flock are varied, and we can see how an elder with the gift of mercy might take the lead when a case calling for compassion arises, whereas another might be more active when a theological error has to be corrected. Nevertheless, no individual, however many gifts he may appear to have, should be allowed to have the last word in every situation.

At the first sign of over-assertiveness on the part of one of their number, fellow elders need to prayerfully and graciously, but firmly, tell their brother in the Lord that he is going beyond the mandate the Chief Shepherd has given him (Gal. 6:1).

AND TO THE FLOCK...

We would like to think that you have been able to escape the type of situation mentioned above, but it is not uncommon for elders to fail to discipline themselves in the way we have outlined. It may seem easi-

er to go along with the dominance of the most assertive man and even to rally behind

him in a show of loyalty. What will happen next? The elders have now formed themselves into a block or board of men who are threatened by any appeal made to them. They may read such an approach as a budding rebellion, stiffening their position and developing a siege mentality. They are now on the defensive: the drawbridge goes up, and they are not open to any suggestions except those originating within their castle.

Of course, the impending split is not entirely their fault. There are those who are hungry for power and recognition who may presume to speak for the people and arouse them to rebellion against their leaders—a man like Absalom, who won the hearts of many, or Jeroboam the son of Nebat, whose appeal had some reason and support but which came from the lips of a man evil at heart (2 Sam. 15:4-6; 1 Ki. 12:1-16). In the latter case, King Rehoboam had inherited a problem created by Solomon, his father, and was not entirely to blame for the oppressive situation that caused the people to complain; but, he was blameworthy for the way he way he handled it. Elders may learn a lesson here, to treat discontent with wisdom and compassion, and not assume Rehoboam’s threatening, self-defensive stance.

Let me close with an appeal to all to pray for elders. Their work is not easy and they are made of the same stuff as the rest of us. At the same time, may those of us who are elders be careful not to put too great a distance between ourselves and those we are called to lead. **WRITE: elders@uplook.org**



Expository Preaching

The value and effectiveness of explaining the text of Scripture.

The primary purpose of this series is to provide helps for preachers and shepherds in teaching the Word of God to the saints, thus taking seriously our responsibility to “*feed My sheep*” (Jn. 21:15; see 1 Pet. 5:2). In particular, we hope to address the subject of expository preaching.

Defining expository preaching

Expository preaching is not just a verse-by-verse running commentary on the Scripture. Although it includes that, it is significantly more. It involves expounding the text, bringing out its meaning to the original readers, the background surrounding the writing of the passage (if known), and the application and relevance to us today. It also includes comparing scripture with scripture, bringing similar passages to bear on the passage being dealt with. Another aspect is pointing out doctrinal truth wherever it is found.

Why is it so effective?

“*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*” (2 Tim. 3:16) and we are charged to declare “*all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20:27). Expository preaching helps us fulfill this mandate: it eliminates “hobby horses” and “one-stringed fiddle” preaching, while at the same time helping to ensure that the difficult passages of Scripture are not skipped.

Furthermore, it presents the Scriptures in the context in which they were originally given by the Holy Spirit. This method aids people in better understanding the Scriptures because they generally read the Bible in a verse-by-verse manner.

Later on, when reading the same passage in private devotions, expository preaching will certainly help the Bible reader to remember things that had been taught in the public meetings of the assembly.

Lastly, the preacher who adopts this method will never run out of subject matter, and will not spend long hours wondering what to preach on, but instead devote that precious time in studying the text itself.

How can we work it into our local assemblies?

Let it be understood here that I am not suggesting that expository preaching is the only method of teaching God’s Word. I am also a proponent of open platform meetings, conversational Bible readings, and gospel meetings. However, I do believe that New Testament assemblies would be greatly edified by regular and systematic exposition of the Scriptures. Somewhere in our schedule it would be profitable to the saints to have time set aside for the expounding of the Scriptures.

One challenge with implementing this is that we often have different preachers each Lord’s Day. A possible solution is to ask visiting and local preachers to expound on a passage in a prearranged schedule. Not all will appreciate this, but many will be happy to work on the passage, provided they are given sufficient notice. It also can help the saints to prepare themselves for the message by reading ahead. Especially difficult passages should be assigned to those with extra ability in clearly teaching the Scriptures.

Of course this will take planning. Some are reluctant to do this, as they insist that everything is to be Spirit-led, so any kind of planning is viewed as unscriptural. Needless to say, the giving of the Scriptures as books and letters was definitely Spirit-led, and to seek to teach the Scriptures in the same manner in which they were given could hardly be viewed as grieving the Spirit or unscriptural.

Why it is neglected?

Perhaps the primary reason for neglect is because it is such a lot of work. It can take several hours initially to do the exegesis of a passage of Scripture, and then to put it into a preachable form. Time constraints, and perhaps other priorities, mean that other methods of preaching are an easier option. It is also difficult because we have to deal with complex portions of the Word of God, which may cause the preacher to lose sleep and sweat over the passage in an attempt to unlock truth and grasp its true meaning. It can truly be a case of laboring in the Word and doctrine. 🕒

Propitiation

Now we can rest where God rests.

The author traces the linkage between the ancient words “mercy seat” and “atonement” with the New Testament idea of propitiation.

Propitiation is an interesting word. By definition it means an appeasement of wrath. It is used by the Greeks, owners of the language of the New Testament, to refer to “soothing the anger of the gods” (Adam Clarke). The Greeks were notorious for their mythology about the gods. These gods could become angry with humans, or even each other, and bring down terror and judgment. To end this judgment, their wrath had to be appeased by some labor. Even in the Book of Acts we read of Paul going to Athens and referring to these many gods. He, accordingly, preached to the people of the one true God.

Of course the idea of an angry god that must be appeased was not unique to the Greeks, nor is the idea gone today. Dwight Pentecost writes,



The concept of god, universally held by all the heathen, is of a god who is angry and must be placated before any blessing can be expected from him. And all heathen religions seek to change the attitude of their god toward man so that they may receive kindnesses and mercies from his hands. It is only in the Word of God that we have pictured for us the true character of God—a God of love, a God of mercy, a God of grace, a God who, even though He must punish sin-

ners because He is a holy God, loves sinners and seeks to pour forth mercy and grace upon sinners if a way can be found to turn loose the torrent of His love toward them.

This view of an angry god needing appeasement in order to change his actions also fails to recognize the fact that God is unchanging, and,

yet that is one of His attributes (Mal. 3:6). Just as He is a God of justice that must punish sin, He is also a God of unchanging love and mercy.

It is when we see the true character of God that we can fully appreciate this aspect of propitiation. It is one of the great doctrinal words of salvation. While other aspects of salvation deal with our position and man's aspect of salvation, propitiation deals with God's aspect. His holy standard must be met, judgment must be meted out. God's standard is perfection and can only be met by God Himself. So, that is what he did. God judged His own Son for our sins. *“And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world”* (1 Jn. 2:2).

Atonement

There is no mention of the word propitiation in the Old Testament. That is because it points us to the cross, and the work of propitiation had not yet been completed. In the Old Testament, the word used is “atonement.” Atonement is merely the covering of sin.

