

G R A C E

... it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace ... Hebrews 13:9

Issue 159 July-August, 2009

Studies in Galatians—Part Twenty-Seven

John G. Reisinger

We now come to a section of application that has profound implications. Paul continues his discussion of what it means to walk in the Spirit as opposed to walking in the flesh. We will learn a vital truth in these three verses.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another (Gal. 5:24-26, KJV).

Verse 24 is a fact experienced by every child of God. Crucifying the flesh, in the sense Paul uses that phrase in verse 24, is essential to conversion. Every true Christian has “crucified the flesh.” That does not mean the Christian no longer sins.

Verse 25 is a positive exhortation based on the fact stated in verse 24. Paul is saying, “Let’s prove we really have eternal life, which is living in the Spirit, by the way we live. Let’s “walk in the Spirit” in our day-to-day life and demonstrate the fruits of the Spirit. All Christians, without exception, “live in the Spirit.”

They ‘live in the Spirit,’ or have spiritual life, because they have been born of the Spirit. Paul is not describing some “super” Christians who live in the Spirit as opposed to second-class Christians who know

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Become What You Are

A. Blake White

The Jewish people viewed resurrection in terms of a large scale event that would not occur until the end of history when their covenant God would restore the world and raise humanity to life, some to eternal life and others to eternal destruction. What they did not expect was that one man would be raised in the middle of history as the first-fruits. Christ’s resurrection was the first day of the new creation. Now, new covenant Christians live during the overlap of the ages, between the two comings of Christ. The age to come has broken into the present with the resurrection of Jesus. Oscar Cullman helpfully compared the Christian life with living between D-Day and V-Day during World War II. The allies invaded Normandy on June, 6, 1944. It was called D-day and it was the decisive battle

of the war. The beachhead was established and everyone knew the allies were the victors. But the final overthrow of the Nazi regime wouldn’t occur until May of 1945. After D-day, there was never any question as to how the war would end, but there was still lots of fighting to be done. There was no way Hitler would give in. V-Day was guaranteed, but there would still be fighting, suffering, death, and agony. In fact, more people would die after D-Day than before, but the outcome was never in doubt. This is where we live as new covenant Christians. The victory has occurred at the cross and resurrection of Israel’s Messiah. Christ has guaranteed our forgiveness of sins and God’s new world, but we still have to wage war and fight sin in

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nothing of life in the Spirit. The whole paragraph is addressed to “those that are Christ’s,” or all Christians. However, all Christians do not ‘walk in the Spirit’ with the some consistency. Living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit are two different things.

Verse 26 is a negative exhortation. We are here told what not to do. We must not be “desirous of vainglory.” Vainglory is another word for conceit. Let us not become conceited. Conceited people think too highly of themselves. It is impossible for a conceited person to have a God honoring relationship with another person. If you think you are better than the other person, you will find a way to challenge them and demonstrate your superiority. If you feel the other person is superior to you, then you will envy them and stay out of their way. The moment you become conceited one of two things will automatically follow. You will either “provoke,” meaning challenge, or else you will “envy.” Either provoking or envying must inevitably follow a conceited attitude.

The great lesson in verse 26 is this: Your attitude to yourself totally controls your attitude to other people. That is not “good psychology,” that is biblical, Pauline theology. 1) Your attitude toward yourself determines your attitude toward others, and 2) your attitude toward God determines your attitude toward yourself. If you are conceited or self-righteous, you

are not thinking straight about yourself. You are not viewing yourself as God views you in his Word. When you are not honestly facing the truth about yourself as it is revealed in Scripture then you will automatically act in one of two, and both wrong ways. You will either provoke or envy other people depending on how strong or weak you perceive them to be. If you feel stronger than the other person you will find a way to challenge them and prove how superior you are. If you feel they are stronger than you, then you will avoid any situation where a challenge shows up your weakness. You will envy these people and try to find ways to see them criticized. You will try to “bring them down a notch.” We will work this out in a moment.

The first thing we must do is compare Galatians 5:24 with Romans 6:6. There are both similarities and differences in the two texts. It is vital that we understand these two texts and their relationship to each other.

First, both texts speak of the flesh being crucified.

Second, both use the aorist tense for the word *crucify*. This tense is used to denote a ‘once and for all action’. An action that is described with an aorist tense never gets bigger or smaller and never happens to the same person again. It never changes; it is done once and for all. It is the difference between something going “boom,” once and for all; and “boooooom,” starting and growing; and “boom-boom-boom,” happening again and again. Romans 5:1 is an illustration. “Therefore having been justified by faith...” You are just as justified the moment you trust Christ as you will be the day you die. You are just as justified the day you are converted as the Apostle Paul was at the height of his Christian life. Likewise, the act of crucifying the flesh in both Galatians 5:24 and Romans 6:6 is a once

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TOTAL DEPRAVITY, TOTAL GRACE

The Gospel in Ephesians 2:1-5

Steve West

The privileges of the gospel that are freely given to those in Christ are beyond comprehension. In the heavenly realms, believers have *every* spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Before the universe was created by God we were elected to be holy and blameless in the sight of God, the only one whose sight really matters (1:4). We were predestined to be adopted right into his family through Jesus, and this was not done grudgingly, but in full accordance with God's desire, pleasure, and will (1:5). These acts that God has done result in the revelation of the glory of his grace, and this in turn results in praise and adoration (1:6). God's super-abounding grace has been richly poured out on us, coupled with the gift of wisdom and understanding so that we can know how to respond to his grace, and live in light of it (1:7-8). As a special bonus to living in the new covenant age, we also have the immense privilege of knowing the mystery (i.e., that which could not be inferred or discovered by human thought, but which must come from special and direct divine revelation), that absolutely everything in the universe is made coherent under Christ Jesus, who is the head or focal point of it all (1:9-10). In Christ we were selected as God's portion through his predestinating power, so that we can be for the praise of his glory (1:11-12). Not only is this the case, but we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of God, who guarantees the consummation of our redemption in the future (1:13-14).

Such thoughts stagger the imagination, and they drive Paul to prayer. In verses 15-23 he exalts the name of God in praise, and he pours out peti-

tions for the growth of the church in understanding, holiness, and power. He concludes by magnifying the victory of Jesus, and his ascension and installation at God's right hand as the conqueror of everything. Now Christ reigns over all, for the sake of his people, the one body, the church. These people are privileged and blessed beyond human comprehension, but Paul feels the need to remind them of something very important: before we take such things for granted, or imagine that we were blessed in light of what we deserved, we need to reflect on what we were before regeneration.

"As for you," Paul says in 2:1, "you were dead in transgressions and sins." There is some debate in this text as to whether or not the pronouns "you" and "we" are being used interchangeably, or whether they are used to denote Gentiles "you" and Jews "we." While I think that there is no ethnic significance attached to these pronouns in this text (there is such significance in other texts, but not here, in my judgment), in the end it does not matter very much, because verse 3 associates the "we" with the same standing, depravity, and wrath of the "you." In other words, even if "you" denotes Gentiles and "we" denotes Jews, Paul is making clear that everyone in Christ, regardless of ethnicity, fully stood under the wrath of God as they were in their sin nature. This would be very similar, then, to the argument Paul makes in Romans chapter two.

Nevertheless, what is abundantly clear in Ephesians 2:1 is that the same people who have been given the incredible blessings described in Ephesians 1, started out *dead*. Sin was both

the cause of their death, and the condition in which they persisted. They were characterized not by life, but by its opposite. By using the virtual synonyms of "transgressions and sins," Paul makes very clear that they were characterized by deliberate, volitional, and flagrant trespasses against God.

