

G R A C E SOUND OF

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

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Thoughts on the Book of Ecclesiastes —Part Thirteen John G. Reisinger

The Seeker, in the latter half of chapter five, contemplates the vanity of wealth. He compares riches and poverty, and concludes that true contentment for any man, whether rich or poor, comes only from recognizing and living in the world *over the sun*. In chapter six, the Seeker continues to develop this idea, expanding the concept of the vanity of wealth to include all forms of success. He shows that prosperity may not always be good. In chapter seven, he sets forth the opposite and accompanying truth — namely, that adversity may not always be bad.

I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on men.

God gives a man wealth, possessions

and honor, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires, but God does not enable him to enjoy them, and a stranger enjoys them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil.

A man may have a hundred children and live many years; yet no matter how long he lives, if he cannot enjoy his prosperity and does not receive proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he.

It comes without meaning, it departs in darkness, and in darkness its name is shrouded.

Though it never saw the sun or knew anything, it has more rest than does that

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PRINCIPLES OF UNITY AMONG THE BRETHREN: Handling Christian Liberty with Maturity— An Examination of Romans 14—Part 2 David Seefried

Second Principle: God, not man, makes the Christian stand.

Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. Romans 14:4

The first principle, drawn from verses 1-3, teaches that we are to allow each individual to work out his or

her own salvation within the context of liberty without scorning or judging that individual. Verse 4 addresses key issues that provide added insight into the subject of Christian liberty. Paul now establishes a further governing principle for our interactions with other Christians.

To Whom Do We Belong?

The words of verse 4 strongly

rebuke us in the matter of judging other Christians. Look at these words: "Who are you to judge...?" Who indeed are we to go about looking at the lives of others who belong to the Lord? Let us remember that we are dealing, not with doctrinal issues or open sinful behavior, but with convictions determined in our own consciences as we work out our salvation. This question reminds us that we are in no position to judge other Christians. We cannot know what is in their hearts, what circumstances they have experienced, or what guides their motivations. A Christian would have

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man—

even if he lives a thousand years twice over but fails to enjoy his prosperity. Do not all go to the same place? (Eccl. 6:1-6, NIV)

Chapter six of Ecclesiastes begins with a series of sketches that show some of the limitations of money and what it procures: possessions and prestige. The old saying, “Money is not the only thing, but it is miles ahead of whatever is second,” is not always true. Wealth, regardless of how we measure it or how much of it we possess, cannot guarantee contentment. If God gives a man everything that the heart could desire and does not give him a heart to enjoy it, then it would have been better for that man never to live. What profit is a life of discontentment, even if lived in the lap of luxury? How many people do you know that have all that money can buy, and yet cannot seem to enjoy what they have? They live jaded, empty lives while surrounded by every modern status symbol.

The Seeker, in 5:18-20, depicts a man who lives under the blessing of God because God gave him contentment. In 6:2, God gives another man wealth, but not the ability to enjoy it. Additionally, this man has fame and recognition. These too, he is unable to enjoy. The author does not explain what has happened to prevent the second man from enjoying his wealth. The scenario includes a bitter irony: a stranger will enjoy his wealth. Neither the man nor his children will benefit from the man’s prosperity.

The reader can imagine various reasons why the man in 6:2 cannot enjoy the prosperity given by God. He may die young – cut off in the prime of his life. However, even if he lives a long life and has many children, there is no guarantee of any true happiness. He has all the symbols of fame and security but (v. 3) his life may be

unsatisfactory. The key thought in this section is in the words, “God does not enable him to enjoy.” Repeatedly, the Seeker pounds home that lesson in the book of Ecclesiastes. Enjoyment does not reside in possessions; it is a gift that God alone can give. If he withholds it, no amount of effort is going to extract it from any other source. This truth is the exact opposite of the message constantly bombarding us today from every form of advertising.

The text raises the question of why God would give prosperity, but withhold the ability to enjoy it. The Seeker has already answered that question in 2:25, 26 where he says,

“... for apart from him, who can eat or find enjoyment? To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness...” (Eccl. 2:25-26, NIV).

Notice the Seeker’s wording: “to the man who pleases him.” Do not understand this to mean that performing certain religious exercises or joining a church is a way of pleasing God. The way to please God is to have faith, to believe him, to take him at his Word and act on that Word. This is what pleases God: obedience based upon faith. God freely gives such a person the gift of enjoying all things as a gift from God. This is why a thankful heart is vital to the Christian life (1 Thess. 5:18).

Regardless of what wealth, possessions and honor a person has, if he does not have contentment, he has missed the boat. Eternally, his condition is worse than that of a stillborn child. Michael Eaton comments:

Despite family, longevity and fame, a man’s life may so miscarry as to incur life long dissatisfaction and an unmourned death. The *soul* in AV *his soul is not filled with good* is the whole inner life of man, and is used here as his capacity for feelings, inclinations, enjoyment,

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Deliverance: The Warning of Sodom and Gomorrah

Murray McLellan

From a tract compiled by Murray McLellan (an unworthy sinner upon whom God has bestowed his mighty grace. "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption – that as it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord'" [1 Cor. 1:30-31]).

I neither claim nor seek originality in the following article. I seek to magnify and exalt the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Unto Him belongs the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

Many events have come and gone since the creation of the world. Humanity has a long history, much of which the human race has forgotten entirely, and some of which only those with a love of history remember. Most by-gone events pass into obscurity with each new generation. God, in his Word, has purposefully preserved a record of certain historical episodes for our admonition and warning (1 Cor. 10:11). We want to look at one such event, recorded for us in Genesis 19. In this historical narrative, God lays out a warning, not just for the ancient participants, but also for contemporary readers. We who live in the final age before the ultimate wrath of God upon a God-rejecting and God-ignoring world may be delivered from that wrath by heeding the lesson of Sodom and Gomorrah.

In Genesis 19, we read that God had determined to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, all their inhabitants, and other cities from the plains of Jordan. What was it that had so angered God? What was it that had caused his wrath to abound to the point where he would destroy all the inhabitants of these cities? What was Sodom's sin? God answers that question in Ezekiel 16:49-50.

"Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the

poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit."

At this point in history, God tells the nation of Israel that she is guilty of the same sins that Sodom was. That is why he refers to Sodom as Israel's sister. Could not he say the same of our nation? Are we not a people of pride and selfishness? The people of Sodom lived for themselves and did their own thing. They neither sought God, nor lived for his glory and honor. They were lovers of themselves more than they were lovers of God. The citizens of Sodom had no problem seeking after religion or spirituality in the form of a god of their own making – a god who enabled them to do as they wished. Such seeking is idolatry!

Such is the pride of fallen man, who will not bow to the truth of God as revealed by God himself in the Scriptures. God is who he is. He told Moses, "I Am who I Am." God is not whoever you want him to be. Imagining God to be a certain way does not make him so. You may think that God would never destroy all the inhabitants of a city such as Sodom just because they had pride, but such an idea does not change the truth that God did in fact destroy Sodom.

In John 4:24, God clearly reveals that he is spirit, and those who worship him must do so in spirit and in truth. They must worship him "in

spirit," i.e., genuinely, not for selfish gain, and from the heart. And they must worship him "in truth," i.e., as God is in truth – as he really is. God is the God who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and who has promised an even greater destruction to come for those who walk in the same sin as the inhabitants of Sodom walked.