The Day of Atonement was one of the high days of the children of Israel. It was the only day on which the high priest could go behind the veil in the tabernacle, into the holy of holies. This poignant sacrifice is described in Leviticus 16 and pictures for us the work of Christ on the cross. There was just one sin offering (v. 5), yet two goats were required in order to illustrate two great aspects of Christ's death. First, we see that blood is required. The high priest would go behind the veil, taking with him the blood of the one goat (v. 15). Hebrews 9:22 says, *“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”*

PROPITIATION *continued*

Then the high priest would confess the sins of Israel over the live goat, and send it into the wilderness to bear away the iniquities of the people (vv. 21f). What a picture this is! Yet it is only a picture. No one was ever saved by the Day of Atonement, “*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins*” (Heb. 10:4). So how would sin be taken away? To this we cry with John the Baptist, “*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (Jn. 1:29). Only God’s perfect Son could truly deal with sin.

A Solo Work

The second thing we see is that it is a work that is between the high priest and God alone. Of course a priest is an intercessor, and the high priest went before the Lord on behalf of the people. But, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest went behind the veil alone to do his work. When Christ, our Great High Priest, went to the cross to deal with our sin, God the Father veiled the scene in three hours of darkness while He dealt with Him alone regarding our sin. And when that work was done, the physical veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom.

It is significant that the Scriptures record how the veil in the temple was rent. The temple veil was far too high for any man to reach the top, so if a man had attempted to tear the veil, he would have grabbed the bottom and torn from bottom to top. But the veil was torn “top to bottom,” signifying that God on high tore down the veil that separated us from Him. We can now go freely to the mercy seat, where previously only the high priest could go. The separation caused by sin is now done away with. W.E. Vine put it this way: “Christ annuls the power of sin to separate between God and the believer.”

Satisfying the Holiness of God

Thirdly, we see why this work had to be done. God is a just and holy God. His standard is perfection. His laws must be satisfied. His wrath against sin must be satisfied. When the high priest came into the holy of holies, he would sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat. The mercy seat was where the

Shekinah glory dwelt. It was the lid of the Ark of the Covenant which contained, among other things, the stone tablets on which the Law had been written. The Law condemns us, for we cannot possibly keep it all. Because of our infractions, we have incurred the wrath of God.

But over the Law that condemned us is the mercy seat. How appropriately named! One would think from the description that it might be called God’s seat of judgment. But it is God’s character to be merciful; to find a way to have His law satisfied and show mercy simultaneously. It was here that the blood was sprinkled. Christ, the Son of God, shed His own blood to appease the wrath of God. 1 John 2:2 says, “*And He [Christ] is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*” The word used for “propitiation” is the same Greek word used for “merciful” when the publican cries out, “*God be merciful [propitious] to me a sinner*” (Lk. 18:13) and the same word used for “mercy seat” in Hebrews 9:5.



Only God could have formulated and executed this plan.

Only God Could Do It

The last thing we see is that only God could have formulated and executed this plan. He gave the details for the Day of Atonement to Moses. They were to be followed precisely. If they weren’t, the priest would die and there would be no atonement. He could only come at the prescribed time in the prescribed way. The high priest could only go behind the veil once a year, picturing for us the one-time sacrifice of Christ.

Christ, our High Priest, is the only One who could satisfy the just demands of the Law completely and permanently. He didn’t just atone for our sins; He satisfied the wrath of God against us and cleared the way for sinners to be forgiven. And now we can sing with the hymn writer:

*O the love that drew salvation’s plan.
O the grace that brought it down to man.
O the mighty gulf that God did span
At Calvary.*



Armenia

The land of Noah's ark.

We read in Genesis 8:4 of the place where *"the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month upon the mountains of Ararat."* It was here God said to Noah *"Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth"* (Gen. 9:1). This land is the country where man received, as it were, another chance at living for God after He had judged mankind for his wickedness.

Armenia is a country with a long and, very often, sad history. It is a very beautiful country, elevated above sea level, mountainous and land-locked. It is surrounded by Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Iran. At one time the country stretched down to the Mediterranean Sea and also had coastline with the Black Sea. Today it is similar in size to Belgium.

Over the centuries Armenia has had dreadful experiences of war and oppression during the Ottoman Empire, when, between 1915 and 1923, the Turks tried to wipe the Armenian people off the face of the earth. An estimated 1.5 million people were persecuted and murdered by the Turks in that genocide. Turkey tries to deny this ever happened but there are millions of people throughout the world who can testify to their ancestors' suffering.

The Armenians are a very friendly and welcoming people. Having shaken off the shackles of communism in 1991, today they have a democratic government and are independent and free for the first time in many years. The infrastructure of the country has virtually collapsed in recent years, poverty is widespread, and any wealth there is in the nation is in the hands of a minority. Overall the economic picture of the country is very bleak.



I have had the privilege of visiting Armenia on a number of occasions in recent years. I have gone there with a brother from Cyprus who first sparked my interest in that country. This brother lost many family members in the genocide.

There are two assemblies in this country of approximately 3.5 million people, one in the capital, Yerevan (pop. 1.3 million) and another in Gumri, the second city (pop. 130,000). The Yerevan assembly commenced in mid-2003 and consists of believers of all age groups, including some very enthusiastic young people. The work began there through a brother called Hrach Avetisian upon his return from Cyprus. He had come to saving faith in the Lord while living there. At first he met much opposition from family and neighbors, but gradually the Lord broke down barriers and souls began to get saved.

Today, there are about 30 believers in fellowship and the work is growing. There is a Sunday school and young people's Bible class, a prayer meeting, ministry meeting and a very good gospel meeting every Lord's Day. There are always good numbers at this meeting, especially of the unsaved.

Guimri has the only full time commended workers in the country, Toros and Virginnia Pilibosian and their two children. The work began here a number of years before Yerevan. The assembly is strong, with a

large Sunday school and a good teenagers' outreach. This city suffered severe damage in an earthquake in 1988, when approximately 55,000 people perished in the area. In the assembly a number of believers have personal injuries and others have scars due to personal and material loss.

The believers are very poor, as is the general population. Most goods are available in the shops, but with very high unemployment and poor wages, their situation is very sad. The average wage for most is \$1.00 a day, nurses and teachers get \$20.00 a month, that is, when they actually do get it, and old age pensioners get \$7.00 a month. The possibility of a comfortable living is out of the reach of most. Their homes are in a very poor, run-down condition with virtually no heating for the most part. Temperatures can go as low as -35° C in the winter. The believers need our prayers and our practical love.

This country was the first to adopt Christianity as their state religion in the year 301 AD, 10 years before Rome. History tells us that two of the apostles spent at least 10-15 years there and the king, in apostolic days, was a believer. This land was a very bright jewel in Christian witness in its early days. Today, it is still religious. Churches—that the communists tried to destroy—are in abundance. The official religion of the country is now the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church.


There is a good measure of freedom for outreach with the gospel. Every year the believers in Guimri and Yerevan distribute thousands of calendars at the New Year. Bibles are available to the general population in different places. The harvest is great in this country, but the workers are few.

