



Bible Believers' Bulletin

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“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17)

April 2021

Bible Preaching

By Brian Donovan

In the first two chapters of his first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul goes into some detail about what is considered Bible preaching. He first lays out what it is NOT. A student can learn almost as much about any subject by studying what it is not, as he can finding out what it is. When the Lord teaches throughout the scriptures, he will consistently show what the thing is not, in order to show what it is. For instance, in Romans 5, the Lord gives a number of lessons about Adam, to show what Jesus Christ is not. By Adam, sin entered into the world (Rom. 5:12), while in Christ there is grace (verse 17); in Adam came death (verse 12), while in Christ there is eternal life (verse 21); in Adam came judgment and condemnation (verse 16), while in Christ there is the free gift and justification (verse 16); in Adam we became God's enemies (verse 10), while in Christ there is reconciliation (verse 10).

Paul uses the same method in his explanation of Bible preaching. In 1 Corinthians 2, he writes that his preaching was NOT in **“excellency of**

speech” (verse 1), NOT **“with enticing words of man’s wisdom”** (verse 4), NOT **“the wisdom of this world”** (verse 6), and NOT in **“the spirit of this world”** (verse 12). The excellency of speech comes with the education of this world. It includes **“enticing words”** of a man trying to trick someone into buying something. To entice is to trick the hearer, as the Philistines told Delilah in Judges 16:5, **“Entice him and see wherein his great strength lieth.”** Jesus Christ preached that false prophets are deceivers who appear as sheep, but inwardly are wolves (Matt. 7:15). Hence, we get the common expression, “Don’t let them pull the wool over your eyes.” It reminds one of today’s teachers of **“science falsely so called”** (1 Tim. 6:20), who are trying to sell something to their hearers in their efforts to get rid of God by foisting evolution in His place.

In trying to explain away the God who created time and space, Paul Davies (the science “fiction” writer) entices his readers to “relax the requirement that cause always precedes effect,” asking, “Suppose you could influence nineteenth-century events in such a way as to prevent your own birth?... Hypothetical faster-than-light particles (called tachyons) could accomplish this.” Using an enticing word (tachyons), he hopes to deceive his readers into

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THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

By Dr. Peter S. Ruckman

(Part one of two parts)

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; (Eph. 6:10-18).

What you are about to read is what I call a "magical" message. It is a guaranteed killer; it is a "one-night stand." I preached this message at

four of America's major fundamental, conservative Christian colleges and universities, and I never got an invitation to speak in any of them again, after that.

Now I would have been the last person in the world to think such a thing could happen. I kept hearing all this talk about being a "militant Christian," so I came up with a military message. The problem was (and is) that there wasn't one "militant" fundamental school in this country that had enough backbone even to put up with the message.

When I got overseas in the Army, the action was over, and I missed out on combat. Nevertheless, I come from three generations of Army officers; I ought to know something about the military. So I put a military message together and figured that the "militant fundamentalists" would surely appreciate it, but they didn't. I preached this at my "alma mater," Bob Jones University, in 1951, and I never got an invitation back. I preached it another time at Tennessee Temple and never got invited back. I preached it at the Bible Baptist Fellowship in Springfield, Missouri and another time at the World Baptist Fellowship in Arlington, Texas; neither group invited me back to speak again. It must be a peculiar message because the same thing happened at Trinity College, near Tampa, Florida, when Billy Graham was there—I never got an invitation back. If I want to close a door to a

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place to preach, this is the message that will do it.

The strange thing is, I have preached this same message to local churches all over the country, and they took it. The colleges and universities, though, couldn't stand it. If some of you want a "ministry," I'll tell you what to do: get you a hundred copies of the DVD of this sermon and mail them out to every Christian university, college, seminary, and Bible institute. Then wait and see what kind of response you get. It will rattle their cage, baby. It will drive them up the wall; it will just eat their lunch.

Our text describes the armor of a first-century Roman soldier. When I wrote my two volumes of church history, I likened the militant Christians of the Philadelphia church period (1611–1904) to German storm troopers in Nazi Germany. A little sissy with lace on his britches named Gary Hudson over in Jacksonville, Florida wrote me and said, "How dare you liken these good, godly, spiritual men to Nazi storm troopers!"

We must comfort this little feeble-minded sissy britches (see 1 Thess. 5:14). The greatest Christian who ever lived likened the Christian to a first-century Roman infantryman. You reckon those Roman foot soldiers were paragons of virtue? Are you naive enough to think they were fine, clean-cut, spiritual, godly men? Thin-skinned sissies like Gary Hudson don't have good sense.

Paul says, "Put on the whole armor," and the armor he describes is based on that of a Roman infantryman. Men like Clausewitz and von Moltke called the infantry "the Queen of Battle." But to the privates, corporals, and sergeants, the infantry is not a queen at all; it is a *pawn*. On a chess board, the pawn may not seem like much; but in the hands of an experienced chess master, it can do a lot of damage, even to the point of checkmating the king if it is in the right position. That's the infantry.

Back in World War I, an infantryman was called a "doughboy." When I was in, he was a "dogface." In Vietnam, he was a "grunt." The infantryman was called a "grunt" because he had to carry everything he needed for battle on his back; it weighed about 85 pounds. The guy would march along with that load on his back and grunt as he walked. The soldiers in the infantry during World War II were called "dogfaces" because they were treated like dogs and had to fight like dogs. My dad told me of instances in the trenches during World War I where, during an attack, those soldiers would get in hand-to-hand combat and do anything necessary to stop their opponent, including yanking off a guy's privates or biting through his neck into the jugular.

War is a terrible thing. The Yankee general, William Tecumseh Sherman, said, "War is hell." Of course, we who believe the Book understand

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it is not literal hell, but it is as close as you can get this side of death. All the elements are there: the maggots, the blood, the fire, the dung, the garbage, the ashes, the pain, the terror, the horror—the whole thing. Bob Jones Sr. said, “War is God’s judgment on sin here, and hell is God’s judgment on sin hereafter.” I believe that; it is a “fundamental of the faith” with me.

So the Christian is a “**soldier of Jesus Christ**” (2 Tim. 2:3), and he is to train as a soldier (2 Tim. 2:4). That military figure occurs many, many times in the Bible. When I sign a Bible, I invariably include Joshua 1:9 as a Bible reference. The verse is a command to the general of an army.