God also is a God who is pleased to display mercy in deliverance for those who heed his warning. As we pick up the story of Sodom in Genesis 19:12, we see that God has sent two messengers – angels in the form of men – to deliver Lot (Abraham's nephew), and those who would trust God's words as delivered by the mouths of these angels.

Then the men [the angels] said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city – take them out of this place! For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it."

So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, "Get up, get out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city!" But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking. (Gen. 19:12-14)

Most of those to whom Lot spoke

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satisfaction. To die unburied was the mark of a despised and unmourned end, (cf. Jer. 22:18f. and Ecc. 8:10). Better to miscarry at birth than to miscarry through out life.¹

The Seeker compares the dissatisfied rich man of verse 3 with a stillborn child in verse 4. The child comes into the world without any realization of life. It departs in darkness, or the realm of the dead. It has never seen the sun, or anything *under the sun*, and it will never know any existence of reality. However, the stillborn child has more rest than the discontented rich man. The child does not have to fight a meaningless and irksome life of despair *under the sun*.

In verses 3 through 6, the author raises the subject of long life. Normally, we view long life as a blessing from God. However, if one's life is a

1 Michael A. Eaton, *Ecclesiastes, An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1983), 106.

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prolonged time of misery, no one can view it as a blessing from God. It is really just a waiting period for death — and death is the common destination of all, no matter how long a given individual takes to get there. In verses 7 through 9, the Seeker returns to a theme he has addressed earlier: the vanity of work, wisdom, and ambition.

All man's efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied.

What advantage has a wise man over a fool? What does a poor man gain by knowing how to conduct himself before others?

Better what the eye sees than the roving of the appetite. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. (Ecc 6:7-9, NIV)

We must not take verse seven to mean the only reason any man works is to satisfy stomach hunger. Many people with full bellies have empty hearts and souls. We have appetites other than hunger that exert stronger influences on us. However, the main point is that no amount of labor, regardless of what it attains, can ever satisfy the human heart. Remember the words of our Lord, "Man shall not live by bread alone."

A wise man (verse 8) may, in one sense, be no better off than the fool, because his very wisdom gives him a greater capacity to see the potential of man, as well as the sin of man, that makes realization of that potential impossible. Wisdom, as we saw earlier, carries its own set of problems. Likewise, a fool may learn how to ingratiate himself in the eyes of others, yet he remains a fool. What has he really gained that is worth having? What price has he paid to gain so little?

Charles Bridges points out that verse 9 repeats the theme and message of the Book of Ecclesiastes as well as the whole of Scripture.

The sight of the eyes is the real-

ity before us. *The wandering of the desire* is the longing pursuit of some unattainable object — some phantom only imagined — never reached. The fruitless search only ends in *vanity and vexation of spirit*. Better therefore to enjoy what we have in possession, than to be roving up and down in anxious weariness. For what can be more wretched, than when the false pictures of the world palm themselves upon us for realities, when shadows begin to pass away, and there is no substance to supply their place! The true good that a man can have in this life, is to enjoy that which he hath in peace and rest, and not to *wander* in the straying and unsatisfied desires after that which he hath not. The *wandering desire* — "Loving to wander" — is indeed our nature. But under Divine Teaching the light is clear and strong; the eye and heart are fixed. One object fills every desire — "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Psalm 73:25). Everything is unreal, when placed beside this glorious treasure. Our position is not so much looking up to heaven from earth, as looking down from heaven to earth. And it is when we thus realize our rightful standing in heaven (Compare Eph. 2:6; Phil. 3:20) we rise above the dying vanities of earth. "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath" (Prov. 15:24). There is no *wandering* here. But if we do not find our rest here, truly it is a sickening picture. Our comforts are dashed with bitterness. Our whole sky is darkened with despondency.²

Earlier, in 1:9, 10, the Seeker wrote that there was "nothing new under the sun." Now, in 6:10, he states the same thing in slightly different terms. His long and serious search for truth and reality always hits the same wall. There really is nothing new under the sun.

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2 Charles Bridges, *Ecclesiastes, A Geneva Series Commentary* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1961), 127-28.

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO MUSLIM TERRORISM

Part 3—Current Issues

Clyde F. Autio

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father.... (Matt 5:43-45 KJV)

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matt 10:28 KJV)

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:31&32 KJV)

But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. (1 Cor. 8:6 KJV)

Review of the Problem

Must a free and open democratic government provide an impartial balance of respect for all religions? Is a war against Muslim terrorists another Crusade? How is it the same or different from the historic Crusades?

Modern Myths

Numerous red herrings and false ideas clutter the politics of terrorism warfare. Included among those notions are the following:

- *If we pull out of Iraq and Afghanistan, we will reduce terrorism against the United States.* This thought ignores the twenty-year history of repeated terrorist attacks that preceded our troops' entrance

into either Afghanistan or Iraq. Another twist to this argument suggests that Osama Bin Laden is infuriated at both Saudi Arabia and the United States because our deployed military desecrated holy sites in Saudi Arabia. We never stationed our troops in locations considered as 'holy' or that had any religious significance. There is no evidence to support the notion that our presence in Iraq is fostering terrorism. Muslims from other countries accomplish most of the terrorist strikes in Iraq. Our greatest pressure in Iraq is not from Iraqis. Foreign terrorists fight against the change to the Iraqi government that moves toward more freedom and away from the Jihad's intention to establish pure Islamic Taliban types of governments.

- *If the United States would work to reduce the poverty and hopelessness of young Muslims, we would reduce terrorist attacks.* Again, the cultural facts about the terrorists dispel any basis for this idea. None of the nineteen terrorists involved in 9/11 were either impoverished or without hope. They had enjoyed education opportunities, money for travel, and access to all the advantages a free country offers. They had not spent time in refugee camps, nor had they any personal reason to have a grievance against Israel or the United States. Their choice stemmed from a motivation to kill the infidels and to enter a glorious after-life. The four young men who committed the 17 July 2005 bombings in London were not living in deprived conditions. One was married with a child and a pregnant wife, one had a job

teaching school, and the others lived within the English mainstream. The government included their neighborhood in its program of providing facilities and opportunities so that they would be included in the benefits of the culture. However, one of those benefits, a secular and non-political storefront youth center funded by government, European Union and charitable funds, became a hub for radical dissent and the meeting place for these terrorists. The mother-in-law of one of the terrorists had been invited to Buckingham Palace to be recognized for her work among the Muslim community. At least one of the 17 July 2005 terrorists had been provided a weekly rental housing benefit that since 1999 had amounted to over \$47,000. The other three 7/17 terrorists had also received government subsidies. So, the willingness of the terrorists to accept government assistance and inclusive treatment did not dissuade them from their desire to rain havoc on their benefactors.

Significant evidence exists to suggest that many of the world's young Muslims have a sense of shame and low esteem. However, that is primarily the consequence of the stifled lifestyle imposed by their religious beliefs that look backwards and reject technology and modernization. A search of new patents since the mid-1980s will show that South Koreans have sought over ten times as many patents as has the entire

Reisinger—Cont. from page 4

That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he. (KJV)

To give something a name is to note it worthy of study or give it a specific character. However, everything worth recording has already been named and recorded. *That which has been* — the whole of what can be obtained from all sources using every method — wisdom — history — pleasure — honor — power — riches — fame — all — *has already been named*. The Psalmist said it better than we could,

LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.

Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.

Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee. (Ps 39:4-7, KJV)

The Psalmist and the Seeker express the same hope and confidence in the sovereignty of God. The Seeker is telling us that God has decreed that no human effort, regardless of how sincere and exacting, can find true happiness. We must receive enjoyment, in faith, as a gift of God. God made it that way. Proud and self-sufficient, fallen humanity does not like those terms and is ready to fight with God. We must learn three things from this text:

(1) God has decreed all things, including the creation of humanity. God has already known whatever has come to be before it happened. Before human life appeared on earth, it was named in the mind and thought of God.

(2) God knew everything about human beings before he created them. There were no surprises, including humanity's fall in Eden.

(3) The Seeker insists that all was decreed in spite of humanity. Human beings may not like the way God operates, but they cannot argue with God.

Man's original dignity, being made in the image of God, serves to highlight more clearly his present degradation. All things known and named are varying shades of the same vanity. No matter how highly man esteems himself in his own eyes, or is held in admiration by fellow creatures, the stamp of vanity is indelible. *It is known that it is man* — at best, but man. Bridges explains:

His religion is self-wrought. Whatever it be, it never brings him close to God. It always therefore leaves him short of peace with God. Man is its center. What is lacking is the teaching of humility. "Remember," speaks Bishop Taylor in his own eloquence — "what you were before you were begotten? Nothing. What were you in the first regions of your dwelling, before your birth? Uncleaness. What were you for many years after? Weakness. What in all your life? A great sinner. What in all your excellencies? A mere debtor to God — to your parents — to all the creatures."

A being — thus fraught with infirmity and corruption — a very worm in weakness and helplessness — can he *contend* with his Maker — infinitely *mightier than he* (Isa. 45:9)? Can he implead him and call him to account? "Nay, but, oh man, who are thou that replies against God?" (Romans 9:20). Learn the lesson of prostrate submission. Take thy proper place — "laying your hand on your mouth" (Job 40:4), and your mouth in the dust. To contend with God is to add madness to folly. To submit to God's sovereignty is your security and your rest.³

The more we know, the more visible becomes the vanity and futility of life. Arguing with God will only aggravate the problem and add to the vanity. Add up all the things that on the surface appear to be positive and you discover that man is none the better. Look at and combine all his words of rationalizing, boasting, and questioning; together they give no light or hope.

The more words, the more vanity, and what is man the better? (Eccl. 6:11, RSV)

In verse 12, the Seeker asks two questions. (1) Who really understands life and knows what is good for man, and (2) who can know what the future holds?

For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? For who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun? (Eccl. 6:12, KJV)

Where is the person who, without question, knows what is good for him or her? How many times have you and I been willing to do almost anything to get something we thought would simplify life or make it more enjoyable, and when we got it, we were soon trying to figure out how to get rid of it? Likewise,



There is a sense in which a child of God can answer both of these questions as they concern the

Reisinger—Cont. on page 13

Excerpt from: *We Preach Jesus Christ Acts 5:42*

C. H. Spurgeon

It is an old and trite saying that the ministers of the gospel may be divided into three kinds—the doctrinal, the experimental, and the practical. The saying is so often repeated that very few would contradict it. But it betrays at once, if it be true, the absence and lack of something essentially unnecessary for the church's success. Where is the preacher of Christ out of these? I propound this, that if a man be found a preacher of Christ, he is doctrinal, experimental, and practical. The *doctrinal* preacher generally has a limited range. He is useful, exceedingly useful, God constitutes him a barrier against the innovations of the times: he preaches upon his subjects so frequently that he is well versed in them, and becomes one of the armed men about the bed of Solomon.

But suppose the doctrinal preacher should have it all his own way, and there should be none others at all what would be the effect? See it in our Baptist churches about one hundred and fifty years ago. They were all *sound* and sound asleep. Those doctrines had preached them into lethargy, and had it not been for some few who started up and proposed the missions for the heathen, and who found but little sympathy at first, the church would have been utterly inactive. Now, I would not be hard with any, but there are some brethren still whose preaching might justly be summed up as being doctrinal, nothing more than doctrinal, and what is the effect of their ministry? Bitterness. They learn to contend not only earnestly for the

faith, but savagely for it. Certainly we admire their earnestness, and we thank God for their soundness, but we wish there were mingled with their doctrine a somewhat else which might tone down their severity and make them seek rather the unity and fellowship of the saints than the division and discord which they labor to create.

Again, I will refer you to the next class of preachers, the *experimental*. How delightful it is to sit under an experimental preacher! Perhaps of all ministries this one is the most useful—he who preaches the doubts, the fears, the joys, the ecstasies of the people of God. How often do the saints see the footsteps of the flock, and then they find the shepherd under an experimental minister! But do you know the effect of an experimental minister, purely so, I mean, when all else is put aside to make room for experience? There is one school of divines always preaching the corruption of the human heart. This is their style: “*Except thou be flayed alive by the law; except thou art daily feeling the utter rottenness of thine heart, except thou art a stranger to full assurance, and dost always doubt and fear; “Except thou abidest on the dunghill dost scrape thyself with a potherd, thou art no child of God.*” Who told you that?

This has been the preaching of some experimental preachers, and the effect has been just this. Men have come to think the deformities of God's people to be their beauty. They are like certain courtiers of the reign of

Richard III, who is said by history to have had a hump upon his back and his admirers stuffed their backs that they might have a graceful hump too. And there be many who, because a minister preaches of doubts and fears, feel they must doubt and fear too, and then that which is both uncomfortable to themselves and dishonoring to God comes to be the very mark of God's people. This is the tendency of experimental preaching, however judiciously managed, when ministers harp on that string and on that alone: the tendency is either to preach the people into a soft and savory state, in which there is not a bit of manliness or might, or else into that dead and rotten state in which corruption out swells communion, and the savor is not the perfume of the king's ointments, but the stench of a corrupt and filthy heart.

Take also the *practical* preacher; who would say a word against this good man? He stirs the people up, excites the children of God to holy duties, promotes every excellent object and is in his way an admirable supplement to the two other kinds of ministers. But sit under the practical preacher; sit under him all the year round and listen to his people as they come out. There is one who says, “*the same thing over again—Do, do, do, nothing but do.*” There is a poor sinner yonder just gone down the front steps. Follow him. “Oh,” says he, “I came here to find out what *Christ* could do for me, and I have only been told what I must do for myself.”

Now this is a great evil, and persons who sit under such a ministry be-

Autio—Cont. from page 5

Muslim world. The same ratio applies to internet usage. While they feel nostalgic for the once glorious days of the Muslim world, and lament that today their world is inferior to the west, they fail to acknowledge that they have supported religious leaders that have inhibited advancement. In the 1920s, the Saud family had to choose very carefully how to modernize so that they would not have a conflict with Wahhabism. Younger Muslims find it extremely difficult to accept the reversal of their religious heredity. They have gone from once having world recognition and domination for many cultural contributions to being irrelevant in any of the modern scientific developments or cultural advancements. There are many angry young people in the world; yet it appears that only angry young Muslims assume the right to become walking self-destructive bombers who kill innocent bystanders, many of whom are other Muslims.