I hope to make some visits again during

2006. I have had a series of meetings in the past in both assemblies on a number of occasions, and last year upwards of 20 believers were baptized and quite a number saved. This is a great encouragement. Home visitations are a wonderful opportunity to get to know the saints and to encourage them in their very poor surroundings. Their homes are cold and pitiful for the most part. There is much personal misery and poverty. Need abounds, but praise the Lord for the little assemblies that are doing their best for the Lord against so much to discourage.

I commend Yerevan, the capital city, whose foundation was laid 2788 years ago, and Guimri, to your prayers. I also pray that many more would be saved in the country and other assembly testimonies would be established. Last year we were able to send about 60 young people out of the city of Yerevan for a weeklong holiday; the gospel was preached twice a day during that time. Also, the assembly in Guimri takes young people out of that city for approximately 3 weeks and a number were saved this past summer. It was lovely to see them coming to the meetings and taking such an interest in the things of the Lord.

Pray that wisdom would be granted when visiting, as many ask very probing questions and seek advice on very personal matters. For many of them it is very costly to be a Christian, to leave the Orthodox Church and to take a stand for the Lord outside the system.

It is my intention to visit in the spring of 2006, God willing, to help where I can as the Lord leads. If anyone would like further information on the work there, you can email me at twwandhfw@hotmail.com 

Now is the time to remember the words of the other John 3:16.

“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (vv. 16-18).

Reconciliation

Do you agree with God?

The writer makes the shocking statement: "I don't care if I go to heaven." Can he convince you to agree?

One day, when speaking at a Bible camp, a nervous hush fell over the crowd when I said, "I don't care if I go to heaven." After a few moments, I put their minds at ease by adding, "I just want to be with the Lord Jesus."

You see, the gospel we often preach falls far short of the emphasis of the Bible. We tend to focus on the sinner being saved from sin and hell, and being made fit to live in heaven forever. Both are gloriously true, but they are actually mainly benefits that come from the greater truth of salvation: that we have been reconciled to God, and will never be separated from Christ. So we won't be in hell, since His personal presence is not there; and we will be in heaven, because that will be where He is enthroned, and we will be seated with Him.

Hear it from the final chapters of the Revelation:

"He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God...He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son...And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads" (Rev. 21:3, 7; 22:4).

"Christianity is not a religion; it's a relationship." Many times we make this statement as we share our faith with the lost. If it is true (and it is!), then it should shape our understanding and emphasis about the message of salvation. John summarized it by saying, "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the

Son of God hath not life" (1 Jn. 5:11f). So, having eternal life is not simply a gift from God that spares us from hell and grants us entrance into an everlasting home in heaven; it is to have the very life of the eternal Son of God take up permanent residence within us.

The Lord Jesus defined it as He prayed to the Father, "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (Jn. 17:3). This refers to a knowledge that is from the heart. It has an intimacy to it, as can be seen in our glimpses of the beautiful relationship between the Son and the Father, as Christ walked this earthly scene. He showed us what eternal life looks like; and it is a life that only He can live. This is why reconciliation is to be such a crucial aspect to the message of salvation and of the lives we live as believers.

Reconciliation is essentially a bringing about of agreement. It ends any conflict and brings peace. We can see this in practical examples, such as the work of a mediator in a dispute a company has between union members and the management, or between a husband and wife. Where there was disagreement, there is now agreement; balance and harmony is found. Things can then proceed in the way they should. On a much more profound level, this is what has happened in our salvation.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly...For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:1, 6, 10).

"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now



RECONCILIATION *continued*

hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight” (Col. 1:21f).

Note that the disagreement was seen by God as enmity, a hostility toward His holiness. This was not just in our deeds but in our minds. Likewise, if there is to be agreement, then the change will have to first take place in our minds—how we think, where our allegiance is, what our priorities are, what attitudes we allow, the lifestyle we choose, etc. Hence the exhortation in Romans 12:2, “*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*” The Lord is perfect, so the need for reconciliation is entirely ours—all of the change must occur in us. But the provision for reconciliation comes entirely from Him!

Salvation brings repentant sinners into a reconciled state, which is to show itself in our new life. The Lord spoke through Amos, “*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*” (Amos 3:3). There needs to be a deliberate plan for two to walk together. God is holy and righteous, but we are not. So we must change if we are to “*walk in [i.e. keep in step with] the Spirit*” (Gal 5:25) and “*walk [in a manner] worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing*” (Col 1:10).

Christ’s call on our lives is the same today as it was for the first disciples: “*Follow Me.*” If we are to succeed in this, we must deliberately go where He is going and at the pace He is setting. The fact that He has reconciled us to Himself makes it possible for us to be effective disciples. And it safeguards us from the two gutters on either side of the “*path of righteousness,*” namely legalism and liberalism. Christ subscribes to neither of these views, so those who agree with Him will be free of these traps, as well.

He also calls us to work with Him. “*Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls*” (Mt. 11:28-29). Now that we are reconciled, we have a focus for the work we

do. It isn’t just that we work for the Lord; it is a matter of working *with* the Lord. He tells us that the way this happens is to pay attention to His heart. The work He does is an extension of His character. Likewise, the work we do in His name is going to be right only if our hearts and minds are reconciled to His. It isn’t just a matter of doing right; it is a matter of being right—just like the One whose yoke we now share.

This reconciliation also shapes our fellowship. First, it affects our fellowship with the Lord Himself. Notice the appeal He makes to believers in Laodicea, who were not in agreement with Him: “*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me*” (Rev. 3:20). He is eager to unveil Himself to those who long to know His heart: “*The secret [intimate counsel] of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant*” (Ps. 25:14).

Then, after fellowship with the Lord, another benefit of this reconciliation with Him is that we end up having fellowship with all other believers (see 1 John). If we each agree with Him, then we will have agreement with each other.

Finally, having been reconciled by Him and to Him, we are to be on a mission as ambassadors to urge others likewise to walk with God. In fact this gospel appeal is called “*the ministry of reconciliation*” (2 Cor. 5:15-20). Fallen humans have a need to be reconciled to God. The Lord wants us to agree with Him so that we might enjoy His glory. So, when we call sinners to salvation, may our words and hearts be in agreement with the Lord’s. He wants us to tell them, “*Be reconciled to God.*” 🗣️



We are to be on a mission as ambassadors to urge others likewise to walk with God.

Kinds of Sanctification

Rich in meaning, sanctification is the pathway to true happiness.

Distinguishing the various aspects of sanctification is key to a true understanding of the doctrine.

The word sanctify means “to set apart.” There is a whole family of words—sanctify, sanctification, saint, holy, holiness, consecrate, consecration—that all have the same root meaning. Very often sanctification means the process of separating from common or unclean uses to divine service. But not always. If you just remember that to sanctify means to set apart, you will have a definition that fits all cases.

In the Old Testament God sanctified the seventh day (Gen. 2:3). The firstborn of both men and animals were sanctified to the Lord (Ex. 13:2). The priests were told to consecrate themselves to the Lord (Ex. 19:22). Mt. Sinai was sanctified (Ex. 19:23). The Tabernacle and all its furniture were sanctified (Ex. 40:9). In

Isaiah 66:17, we read that the people sanctified themselves to worship idols.