“Have not I COMMANDED thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”

That’s a *military* command. The last thing you would think of when looking at the average church is a military camp, trained to do armed combat, ready to do battle for the Lord. You might think of it as a big nursery or an old folks home or a social club or a theater (these days), but not an army of trained soldiers ready to fight. But that is what the church is supposed to be, according to the Book.

Early Christianity understood this. The hymn writers understood

this: the old-time hymns were *march* tempo. Modern Christian music is lounge music or love ballads or straight-up rock. The military element is completely gone. Some wit once said, “The reason you can’t get a decent choir these days to sing ‘Onward, Christian Soldiers’ is because there are too many *conscientious objectors* in the choir.” There’s a lot of truth in that.

I have often thought, “What if Christians were trained like soldiers are trained?” Before I was deployed to Japan, I trained men in hand-to-hand and unarmed combat. I would be out on that drill field when it was 110 degrees in the shade before 300 men glaring at me, yelling at them the whole time. Sometimes I had a bullhorn, but more often I didn’t. I trained them in how to fight and kill with whatever they could get their hands on. I would make them go through bayonet drills with the scabbards off. Some colonel would come by and tell me to put them back on, but I would tell him, “We’ve gotta make training realistic; you can’t make it real with the scabbards on.” I would yell at the recruits and call them everything but white, trying to get them angry and stirred up. That was my job. I am afraid some of that spilled over into my early preaching. I am much better now than I used to be, but if you could have heard me between 1950 and 1952, it was horrors, man, horrors.

Christians can’t be trained like

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that; they wouldn't take it. Can you see them? I can. "Captain, I'm not reporting for duty today." "Oh, you're not, are you?!" "No sir." "And just why not?" "Because I'm just not going to be around anyone who talks about me that way." Can't you see that going well?

I had goofed up once in the Army and had a superior officer, six foot-three, bending over me just as mad as a hornet. He got his hands about an inch from my ears as if he were about to grab them and said, "Why, you little squirt, I oughta get you by the ears and peel you right down!" As he said that, he brought his hands down the sides of my body (without laying a hand on me). I could almost feel my skin peeling off.

I remember stepping off the bus at Citizens' Military Training Camp and having the D.I. say, "Well, boys, you might as well make up your minds to be happy while you're here because nobody gives a blankety-blank if you ain't." Can you imagine welcoming a new member into your church like that? Why, you can't train Christians like that; they can't take it.

There are Christians in this country who don't even think I am saved because of the way I talk. I talk like a *male*; how do you talk? People think a preacher ought to talk differently when he's behind the pulpit than when he's not. I don't talk any differently behind the pulpit than when I'm in my bedroom, in my bathroom, out in the backyard, out on the boat, or

in the hockey rink. You don't change when you come into a church building; you are the same rascal who fought with your wife on the way to church.

If some folks doubt my salvation, I doubt some of theirs, but my doubts are based on something different. I don't understand why they are so thin-skinned; I don't understand why they can't take it. I have been saved nearly sixty years, and I have had to work with them all that time, but I have never adjusted to them. I mean, you have God for your Father, Jesus Christ for your brother, the Holy Spirit living in you as an infallible guide, and you break down every time someone looks at you crooked. I don't understand you.

My company commander in the Army was a fellow named Max Shoening. That Krauthead was a character. He had a jaw like a shovel and wrist bones as big as thigh bones. That old boy had been a "ski trooper"—a paratrooper on skis—in the Aleutians. One time he fell 600 feet off a mountain. He was in the hospital for six months with broken ribs, a busted jaw, a busted nose, a busted ankle, and lacerations and bruises all over his body. When he got out of the hospital, do you know what that bird was doing? He was back there going up and down those mountains, in thirty-below-zero temperatures, on his skis. He wasn't even saved. Why is it an unsaved man can do something like that for

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FDR (the Commander-in-Chief at the time), and Christians will quit if someone in church treats them in a way they don't like? I don't get it.

If Christians were trained like the Army used to train its soldiers back in World War II, the Christians wouldn't last half a minute because they couldn't take it. Back in my day, the military leadership allowed two percent casualties in training, and there was no "congressional investigation" into them, either. One of the guys I was training fell on a stake in the barbed wire during a live-fire exercise. He couldn't make enough noise to be heard over the shot and shell, and he died.

There was a guy in my outfit named Butch Nelson. Butch was standing up during a live-fire exercise looking at the barrage coming in. I was flat on the ground because the three basic rules in the infantry are: 1) get down, 2) stay down, and 3) don't get up. I told Butch, "You'd better get down, man." He said, "Nah, it's hitting 200 yards away; I'll be all right." I said, "You might get a short round." About that time, I saw his hand jerk. I saw his hand jerk before I heard the shell. Some fragment had hit him, and it looked just like a bucket of ketchup had been dumped all over him. I was asked what happened, and when I said that Butch had been standing up, that was the end of it. That was the way we were trained. If you were told to get down and you didn't get down,

then it was your own stupid fault if you got killed.

I remember being out on the drill field in Leavenworth, Kansas in the summer when it was 115 degrees in the shade. Some of you have never had the "blessing" of standing in that heat for an hour and a half at parade rest while the band marched up and down the field. After a while, bodies were collapsing all over that field from heat prostration, and the "meat wagon" (an ambulance) was coming around and hauling them away to the base hospital. To this day, I could tell the sound of a Garand or a Springfield rifle with a strap on it hitting the ground. There was no complaining about it; you just had to survive.

I'll never forget one day when I was on KP duty. I was cutting tomatoes for salad for 200 men. I got a really sharp knife and got it where I could cut through with one slice. But if you do that, you have to pay attention to what you are doing. I got my mind on something else, and I came down with that knife into my finger halfway to the bone.

Blood went all over that salad, and that mess sergeant came at me cussing and swinging a frying pan. I ducked and headed for the dispensary, holding that bleeding finger. As I looked back, I saw that sergeant with his hands on his hips, looking over that blood-soaked salad. I saw him grab a bottle of ketchup and pour it all over the salad and mix it up. Those GIs got blood salad that day.

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In the Army I was in, the mess halls weren't like Las Vegas buffets like they are today. You went down the mess line, and the only choice you had on the food was to take it or leave it. When we were on ship being transported to the Pacific (and the men were turning green and "feeding the fish"), for breakfast there was an old black chef in the mess line serving up "mush" (oatmeal). That old boy had a warped sense of humor. He would slop that mush into the men's mess kits, and as he did, he would make an "upchuck" sound. Don't tell me you Christians could take that kind of training.