- *The Quran and the Bible have much in common.* This argument is a corollary to the argument that the two religions are compatible. We discussed the lack of similarity between the two religions earlier. In practice, as well as in precept, there is no similarity. Christianity, although it has had some bad adherents who have done some bad things, has proven to be the greater advocate for the rights of people. Historically, Christians have championed the elevation of women, the elimination of slavery, the proliferation of excellent educational institutions, and the founding of innumerable state-of-the-art health-care facilities. The Christian concept of liberty of conscience has been the basis for free thinking that has led to the world's greatest scientific discoveries and techno-

logical advancements. Islam does not have such a record.

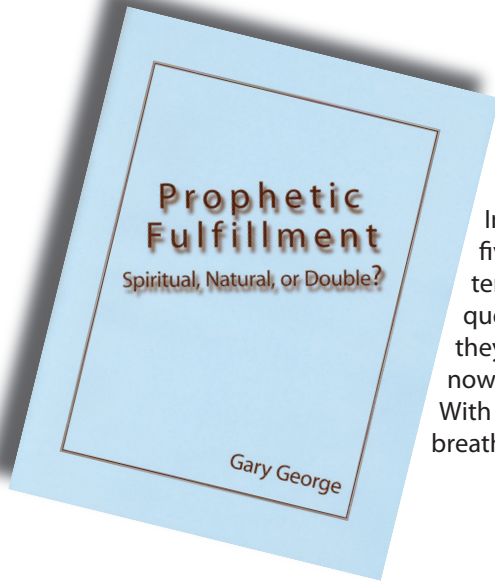
We must understand this about the Quran, or more specifically, about its adherents: the Quran means what they want it to mean when they want it to mean what they want it to mean. In other words, studying the text reveals less knowledge about the practice of the religion than does the study of its adherents and practitioners. For example, slavery has been abolished in the Christian world, yet it thrives in the Muslim world. The perpetuation of this untruth about the similarity between the Bible and the Quran misrepresents the man-god relationship in both cases and compounds the problematic freedom of religion for both religions. The complete history of both religions reveals that in practice they have nothing in common and share only the ability of their adherents to exercise their faith in non-Muslim nations.

- *Mutual respect will erase the great divide between the Muslims and Christians or western world.* This proposal is impossible as long as the Muslim world adheres to its tenet that only Islam is the true religion. While Christians believe in the truth and exclusivity of their religion, they do not forcefully impose it upon other nations or even upon the non-Christian residents of their own nation. Saudi Arabia insists that all foreigners properly respect Saudi holy days and follow Saudi religious customs. They prohibit the practice of all other religions within their nation. America has given Muslims in America the same religious protections that Christians enjoy, yet there is no similar accommodation afforded Christians in Saudi Arabia. As long as the tenets of the Wahhaby sect prevail, there will be no elimination of the Muslim-sponsored con-

flict. When Muslims recognize other faiths, they do so in such a way that makes the other faith inferior to Islam. Aided by naïve liberal allies, American Muslims are asking that the Koran replace the Bible when they are required to take an oath. This is another example of American political correctness that ignores the Christian basis of our founding heritage, traditions, and jurisprudence, and disregards the lack of rights given to American Christians in the Muslim world.

- *Saudi Arabia is a trusted friend.* At this time, there is little evidence that Saudi Arabia has taken major steps to stop the flow of money to terrorist organizations or to eliminate the teaching of hatred towards Christians in Saudi funded schools throughout the Muslim world. Nor have they aggressively participated in the identification, capture, and punishment of all terrorists or become an outspoken advocate of the practice of a restrained form of the Muslim religion. A first step toward reducing terrorism is the elimination of both hate-based teachings and financial support; this has not occurred. The United States can take a leading role in stemming the hate speech spread through Muslim religious programs and educational institutes by putting a bright light on those who promote and condone hate speech. Evil perpetrators never like to be in the bright lights of exposure.
- *Anti-American Muslim terrorism would stop if the United States would pull out of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.* This is a red herring intended to leave Israel without sufficient support to insure national viability. The goal of the Arab states is the complete elimination of Israel, as the stated last step in the Third Great Jihad. Palestine is a pseudo-state for the purpose of

Autio—Cont. on page 12



A new book by Gary George With an Introduction by John G. Reisinger

In *Prophetic Fulfillment, Spiritual, Natural or Double?* Gary George examines in detail five “another” promises made in the Old Testament Scriptures. They are: another temple, another priest, another king, another prophet, and another covenant. The questions examined are: Are these promises spiritually fulfilled now—in the church, will they be fulfilled naturally in the future, or is there a double fulfillment—a spiritual one now and a natural one in the post- church age? With the plethora of prophetic views so prominent in Christian circles today, this is a breath of fresh air, a must read!

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I appreciated the book and found it helpful. Actually, I found it exhilarating.

Carl Muller, Pastor, Trinity Reformed Baptist Church, Burlington, Ontario

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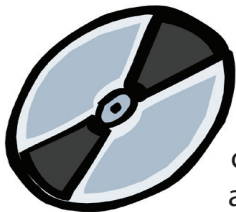
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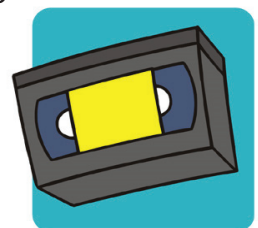
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harassing and weakening Israel. If one is to accept Palestine as a legitimate historical nation, one should be able to find in its history such facts as:

1. the names of its capital and major cities;
2. the location of its borders;
3. the names of leaders that preceded Arafat;
4. its form of government;
5. its source of economy and type of currency;
6. the distinct ethnicity of its people;
7. public records relating to its cultural and development.

Palestine could not continue to prosecute its terrorism against Israel without the support of the surrounding Arab nations. Yet, those same Arab nations will not provide humanitarian relief to the displaced Palestine 'citizens' that are sheltered in refugee camps by permitting them to be assimilated into their national populations. To those nations, the Palestinians are their expendable foot soldiers in the war to annihilate Israel. Dave Hunt's book, *Judgment Day!*, provides excellent documentation of the events, purposes and consequences of the Israel-Arab conflict and future expectations.

- *The United States must prepare plans for an early and swift withdrawal from Iraq.* Undoubtedly, this is one of the worst proposals that the United States could undertake or suggest. A review of the location, nature, and types of terrorist strikes over the past twenty years yields an almost universal conclusion that those strikes occur under one of several conditions: assaults

against populations that lack adequate defensive protection, if any at all, or strikes amidst fearful people. The Muslim method for decimating the Christian populations throughout Africa has been to use the larger and stronger government military assets as their cover to rape, torture, enslave, and murder defenseless Christian people. They have never undertaken a similar task where the subjects of terrorism were able to mount an effective military response. In the past forty years, Muslim armies have always suffered dishonorable defeats when fighting a military type of war. All of the Israeli-Arab and both United States-Iraqi wars proved to be disastrous for the Arab forces.