In this state of death they were dominated by three things. The first is "the ways of this world," or more literally "according to the age of this world" (2:2). "According to" (in Greek *kata*), here roughly means "the standard," and so the phrase means that the standard of our previous conduct was in accordance with the mindset and ways of the world. As often is the case in the New Testament, the "world" in this context refers to the rebellious, satanically inspired system that is full of hatred, enmity, and rebellion against God, his character, and his purposes. Paul is saying that, previous to salvation, people were controlled by the standard of the world, and all of their thinking and acting was in accord with the godless world's priorities and values.

While the world is somewhat abstract, the ruler of the kingdom of the air is personal (2:2). In fact, the Greek word *kata* is repeated before this phrase, so Paul literally tells his readers that they used to walk "according to the ruler of the kingdom of the air." This is a reference to Satan himself. Not only are people dead in their sins and following the standard of the world, they are also following the standard of God's archenemy, Satan! What Satan loves, they love. What Satan tempts them to do, they embrace

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and for all act. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have—once and for all—*aorist tense*—crucified the flesh.

Third, Romans 6:6 is in a *passive* voice and Galatians 5:24 is in an *active* voice. It is vital to see this distinction. The passive voice is used when you want to emphasize that the person involved is being acted upon and not doing any acting. If I say, “Bill threw the ball to me and I was hit by the ball.” I am using the active voice to describe what Bill did and using the passive voice when describing what the ball did to me. I did nothing, I was passive. I was acted upon. If I would say, “Bill threw the ball and I caught it,” I would use the active voice to describe Bill’s action of throwing the ball and also use the active voice to describe what I did in catching it.

Romans 6:6 declares that our old life, or old man, was crucified with Christ at the cross. ‘Was crucified’ is *aorist passive*. We did not act at the Cross. Christ did it all, and He did it once and for all. It is a finished work and it was 100% his work. We were passive and did nothing. We were put to death when Christ died for us; we were buried with him, rose from the dead with him, ascended to heaven in him and at this moment we are “seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” We did not have one single thing to do with any of that work. We were passive and Christ did all the acting in our place. Galatians 5:24 is not in a passive voice. *It is not describing the same thing as Romans 6:6*. It is not describing something that was *done to us*, as described in Romans 6:6; it is describing something *we did*. We consciously and deliberately ‘crucified the flesh.’ When I say *we*, I mean every Christian. The text says, “They who belong to Christ,” and that means each and every Christian, “has crucified the flesh.” It was the Christian’s action. True, we did it ‘by grace’ and the power of the Holy

Spirit, but it was still our action and it was a once for all time action just as much as ‘having been crucified with Christ’ was a once for all action. If you have never crucified the flesh, in the sense that Paul teaches in verse 24, you are not a Christian. Obviously, we better be sure what it means to ‘crucify the flesh.’

Verse 24 is another way of saying, “We repented of our sin and admitted to the truth of total depravity.” The word *repentance* means a change of mind that leads to a change of direction. It was a change of mind about God and his character. We see that he is more than just love and mercy; he is also holy and righteous. It is a change of mind about ourselves. We are not good and nice people who deserve heaven; we are guilty sinners who deserve God’s wrath. We changed our mind about grace being the only ground of hope of ever being saved. We forever jettisoned good works as a way to earn God’s favor. It was the Holy Spirit who gave us both the insight and desire to obey the truth, but it was our act that changed us. The Holy Spirit does not repent ‘for us’ nor does Christ believe the gospel in our place.

When we repented, we went from big #1 in our eyes to zero. We went from “hot stuff” to a dung heap. Instead of boasting about how good we were, we acknowledged we were totally depraved. Romans 7:18, “I know that in my flesh dwelleth no good thing,” was a personal biography that we willingly signed and acknowledged as our own. We admitted that we deserved judgment and offered no excuse or justification for our sin and guilt. We openly confessed that everything about us deserved the fire and nothing was worth salvaging. That is how we began our Christian life and that is how we continue in our Christian life. We once for all agreed

with God and his Word about what we were in God’s sight apart from grace. We repented and confessed we deserved to die. We continue to remind ourselves every day of what we did at conversion. In an act of confession and commitment, we mentally put to death our old life. All boasting and self-righteousness were gone. We were stripped naked spiritually and came to God “with nothing in our hands” except our sin and his promise.

Our Lord taught us that we must deny ourselves and take up our cross daily and follow him. Taking up the cross is a vivid image of speech that Christ intended to show self-denial. It is a picture, metaphorically, of taking our flesh, our sinful self, and nailing it to a cross because we are convinced there is no good thing about the flesh.



It is a picture of our turning our back on the old nature and all of its lusts. John Stott suggests that a Christian’s rejection of his old nature is to be *pitiless*, it will be *painful*, and it must be *decisive*.

It is not possible to crucify the flesh until you are convinced that you owe the flesh nothing but death. Romans 8:12 tells us we are not debtors to the flesh. We owe it nothing but death. We must not coddle the flesh or try to protect some pet sins that may seem harmless. We must see the totality of the flesh to be an enemy that must be crucified. The work of crucifixion must be without pity.

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THE BEGINNING AND THE END

Mike McInnis

The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD. The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD (Proverbs 16:1, 33)¹.

Here in the sixteenth chapter of Proverbs is one of the greatest testimonies to the absolute predestination of all things by the Lord that is found in all of the Scriptures. The chapter begins with a clear declaration that even the planning that men do and the thoughts of their mind are not random at all but are determined by him who rules in the heavens and the earth. The chapter ends with an equally clear declaration that the details of every event, even down to the number which appears on a set of dice thrown in a back-alley craps game, occur exactly according to his will and purpose.

It is essentially redundant to use the terminology of “absolute predestination” even as it is equally redundant to use the term “absolute sovereignty.” It is sort of like saying “dark black” or “pure white.” There is no such thing as “limited predestination” as some purport. The power of God has absolutely no limitation. The fact is that if something is predestined by God, it must occur and it cannot occur if not ordered by him. The same God who orders the events and directs the steps of men in the earth is the one of whom the Psalmist says, “*But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased*” (Psa 115:3).

Men like to come up with a limited set of activities which they consider that God can bring to pass without the violation of some unwritten laws of fairness, morality, or the supposed free will of men. Yet the true and liv-

ing God freely testifies of himself, “*I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things*” (Isa 45:5-7). He is clearly the first cause of all events and is limited by nothing except himself. He further declares the complete fulfillment of his will in the occurrence of all events, by saying, “*Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it*” (Isa 46:9-11).

Those who would oppose the view of God as the predestinator or determiner of all events are those who ultimately think it possible for men to establish their own righteousness before God. If not in a future existence at least from a conditional viewpoint that they can by their own actions earn the blessings of God upon them in the present time as a result of their supposed obedience. They would try to make the Scripture references to God’s foreknowledge to be speaking of a mere ability to know ahead of time what will occur. They find some odd comfort in thinking that any sort of event may randomly happen without God directing that course but rath-

er sitting idly by as a mere observer of what does occur. Such a view is quite comfortable to the natural mind but is diametrically opposed to the revelation of the GOD of the Bible who testified to John, “*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last*” (Rev 22:13).

Those who go about to establish their own righteousness consider that men are in some kind of probationary state before God wherein their own actions can either fulfill the will of GOD or thwart it. They view God as hoping all men will follow a certain path but absolutely uncertain what men will do except that he can look into the future like some superhero of the comic books, and merely twiddle his thumbs as men do whatever they determine to be done. They usually rise in anger when confronted with such scriptures that indicate the elective grace of God such as Paul mentions: “*(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*” (Rom 9:11-13). Some will even admit that God elects men unto salvation but balk at the plain truth that he also reprobates some unto damnation (see I Pet.2:8; Jude 4) according to his purpose.