I hadn't been in the Army three weeks when I got an ingrown toenail, and it was a "beaut," boy. It turned purple and began to bleed. I went down to the dispensary to have it taken care of. The medic took one look at it; and without anything to numb the toe at all, he took a pair of scissors, put the thin blade under the nail all the way down to the bottom, and clipped. He then took a small pair of forceps and yanked the clipped part of the nail out. I was white as a sheet with the pain. All that bird said was "Next!" and that was it. That's how you train infantrymen. Christians couldn't take it, although an infantryman is to what they are likened by the Apostle Paul.

Now the Christian soldier is clad with three pieces of *defensive* armor, and he has one *offensive* weapon. He has a "**breastplate of righteous-**

ness" to guard the heart, he has a "**helmet of salvation**" to guard the mind, and he has a "**shield of faith**" to guard everything else. His one offensive weapon is "**the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**"

All combat is composed of those two elements: offense and defense. Every form of martial arts and military exercise contains those two elements. In karate and aikido, there are offensive punches and defensive blocks. In knife fighting, there is a defensive way to hold the blade and an offensive way to hold it. In Filipino stick fighting (*escrima*), one stick is held in a certain way to block blows while the other is used to attack.

When it comes to the believer's warfare, Christians are short one way or another. Some Christians have all kinds of faith and can take all kinds of blows, but they never get a lick in for the Lord. Others are aggressive, but when the Devil gets after them, they get torn to pieces. You have to have both offense and defense.

Now there is a combat *stance*—the way you stand. Three times in Ephesians 6 the Christian is commanded "**to stand.**" In the martial arts, there is the forward stance and the horse stance and many variations for both defense and offense. If you don't take a proper stance, it doesn't take much to knock you over. That's the problem with a lot of Christians—they get off balance and get knocked flat.

In a bayonet attack, each stroke

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has a certain stance, and each stance involves a *forward* movement. There is a long thrust that comes from the back foot. And as you go from a long thrust to a short thrust to a vertical butt stroke to a horizontal butt stroke, there is no backward movement; it is all forward. You don't even go backwards when you turn toward an attacker. If there is a man behind you, you don't move backwards; you make a turn and attack forwards.

You say, "What has that got to do with the Christian?" That Bible says—and you'd better get this—**"forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"** (Phil. 3:13–14). Stop living in the past and licking your wounds, and MOVE ON!

I was trained by an old Kraut named Major Bronkhorst. He got his American citizenship after World War I. At the time, he was one of only five white men that had a black belt in martial arts. That bird would stand out there on the drill field with that black sash on, with no helmet or covering from the sunlight, and put us through our paces. He didn't smoke, drink, or even cuss.

When I got over to the Philippines training Filipino scouts, I would train them like Major Bronkhorst trained me. They would be out there in that jungle heat and humidity, and I would

have them "assume the position" for a forward thrust and hold it. The idea was to build endurance. After a while, the tip of the bayonet would begin to drop, and I'd yell, "UP!" Up they would come—at least for a while. One guy there whose bayonet kept dropping, said to me, "Lieutenant, I am very sick." "You got your slip from the medics?" I asked. "No sir." "Then get 'em up!"

I would have those scouts hold that twelve-pound rifle over their heads and double time it a quarter mile down the trail and back. That guy who told me he was sick ran 300 yards and fell flat on his face; he lay there just as still as a stone. The other guys in the ranks looked at that and then looked at me. "You see that?" I said, "Good man; worth more money. He went until he dropped."

Some thin-skinned sissy would say, "You're a mean so-and-so, Ruckman." No, you're not reading your Bible. Matthew 26:39 says your Saviour in the Garden of Gethsemane **"went a little further, and fell on his face."** It's no sin to fall down when attacked; *just don't stay down*. Get up and go on for God.

Now it goes without saying that a soldier should have courage, and as a soldier of Jesus Christ, the Christian should have courage. What is courage? Well, it isn't a lack of fear. Courage is doing what is right even when you are scared stiff to do it. A man who isn't afraid is not courageous. A man who is courageous is

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a man who is afraid and goes ahead anyway and does what he is supposed to do.

There is no such thing as an infantryman who is not scared at times. Of course, if a guy is crazy or hyped up on drugs (like some of them were in Vietnam), then no sweat, but if you have your senses about you, then you know all kinds of things can happen, and that can scare the fire out of you.

Over in the South Pacific, the Jap-

anese had a mortar shell that would make an ungodly sound. After a skirmish, a fellow was found five miles behind the regimental bivouac, just terrified. "What are you doing back here, man?" he was asked. "I heard that talking bomb; I can't stand them talking bombs," he said. "That bomb ain't talking to you," he was told. "Oh yes it is," he replied, "I done heard what it said!" "What did it say?" "It said, 'Boy, you ain't nevah goin' back to AlaBAMA!'"

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Bible Preaching

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thinking that he is saying something scientific. You are not going to do anything about changing the past; you can only go forward and affect your future. He then informs that there is hope that “we can discover, within the context of physics, a principle that will enable the universe to come into existence of its own accord.”

These are typical examples of “**the wisdom of this world**”, using “**excellency of speech**” that the scripture says is what Bible preaching is NOT. Davies writes that a “mother universe” (which he describes as a rubber sheet) can give birth to a “daughter universe” that bubbles out from the mother sheet and then breaks away, and this explains how a universe can be “created” of itself. But the problem is not where the “daughter universe” came from just yet; the problem is where did the “mama” come from? His enticing words are said to be “breathtaking”, according to the New York Times Book Review.

Davies attempts to explain biological evolution with the same kind of trickery. After showing that statistics prove the impossibility of the spontaneous generation of DNA, he throws the math out and writes a whole paragraph on how it “could have been”, “might have been”, “by some external influence”, that “could simply have been the sun”, and then “in summary, it is not hard to envisage a prebiotic soup” as the answer. No, it’s not hard for a fanatical, religious, and superstitious denier of facts to envisage anything he wants.

When the apostle Paul went to Athens, he came across the educated, evolutionary group of superstitious pagans, called philosophers. His audience was interested in hearing what Paul had to

say to see if they could spend more of their time in “**either to tell, or to hear some new thing**” (Acts 17:21). Instead, they heard some Bible preaching that was plain, and that pointed out that God was finished winking at the times of their ignorance, and that He “**will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained**” (Acts 17:31).