Muslim terrorists choose to strike where they perceive the population or government can be easily manipulated through the fear of further terrorist strikes. Fear, following pre-Iraq war terrorist activities, neutralized Turkey from being America's ally. Media-hyped public outcry against Spain's involvement in Iraq precipitated the rail bombing in Spain. With one series of bombing, terrorists were able to change the outcome of a national election and force the withdrawal of Spain's troops that were supporting the Iraq liberation coalition forces. A media-sponsored attack on Tony Blair for his support of the United States and a sense that the public would rather capitulate than risk staying the course preceded the London bombing. Fear of retribution among the Iraqi population has provided cover for the foreign terrorists who are using terrorism to hamper military operations and to dampen the Iraqi citizenry's appetite for a free government.

The same strategy failed on 9/11 as a president willing to make the tough courageous choices led the United States to fight terrorism

and all of its supporters and not just to launch token retaliatory strikes. It is for this reason, alone, that it is imperative that Christians demand that their leaders and the media of their country unite to fight and stop Muslim terrorists. National unification of purpose must not only fight terrorism and terrorist states overseas, but also aggressively pursue domestic policies that will deny the perpetrators of terrorism the use of our various freedoms as a cover to breed further terrorism, whether it be in their religious facilities, schools, universities, or communication systems. The greater purpose of those freedoms is for the well-being of the nation, and not for the encouragement of sedition. We must hold the media accountable for its role in public opinion, and we must make the moderate Muslims realize that their own freedom of religion depends on their active protection of the nation that gives that freedom.

Conclusion

While the history of Islam is replete with atrocities and terrorism, it is incorrect to assume that all Muslims are currently associated or sympathetic to those practices. The problem facing the United States in general and Christians in particular is how to respond properly to the Muslim body so that we have the opportunity to witness to their need for Christ and not condone their religious excesses or laws that we view to be offensive towards Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The following suggestions might provide some springboards for further discussion and writing:

- Christians must never stand idly by while the media and national leaders erroneously suggest that the two religions are similar and have much in common. Christians should be quick to deny this type

Autio—Cont. on page 19

Reisinger—Cont. from page 6

most important things in our existence, both in the present and in the future. We know for sure who we are, where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going when we leave here. We know where to find the Bread of Life that satisfies the soul in its hunger to know truth and reality. We drink from a well of water that quenches that deep thirst to know God and fellowship with him.

Walter Kaiser, in his commentary, includes the following excellent review of chapter six:

“Never judge a book by its cover,” goes the old saying, and men should never get confused about the true state of others’ affairs by looking merely at their outward welfare. A man may possess wealth, honor, numerous children, long life and virtually every outward good that anyone could possibly imagine; yet he can still be a very broken, dissatisfied, and unhappy person.

Indeed, this is a weight that weighs heavily on men (6:1): God may grant a man wealth, possessions, honor, and virtually anything his heart wants without also granting him the ability to enjoy any of it (6:2). Therein lies the point of Solomon: things are not always what they seem to be. Prosperity without the divine gift of enjoyment is nothing. In fact, God-given wealth without the God-given power to enjoy it is a major malady. Worst of all is that a stranger, not even his own kin, consumes the whole estate from which a man had only joylessly partaken portions.

So immense is this deprivation of enjoyment that even if the case just mentioned were reversed and, instead of being childless and leaving his possessions to a total stranger, that same man was blessed with an abundance of children; and if, instead of departing from this earthly scene quickly and letting a stranger receive a bonanza of goods, he lived for an unusually long number of days; still, if he were not given the

divine gift of enjoying it all, death at birth would have been preferable to what had happened to such a man (6:3). A stillborn baby is free from all the suffering of the joyless rich man and has more rest than he does (6:4, 5).

After all the concessions made in verses 3-5, we see that even if an inordinate number of days were offered to this man, they must come to an end. Then he, too, must go to the same place as the stillborn child (6:6). That “one place” is, as seen in 3:20, the grave. What then? If even the longest life eventually terminates having yielded no enjoyment, not to mention any prospect of anything to follow, what is the benefit, or advantage, of all those years? Although others may have looked on with envious eyes, the truth is that the extension was not what it appeared to be; it was a compound sorrow.

Whereas the man’s labor was continually aimed at his insatiable desire for pleasure, he never arrived (6:7). No man, be he wise, poor, or rich can satisfy his desires on his own (6:8). True, making do with what we possess is better than striving for what we do not have, for all the wishing for things we want is worthless (6:9).

The reason riches fail to yield any happiness rests on the unalterable ordinance of God (6:10). Mortal man, the creation of God, cannot set aside or overcome that divinely established connection between earthly things and the dissatisfaction with those things apart from God. Try as man will to wrestle and contest God’s decision to link these two things — the more he talks, the more vapid, empty, and unsatisfactory the situation becomes (6:11). All words are useless; man might just as well acknowledge his limitations and begin immediately to fear God. The ordinance of God dictates the capacity of worldly things to yield enjoyment; in fact, it must be observed that often worldly prosperity only increases the emptiness and dissatisfaction. We might ask, in the words of Paul in Romans 9:20, “Who art thou, oh man, to talk back to God?” Do you know what is good for

man? (6:12). Does any man know what the future holds? Of course, no one knows except God. Therefore, no one can say what will be the real advantage of one thing or another for himself or others.

If every one of the above cases has shown the inadequacy of judging the fairness and goodness of the plan of God by observing only external features, then the providence of God may not have so many exceptions as we may have thought as we began to apply the truth of 3:1 — that there is a time and season for everything under heaven — especially when compared to the apparent success of the wicked. Prosperity may not always be what it seems. Therefore, let us seek to know God, to be content with such gifts as He gives us, and to receive the accompanying gift of enjoyment from His hands.⁴

In chapter seven, the Seeker depicts situations where a particular choice is far better for us than the opposite choice. Just as prosperity is not always good, it is equally true that adversity is not always bad. Many of the best things that ever happened to us grew out of hard and painful situations.

But ... that is the next chapter.

⁴ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Ecclesiastes, Everyman’s Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), 80-82.

**Shall we receive good from God,
and shall we not receive evil?”**

Job 2:10 ESV

A Memorial to Richard Barker

Isaiah 53:1: “Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”

On October 9, 2005, Richard Barker, our dear brother, father, and friend, departed the church here on earth and was gathered to the great assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect. To honor the memory of my father sufficiently, I must also mention his dear wife, Marie Theresa, whom the Lord received unto himself on September 26, 2003. My father often remarked that this precious woman loved him deeply, sacrificed tremendously for him, and traveled almost anywhere with him. She remained married to him until death parted them just months shy of sixty years. Many of you who attend the Bunyan Conference will remember them as the sweet older couple who sat together in the front row, faithfully, every year.

Richard Barker was industrious and energetic by nature; his conversion during WW II set him on a course of unwavering determination to avoid compromise in following Jesus Christ. He was determined to follow Jesus Christ unashamedly, boldly, and loyally: regardless of the effort or the cost, even if it meant losing his life only to gain it in the end. His dedication to establishing a ministry would inspire him on several occasions to sell all his possessions, take four, six, or nine (depending on the particular stage of growth of the family) of his ten children, along with a nursing wife, and travel from Maine to places such as Cold Stream, Canada, San Francisco, and Washington State.