In the New Testament, sanctification is used primarily in regard to people. However, Jesus said that the Temple sanctifies the gold on it, and that the altar sanctifies the gift on it (Mt. 23:17, 19). Paul taught that when we give thanks for our food, it is consecrated by the Word of God and prayer (1 Tim. 4:5).

With regard to the sanctification of persons, God consecrated Christ and sent Him into the world (Jn. 10:36); that is, the Father set His Son apart for the work of saving us from our sins. Jesus consecrated Himself (Jn. 17:19); in other words, He set Himself apart in order to intercede for His people.

There is a sense in which even certain

unbelievers are sanctified: “*For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband*” (1 Cor. 7:14a). This means that the unbelieving partner is set apart in a position of privilege by having a Christian spouse praying for his or her salvation. And there is a sense in which Christ should be sanctified by all believers. “*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts...*” (1 Pet. 3:15). We sanctify Him by setting Him apart as undisputed Sovereign in our lives.

In addition to the above, however, there are four other important kinds of sanctification which we should distinguish in our study of the New Testament. These are called pre-conversion sanctification, positional sanctification, progressive sanctification, and perfect sanctification.

Pre-Conversion Sanctification

Long before a person is born again, the Holy Spirit has been working in his life, setting him apart from the world and wooing him to Christ. Paul realized that he had been set apart before he was born (Gal. 1:15). In 2 Thessalonians 2:13, the apostle reminds the Thessalonians that there were three steps in their salvation (see also 1 Pet. 1:2):

1. Their selection by God.
2. Their sanctification by the Spirit.
3. Their belief in the truth.

In eternity God chose us in Christ (see Eph. 1:4). In time the Holy Spirit set us apart. Then we obeyed the gospel. As soon as we did, the value of the shed blood of Christ was credited to our account. But the point to notice here is that the sanctification Peter speaks of is a kind that takes place before a person is born again.



KINDS OF SANCTIFICATION *continued*

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Positional Sanctification

The moment a person is born again, he becomes positionally sanctified. This means that as far as his standing before God is concerned, he is perfectly set apart to God from the world because he is *“in Christ.”* In a very real sense Christ Himself is his sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30).

Every true believer is a saint; he has been separated to the Lord. This is his position. Thus in 1 Corinthians 1:2 all the Christians in the local church in Corinth are described as *“sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.”* The Corinthian saints weren't always very saintly! They tolerated scandalous sin in the fellowship (1 Cor. 5:1-2). They went to law against one another (1 Cor. 6:1). They had some teachers who denied the Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12-14). But it was still true of them that as far as their position was concerned, they were sanctified in Christ.

Now let's look at some of the passages that deal with positional sanctification. In Acts 20:32, the expression *“all those who are sanctified”* means all believers. In Acts 26:18 the Lord described His people as those *“who are sanctified by faith in Me.”* The Corinthians are described as having been *“washed...sanctified...justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God”* (1 Cor. 6:11). And the writer to the Hebrews reminds us that *“we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”* (Heb. 10:10). *“For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified”* (Heb. 10:14, KJV).

Positional sanctification is also indicated at times by the use of the word holy. Thus in Colossians 3:12, when Paul addresses the Christians as holy, he is referring to their standing before God.

Progressive Sanctification

While there are many scriptures which say that all Christians are sanctified, there are many others which say that they should be sanctified. If we fail to distinguish the kinds of sanctification, we can find this very confusing, even apparently contradictory.

Progressive or practical sanctification refers to what we should be in our everyday lives. We should be living lives of separation to God from sin and evil. Saints should be becoming more saintly all the time.

It was this aspect of sanctification that the Lord Jesus referred to in John 17:17, when He prayed for His own, *“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”*

The believer's cooperation is involved in this (2 Tim. 2:21). Wherever you find exhortations concerning sanctification or holiness you can be sure that the subject is practical sanctification. Thus Paul urged the Corinthians: *“...let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”* (2 Cor. 7:1). And in the same vein Peter wrote, *“as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct”* (1 Pet. 1:15).

One particular form of practical sanctification concerns separation from immorality: *“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor”* (1 Thess. 4:3-4).

How does a Christian become more holy, more like the Lord Jesus? The answer is found in 2 Corinthians 3:18: *“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”*


Practical holiness comes from being occupied with the Lord. It's a principle in life that we become like what we worship. The more we meditate on Christ, the more we become like Him. The Holy Spirit works this marvelous transformation—not all at once, but from one degree of glory to another!

Perfect Sanctification

This aspect of sanctification is still future for the believer. When he sees the Savior face-to-face he will be forever set apart from all sin and defilement. He will be morally like the Lord Jesus—perfectly sanctified.

This is what we read about in Colossians 1:22, *“...in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.”*

In that day the Church will have its ultimate sanctification: *“...that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish”* (Eph. 5:27).

Other passages describe our perfect sanctification without mentioning the word. John, for instance, says: *“...we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is”* (1 Jn. 3:2b). And Jude reminds us that our Lord will present us *“...faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy”* (Jude 24b). 

The Sovereignty of God

Whenever the subject is discussed in Scripture, it always leads to worship, not warfare.

This article shows the biblical balance between God's will and man's.

The blazing African sun beat down on the crowded Arab market as women busily bartered with the merchants. The bustling walkways were lined with storekeepers selling their wares, as the children played nearby. The air was filled with the pungent smell of spices, and the confusing din of a thousand voices. Amid these dusty streets teeming with people, a pregnant woman began to slowly make her way across a wide thoroughfare. Suddenly, there was a great commotion, and in an instant, an out-of-control wagon, being pulled by a team of horses in full gallop, raced through the marketplace. Without warning, the horses trampled the helpless woman with tremendous force. Immediately a crowd gathered. The driver, now realizing what he had done, brought the horses to an abrupt stop. While looking at the woman lying dead on the ground, he said with callous indifference, "It was the will of Allah," and continued on his way.

To many, this account describes their view of the sovereignty of God. To them, God's actions are arbitrary, capricious, and often unjust. Their attitude is "whatever will be, will be." No matter what happens, it is God's will. This is the fatalistic view of God. Such a God will be feared, but how can He be loved? If He cannot be loved, how can He be trusted?

Sovereignty and the Attributes of God

Thankfully, the Bible does not present such a view of God's sovereignty. The Bible reveals God as both infinitely all-powerful and infinitely good. God's goodness, justice, mercy, grace, and His numerous other attributes meet together to form the righteous and holy sovereign actions of God. God's sovereignty may sometimes involve testing in the form of

calamity and trials, but never without love, faithfulness, and compassion. His sovereign will may appear for the moment to be without purpose, yet the ways of God are always perfect. He is a God whom we can trust, love, and worship for His sovereign will.