The revelation of this truth strips men naked and bare before God and manifests the fact that apart from his mercy they shall surely perish. They have no remedy of their own. It is impossible that a man could be lifted up with pride or strut about with some

¹ All Scripture verses are from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

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Our rejection of our old nature will indeed be painful. There are things and relationships that are very dear to the flesh. They bring us much creature comfort and enjoyment. They also often draw us away from God and godliness. It is a great mistake to deny the reality of sin's appeal. Much sin is pleasant and enjoyable. The hymn writer was correct when he said, "For thee all the *pleasures* of sin I resign." Modern hymnbooks have changed that to, "For thee all the *follies* of sin I resign." It is certainly true that sin is utter folly but it is also true that sin is very pleasant to the flesh.

John Stott has some excellent thoughts on the need to be decisive in our crucifying the flesh.

Now 'those that belong to Christ Jesus', Paul says, 'have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires'. The Greek word is in the aorist tense, indicating that this is something we did decisively at the moment of conversion. When we came to Jesus Christ, we repented. We 'crucified' everything we knew to be wrong. We took our old self-centered nature, with all its passions and desires, and nailed it to the cross. And this repentance of ours was decisive. So, Paul says, if we crucified the flesh, we must leave it there to die. We must renew every day this attitude to sin of ruthless and uncompromising rejection. In the language of Jesus, as Luke records it, every Christian must 'take up his cross *daily*' (Lk. 9:23).

So widely is this truth neglected, that it needs to be further enforced. The first great secret of holiness lies in the degree and decisiveness of our repentance. If besetting sins persistently plague us, it is either because we have never truly repented, or because, having repented, we have not maintained our repentance. It is as if, having nailed our old nature to the cross, we keep wistfully returning to the scene of its execution. We begin to fondle it, to caress it, to long for its release, even to try to take it down again from the cross. We need to learn to leave it there. When some jealous, or proud, or malicious,

or impure thought invades our mind we must kick it out at once. It is fatal to begin to examine it and consider whether we are going to give in to it or not. We have declared war on it; we are not going to resume negotiations. We have settled the issue for good; we are not going to re-open it. We have crucified the flesh; we are never going to withdraw the nails.¹

There is an old saying that no matter what time of day you cut off a copperhead's head, the snake will not fully die until the sun goes down. I don't know if that is true or not. I do know that sin in us will not fully die until the day we land in heaven. We need the same advice about sin that the old timers gave about copperhead snakes. Even though the snake's head is cut off, if it wiggles, hit it again!

Verse 24 is stating that we admitted we were totally depraved sinners. We openly confessed there was no good thing in us. In other words, we repented. We agreed with God that we deserved to perish because we were guilty, depraved, hopeless and helpless sinners with no excuse or self justification. We quit trying to blame our condition on bad parenting, a cruel and non-understanding environment, a temperament inherited from parents that said, 'that is just the way I am.' All of those hiding places were exposed and renounced. We agreed that the flesh, in its totality, deserved death (Romans 8:12). We did not make any 'provisions' for the flesh (Romans 13:14) by trying to hang on to some really favorite sins.

Verse 25 is a positive exhortation that logically follows the fact established in verse 24. Paul here exhorts us to prove we have the life of God in us by living that life out in our relationships. Let us prove by the way we live that we are born of God and have his life in us.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25, KJV).

Remember that all Christians live in the Spirit but all Christians do not walk in the Spirit with the same speed or consistency. Exactly what is Paul exhorting Christians to do in this verse? What does it mean to "walk in the Spirit"? Walking in the Spirit is nothing less than walking in obedience to the revealed will of God in Scripture. It is manifesting the fruit of the Spirit in our relationships instead of the works of the flesh. If a child of God walks in the flesh and manifests the works of the flesh in his life, he is in essence denying what he confessed in verse 24. You can't say, "I am a depraved sinner who deserves his flesh to be crucified and at the same time to be living to please the flesh. That is a contradiction. The moment you start claiming 'rights' and feel justified in using other people for your own ends to meet your needs, you have denied your confession of depravity. How can a person walk in the kind of life style he totally renounced at conversion and, at the same time, claim to love God? Only by forgetting what he confessed to in verse 24 or by proving that he never believed what he confessed in the first place. It is impossible for verse 25 to be true in your experience without verse 24 also being true. One experience is built on the other. You cannot walk in the Spirit and deny total depravity at the same time.

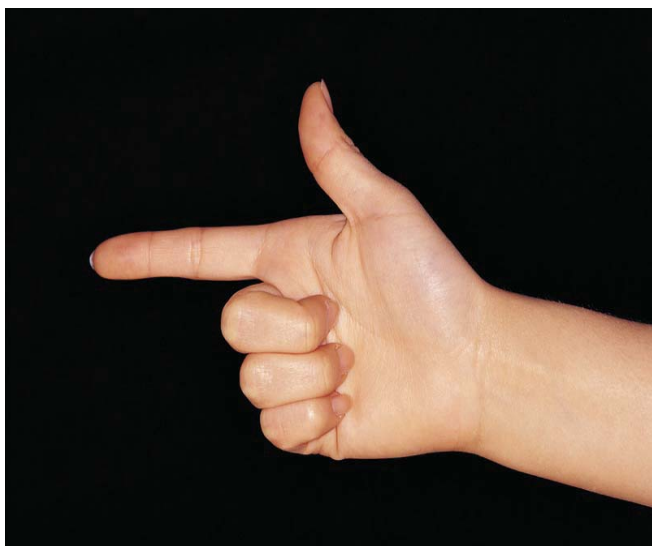
The negative exhortation in verse 26 is, "let us not be conceited." We are told in Scripture to honestly evaluate ourselves. We are to know our strengths and weaknesses. As Clint Eastwood says in one of his Dirty Harry movies, "A man's got to know his limitations." However, we must be honest in our evaluating.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought,

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¹ John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians: Only One Way*, BST (Leicester, England: IVP, 1988), 151 & 152

with perverse delight. They love the world system in opposition to God because they love the mastermind behind it, their master Satan.



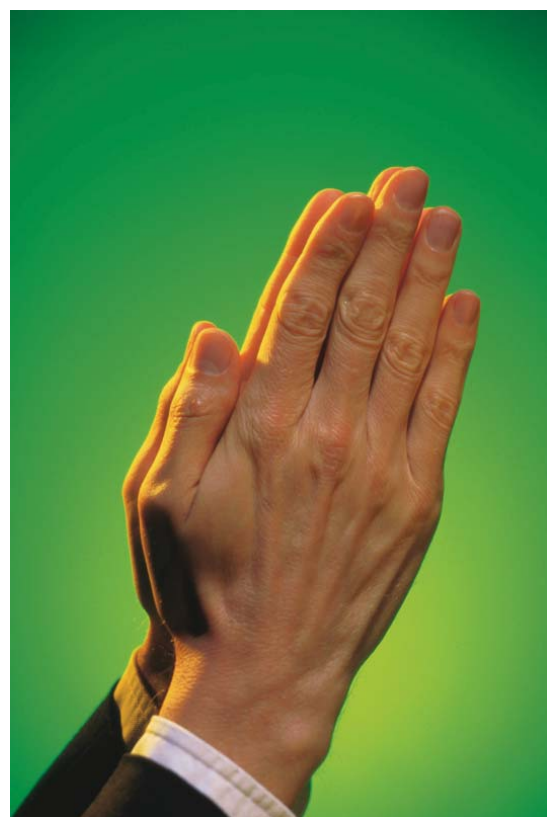
Human beings never like to admit that guilt begins in their own hearts. We are comfortable blaming our sins and mistakes on sociological and environmental factors (e.g., the world), or on other persons (e.g., our parents, peer group, or even the devil). What we do not like to admit is that the real problem is internal; it is in our hearts, and in our minds. Yet Paul is not done listing the areas of our bondage; if he had stopped here we could shift the blame to the world and Satan, but Paul goes on to point out that “all of us” lived according to the world and the devil, *because we loved to gratify our sinful flesh, and follow its desires and thoughts* (2:3). In our hearts we longed for wickedness. We thought, meditated, and planned out fantasies, and tried to execute as many of them as possible. This is not only true sexually—there are many people who do not commit adultery because they are worried about getting caught, not because of moral fortitude—but also in terms of pride, advancement, and generally self-centered living. Even if someone is an outstanding citizen and philanthropist, they are guilty of the tremendous crime of failing