In a world filled with humanism and non-rational thinking resulting from modernism or theological liberalism, my father had a tremendous love for the truth. An avid student of science, political science, and history (in particular Baptist history), he was a prolific reader; he had a great memory for facts and events of history, and was like a walking encyclopedia. But of all

his studies, studying the Scripture (1 Tim. 4:16) was his greatest joy. For him, the Word of God was life and bread for a hungry soul. Not only did he devour the Word; he proclaimed it to others. His regular practice, even up to a day or two before he died, was to walk a five-mile loop around town, with a pocket full of tracts. Some of these tracts were ones he had written himself; others were tracts like “Why We Like Tulips.”; My father engaged any and all he would meet, asking, “What is your spiritual orientation?” with the expectation to proclaim the truth, the good news of Jesus Christ.

My father wanted his relationships with both God and man to be authentic and genuine. Some people thought he was too aggressive in presenting what he believed. I think he did that intentionally, knowing that we usually will never move from where we are in our thinking unless someone challenges us honestly to do so. Some have commented that my father provoked them and challenged them to think, to study, to know, and to believe. Brother Gary George, speaking at my father’s funeral service, commented, “Brother Barker has sown a lot of seeds in this area; we look forward to the harvest.”

In his relationship with God, my father loved the Savior. Some of his favorite times were at a table with a simple loaf of bread and common grape juice, remembering a Savior who shed his precious blood on the cross. My father had faith in a God who loved him genuinely and intentionally. This is why my father loved the doctrine of Sovereign Grace. The Sovereign Grace of God is a love that ordains the salvation of those who are helpless, hopeless, and dead, and determines to lift their heads, redeem them, and give them eternal life. Sovereign Grace portrays man as a total sinner and it portrays God as a total Savior. Nothing is as sweet as knowing what we fully are, only to know what a Savior he fully is.

This is the man, Richard Barker, that I remember. Like so many others whom we have had the privilege to know, he will be sorely missed.
His son, Ted

Spurgeon—Cont. from page 7

come lean, starveling things. I would that practical preachers would listen to our farmers, who always say it is better to put the whip in the manger than upon the horse’s back. Let them feed the people with food convenient for them, and they will be practical enough but all practice and no promise, all exhortation and no sound doctrine, will never make the man of God perfect and zealous for good works.

But what am I driving at in bringing up these three sorts of ministers? Why, just this: to show you that there is one minister who can preach all this, without the dangers of any one of the others but with the excellencies of the whole. And who is he? Why, any man in the world who preaches Christ. If he preaches Christ’s person he must preach *doctrine*. If I preach Christ I must preach him as the covenant head of his people, and how far am I

then from the doctrine of election? If I preach Christ I must preach the efficacy of his blood, and how far am I removed then from the great doctrine of an effectual atonement? If I preach Christ I *must* preach the love of his heart, and how can I deny the final perseverance of the saints? If I preach the Lord Jesus as the great Head and King, how far am I removed from divine Sovereignty?

Must I not, if I preach Christ per-

McLellan—Cont. from page 3

would not heed his warning. The people of Sodom saw no danger. They believed everything would continue as it had from the beginning of creation (see 2 Pet. 3:3-7). They felt they were alright. Yet, their belief and security did not save them from destruction with brimstone and fire under the condemnation of God. They had ignored God and did not seek him whose hand held their life and breath. They did not love the true and holy God, nor did they glorify him or worship him as he himself commanded.

Many today will not heed the warning of those who have read the Word of God. They smile smugly to themselves, thinking that because they do not believe it, it is not so. Oh, how many people are now in hell, who ignored the truth and refused to believe that God would judge them and send them there! God says it is true – through his messengers who proclaim, not their own word, but God’s Word.

Scripture informs us that others were angry with Lot. This still happens today. People become angry with the messengers for proclaiming the truth – the very truth that is for their good, for their deliverance. Perhaps even you, dear reader, are burning inside over the message of this article. You want to believe that this is just my interpretation of the Bible. However, the Bible speaks clearly.

sonally, preach his doctrines? I believe they are nothing but the natural outgrowth of that great root thought, or root substance rather, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who will preach Christ fully will never be lax in doctrine. And what better *experience* can you preach than in preaching Christ? Would you preach the sufferings of the saints, preach *his* agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion; for the true sufferings of the saints are

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. (Rom. 1:18)

The soul who sins shall die. (Ezek. 18:4b)

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment. (Heb. 9:27)

Jesus says that he “*will come on a day when he [the servant] is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*” (Matt. 24:50-51)

These will go away into everlasting punishment ... (Matt. 25:46)

The Bible clearly proclaims that a greater destruction than that of Sodom is coming. God has not yet judged, but he will. Though God suffers long, yet he will not put up with sin forever. When he judges, and the angel of death comes for you, how can you – a guilty sinner – stand? In the Day of Judgment, we all must appear before the infinite, holy, and all-powerful God of the universe. Oh, when his wrath is kindled but a little, what an awesome and terrible thing!

In that day, the Scripture tells us, he will not pity. He will not spare. What value will your feeble “good works” and religious ceremonies be to you in that day? Isaiah declares, “But we are all like an unclean thing, and

in fellowship with him. If you would preach their joys, preach *his* resurrection, his ascension, and his advent; you are never far from the joys of the saints when you are near to the joys of Christ; for did not he say, “*My joy shall be in them that their joy may be full*”? And what better *practice* can be preached than preaching Christ? Of every virtue he is the pattern; of the perfection of human character he is the very mirror; of everything

all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6a). These filthy rags cannot cover your sin. God explores your heart – your past – your deeds – your thoughts and desires and intents – your failure to do all the good you ought to have done. God’s testimony is that you are guilty. Does not your own heart testify to your guilt as a sinner? God alone has the authority to judge – to save or damn justly.

As we continue to look at the passage in Genesis 19, we see that God is merciful and has determined and is willing to save sinners, though they are worthy of damnation.

When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, “Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.” And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, “Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains lest you be destroyed.” ... Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But his wife looked back

McLellan—Cont. on page 16

that is holy and of good report, he is the abiding incarnation. He cannot fail, then, to be a good doctrinal, experimental, practical preacher, who preaches Christ. Did you ever know a congregation grow less spiritual by a minister preaching Christ? Did you ever know them to get full of doubts and fears by preaching Christ? Did you ever hear of their getting lax in sentiment by his preaching Christ?

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McLellan—Cont. from page 15

behind him, and became a pillar of salt. And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD. Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace.” (Gen. 19:15-17, 24-28)

Even as God called Lot out of the city of destruction and delivered him, today – if you will heed God’s voice – if you will listen to his warning – he will deliver you from the great day of his wrath. You need a great deliverer. No mountain will hide anyone in the day that God judges the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. You need a greater rock, because you need deliverance, not from the destruction of a physical city, but from the destruction and condemnation earned by your own sin. Jesus Christ is the mighty rock whom sinners need. God struck him on the cross in the place of sinners and opened a cleft, where sinners can find a refuge (Ex. 33:18-22). Jesus alone can deal with our sins. He alone could bear the wrath aimed at sinners and die under its judgment as a perfect and holy substitute for all who turn from their sin, self-righteousness, pride, and deception that they are good enough – and come to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance and faith.

No baptism, no last rites performed by another human being can save you.