These “great thinkers” responded to the truth by mocking (Acts 17:32) and then went their way, pretending to be brilliant by asking things like, “Is the rock hard?”...“What do you mean by hard?”...“What do you mean by what do you mean”? As the first President of Princeton (Jonathan Dickinson) once said, “Cursed be all that learning that is contrary to the cross of Christ.” Of course, that was many moons ago when Princeton was set up to train preachers and teach Bible truths back in 1740.

After telling what Bible preaching is not, Paul proceeds to tell us what it is. He said that he was with them in “**weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling**” (verse 3). A Bible preacher is a saved sinner and preaches with infirmities and weaknesses in spite of himself. He also is to preach in the fear of God, in much trembling at the word (Isa. 66:2), and fear of the responsibility involved. Preaching is not a man-to-man confrontation, as the Athenian sophists, but a “**demonstration of the Spirit and power**” (verse 4). Paul would put no confidence in himself (Phil. 3:4), but in the words, which he believed to be “**spirit**” and “**life**” (John 6:63).

Whenever the scripture is preached, it will bring in the work of the Holy Spirit, who will “**reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment**” (John 16:8). This will happen in both

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one-on-one witnessing as the gospel is preached, as well as in a congregation. One of the greatest experiences in the Christian life is to watch this demonstration of the Spirit and power in personal soul winning. To see the power of the word of God take over in preaching is an exciting event. There is not much better in life than to see a grown man stop you in mid-sentence, after tearing up after he has heard the gospel and say, "Can I do that right now"?

Bible preaching is not the **"wisdom of this world"**, but it is **"the wisdom of God"** (verse 7). The scripture must be taken by faith, and this is what the lost world calls **"foolishness"** (1 Cor. 1:18), but to **"us which are saved it is the power of God."** Faith in the scripture is our foundation that will not only get us through the storms of this life (Matt. 7:24-29), but will also carry us over into that eternal world, which we cannot see just yet. The more we live by faith in the scripture, the more we get revealed of the mysteries of things unseen.

Bible preaching deals with things that **"eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man"** (verse 9). Our eyes have not yet seen the throne and the one sitting on it, the rainbow overhead, the sea of glass like unto crystal, and best of all, our Saviour Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, **"whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another"** (Job 19:27). Nor have our ears yet heard the myriad of angels and the hosts of heaven singing with the saints who have gone before as they shout out, **"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created"**

(Rev. 4:11). We have not yet seen the mansions that are being prepared for our eternal home (John 14), nor the glory of the Father, which cannot be taken in with these physical eyes of flesh. Moses asked to see that glory and was treated with a place within the rock (Jesus Christ), where he saw the goodness of God pass by, but could not see His face, **"for there shall no man see me, and live"** (Exod. 33:18-23).

The Lord has much more to reveal to His children (Deut. 29:29), and Paul writes in the same passage of 1 Corinthians 2:13 that they are revealed by **"comparing spiritual things with spiritual"**, namely, the very words of scripture. Bible preaching will have an outline of scripture. It will give points that come directly from scripture and

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Bro. Donovan's Meeting Schedule

April 30–May 2

Lakeside Baptist Church
3055 Bacom Point Road
Pahokee, FL 33476
Pastor Ted Hines
(561) 924-7592

June 18–20

Bible Believers Bapt. Church
596 SE Alexander St.
Hillsboro, OR 97123
Pastor John Robinson
(503) 706-7147

June 25-27

Bayview Baptist Church
1116 W. 7th St.
San Pedro, CA. 90731
Pastor Steve Andrus
(310) 548-7234

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not from a Baptist handbook, Confessions of Faith, or the latest newscast. Bible preaching will remind the saints that there is a judgment seat of Christ where there will be great rewards, as well as loss (1 Cor. 3:11-15).

We look forward to the day when He calls us home, to be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. We will finally see with new eyes, and hear with new ears, and experience with a new body, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him. Those invisible things that we now only see through eyes of faith, we will see right before our brand new physical eyes and hear with our brand new physical ears, and feel with our brand new physical body.

“Beulah land, I’m longing for thee,
And some day on thee I’ll stand...
I’m looking now across the river
Where my faith will end in sight...
There’s just a few more days to labor,
And I shall take my heavenly flight”.

The Lord reveals the unseen things by His Spirit (verse 10), and this requires a new birth, for the **“natural man re-**

ceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (verse 14). A lost man has a dead spirit that needs to be quickened (Eph. 2:1-2) by the new birth, which is performed by the Spirit (John 3:3-7). The gospel we preach is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4), which is foolishness to the lost world.

The natural men of this world, led by the princes and principalities of the air, went after Christ with a hatred that, had they known how it would come out, **“would not have crucified the Lord of glory”** (1 Cor. 2:8). They knew that He was the **“heir”**, and they hated His preaching so much they just wanted to be rid of Him (Mark 12:7-12). Little did they know that it was God’s way to save millions of sinners and bring many sons to glory. Those princes thought they could wash their hands of Him (Matt. 27:24) and take over His kingdom. But it was all planned by God to provide Himself a Lamb (Gen. 22:8), and this Lamb is the only acceptable payment for your sins by faith.

FEBRUARY’S SERMONS

Brian Donovan

Three Resurrections
The Marks Of A Good Soldier
The Revelation From God
The Way Of The Backslider

