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Presbyterian

THE MAGAZINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

september 2006



Paul

The **right** perspective

J. Ligon Duncan • Retail therapy • Christ's feminism

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editorial

Martin Luther once remarked that the doctrine of justification by faith was the article by which a church stands or falls. John Calvin opined that "it was the main hinge on which religion turns". If Calvin and Luther's views on justification are any guide as to the significance of the doctrine, then the debate that has been recently sparked over Paul's understanding of justification has serious implications for the future of evangelical Christianity.

What is this controversy? How has it arisen? And what are the stakes involved? No doubt many Christian leaders have now become familiar with the term, "the new perspective on Paul". It has popped up in a variety of ways in recent years, but it became a major talking-point several months ago when Bishop Tom Wright, the Anglican bishop of Durham, visited Australia on a widely publicised lecture tour. Dr Wright is one of a number of leading academic proponents of the new perspective. There is no doubt that his impressive scholarship, which is often supportive of the evangelical position, has won him a keen and receptive audience for his views.

In this issue of *Australian Presbyterian*, we have introduced our readers to a number of matters which are central to understanding the new perspective and to evaluating its long-term impact on the church. Our first aim is to introduce some of the personalities involved and to explain what they are saying about how we should understand the apostle Paul. Although our explanations are only relatively brief, we hope that they satisfactorily state the positions of those who espouse the new perspective. We have also tried to offer some form of assessment of their position based on an informed hermeneutical approach to the New Testament documents.

Readers should be aware that in a limited treatment of such an important issue it is difficult not to focus on areas of serious disagreement. Such a focus does not imply that the new perspective has no new insights to offer in our understanding of the New Testament. It simply means that we have chosen to engage the new perspective at the point where we believe that it endangers the gospel.

Peter Hastie 

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Paul in perspective

The Reformers understood justification better than many today.

Paul gives his Epistle to the Romans to a Letter Carrier (1570). Artist: unknown master connected to the Protestant Reformation era writings.



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**Ligon Duncan
talks to
Peter Hastie**

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Dr Duncan is married to Anne. They live in Jackson and have two children, Sarah and Jennings.

Why is the doctrine of justification so

important in the church?

The doctrine of justification is important to the church for many reasons. The first is that the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, safeguards the sovereignty of God's grace and righteousness in our salvation. I find it interesting that in Paul's letter to the Romans he celebrates the mercy of God to us in Jesus Christ. He reminds us that our salvation is all of God and is based on the work of Christ alone. He emphasises that although we have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God the Lord has shown us grace in Jesus Christ and drawn us savingly to Himself. And He has done this in a way that preserves His own righteousness and justice.

Paul explains how God maintains His righteousness in a number of places in Romans. In chapter 3, for instance, he shows that God has demonstrated His grace to us through the atoning work of Jesus Christ in such a way that He does not compromise His integrity. The good news of the Gospel is that God has found

a way to punish our sin in full measure and yet also to bestow His grace upon us in Jesus Christ. And justification is the doctrine that Paul uses to explain this to us. Further, since the doctrine of justification is integral to the meaning of the gospel, it is of crucial importance to the Christian life.

While I have no doubt that it's possible to be a Christian and to be confused about the doctrine of justification, it's simply not possible to be a *healthy* Christian and to misunderstand what it means to be justified. So, that's the first reason why the doctrine of justification is important.

The second reason is that it is precisely this doctrine that protects all the benefits of the doctrine of grace. The simple fact is that you can undermine the very notion of grace if you don't get justification right. The Reformers realised this. They knew that they could agree with everything that Augustine had taught about grace during the Pelagian controversy but lose the very idea of grace itself if they misunderstood the doctrine of justification. The reason for this is that justification deals with the way that you receive the grace that has been offered in Jesus Christ.

The Reformers recognised that we couldn't subscribe to Augustine's theology of grace and, at the same time, maintain a doctrine of justification that taught that we receive grace as a result of some meritorious reason within us, whether it is our works, or in receiving the sacraments, or simply our faithfulness to God. I think that they were right in that. You can only have a true doctrine of grace like Augustine's if it is secured for us by a robust Pauline understanding of justification. So, for at least those two reasons, I think the doctrine of justification is important. It protects the character of God and guards the doctrine of grace.

Can you explain what Paul means by the term "justification"?

I think the place to begin is in the first three chapters of Romans. In those early sections of the letter the apostle Paul establishes that the whole world – both Jew and Gentile – is guilty before God. As Paul says, "there's nobody who's righteous, there's nobody who's good, there's no-one who seeks God, there's no-one who has understanding". So he paints a picture of a guilty world before God and with no hope of redeeming itself because, he says, "by the works of the law, no flesh will be justified in his sight" (Rom. 3:20).

Then he continues, "but now apart from the law the righteousness of God

has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe. For there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being *justified* as a gift by His blood" (Rom. 3:21-4).

Now Paul is very careful in his choice of words here. When he speaks about being justified, he uses a technical, legal term which comes right out of the Septuagint. I imagine that Paul has a passage like Deuteronomy 25 in mind where Moses says in verse 1, "If there is a dispute between men they go to a court and the judges decide their case and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked". Now I think there is a very interesting comparison between the two contrasting ideas of justification and condemnation. We need to remember that it is legal language that is used in connection with sentencing. They are the sort of words that we use to describe a person's legal status as opposed to their psychological condition. For instance, when a judge justifies the innocent, he doesn't actually make a man innocent; rather, he makes a declaration of how the man stands before the law.

Now Paul takes this word "justify", which means to "declare someone righteous", and he goes on to say that we have been justified, that is, declared to be "not guilty" as a gift by God's grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ. And so Paul, in Romans 3:24, makes it clear that the basis of our being declared not guilty is not to be found in us; instead, we are "justified" because of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The gift of being declared accepted by God is not based on something in us or in something that we do; rather, it is based on something which God has done in Jesus Christ. And that's good news! We have someone else who has accomplished our salvation.

Has the church always understood justification in this way?

Yes it has, although not everyone has had the clear understanding of the doctrine that we find in the Reformers. For

instance, some of the early Church Fathers had a good grasp of the doctrine. Of course, not every one in the early church was clear about the doctrine of justification; but some leading scholars were. Theologians like Augustine and Ambrosiaster were people who understood perfectly how the language of justification was used in Paul's writings.

What difference did it make to the Reformers, particularly Luther, when they embraced the doctrine of justification for themselves?

Of course for Luther, it ended years of agony of conscience over his experience of assurance. Until the truth of justification dawned on him, Luther had believed that his salvation was determined on the basis of his own intrinsic merits. But as soon as he understood the meaning of justification he realised that his salvation and assurance were based on something outside of him; and, of course, that something is the person and work of Christ.

What we need in order to be saved (and assured) is a righteousness that is not our own. A personal or an inherent righteousness is not good enough because it is corrupted by sin. Indeed, even an inherent righteousness infused to us through the sacramental system is insufficient, because if our assurance and salvation ultimately rest on something in us we will never be assured. When we look into our hearts, as Calvin would later say, it's a factory of idols. So, if my assurance is based on something in me, I'll never be certain of my salvation.

Incidentally, it should come as no surprise that the official Roman Catholic doctrine is that no one can gain a perfect assurance except by special revelation from God. Calvin, on the other hand, taught that the normal experience of the believer was to be assured because as the writer to the Hebrews tells us, to exercise saving faith is to experience the assurance of God's mercy and love to us. The Reformers knew that if Christian assurance is based on something in us, we will never attain it. Luther saw that as clearly as any human being has ever seen it.

Why do Roman Catholics find the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith alone so difficult to accept?

I think they find it difficult to accept because it is counter-intuitive. There seems to be a strange irony at work here: on the one hand, we want to be assured, but on the other, we think that we have to do it ourselves. I think it's native to fallen

man to think that the way that you relate to God is by hard work. It's ingrained into us that you get what you pay for. This isn't just an idea of Western culture; I think it's something that's instinctive to fallen man.

Of course, the problem with us in our fallen state is that we are idolaters. Calvin made this point strongly and I agree with him. Now the fundamental aspect of idolatry is that you have to do something to win the favour of the gods so that they will do something for you. This line of thinking is innate to us all. So, for Paul to come along and say, "no, it's all about grace", is very radical and counter-intuitive.

The problem Roman Catholic theologians face is that they try to combine their theology of grace and their theology of fallen humanity into one comprehensive scheme. But the Reformers said, "No, no, no!" The apostles teach a theology of grace, not one of grace plus our faithfulness, or grace plus the sacraments, or grace plus the penitential system, or even grace plus our works.

Exactly what did the Reformers understand by the doctrine of justification by faith?

The Westminster Shorter Catechism gives an excellent synopsis of what the magisterial Protestant Reformers of the 16th century believed about justification and what the Protestant church continues to believe, or at least, should believe. Interestingly, Wesley and the Methodist tradition, the Anglican formularies and the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition are at one on this issue. We may disagree on other things, but historically we have agreed that justification is an act of God's free grace whereby He pardons our sin and counts us as righteous, not because of anything in us but because of the person and work of Christ. And that is what our catechism question is getting at when it asks and answers the question, "What is justification?"

In this answer we should notice two very interesting things. The first is that justification involves the pardoning of sin. The concept of justification includes a number of subsidiary ideas such as the guilt of sin, the penal desert of sin, and the acquittal of sin and guilt. However, it also deals with our positive likeness and standing before God. But our standing before God and our likeness to Him aren't based on something we do, nor are they even based on our faith, though faith is the instrument whereby we receive that justifi-

fication. Ultimately, they are based on Christ.

Are there any current developments within the church in connection with the doctrine of justification by faith that are causing you concern?

One thing that concerns me is the relatively poor grasp that evangelical preachers have of the doctrine of justification. Many preachers display a poor grasp of it and often refer to it outside of its original forensic, court-room context.

The new perspective claims that traditional Protestant scholarship has misunderstood the Judaism of Paul's day.

There are also many New Testament scholars and theologians who are taking a more flexible approach to the doctrine of justification.

Actually, this is nothing new. Scholars like Albert Schweitzer, F. C. Baur and the Tubingen school and others over the last century have wanted to re-assess the doctrine of justification not as a judicial act but as just one among a number of metaphors which the Bible uses to talk about our relationship with God. These scholars argue that it is wrong to privilege justification over other metaphors that speak about our salvation. They claim that one metaphor is sanctification, another is union with Christ, another is justification, and these are just different ways of saying that being in relationship to God is like being counted righteous, or it is like being acquitted of sin, or it is like being made holy – but these metaphors shouldn't be privileged over and against each other.

However, I think the New Testament writers were giving us more than metaphors when they used these terms. They were giving us concrete ideas that cohered with one another and which needed to be organised in such a way that they did not actually controvert each other. Unfortunately some modern scholars reject this way of understanding the cluster of doctrines that deal with various aspects of our salvation and prefer a kind of system that is more fluid and non-specific. In taking this approach they have confused the doctrine of justification.

One of the new developments that has had a direct bearing on the doctrine of justification is called the new

perspective on Paul. What is it, and are you concerned about it?

Actually, I prefer to call this movement "the new perspectives" (plural) because it embraces a number of different views, most of which have been brewing for some time. For instance, you can find certain tendencies in German scholarship back in the late 19th century that were the forerunners of the more recent developments that we see in "the new perspectives".

The term itself, the new perspective, was coined by James Dunn, a New Testament scholar in Durham, England, for a new approach to reading the theology of the Apostle Paul. Dunn's view is that basically we have misunderstood Judaism in the context of New Testament Christianity. He says that the Judaism of the Rabbinic period was not a religion of "works righteousness" or self righteousness; in fact, Dunn says that Paul did not condemn Judaism because it taught that salvation was by works. Instead, Paul was concerned about the status of Gentiles in what was essentially a Jewish church at the start. Thus, according to Dunn, our whole understanding of justification has been wrong.

Krister Stendahl, a professor at Harvard in the 1960s and in the 1970s, articulated many of the themes that are now popular in the new perspective on Paul. But the theologian that really put the new perspective on the map was E. P. Sanders. Sanders had been a professor at Oxford and then came to Duke University in North Carolina. He wrote a book called *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, which was essentially a reassessment of the Judaism during the first century at the time of the birth of Christianity.

Sanders' aim in the book was to correlate Paul's teaching to the Judaism of the period and to vindicate it from the claim that it taught a "works-righteousness" or some sort of a proto-Pelagianism. His book was a significant turning-point in the scholarly world of Judaic studies and early Christianity. Sanders' major claim, and that of the new perspective, is that traditional Protestant scholarship has misunderstood the Judaism of Paul's day.

He claims that first-century Judaism did not have a theology of works-righteousness; instead, it had a theology of grace. Of course, it depends on what Sanders means by the term "grace". He seems to think that God's grace can still remain grace even when there is still some room for human merit; he has a Roman Catholic or semi-Pelagian view of it.

Further, he maintains that Paul's protest against Judaism did not have to do with its doctrine of salvation; it had to do with Judaism's doctrine of the church or the people of God.

Sanders argues that when Paul was complaining about the Judaism of his day his criticism was twofold. First, he claimed that Judaism didn't acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, and second, it had an exclusive (as opposed to an inclusive) view on race and religion. Now since Sanders had a prodigious mastery of the primary sources of Rabbinic Judaism, many people started to think that perhaps he was right and that they had misunderstood the nature of first century Judaism.

Numbers of scholars felt that there was a need to rethink how we read Paul in relationship to the Judaism of his period. So it became popular, for example, to say that Paul wasn't really *converted* on the road to Damascus, he was just called. Nor, it was said, did Paul see himself as the founder of a new religion; rather, he saw himself fulfilling his calling as an Israelite, as a Jew to the world. In other words, what happened was that New Testament scholars began to stress the continuity between early Christianity and Judaism, rather than discontinuity. They said that Christianity and Judaism basically share the same understanding of how a person is saved but they have a different view of who is a member of the church and how we ought to think about the identity of Jesus. E. P. Sanders made a famous quip that "Paul's big thing with Judaism was that it wasn't Christianity". He claimed that the only real difference between Jews and Christians is that Jews don't accept Jesus as the Messiah and they have an exclusivist view of the people of God (only they can belong).

So consequently, all of Paul's famous declarations in relation to justification are now read in the context of the debate about the nature of the church, rather than in the context of the debate about salvation. Further, a couple of other prominent scholars, James Dunn of the University of Durham and Bishop Tom Wright, the Anglican bishop of Durham, have taken Sanders' insights and tweaked them a bit and have become the leading proponents in applying some of the insights of the new perspectives in our understanding of Paul.

For instance, N.T. Wright says when we look at justification we need to understand that justification is more about ecclesiology than it is about soteriology. It is more about the doctrine of the

church or the people of God than it is about how we are saved or our status before God. He argues that Paul is not so concerned about how an individual stands before God; rather, he is more concerned about how an individual knows that he or she is in the community of God's people. Justification is Paul's answer to that, not to the former question.

Should this perspective be a matter of concern for pastors and church leaders, or is it just an esoteric academic debate?

