"Chance" or "Hope" of Eternal Life

Raymond Elliott

As we grow older, we should always be learning, especially in regard to our understanding of the word of God. I have for years spoken of and written about 'The Scheme of Redemption.' A friend of mine and brother in Christ who has traveled to three different continents mentioned to me that in other cultures the word 'scheme' carries the meaning of trying to defraud or cheat someone. So, I have begun to speak or write of the 'eternal purpose' or 'plan' of God to redeem mankind from sin.

First, I would like to emphasize the reason Jesus Christ shed his precious blood and died on the cross as mentioned in the following scriptures. Matthew 26:26-28: "And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.'" Ephesians 1:7: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace…" 1 Corinthians 15:3: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures…" Being a child of God and a member of the body (church) of the Lord and living a life of faithfulness (not perfection as one might understand), we possess the promise that is found in 2 Peter 1:11, "For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

The word 'chance' carries a meaning of "a possibility of something happening; the occurrence and development of events in the absence of any obvious design." Thus, the word *chance* carries the idea that it *might* happen rather than the *certainty* of what is promised as found in the word of God. The biblical meaning of the word 'hope' is "a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen."

Continued on page 3

Inside this Issue

1 *"Chance" or "Hope" of Eternal Life*
Raymond Elliott

2 *The Preacher and Prayer*
Andy Erwin

4 *Apostasy and You*
David Deagel

6 *Counterfeit Christianity*
Johnny O. Trail

8 *Worldwide Preacher Training Update*

9 *The Epitome of the Gospel*
Mike Kiser

11 *Biblical and Unbiblical Preaching*
Arvin James V. Pestolante

13 *The End Is Not the End*
Cedric Dave N. de Mayo

14 *Rise Up and Build!*
Billy Lambert

The Preacher and Prayer

Andy Erwin

Prayer has the power to heal sickness and cure diseases – both spiritual and physical. Prayer needs practice, not proof. The preacher's understanding of prayer and devotion to it is a product – for better or worse – of his relationship with God. If the preacher ever questions his closeness to God, he needs only to reflect upon his practice of prayer. God is as close to the faithful minister as his next prayer. God will always be just as close to a person as that person wants Him to be. When a minster is feeling far from God, he must ask himself how much time he is spending with Him in prayer. We speak most often to those who are closest to us. It is not different with God. If one is truly close to God, he will speak often to his Father.

In despondencies and depressions, when preachers feel like they deserve Him the least, is when they need God the most. The preacher's relationship with his Father reminds him that he does not have to be perfect to be in the presence of God. Through prayer he is making known to the Father that he is choosing to live in God's strength rather than his weakness.

A preacher's prayer life should never consist of simply giving a "to do list" to God. Prayer is not about getting God ready to do man's will. Prayer should prepare man to do God's will. The prayers of the preacher are for his life and the life of his congregation. His deepest concerns can be poured out in earnest supplications before the Lord. He can beseech the God of all grace for "mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

When his family is under attack, let him pray. When his marriage is under attack, let him pray. When he believes he is failing in his work, let him pray. When lonely, pray. When helpless, pray. When bitter, pray. God knows when his servants are hurting. During these times of despair, the faithful minister will find that "the hand of the Lord is not shortened that He cannot save, nor is His ear dull that He cannot hear."

Again, when we look to the supreme example of Christ, we find that Jesus did not just teach about prayer, He lived through His prayers. The Gospels bear witness to the prayers of our Lord. He prayed privately. He prayed frequently. He prayed for the future of the church. He prayed when facing decisions. He prayed when tempted. Our Lord prayed when facing death. If Jesus needed to pray, how much more do preachers need to pray today? Jesus only had three years of public ministry, yet He was never so restricted by time that he could not spend hours in prayer. A man's ministry will never ascend to greater heights without prayer. In fact, his ministry will never go beyond his prayers.

The apostle Paul prayed for the churches, elders, and servants in the places where he had been. He prayed "without ceasing" (Colossians 1:9), "night and day" (1 Thessalonians 3:10), and "always" (Philippians 1:4). Regardless of the congregation, Paul knew the people and their specific needs. He desired for the church to be built and strengthened through knowledge and wisdom of God's plan. He prayed that churches would grow in their love for one another and all men. Paul prayed that lives would be fulfilled in Christ and that Christ would be glorified. Observe,

"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11).

A preacher of the gospel should desire God to be at the heart of his ministry, both blessing and sustaining the people he is seeking to save. Prayer seeks God's intervention not only on behalf of the preacher, but also on behalf of the flock.

Ministry without prayer is like a body without air. God will breathe the breath of life into one's ministry through prayer. When he fails to pray about life and ministry, the preacher is conceding (whether consciously or not) that God is not needed. Choosing not to include God through prayer is tantamount to believing that one is self-sufficient for that work. Choosing to pray faithfully, however, is admitting one's need for God and that sufficiency can only come from God.