Zack Colvin

The Rod That Budded

Robert Militello

The Death Of A Saint

Kyle Stephens

A Peculiar People

David Walker

Your Lot In Life

Randy Vartabedian

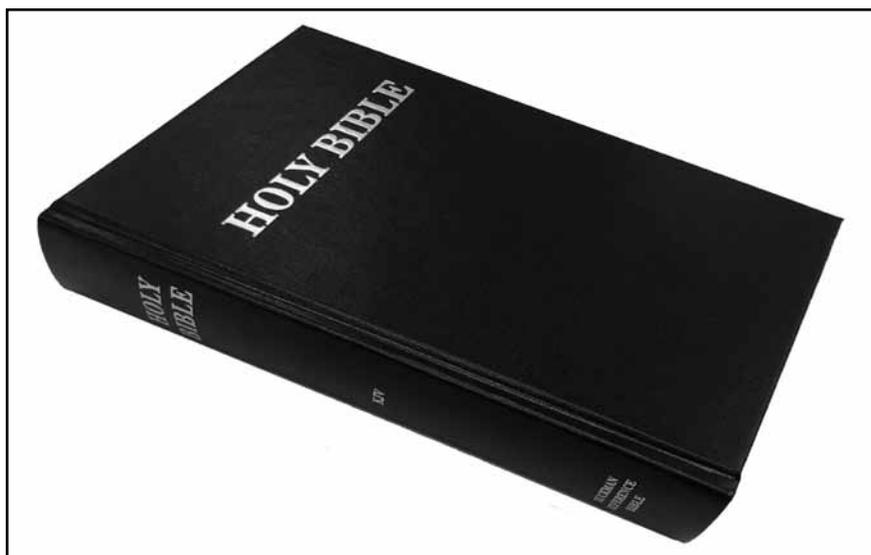
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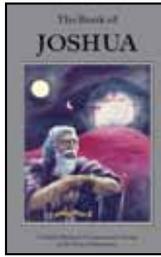
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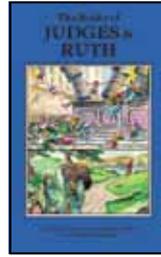
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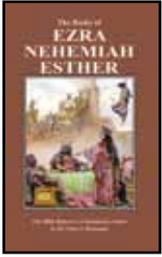
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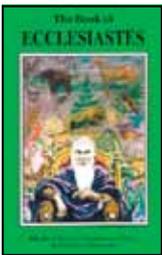
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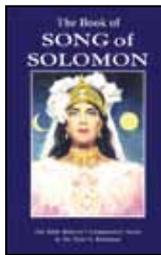
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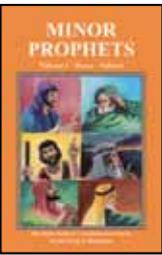
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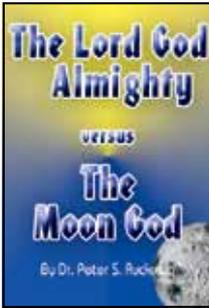
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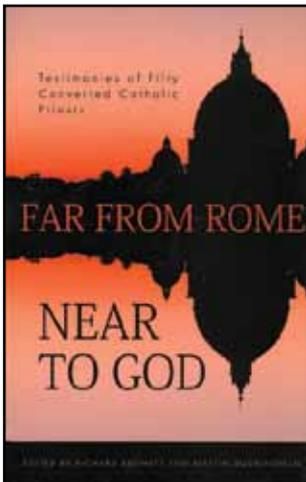
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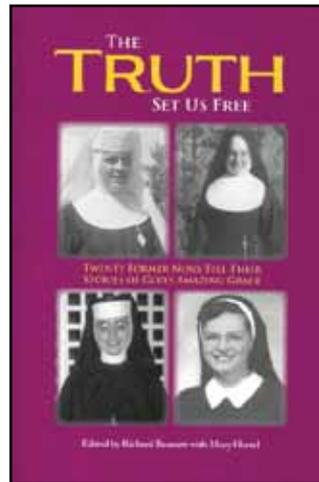


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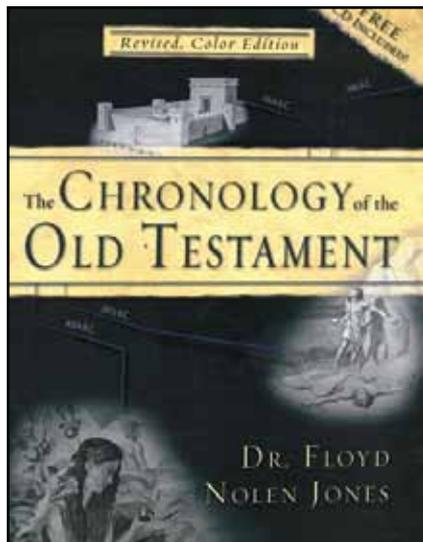
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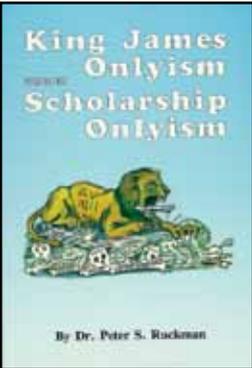
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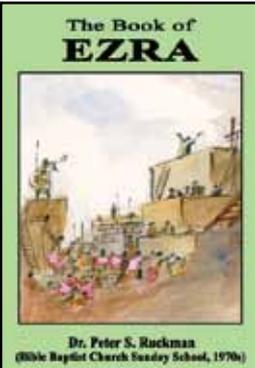
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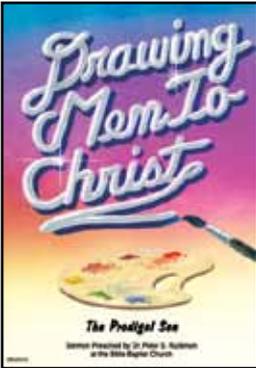
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Christian Maturity

Romans 15:1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Chapter 15 opens with a continuation of what Paul was saying in chapter 14. He says in verse 1, "**We then,**" which points back to what he said in verses 22 and 23 of chapter 14. So in view of the fact that there are strong Christians who need to watch how they exercise their liberty in Christ, and in view of the fact that there are *weak Christians* who sin because they don't have faith to do a thing, the stronger Christians ought to help the weaker Christians out. That is, he ought to behave himself around the weaker Christian and not *misuse* his liberty.

The weaker Christian is characterized by a tender, over-sensitive conscience. The least thing upsets them. When you first get saved and get in the Scriptures, you see so much sin in yourself and the world around you. Right away you want to be clean, so you get rid of this and you stop doing that. When that happens, you have to watch out for that old *self-righteousness* rising back up in you. *You are in danger of becoming super-pious and Pharisaical.* All the sin on the *inside* still remains.

When you've cut your hair and cleaned up your language and laid off the booze and the cigarettes and thrown the TV out and thrown out the rock music, you have to watch out for pride, laziness, conceit, self-service, ingratitude, malice, anger, selfishness, greed, and lust.

I have a little dissertation in my files that I call "The Holiness Nightmare." It goes like this:

"*Sin* is to feel a secret pride in success, training, or appearance. It is to feel an important, independent spirit. It is to feel bitter over what someone has told you about the success of *another*.

"*Sin* is a hard, sarcastic, or unyielding spirit. It is a touchy, bitter, sensitive spirit, resigned to attract the attention of the opposite sex, to say and do things to attract attention to self. It is a constant complaining and a desire to quit trying to do right. It is abusive acts to self and others. It is a deceitful or an evasive spirit that seeks to create false impressions, depict *flaws*, and criticize *when set aside unnoticed*.