to give God his due, if they do not acknowledge him in all they do. The world and Satan teach more than unbridled libertarianism; they also teach respectability, independence, and the natural goodness of human beings. What Paul says, however, is that every human being is, apart from grace, an object of wrath (2:3).

Well, what can be done when you follow the standard of the world, live according to Satan, and have a sin nature which bends every desire and thought to pursuing wickedness? The answer is *nothing*. You can do nothing. What Paul says in the next two verses, then, will have nothing really to do with what we can do. “But,” he writes, indicating a total contrast to what we can expect as objects of God’s just wrath, “because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved,” (2:4-5).

Note the following: 1) Lost in the ways of the world, the ways of Satan, and in our totally depraved nature, we are naturally objects of God’s wrath; 2) But God does not destroy us, but loves us and has mercy upon us; 3) God made us alive with Christ, even when we were still dead in our deliberate transgressions; 4) So it can only be by grace that we have been saved! We must never forget that all of the privileges and blessings delineated in Ephesians 1 are ours not because we deserve them (we deserved wrath, after all), but because God loves the unlovable, and has mercy on the

wicked. In case the point was missed Paul will expand on it in 2:6-10, which contains that justly famous verse, that you have been saved by grace through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God (v. 8). Our salvation is not by works (v. 9), for clearly that would be impossible for people such as ourselves in our lost condition. Every spiritual blessing is ours in Christ, but only because of God’s love, God’s mercy, God’s choice, God’s pleasure, and God’s will. We are totally depraved, but not beyond the reach of sovereign grace. His grace has put our state of deadness in the past tense: “in which you *used to live*,” (2:2); “all of us also lived among them *at one time*,” (2:3). But we do not all live there still. Now we exist in the heav- enlies with Christ Jesus (2:6); now we are no longer dead, but have been made alive (2:5). It is no credit to us, but results in the praise of his glorious grace. The gospel in Ephesians 2:1-5 is that we are wicked beyond hope and ability, but God’s sovereign grace from first to last is able to save by, through, and in Christ Jesus. Ω



Reisinger—Continued from page 6

but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you (Rom. 12:3, NIV).

Notice we are to specifically avoid thinking “too highly” of ourselves. Thinking too little of ourselves is far less common but it is just as wrong as is thinking too highly of ourselves. For a child of God, it is just as wrong to have an inferiority complex as it is to have a superiority complex. Both of these attitudes grow out of wrong thoughts about yourself and a refusal to evaluate yourself in the light of God’s truth. In both cases you are disobeying the Word of God and not accepting what it says about you. There are two vital doctrines you must understand and believe at the same time.

First of all, you must remember the doctrine of total depravity. If you are truly totally depraved then that means you are better than no one. You cannot look down your nose at any other person nor can you despise anyone for supposedly being worse than you. “Total” depravity admits of no degrees.

Secondly, you must believe and remember the doctrine of unconditional sovereign election. That means no one is better than you. You are one of God’s special people. You are the apple of his eye. You were a dead dog, but you are now a child of God. The world may tar and feather you and then light a fire under you but you are still one of God’s elect! No one can cause you eternal hurt. If you can get these two things written in your soul you are “free” and untouchable in your real life which is hidden in Christ.

We need to look more carefully at the exhortation in Galatians 5:26. What happens when you become conceited? Your actions will deny and contradict what you said and did in verse 24. You start thinking and act-

ing like you really aren’t so bad after all. You start believing that there are still some good things about you that deserve recognition. You start feeling you deserve far better treatment that you have gotten. When this happens you have forgotten that you confessed you deserved nothing but damnation. What has really happened? Your wrong thinking is leading to wrong feelings about yourself and the wrong feelings are starting to produce wrong actions. The old self patterns of thinking and actions that you renounced in your repentance return and start controlling and destroying your relationships.

This kind of thinking grows out of having wrong expectations and wrong expectations grow out of not understanding Scripture. When conceit starts to rule your thinking then things like, “It’s not fair” begin to occupy your mind. If we were thinking biblically, we would know that we had no right to think it ever would be fair. It was not fair that they stoned Steven to death; it was not fair that his bothers hated Joseph and sold him to the Egyptians as a slave. We live in a world of sin. We live in a world that hates grace and anyone who exemplifies grace. Where did anyone ever get the idea they had a right to expect fairness? Surely not from the Bible.

Feelings that lead to moods and ultimately to wrong actions do not float in through the window and grab hold of your thoughts and emotions. They come from inside of us. They grow out of the things we believe; out of the way we understand and respond to what we believe to be reality. We start defining reality on our own terms instead of what God says. Your feelings, especially about yourself, are based upon your faith that the things, or thoughts, you believe about yourself are true even if the Devil may have planted those thoughts in your mind. Who told you that were hot stuff that deserved more recognition? Likewise,

who told you that you were a useless failure who could not make it? Who convinced you that you had the right to think for another person and control them into serving you to help you reach your goals? In each of these instances it was not the Holy Spirit controlling your mind. It was your old conceited sinful self. Your wrong thoughts about yourself were giving you bad information.

It is no accident that the Bible says a lot about thinking correctly. Look at two representative texts.

For as he thinks in his heart so is he (Prov. 23:7a, NKJV)

So Jesus said, “Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man” (Matt. 15:16-20, NKJV).

Everything hinges on the thought life. He who controls the mind controls the whole man. How you think determines how you feel and how you feel determines how you act. This is especially true of your attitude toward, and your treatment of, the people with whom you have any kind of a relationship. If you are conceited enough to think you are #1, it will not be long before you start trying to prove you are #1. Being recognized and treated as #1 is part of the enjoyment of occupying that position.

We keep emphasizing how important it is that we think correctly (biblically) about ourselves and avoid becoming conceited because one or two wrong attitudes must follow. You will challenge those weaker than you to some kind of a contest that enables

Reisinger—Continued on page 14

The 2009 Providence Theological Seminary Doctrinal Conference August 5-8

Colorado Springs, Colorado

The theme of the conference is:

This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; hear Him. (Matt. 17:5).

The featured guest speaker is Dr. Tom Nettles, Professor of Historical Theology, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville. He will speak three times, once each night, on the historical origin, influences and theological challenges to Sovereign Grace Baptist Theology.

The doctrinal purpose of the conference is to demonstrate the need for a more accurate way to interpret the Bible than that which is found in the theological systems of Dispensational Theology and Covenant Theology.