I think it's a matter of broad concern,



My problem is that I have had some very capable students who have read and listened to Tom Wright and they have become confused.

and I certainly believe that the amount of ink that's being spilled over it is proof of that fact. I don't regard it as a storm in a teacup. What ultimately convinced me that it was a major issue was that some of the best students that I've taught in seminary over the last dozen years have fallen hook, line and sinker for it. I think the reason for this is that these students, though gifted, received their introduction to the debate through the writings of N.T. Wright and others and so weren't properly equipped from the outset to assess the issues. They got off on the wrong foot, so to speak. Consequently, they have become fuzzy in their understanding and presentation of the gospel and that, for me, is a serious issue.

I should also mention that there are other significant issues apart from justification that are in play here too. Following the line of the new perspective throws a believer's assurance into doubt and it raises questions about his capacity to persevere in the Christian race.

How have they become unclear in their presentation of the gospel?

I think they have become unclear in two ways. First, since they are confused in their understanding of the doctrine of justification it's hard for them to do a good job in presenting the gospel. I mean,

unless you understand what Paul is talking about when he uses the term justification, how can you be sure that his message is good news? And if you can't be sure that it is, then I am at a loss to know how you can present the gospel well.

The second way that some of these people have become unclear about the doctrine of justification is that they have allowed the gospel to be redefined. Bishop Tom Wright, for example, will often say that the gospel is not to be found in Romans 3:22-28 in the section on justification. Instead, he claims that the gospel is to be found in Romans 1:3-4, which is the declaration that Jesus is Messiah and Lord. He says that this is the gospel – not the claim that we're justified by faith apart from the works of the law. My problem is that I have had some very capable students who have read and listened to Tom Wright and they have become confused. They are no longer certain about the central thrust of the gospel and they start to say to themselves, "maybe I've misunderstood it?"

But is Wright wrong in saying that the gospel is principally about Jesus being Messiah and Lord?

He's wrong in the sense that he only gives you half an answer. His problem is that he doesn't give you a comprehensive understanding of what the apostles understood about the gospel. For instance, the proclamation that Jesus is Messiah and Lord is not the version of the good news that you get in the preaching of the apostles. Peter and Paul give us a far more comprehensive version than that in the book of Acts. Of course, the claim that Jesus is Messiah and Lord is absolutely crucial to the gospel; nothing else that Jesus said and did would make sense or have saving effect if he were not Messiah and Lord.

But my point is that the apostles understood the gospel in larger terms than Jesus simply being Messiah and Lord. For example, the sermons in the book of Acts so often focus on Jesus' death and resurrection. Surely this alerts us to the fact that the gospel is more than the bare claim that Jesus is Messiah and Lord. I think we need to ask the question: "Okay, so He's Messiah and Lord. But why is that so important? How does it affect my salvation? And why do I need to be saved in the first place?" I think we need to remember that the message of the Gospel embraces the Person as well as the work of Christ. It is not enough for Wright to make a statement about the Person of Jesus; for it to be a Gospel we must also know about His work.

Incidentally, the answers to these questions explain why the first three chapters of Romans form an integral part of the gospel. They come before Paul's first use of the term justification. If you understand their basic thrust you'll understand why justification is so important for Paul. The basic problem that we all face is not that we can't live at peace with one another; our problem is that we're sinners in the hands of an angry God. We have offended a holy God and have brought down His wrath upon us. And the only solution to that problem is the one that Paul presents in Romans 3 where he tells us that justification is our only hope.

Do you think that Sanders, Dunn and Wright can be helpful in some ways in giving us a better understanding of first-century Judaism?

They can be helpful in some ways, such as giving us a better appreciation of the beliefs of some of the Jewish sects such as the Pharisees, but it's certainly not the case with the doctrine of justification. I wouldn't recommend students to read any of these scholars if they are trying to understand justification for the first time. I don't think they correctly understand the doctrine as Paul presents it in either Galatians or Romans.

How about Dunn? He claims to be an evangelical of sorts?

The problem with Dunn is that while you get many helpful observations along the way you also get a lot of muddled commentary on Paul's view of the law and justification. So his would not be the first commentary that I'd pull down from my shelf if I was preaching through Galatians and Romans. He can be helpful in some areas, but to be quite frank, when I read Dunn in this area I find that he makes lots of statements that are calculated to cause confusion and uncertainty in the minds of his readers.

How about Tom Wright? I understand that he has just written a commentary on Romans in the New Interpreters' Bible Series. Do you disagree with his understanding of Romans?

Yes, I do. Like Dunn and Sanders, he reads Romans as though it has to do with this "Gentile status" question. As a result he gets the vocabulary and the concept of justification wrong.

Many of the people who dismiss Luther's and Calvin's teaching on justification never read their original writings.

His commentary really doesn't help us address important issues like, "what is the ground of my salvation?" or to put it in a more popular style, "how can I ever stand before God?"

Scholars who write from the point-of-view of the new perspective claim

that the Reformers have misunderstood Paul in their reading of Romans and Galatians. Do you think they have?

I think Luther read both these letters correctly, although I think Calvin brought a greater level of clarity to the doctrine of justification. His treatment is more nuanced. On the essential issue of justification in these letters, I believe that Luther was right. Furthermore, I am not convinced that Luther read his own conversion experience back into Paul as some in the new perspective claim.

The other point that I would make is that sometimes scholars who are writing from the new perspective do not have a close acquaintance with the Reformers. For instance, Carl Trueman, a colleague of mine who teaches at Westminster Seminary, gave a paper at Tyndale House a

couple of years ago in which he noted that James Dunn, in making a sweeping dismissal of Martin Luther's theology, had quoted from the popular biography of Luther, *Here I Stand*, by the Church historian from Yale, Roland Bainton. When scholars quote from secondary sources and not from Luther's work directly I wonder how closely they have read Luther in the first place. Dunn doesn't seem to have a first-hand knowledge of Luther. I suspect that many of the people who are dismissive of Luther's and Calvin's teaching on justification by faith have never read their original writings.

Can you recommend any good books to read on this subject?

Yes, there are a number. Probably the best single volume to address the issue of the new perspective is Stephen Westerholm's *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics*. This is an amazing book which just about covers everybody who has ever written on the subject. He's also fun to read. The introduction alone is worth the price of the book – it will leave you on the floor rolling in laughter.

Another good book, particularly for getting an overview of the history of this issue is Frank Thielman's *Paul and the Law*. John Piper has also written an excellent book called *Counted Righteous in Christ: Should we Abandon the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness?* Here Piper interacts especially with Robert Gundry who rejects the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness. I should also mention Guy Waters' book, *Justification and the New Perspective on Paul*. It is a fine piece of work too.

How about commentaries?

As I have already said, I wouldn't be reaching first for commentaries by those who represent the new perspective. I think that is a good way for pastors to become confused.

However, there are some excellent commentaries available today, particularly on Romans. Douglas Moo has written one in the New International commentary series that responds to the new perspective. He represents a strong evangelical viewpoint that is highly informed and interacts with other views at a technical level. Tom Schreiner is another scholar who has written a fine commentary on Romans. These are probably the best and most up-to-date commentaries for dealing with the claims of the new perspective.

Peter Hastie is issues editor of AP.



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Justi-fiction

What Paul might have said about the new perspective.

Confusing as it may sound there is no such thing as *the* “new perspective on Paul”. There are many perspectives! What started off as a single movement has now so fragmented it’s difficult to generalise and is perhaps an indication of its own demise. Tom Wright, in a bid to distance himself from the rest, renames his approach a “fresh perspective”.

Even so, adherents of the new perspective still hold enough in common to be able to lump them together. Hence, the designation new perspective is useful, but of course not everything below applies to every advocate. The cry “Oh, but I don’t believe that!” will inevitably ring out from an article as brief as this.

What is the new perspective on Paul? It is characterised by three claims. First, that Judaism in the first century was not a merit-making, legalistic religion. The Jews (it is claimed) did not seek to earn salvation by doing works of the law. They recognised the primacy of grace. God’s initiative and choice had established them in a covenant relationship. The role of obedience to God’s law is meant to show that you are serious about wanting to stay in that covenant relationship. Obedience is not about wanting to start a relationship, but about maintaining it.

Second, Paul attacks Judaism for its ethnic exclusivism, not its legalism. When Paul refers to the Jews as “seeking to establish their own righteousness” (Rom. 10:3), he means that they are exhibiting a kind of national and cultural pride. Establishing their own righteousness is not to be taken in the sense of seeking a moral (meritorious) status before God based on the performance of the Law, but an ethnic status based on the possession of the Law.

So Paul’s problem with the Judaisers (e.g. in the Letter to the Galatians) was not a moral one. Their insistence on matters such as separation from Gentiles while eating created divisions in the church along ethnic lines. The Judaisers were trying to make the new movement that Jesus started into an exclusive Jewish religious club and were erecting artificial barriers to keep the Gentiles out of mem-



Tony Bird

bership.

Third, Paul’s teaching about justification does not address an individual’s sin before a righteous God (as Protestant theology has commonly understood it) but rather shows who is in the church of Jesus Christ. Justification does not describe the way by which God declares the sinner righteous (that is regarded as “justi-fiction” or legal-fiction); rather it is the declaration “that whoever believes that gospel, and wherever and whenever they believe it, those people are truly members of His family”. You are saved by believing the gospel (which according to Wright is only the announcement of the Lordship of Jesus); justification tells you with whom you can now enjoy fellowship. It is the great ecumenical doctrine drawing together believing Jews and Gentiles in Christ.

According to the new perspective, the preaching of the gospel brings the church into being; justification is the doctrine that defines its boundaries. On this reading of Paul, justification is not a doctrine essential to salvation but a second-order matter about church membership. Justification is no longer a constituent element of the gospel but a result that flows from it. We are now a long way from the Reformation view that justification is about God pardoning sin and reckoning to the sinner the righteousness of Christ, accomplished by His substitutionary atonement on the cross and received by faith alone.

If the new perspective is correct how can it be that we have so misread Paul?

What if the Reformers got it wrong? If the new perspective is right then Catholics and Protestants have been arguing over nothing for the last 400 years. We have in fact turned the doctrine of justification on its head and used it to create division rather than – as was originally intended – to unite. Moreover, acceptance of the new perspective opens up room for dialogue with Jews who have for many years argued that Christians have been guilty of misunderstanding Judaism and propagating anti-Semitism. If Judaism really is a religion of grace, why then have we demonised it as legalistic?

What influence does the new perspective have today? It has attracted both liberals and evangelicals. As recent events show, conservative denominations like the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) have experienced controversy and division on this issue. New perspective adherents are to be found among those who have taught at leading conservative seminaries and call themselves Reformed. Ligon Duncan, past moderator of the PCA, has now called for presbyteries to examine candidates for the ministry in order to weed out those who show sympathy to the new perspective.

Until recently the new perspective has been confined to academia but the signs are now apparent that churches are being influenced. Perhaps Tom Wright, the Anglican bishop of Durham and recent visitor to Australia, has done more than any other to bring about this change. He can write at a popular level, and has won the respect of evangelicals by exposing the fallacies of liberal reconstructions of the historical Jesus such as those put out by the Jesus Seminar. Nevertheless his book, *What St Paul Really Said*, published in 1997, is becoming the conduit through which the new perspective is entering mainstream Christianity.

It may help to trace the origins of the new perspective to understand what is driving it. Its main lines were set out most fully in 1977 when E. P. Sanders wrote, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. He argued from Jewish writings around the time of Paul that the uniform “pattern of religion” among Jews was best described by the

phrase *covenantal nomism*; ie grace got you into the covenant and obedience kept you in it. He criticised (in some respects rightly so) the view that every Jew believed you could get into heaven by keeping the law of God. It is true that some Protestant theologians have read the New Testament against the merit theology of Jewish writings that appeared several hundred years later.

But even though Sanders spelled out the basic tenets of the new perspective, its roots go back further still to the end of World War II. There was a great deal of heart searching and guilt over the role Christianity had played in the Holocaust. Some sections of Christianity had been ambivalent towards the Jews and some preaching had inflamed anti-Jewish sentiment. Anything then that put Judaism in a good light (as does the new perspective) was warmly received.

Initially, the new perspective was developed by liberal scholars who did not believe the Bible is the word of God. For all Wright's orthodoxy in some areas, he too does not believe in the inerrancy of Scripture. And if you hold wrong ideas about the Bible, then inevitably you will end up with wrong (and conflicting) views about God.

What is wrong with the new perspective? First, it gets Judaism wrong when it attempts to describe the "pattern of religion" found in Judaism. In fact Sanders has simply replaced one historical caricature of Judaism with another. The writings of Judaism about salvation cannot be

reduced to one single pattern but show a range of views. Some are clearly legalistic; some, indeed, do show covenantal nomism. Sanders is not wrong everywhere, but he is wrong when he tries to establish that his category is right everywhere.

The real problem is that Sanders' portrayal of covenantal nomism as an alternative to legalism is positively misleading.

Wright, like Sanders, makes the mistake of taking an idea which may be found somewhere and making it appear everywhere.

The covenantal nomism he describes is merit theology by another name. Covenantal nomism brings in works of the law by the back door since it incorporates them into the equation of salvation. How obedient do you have to be to stay in covenant relationship?

You never really know in covenantal nomism. Luther would have reacted just as much to covenantal nomism as he did to the versions of works-righteousness he found in his own day.

Wright's views are similarly flawed. The "pattern of religion" in Israel according to Wright is a belief that the Jews thought themselves still in exile. Even though they had returned to their own land they believed they were still awaiting fulfilment of God's promises to restore

the land to them. The genius of Paul (claims Wright) is that he saw the meaning of the death of Jesus as bringing an end to exile.

This dominates Wright's thinking and so all of the major ideas connected with salvation are redefined accordingly. On the cross Jesus atoned for the corporate guilt of the nation that put them in exile. Repentance is a turning away from zeal (ie political action with the use of force if necessary to bring about the end of the exile). "Forgiveness of sins is another way of saying 'return from exile'." The parable of the Prodigal Son becomes an "end-of-exile" story as the younger son returns from the far country.

According to Wright, the cross is all about fixing the corporate guilt of Israel even though Paul clearly thinks in terms of individual sin eg "none is righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10). And while the end of the exile does play a minor role in the New Testament, it is only one of several Old Testament themes that Christ fulfilled. Nevertheless Wright has made it the major theme. He makes the mistake like Sanders before him of taking an idea which may be found somewhere and making it appear everywhere. This leads him to find meanings in Scripture, such as in the parable of the prodigal son, that are simply not there.

Second, the new perspective gets justification wrong. Wright differs from a classical evangelical understanding of justification in three key areas. He denies the imputation of Christ's saving work for sinners. Although he says he believes in forensic justification, what he means is that God as judge is only saying a person is right in a law court setting. There is no transfer (imputation) of righteousness. So when he comes to key verses like 2 Cor. 5:21 he departs from the plain sense of the text and embarks on an explanation that is frankly bizarre. In the latter case he says that the apostles are "the righteousness of God" in that they are "the living embodiment of the message they proclaim". This explanation can only be arrived at by imposing an already decided view of justification on the text.