"*Sin* is lustful and wandering eyes, a shrinking from duty and reproach, a tendency to retaliate when crossed, and permitting things you do *not* permit in your idea of a consecrated Christian.

"*Sin* is a shallow stinginess, an uncleanness in thought or desire. It is a joke that reflects the vain or light manner of conversation or life of the jester. It is being unwilling to put out for others unless personal advantage is involved; it is partiality to certain persons or classes or denominations in your dealings.

"*Sin* is always thinking of what might have been if certain things hadn't happened. It is an unthankful, unappreciative attitude toward your lot in life. It is living in constant fear of failure; it is taking an

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Christian Maturity

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unmerciful attitude toward those *who do fail*. It is taking an *inferior attitude* toward those of wealth or position.

“*Sin* is putting on a false or exaggerated humility or imagining how others are praising you or speaking well of you. It is straining at the truth, showing an apathetic attitude toward being caught in sin, or shirking responsibilities.

“*Sin* is the feeling of nervousness you get when you watch somebody do something you think *you* could do better.”

If you put that on a Charismatic assembly, *there wouldn't be one person left in the congregation*. What I listed there wasn't anything that anyone *committed*. It wasn't a list of sins; *it was a description of sin*. That's the *nature* in you that *produces* the outward sins.

What the weak brother needs is to grow in grace. Growth takes time. Growth takes practice. Growth takes experience.

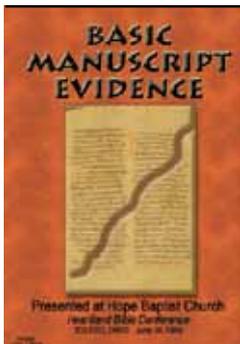
Hebrews 5:12–14 says, “**For**

when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

A strong Christian becomes strong by exercising discernment: being able to tell what is good, what is evil, and what doesn't matter. A strong Christian's goal should not be to see how much of his liberty he can practice (“**not to please ourselves**”) but how much he can help his weak brother to grow in grace. That is why Paul says in verse 2: “**Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.**”

(Taken from commentary on Romans by *Dr. Peter S. Ruckman*)

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No More Groaning

By Robert Militello

Soon, the saints of God will get a new house to live in. In 1 Corinthians 15:51, Paul calls this event a “**mystery**”. Titus 2:13 labels it the “**blessed hope**”. While we remain, waiting for this mystery to unfold, we groan.

“For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven” (2 Cor. 5:2).

Caterpillars become butterflies, and the God who arranges for this event will change the vile bodies of His saints into glorious bodies. There is so much in scripture that gives comfort to an aging Christian. The prospect of living eternally in a corruption-proof body is such a delight to meditate upon.

“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psa. 119:103).

I don't know that anyone has to enjoy getting old, but a Christian has a retirement package completely unknown to those outside of Christ.

There are two questions in 1 Corinthians 15:55 for which all the philosophers, intellectuals, and scientists have no answer for. **“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”** Victory over death and the grave should give the Christian all the courage and confidence he or she needs to turn from this present evil world. In the face of the promise of a glorified body and everlasting joy, how can a saint be cowardly in standing up to, and exposing the lies that the unsaved cling to?

We know that Abraham believed

in a literal, physical resurrection and was willing to kill Isaac as a testimony to his confidence in the promises of God. That willingness to trust God and not his own understanding made him a friend of God. Jesus calls His disciples His “**friends**” in John 15:14–15. We believe that we shall live in a body of flesh long after our present body has decayed and turned into worm food. Job knew this well before Moses wrote Genesis.

“And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet IN MY FLESH shall I see God. Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me” (Job 19:26–27).

How the Sadducees in Christ's day denied a physical resurrection in light of what the book of Job taught is a testimony to their blindness. Paul cleverly exploited this split among the Pharisees (who believed in a resurrection) and the Sadducees in Acts 23:6–10. If anyone knew the quirks of his own kind, it was Paul.

A resurrected Christ is a terror to religious folks. Matthew 27:62–66 proves it. The Sanhedrin, the ruling council of Jews, wisely understood that the disappearance of Christ's body would be the foundation stone for the birth of a cult among the Jews. Believing that this special Rabbi, Jesus of Nazareth, rose from the dead would entice Jews to follow His teachings and become His disciples. Well, this certainly happened, and the idea of a resurrected rabbi causing problems among Jews was played out in front of me when I lived

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No More Groaning

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in Brooklyn.

On June 12, 1994, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, died. He was the leader of the Lubavitcher Hasidic dynasty and a giant among Orthodox Jews around the world. During his lifetime, thousands of his followers believed him to be the Messiah. It is said that the Rebbe never encouraged this belief, but didn't seem to aggressively put down the idea. Schneerson was a giant in Torah scholarships, and many Jews would not make significant personal decisions without seeking his guidance. In 1994, he was posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal for his "outstanding achievements toward education, morality, and acts of charity."

Schneerson had political clout controlling tens of thousands of votes, and City Hall feared him; this I know. His zealous followers were seen all over the city "evangelizing" secular Jews. I was approached many times, being asked, "Are you Jewish?". Like a Jew, I responded with a question, "Why do you ask?" Their goal was to win back Jews who strayed from Torah living. They gave out free Sabbath candles to be lit on Friday evenings. No other orthodox sect in Brooklyn reached out to non-observant Jews. They were unique and admired.

Schneerson spoke often in the early nineties of the coming of Messiah, saying that redemption and world peace would not come without Him. He urged his followers to strive for righteousness and excel in acts

of charity and Torah scholarship. In 1992, the Grand Rebbe suffered a stroke, leaving him partially paralyzed. During this time, the hope that Schneerson could be revealed as the Moshiach (Messiah) picked up steam. Billboards along highways in Israel proclaimed, "Moshiach is coming." Schneerson's followers were responsible for these eye-catching signs.

Schneerson passed quietly at the Beth Israel Medical Center on June 12th, 1994, and was buried in Montefiore Cemetery in Queens, New York. Following age-old Jewish tradition that the resting place of a tzadik (super righteous soul) is holy, Schneerson's gravesite is viewed as a holy site. A Jewish publication described the site as "the American Western Wall" comparable to the Western Wall near the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It is a prayer site with Jews around the world sending faxes and e-mails to Lubavitcher headquarters in Brooklyn requesting that prayers be said at the gravesite.