But as many as received Him [Jesus Christ], to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12-13)

Would you be a child of God? Take

your sins and your righteousness and pile them up as a heap of rubbish to be burned. Your righteousness is just as loathsome as your sin. Trust Christ alone for all things. Trust his blood, shed on Calvary, to cleanse you entirely from all sin. Trust his righteousness for your entire acceptance with God. Trust Christ alone.

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness:
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.



(from “The Solid Rock” by Edward Mote, 1797-1874)

Have you been delivered? You do not have much time. None of us knows how much time we have, and time passes rapidly. You might lose your mind. Your heart could give out. There

are multitudes of ways that people meet their end. Today, heed his voice. Confess your sin. Acknowledge that you deserve his wrath, for your sin is great against him. Then look – look to the promise of God, who declares, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” Humble yourself before him. He alone can rescue you. That is what he was doing on the cross. It was a rescue mission for all who repent and entrust themselves to him! Why should you perish when there is a great deliverer, who, through his work on the cross, reconciles sinners to God, saving them to the uttermost?

Again, hear the Word of our God:

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward [recompense], how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him. (Heb. 2:1-3)

What was the message first spoken by the Lord? “From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (Matt. 4:17).

Heed the testimony of God. It is sure. If you say to yourself and to God (before whom all things – all thoughts – are open and laid bare), “I do not care!” you only show how little you grasp of the power of God and his wrath against sin. You who wince at pain; you who flinch when you touch something hot; you who would flee a burning house – you are rushing toward the greatest pain, from which you will not be able to flinch or flee. Oh, the horror of that day! Wake up! Wake up, sinner! Do you not see that the wrath of God abides on you? Listen to God’s testimony of Jesus Christ the Lord, who himself is the only refuge for sinners. Take his hand; take his yoke upon you (Matt. 11:28-30), and do not look back.

As the ark was the only form of rescue for Noah, so Christ is our only hope of salvation. As the cleft in the rock was the only safe place for Moses so that God’s presence would not consume him, so Christ is our only safe place. As the angel sent from God delivered Lot, so the Son sent from God is able to deliver sinners who surrender to him in faith. How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

For those who hear the truth and yet reject the warning of God and the great salvation found in the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus declares plainly, “But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you” (Matt. 11:24). Heed the warning from the history of Sodom and Gomorrah; flee from the wrath to come by trusting in the only escape that God provides – the deliverance that comes from the Lord Jesus Christ. Ω

Seefried—Cont. from page 1

to be omniscience to judge rightly a brother in Christ. “Who are you?” we are asked. We should repeat these sobering words in our minds and hearts each time we find ourselves tempted to judge another Christian.

This searching question contains an important definitive concept. The one we judge belongs, not to us, but to the Lord. Paul writes, “Who are you to judge another’s servant?” That person belongs to the Lord and not to us. In the Christian realm, whether among pastors or the people of the church, when we judge, we criticize someone purchased by the blood of Christ. That purchase makes that person Christ’s own possession; when we have a critical spirit toward that Christian, we are treading on the thin ice of criticizing the work of the Holy Spirit in that person’s heart.

Sadly, fallen human nature too easily equates membership with ownership. We often think that when someone is a member of a church, he or she “belongs” to that church. Some pastors treat people in the church this way, as if Christians belonged to an organization or to a pastor. To think this way is to think falsely. All Christians belong to the Lord. What we do with individual Christians within the organizational structure of a local assembly must never encroach upon the sovereign possession of our Lord. In the Christian community, there should be a real sense of belonging, but that concept of belonging must never translate into ownership. No one owns the Christian except the one who bought that Christian with his own blood, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ is the master of his property, and as such, the Holy Spirit is free to deal with and develop that property as he sees fit. For us to stand in judgment on another Christian is to question the work of God in the life of his servant. Are we going to claim that Christ is

doing a terrible job of developing the spirituality of his child? Is not an accusation against another Christian really an accusation against our Lord and his work in the heart of the believer? We look at other Christians and either like them or dislike them, but seldom do we stop to think beyond what we see. Our invisible Lord is behind every Christian; a charge against a Christian is a charge against that Christian’s Lord. If we could see clearly that an attack on a brother is an attack on that brother’s Lord, then our mouths quickly would go silent when we are tempted to attack others.

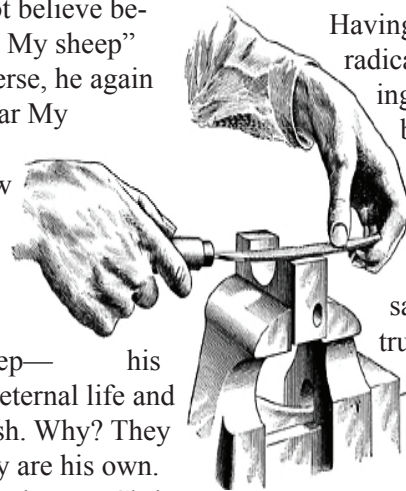
The statement that the Christian is the servant of the Lord has many implications. It is helpful to consider who really “owns” believers. In John 10:26–30, Jesus uses the pronoun *my* quite often. He tells the unbelieving Jews that they did not believe because they were “not My sheep” (v. 26). In the next verse, he again states, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (v. 27). Again, we see to whom the sheep belong. The Lord says “My sheep!” To these sheep—his sheep—Christ gives eternal life and they shall never perish. Why? They belong to Christ; they are his own. The sheep have been given to Christ by the Father (v. 28). The entire matter of the security of the believer for eternity rests upon the fact that Christ bought the sheep with his blood, and they are now his own. He will protect his own, and they will never perish.

Able to Stand

Once Paul establishes this fact of ownership, he addresses the derivational principle of who makes the Christian stand firm in the faith: God makes his children stand. If there is confusion on Christian liberty, here is its primary source. If Christians fully embraced and lived this verse, there

would be less manipulation of others in the church. Because some Christians do not like, or do not believe, the underlying principle in this verse, they take responsibility for propping other believers into a standing position. This attitude has plagued the church throughout her history, but has been especially prevalent in the twentieth century.

Christians become confused because they fail to understand that the Lord uses various means to the end of causing his children to stand. Of course, the believer needs Bible study and biblical preaching. Of course, discipleship is of great importance. Of course, pulpits need to issue warnings against sin. However, at the end of the day, God, not man, causes the Christian to stand. If God does not cause one to stand, then one will not stand.



Having forsaken the reality of radical conversion and having replaced it with easy-believism, the church now holds its breath when anyone professes saving faith in Christ. However, just as we saw in John 10:26–30, true believers belong to the Lord. That means they are being kept by Christ and the Father. We cannot allow

faulty theology or a weak doctrinal position on salvation to jeopardize the central fact of this text: God causes the believer to stand. God is not to blame for those who walk away. If a church preaches a salvation that barely gets a person inside the door of faith, that church is to blame for the large numbers who walk away from involvement in the local church, the place where God can grow them more readily.

Growth—A Certainty

True believers will mature and

Seefried—Cont. from page 17

grow in knowledge and love for the Lord. Not trusting this certainty, churches often establish rules and regulations in the name of “helping believers stand.” The Pharisees did this in our Lord’s time, and the Lord called them whitewashed burial chambers filled with dead men’s bones (Matt. 23:27). They cleaned up the outside, but inside they were filled with rot. Despite Christ’s rebuke of the Pharisees, churches regulate every area of our behavior—what we wear, what we eat, what we drink, and what we do. This springs from a fundamental distrust of Christ’s ability to make a believer stand.