Next, he shifts the emphasis that justification takes place in the present to something that God will declare in the future. Practically, this means you can never be sure you are justified till you are finally justified. On this reading Paul would never have been able to write, "since we have been justified through faith we have peace with God (Rom. 5:1)."



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Does Paul really say we will always be uncertain about our present standing with God till the day we meet Him?

Then he argues that “works of the law” are involved in some way in salvation and this is more than simply attesting to genuine faith. Leaving aside the question of what “works of the law” are in Paul (whether they are the ethnic boundary markers of the new perspective or good deeds in traditional understanding), once works count you can never be sure that you are good enough for God.

Third, the new perspective gets the Reformers wrong. It claims to be reforming the Reformers in the light of the word of God – a principle they would have applauded. But when you distort their teaching in order to put forward your own, you do neither yourself nor the Reformers any good. Krister Stendahl, the originator of key concepts of the new perspective, argued that Protestants for too long have over-emphasised individual guilt in presentations of the gospel. He claims we got this from Reformers like Luther who read his own struggles of conscience into Paul, whereas the historical Paul was never so bothered about his personal guilt (Phil. 3:4-6).

But the new perspective gets it wrong by accusing the Reformers of confusing the situation that Paul confronted (e.g. in Galatia) with the works-righteousness of their own day. Out of this confusion, the new perspective says, they have formulated the doctrine of justification by faith. Hence, it was something that came out of the 16th century, not the first.

Yet historically the Reformers’ doctrine of justification was not something new. Thomas Oden shows how widespread this understanding of justification was from the very beginning of the church. The Reformers merely rediscovered and reapplied it to the merit theology they faced. Far more likely a scenario is that the new perspective has not really understood what Luther and the Reformers were saying about Paul.

Fourth, the new perspective gets Scripture wrong. The plea that I read in many of the writings sympathetic to the new perspective is for “careful” exegesis. Now don’t get me wrong; I’m all for proper exegesis. However, in order to do careful exegesis the new perspective people have to construct a revised historical background to the New Testament based on extra-biblical writings. Their revised version of history is yet another fallacy. Exegesis is held hostage not to the text of

Scripture but to something outside of it.

The Reformers not only spoke of faith alone (*sola fidei*) but of Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*). The sacred text gives us sufficient knowledge of the historical background of the New Testament period in order to make adequate sense of its important teachings. The sacred writings are able to make you *wise* unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). The last 100 years or so has seen a succession of attempts to interpret the Bible against perceived parallels in other writings of the period. *Parallelomania* was a phrase coined in the



Justification is not some second-order doctrine. It is tied to the very character of God and the meaning of the cross.

1960s to describe this phenomenon, but the approach is flawed. Historical information from documents of the period may shed light on the meaning of the inspired word of God, but they do not determine it.

New perspective advocates claim that the Judaism of the period was uniformly a religion of grace. However, when I read the New Testament account I come away with a distinct impression that a good deal of the way Judaism was commonly practised was moralistic. The parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee (Luke 18:9-14), the dealings of Jesus and Paul with the religious leaders of the day reveal a good deal of self-righteousness. And it is not just legalism, as Wright insists, that we have read into Paul. Paul’s criticism of Judaism is broader than that. He rebukes them for failing to keep the law (Rom. 2:17-24), although they regard themselves as morally superior through possessing the law (Rom. 2:1-5). Jesus’ criticism is that the Pharisees had brought in traditions of men alongside the Scripture and that they majored on minors and vice-versa (Matt. 15:3; 23:23).

Has the new perspective even got the documents of Judaism aright? Take the word “grace”, for example. It is commonly stated by proponents of the new perspective that Judaism of the first century was a religion of grace. However,

when you examine the meaning of grace in those documents more often than not it is God’s favour poured out on those who are deserving. This is a long way from Paul’s usage.

What is at stake? To put it as simply as I can, the future of the church. Martin Luther said of justification that “if this article stands, the church stands; if it falls, the church falls.” The preaching of the doctrine of justification by faith alone has been one of the distinctives of evangelicalism. It has brought peace to many a troubled soul. And those plagued with doubts because of ongoing sin and guilt have discovered that it brings a deep sense of assurance. This is not some second-order doctrine, but is tied to the very character of God and the meaning of the cross.

Paul says that in the gospel a righteousness from God is being revealed (Rom. 1:17). In his thinking you cannot separate the gospel from righteousness. This righteousness is something that God objectively achieves for us in declaring the sinner acquitted from the penalty of the law. Paul defends the action of God as just when He “justifies the wicked” (Rom. 4:5) and forgives us all our sin. This is not “justi-fiction” (as critics would claim) but is achieved for us by Christ becoming sin on our account and dying in our place on the cross as our representative and substitute (2 Cor. 5:21).

On the same basis we are declared to be righteous by the righteous Judge through faith in Christ alone just as Abraham was (Gen. 15:6 cf Rom. 4:5). This declaration of God is made now before that future day when God will judge the world in righteousness. Even after a lifetime of service the believer dare not trust in any of his own works. He can only look away from self to Christ alone and despair of any reliance placed elsewhere. Only Christ’s perfect obedience in life and death will withstand the scrutiny of a holy God on that future day. Works are the fruit of faith, attesting to growth in grace and a sign of genuine trust (James 2:14-16).

However well intentioned adherents to the new perspective may be, it represents a serious departure from historic Protestantism formulated in our confessions and from the apostle Paul. I don’t think he would be at all happy with new perspective versions of his theology.

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Wright or wrong?

Wright's new perspective has insights, but too high a cost.

Imagine asking a jeweller to describe a watch-spring. He might simply talk about the spring itself; he might demonstrate how it was related to the rest of the mechanism; he might even explain the value of knowing the right time, and the significance of the watch-spring as part of achieving that end... There is no point in the jeweller telling you what a marvellous thing a watch is and leaving you with the impression that the spring is used to hang it on your watch chain."

You might be wondering: why would I begin an article on N. T. Wright and the doctrine of justification by faith by talking about watches and springs? For one simple reason: the above analogy comes from Wright himself, and illustrates some of the ways he believes Protestants have got it wrong about justification.

We may, for example, confuse the "watch-spring" of justification with the "winding mechanism" of God's mercy. More significantly, Wright argues that many Christians have confused justification with salvation. Justification, as understood by the apostle Paul, is simply God's pronouncement that we're in the right – whereas salvation is our actual *rescue* by God from sin and its consequences. The watch-spring is but one component part of a much larger mechanism – the watch itself.

Tom Wright's view of justification arises from his engagement with the "new perspective(s) on Paul". It's a significant departure from the Reformed understanding that has dominated Protestant thought from the 16th century to the present day. I think Wright is wrong – but I don't believe we should dismiss his entire argument too quickly.

Although we may have significant reservations about the conclusions he draws, Wright is attempting to address what he sees as an imbalance in the thinking of Reformed evangelicals. I want, therefore, to set Wright's view alongside the view we've inherited from the earliest Reformers, and to ask: what can we learn from Wright's attempted corrective? And where does Wright himself take things too far?



Gordon Coleman

From the earliest days of the Reformation, the doctrine of justification of faith has been considered central to the Protestant understanding of the gospel – the definitive answer to the question: how can sinful human beings stand in the presence of a holy God? Martin Luther declared it "the basic and chief article of

Wright is an articulate and thought-provoking scholar with an apparent commitment to the Scriptures as the Word of God.

the faith with which the church stands or falls, and on which its entire doctrine depends". Calvin, likewise, claimed that justification was "the main hinge on which religion turns" – without it "you have no foundation on which to

establish your salvation, nor one on which to build piety toward God".

The doctrine of justification by faith, as the Reformers understood it, lay at the heart of their conflict with Rome. Against the merit theology of medieval Catholicism, which said God saves us at least in part through our efforts to save ourselves, Luther and Calvin contended salvation was the work of God alone. Sinful humanity cannot save itself: God must declare us righteous in his sight. For the Reformers, justification is "the Great Exchange": God imputes to us the righteousness of Christ, even as Christ bore our sins in His body on the cross.

Tom Wright, along with other proponents of the new perspective(s) on Paul, has attacked this traditional understanding of justification as inadequate – labelling it a distortion of Paul's theology. They argue that Luther was guilty of reading his own experiences – his pre-conversion struggles of conscience, and (along with Calvin) his battles with the merit theology of medieval Catholicism – back into the text of Romans. It is time, they

say, to return Paul's argument to its original context – the clash between Christianity and first century Judaism – and read it afresh against that backdrop.

Wright accepts the argument of E. P. Sanders that the Judaism Paul was "converted" from did not believe in "salvation by works" – at least, not of the kind the Reformers were contending with in medieval Catholicism. Therefore, Paul's critique of Judaism – the well from which his doctrine of justification springs – cannot be viewed as an attack on legalism. Paul's target is the Jewish obsession with "works of the law" (particularly circumcision and food laws) as boundary markers that define the limits of the covenant family.

This revised understanding of first century Judaism leads to a radical reinterpretation of Paul's argument in Romans 1-3. For proponents of the new perspective, Paul's primary concern in these chapters is not how sinful humans can stand before a holy God, but the basis on which Jews and Gentiles both can be included in the covenant family of God. Paul's teaching on justification, says Wright, is therefore "not directed against those who attempted to earn covenant membership through keeping the Jewish law (such people do not seem to have existed in the first century) but against those who sought to demonstrate their membership in the covenant through obeying Jewish law." The doctrine of justification simply "declares that the way is open for all, Jew and Gentile alike, to enter the family of Abraham".

Where does this novel understanding of justification come from? Wright would, of course, argue that it's not novel at all: he's simply recapturing Paul's original understanding of justification. And he would point us back to the Old Testament categories of righteousness that Paul's theology was based on. This, I believe, is Wright's strongest contribution to the overall debate – and where we can most profit from his argument, even if we reject the conclusions he reaches.

Tom Wright is one of the few proponents of the new perspective who still accept that Paul's language of justification

is forensic. The term “righteousness” and the verb “to justify” (*dikaïosynē* and *dikaioō*, respectively, in the Greek; *tsedeq* and *tsādaq* in the Hebrew) are borrowed from the law courts. When God justifies us, He is making a legal declaration, that we have no case to answer before the heavenly court. We are not guilty, not subject to God’s judgment, free from the penalty and stain of sin.

That said, the Old Testament concept of righteousness on which Paul’s understanding was built was not primarily legal or forensic – it was covenantal and relational. God’s righteousness consists in His mercy and His absolute commitment to covenant faithfulness – what He has promised, He will fulfil. Likewise, when applied to human beings, righteousness in the Old Testament is understood primarily in terms of covenant obedience: so, for example, Moses instructs the people of Israel that “if we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us, that will be our righteousness” (Deut. 6:25).

On what basis, then, does God justify us? Here is where Wright differs from the historic position of the Reformers: in his books, justification “doesn’t describe how people *get in* to God’s forgiven family; it *declares that they are in*. That may seem a small distinction, but in understanding what Paul is saying it is vital.” Wright categorically rejects the notion of imputation – the idea that righteousness is “an object, a substance or a gas which can be passed across the courtroom”. God’s righteousness remains God’s righteousness – it is not transferred to us. Moreover, he claims, a judge is not acting justly if he declares the guilty to be innocent. He asserts that God can only justify us – that is, hand down a “not guilty” verdict, because we are already just.

So, if justification is God’s declaration that we are *already* just, at what point do we actually become just? According to Wright, that occurs when we hear the message of the gospel, and through the gospel God’s word works in our hearts to bring us to faith – when we believe and respond to the message that the “the crucified and risen Jesus is the Messiah, the Lord of the world”. Justification is the result of saving faith, and therefore subsequent to it.

There is much to appreciate about Tom Wright’s approach to the question of justification – he is an articulate and thought-provoking scholar with an apparent com-

mitment to the Scriptures as the Word of God. His driving concern in re-evaluating Paul’s theology is to understand the New Testament in light of the Old.

I believe that his critique of much evangelical theology is correct: we are too prone to think in forensic terms, at the expense of a covenantal understanding of the work of Christ. And this is in large part because we fail to see how the gospel is fundamentally a fulfilment of God’s covenant promises to His people in the



We need God to do far more than tell us who’s in and who’s out of God’s family – we need Him to cleanse and pardon us.

Old Testament era. Wright has done us a favour in reminding us of the fundamental continuity of the old and new covenants: Christ “did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfil it” (Mt. 5:17-20).

The problem is that his attempted corrective becomes an *over*-correction, which ends up radically downplaying the forensic aspects of justification. It leads Wright to set up a false antithesis between soteriology and ecclesiology: justification is no longer about who is saved (*soteriology*) but about who belongs to the covenant community (*ecclesiology*) – as though the two can be separated. We can only belong to the covenant community if God first saves us, by dealing with the consequences of our sinful rebellion.

Moreover, Wright’s redefinition tends to diminish the link between justification and the problem of human sin. For Wright, the heart of the gospel message is not that “Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3), but that “the crucified and risen Jesus is the Messiah, the Lord of the world”. Although he acknowledges our need for rescue from sin and death – and affirms that our salvation is achieved through the sacrificial, atoning death of Christ – the cross becomes displaced from the centre of his understanding of the gospel.

Any assessment of the new perspective must finally be based on the question: does this revised understanding do justice to the argument of Paul in, say, Romans 1-

4? For Wright, Paul’s main aim in these chapters is to demonstrate that covenant membership is open to all. But is that really all that Romans 1-4 seeks to establish? In the end, the reason I have to disagree with Tom Wright is that his understanding of justification robs this passage of its power. It turns the primary thrust of Paul’s argument into a sideline.

Is Paul at all concerned to address the problem of Jew-Gentile relations? He most certainly is – and returns to this issue in chapters 9-11 of the same epistle. But is that his primary concern? No, I do not believe so. The immediate context of his teaching on justification is his exposition of the wrath of God, poured out on human sin – and our utter incapacity to establish a righteousness of our own. We need God to do far more than tell us who’s in and who’s out of God’s family – we need Him to cleanse and pardon us. And according to Paul, that is what God does in justifying us: at one and the same time He declares us righteous and effects our righteousness, on the basis of the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

Dr Gordon Coleman is minister of the Shellharbour / Albion Park congregation on the NSW south coast.

Vacancy

A vacancy exists at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Gardenvale East, as at 1st August 2006. The congregation is seeking a man called by God to minister both to themselves, and to lead them in reaching out to the neighbouring community. Amongst the people there is a strong desire for growth, and for competent leadership under God, in helping them bring people to Christ. The parish, although small in number, is fully sanctioned and financially viable into the foreseeable future.

If you are suitably qualified and would like more information, phone Rev. Phil Daffy (Interim Moderator) 9509 7373. Alternatively, email your CV to pdaffy@bigpond.net.au, or snail mail to Rev. Phil Daffy 36 Thanet St, Malvern, 3144.

Fast fix

A neglected path to spiritual health.

Just over 30 years ago, the “Life, be in it” campaign started. It emphasised people’s participation in a whole range of activities, not least the need for improving their physical health by doing some form of exercise.

If that message was needed then, how much more so now? We constantly get information about obesity levels increasing and an astonishing rise in the incidence of diseases contributed to by a lack of physical fitness.