Each of the seminary's resident faculty will present one message:

Dr. Gary D. Long, Faculty President
Professor Dwight Brown, Dean of Students
Dr. Frank Gumerlock, Professor of Historical Theology
J. William Dorman, Professor of OT Literature and Exegesis

Also, five seminary Board of Directors members will present one message each:

Jackson Boyett, Pastor of Dayspring Fellowship in Austin, TX
J. David Gilliland, M.D., Chairman of the Board, Providence Theological Seminary
Joe W. Kelley, D.Min. Candidate and longtime pastor of Killeen Bible Church, Killeen, TX
William W. Sasser, Pastor of Grace Church in Franklin, TN
Richard A. Smith, Elder, Dayspring Fellowship in Austin, TX

Six Conference sessions will be held with two messages each starting on Wednesday evening followed by morning and evening sessions on Thursday and Friday and concluding on Saturday morning.

The afternoons will be free to visit the many attractions in the beautiful Pike's Peak region of the Rocky Mountains. See the seminary website (www.ptsco.org) for message titles and presentation times. Discussion times are scheduled and a Book Table is planned.

Sign-in for the conference will be from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, August 5th.



REGISTRATION FOR THE 2009 PTS DOCTRINAL CONFERENCE

Wednesday to Saturday, August 5-8, 2009

The registration fee before July 1st for adults for all 12 conference messages is \$100 (after July 1st, \$120); for the accompanying spouse, \$80 (after July 1st, \$100); no fee for high school children attending with their parents. Individual adult message fees including accompanying spouse: \$10 per person per message. College-age students \$60 for all 12 messages or \$5 for each message attended. Drink refreshments will be provided during the message breaks. Daily meals are attendee responsibility; they are **not provided** at the conference site.

A **Registration Form** with complete instructions is available on the PTS website (www.ptsco.org).

All conference sessions will be held at **5210 Centennial Blvd., Colorado Springs, CO, 80919**, which is the facility of **Front Range Alliance Church**. The Seminary phone # is 719-434-4872 and the Seminary Email address is info@ptsco.org.

Refund Policy: There will be a full refund for cancellations made no later than July 1. There will be a \$25 refund fee for each cancellation after July 1.



MOTEL ACCOMODATIONS

Special arrangements have been made with **Quality Inn & Suites** located at 555 W. Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs. It is near the church facility. Several restaurants are located within a block or two of the motel. Conference attendees must make their own room reservations—**make them early**—by calling the motel at 719-593-9119. **Tell the motel desk that you are attending the Providence Theological Seminary Conference.** See the seminary website (www.ptsco.org) for details about the rooms and the rates offered.

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<i>But I Say Unto You</i> —Reisinger	\$10.95	\$8.68		
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There is not a spider hanging on the wall that doesn't have a purpose; there is not a weed growing in the corner of the church lot that doesn't have a reason for being there; there is not a single insect fluttering in the breeze that does not accomplish some divine decree; and I will never believe that God created any man or woman, especially any Christian man or woman, to be a blank, and to be a nothing. He made you for a purpose. Find out what that purpose is; find out your niche, and fill it. Even if it is something small, if it is only to be someone who picks up trash at the side of the road, or one who mows the church lawn, do something in this great battle for God and truth.

C. H. Spurgeon

2009 JOHN BUNYAN CONFERENCE

AUDIO CD ORDER FORM

QTY	CD NO	SPEAKER	TITLE
	JB09-A02	John G. Reisinger	<i>Why Call it the 'John Bunyan' Conference?</i>
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	JB09-A12	John G. Reisinger	<i>Imputation and Limited Atonement</i> (includes Q & A for A06 and A12)
	JB09-A01	Gary George	<i>Whitfield, God's Oracle</i>
	JB09-A03	Gary George	<i>Calvinistic Evangelism</i>
	JB09-A21		Q & A for A01 and A03
	JB09-A04	Blake White	<i>The Newness of the New Covenant, Part 1</i>
	JB09-A05	Blake White	<i>The Newness of the New Covenant, Part 2</i>
	JB09-A24		Q & A for A04 and A05
	JB09-A07	David Morris	<i>For Whom Did Christ Die? Part I</i> (includes Q & A for A07, A08 & A09)
	JB09-A08	David Morris	<i>For Whom Did Christ Die? Part II</i>
	JB09-A09	David Morris	<i>Does God Have Two Wills?</i>
	JB09-A10	Kirk Wellum	<i>Matthew 5:17-20 and the New Covenant</i>
	JB09-A11	Kirk Wellum	<i>Matthew 9:14-17, Wineskin Patches</i>
			(The Q & A following A10 & A11 was inadvertently not recorded)
	JB09-A13	John T Jeffery	Review of <i>The Case for Biblical Christianity</i> by Edward John Carnell (author) and Ronald H Nash (editor).

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The Atonement

John G. Reisinger

Some men who in the past were unashamedly Calvinistic in their theology are now advocating a new view of the atonement of Christ. They claim that many great Calvinists have held this view in history. Basically they are teaching that the atonement is universal but its application is controlled by election. They claim a “universal atonement” with a “particular redemption.” The sins of all the sons of Adam were paid for at the cross but sinners are not redeemed until they believe the Gospel. Some very good churches, which I am familiar with, have been split over the issue. Those leaving these churches feel the new view is a denial of the historic, and in their mind, biblical, doctrine of limited, or particular, atonement. Before we look at the specific arguments for and against, let me make a few general remarks.

We must be careful not to read into a text of Scripture a theological concept that is not there. Let me give two examples. The first is Romans 7:1-3. That text has nothing to do with divorce and remarriage and should never be used in a discussion of whether it is wrong or permissible to be divorced and remarried. Paul is teaching law and grace and not giving instructions about the legitimacy of divorce.

The second illustration directly involves our discussion about the atonement. John 3:16 is not talking about the extent of the atonement. To use this text to attempt to overthrow either election or limited atonement is a great misuse of Scripture. The text says, “God so loved the world.” It does not say, “God loved the elect.” The Holy Spirit knows the Greek word for *elect* but he deliberately did not use it

here. He used the word *kosmos*. There are many texts that clearly teach God’s special and redemptive love for the elect. However, John 3:16 is not one of them. Likewise the text does not say God loved, “every individual without exception.” Again, if the Holy Spirit wanted to say that then he would have done so. The Holy Spirit said, “God so loved the *kosmos*.” Exactly what is the *kosmos* that God so much loved that he gave his only son up to death? It is impossible to understand the verse without understanding the meaning of that word.

Before we look for the meaning of *kosmos*, let me illustrate an important point. Some years ago I was asked to speak on the five doctrines of grace and then lead a discussion. I spent an hour going through the essence of the so-called “Five Points of Calvinism.” When I was finished, the first question was from a local evangelist. Our conversation went like this:

“What do you do with John 3:16?”

“What do you mean ‘what do I do with it?’”

“I mean, how do you get around it?”

“I don’t ‘get around it.’ I leave it in the Bible and try to understand it. I believe it and preach it the same as I do every other verse in Scripture.”

“But John 3:16 contradicts everything you said tonight.”

“Can you show me how it contradicts anything I said?”

“You said God only loved the elect and Christ only died for the elect. John 3:16 says God loved everybody the same and Christ died for all men without exception.”

“Show me where John 3:16 says

either one of those things.”

“It says ‘God so loved the world’ and that means God loved everybody and Christ died for everybody.”

“No, it does not say that. It says, ‘God so loved the *kosmos*, or world’ but does not say, ‘God loves everybody the same or that Christ died for everyone. . .”

“But *world* means *everybody in the world*.”

“You are not quoting the text, you are interpreting it. You are giving a meaning to the word *world* which is not consistent with the rest of Scripture. This is just as bad as trying to make the word *world* mean *elect*. The Gospel of John uses the word *kosmos* over fifty times without one instance of it clearly meaning ‘everyone in the whole world.’ Look at several texts:”

That as the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. (John 1:9, 10).