If the preacher truly desires his ministry to be a ministry of reconciliation, prayer will be in his heart and at the heart of his ministry. The man of God cannot succeed without God! If the preacher's prayer life is weak, his ministry will be listless. He will not have because he has not asked. And the one who has, "to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him" (Matthew 13:12).

A man of God must follow the maxim which states, "Talk to God about your flock before you talk to your flock about God." Go to God during sermon preparation. Go before the Lord concerning any problems in ministry. Seek the Father's will before making any decisions. Pray for guidance always. Pray that God will give heavenly wisdom, compassion, and love.

Seek His spiritual blessings through prayer. As God grants these spiritual blessings, the preacher will become more of a spiritual blessing to the church. Pray that God will use you to accomplish the greatest possible good "according to the measure of the grace of God that is in you." Doors of opportunity will be opened that no man can shut. Souls will be saved, and the church will grow both spiritually and numerically.

Continued from Page 1: *"Chance" or "Hope" of Eternal Life*

"The Greek word for *hope* in the Bible is *elpis*, which is often used to convey the idea of confident expectation and anticipation. It is used in various passages in the New Testament to describe the hope that believers have in God's promises and in the future." In fact, the word *hope* is mentioned 50 times in the New Testament.

Here are just a few passages that mention the hope we have in Jesus Christ: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 13:15).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5).

"Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior" (Titus 1:1-3).

"For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it" (Romans 8:24,25).

There is no uncertainty in the hope that is found in the word of God. It is not a matter of 'chance' but a promise from God who cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18). Many who desire to be saved eternally cannot really expect it because they have not had their sins washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ (Acts 22:16; Ephesians 1:7). Believers in Jesus Christ should obey the commands given in the word of God in order to receive remission of sins and to have the hope of eternal life when our days end on this earth (Acts 17:30, Acts 2:37,38,41,47).

Apostasy and You

David Deagel

Throughout the Scriptures, we find an abundance of warnings from God to those who are His children concerning the dangers of apostasy. Even from the beginning with the first family, Adam was warned not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17). Cain was warned concerning his anger (Gen 4:5-7). Moses, by inspiration, gave warnings to Israel that disobedience would bring about cursing from God (Deut. 28:15-ff; 31:14-29).

We continue to find these warnings throughout the New Testament. Paul gives a warning to Timothy about those who will soon be departing from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1), warnings of perilous times coming (2 Tim 3:1), and ungodly deceivers (2 Tim 3:2-9). Echoing much the same, Peter gives warnings of false teachers (1 Peter 2). Even in his short treatise, Jude focuses much of his attention on the reality that many have become apostates in times past (5-13) and gives warning to the followers of his day of those who would cause divisions (16-19).

While we have been given ample warning that those apostasies happened in times past, we also understand and see much of the same within our own time and society. We are surrounded by those who have rejected the faith and have lived lives immersed in sin. Seeing these things, what is it that we are to do? We often decry the depravity groaning in our spirits while we moan about it to our confidants. In our complaints we may find solace and hope for a better future; however, what does it avail? Is society impacted by our murmuring? Is repentance brought about through our complaint? I have yet to see effective change brought about by the catalyst of grumbling.

What can be done? Is it impossible to bring about repentance and change in an entire nation, let alone the whole world? The task is ever so daunting that it would be laughable to make any feeble attempt to affect change, correct? Those thoughts may have been brewing in the mind of young Timothy as Paul paints the bleak picture of the soon-

coming "perilous times." However, we must take notice of Paul's directive. He did not console Timothy to seclude himself, protect his family, and simply rely on God to provide an outcome that would change the minds and hearts of those who resist the truth. Instead, Paul commanded Timothy to herald the gospel of Christ. Timothy was to PREACH the WORD! His duty was not one of grumbling and complaining but was one of conviction and ACTION, to speak boldly against the apostasy. The man of God is to preach the gospel at all times, and in all places, to all people for all time.