Physical exercise is beneficial. While maintaining a balanced diet and getting enough rest is essential for good health, regular exercise is indispensable to good health for people of all ages. Everyone knows this is true, whether they get involved in such exercise or not.

No wonder that the Scriptures pick up on this God-Given truth: “Physical training is of some value...” Paul observes to Timothy (1 Tim. 4:8).

In the physical realm, as I’m sure you’ve heard many times before, a regular, brisk walk, even three times a week is better than a once-a-month jog. It’s the regularity and consistency of the walk that is helpful.

God’s Word refers to the daily living of the Christian life as a walk:

- “Walk in the light” says John (1 John 1:7): live a truth-filled, authentic, obedient, God-centered life.
- “Walk in the Spirit,” says Paul (Gal. 5:16): actively depend upon the power and priorities of the Holy Spirit (now made known in God’s Word) in this life of obedience.
- “Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,” Paul also says (Eph. 4:1). This is the basic kind of exercise needed to maintain some level of fitness.

Physically speaking, the next level of exercise is the “power walk”. Remember your first power walk, where you worked up a sweat and felt your calves stretch tight? If not then it’s likely that your heart-rate didn’t increase enough to positively improve your health.

Spiritually speaking, the “power walk” is almost like “running”.

Jogging/running is physically for the

few and not recommended for those who are not reasonably fit – though some would-be athletes start exercising by pushing themselves to this extreme in an attempt to get fit quickly.

Biblically speaking, the command to “run the race with perseverance” (Heb. 12:1) indicates an enthusiastic eagerness not only to live the Christian life but to

Bodily fitness will sooner or later ebb away but training in godliness begins the process of total transformation.



make progress in the things of God, to “press on towards the goal of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14), to “finish the race”, to “keep the faith”, reaching the awards ceremony in Glory (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

As already mentioned, “physical training is of some value...”. To have a muscular, healthy body is useful for a Christian. However, “godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come” (1 Tim. 4:8). Bodily fitness will sooner or later ebb away but training in godliness begins the process of total transformation which will be completed when the Christian receives the glorified “spiritual body” of which 1 Corinthians 15 speaks.

Certainly regular walking and running are essential disciplines, but so is the fight against remaining sin known as mortification (the putting to death of sin; see 1 Cor. 9:24-27, Rom. 8:12-13 and Col. 3:5-11). Putting sin to death is, to the soul,

what the taking of anti-oxidants is to the body i.e. the removal of harmful substances (free radicals) that will positively promote one’s health.

A much-neglected method of training is fasting linked with prayer. Fasting frees up time, which would otherwise be taken up with another activity for the purpose of reading God’s Word (having Him speak to us) and prayer (our response to Him). Like a trainee who is aware of their state of unfitness, fasting also witnesses our realisation of our need of God’s mercy to us personally and the church in general, due to the current Spiritual unfitness even in the church.

Fasting is a discipline only to be undertaken at special times and for specific reasons (see Joel 2:12-32, Acts 13:1-4 and Mk 9:14-29, 1 Cor. 7:2-6). The Lord has seen fit to bless His church with times of revival and restoration following on such times of fasting and prayer as witnessed in the 1859 Revivals in Ireland and America.

You can take advantage of some spiritual training next month. The federal assembly of the Presbyterian Church has asked the Church and Nation Committee to recommend a “day/period” for prayer and fasting “to seek the Presence of God”. The period has been set to begin from Sunday 1 October and climax on Reformation Sunday, 29 October 29.

For more details, visit the committee’s website: www.canfederal.presbyterian.org.au or contact me – the convener – at PO Box 273, Brighton, SA 5048; phone (08) 8296 1581; mobile 0428 960 801. Email: info@seacliffpc.pcsa.org.au.

Training... be in it! I encourage you (and myself) to improve levels of physical fitness; however, even more fervently do I encourage you to get involved in the prayer and fasting “period” in October 2006 for the glory of God and the good of His church.

Rev. Stefan Slucki, minister of Seacliff Presbyterian Church in SA, is convener of the Australian Church and Nation Committee.



The man who divides

***20 daily Bible studies in
John 11-13 and Jude***

As if making one last glorious attempt to convince the world about who He really is, Jesus purposely allows one of His close friends to die and be buried without any hope of resuscitation, so that He might raise him, in an open display of His divine power, to normal life again. As we might expect, this caused many people to believe in Him. In contrast, yet in accordance with what we have come to realise is the case as we have worked through John's Gospel, many others became more hardened in their opposition to Him.

The same thing happens today: men continue to refuse to do the one thing required of them, to believe in Jesus (cf John 6:29, Acts 17:31). The difference between those who do and those who don't is spelt out in these chapters of John and in Jude: the contrasting attitudes to Lazarus; Mary and Judas at the dinner in Bethany; the people and their leaders on Palm Sunday; Peter and Judas at the feet washing.

In the space of a few days Jesus goes from the mighty act of raising the dead, to giving the disciples a practical demonstration of genuine, humble servanthood; the response to Him moves from having expensive perfume "wasted" on Him, to being betrayed by a close friend. This is our Saviour who came from heaven to die for us and rescue us from sin and death. This is our Lord who is building His church, and who calls us through His servant Jude to "contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints".

Bruce Christian ▶

DAY 1

God's intentional delays

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 11:1-6

THE POINT In spite of Jesus' deep personal love for Mary, Martha and Lazarus, and their unquestioned deserving of His attention, Jesus withheld His help to achieve a higher purpose for God's glory.

THE PARTICULARS

- Living in Bethany (a small village 3 km east of Jerusalem) Mary, Martha and their brother Lazarus were a family close to Jesus, providing Him a refuge when He was in Judea (1, cf Luke 10:38f).
- Mary was very devoted to Jesus as a person. Her devotion-for-its-own-sake had earlier drawn criticism from her sister who was more practically inclined (cf Luke 10:38f). She will later "anoint" Him generously with expensive perfume (2, cf

12:3, 7).

• The sisters knew that their love for Jesus was reciprocated and that He would be concerned for their brother's well-being (3,5).

• It's interesting that although Jesus had earlier commended Mary because she had "chosen what is better" (Luke 10:41-42), John only refers to her as the sister of Martha and Lazarus in vs 5.

• Jesus knew what God's plan was in Lazarus's being terminally ill and He acted accordingly, callous as this action seemed (4, 6).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Are you willing to let the sovereign Lord work out His plan for His glory in your life, even when it seems needlessly harsh?

DAY 2

Dead ahead

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 11:7-16

THE POINT This discourse of Jesus leading up to His advance into enemy territory for the raising of Lazarus from the dead provides the reader with real-life, visible evidence of the spiritual principles outlined by John at the beginning of his Gospel (see 1:1-13). Jesus came to bring light into the world's darkness, and to show the clear distinction between His true light and our darkness. It is as dramatic as God's original act of Creation (cf 2 Cor. 4:6)!

THE PARTICULARS

- Even when Jesus did eventually decide to go south He gave the impression that it was not specifically for His sick friend (7-8).
- Jesus' disciples knew the danger they were all in because of

the Jewish authorities' mounting opposition to their Master (8, 16).

• It is significant that Jesus' enemies did not arrest and try Him in broad daylight; their state of spiritual darkness required them to act (illegally) at night, but they still could not extinguish the light He brought into their dark world (9-10; cf 13:30; 1:5 NIVfn).

• For those who belong to Jesus, who are filled with His life/light (see 1:4), death is rightly seen as temporary "sleep" from which they can be roused as the raising of Lazarus will show (11-15).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Is Thomas expressing trust or resignation (16)? Does it matter?

DAY 3

Resurrection? Only in Jesus

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 11:17-27

THE POINT By letting Lazarus become well-and-truly dead (Rabbis taught that the "spirit" hung around for 3 days) Jesus could show the full extent of His life-giving power as the Messiah/Son of God.

THE PARTICULARS

- The common view that Jesus was in Transjordan (1 day's travel from Jerusalem) when news came of Lazarus's illness requires that His friend had died just after the messenger had left. Carson argues that He was much further north (150 km) in the tetrarchy of Philip, so that He only set out after He "knew" Lazarus was dead, and the whole 4 days was taken up getting there (17).

• Martha's full confidence had been in Jesus as God's promised Messiah (27), so, understandably, she felt He had let the family down by not arriving in time; but she hung on in hope (21-22).

• Martha had been well taught by the Pharisees, from the (OT) Scriptures, concerning the hope of life beyond the grave (23-24).

• By using His "I Am" formula, Jesus is able to link resurrection and (eternal) life directly with Himself: yes, living believers in Him will still die physically, but they will be raised to life again and in that sense will have never really died spiritually (25-26).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Does your trust in Jesus survive mysteries in His providence?

DAY 4

Jesus wept

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 11:28-37

THE POINT The scene near Lazarus's tomb gives us a valuable insight into Jesus' human nature as well as His divine nature. As the holy God He was angry with sin and its consequences; as man in the image of God He felt the pain of those He loved; and He held these emotions in balance, not allowing either to diminish the other.

THE PARTICULARS

- Because of the crowd (indicating the good standing of Lazarus and his sisters in the village – perhaps many had been blessed by the same hospitality that Jesus had), Martha sought privacy for Mary with Jesus (28); but her attempt didn't succeed (29-31).
- Mary followed Martha in expressing disappointment to Jesus

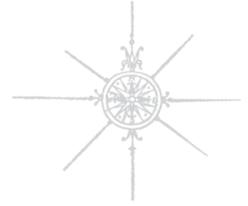
that He wasn't there when they needed Him most (cf 21); yet it was done in an attitude of submission and deep devotion (32).

• The word translated "deeply moved" carries with it the idea of real anger; Jesus was not only feeling their pain, He was also reacting to the stark reality of the effect of human sin on God's world, bringing death and sadness instead of life and joy (33-36).

• Jesus' power to heal the sick could not be denied; but death was so final that Jesus' late arrival ended all hope for Lazarus (37).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Do you find it hard to "hate the sin" while "loving the sinner"?



Come worship with us!

If you are passing through or moving nearby, feel free to ring the Minister, Clerk or Elder.

australian capital territory

CANBERRA, BELCONNEN

Cnr Gatty St. & Ross Smith Cres, Scullin.
Sunday Service 10:00 am
Elder: Mr R Howe (02) 6247 9586

CANBERRA, FORREST (St Andrew's)

1 State Circle (opp Parliament House).
Service Times: 9.30am. & 7.00pm.
Church Office: (02) 6295 3457

CANBERRA, TUGGERANONG

Isabella Plains: Isabella Plains Primary School,
Ellerstone Ave.
Worship Service & Sunday School 10.00am.
(02) 6292 6772

new south wales

ABBOTSFORD-FIVE DOCK

443 Great North Rd., Abbotsford. 9.30am
& 5.00pm. Rev. Moses Hahn (02) 9713 2939.

ANNANDALE-LEICHHARDT

Hunter Baillie, Johnston & Collins Sts.
10.00am, 6.30pm. 2nd & 4th Sundays.
Rev. Peter Dunstan (02) 9810 7869

ARMIDALE (St. Paul's)

Faulkner St, 9.30am. & 7.00pm.
Rev. David M. Seaman (02) 6772 3093

ASHFIELD

Liverpool Rd. & Knox St. 10.15am & 6.00pm
Rev Peter Hastie (02) 9798 6572.

ASHTONFIELD

19 Galway bay Dr. (Shamrock Hill Multi-
Purpose Ctr.) 10.00am.
Rev. Russell Vandervelden (02) 4933 8174.

BEACON HILL (St Andrew's)

244 Warringah Rd. 9.00am. & 7.00pm.
Rev. Trevor Cheetham (02) 9451 5076.

BEECROFT

Mary St., 8.45am. 10.30am. & 5.30pm.
Rev. Paul Cooper (02) 9876 2478.

BEGA — EDEN

Bega — 25 Upper St. 9.30am.
Contact: Mrs M. Cochrane (02) 6492 2949

BONDI

Cnr. Castlefield & Miller Sts.
10.00am & 7.00pm.
Rev John Graham: (02) 9130 6607.

BONNYRIGG

Western Regions Chinese Church
14-16 Bibbys Place. 9.30 am. (English) &
11.00 am. (Mandarin)
S.Clerk: Stanley Chen (02) 9753 2073

BOWRAL-MITTAGONG

Bowral: 20 Bendooley St. 10.30am.
Kid's Church: 10.30 am. 1st & 3rd Sunday
Mittagong: Cr Alice & Edwards Sts. 9.00am.
Rev. Doug McPherson: (02) 4872 4052.

BURWOOD (St. James)

46-48 Belmore St. 9.15am
Rev. David Maher (02) 9744 6542

BURWOOD CHINESE

46-48 Belmore St. 9.15am & 11.15am
(Cantonese) 10.00am & 5.00pm (English).
Church Office: (02) 9715 3889.
Rev. Dennis Law 0414 812 776.
Rev. Eugene Hor 0414 992 106.

Mr Joe Lin 0405 203 064. Miss Amy Leong
0403 687 467 (Pastoral worker)

CAMPBELLTOWN

34 Lithgow St. 8.30 am. 10.00 am. 6.30 pm.
Rev. Jim Elliot (02) 4625 1037.

CARINGBAH

393 Port Hacking Rd. South. 9.30am & 6.30pm.
Rev. Darren Middleton (02) 9540 4469.

CHATSWOOD

St Andrew's, Anderson St. 9.00am & 6.30pm.

Lane Cove, St James, Farran St. 10.00am.
Rev. Jeff Read (02) 9419 5932 (W) 2077 (H)

CHERRYBROOK

John Purchase Public School Hall,
Purchase Road. Service: 9.30 am.
Rev. Stephen Fong (02) 9875 3684

CHINESE CHURCH

Cnr Crown & Albion Sts. Surry Hills.
English/Cantonese/Mandarin/Bilingual
Services. Office (02) 9331 4459.

Rev Ezra Tseng (02) 9500 1259(H).

COFFS HARBOUR (St Andrew's)

187 Harbour Dr. 8.00am, 9.45am & 6.30pm
at Harbourside Evangelical Church.
Rev. Jamie K. Newans (02) 6652 3183

CONCORD

Cornerstone Presbyterian Community Church
Meets Concord Public School 9.30 am.
Cnr Burwood Rd. & Stanley St. Concord
Rev. C S Tang (02) 9688 7880 (H)

COWRA

46 Macquarie St. Also Gooloogong,
Morongla. Ph (02) 6342 1467.

CRONULLA

13 Croydon St. 9.30am.
Rev. Russell Stark (02) 9523 5875.

EAST MAITLAND

George St. 9.30am. **Beresfield:** Beresford Ave.
7.45am. **Raymond Terrace:** Irawang St.
9.45am. Rev. J. Buchanan (02) 4933 7443.

EPPING

Bridge & Rawson Sts.
8.45am, 10.30am & 7pm. (02) 9876 1188.