“It is obvious that none of the four uses of *world* can mean *everybody in the world*.”

Behold, the world is gone after him. (John 12:19).

“Again, it is impossible to translate this text as, ‘everyone in the world has gone after him.’ Certainly the Pharisees were not going after him.”

“The same is true of the phrase *whole world*. When you make *whole world* in 1 John 2:2 to mean *everyone in the whole world*, you are again interpreting the text. Compare it with 1 John 5:19.”

And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

“It is obvious that the whole point of this text is to separate the ‘we’ believers as not being part of the whole world.”

At this point, the man smiled and said, “I knew you would have

Reisinger—Continued from page 8

you to put the other person down and demonstrate your superiority. Since you are superior, you feel justified in using the weak person for your own ends. In your own eyes, you believe using other people is part of the turf that belongs to the strong. One thing is sure, you cannot “love and serve” another person (Gal. 5:13) in any relationship when you feel superior to them. It is vital that we see how inevitable it is that either challenging or envying must follow a conceited attitude.

You have three choices in every relationship.

1. You serve me on my terms because I am better than you. Both of us will grow to despise each other. I will have no respect for you because you are gutless, and you will hate me for using you and taking advantage you.
2. Or you can reverse the above and I serve you on your terms. The same painful relationship will follow. In every relationship based on either of these two situations, one person is insignificant and unnecessary. A deacon at a wedding said, “I think that will be a good marriage. Mary loves Jim, and Jim loves Jim.” Of course, he was joking.
3. We serve each other on Christ’s terms. This is walking in the Spirit. In such a relationship, two people will grow in their love to Christ and to each other.

Who defines the roles and responsibilities in a marriage? Who tells a man how he is to treat his wife and what he has a right to expect from her?

Playboy magazine? His father or grandfather—“That’s the way we have always done it in this family.” The majority in society or the politically correct crowd? A man’s own feelings and expectations? Or does the Word God alone teach him his duty to his wife?

Who tells a woman how to treat her husband. The feminist movement? Her mother and grandmother? The majority or politically correct people? Her own ideas and expectations. Or is the Scripture alone her rule book for her duty to her husband.

Can you imagine a man who spent an hour reading and looking at Playboy magazine and absorbing its philosophy coming home at 5 o’clock from work to a wife who spent half of her afternoon watching soap operas and the other half reading a feminist magazine? The false and selfish expectations imbibed by both would explode in short order.

One of the greatest hindrances to “walking in the Spirit is confusing duty and feelings. Your feelings have nothing to do with doing your duty. You perform your duty simply because it is your duty. If you do it only because it is duty, you receive no reward. If you do not do your duty you will always be wrong.

That sounds like being between a rock and a hard place. What you do is this: Do your duty even when you don’t feel

like it and pray to God to enliven your heart to enjoy it! God has made loving your mate a duty whether you feel like it or not. The next time someone tells you they are leaving a mate and children in order to “find themselves” smile, lay your hand on their shoulder and say, “My dear friend I hope you are successful. I pray you will really find yourself, and when you do you will discover what a conceited self-centered nerd you really are.” Try the “I did not feel like going to go to work” argument on your boss and see if you still have a job.

I suggest every husband and wife read carefully Ephesians 5:22-33. After thinking about it go back and read verse 21.

You have only two choices. You can walk in the flesh and seek to satisfy needs by using other people, or you can walk in the Spirit and crucify the flesh. It is flesh or Spirit, law or grace, works or faith. Or put another way, you use or serve others. We can walk in the Spirit and keep remembering that we once and for all crucified the flesh and consciously put to death the deeds of the flesh. We can understand that “No, I do not owe my flesh any gratification at all. It is my sworn enemy and its every promise is really a ticket to trouble.” We must keep reaffirming our repentance in order to maintain the right attitude and actions. When the flesh tempts us to satisfy a lust, get out the canceled check signed in our Lord’s blood and say, “Flesh, I owe you nothing.” Reaffirm again your biography as recorded in Romans 7:18. Also remind yourself of your sovereign election and “the blessed hope” set before us.

I repeat what I said earlier. It is impossible to believe in total depravity and sovereign election and have either a superior or inferior attitude. A religion that uses rules to control people can easily engender a false



The Difference Betwixt the Law and the Gospel

Ralph Erskine

The law supposing I have all,
Does ever for perfection call;
The gospel suits my total want,
And all the law can seek does grant.

The law could promise life to me,
If my obedience perfect be;
But grace does promise life upon
My Lord's obedience alone.

The law says, Do, and life you'll win;
But grace says, Live, for all is done;
The former cannot ease my grief,
The latter yields me full relief.

By law convinc'd of sinful breach;
By gospel-grace I comfort reach:
The one my condemnation bears;
The other justifies and clears.

The law shews my errors are great;
The gospel freely pays my debt:
The first does me the bankrupt curse;
The last does bless and fill my purse.

The law will not abate a mite,
The gospel all the sum will quite;
There God in threat'nings is array'd
But here in promises display'd.

The law and gospel disagree,
Like Hagar, Sarah, bond and free:
The former's Hagar's servitude;
The latter Sarah's happy brood.

To Sinai black, and Zion fair,
The word does law and grace compare.
Their cursing and their blessing vye
With Ebal and Gerizzim high.

The law excludes not boasting vain,
But rather feeds it to my bane;
But gospel grace allows no boasts,
Save in the King, the Lord of Hosts.

The law still irritates my sin,
And hardens my proud heart therein;
By grace's melting pow'r renews,
And my corruption strong subdues.

The law with thunder, Sinai-like,
Does always dread and terror speak:
The gospel makes a joyful noise,
And charms me with a still, calm voice.

The legal trumpet war proclaims,
In wrathful threats, and fire, and flames:

The gospel-pipe, a peaceful sound,
Which spreads a kindly breath around.

The law is weak through sinful flesh;
The gospel brings recruits afresh:
The first a killing letter wears;
The last a quick'ning spirit bears.

The law that seeks perfection's height,
Yet gives no strength, nor offers might;
But precious gospel-tidings glad
Declare where all is to be had.

From me alone the law does crave,
What grace affirms in Christ I have:
When therefore law-pursuits enthrall,
I send the law to grace for all.

The law brings terror to molest,
The gospel gives the weary rest;
The one does flags of death display,
The other shows the living way.

The law by Moses was expressed;
The glorious gospel came by Christ:
The first dim nature's light may trace;
The last is only known by grace.

The law may rouse me from my sloth,
To faith and to repentance both:
And though the law commandeth each,
Yet neither of them can it teach.

Nor will accept for current coin
The duties which it does enjoin:
It seeks all, but accepts no less
Than constant, perfect righteousness.

The gospel on the other hand,
Although it issue no command,
But strictly view'd, does whole consist
In promises and offers blessed;

Yet does it many duties teach,
Which legal light could never reach:
Thus faith, repentance, and the like,
Are fire that gospel-engines strike.

They have acceptance here through grace,
The law affords them no such place:
Yet still they come through both their hands,
Through gospel-teachings, law-commands.

The law's a house of bondage sore,
The gospel opens the prison-door:
The first me hamper'd in its net;
The last at freedom kindly set.

The precept craves, the gospel gives;
While that me presses, this relieves;
And or affords the strength I lack,
Or takes the burden off my back.

The law requires on pain of death;
The gospel courts with loving breath:
While that conveys a deadly wound;
This makes me perfect, whole, and found.

There viewing how diseas'd I am,
I here perceive the healing balm:
Afflicted there with sense of need,
But here refresh'd with meet remedé.

The law's a charge for what I owe;
The gospel my discharge to show:
The one a scene of fears doth ope;
The other is the door of hope.