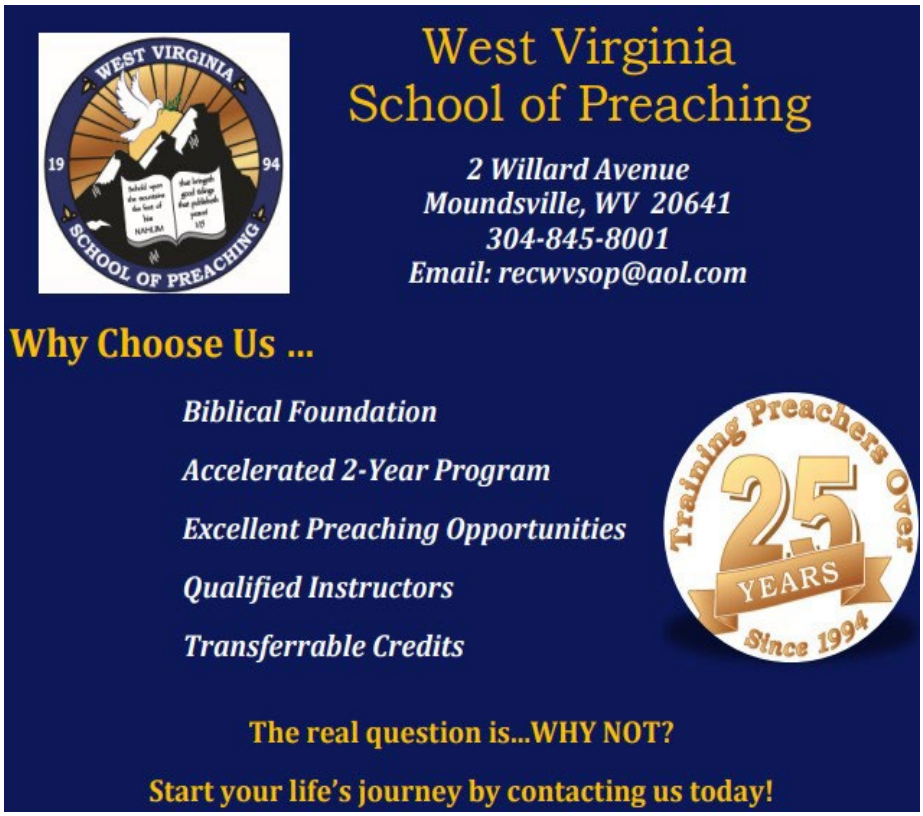
We see the corruption of society, the shrinking numbers in our auditoriums, and the lack of commitment of some who do darken the door of the church building occasionally. What can we do? We do as Paul directed Timothy; PREACH the WORD! The world needs men who will not cower to others who will led the church into apostasy. The church needs men who will proclaim the gospel in its entirety, who will teach the "goodness and the severity of God" (Rom 11:22), who will "convince, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim 4:2). Will you be one of those men who devote themselves to ministry and to being a Timothy?

Not just men who dedicate their life to ministry, what additionally is needed is the whole body of Christ having an evangelistic mindset. Not a single person can afford to sit back and allow the preacher, elders, deacons, or a few in the congregation to be the sole heralds of God's word. Are we all evangelists, pastors, or teachers (Eph 4:11)? No, but each one has some ability, some influence, and some way to share the word of God to others.

[Editor's Note: David is working alongside the fine brethren at the West Virginia School of Preaching, and they are doing a good work.

He asks of us, "Will you consider the possibility of being one of those men who will dedicate their life to sharing the gospel of Christ? We would love to talk with you about the opportunity of attending the West Virginia School of Preaching.

Will you consider using whatever ability you have been bestowed in some way, somehow, to bring glory to our Father by reaching others with the gospel?]



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Counterfeit Christianity

Johnny O. Trail

When I was a student at MTSU, I worked for a gentleman who was a retired antique salesman. C.B. Arnett was the first person in the southeastern United States who imported antiques from Europe and sold them in the states. Upon his retirement, there were some beautiful art pieces that remained in his private collection.

After I had worked for him for a period of about ten years, he determined that the home he occupied with his wife was too big to maintain. Soon afterward, he made plans to downsize his collections and move to a retirement facility located on the north side of Murfreesboro. To this end, he organized an estate auction and a private auction for the more valuable items in his art collection.

To determine the value of the art, he had me take pictures of the paintings, and he sent the photographs to an art gallery for authentication. In some cases, he had to ship the art for firsthand, up-close examinations. It was nerve wracking for me to handle pieces of art that were valued in the tens of thousands of dollars, but he trusted me with this work.

One painting had potential for great value. The painting was alleged to have been done by an artist named George Inness. One web page provides the following description of his life and art:

"Artist George Inness (1825-1894) was a renowned American landscape painter, working largely in oils on canvas. He combined artistic sensibility with a designer's calculation, studying at the National Academy of Design and admiring the work of Hudson River School artists…As an artist, George Inness painted panoramic landscapes whose composition is precise, and the color is rich. George Inness' prints of landscapes, particularly giclee on canvas, are highly desired as focal points or accents for interior design."[1]

The piece that was sent off from the private collection was very pretty and it looked to be very old. Upon examining the value of Inness' paintings, they could be worth millions depending upon the size and the nature of the piece. One source reveals the most expensive Inness painting ever sold. It states,

"George Inness's work has been offered at auction multiple times, with realized prices ranging from 38 USD to 1,945,000 USD, depending on the size and medium of the artwork. Since 1998 the record price for this artist at auction is 1,945,000 USD for Sunset on the River, sold at Christie's New York in 2008."[2]

One could potentially retire if a collected piece of art fetched this amount at auction! To make a long story short, the artwork was sent off to the appraiser to authenticate and determine the value of the painting. The collector was excited to find out how much the painting was worth and in all honesty I was too.