While sovereignty is surely to be believed by all who love sound doctrine, it must not be understood to be exercised in conflict with God's attributes, such as love, justice, truth, and immutability. Some have erred in this respect and have raised sovereignty to such a level that all the attributes of God become secondary, thereby causing discord in the nature of God. The sovereignty of God can never be exercised at the expense of His divine nature, which is love (1 Jn. 4:8). Concerning this conflict, Dr. James Orr, general editor of the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, writes, "Calvin exalts the sovereignty of God, and this is right, but errs in placing his root-ideas of God in the sovereign will rather than in love."¹

Sovereignty and the Goodness of God

The biblical principle that God is good and does good applies to His sovereign actions. God's nature and His holy purposes cannot be divorced; for God will not act contrary to His holy nature. Scripture reveals that God's mercy, goodness, grace, and compassion all undergird His sovereign purposes and will. Abraham echoed this very principle, when he said, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25). Even when affliction and suffering are God's divine will, it too is ruled by His "compassion and unfailing love." Jeremiah the prophet explains, "Though He brings grief, He will show compassion, so great is His unfailing love. For He does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the



THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD *continued*



children of men” (Lam. 3:32-33). Theologians have called this linking of God’s sovereign rule with God’s infinite goodness the doctrine of “providence.” Providence is divine care, sustenance, and love, and His sovereign rule over creation for His glory and the good of man.

The two-fold goal of providence is the glory of God and the good of His people. God never pursues His glory at the expense of the good of His people, nor does He ever seek our good at the expense of His glory. He has designed His eternal purpose so that His glory and our good are inseparably yoked together.

Divine Sovereignty and the Wisdom of God

All God’s actions are also rooted in His infinite wisdom. God’s wisdom enables Him to direct every act that occurs upon the world stage into a perfect plan that accomplishes His divine purpose. God is the master of every situation. Man can be frustrated by circumstances outside of his control, but this is never true of God. There is never a situation or difficulty which can ever frustrate the wisdom of God. His sovereign actions are advanced by His unbounded omnipotence and ruled by His infinite wisdom. The Psalmist has said, “*Great is our God, and of great power: His understanding is infinite*” (Ps. 147:5). His ways are infinitely perfect. No act of God is flawed or suspect. No decision of God can ever be improved. We may not understand the ways of God, yet they remain rooted in perfect wisdom. It is not our place to raise doubts about our “*God only wise,*” but rather to bow in worshipful submission. The psalmist writes of the works of God, “*O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches*” (Ps. 104:24).

The Biblical Scope of Divine Sovereignty

The doctrine that God is sovereign in His created universe is a truth that must be believed by all Christians. That God is sovereign means that He is the highest and greatest, exalted above all. He is omnipotent and controls everything, working everything according to His eternal plan and purpose (Eph. 1:11). The Bible states that God is eternal, self-existent, self-sufficient, unchanging, all-powerful, all-knowing and He alone stands unequalled, above all. “*For Thou, Lord, are high above all the earth: Thou art exalted far above all gods*” (Ps. 97:9). Since God is infinite, His rule must be absolute. His rule must involve

total control of everything in His creation—every circumstance, every situation, every event. God’s sovereignty means that He either directly causes or consciously permits all that happens in human history. God claims full responsibility for establishing and removing human rulers. God, according to His holy character, has the right to do those things that please Him (Ps. 115:3).

Yet we must never forget that those things that please Him most are marked by love, mercy, and justice. God is in complete control, and yet He does not manipulate people like puppets. He gives them the dignity and freedom to make decisions and holds them responsible for those choices. Those decisions may bring to pass untold misery and suffering, yet God allows it. However, through divine omniscience, God knows every choice that man would make, and through divine sovereignty He takes those choices and uses them to serve His purposes. In this way, God has complete control over every decision and action, and man has the freedom to make decisions.

However, where divine wisdom deems it best, He will overrule man’s decisions in order to accomplish His own matchless purposes. Only an omnipotent God can take man’s choices and the suffering that follows and cause them to ultimately serve His sovereign and perfect will. God does not always allow man’s sinful actions to run their full and natural evil course, but intervenes and overrules. Moreover, we should not question God’s sovereignty, but rather yield to the good and perfect will of God.

The Scope of Man’s Free Will

However, some have wrongly concluded that if God is absolutely sovereign, then man does not have a free will. It is thought that man can only act inasmuch as God will allow him to act, and that man must act only as God desires. Therefore, according to this view, man cannot resist the will and desires of God. This view may strike us as biblical and logical; however, Scripture does not seem to support this view.

Moreover, Scripture emphasizes that God has sovereignly granted to man the ability to make free choices. This is not man usurping God’s role in the world, but this is God’s sovereign design and purpose for man. Man could not make free choices except that it was given by God. This principle is stated by our Lord Himself in His interview with Pilate before the crucifixion. Pilate

charged the Lord, “Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and have power to release You?” Jesus answered, “You could have no power at all against Me, except it were given to you from above...” (Jn. 19:10-11). Pilate thought that his ability to make free decisions was a personal right. Our Lord rightly corrected Pilate and stated that the ability to make free choices is from God: “given from above.”

Frequently through Scripture we see man acting in defiance of God’s desires. This ability is granted to man from God. Solomon in the book of Proverbs declares, “For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof” (Prov. 1:29f). God has not determined and caused all things to come to pass as they do. God exercises sovereign control in the world; but within this control, He permits certain events and purposes others.

It is of great importance to carefully distinguish between these two aspects of God’s sovereignty. For this reason, the sinful consequences of man’s will must never be attributed to God. The Word of God clearly states that all sinful temptations, the acts of the flesh, wars, lust, killings, and the misery that results because of sin are not caused by God, but by the free choices of man (Jas. 4:1).

The Word of God carefully sets forth both the infinite sovereignty of God and human responsibility. God is sovereign, and yet in this infinite sovereignty, God has granted to man a free will. To detract from either of these truths is to detract from the fullness of the Word of God.


A proper biblical balance between the two must be rigorously sought and maintained. Respected author A. W. Tozer strikes this proper biblical balance,

God sovereignly decreed that man should be free to exercise moral choice, and man from the beginning has fulfilled that decree by making his choice between good and evil. When he chooses to do evil, he does not thereby countervail the sovereign will of God but fulfills it, inasmuch as the eternal decree decided not which choice the man should make but that he should be free to make it. If in His absolute freedom God has willed to give limited freedom, who is there to stay His hand or say, “What doest Thou?” Man’s will is free because God is sovereign. A God less than sovereign could not bestow moral freedom upon His creatures. He would be afraid to do so.”²

Dr. Norman Geisler adds further clarity, writing,

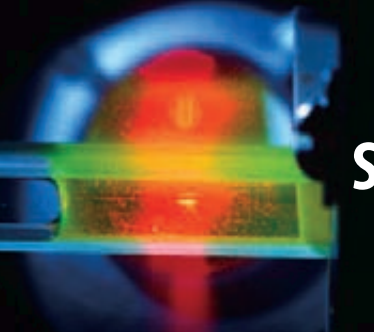
“Human freedom is not contrary to God’s sovereignty. God sovereignly gave man his freedom by creating him a free creature, and God sovereignly continues to allow man to exercise his freedom moment by moment in existence. Thus the sovereignty of God is not thwarted by human freedom but glorified by human freedom. For God gave man free will, He sustains man so he can act freely, and he brings about all his purposes without violating man’s free will.”³