An angry God the law reveal'd
The gospel shows him reconcil'd:
By that I know he was displeas'd;
By this I see his wrath appeas'd.

The law thus shews the divine ire,
And nothing but consuming fire.
The gospel brings the olive branch,
And blood the burning fire to quench.

The law still shows a fiery face,
The gospel shows a throne of grace;
There justice rides alone in state,
But here she takes the mercy-seat.

Lo! in the law Jehovah dwells,
But Jesus is conceal'd;
Whereas the gospel's nothing else
But Jesus Christ reveal'd.

Reisinger—Continued from page 14

loyalty and will soon lead to legalism. The same is true in any relationship. Where rules reign, judging soon follows, and a superior condemning attitude is not far behind. Such an atmosphere will always use guilt, for breaking the rules, as a means of control. Pastors and parents are experts at manipulation by guilt. *God never uses guilt to motivate us. He uses the love of Christ.*

Those who use guilt to motivate have all kinds of ways to lay false guilt on you. It is called “putting you on a guilt trip.” False guilt is more difficult to deal with than true guilt. True guilt can be confessed and be forgiven. Even God cannot forgive false guilt. The only person who can remove false guilt is the one who laid the guilt on you. If your Mama put the guilt on you then Mama is the only one who can take it off. If the pastor put you on a false guilt trip then he alone can remove the false guilt. The price for him to remove such guilt is for you to give him your conscience and blindly obey without question his

McInnis—Continued from page 5

false sense of his own righteousness when he has been convinced by the Holy Ghost of the same truth that Nebuchadnezzar was brought to confess after he (the mightiest king on earth at the time) was brought down to utter humility and made to eat grass like an ox. *“And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?...Now I Nebuchadnezzar*

every whim. He will call it his God given “duly authorized” responsibility.

Whenever a relationship demands that you must “earn” the other person’s love and approval, then Galatians 5:16 and 5:26 are in motion. We love and forgive “for Christ’s sake” even as Christ loved and forgave us. A husband cannot love and serve his wife if he really believes he deserves a better wife. If a wife honestly feels she is superior to her husband, she may outwardly submit to him, but it will not last. The lid will blow off. A pastor cannot love and serve a congregation if he believes his gifts deserve a much bigger hearing. Likewise a congregation cannot love and serve a pastor when they believe their present pastor is “below their status in the community.” This is what walking in the flesh versus walking in the Spirit is all about.

One last thing, how should a Christian who is caught red-handed in sin respond when reminded of what they did by an unsaved person? Let’s say a Christian woman is married to

praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase” Dan 4:34-35, 37.

The one who has revealed himself as the savior of sinners has plainly demonstrated that he has fully accomplished the exact purpose which he came into this world to perform. Were he not that living God who predestinates the beginning and the end he could not have assured the salvation of his people nor in any wise could he have proclaimed, *“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”* (John 6:37). Just as the Aaronic high priest went into the Holy of Holies with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel emblazoned on his breast plate so did our great high priest enter into the very presence

a non-Christian man. She is goaded into a fight with her husband. She gets angry and says some awfully mean things to him. He smiles and says, “So that is the way Christians act when they get upset.” That is not the time to try to justify yourself by saying, “Well, at least I sincerely try to get along and you could not care less.” No, don’t say that. You sinned and you know it, your husband knows it and God knows it. Sin must be confessed. In such a situation the wife should say (even if the husband deliberately provoked the fight), “Honey, you are right. I sinned and I am sorry. I was not a good example of a Christian.” When he wakes up (he will faint), say, “I asked God to forgive me and I want you to forgive me.” Give him a little kiss and say, “I wish you were a Christian and could help me in my Christian life to be a better wife. I really do love you.” That is walking in the Spirit. That is manifesting the fruit of the Spirit.

In our next article we will look at more ways the new life in the Spirit is worked out in everyday life. Ω

of his father with the names of all of his elect written upon his breast, yea graven upon his heart.

Just as surely as our substitute offered himself without spot to God in order to fulfill his own predestined purpose, so does he order the application of that salvation which he has purchased and ordained for his people to receive. Even as Luke tells us, *“And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed”* (Acts 13:48). *“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Phi 1:6). Ω

Atonement—Continued from page 13

some way to get around the text.” I replied, “No, it is you who are trying to get around the truth of God’s sovereign grace by interjecting a wrong interpretation of John 3:16. I think I have shown that John 3:16 neither proves nor disproves election or free will, nor limited or unlimited atonement.”

To understand what John 3:14-16 means first requires carefully looking at the exact words used. Two very important words are *so* and *for*. You cannot start the discussion with a verse that begins with the word *for*. The word *for* in verse 16 connects what you are about to say to what you have just said. It is a conclusion, a reason, or an application of something just established. I would suggest that an outline of these three verses would look like this:

The *facts* of the Gospel - verse 14.

The *result* of the Gospel - verse 15.

The *reason* for the Gospel - verse 16.

Let me flush that out.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: (John 3:14).

The key words are *as* and *even so*. The brazen serpent on the pole was a type of Christ on the cross. Sinners need a sacrifice to make them whole. God provided just such a sacrifice in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He *must be lifted up* if there is to be salvation. The Gospel is in verse 14 not verse 16. The Gospel involves preaching the cross.

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:15).

The key word is *that*. Verse 14 had to happen in order for verse 15 to happen. Because Christ died for sinners, there is a full salvation for any and all who trust God’s promise to forgive all who ‘look to Christ’ or believe the

Gospel.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16).

The big word in this text and the whole context is not the word *world* but the word *so*. This word introduces what was behind this greatest of all God’s acts in giving up his son to the cross. The wonder and amazement expressed in the little word *so* has nothing to do with the extent of the atonement but the fact of the atonement itself. It expresses the greatness of God’s love to send his son.

Opponents of historic Calvinism ask, “Do you believe in the ‘whosoever will’ Gospel of John 3:16?” We reply, “John 3:16 does not say ‘whosoever will’ but it does say ‘whosoever believeth.’” This is a clear and certain fact that whoever believes the Gospel will be saved. No if, ands, or buts. That is the Gospel and it is to be proclaimed to any and all sinners without exception. I will readily admit that hyper-Calvinism denies this but the crowd I hang out with believe it and preach it passionately.

If anyone keeps pressing to make ‘whosoever will’ to mean everyone without exception, we ask, “Does whosoever *will* include the whosoever *won’ts*? Does whosoever believeth include whosoever refuses to believe?” The truth that whosoever *believeth* is certain of being saved in no way means or implies that either election or limited atonement are not true. If I drive past a sign that advertises free booze from 2 pm to 4 pm at a local bar on Fridays to “whoever desires it,” I can say, “That promise does not include me.”

The thing that should amaze us is that little word *so*. God loved the *kosmos* so much that he gave his son up to die so that all who believe in him will have everlasting life. It is the

extent of God’s amazing love, not the extent of the atonement, which is the subject of the text. We have no more right to make it teach a universal and redemptive love than we do to try to make the word *world* mean *elect*.

I think the word *world* in John 3:16 is used in a generic sense. It is used the same way as the word *gentiles* is used in Acts 13:46 where Paul, after the Jews rejected his preaching, said, “lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” He did not mean ‘every Gentile without exception’ but the Gentiles as opposed to the Jews. John 3:16 could mean God loved the world of mankind as opposed to fallen angels. Hebrews 2:16 makes that very distinction.