When the appraisal arrived, it was determined that it was "a fake." Still, the appraiser estimated that it could fetch $10,000 at auction. Not bad, but far short of the potential value that it might have had if it was a genuine George Inness painting. It's obvious that a genuine painting is far more valuable than a counterfeit one!

Along these same lines, we might examine the Bible's impetus regarding genuine, sincere, or pure Christianity. There were hypocritical Christians in Paul's age, and they exist in our time also. Scripture is replete with passages that urge Christians to be genuine in their conduct—not counterfeit or false—in their manner of behavior and words.

To that end, *we need to be genuine in our love for God and the brethren*. Paul shares this sentiment in Romans 12:9. He writes, "Let love be (genuine—ESV) without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good." Evidently, one can love in a hypocritical manner. One can profess to love God and his brethren while acting in a manner inconsistent with such a profession.

Perhaps this hypocrisy is evidenced by actions or words that are not consistent with the Bible's definition of love. This must have been a problem

[1] George (1825) Inness Paintings & Artwork for Sale | George (1825) Inness Art Value Price Guide (invaluable.com)

[2] George Inness | 431 Artworks at Auction | Mutual Art

among some of the brethren in the first century, because Peter seeks to address it in 1 Peter 1:22. He says, "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart." Hopefully, we are not counterfeit in our love for God and the brethren.

Next, *we should be pure in words, thoughts, and deeds*. Philippians 4:8 says, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." If we direct our minds to consider pure things, we will find our Christian walk to be freer from the temptations we face.

Pure wisdom is an outright rejection of things that are sensual, worldly, or envious in our lives (James 3:14-16). These things are the antithesis of genuine Christianity. The brother of Jesus writes in James 3:17-18, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

Prior to these passages, James defined appropriate uses of the tongue and coupled those thoughts with what pure religion was. He said in James 1:26-27, "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." This servant attitude regarding love (cf. Philippians 2:5ff) and purity from the world should be a hallmark of practical Christianity.

Hopefully, our Christianity is not counterfeit in nature. Counterfeit currency and other counterfeited items of value create confusion and chaos in the financial world. Counterfeit Christians create doubt and confusion in the lives of unbelievers and imperil the soul that is counterfeit in behavior. We must stive to be genuine Christians in our behavior.

Worldwide Preacher Training

Our third year of Worldwide Preacher Training will involve some ambitious plans and lots of work.

In addition to teaching in the US, Philippines, and South Africa, we will begin a mentoring program for preachers in these and other countries. We are also anticipating a summer trip to the Philippines to help conduct an evangelistic campaign.

Plans are also underway to begin a graduate school of preaching that will consist of international students and teachers. Much planning and foundational work is required for this effort. Once we begin, we want to be successful. So, we are "counting the costs" currently (Luke 14:28-30).

The purpose of the Legacy College of the Bible will be to assist churches of Christ around the world in equipping ministers who have graduated from a school of preaching or undergraduate college to gain an increased knowledge and capability for teaching the word of God. The school will also have a special interest in helping bi-vocational preachers to continue their ministerial education. We recognize the need and desire of those who are limited by time restraints and location to learn in a college-level setting. Our schedule will be crafted to cater to these needs by offering a flexible method of study.

The primary goal for January 2024 has been to collect books for libraries in two schools. Through your help we have raised over $10,000 to purchase and transport these books.

Thus far, we have 45 boxes of books. Most of them are 17x11x13. It's hard to say what the total value is for all the books. Perhaps a collector might estimate between $25,000 and $50,000, but such estimations always seem to vary. Regardless of total value, we feel this is a good cause and has been blessed by God through you.

One of the libraries to be receiving the books is the ACU library in the Philippines. The brethren operate a graduate program there and we have collected a good collection of books for the students and faculty to use mainly for academic research purposes. The bulk of what we will be sending them consists of commentaries, word studies, and original source material.

The second library we will be sending books to is in Ghana. I visited the West Coast School of Preaching in October and noticed their library needed more books fundamental to gospel preaching and teaching. We are sending them a fine collection of sermon books, debates, church history, commentaries, topical studies, and word studies.

A truck will be loading the books in Fayetteville, TN and transporting them to Mission Printing in Arlington, TX. The brethren in Arlington will see to the overseas shipping of the books later this year, Lord willing.