Needless to say, the Rebbe's body is rotting in that "holy site" in Queens. There has been and will be no resurrection. The grave claims us all, whether spiritual or not. Jesus said that He was the resurrection, and Menachem Schneerson never professed to know Him.

We will rise. Millions of dirty, Gentile dogs have put their trust in a dead Jewish Rabbi. His followers saw Him after He was brutally murdered.

Even to this day, the Rebbe's resting place is visited daily, and

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No More Groaning

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the gravesite is inspected to see if something extraordinary has taken place. Sad, isn't it? Such fervent hope and yearning for the coming of the Just One are still alive in the hearts of countless Jews, while millions of secular Jews care little for what their own Book teaches.

Let me say that the Lubavitcher Jews (most, not all) have a zeal for their beliefs that many Christians lack. I admired that. Why should one in Christ be put to shame by someone who doesn't even know there is a Holy Spirit? These Jews have no "Blowouts" to revive their souls. What they do have is a determination and a steadfastness that drives them to "save" lost Jews. Paul had that. A Christian who reads Paul often enough ought to have a desire to serve that is greater than any Lubavitcher possesses—amen?

A risen Savior with the power to change one's life was unknown to me as a Catholic. That church sends folks to Mary and saints because they have a powerless Christ. Every crucifix showing a dead savior should be replaced by a painting depicting an empty tomb with a large stone off to the side. For me, eternal life was fleeting. I got it by eating the communion wafer on Sunday morning, but lost it upon committing a sin, mortal or venial, later during the week. So, I had to go to confession on Saturday afternoon and then receive communion again on Sunday morning.

You never knew where you stood with the Lord, so going to Mary was a safer bet because she

had a mother's heart and offered a special kind of understanding. God alone knows how many millions of Catholics died, looking to Mary for solace. Rome will burn one day. She's a harlot and deserves to be set on fire. After all, she put the torch to God's saints when she ran Europe, and vengeance belongs to our God.

So we who belong to Christ wait to step out of our mortal, failing bodies and put on a wrinkle-free, stain-proof new suit for our eternal souls. Our Father will dress His children as He sees fit.

"But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body" (1 Cor. 15:38).

We will have a different kind of flesh from what we now have (vs. 40). Note that Lazarus was raised with the flesh he died in. His resurrection was a spectacular display of God's power to reverse the natural process of decay. Consider the implications of what John 11:39 teaches. Scripture says Lazarus had been dead four days. Rigor Mortis had to have begun, and the blood had to be congealed. Martha was not wrong when she said to Jesus, **"by this time he stinketh."**

My dad, who saw combat in World War II, told me how awful it was to pass through a field of dead bodies (American and German) and smell the stench of decaying flesh and internal organs exposed to their air. Our Savior is not deterred by any smell when He sets out to show mercy. He came voluntarily into this stinking world to save dirty, smelly, unwashed sinners such as us—did

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No More Groaning

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He not?

What happened, physically and organically, when Lazarus' soul came out of Abraham's Bosom (Paradise) and entered into a lifeless corpse? Did the blood liquefy before the heart started pumping again? Did all the internal organs come on line instantly and without a hitch? Lazarus was back in his skin, and his old suit was still prone to decay, for he had to die again. The suit we shall soon receive is not of this earth. It was tailored in heaven and is, and forever shall be, flawless. It's great to be saved, amen? The transforming of a natural body into a glorious body is supernatural and cannot be duplicated in a laboratory.

Man's science knows nothing of the mysteries of our faith. Raising Lazarus from the dead was the capstone miracle that should have convinced the Jewish leadership as to who Jesus was. Yet, it did not. The Jews looking for signs were given not a few by any means. But remember what Father Abraham said to the rich man who went to hell in Luke 16:31. **"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, NEITHER WILL THEY BE PERSUADED THOUGH ONE ROSE FROM THE DEAD."**

We have been persuaded by a Ghost working through a witness for Jesus and a Book that God breathed upon. According to God's word, we have been **"fearfully and wonderfully made"** (Psa. 139:14). Nevertheless, when Adam and Eve disobeyed, sin entered the human race, and our wonderfully made bodies were then set to go

back to dust and ashes. Still, the human race, prior to the flood, walked around in bodies that lasted hundreds of years. Methuselah lived for almost a millennium; how's that for a body of flesh and blood subject to decay? After the great deluge, lifespans declined dramatically. By David's time, reaching eighty was a struggle. Sin leaves its mark, but living righteously can add to your years.

"Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee and THOU MAYEST LIVE LONG on the EARTH" (Eph. 6:2-3).

Paul was teaching the Gentiles what the Jews knew from Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16. That God rewards the one who reveres his parents. Orientals know this without the scriptures. Taking care of your body is a serious obligation for one who has the Holy Spirit living inside his flesh. In these last days before we go home, many dear saints take better care of their vehicles, fishing and hunting gear, and other assorted passions more than the house their soul lives in. Our body is a temple. That's an extraordinary thing when you meditate on that truth. Do we? Vehicles should last longer if you change the oil regularly, rotate the tires, and drive with a soft foot on the gas. We must all land in a coffin, but why hurry to get there?

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22).

Since the Church, which is Christ's body, came into being after Calvary,

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No More Groaning

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all souls die in Christ or outside of Christ. It is your responsibility to certify that you are in Christ—see 2 Corinthians 13:5. God alone knows how many professed believers in Jesus Christ will remain on this earth when the Lord removes His Church. What trauma awaits those who thought they were in Christ because they were baptized, or went to church, or believed the Bible. We are prone to be deceived about many things in this life, but being in or out of Christ is the one thing one must certify without delay.

Death may come by surprise; it needs no invitation to walk through your door. When I'm told that someone I know or had known died, I'm anxious to know if they were in Christ. No doubt, you share this feeling, and why not? The Lord is not willing that any should perish—see 2 Peter 3:9. That's why we remain on this earth after being saved; to do the Lord's business and help rescue the perishing.

We live in a day when billions are spent on supplements, organic foods, health clubs, and whatever else can prolong life and ward off death. Death is a terror, even to many of God's children. Although Paul wrote in Philippians 1:23 that it is far better to depart and to be with Christ, life in America being what it is, I suspect many saints are comfortable enough and want to remain here.

Human nature makes it hard to fall in love with what we can't see. We live in a physical world, and the allurements of what we see work strongly upon our souls. With

good reason, Paul exhorted the Colossians to set their **“affection on things above, not on things on the earth”** (Col. 3:2). The apostle to the Gentiles had to remind these believers that they were dead, but risen with Christ to a new life.