FORSTER/TUNCURRY

Bruce St. Forster, 9.30am, 6.00pm.
I.M. Rev. Scott Donnellan (02) 6582 2505

GLEN INNES

Heron St. 10.15am & 7.15pm.
Pastor Lance Jackson (02) 6732 5707

GOULBURN (St Andrews)

Clifford St. 9.00am. 7.00pm (2nd & 4th
Sundays). Also **Taralga, Crookwell and
Tuena.** Rev. Chris Balzer (02) 4822 2344

GOSFORD

14-16 Young St. West Gosford. 8.00am.
9.45am. 6.30 pm. Rev. M. Cropper
Office: Ph (02) 4323 2490.

GRANVILLE/MERRYLANDS

Granville: 14 Hutchinson St. 8.45am.
Merrylands & Monitor's Rd. 10.30am.
Bruce Frost, Pastor (02) 9638 4777

GRIFFITH

Opp. Collina Oval, Blumer Ave. 9.30 am.
Rev. Peter Gobbo (02) 6962 4827.
Dr L. Thorpe (02) 6962 1934

GUNNEDAH

Marquis & Barber Sts. **Boggabri:** Court
House (02) 6742 0551

HURSTVILLE

Cnr. Park Rd. & McMahon St. 9.30am &
6.30pm. Rev Kevin Murray (02) 9153 8176.

KIAMA

Terralong St. 9.00am & 7.00pm.
Pastor: Noel Creighton (02) 4233 1554

KOGARAH

Cnr Kensington & Derby Sts. 9.30am.
Mr Tim Ravenhall (02) 9798 8467.

KOREAN, SYDNEY (Young Nak)

7-9 Manson St, Telopea. 9.30am. 11.00am.
3.00pm. S.Clerk (02) 9816 3807

LEETON

Cnr. Sycamore & Cypress Sts. 10.00 am.
Rev. Richard Keith (02) 4272 9407

LISMORE (St Paul's)

188 Keen St. 9.00 am. & 7.00 pm.
MANLY (St Andrew's)

Raglan St. & Augusta Lane. 9.45am.
Rev. Derek Bullen (02) 9976 2801

MAROUBRA

8 Robey St, 10.00am. 7.15pm.
Chinese Service, 4pm.

Rev Johnnie Li (02) 9349 1312

MOREE (St Andrew's)

Cnr Albert & Auburn Sts, 10.00am.
Tel. (02) 6752 1083

MORUYA

31 Evans St. 9.00am.
Rev. David Hassan (02) 4474 2186.

MOSMAN (Scots Kirk)

Belmont Rd. (nr Military Rd), 9.00am.
Rev. Adrian de Graaf (02) 9969 6101.

NAROOMA

1 Farncombe Ave. 11.00am.
Rev. David Hassan (02) 4474 2186.

NEWCASTLE (St Andrews)

Cnr. Laman & Auckland Sts 9.30am & 6.00pm.
Office: (02) 4929 2857

NEWCASTLE EAST (St. Philip's)

48 Watt St., 10.00am.

Surfside Evangelical: 7.00pm.

Rev. John Macintyre (02) 4929 2379.

NORTH SYDNEY-GREENWICH

(St Peter's) 234 Blues Point Rd. 10.00am.
& 6.45pm. Wednesday 1.15pm.

Greenwich: (Taylor Memorial)

86A Greenwich Rd. 10.00am.

Rev. Dr Paul Logan (02) 9955 1662.

Rev. Matthew Oates (02) 9405 2235.

ORANGE (St James)

Cnr Anson St. & Matthews Ave. 10.00am.

Rev. William Stewart (02) 6362 6304

PARRAMATTA CITY

Cumberland High School,

Dunmore Ave. Carlingford.

S. Clerk: Mike Whiteman (02) 9484 1240.

PENRITH (St Andrew's)

Doonmore St. near High St, 9.00am. &
7.00pm. Rev William Morrow (02) 4721 2440.

PORT MACQUARIE (St Andrew's)

Cnr William/Munster Sts, 9.00am., 10.30am

Rev S Donnellan (02) 6582 2505

RANDWICK

Alison Rd. & Cook St. 10.00am. & 5.00pm.

Rev. Grant Thorpe (02) 9399 3183.

ROSE BAY (St Andrew's)

Cnr Dover Rd. & Carlisle St.

10.00am & 6.00pm.

Rev Bruce Christian (02) 9388 1206(O).

SOUTHERN CROSS

Park Ave. East Lismore

Rev. Stephen Cree (02) 6621 3655

SPRINGWOOD

160 Macquarie Rd. 10.30am. & 6.00pm.

Winmalee : 481 Hawkesbury Rd. 9.00am.

Ass. Min. Mark Armstrong (02) 4751 1188

(O). I.M. Rev. Dr Lindsay Ferrington

STRATHFIELD (St David's)

Barker Rd. & Marion St. 10.00am. & 6.30pm.

Rev Robert McKean (02) 9746 8123.

SUTHERLAND

Cnr Flora & Glencoe Sts. 9.30am & 5.30pm

Rev Andrew Clausen (02) 9521 2361

SYDNEY (Scots Church)

44 Margaret St. Sydney. Sun: 10.30 am.

Wed: 1.15pm. Rev. Adrian Van Ash

(02) 9299 7490 (O) (02) 9817 0587 (H).

TAMWORTH (St Stephen's)

Cnr Matthews & Crown St. 9.00am &

6.30pm. **Moonbi** 9.00am.

Rev Stuart Andrews (02) 6765 8754.

Tamworth Community Presb Church,

St Stephens, Cnr Matthews & Crown St.

10.30am. Rev Keith Walker (02) 6766 1802

Rev. Phillip Chang (02) 6766 6393.

TAREE

Albert St. 9.00am.

Rev. Paul Harris (02) 6552 1082(O).

TERRIGAL (Scots Kirk)

2 Willoughby Rd. 9.00am & 6.00pm.

Rev. Glenn Samuel (02) 4385 2240

TUROSS HEAD

277 Hector McWilliam Dr. 9.00am.

Rev. David Hassan (02) 4474 2186.

WAHROONGA

Wahroonga Presbyterian Church,

Cnr. Illoura Ave. & Stuart St. 9.30am.

Rev. Murray Fraser (02) 9489 3690

WAGGA WAGGA SOUTH

60-62 Coleman St. Turvey Park

9.00am & 10.30am.

Rev. Sandy McMillan (02) 6925 1228.

WEE WAA

Mitchell St. Rev. Mark Powell (02) 6795 4259

WELSH CHURCH: St Peter's, North Sydney.

2nd Sunday of the month. 3.00pm.

Rev. Dr Paul Logan (02) 9955 1662.

WENTWORTH FALLS (St Andrew's)

Falls Rd. 9.00 am. Session Clerk: Mr Bernie

Tucker (02) 4757 3518

WENTWORTHVILLE (St Andrew's)

7 McKern St. 9.00am & 5.00pm.

Rev. Luke Tattersall (02) 9863 8366.

WESTLAKES

Warnervale Community Hall, Warnervale Rd

S.School 8.30 am. Service 9.30 am.

Rev. Esa Hukkinen (02) 4393 5530

WEST WYALONG

Pioneer Memorial, Court St. 11.00am.

Also at **Barmedman, Mirrool, Tallimba &**

Weethalle. Various times.

Mr. Graham French (02) 6972 2143.

WOLLONGONG (St Andrew's)

Cnr Kembla & Burelli Sts. 9.45am & 6.00pm.

Rev. John Thompson (02) 4226 1725(O).

WOOLGOOLGA

Cnr Scarborough St & Landrigan Cl. 9.00am.

Rev. Jamie K. Newans (02) 6652 3183.

WOONONA

7 Gray St. Rev Peter Currie (02) 4284 4057.

WOY WOY

120 Blackwall Rd. 9.00 & 10.30 am.

S.Clerk: Keith Chapple (02) 4341 2688



ACACIA RIDGE

Cnr. Mortimer & Beaudesert Rds.

9.00am. & 6.00pm. Pastor Stephen Teale,

(07) 3277 0010, (07) 3711 3022 (H).

ASCOT

68 Charlton St. (Near Airport).

Nundah: 14 Rode Rd

Rev Guido Kettmiss (07) 3216 4151.

Rev Les Hall (07) 3267 0558

ATHERTON (Tablelands)

Cnr. Alice & Jack Sts. 10.00am & 6.00pm.

Rev. Cameron Wills (07) 4091 1375

BALD HILLS

58 Strathpine Rd. 8.30am. & 7.00pm.

Rev Peter Bloomfield (07) 3261 4305.

BRISBANE KOREAN

145 Ann St. 8.00am. 12.00 noon, 7.30pm.

Rev Dr M. M. Y. Kim (07) 3300 3132

BRISBANE (St Paul's)

53 St Pauls Tce. Spring Hill.

Rev A. Gardiner (07) 3831 7458(O).

BUNDABERG

Cnr Water & Alice Sts. 9.00am & 7.00pm.

Rev. Wallace Brown (07) 4151 4766.

CABOOLTURE

24 Cottrill Road. 9.00am & 6.00pm.

Rev. G. Watt (07) 5494 1181

CAIRNS

85 Sheridan St. 9.30am. & 6.30pm.

Korean 11.00am. Cook Island 12 noon.

Rev. Harry Oh (07) 4051 2238

CALLIDE VALLEY

Biloela: Cnr. Kariboe & Melton Sts.

10.00am. **Jambin:** Three Ways 8.30am.

Rev. Mal Pierce (07) 4992 1441.

CHARLEVILLE/BLACKALL

78 Galatea St. 9.00am.

CLAYFIELD (Scots Memorial)

29 Bellevue Terrace, 9.30am & 6.30pm.

Rev. Andrew Richardson 0423 160 412

COORPAROO

Emlyn St. 10.00am.

H. M. Phil Case (07) 3397 8793.

CREEK ROAD

Presbyterian Ministry Centre, 1541 Creek Rd

(cnr Fursden Rd). **Carina** 9.00am & 6.30pm.

Centre: (07) 3398 4333.

Rev Peter Barson (07) 3399 3607.

Asst. Mr Jens Norved (07) 3399 6123.

DECEPTION BAY-BURPENGARY

Peace Presbyterian Church. 9.30am.

155-157 Maine Terrace, Deception Bay.

Rev. John Gilmour (07) 3203 2526.

GLADSTONE (St Andrew's)

Goondoon & Bramston Sts. 10.00am.

Benaraby: O'Connor Rd. 8.00am. **Calliope:**

Dawson H'way (Stirrat St.) 2nd Sunday

9.30am; 4th Sunday 8.00am. Rev. D. Secomb

(07) 4972 1058 (O); 4972 1057 (H).

GOLD COAST (I)

Arundel: 132 Allied Drive 9.30am & 6.30pm.

Rev. Russell van Delden (07) 5571 5676 (O).

Robina: Cnr University & Cottesloe Drives

10.00 am & 6.30 pm.

Rev. Kevin Ridley (07) 5571 1416

GOLD COAST (II)

Mudgeeraba: Cnr Mudgeeraba Rd &

Regency Pde. 9.00am & 6.30 pm.

I.M. Rev. Graham Eastwell (07) 5573 1458

GOLD COAST (III)

Christ Church: Currumbin Primary School,

Phillip Street, Currumbin - 9.30am.

Rev. Alan Radloff (07) 5593 8909.

ITHACA

100 Enogerra Tce, Paddington.

Service: 9.30 am. 6.30pm.

Rev. Robert Herrgott (07) 3300 6158.

IPSWICH

Cnr Limestone & Gordon Sts. 9.30am,

10.00am & 6.30pm. **Forest Hill:** Church St,

9.00am. Rev. John Langbridge (07) 3294 7999.

Rev. Wesley Redgen (07) 3282 9829.

Pastor Paul Blake (07) 3281 0427.

Rev. John Kirkpatrick (07) 3281 5930.

MACGREGOR

268 Padstow Rd. Eight Mile Plains 9.00am.

Pastor Ross Wilson (07) 3272 6265

MACKAY

Cnr Harvey St. & Evans Ave. Nth Mackay.

8.30am & 7pm. **Sarina:** Sarina Beach Rd.

9.30am each Sunday; Ph. (07) 4957 2835.

MARANOA

Roma: Queen Street 9.00am.
Surat: (1st Sunday) 11.15am.
 Pastor Walter Posthuma (07) 4622 1158

MAROOCHYDORE

45 Okinja Road Alexandra Headland 9.00am
 & 7.00pm. Rev. Peter Barber & Church
 Office (07) 5443 7073.
 Rev. Keith Mayers (07) 5445 9209.

MARYBOROUGH

523 Alice Street. 9.00am (& 5.00pm first
 Sunday). Rev. David Newman (07) 4123 1212

MONTO

Bell St. 10.00am. **Abercorn** 11.45am. (1st
 Sunday). **Kalpowar:** 5.30pm.
 Pastor Elton Wiltshire (07) 4166 1441.

NORTH PINE

57 Old Dayboro Rd. Petrie. 9.00am &
 6.30pm. Rev P. Cornford (07) 3285 2104.

REDCLIFFE PENINSULA

WoodyPoint, Cnr. Ellen & Hawthorne Sts.
 9.30am. & 6.00pm.

Scarborough: Jeays St. 8.00am.

Rev. Peter Whitney (07) 3284 2578.

ROBINA

Cnr Cottesloe & University Drs.
 Rev. Kevin Ridley (07) 5571 1416.

ROCKHAMPTON (St Andrew's)

51 Denham St. (cnr Alma Lne) 9.00am. &
 6.00pm. Rev C. Kennedy (07) 4922 8241.

ROCKHAMPTON (John Knox)

Rundle St. 10.00 am. & 7.30 pm.
 Rev. Jon Chandler (07) 4922 1825 (O)
 (07) 4922 1540 (A/H).

ROCKHAMPTON (St Stephen's)

Burnett St. Nth Rockhampton, 8.30am.
 Rev. Jon Chandler (07) 4922 1825 (O)
 (07) 4922 1540 (A/H).

Mt Morgan: St Enoch's, East St. 4.00pm.

Rev. Jon Chandler (07) 4922 1825 (O)
 (07) 4922 1540 (A/H).

SANDGATE

Loudon St. 9.00am & 6.00pm.
 Rev. D.K. Ashman (07) 3269 1231

SPRINGSURE

Charles St. 10.30am.
Emerald: Cnr Ruby & Egerton Sts., 8.30am.
 Rev B J Harrison Phone (07) 4984 1550.

THE GAP

1195 Waterworks Rd, 9.00am.
 Rev. Chris Perona (07) 3300 9875

TOOWOOMBA NORTH (St David's)

Mary St. Also at **Geham.**

TOWNSVILLE (Willows)

26 Carthew St. Kirwan 9.30am & 6.30pm
 Rev. David McDougall (07) 4723 1232
TOWNSVILLE (St Andrew's)
 113 Wills St. City. 9.00am. & 6.30pm.
 Ass. Rev. Kwang-Ho Song (07) 4778 3823
 Rev. Rudi Schwartz (07) 4771 2460

WEST TOOWOOMBA

Cnr Greenwattle & South Sts. 8.00am,
 10.00am & 6.00pm. Rev R. Sondergeld
 (07) 4633 4000 (H) (07) 4633 4188 (O).
 Past. Robert Farr (07) 4614 0467.