The schools we are helping are good schools and operated by good men. We are happy and blessed to help them!

Thank you for all you do to support this work. You have our love and our gratitude!

Andy Erwin

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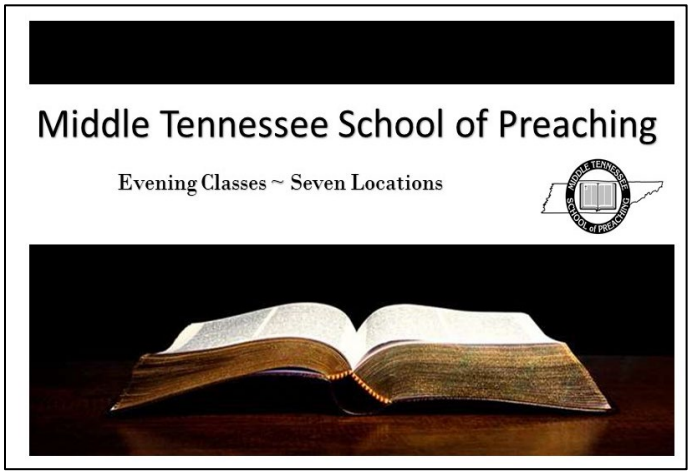

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The Epitome of the Gospel

1 Timothy 3:16

Introduction:

1. The Apostle gave us a concise summary of the Gospel in one sentence.
2. "Without controversy"! It is mighty in the holy truth that it reveals.
3. No other religion contains these marvelous facts.

Discussion:

I. The Description of the Gospel. "*Great…mystery.*"

A. Human wisdom could not have devised it. 1 Corinthians 1:23.

B. Angels could not comprehend it. 1 Peter 1:12

C. The Devil and all his agents could not stop it. (Judas, chief priests, Herod, Pharisees.)

II. The Details of the Gospel. "*God was…*"

A. "Manifest in the flesh."

1. The incarnation. John 1:1, 4
2. His name says it all. Matthew 1:23
3. His purpose was to reveal the Father. John 14:9

B. "Justified in the Spirit."

1. He had no sin. Hebrews 4:15
2. The Father's testimony. Matthew 3:17; 17:5.
3. His resurrection proves His claim. Romans 1:4.

C. "Seen of angels".

1. Gabriel announced His coming. Luke 1:26, 27
2. They sang at His birth. Luke 2:9-15
3. Ministered after His temptation. Matthew 4:11
4. Strengthened Him in Gethsemane. Luke 22:43
5. Announced His resurrection. Matthew 28:5-7
6. Present at His ascension. Acts 1:11

D. "Preached unto the gentiles."

1. Those who were "without". Ephesians 2:12
2. Prophecy: Isaiah 2:2, 3; 62:2.
3. The great commission. Mark 15:15
4. The Apostles obeyed the Lord. Acts 10:34, 35; 17:30, 31.

E. "Believed on in the world."

1. Jewish prejudice was overcome. Acts 2:37-41
2. Gentile lust and greed conquered. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
3. Through the preaching of the faith producing word. Romans 10:17; John 20:30, 31.

F. "Received up into glory."

1. To make His offering for sin. Hebrews 9:24-26
2. To send the Holy Spirit. John 16:7-13
3. To reign on David's throne. Acts 2:33-36
4. To represent His people. 1 John 2:1, 2
5. To make ready our reward. John 14:1-3

III. The Design of the Gospel.

A. The gospel reveals the foundation of godliness. Romans 6:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 5:17

B. By obeying the gospel, we come to all the blessings of godliness. Romans 5:1; 8:1, 16, 17.

C. By the gospel's influence we are led to practice godliness. 1 Timothy 4:8; Titus 2:11, 12.

D. By all this glory and honor is unto God. Revelation 5:12, 13; Ephesians 3:21

Conclusion:

1. Can the details be refuted?
2. Can anyone afford to be indifferent?
3. Can the warning be successfully ignored. John 8:24

-Mike Kiser

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BIBLICAL and UNBIBLICAL PREACHING

ARVIN JAMES V. PESTOLANTE

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes Salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns" (Isaiah 52:7).

Many people would prefer hearing a sermon that entertains them. Well, sadly but true, because of stubbornness and being self-willed, people will just accept every word that they want to hear and not the words that they need to hear. We could also say that denominational preachers are admired and acknowledged by millions of people, and sadly, these preachers are preaching unbiblical doctrines, while the true heralds of God are not being appreciated by many.