Scholar and gifted preacher C.H. Spurgeon draws together the importance of these two lines of truth: “Man is a free agent, a responsible agent, so that his sin is his own willful sin and it lies fully with him and never with God, and yet at the same time God’s purposes are fulfilled, and His will is done even by demons and corrupt men—I cannot comprehend it: without hesitation I believe it, and rejoice so to do...I worship a God I never expect to comprehend.”⁴

Finally, the doctrine of the sovereignty of God must never provide man with excuses. Systems of theology may give reasons to do so, but not the Word of God. No man can deny full responsibility for his actions, claiming that he was irresistibly led by God; for God never does violence to the free will which He has graciously given to man. God’s sovereignty and man’s freedom dwell side by side in such a way that the former does not force itself upon the latter; but in some cases He does overrule for His highest eternal purpose. In a future day we will see that mankind, in complete freedom, in uncoerced decisions, has been working out God’s eternal plan. How can this be brought to pass? It is only through a sovereign God characterized by infinite power, wisdom, love, and goodness. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!” (Rom. 11:33-36). 

Endnotes

1. James Orr, *The Progress of Dogma*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), p. 292
2. A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, (New York, NY: Harpers and Row Publishers, 1961), p. 118
3. Norman Geisler, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986), p. 429
4. C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 16, (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1907), p. 501



The Fingerprint of God


With everything God touches He leaves something of His glory behind.

I recognize faces easily, although names are sometimes slow to come to mind. Just ask my children. Each is a unique person, and though I recognize them, I still occasionally mix up their names. What I never forget is that they are separate and distinct persons from me. Each is genetically complete, clearly human, and very much alive, both physically and spiritually. Some have suggested that personhood also depends on the presence of brain function, age from conception, or even location (inside or outside the womb). The definition of who is, and who is not, a person is literally a life and death distinction for unborn children. Since January of 1973, some 33 years ago now, millions of children have failed to meet the legal definition of personhood and have lost their lives from a horrible “choice” made by, of all people, their own mothers.

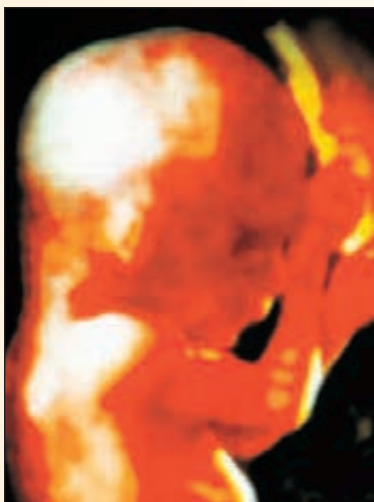
The biological facts are well known. The human egg and sperm reproductive cells are both alive, but each is an incomplete cell because each contains half the normal amount of genetic material as a regular body cell. It is only when the sperm cell penetrates the outer defensive layer of the egg and the two cells fuse during fertilization that a genetically unique, diploid, human cell is formed. At that moment, a human genetic profile or fingerprint is established which is different from either parent and which never changes no matter how many trillion cells develop from this first cell. Fertilization, or conception, is the first moment a new, genetically unique human life can be recognized.

Even more amazing is the evidence, developed in

the past four decades, that the mother’s immune system recognizes the growing embryo as a “foreign” object which should be rejected—just as a heart or skin transplant from another person would be rejected unless anti-rejection drugs were taken. But the growing baby, despite being recognized through its histocompatibility proteins as foreign, is not attacked as if it were just some tissue graft. Scientists call this situation an “immunological paradox” because mothers develop potentially lethal antibody and cell-mediated immune responses against the growing child but the response does not damage the infant.¹ Instead, during pregnancy, a temporary state of immunological “tolerance” or protection develops which lasts until delivery of the child. The body recognizes the developing child as if it were an invading bacterial infection or an organ graft, but instead of removing this threat, the body protects this new life.

It has been said that life began just once and since then is just passed on. The biological facts are clear that, for the individual, this point of “passing” is the moment of conception. Conception creates a new life, a new person. It is equally clear that God has finely and elegantly designed the mother’s immune system to recognize, but also protect, the growing new life within her until birth. This is not an immunological paradox. It is the fingerprint of God. —MICHAEL G. WINDHEUSER, PH.D. 

1 A.L. Mellor and D.H. Munn. Immunology at the maternal-fetal interface: Lessons for T cell tolerance and suppression. *Annual Review of Immunology* 2000; 18:367-391.



Grace at Work

A lost Dollar is found.

My wife Linda and I live in the heart of East Texas, in the small town of Golden. The Lord has blessed us with six children. Our oldest son is married, and the other five still live at home. We are in fellowship at Golden Bible Chapel. How thankful we are for that precious group of believers!

I was blessed to have grown up in a loving home with my parents and two sisters. As far back as I can remember, we went to a little Baptist Church where the gospel was clearly preached. I made a profession of faith when I was nine years old, but I never really had assurance of salvation.

Even at a very young age though, I had a desire to preach; so at the age of fourteen, I preached my first sermon (it was about seven minutes long). Still, I had no assurance.

A few years later I met Linda, who introduced me to the assemblies. I knew all the right words to say, and convinced the folks there that I was a believer. Linda and I married in January of 1977. I was speaking some at the little assembly, but still I didn't have peace. One night a visiting preacher was speaking at the chapel. I can only remember one thing that he said in his sermon, "If we could look into one another's hearts, it would scare us to death."

At that moment, I realized that God could see what was in my heart. A few days later, I was reading 1 John 5:12, "*He that hath the Son hath life, he that hath not the Son hath not life.*" I told the Lord that if I hadn't been saved as a boy, I wanted to be saved right then. Oh, what assurance I had!

Soon after that, I met Leonard Lindsted. How I thank the Lord for that dear brother, as well as other godly men who disciplined me and encouraged me to study the Word. What a blessing it was when I was invited to go along with some of them to hold gospel meetings! The Lord had placed a desire in my heart

(Left to Right): daughters Elizabeth, Hannah & Rachel, wife Linda, Grady, sons Joel and Joshua (in front).



Texas Bluebonnets

to be in "full-time work," but it was not until August of 1997 that He led us into that area of ministry. He has given us many opportunities to work with children at Vacation Bible Schools and at camps. We have also had the privilege of visiting many small assemblies. What a joy it is to meet other believers of like precious faith!

And what a joy it has been to share the gospel. But such work is the portion of every believer, not just those in "full-time work."

The story in 2 Kings 7 gives us a beautiful illustration of sharing the gospel message.

The Promise

There was a great famine in Samaria. The Word of the Lord came through the prophet Elisha in verse 1, "*Tomorrow about this time, shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel.*" And in verse 16 the promise is fulfilled. The people went out and spoiled the tents of the Syrians.

God's Word is filled with promises. There are the promises of the first coming of our Saviour, which were fulfilled at His birth. And there are the promises of His return. In 1 John 2:25, we read, "*This is the*

GRACE AT WORK *continued*

promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life." But the promise that I would like to look at is in Psalm 126:5-6, *"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."*

We are not seeing many souls saved because our eyes are dry. How long has it been since we shed tears for the unsaved? If we sow in tears, we will reap in joy.