WINDSOR

Maygar St. 8.30am.
Wilston: Macgregor St. 10.00am.

Newmarket: Wilmington St. 6.00pm.
 Rev. Eric Noble (07) 3356 4124.



ARARAT

330 Barkly St (Cnr Albert St). 10.00am.
 Rev. Iain Hutton (03) 5352 4054

ASHBURTON

Junction of High St. and High Street Rd.
 near Warrigal Rd. 10.15am.
 Rev Peter Orchard (03) 9889 6034.

ASPENDALE

Cnr Station St. & Lyle Grv. 9.00am. &
 6.00pm. Session Clerk (03) 9580 6161.

AUBURN

Cnr Rathmines & Station Sts Hawthorn East
 10.00 am. Rev. Trevor Cox (03) 9882 5256

BAIRNSDALE

159 Nicholson St. 10.00am.
 1st of Month 5.00pm. S/school 9.00 am.
 Rev. Gary Stephens (03) 5153 1669

BALACLAVA

106 Hotham St. & Denman Ave. 9.30am.
 Rev. Tony Johnson (03) 9527 3270.

BENDIGO (St John's)

Forest St. 10.30am. (03) 5443 6189.

BLACKBURN

53 Gardenia St. 11.00am.
 Rev P Locke (03) 9725 6417

BRIMBANK

Sydenham Community Centre
 Cnr, The Community Hub & Overton Lea
 Blvd, 6.00pm each Sunday.
 Rev. Peter Owen (03) 9747 8195.

BUNDOORA

Bundoora Hall, Noorong Ave.
 10.00am & 6.00pm.
 Admin: Mrs M. Goodson (03) 9457 4962.

BURWOOD

(Chinese Presbyterian Church) 11.00am.
 Cnr. Greenwood & Tennyson Sts.
 Rev Dr John Elnatan (03) 9801 7645.

CAMBERWELL- Trinity

cnr Riversdale & Waterloo Sts. 10.00am.
 Rev. Philip Mercer (03) 9882 8102

CAMPERDOWN-TERANG-GARVOC

9.30 am Aug — Jan. 11am Feb — July
Terang: 1 Warrnambool Rd.

Camperdown: Campbell & Brooke Sts.

Garvoc: 2:30pm. 2nd & 4th Sunday.
 Pastor Bernie Thomas (03)5592 1041

CANTERBURY

146 Canterbury Rd. 10.30am. & 7 pm.
 Rev. Grant Lawry (03) 9836 4601.

CANTERBURY JAPANESE

146 Canterbury Rd. 10.30 am
 Mr Sam McGeown (03) 9894 2384.

CAULFIELD-ELWOOD

Caulfield: Neerim/Bambra Rds. 11.15am.
Elwood: Scott/Tennyson Sts. 9.15am.
 Pastor: Evan Prentice (03) 9505 3013.

CHELTENHAM Pioneers' Presbyterian

8 Park Rd. Cnr. Charman Rd. 9.30am. Rev.
 Choul Yat; Sudanese (Nuer Language) 2.30pm.
 I.M. Rev. M. Wharton (03) 9018 9521.

CLIFTON HILL

Cnr Michael & McKean Sts North Fitzroy.
 10.45 am. Rev. Peter Phillips (03) 9346 8044.

COLAC (Scots)

90-94 Armstrong Street. 10.00am.
 Rev. Marvin Hagans H: (03) 5250 4360
 O: (03) 5231 2398

DANDENONG

51 Potter St. 10.00am.
 Rev. John Rickard (03) 9792 4252.

DONVALE

Seventh Day Adventist Church, Central
 Road, Nunawading. 9.30am & 6.30pm.
 Rev Gerald Vanderwert (03) 9842 9493.
 (03) 9841 7020 (O)

DROMANA-MORNINGTON

St Andrew's, Gibson St. 9.00am.
Mornington (The Chapel) Cnr Strachans
 Rd. & Nepean Hwy. 11.00am.
 Rev. Dr Michael Wishart (03) 5975 9514.

DROUIN

Church St. 9am. 10.30am. 7.00pm.
 Rev. Ken Brown (03) 5625 1126.

ELTHAM

23 Batman Rd. 10.00 am
 Rev. Don Elliott (03) 9439 9720

ESSENDON

Cnr Wilson & McPherson Sts. 9.15am &
 7.00pm. Rev. Peter Phillips (03) 9346 8044.

FLEMINGTON

Norwood St. 9.30am.
 S. Clerk Miss R. Anstee (03) 9650 9903.

FRANKSTON

30 Radiata St. 10.30am.
 Pastor Bill Medley (03) 9786 2976.

GEELONG (St. Georges)

Cnr. Latrobe Tce & Rynie St.
 10.00am & 7.00pm.

Rev. Graeme L. Weber (03) 5229 5493.

GEELONG NORTH

Cnr Victoria St & Balmoral Cres. 10.00am.
 Rev. Allen Lendon (03) 5278 1887.
 S. Clerk Mr Bert Stasse (03) 5241 4097.

GEELONG WEST (Scots)

Cnr. Pakington & Waratah Sts. 10.00am.
 I.M. Dr. Allan Harman (03) 5256 2134.

HAMILTON

St Andrew's, Gray & McIntyre Sts. 10.00am.
 & 5.00pm. (last Sunday of month)
 Phone: (03) 5572 1009

HAWTHORN

580 Glenferrie Rd. 11.00 am. & 7.00 pm.
 Rev. Graham Nicholson (03) 9819 5347.

HEATHMONT

Cnr. Waterloo St. & Canterbury Rd.
 Heathmont 10.00am.

Rev. Andrew Venn (03) 9870 5182.

KANGAROO GROUND

265 Eltham-Yarra Glen Rd. 9.30am.
 S. Clerk: Dr R.Baldock. (03) 9437 1265

LEONGATHA

Cnr. Bent & Turner Sts. 10.00am.
 Session Clerk: (03) 5662 2107

MALVERN

161 Wattletree Rd. 10.30am. & 5.00 pm.
 Rev. Philip Daffy (03) 9509 7373.

MELBOURNE

The Scots' Church, Cnr. Russell & Collins
 Sts. 11am & 7pm. Wed. 1.00pm.
 Rev. Douglas Robertson (03) 9650 9903.

MELTON

Mowbray College, Centenary Ave. 10.00am.
 Rev Peter Owen (03) 9747 8195.

MOE — YARRAM

Moe: 34 Fowler St. 10.00am.
Yarram: Cnr. Dougherty & Montgomery Sts. 2.00pm. Rev Jared Hood (03) 5127 1296.
NOORAT
 Cnr Mc Kinnons Bridge & Glenormiston Rds. 10.30am. Rev. Barry Oakes (03) 5592 5220
NORTH GEELONG-NORTH SHORE
 10.00am alternate Sundays at **North Geelong**, Cnr. Victoria St. & Balmoral Cr. & **North Shore**, Cnr Seabeach Pd. & Myrtle Gv. 5.00pm each Sunday at **North Geelong**. Rev. Allan Lendon (03) 5278 1887.

NUMURKAH

58 Saxton St. 11.15am.
Tallygaroopna: Victoria St. 9.30am.
Cobram: Cnr High and Pine Sts. (Anglican Church) 2.30pm.

RESERVOIR

81 Edwardes St. 10.00 am. & 7.00 pm.
 Rev. Ross Tucker (03) 9460 9523

ROCHESTER

Cnr Victoria St. & Echuca Rd. 11.00am & 7.30pm (every 2nd Sunday).
 H. Missionary – Mr S. Arbuckle.
 S. Clerk – Mr J. Broad (03) 5484 1927.

ST KILDA

Cnr Alma Rd. & Barkly St. 9.30am & 7.00pm. Rev. Bob Thomas 0417 592 646.

SEAFORD

St Barnabas Anglican Church. 10.45am.
 Cnr Park St & Margaret Ave.
 Session Clerk (03) 9580 6161

SHEPPARTON

Cnr. Hayes & Leithen Sts. 9.00am. & 7.00pm. Also **Stanhope, Kyabram**.
 Rev Kyung Ee (03) 5831 6494.

SOMERVILLE

Cnr Jones Rd. & Park Lane.
 Rev. Ian Brown (03) 5977 5469.

SOUTH YARRA

621 Punt Rd. 10.30 am. & 5.30 pm.
 S.Clerk: Mr J. Adlawan (03) 9808 7391.

SUNSHINE

McKay Memorial, Anderson Rd. 10.00am. & 6.00pm.

Rev Cor Vanderhorn (03) 9311 1661

SURREY HILLS (St Stephen's)

Canterbury & Warrigal Rds. 10.15am & 7.00pm. Family Services 6.00pm (2nd & 4th Sunday). Deaf Presbyterian Church 2.00pm.

Rev. Tony Salisbury (03) 9551 3634

Rev. Chris Siriweera (03) 9833 3306.

UPPER YARRA – WARBURTON

3471 Warburton H'way. 10.00am. & 6.00pm.
 Rev. Tony Archer (03) 5966 2309.

WANGARATTA – REGIONAL PARISH

Wangaratta, 158 Rowan St. 11.00am & 5.00pm (9.00am 1st Sunday)

Yarrawonga, 47 Orr St. 8.45am (11.00am 1st Sunday). **Myrtleford**, 78 Standish St. 7.00pm (5.00pm June, July, August).

Rev. Neil Harvey (03) 5721 6444

WARRNAMBOOL (St John's)

Warrnambool: Spence Street. 9.30am & 11.00am & 7.00 pm. **Office:** (03) 5562 2029

South Warrnambool: McDonald St. 9.30am.

Woodford: Mill St. 11.00 am.

Rev Chris ten Broeke (03) 5561 5373

Rev. Philip Burns (03) 5561 7899.

WEST FOOTSCRAY

141 Essex St. (Scots) 10.00 am.
 Session Clerk: Ms J Swift (03) 9687 5701
WILLIAMSTOWN (St Andrew's)

87 Cecil St. 10.00am.

Rev. Bruce Riding (03) 9397 5338

WOORI YALLOCK

Healesville Rd. 9.15am & 5 pm, (7pm DLS)
 Rev David Brown (03) 5964 6014.

WYNDHAM

116-120 Blackforest Rd. 10.00am.
 Pastor Shane Cassidy (03) 9974 2024

western australia

BASSENDEN

14-16 Broadway. 9.30am.
 Rev. Ross Fraser (08) 9248 3252.

BICTON

Harris St. & View Tce. 9.00am & 7.00pm.
 Rev. Andrew Robinson (08) 9339 3542

FREMANTLE (Scots)

90 South Tce. Worship & Sunday School 10.00am & 5.00pm, Wednesday 12.30pm.

Rev. Stuart Bonnington (08) 9319 2208 Off. (08) 9336 6572

LEEDERVILLE (Henderson Memorial)

Cnr Kimberly & Ruislip Sts. 10.30am.

International Service 12 noon.

Rev. Seong Mo Byun (08) 9382 2325.

south australia

ADELAIDE (St Andrew's)

92-98 Archer St. North Adelaide. 10.30 am.
 Rev. Dr G. Lyman (08) 8563 2147.

Session Clerk Mr D. Niven (08) 8381 4615.

ELIZABETH

106 Goodman Rd, Elizabeth South. 9.30am.
 Session Clerk: Mr Bob Arstall (08) 8825 5226.

Int. Mod. Rev. John Campbell (08) 865 3045

LARGS NORTH

Brenda Terrace. 11.00am.

Pastor Norman Carter (08) 8263 9692.

MILLICENT

Cnr Fifth & Sixth Sts. 10.30 am.

Rev. Alan Clarkson (08) 9739 6490.

Also Rendelsham

MT BARKER

Hutchison St. 10.30 am.

Pastor Rupert Hanna (08) 8391 3151.

Mod. Rev. S. Slucki (08) 8296 1581.

MT GAMBIER

Allison St. 10.00 am. 5.30 pm. Also **Allendale**,

Glenburnie, Nelson (Vic), OB Flat.

Rev Gary Ware (08) 8723 9028.

NARACOORTE

Church St. 10.00am.

Rev. Andrew Gall (08) 8762 1035.

NORWOOD (St Giles)

79 The Parade. 9.15am & 7.00pm.

Rev Dr Reg Mathews (08) 8395 7841

PARA HILLS

174 Maxwell Rd. 10.45 am.

Rev Dr Reg Mathews (08) 8395 7841

PENOLA

Portland St. 9.30am. Rev. Alan Clarkson (08) 9739 6490. Also **Dergholm, Kalangadoo**

PORT AUGUSTA

Jervois St. 10.00 am.

Barry Rossiter (08) 8642 2059.

SEACLIFF

Kauri Pde. **Seacliff**. 9.30am.

Rev. S. Slucki (08) 8296 1581.

WHYALLA

28 Ramsay St. 10.00 am.

S/Clerk H. Mashford (08) 8645 0818.

I.Mod. Rev. J. Campbell (08) 8265 3045.

tasmania

CORNERSTONE (Hobart) 10.00am.

The Philip Smith Centre, 2 Edward St, The Glebe. Rev. David Jones (03) 6223 4701.

CROSSROADS 6.30pm.

Underground at 86 Murray St.

H.M. Michael Lynch 0414 669 554.

DEVONPORT (St Columba's)

13 Edward St. 10.00am. **Don:** Waverley Rd. 2.00pm (1st & 3rd Sundays).

Rev. Steve Warwick (03) 6424 6066

HOBART (St John's)

10.00am & 6.00pm (7.00pm daylight saving).

188 Macquarie St. (03) 6223 7213.

Rev. Robert White (03) 6229 7657

Rev. Rod Waterhouse 0438 555 983.

LAUNCESTON (St Andrew's)

Civic Square. 10.00 am & 5.00 pm.

Church Office: (03) 6331 5412

Rev. Peter Thorneycroft 0438 315 412

MONTROSE

Cnr. Islington Rd. & Walker St. 10.00 am.

Mod. Rev. Rod Waterhouse 0438 555 983.

RIVERSIDE

Eden St. 10.45am.

Glengarry: 9.15am. Frankford H'way.

Winkleigh: 9.15am, 2nd Sunday.

Rev. Norman Shellard (03) 6327 2967

ROKEBY

Presby. Community Church, Tollard Dr.

Rev. Neil McKinlay (03) 6247 3656.

SCOTTSDALE

George St. 11.00am. **Bridport:** Westwood St.

9.00am. I.M. Rev. P. Thorneycroft,

Pastor Greg Munro (03) 6352 2527.

STANLEY (St James)

Fletcher St. 10.30am.

I.M. Rev. Steve Warwick (03) 6424 6066.

ULVERSTONE (St Andrew's)

65 Main Rd. 10.00am.

I.M. Rev. Peter Thorneycroft 0438 315 412

WEST TAMAR (Auld Kirk)

Sidmouth 10.00am and Mole Creek 2.00pm.

I.M. Rev. John Britton (03) 6339 4480

To register your church in this section of AP is an easy, low cost exercise. Facsimile the AP office on: (03) 9723 9685 or E-mail us at: aus-pres@bigpond.net.au
The Annual Fees are:
 Congregations under 50 \$45.00 plus GST
 Congregations 51 -99 \$55.00 plus GST
 Congregations 100 or more \$65.00 plus GST

DAY 5

“Lazarus, come out!”