Awareness of False Teachers Today

Tim Challies says there are 7 false teachers today: **(1)** The *Heretic*: the most prominent and perhaps the most dangerous of the false teachers, denying, contradicting, and adding the true teaching. This is a cult religion (2 Peter 2:1). **(2)** The *Charlatan*: the person who uses Christianity as a means of personal enrichment (1 Timothy 6:3-5). **(3)** The *Prophet*: claims to be gifted by God to speak fresh revelation outside of Scripture, authoritative words of prediction, teaching, rebuke, or encouragement (1 John 4:1). **(4)** The *Abuser*: uses his position of leadership to take advantage of other people to feed his sexual lust, though he may also desire power (2 Peter 2:2). **(5)** The *Divider*: uses false doctrine to disrupt or destroy a church (Titus 3:10). **(6)** The *Tickler*: who cares nothing for what God wants and everything for what men want. He is the man-pleaser rather than the God-pleaser (2 Timothy 4:3-4). **(7)** The *Speculator*: obsesses about the End Times, and somehow his failed predictions dissuade neither himself nor his followers (Titus 3:9).

Homiletics Must be Based on Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is "the science of interpretation," from the Greek word *hermeneuo* which means to *interpret* or to *translate*. We must "Let the Bible interpret itself." Meaning, we should interpret the passage according to the context.

Homiletics is also from the Greek word *homiletikos* which means *conversation*. **"**Homiletics is the art of preparing sermons and preaching.**"** Thus, hermeneutics supplies the understanding for the sermon, whereas homiletics is the actual preaching of the sermon. Therefore, the way we preach the sermon and the way we deliver the conversation with the people must be based on the proper interpretation of the Bible, which is the proper hermeneutics.

Such preaching is the opposite of the *Tickler* that was mentioned above, who preaches a partial gospel which is no gospel at all. Remember when Paul encouraged Timothy "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim.2:15). We must carefully handle the word of God.

The Hebrew author says, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

Scriptures Cannot be Added and Subtracted

In Deuteronomy 4:2 the Israelites are given a warning: "Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you." Moses repeated the admonition in similar words in Deut. 12:32.

Is this warning applicable to us today? When Moses gave the instructions to them, he was speaking of the "entire Bible" available at that time – Genesis through Deuteronomy.

God gave us further revelation that reflects the same message through apostle John in Revelation 22:18–19. We should not add, lest the plagues and curses will be added to us and if we subtract, eternal life will be also taken from us.

God also gives a warning in Proverbs 30:5-6 through King David saying: "Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar."

The Scriptures we have today are completed and breathed by God.

God revealed everything that we need to be thoroughly equipped for the good works (2 Tim.3:16-17), so why do we need to add? One thing more and most of all, God will not let the Bible

we have today be inadequate. Remember when Jesus says in Matthew 24:35: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." Instead of adding and taking away doctrines from the Bible, we must boldly preach it biblically, not partially, or else God will take away our chance to live with Him in the Holy City and to have eternal life and we will be accursed (Galatians 1:8-9)

Preaching Creatively, Yet Scripturally.

Communication is the key. Maybe we are neglecting the essence of this. Perhaps one of the reasons people prefer false teachers is because they are attractive to their ears. Though it is a lie, it sounds encouraging, but it leads to death and destruction. That's why we may need to sharpen our skills of communication while remaining in line with God's word.

We can preach creatively and not go beyond what the Bible says. Remember that even our Lord used parables to illustrate and describe, to relay his message so that a hearer could understand it better (Matthew 13:10-17). We can conduct biblical sermons that grasp the attention of our audience without eliminating biblical doctrines, values, and principles. We can learn from others various ways to present ourselves, speak, use facial expressions, and gestures. But being appealing in the sight of men because 'sweet talks,' innocent faces, and flowery words is condemned by Christ (Matt. 7:15-16a).

As heralds of God, we have a greater responsibility toward people and their souls (James 3:1). Being the ones who bring the gospel of peace and glad tidings to the people (Isaiah 52:7), we must be careful in preaching it, we must be responsible and accountable.

Haddon W. Robinson says. **"**Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher applies to the hearers**."**

Conclusion

Let us distinguish between biblical and unbiblical preaching by **(1)** being ware of false teachers today; **(2)** having our homiletics based on biblical hermeneutics; **(3)** realizing that the scriptures cannot be added or subtracted; **(4)** preaching creatively, yet scripturally.

"The End is not the End"

Cedric Dave N. de Mayo

"I am sick to death; oww! I can't breathe, I am dying; He died because of a massacre; He is in the hospital, dying."

These words are often heard because death is certain in human lives. At first glance, death seems like the end of life. According to *biblestudytools.com,* death is the termination of life. It is the opposite of life.

In a physical sense, the Bible says in Psalm 103:15-16, *"As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, And its place remembers it no more."* Adam, the first man to live in the world, died at 930 years old. Methuselah, the oldest person who lived, died at the age of 969 years old. One of the famous singers, the "King of Pop" Michael Jackson who was often monitored by doctors died June 25, 2009, 2:26 p.m. at the age of 50.