One last thing concerns this idea of Calvinists ‘explaining away universal passages’. I remember a meeting where Dr. S. Lewis Johnson was exegeting some of the major texts Arminians use to refute the Doctrines of Grace. It dawned on me that Arminians do not have meetings like the one I am describing. Have you ever attended an Arminian meeting where they tried to explain Romans nine and make it fit into their system? You could listen to Arminians for a hundred years and never know Romans nine was in the Bible. They do not have conferences and say, “Fellows, how do we get our universal redemptive love of God into this chapter?” We get accused of twisting Scripture only because we honestly and seriously believe and seek to understand every single verse in the Bible. We are not afraid to test our belief. A dear brother once quoted a verse and said, “That is a good Arminian verse.” I replied, “There is not an Arminian verse in the whole Bible. The Bible is perfectly harmonized when correctly understood.” Ω

White—Continued from page 1

this present world order. The second coming of Christ will be V-Day, but it is not here yet. We live in between the times, in between God’s victory, and the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promises.

This leaves an undeniable tension for those who have been redeemed by Christ and given the gift of the Spirit, yet still have indwelling sin and live in this present evil age. The solution is to be found in what New Testament scholars have called the “Indicative and Imperative.” Indicative, meaning the fact of what God has done for his people in Christ, and imperative meaning what God now commands and expects from his people. It is vital to the Christian life to keep these in balance. The imperative always flows out of the indicative. The indicative always expresses itself in the imperative.

If one over-emphasizes the need for obedience and neglects the good news of what God has done for us in Christ, there is a tendency towards legalism. Legalism never leads to true spiritual life. One of two errors usually occurs: a person will think they are doing well and end up becoming proud, and arrogant. Then when something bad happens to them, they are angry at God, because they think they deserve better. They’ve kept their end of the deal, so to speak. The other

error is to realize that you can never do enough good works to please God. We will always fail. This leads to self-hate and despair. On the other hand, if one over-emphasizes the good news of what has taken place in Christ, and does not call people to obedience, they will become worldly, and immoral, not taking God’s commands seriously enough.

This relationship is really what sets Christianity over against all other religions. Pastor Tim Keller writes, “Religion operates on the principle ‘I obey—therefore I am accepted by God.’ But the operating principle of the gospel is ‘I am accepted by God through what Christ has done—therefore I obey.’”¹

I hope it is clear that both the indicative and the imperative are essential. We need to be a people who understand the glorious good news of what God has done for us and in us through Christ, and be a people who are marked by obedience. Thankfully, we not left to ourselves to find this balance. God, in his kindness, has revealed himself and continually shows us these twin truths. Here are several examples mostly found in Paul’s letters:

First it’s important to note that the letters of Paul are often structured in this manner, though the distinction is

¹ Tim Keller, *The Reason for God* (NY: Dutton, 2008), 179-80.

not air-tight and there is often overlap. Think of Ephesians: in the first three chapters we read about election, redemption, forgiveness, the gift of the Spirit, being brought to life from the dead, being brought near to Christ though we were far off, the mystery of the gospel. Then Paul turns to the imperatives of unity in the church, putting on the new self, abstaining from sexual immorality, marital relations, child-parent relations, slave-master relations, and then putting on the full armor of God. Or consider that blessed letter to the Romans. After eleven chapters of gospel theology, Paul writes, “I appeal to you *therefore*, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect,” and then continues with a few chapters of ethical exhortation. Paul grounds the imperatives of chapters 12-16 with the indicatives of chapters 1-11.

Romans 6:1-12 is telling in this regard. In essence he says, you have died to sin (indicative), therefore put sin to death (imperative). Read verses 1-2 coupled with verses 11-12: “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin

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still live in it? . . . So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions.”

In Colossians 3:1-10, Paul writes, “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore

minds on the things that are above. We need to do these things **because** (for) we have died and our life is hid with Christ. Because of this reality we must put to death what is earthly in us. We once walked in disobedience but now must put them away. That is, we must be obedient, **seeing that** we have put off the old self and put on the new self. Notice the gospel logic the apostle uses in this beautiful passage. The evangel brings an ethic.

Galatians 5:1 and 5:25 also holds the indicative and the imperative in proper balance²: “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore,

verse showing that God’s work is the cause of our work: “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, **for** it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (emphasis mine). God’s work doesn’t eliminate our work but is the basis for it. Our work is established and secured by God’s work.³

This sort of gospel logic abounds in Paul’s letters (see Rom 6:14, 7:4, 2 Corinthians 5:15, Gal 5:1). Ephesians 5:8 encourages us by reminding us that though we were once in darkness, we are now light in the Lord. Paul then immediately exhorts us to walk as children of light. In other words, “Walk as children of light, because in the Lord, you are children of light.” Colossians 3:9 says that we have put on the new self (indicative) while Ephesians 4:24 commands us to put on the new self (imperative). Galatians 3:27 says we who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (indicative), while Romans 13:14 commands us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ (imperative).

Brothers and sisters, may we live in light of the gospel; never forgetting or assuming the great work of Christ for us, and never forgetting or assuming the great demand of Christ on us.

For a few helpful resources on the indicative and imperative, see Herman Ridderbos, *Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 253-58; Richard Gaffin, *By Faith, Not by Sight* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006), 68-75; Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 656-58. Ω

what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.” Notice how the imperative is grounded in the indicative. If you have been raised with Christ, **then** seek and set your

and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” In other words, “Christ has set us free, so be free.” Verse 25 says, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” I don’t think Paul is using the verbs “live” and “walk” in a technical way here. He means, “If we live by the Spirit, let us live by the Spirit,” or “If we walk in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit.” The indicative grounds the imperative.

Philippians 2:12-13 is a popular

² I owe much of this exegetical insight to Richard Gaffin, *By Faith, Not by Sight* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006), 70.

³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001), 257.



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Poor Ship!

(The following is a letter of John Newton to his 14 year old adopted daughter, who was away at school).

He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm! Luke 8:24

My dear Betsy,

Sometimes, when I consider what a *world* you are growing up into, and what *snares* and *dangers* young people are exposed to, with little experience to help them—I have some painful feelings for you!

The other day I was at the harbor, and saw a ship launched—she slipped easily into the water; the people on board cheered; the ship looked clean and mirthful, she was freshly painted, and her colors flying. But I looked at her with a sort of *pity*, “**Poor ship!**” I thought, “you are now in port and in safety; but before long you must go into the wild sea! Who can tell what *storms* you may meet with hereafter, and to what *hazards* you may be exposed! How weather-beaten you may be before you return to port again, or perhaps you may not return at all!”

Then my thoughts turned from the *ship*—to my dear *Betsy*. The ship seemed to be an emblem of your present state—you are now, as it were, in a safe harbor; but by and by you must launch out into the *world*, which may well be compared to a *tempestuous sea*. I could even now almost weep at the resemblance! But I take courage, as my *hopes* are greater than my *fears*. I know there is an *infallible Pilot*, who has the *winds* and the *waves* at His command! There is hardly a day passes, in which I do not entreat Him to take charge of you. Under His care—I know you will be safe. He can guide you, unhurt, amidst the storms, and rocks, and dangers—by which you might otherwise suffer—and bring you, at last, safely to the haven of His eternal rest!

“Who is this? He commands even the *winds* and the *water*—and they obey Him!” (Luke 8:25).

I hope you will seek Him while you are young—then you will be happy, and I shall rejoice. *Nothing will satisfy me but this!* Though I should live to see you settled to the greatest advantage in temporal matters—unless you love Him, and live in His fear and favor—you would be quite miserable! I think it would nearly break my heart; for, next to your dear mamma, there is nothing so dear to me in this world as you! But the Lord gave you to me—and many a time upon my knees, I have given you back to Him. Therefore I hope you must, and will, and shall be His!

I am, with great tenderness, my dear child,

Your very affectionate father

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