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 11:38-44

THE POINT The raising of Lazarus is a good picture of what occurs at conversion when God brings a person from death to life (cf Ephes. 2:1-5): Jesus made an appeal to Lazarus requiring a response of obedience by the exercise of his will – and the crowd saw him making this response. But we know in fact that the ability for Lazarus to respond came not from himself but from the gracious, sovereign work of the Holy Spirit within him. Dead people cannot really decide to come to life, they have to be made alive!

THE PARTICULARS

- The same word is used to express Jesus’ emotion at the tomb as was used in vs 33 – a delicate balance of sorrow, compassion

and anger; the death of His close friend Lazarus after a short illness, and the resulting distress and helplessness of his sisters, bring out this emotion even though Jesus always knew the outcome (38).

- John keeps emphasising the fact that Lazarus had been dead for 4 days (39, cf 17); the anticipated bad smell would indicate that the body’s putrefaction process had already commenced (39).
- The purpose of the whole death-resurrection event was to bring glory to God; hence Jesus’ calling out for others to hear (40-42).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What does this story teach about Jesus? ... sovereign election?

DAY 6

“... the dead are raised...”

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 11:45-57

THE POINT The most obvious, natural reaction to the miracles performed by Jesus, especially the dramatic raising to life of four-days-dead Lazarus, would be to recognise Him as God’s promised Messiah (cf Matthew 11:2-6). But by now we’ve almost come to expect the exact opposite reaction from the Jewish leaders. Just as they had cast the healed blind man from the temple (ch.9), and as they will soon try to liquidate the raised Lazarus (12:10f), in order to get rid of the tell-tale evidence (as if this would somehow alter the facts!), they only became more determined to kill Jesus.

THE PARTICULARS

- Many Jews were convinced by the evidence and believed (45).

• The Jews were waiting for a Messiah to deliver them from Roman oppression; when He came, they were afraid the oppression would increase! They could only think in human terms (46-48).

- John was quick to see the irony of the high priest’s unwitting but theologically accurate “prophecy” concerning Jesus’ substitutionary atonement, His death that we might be saved (49-53).
- Jesus was fully aware of what would happen to Him, and when; so He planned His public appearances accordingly (54-57).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Can logical argument convert a person? Why not? So what?

DAY 7

Two ways to give

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 12:1-8

THE POINT Because of significant differences in detail it isn’t clear whether this is the same incident as the one recorded in Matthew 26:6ff and Mark 14:3ff. If a separate event, we have 2 such anointings in Bethany in the week leading up to Passover (which need not surprise us – cf 21:25), in addition to the earlier one in the north recorded in Luke 7:36ff. What is more important is that these 2 or 3 “anointings” point to Jesus as Israel’s true Messiah-King.

THE PARTICULARS

- It isn’t stated that the dinner in Jesus’ honour was at Martha’s home, although it was Martha who was the one serving (1-2).
- Mary’s action was costly and liberal; she poured the perfume

on Jesus’ feet as a sign of servitude (cf 13:5-6), but she probably “anointed” His head and “embalmed” His body too. The perfume’s fragrance anticipated His sacrifice (3, 7, cf Exodus 29:18 etc).

- Judas is symbolic of the natural man without God’s indwelling Spirit, earthy man who can only think in material terms (4-6).
- Helping the poor and caring for others’ needs are commendable activities in the Lord’s ongoing work; but there are also unique opportunities just to focus on Him alone (7-8, cf Luke 10:41-42).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- When did you last “waste” something on Jesus for His own sake?

DAY 8

Two ways to respond

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 12:9-19

THE POINT In every age, people have responded to Jesus in opposite ways: for those who believe, there is not the slightest doubt from the evidence that He is the divine Saviour He claimed to be, and they will praise Him openly; but all who see Him as a threat to their autonomy will go to the most ridiculous lengths to blot Him out. There is nothing more irrational or unscientific than interfering with the evidence as if this would somehow change the reality!

THE PARTICULARS

- Understandably, Lazarus became yet another “proof” of Jesus’ true identity as Messiah; the attempt to kill Him was a further pathetic example of spiritual blindness (9-11, 17-19; cf

9:39-41).

- But something else was occurring: overwhelmed by the evidence large numbers were ready to proclaim Jesus the promised King. Psalm 118 was part of their liturgy that anticipated His coming, so calling out vs 25-26 spontaneously is no surprise (12-13)!
- After the resurrection, John and the other disciples discovered many OT passages that predicted specific details relating to, and fulfilled in, Jesus; Zechariah 9:9 is such a passage (14-16).
- Jesus’ choice of a donkey demonstrates His majestic humility.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Why do so many people refuse to consider the case for Christ?

DAY 9

Living by dying

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 12:20-26

THE POINT The Greeks who sought Jesus out at the Feast provide the right backdrop for Jesus' declaration (see v 32 tomorrow) that, far from being a disaster, His death by public execution on a cross would be the magnet to draw everyone from everywhere to Him.

THE PARTICULARS

- It is not clear whether the "Greeks" at the Feast were scattered Greek-speaking Jews (cf Acts 2:5-6) or Gentile God-fearers like Cornelius (cf Acts 10:1-2). Either way, they were interested in the things of God and were therefore keen to "see Jesus" (20-21).
- Philip ("horselover") and Andrew ("man") were the two disciples with Greek names and so were the appropriate contact

persons for the Greeks to wangle an interview with the Teacher (21).

- John wants to show the intensity of Jesus' focus on the cross at this point by highlighting His apparent snubbing of the curious Greeks when we might have expected a more genial "reply" (23).
- It seems that God built the life-death-life cycle of wheat into His Creation in order to provide Jesus with this parable (23-26).
- Jesus demonstrated the meaning of dying to self by being "obedient to death ... on a cross" himself (24-26, cf Philippians 2:8).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What practical changes might be expected from "dying to self"?

DAY 10

Tensions rising

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 12:27-36

THE POINT Again John gives us a wonderful insight into the unique struggle Jesus had as both God and man: He knew why He came, and that He would carry it through; yet balked at the very thought of the cross – what it would cost Him to bear the punishment of our sins.

THE PARTICULARS

- John doesn't report Jesus' anguish in Gethsemane in the same detail as the other Gospels (cf 18:1), but he speaks of a similar anguish here and in the prayer of chapter 17. His concern about the cross obviously weighed constantly on Jesus' heart (27).
- God is glorified by Jesus' obedient life ("I have glorified it") and His death and resurrection ("I will glorify it again") (27-28).

• Jesus was never in doubt as to why He had come to earth: the Father's declared affirmation is for our benefit, not His (29-30).

- The Jews had enough trouble believing the carpenter's son's claim to be the "Son of Man" figure predicted in Daniel 7:14; but then to say He would also die on cross in order to bring God's final Judgement on Satan was just too incongruous (31-34).
- Jesus calls on us urgently to choose between himself as the true source of light, and the world engulfed by darkness (31-34).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Why is the Christian message of the cross so offensive to people?

DAY 11

Choosing light in the darkness

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 12:37-50

THE POINT The spiritual darkness that engulfs the world as a result of our sin is total. All the miraculous signs Jesus did are unable to convince us because we are born spiritually dead, utterly blind to spiritual realities. This is what God said would be the effect of sin on the human race (Gen. 2:17); and He confirmed it through the prophetic words of Isaiah. The only escape from this desperate situation is to look in faith to Jesus, the true light, and to follow Him. The distinction between those who do this and those who do not will be revealed at the end of time on the Last Day.

THE PARTICULARS

- What God told Isaiah would be his contemporaries' response to his message (Isaiah 6:9-10) is equally true of all ages (37-41).

• Isaiah's prophecy (like all the OT) points directly to Jesus (41).

- In one sense, being convinced about Jesus is relatively easy because the evidence is clear; it is the cost of denying self and being rejected by peers that causes many people to back away (42-43).
- As we saw in 8:12-20, God-Jesus-the Bible is one package (44-50).
- Jesus came only to bring salvation; if this salvation is rejected, either by word or life, then He becomes Judge by default (47-48).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- When did it last "cost" you something to be a follower of Jesus?

DAY 12

Meekness and majesty

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 13:1-5

THE POINT Throughout his Gospel, John has been making us aware of the depth of the tension between Jesus and the Jewish leaders: Jesus is self-consciously the Son of God, and His many miracles bear out His claim; the Jews are completely blind to this reality and therefore are vehemently opposed to Him as a blasphemer. It is significant that, as John takes us from that setting of constant confrontation into the passion narrative, we find Jesus taking on the role of a humble servant as an example to His disciples.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus knew it was at this exact Passover that He would die (1).

• Typically of John, his statement about the extent of Jesus' love can be understood in two ways, both of which are appropriate: it goes right to the "end" (the uttermost limit) in time, and in kind. The self-abasing foot-washing anticipates the cross itself (1).

- The scene was set: the meal attached to the Passover was ready; Judas had succumbed to Satan's pressure to betray his Master; the sovereign Father was directing proceedings right through to their climax; so Jesus took on the most menial role of all, that of washing the disciples feet, dusty from the day's activities (2-5).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Meditate on John's points here in the light of Philippians 2:6-8.

DAY 13

Sprung!

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 13:6-11

THE POINT Like us, the disciples weren't into humility in a big way (cf Mark 10:35-45, Luke 22:24-27). As competing peers, they didn't "do" feet-washing. But when the action of Jesus showed this up they were very embarrassed. As usual, Peter was their spokesman.

THE PARTICULARS

- Like the others, Peter was keen to defend his status among his peers; but he knew where he stood before Jesus (cf Luke 5:8), so he could not cope with his Master kneeling before him (6-8).
- In preparing His disciples to see the real meaning of the cross, Jesus used the foot-washing as symbolic of the cleansing

power of His shed blood to wash away their sin (7, 8b; cf Hebrews. 9:14).

- Jesus used the feet-washing as a symbol of new birth in 8b, but in response to Peter's hyperbole in 9 He switched the metaphor (cf the gate/sheep/shepherd in ch 10) so that new birth was now pictured as a bath, and the feet-washing became the ongoing need for cleansing, as in 1 John 1:8-2:2 in a letter written to believers who already possess eternal life (cf 1 John 5:11-13).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Have you had a failure to show humility exposed lately? How did it feel? Will the experience help you to take the initiative in servanthood next time? Why are we such slow learners?

DAY 14

What's a teatowel, men?

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 13:12-17

THE POINT Jesus taught, not only by declaring God's truth in words, but by living it out in a life which He expects His followers to emulate. The two mistakes the Church tends to make are firstly: to think that the sole reason Jesus came was to show us God's way by example (liberalism); and secondly: to acknowledge that Jesus came to die on the cross in our place, bearing the punishment we deserve because of sin, but to fail to see the link between this and obeying His command to love/serve as He did (cheap grace).

THE PARTICULARS

- Official, widely-publicised foot-washing ceremonies by

church leaders call for the answer "no" to Jesus' question, "Do you understand what I have done for you?". Jesus is not talking about ceremonies; He is talking about an attitude of humility that is so natural about picking up towels and basins and doing the menial servant chores that it makes no song and dance about it at all. It's what He meant in the Sermon on the Mount about not letting our left hand know what our right hand is doing (Matthew 6:3).

- True blessing from God follows from obedience to His will by walking humbly in the steps of our Master/Teacher (15-17).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Why do we find quiet, unheralded, humble serving so difficult?

DAY 15

"He who shares my bread..."

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 13:18-30

THE POINT John (under the Holy Spirit's guidance) has a powerful way of dealing with all the tensions associated with Jesus' being both God and Man, with the outworking of God's predestined Plan in the context of real choices in human history. We see it here again.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus knew exactly what was to happen, even in choosing the Twelve. The written Salvation Plan required a betrayer to be included among them (Psalm 41:9), and Jesus had to choose him, love him, and mentor him, along with all the others (18, 26); but knowing this only increased His anguish as man (21). The Eleven were utterly bewildered by such a thought (22-25,

28-29).

- In Greek, verse 19 ends simply, "...you will believe that I AM".
- Again we see the inseparable "Father-Son-Bible" package (cf 12:44-50 above), the NT Scriptures being written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by Jesus' "sent ones" (apostles) (20).
- Jesus' giving the bread to Judas was a genuine act of love; but it became the final act of condemnation of a heart already well on the way to perdition. Satan now had all of Judas, and so Jesus could see no reason for further delaying the inevitable (26-27).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- How does the phrase "And it was night" capture the pathos?

DAY 16

My glory all, the cross

THE PASSAGE

JOHN 13:31-38

THE POINT These words of Jesus to His disciples on the night before He died will be amplified and explained in Chs 14-17 (see AP March '03).

THE PARTICULARS

- The disappearance of Judas into the night set in motion a course of events that would lead inexorably to the lifting up of Jesus, the Son of Man of Daniel 7:14, to die on the cross – the one event that would glorify the Triune God as the culmination of His glorious Plan of Salvation; the climax of human history (31-32).
- The path to the cross was a path that Jesus had to walk alone. "... He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in." (33).

• Jesus' death will usher in a new community of people, united to Him by the long-anticipated new covenant sealed by His blood; and they will be recognised by the world as His people because of the way they reflect His love for them in their love for each other. It is in this sense that His command to them to "love one another as I have loved you" is a new commandment (34-35).

- Peter will follow Jesus in death eventually, but, at the moment, he can't (Christ's unique, substitutionary death), and won't (his own weakness leading to his denial of his Master) (36-38).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Is the cross at the centre of your understanding of the Gospel?

DAY 17

Contending for the faith

THE PASSAGE

JUDE 1:1-4

THE POINT The Church in every age needs to defend the eternal truth of the Gospel of God's grace against those who will deny Jesus as the divine Anointed King (cf Psalm 2), and who use gospel freedom as an excuse for immorality and unrestrained self-indulgence.

THE PARTICULARS

- Matthew 13:55 identifies James and Jude as Jesus' brothers: sons Mary subsequently bore to Joseph. Jude refers to himself as the brother of James, who is older and better known, but as the slave of Jesus the Messiah, in deference to His divinity nature (1).
- Jude identifies His believing readers as those elected and loved by God the Father, and kept safe in salvation by Jesus,

who by implication is the Son, the Anointed King (Christ) (1, cf 24).

- Jude's prayerful desire for his readers is that they experience to an overflowing extent God's mercy, peace and love (2).
- Jude's intention to write a more positive letter was interrupted by news of heretics among them trying to unsettle the faith of his readers; he now needed to reinforce the unchangeable truth of the Gospel entrusted to the Apostles and to all true believers (3).
- God has never concealed His condemnation of godless men (4).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- How is the Church tempted to move away from the true Gospel?

DAY 18

In your dreams

THE PASSAGE

JUDE 1:5-10

THE POINT Like 2 Peter, Jude is concerned with God's Judgement upon an apostate church, but using different OT examples and making use of "popular" apocryphal material to drive his point home.