According to *ourworldindata.org,* a study in 2019 stated that around 60 million people die each year. There are a bunch of people who need to obey the gospel! This world is not forever.

In the spiritual sense, there is more to the subject of death. Man will not cease to exist. The Bible teaches us that death is threefold. To start with, it tells us about the physical death (Hebrews 9:27); the spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1); then the eternal death (Matthew 25:46). In regard to physical death as human beings, we are not permanent in this world. The Bible tells us that death is "separation." Physical death is the separation of the body from the spirit and soul (James 2:26). Ecclesiastes 12:7 tells us that "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it."

Remember in the book of Genesis 2:7, God formed a man from the dust of the earth and breathed into His nostrils the breath of life. God gave us a body that is composed of elements which are physical which are made from the dust

of the ground. The physical death is the consequence when the first man who lived, Adam, sinned (Genesis 3:16). That is why people inherited the consequences of sin but not the sin itself (Ezekiel 18:19-24). Given that men must come face to face with death, how should men live in this world when the end of life is not the end?

We often say, "we only live once" not considering that we will only die once and then judgement (Hebrews 9:27). The essence of death and its certainty is worse than our bodies being put into a grave.

Spiritual death is also a "separation." It is a separation from God because of sin. Prophet Isaiah talks about this matter in Isaiah 59, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear."

On the day Adam and Eve ate the fruit of knowledge of good and evil, they were thrown out of the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:23-24), a separation from God occurred because of sin. Their sin separated them from Almighty God. Romans 3:10 tells that no one is righteous and in verse 23, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. In Romans 6:23, it is stated that the wages of sin is death. Death is what is left when we entirely choose to sin rather than God. Given that all are unrighteous as stated in Romans 3:10, that does not mean there is no hope of salvation. How should me live in this world when the end of life is not the end?

Thirdly, we have the subject of eternal death in the Bible (Matthew 25:46). The second death is eternal damnation (Revelation 2:11). There is a clear portrayal of existence after the end of our lives in this world.

In Luke 16:19-31, the rich man and Lazarus died. These two went into Hades, a spiritual realm which was divided into two: paradise and the place of torment. The "great gulf" keeps the two places separated. The rich man went into the place of torment and Lazarus in paradise. Explicitly speaking, we can tell how they used their lives here on earth.

2 Corinthians 5:10 states that "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

After life is judgement. No second chances shall be offered, and no higher court of appeals will occur. Every person will be judged by the highest court ever known, the Almighty God. After death, the soul will be separated from the physical body (Luke 16:19-31) and if we live in sin, the Bible says that the sinners will be thrown into the lake of fire, known as hell (Revelation 21:8). So, how should men live in this world when the end of life is not the end?

People mourning, dead bodies in graves, people reminiscing about the past. These are common scenarios after death, but there is a lot more to death in the afterlife.

There is good news! There is death to sin. It occurs when we are forgiven of sin and live no longer in sin (Romans 6:1-7). Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. By His death, we have been redeemed from all trespasses. He proclaimed victory over death.

He is God, but came into this world in flesh, dwelt among us for us to have salvation. The grace of God appeared to all men (Titus 2:11). "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

We must live by following God. One must hear the gospel (Romans 10:17), believe God (Mark 16:16), repent (Acts 2:38), confess (Romans 10:9-10; Matthew 16:16) and be baptized (Romans 6:3-4). Be added to the church (Acts 2:47) and be faithful until death to receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

Death is unavoidable (Job 30:23) but it is not the end. Heaven awaits those who are faithful to God. The spirit of the righteous will be with the Lord in paradise, but the wicked will be in the place of torment.

Let us be prepared for life after death, because the end of life here on earth is not the end.

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[Editor's Note: These last two articles were submitted by students from Asian Christian University in the Philippines. We will continue to highlight the work of their students in the *Gospel Gleaner*.]

In 445 B.C. the Jews returned after 70 years captivity. The city was in ruins. The wall was broken down. Nehemiah was the one to lead the people in the reconstruction of the walls.

Nehemiah was a great leader. Harry Truman said, "A leader is a man who can get you to do what you don't want to do and make you like doing it." Teddy Roosevelt was told he was a great leader and a great man. He said: "No, I am simply an ordinary man, highly motivated." Nehemiah was one of the most significant leaders of all time. He teaches us how to be great leaders.

NEHEMIAH WAS A LEADER FROM THE HEART OUT (**Nehemiah 1:4**).

When he saw the wall's condition, it broke his heart. All great women and men of God have had hearts that could be broken (Jeremiah 9:1; Matthew 9:36; Acts 20:28-31). There are few tears shed today when there is so much for which one can weep.

NEHEMIAH WAS A LEADER FROM THE KNEES UP (**Nehemiah 1:4**).