Verse 6 speaks of the precious seed. The seed is the Word of God. *"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God"* (Rom. 10:17). God promises that He will bless His Word. His promise to the one who sows is that he will rejoice, bringing his sheaves with him. What a wonderful thing it is to see someone pass from death unto life and become a new creature in Christ! May we go forth sowing that precious seed.

The Provision

The Lord made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots and horses. They left their tents and fled for their lives. When the four lepers came to the Syrian camp, they found an abundance of food, silver, and gold.

Just as God made a wonderful provision for these starving Samaritans, He has made provision for those who are starving spiritually. In John 6:35, Jesus said, *"I am the bread of life; he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst."* The price has been paid. *"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin"* (1 Jn. 1:7). Christ took our place on Calvary's cross. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved"* (Acts 16:31).


The Proclamation

The lepers said one to another, *"We do not well; This is a day of good tidings."* They pro-

claimed these tidings, so that the whole city was saved from starvation.

Luke 2:10 tells us of the *"good tidings of great joy."* The birth of Christ was proclaimed by the angelic host to lowly shepherds. What a glorious message it was, *"For unto you is born this day, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord."* We must proclaim the good tidings of our blessed Saviour. Let's not put it off. *"Behold today is the day of salvation."* *"The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Pet. 3:9).

What a privilege you and I have to be stewards of the grand and glorious gospel! Colossians 1:15 says that Christ is the image of the invisible God. The invisible is made visible in the person of Jesus Christ. 1 Timothy 1:17 speaks of the invisible and only wise God. No one could see Him. No one could approach Him, but 1 Timothy 3:16 says, *"Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh."* God became man so that He might take our place on Calvary's cross. He has come into the world to save sinners.

We need a renewed vision of hell. We must realize that precious souls are dropping into a lost eternity. May we spread the good tidings of Jesus Christ, a gospel which is simply glorious and gloriously simple! *"The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few."* 

Mike Donahue, a member of GNOM, shares the good news with precious young souls.



May we spread the good tidings of Jesus Christ, a gospel which is simply glorious and gloriously simple!

GOOD NEWS ON THE MOVE is heading for TEXAS and hopes to be in the GOLDEN/TYLER area soon. Please continue to pray for protection from the Enemy and the Lord's rich blessing on the team.

Eternal Security

Probably the greatest doctrinal controversy in the worldwide church today.

Paul states, “For I am persuaded, that... [Nothing] ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8:38-39)

Occasionally, one hears the assertion that we become Christians when we “decide for Christ”; that is, when we decide to trust Him. Therefore, the argument runs, we may subsequently decide to cease to trust Him. We decide to remain Christians, they claim, and we may decide to give up that position. This is a stark presentation of an extreme form of a faulty understanding of conversion. Who then is eternally secure, if anyone can be? What happens at conversion?

When the Lord Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about receiving eternal life, He introduced the subject by a reference to being born again. He explained that eternal life would be entered upon by faith in the Son of God. But this is only one side of what happens, for the new birth He

referred to is a work of God through His Spirit. Paul gives us the theology of this: believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 4:30), the guarantee of good things to come, for we are thus marked as God’s property. This is in view of the future day when we shall experience the fullness of redemption. Before He went to the

cross, the Lord Jesus explained to His disciples that He would send “another comforter,” the Holy Spirit, who would be “with” them and “remain in” them. So believers are not only initially sealed with His Spirit, but also indwelt by the Spirit as a continuing reality. Paul says in Romans 8:9 that every believer has the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Christ, as Paul calls Him.

In Romans 8 again, believers are seen as being “in Christ,” and their position is expressed in the context of a continuum reaching back to God’s foreknowledge, continuing through justification by faith, and climaxing in glory. At the end of that chapter, Paul declares that nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

But this may seem to be high theory removed from our daily experience of ups and downs, times of doubt and failure punctuated by times of spiritual exhilaration. Let us look at what the Lord Jesus says of the ongoing experience of those whom He describes as His sheep.

He describes in John 10 how He brings them into safety. At verse 9 He says He is the door; that is, He keeps safe those who answer His call to come into His fold for safety: “I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, He shall be saved.” His fold is secure against all predators, for He is the door, as an eastern shepherd would normally be in a sheepfold in the wilderness. But that is only one aspect of the relationship between the Shepherd and His sheep.

Our security in Christ, the forgiveness of all our sins, is based on what He claims in verse 11: “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.” We received forgiveness in the first instance because He laid down His life for us in His sacrifice on the cross; we answered His call and entered His fold. And that sacrifice has lasting efficacy.

But there is more in salvation than initial forgiveness. In verse 9, He adds that the saved person “shall go in and out and find pasture.” John 10 is rich in teaching to help us understand our privileged place in Christ. He gives us freedom in our life of following Him—we “go in and out.” A sheepfold is not an internment



ETERNAL SECURITY *continued*

camp! Moreover, He gives us satisfaction—we “*find pasture.*” He has come that we might have “*life...more abundantly.*” He has come to enrich us, not to impoverish us. All of this presupposes that at conversion we embarked on a life of association with Him, of following Him.

See how comprehensive this relationship is, as outlined in John 10? We hear His voice, for we are called by the gospel to a life of obedience to Him. Peter describes this new life in 1 Peter 2:25: “*Ye were as sheep going astray; but ye are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*” Obedience to His voice brings us, as David puts it in Psalm 23, to green pastures and still waters. It is significant that Peter more than once expresses salvation as being through “*obedience*” to the gospel.

Another important expression which is used of this relationship between our Lord and us is, “*He leadeth me.*” These are not anonymous, dumb creatures who must be driven whither they know not. He calls them by name, He says in John 10, and leads them out. He knows where the best pastures are and they trust His skill to lead. He knows them and they know His voice and know Him. So they are preserved from their enemies, who would seek to seduce them.

His summary of this relationship in John 10:27-30 is perhaps the clearest statement of our eternal security. Just think of the detail: we hear His voice; He knows us; we follow Him; He gives us eternal life, and we shall never perish. No one shall pluck us from His hand. No one shall pluck us from His Father’s hand.

It must be stressed that this eternal security is seen as depending on the Saviour and His work for us. Scripture makes it clear that salvation brings us into a new life of glad obedience to Christ. We dare not proudly claim that we are eternally secure if our lives give no evidence of that change which He patiently but firmly works in our attitudes, our values, our aims, our everything. Read again 1 Peter 2:21-25 and the whole of John 10. Of course we all stumble repeatedly and need restoring grace, but these verses face us


squarely with the nature of the normal Christian life.