If Paul were around today, he would see churches filled with saints who are very much alive with thoughts on all kinds of stuff and not necessarily on living the crucified life. In the last decade, millions of Christians had their minds on politics and were becoming fixed on “saving America.” While they knew that nations that forget God are turned into hell, they deluded themselves with the idea that the national freefall into moral degeneracy could be stanchied by politicians claiming to be Christian.

To better understand the urge to keep things going so long as they are going your way, study the exchange between Peter and the Lord in Matthew 16:21–23. Jesus rebukes Satan in Peter, and it's important to understand why. Suppose you were with Jesus for about three and one-half years. You left your business and your family to follow a miracle worker, a man like no other man you had ever known. For over three years, you have witnessed a display of God's power in an ordinary-looking man from Nazareth. Peter's suspicions as to who Jesus was received confirmation from heaven in Matthew 16:16–17. Now, you realize you are on the winning side. David's throne will be restored. Rome will be overthrown. All the promises of the

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No More Groaning

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 prophets will come to pass in Jesus. What could be better than this? The life of an inconsequential fisherman from Capernaum had been turned upside down.

Anyone seeing and experiencing what Peter had would be overwhelmed and would go to any length to keep the dream of the prophets from collapsing. The

Lord's description of His immediate future heard by Peter and the others in verse 21 was way too much to accept. In verse 22, Peter reacts quite predictably. Don't be hard on him. He rebukes the Lord and gets put down decisively. Did Peter not love the Savior? Was he not willing to die for the Savior?

What lesson is here! You can be

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THE CREED OF THE ALEXANDRIAN CULT

1. There is **no final authority** but God.
2. Since God is a Spirit, there is **no final authority** that can be seen, heard, read, felt, or handled.
3. Since all books are material, there is **no book on this earth that is the final and absolute authority** on what is right and what is wrong, what constitutes truth and what constitutes error.
4. There **WAS** a series of writings one time which, **IF** they had all been put into a **BOOK** as soon as they were written the first time, **WOULD HAVE** constituted an infallible and final authority by which to judge truth and error.
5. However, this series of writings was lost, and the God who inspired them was **unable to preserve their content** through Bible-believing Christians at Antioch (Syria), where the first Bible teachers were (Acts 13:1), and where the first missionary trip originated (Acts 13:1-52), and where the word "*Christian*" originated (Acts 11:26).
6. So God chose to **ALMOST** preserve them through Gnostics and philosophers from Alexandria, Egypt, even though God called His Son **OUT** of Egypt (Matthew 2), Jacob **OUT** of Egypt (Genesis 49), Israel **OUT** of Egypt (Exodus 15), and Joseph's bones **OUT** of Egypt (Exodus 13).
7. So there are two streams of Bibles. The most accurate—though, of course, there is **no final, absolute authority** for determining truth and error; it is a matter of "preference"—are the Egyptian translations from Alexandria, Egypt, which are "almost the originals," although not quite.
8. The most **inaccurate translations** were those that brought about the German Reformation (Luther, Zwingli, Boehler, Zinzendorf, Spener, et al.) and the worldwide missionary movement of the English-speaking people: the Bible that Sunday, Torrey, Moody, Finney, Spurgeon, Whitefield, Wesley, and Chapman used.
9. But we can "tolerate" these if those who believe in them will "tolerate" US. After all, since there is **NO ABSOLUTE AND FINAL AUTHORITY** that anyone can read, teach, preach, or handle, the whole thing is a matter of "PREFERENCE." You may prefer what you prefer, and we will prefer what we prefer. Let us live in peace, and if we cannot agree on anything or everything, let us all agree on one thing: **THERE IS NO FINAL, ABSOLUTE, WRITTEN AUTHORITY OF GOD ANYWHERE ON THIS EARTH.**

This is the Creed of the Alexandrian Cult.

No More Groaning

Continued from 29

perfectly sincere, sold out to Christ, and have Satan use your vocal cords to oppose the will of God when you suspect that His will is not in your best interests. Our adversary knows how to play on our hearts and minds like a concert pianist. We are no match for the devil—amen?

Peter made judgments based on normal human reasoning. He was going to resist any harm that would come to his beloved rabbi. To a Jew, to preserve the life of a righteous man is the highest mitzvah (good work). Here's what should have happened, but didn't. When told by Jesus that **"thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men"** (vs. 23), Peter should have said, "How so, Lord?"

When you are in earnest and want the best for your friend and then receive a sharp rebuke, you need an explanation. If Peter had told the Lord that he did not understand why Jesus said what He said, and that he did not want to be an obstacle for the Lord to deal with, a Bible lesson would have been in order. The scripture foretold the Lord's death at the hands of His own people. That was the Father's plan for the Son. Peter didn't ask Jesus to explain why things would come to an abrupt and sad end. His mind was on what his future would be like without Jesus around.

We all wonder how things are going to work out for ourselves. It's normal to want to "size up a situation." How many believers really want God's plan for their lives, especially if that plan doesn't include a happy ending?

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9).

Years ago, I remember dealing with a woman about her soul, and she told me that she tried Christianity and that it didn't work for her. To some, our faith is like a pill and if it doesn't bring relief, try something else. Whatever happened to the word "commitment"? Is it still in the dictionary? No doubt, Peter was well shaken by being called SATAN. Do you think that experience was enough to cure him of unwanted, earthly-mindedness? Not really; all flesh is grass.

Some thirty-five years later, Paul writes to the Galatians and tells them he had to rebuke Peter and Barnabas as to the company they kept when sitting down to dinner. We find ourselves more often than not doing those things that we frown upon when we notice brothers and sisters not measuring up to our standard of so-called, "acceptable behavior". We know what we are, even if others don't.

So, we groan in this earthly tent and will continue to do so until we are finally set free and inherit that new suit promised us at His coming.

"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I SHALL BE SATISFIED, WHEN I AWAKE, WITH THY LIKENESS" (Psa. 17:15).

What a promise. George Whitefield, the great eighteenth-century evangelist, spoke that verse as he was drawing his last breaths on this earth. What a way to go home to glory.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

JESUS SAVES

JESUS SAVES

Prepare to meet thy God

The wages of sin is death;
but the gift of God is eternal life
through Jesus Christ our Lord.



Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and thou shalt be saved.

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