We will not accomplish much without prayer. Most failures are failures to pray. Consider James 4:2 and the necessity of a courageous prayer life.

NEHEMIAH SURVEYED THE SITUATION AND PLANNED A STRATEGY (**Nehemiah 2:15**).

We need a plan in place to confront our changing world. Our world needs: Hope, Community, Love and Compassion. For Christians to do what Jesus did (Luke 4:16-19).

NEHEMIAH WAS A LEADER WHO REFUSED TO LET OPPOSITION STOP HIM (**Nehemiah 2:19**).

He was mocked and ridiculed. Some refused to help him (Nehemiah 3:5). They were accused of being weak (Nehemiah 4:2). There was a conspiracy spread about him and their efforts (Nehemiah 4:7-8). He was offered a compromise (Nehemiah 6:2-3). He was misrepresented (Nehemiah 6:6-8).

NEHEMIAH ORGANIZED THE PEOPLE TO WORK (**Nehemiah 4:21-23**).

He used everyone and assigned them work to do. We need to utilize the talents of all. We are called to work! Everyone needs to work (John 9:4; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Philippians 2:12; 2 Timothy 2:15; James 1:25).

A working church is:

•A happy church.

•A friendly church.

•A trouble-free church.

•A zealous church.

•A growing church.

NEHEMIAH KNEW HOW TO MOTIVATE MEN TO WORK **(Nehemiah 2:17).**

He showed them the need. He had a plan of action. He knew how to bring out the best in others. This is why they were successful.

NEHEMIAH KNEW HIS PRIORITIES **(Nehemiah 2:20, 6:3).**

He refused to get bogged down in trivia. Someone once said: Two things hard to do: To think and to do things in the order of their importance. Nehemiah was successful because he put his trust in God.

Let's learn from Nehemiah! May the Lord bless you and keep you!

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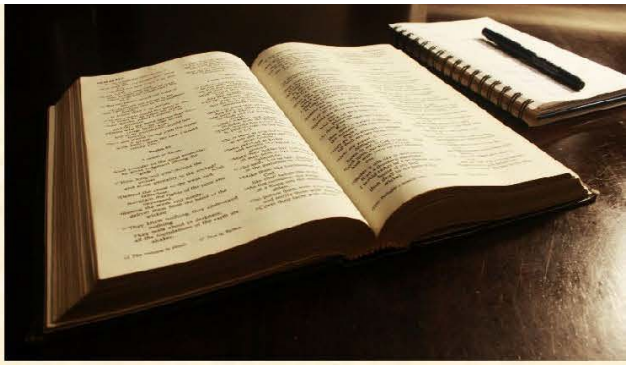

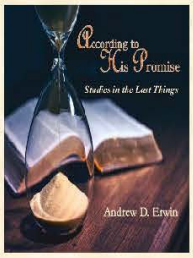

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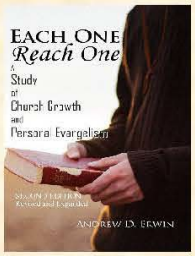

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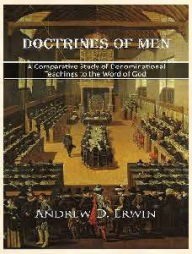

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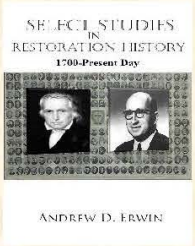

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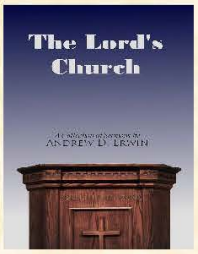

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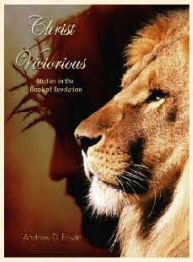

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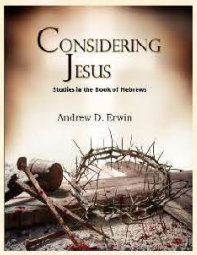

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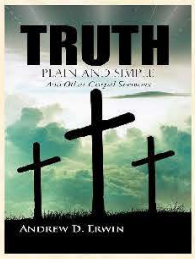

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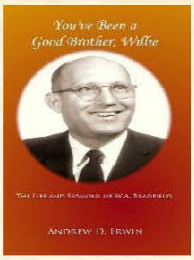

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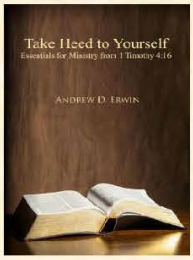

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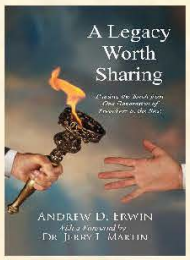

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