But someone may be worried about, for example, Judas. Did he not lose his salvation? John 13 seems to make his situation clear. In verse 10, the Lord Jesus refers to initial salvation as a bath, in contrast to subsequent restoration, which He calls foot-washing. The bath is once for all; the foot-washing is repeated. He reassured Peter there that the bath of regeneration needs no repetition, so that we are “*clean*

every whit.” Then He said that not all of them were clean, and verse 13 explains that He was referring to Judas, who had never had the bath of regeneration. In John 6:64 we are told the Lord Jesus “*knew from the beginning who they were who believed not, and who should betray Him.*” Was Judas perhaps in the Lord’s mind when He told in Matthew 7:22 of wonder-workers who will one day find out that He never knew them?

But what about those who, in the later life of the apostle John, “*went out from us*” (1 Jn. 2:19), and presumably taught heresy? John explains that they went out because “*they were not of us.*” In other words, they were not genuine.

Some worry is caused by those referred to early in Hebrews 6. On the surface they seem to have been saved people, yet in verse 8 they seem to be described as being “*nigh unto cursing.*” The writer goes on quickly to assure the readers that he is “*persuaded better things*” of them “*and things that accompany [or are near to] salvation.*” He is at pains to establish that people may go a long way towards the crucial step into salvation, and yet draw back.

The same applies to those in Hebrews 10 who draw back, in contrast to “*those who believe to the saving of the soul.*” We start and continue in faith, for He keeps us. 



Christ’s summary of this relationship in John 10:27-30 is perhaps the clearest statement of our eternal security.

FINALLY, BRETHREN by Jabe Nicholson

Leonardo Salaz and
Mitch Roth sharing the
gospel on campus.



Seven monosyllables,
but what ringing
blows of the
blacksmith's hammer
to reshape our iron
wills when taken in
the context of
Scripture's
uncompromising
truth.

So, Go, To, Lo, Ho, Do, No

Big ideas in two-letter words. How can we miss the point?

John 3:16 is the gospel in a sentence, twenty-five words that bridge the gulf between a loving God and lost humanity. Yet in this wonderful array of Bible words, preachers often stress the little word “so.” “*For God so-o-o loved the world,*” they intone. And still the question lingers: How could such a God love such a world as this? It was no mere sentiment that moved His heart. The giver-God gave until He could give no more. He *so* loved the world.

That massive *so* inspired a mighty *go*. At the highest level, the question, “*Who will go for us?*” was answered by Isaiah’s Lord. The One who told us to “*Go into all the world*” knew what He was asking. He made a journey much, much farther than any of us have been called to take.


Which reminds me of a story. I was telling veteran goer Ed Harlow (at that time in his 90s) about an old man who, at 85, had professed Christ as Saviour. Getting up off his knees, he said with passion, “I want to go to the Muslims in the Middle East with the gospel!”

Ed listened for the conclusion of the story, but I had already finished. “Well, did he?” he asked. Warm sentiment is fine, high intentions are noble, *but did he go?*

Since we all are to take the gospel, where is it we are to go? Ah, the little word “to.” “*To,*” said the Man with a heart big enough for all, “*to every creature.*” The little preposition, worked hard in daily life—“to work,” “to the store”—was never used more nobly. Go, said the Saviour, to towns and cities, to your neighbor and to the uttermost part of the earth, to highways and byways. Go until there is no palace, no prison, no house, no hut, no adult, no child, to which you have not gone. And this “to” is linked with the “lo.” If we go “*to every creature*” the Lord has promised, “*Lo, I am with you*”—and then adds another exhaustive “to”—“*to the end of the age.*”

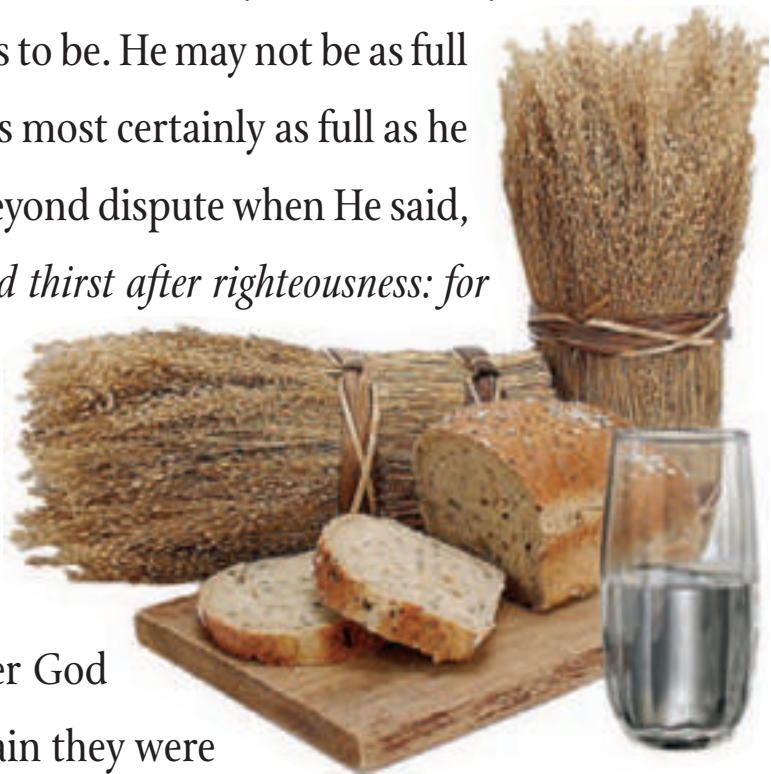
And “*Ho*”? Found in one of the great OT gospel appeals (Isa. 55:1), we read, “*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters...*” From a root pronounced something like “ahahh a-haw,” it is intended to express pain or passion. The word is also translated O!, oh!, ah!, ha!, alas!, and woe! Whatever the case, it is a reminder that the message we proclaim is something that ought to move us deeply. Like John, we should be both burning and shining lights. If the good news touches no more than our intellects, how shall we expect it to reach sinners’ hearts?

Do. “*If you know these things,*” said the Master, “*happy are you if you do them.*” Seminars, books, conferences are fine, but now it is time to actually *do* something. “*Lord,*” we need to cry out with every intention of immediately responding, “*what wilt THOU have ME to DO?*”

And what about “no”? Ah, there’s the rub. We define ourselves by what we say “no” to. We cannot, should not, do everything. In a self-indulgent society, we need to light again the altar’s fire and fuel it with all those legitimate (or illegitimate) things that clog our ability to do what we know He wants us to do. “*No man can serve two masters...Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body than raiment?*” (Mt. 6:24-25). Whatever that means practically, I’m a long way from it, and need a big pile of “nos” to those other masters to even get me close. How about you? Would today be a good day to restart the fire? 

AS HOLY AS YOU WANT TO BE

It may be said without qualification that every man is as holy and as full of the Spirit as he wants to be. He may not be as full as he wishes he were, but he is most certainly as full as he wants to be. Our Lord placed this beyond dispute when He said, *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”* Hunger and thirst are physical sensations which, in their acute stages, may become real pain. It has been the experience of countless seekers after God that when their desires became a pain they were suddenly and wonderfully filled. The problem is not to persuade God to fill us, but to want God sufficiently to permit Him to do so. The average Christian is so cold and so contented with His wretched condition that there is no vacuum of desire into which the blessed Spirit can rush in satisfying fullness.



—A. W. Tozer from *Born After Midnight*, p. 8