The underlying problem is a lack of faith in the power of salvation, the power of the Word, the power of Christ, and the power of the Spirit. Listen to these words: “He will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand” (Rom. 14:4). “God is able” are words to heed. God is able—and we are not. Only God is able to reach deep inside the heart to do the necessary work of conforming the believer to the image of Christ. We can teach the Word and thus give the Holy Spirit ammunition, but we cannot make any person obey the Word of God. Only God is able to do that, and he will do that for all true believers. We do not trust in men, nor do we trust in methods. Rather, when it involves making a believer stand, we trust in the Lord.

In Philippians 1:6 we read, “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” Here again, we find that it is God who began the work of salvation in a believer’s heart. First, God initiated salvation through the new birth.

Second, God will complete the work of salvation in the believer. Note the strength of the word *will*. God will do this without failure because he is God and is able to do this. Nowhere in Scripture do we find that God will do this work in a believer *if* we add rules and regulations or judge that brother. How confident are we in God when it comes to making other believers stand? Do we really believe that God will complete the work of salvation in a believer’s life without our propping them up with our own personal convictions? We should have the same confidence as the apostle Paul does in this verse.

Philippians 2:12-13 provides even more confidence that God will make them stand. These verses admonish us to work out our own salvation with tremendous care. Please note that it



is a singular “own salvation,” not a community salvation that is worked on by everyone. We exercise this care, not because everything depends on us, but because “it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (v. 13). God is at work, and he will surely accomplish his work—a work that deals with his will being done in our lives, a work that brings

us to do what God commands us to do. Verse 13 implies that when God works, he works powerfully. Our intervention in the life of others, far from forwarding the work of God, can actually hinder the work of God in a believer’s life, as Paul will later indicate when he warns against causing others to stumble (Rom. 14:13-15).

Second Principle Restated

Worry about a true Christian making it to the end is biblically baseless. God exhorts us to persevere and so we must, but ultimately, God himself, by his grace, brings us safely home. God does not birth children who never grow, never progress, and do not continue in the faith. Slow growth may result from one of two problems: first, there may be a lack of genuine conversion. In this situation, no amount of human-made rules will help. Second, a Christian may be part of an assembly that offers spiritual milk, but no meat. Here too, human-made rules are no substitute for the whole counsel of God.

Hear again these words in Romans: “For God is able to make him stand.” This applies to the issue of Christian liberty, not to the issue of sin. When someone is living in open sin, doing what God has instructed him or her not to do, then we must speak. That is not the discussion here, however. Let us not question the ability of God in the matter of salvation and growth.

Remember, all true Christians belong to the Lord. We are his property. We are bought with a price. Thus, we are to keep our hands off the lives of our brothers and sisters in the matter of how they work out their own salvation. To restate our principle, it is God, not man, who makes people stand. Ω

Autio—Cont. from page 12

- of a connection based upon the factual evidence of religious practices and teachings.
- There must be a movement to separate policy discussions about Muslim terrorism from ideologies. Discourse along those lines can have no consensus because there are no underlying terms of reference as to the central well-being of the nation. Historically, discussions such as this proved constructive only because there was a sense of common good derived from our national core beliefs and practices. This process has become clouded in the post-Christian era. National unity will present a formidable front for the continuation of terrorism as a means of dissuading the United States from a program to retreat from promoting our values in the Middle East.
 - Christians should act boldly to expose those universities that tolerate the teaching and distribution of anti-American and anti-Christian information. They must demand that Christians have the same rights and privileges as do all other members of this society and pursue a

policy of non-tolerance toward any segregated hate-speech.

- The Christian leadership must promote a program to redevelop biblical worldviews in the members of their assemblies. It is impossible to expect a nation that has wandered away from God to return to those ethics if the very proponents of those values are not properly informed. Throughout the Old Testament history books, God protected or restored the leaders of Israel and Judah from their persecution after they repented of their sins and begged for forgiveness. See 2 Chronicles 33:10-13; 2 Chronicles 32:24-27; 1 Kings 21:27-29; and other such passages that show how anxious God is to restore his people once they have sought his face. *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land”* (2 Chron. 7:14).
- Christians must seek the solutions to the nation’s problems through people and acts of righteousness. Good government will correctly

address all issues, not just a few of the hot-button items, from a proper moral perspective. No longer can one expect any political party, movement, or persuasion to act with the consistency that stems from a proper world view. We must reject the kind of government that heeds left-wing or right-wing spin of a few issues and skips the rest. Integrity, honesty and morality must be present in all deliberations and judgments.

Through God, the nation has, in its own power, the ability to respond effectively not only to Muslim terrorism, but also to all other issues that are a threat to our well-being. The Bible speaks of the erosion of houses built on sand, (Matt. 7:26), foxes spoiling the vines (Song of Sol. 2:15), and a little leaven spoiling the whole lump (1 Cor. 5:6) as a warning to God’s people that we must seek holiness and righteousness in all of our conduct, and not just in a few major social issues. The Christian response to Muslim terrorism is to seek our strength in God, understand the purposes and goal of Islam, seek wisdom in when and how to fight the evil, and be prepared to be God’s witness to a lost and hurting culture. Ω

Spurgeon—Cont. from page 15

Did you ever hear a whisper that men became unholy in their lives because they heard too much about Christ? I think that all the excellence of all ministers may be gathered up into the teaching of the man who can preach Christ every day in the week, while there will not be any of the evil connected with the other forms of preaching. Ω

LOVE,
FAITH,
PEACE,
HARMONY

Christian Love

“If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing!” 1 Corinthians 13:2

LOVE is a grace which many professing Christians think far too little about; but it is of infinite value in the eyes of God. Love is the most characteristic feature of Christ’s image in a renewed man. Love is the most precious fruit of grace; and yet the fruit which too many of His professed followers seem to think themselves hardly under any obligation to cultivate.

Christian love is that benevolent disposition or kindness, which consists in good-will to all creatures, and which leads us, as we have opportunity, to promote their happiness.

Nothing can be a substitute for love.

Christianity is love, not a slavish attendance on ceremonies; not receiving the sacraments; not zeal for orthodoxy; not a form of church government; not belonging to any particular church.

God’s eternal thoughts and purposes in election, Christ’s redeeming work upon the cross, the Spirit’s omnipotent agency in regeneration, are not merely to bring us under a particular ecclesiastical regimen—but to deliver us from the dominion of selfishness, and place us under the reign of love—and thus make us like God!

If an individual is destitute of love, he has no saving religion. He may be zealous for the forms of Christianity, but he is destitute of its living spirit.

And now, my dear friends let me entreat you to examine yourselves concerning this great essential of the Christian character. Are you experimentally acquainted with this disposition? Is this your religion? Is your temperament thus molded? Is that one word *love* characteristic of your spirit? Has God’s love to you, changed you into its own likeness? Do you know what it is to have pride, passion, envy, malice, selfishness—subdued, repressed, resisted—by a meek, gentle, lowly, forgiving, forbearing, generous, self-denying temper? Are the harshness, hardness, asperity of the fallen nature, displaced by the softness, sweetness, and kindness of true love?

John Angell James

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