THE PARTICULARS

- God's people need constant warning against the danger of apostasy: not everyone rescued from Egypt reached the Promised Land (cf Psalm 95:8-11, Hebrews 3:7-19, 6:4-8); even angels in (then) popular thought (eg the apocryphal book of Enoch) fell from grace through pride, rebellion and lust (cf Genesis 6:1-7); and Sodom and Gomorrah were likewise destroyed (Genesis 19). The sins in these examples were as

"unnatural" as God's people turning against Him in the face of His redeeming acts of grace (5-7).

- It is "in your dreams" to imagine some higher spirituality (as in Gnosticism /antinomianism) and ignore God's clear revelation in His Word about the place of godly living in the context of the Gospel of grace: we are not saved by godly living, but we are most certainly saved for godly living (cf Ephesians 2:8-10) (8).
- Using an apocryphal account of a dispute between the devil and the angel Michael over the burial of Moses' body, Jude warns against spiritual pride that leads to spiritual blindness (9-10). "Progressive morality/thinking often goes hand in hand with progressive deafness to the voice of God." (M. Green, Tyndale).

DAY 19

Here-a-tick, and gone forever

THE PASSAGE

JUDE 1:11-16

THE POINT Jude continues his condemnation of the invasive false teachers.

THE PARTICULARS

- Cain represented the faithless man driven by self-centredness and envy; Balaam's error was greed and sophistry, a failure to see the real spiritual issue, opting for pragmatic, self-serving success; Korah's basic sin was insubordination and leading a rebellion against Moses' God-given authority. All heresy has some roots in the love of money and popularity and outward success at the cost of truth, and rebellion against God's revealed Word (10-11).
- Jude uses vivid language to describe the heretics: they are like

dangerous reefs hidden among the Lord's people at His Table, like the butcher-shepherds of Ezekiel 34, like clouds/trees that fail to fulfil their purpose, like the waves of Isaiah 57:20, like shooting stars that defect from the ordered cosmos; moreover, he points out that to apostatise is to be dead a second time! (12-13)

- Jude again quotes from the apocryphal book of Enoch, drawing on this man's godly life (Gen. 5:24) and place (7th) in the scheme of things to provide a contrast with the four-times-ungodly (15) interlopers doomed for destruction when Jesus returns (14-16).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Has the Church become too lax in failing to deal with heresy?

DAY 20

Pressing on

THE PASSAGE

JUDE 1:17-25

THE POINT To Jesus belongs all glory and power; so we can trust Him to bring us safely into the eternal joy and perfection of heaven. Till then, we are to stand for truth, expose error and save struggling souls.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus left His disciples in no doubt that there would always be unregenerate detractors in His Church, especially as the time of His Return drew closer (cf Mark 13:22), and they in turn passed this message on to us (cf 2 Peter 3:3f, Acts 20:29-31, etc) (17-19).
- The end goal of salvation is eternal life which in one sense the Christian believer already has (cf John 3:36; 1 John 5:12), but for which, in terms of its full realisation, he still waits (20-21).

Meanwhile, we are to grow in our understanding of, and commitment to, a faith rooted in God's Word, to know the Spirit's power in prayer, and to be motivated by God's love (20-21).

- Jesus' mercy that saved us is to be reflected in our identification with any who are struggling to believe, in the hope that they too will be rescued from hell; but we need to be careful this identification doesn't drag us into ungodly, worldly living (22-23).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Make a list of the Biblical truths about Jesus, God, us, and our eternal salvation, contained in the brief doxology of verses 24-25.



Across Australia

New lecturer

The Queensland State Assembly has appointed the distinguished academic theologian **Rev. Dr Bruce Winter** as lecturer in systematic theology and principal of the **Reformed College of Ministries** in Brisbane. Dr Winter is currently warden of **Tyndale House** in Cambridge and is known to the evangelical world through numerous publications, including his commentary on 1 Corinthians in the *New Bible Commentary 21st Century Edition* and his work on the translation of the ESV Bible.

He is also one of a handful of Australians who are members of the **Society for New Testament Studies**, the world's most prestigious New Testament academic association. Dr Winter, a Queenslander, is currently a minister of the Anglican Church and has been appointed subject to his reception as a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. He taught for 10 years at the Trinity Theological College in Singapore. Dr Winter will head the 'Year of Excellence in Theological Education' in Brisbane in 2007 (for more details, 07 3871 9347 or rcm@upconnect.net).

Ballarat church turns 150

The **Ballarat South** parish (Vic.) will celebrate its 150th anniversary on 11 March 2007. All past ministers, members and friends are invited to attend. The guest preacher will be the **Moderator-General, Rev. Bob Thomas**. More information from **Rev. Dr John S. Woodward** (03 5334 2909).

Church warmed by Flame

The **Embers to a Flame** (www.embers.toaflame.org) conferences on church revitalisation held in Victoria and Queensland were outstanding successes, both in numbers and overall penetration of the congregations of the Presbyterian Church. More than 400 people came to meetings, with nearly half of all the congregations of the PCA represented at the two conferences. Under the organisational leadership of the **Home Mission** directors of the PCV, PCQ and the PCNSW – Bob

Carner, John Nicol, Bruce Meller and John Irvine, the conferences also welcomed participants from the **Westminster Presbyterian Church**, the **Uniting Church**, the **Grace Presbyterian Churches of New Zealand** and the **Reformed Churches of New Zealand** among others. The conferences were led by **Rev. Dr Harry Reeder** of the **Briarwood Presbyterian Church** of the **Presbyterian Church of America**, assisted by a team of helpers.

26 years of service

After 26 years of voluntary service to the PCQ working in the **Church Supplies bookshop**, Mrs **Joyce Waddington** has resigned from this position. Mrs Waddington, who is 90, is very well known throughout the PCA especially because of the *Book of Family Worship*.

New PLC head

The new principal of PLC (Melbourne) is **Elaine Collins**. She takes up her position at the beginning of Term 4, 2006. Mrs Collins has significant experience in senior educational positions and an exceptional reputation as a leading Christian educator. She moves to PLC from her current position as principal of **Roseville College** in Sydney.

Third minister at Scots

Rev. Dr John Diacos joined the ministry team of the **Scots Church** (Melbourne)

in July. He is the third minister serving in the congregation, under **Rev. Douglas Robertson**, the senior minister. Most recently Mr Diacos was serving in a part-time appointment at the **Bundoora** congregation while working as a medical practitioner.

Outreach in Fremantle

The evangelism ministry team of the **Scots Church (Fremantle)** has been holding monthly outreach days in central Fremantle on the first Saturday of the month.

Korean brochure

The **Child Protection Unit** has produced the four **Breaking the Silence** brochures in Korean. They can be obtained from www.pssd.org.au or from E. McClean, Director, Child Protection Unit PO Box 2196 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012.

New phone

The PCNSW has a new contact phone number 1300 773 774 (1300 pressi). This number allows the office to be contacted from anywhere in Australia for the price of a local call.

Moderators appointed

The **Moderator-Nominate** of the PCNSW Assembly is **Rev. David Robson**, Minister Emeritus; of the PCQ

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Assembly is Rev. Kim Dale of the Tamborine congregation and graduate of Westminster Theological Seminary; of the PCV Assembly is Rev. Grant Lawry of the Canterbury congregation; and of the PCWA Assembly is Rev. Stuart Bonnington of the Scots Church, Fremantle and superintendent of the Presbyterian Inland Mission.

New elder

David Jones has been appointed elder of Nhill, Vic.



Around the World

Hindus storm orphanage

On the night of 5 August, more than 50 Hindu militants stormed the **House of Hope** orphanage in Dantewara, India, in an attempt to forcibly close it. According to sources, the mob was armed with clubs and bamboo sticks. They beat the director, **Suresh**, 35, and threatened to kill him if he continues with the orphanage. They also questioned and threatened several of the children. Suresh is presently in treatment for his injuries. Efforts to lodge a police complaint have failed.

Compass Direct

Iraqi abducted

On 17 August, Iraqi church leaders issued appeals today for the release of a **Chaldean Catholic priest** kidnapped the day before in south-east Baghdad. **Chaldean Archbishop of Kirkuk Louis Sako** said **Father Saad Sirop** was on his way home from celebrating mass at St Jacob church, Baghdad, at about 6:30 am when his car was stopped by three armed men with masks who forced him into their car. "I think there are two reasons these kidnappings are taking place," Sako said. "The first reason is money. But the second reason is they want to push Christians out of Iraq." Sirop is the second Chaldean Catholic priest to be kidnapped in Baghdad in August – **Father Raad Kashan** was abducted two weeks before by a group seeking ransom.

Hindu Taliban

On 4 August, India's **Supreme Court** ruled that police do not require warrants in order to lodge First Issue Reports or arrest and detain anyone accused of involvement in religious conversion activities.

Clearly this ruling opens the door for police with Hindutva sympathies to act as Hindu Taliban. It also opens the door for **Hindutva** forces to employ corrupt and sympathetic police as their agents of persecution.

Nuns, pastors, bishops and evangelists, as well as Christian aid workers, teachers

and social workers, are all immediately at risk of arrest and imprisonment because of their Christian witness. In fact every Christian, actively witnessing or not, is at risk from hostile elements that may exploit the opportunity to bring false charges against them, inspired by a variety of motives, in the same manner that the blasphemy law is exploited for personal gain in Pakistan.

World Evangelical Alliance

Egyptian Christians held

Egyptian authorities have detained seven Christian men without charge since a fatal knife attack on churches in Alexandria in April triggered two days of violence in the Mediterranean coastal city. Alexandrian Christians plan to sue the country's Interior Ministry for the men's release, as well as for compensation for Christian-owned shops and Orthodox churches that were damaged during the unrest. **Hesham Azmy Iskender** was among 101 Christians and Muslims who were originally detained. Over the following month, police released most of the prisoners. But they have continued to renew the imprisonment of Iskender and six other Christians, even after the prosecutor general issued orders for the release of all the detainees in May.

Christian raped

A Christian girl has gone into hiding in Pakistan to escape Muslim in-laws who beat and raped her for fleeing her forced marriage and refusing to practice Islam. **Asya Khadim**, 15, won a divorce from her abusive Muslim husband in February and sought shelter with a local aid organisation to avoid reprisal attacks. Khadim had been married to **Tanveer Qadir** for almost 13 months when her mother filed the divorce case on her behalf in January.

"They tried to force me to read the Koran," the Christian girl told *Compass*. "My husband beat me every day for two months because I refused." Khadim's case highlights ongoing national debate over the controversial Hudood Ordinances that some say encourage domestic violence against women. Under this law, a woman who has been raped must produce four Muslim male witnesses to prove the allegations. According to the Peace Council of Pakistan, at least 50 per cent of women who report rape are jailed and accused of adultery.



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Stem cell veto

Joni Eareckson Tada was among those gathered at the White House in support of US President **George W. Bush** as he vetoed a bill which would have expanded federal funding of research using human embryos from IVF clinics to harvest stem cells. Joining fellow disability advocates, ethicists, researchers, theologians and legislators Mrs Tada, a spinal cord injured quadriplegic for nearly four decades, observed: "I stand with countless Americans with disabilities who believe that our cause is not advanced when human life is sacrificed in hopes of finding a cure. People like me — who are medically fragile — are left vulnerable and exposed in a society that views human life as a commodity which can be experimented upon or exploited."

Assist News Service

Germans become Muslims

Last year about 4000 Germans became Muslims, according to the **Central Islam-Institute** in Soest, which says the numbers have been rising since the turn of the century. Up to the year 2000 the annual number of conversions stagnated at 300, but it has been rising ever since.

The institute's director, **Salim Abdullah**, has no plausible explanation for this trend, as he told the evangelical news agency "idea". In the past, converts were chiefly women, who married Muslims, or academics with an "affection for the Orient".

Today people from all walks of life are among the converts, according to Abdullah, who is a German-born Muslim himself.

The **Islamic Fellowship of Germany** attracts especially high numbers of converts — about 500 a year. According to the **Office for the Protection of the Constitution** in Baden-Wuerttemberg (one of the 16 federal states), the fellowship is associated with the radical **Muslim Brotherhoods**.

According to Abdullah there are 3.2 million Muslims in Germany. Most of them are Turkish immigrants.

It has been noted by the churches that interest in religion is rising in Germany, but it is not focused on Christianity. Today, the citizens in Martin Luther's home country are equally fascinated by esoteric practices, Buddhism and Islam.

Compass Direct

Chinese Christians arrested

China Aid Association reported that government raids of two house churches recently resulted in the arrest of about 80 Christians. Six policemen, including two plainclothes officers, interrupted a fellowship meeting of 43 people in Hubei province, south of Beijing, and detained 20 of them on 21 July, according to CAA. Eight of the congregants were sentenced to 10 to 15 days of jail, while the rest were released that day.

In Henan province, authorities on 19 July detained and interrogated more than 60 house church members, CAA said. They were released later the same day. In Anhui province, well-known house church pastor Wang Zaiqing was arrested on 26 May. A church-planter and preacher in Anhui and surrounding provinces in east China, Pastor Wang was arrested for printing and distributing Christian books.

Radio silenced

A Christian radio station in Nogales, Mexico, apparently alarmed some drug and occult forces in the border town. They put a price on the life of its director,

lawyer/pastor **Hector Manuel Lopez Delgado**, with the intent of destroying his radio ministry, **Radio New Vision**, and church. In June, vandals climbed the mountain to the transmitter with axes and other tools and destroyed the entire installation. When Christians went to authorities to denounce the demolition, they were told that previous attacks on it were not merely attempts to steal copper as they'd suspected.

Pastor Lopez was on the other side of the border in Nogales, Arizona, when he received an anonymous call on his cell phone saying: "We know that a group of narcos and Satanists is against you."

Teenager paralysed

For two years **Francis Yohanna Anche**, 15, has been suffering from a brain injury he sustained when Muslim students in his high school in Zaria city, Nigeria, attacked Christian students. His right hand and leg are still paralyzed from a machete cut to his head. Muslim students at the **Government Science Secondary School** had written a letter on June 24, 2004 warning Christian students that they should stop worshipping in the school's



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chapel or else face their wrath. Seven other Christian students also sustained injuries in this attack. Christian leaders in Kaduna describe the state as the nerve-centre of Islamic extremism, where many religious conflicts in northern Nigeria originate and spread to other parts of Nigeria.



On the Agenda

Iran aims at apocalypse

By Elizabeth Kendal
World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission

Ever since being elected President of Iran in June 2005, **Mahmoud Ahmadinejad** has used every means he can not only to drive Iran backwards to the days of the Islamic Revolution, but also to drive it forward to become a world leader in belligerence.

Ahmadinejad is driven by ideology. He believes his divine calling is to hasten the coming of the **Mahdi** (the Shia messiah, the Hidden 12th Imam) and prepare Iran to receive him. According to the myth, the Mahdi, who supposedly disappeared in the 9th century, will return from his occultation (concealment) in the well behind the Jamkaran mosque on the outskirts of Qom during a time of world

chaos. He will lead the apocalyptic battle between good and evil and establish the global rule of Islam.

Convinced the Mahdi's return is imminent, Ahmadinejad is preparing Iran to receive him. Various infrastructure projects are underway for the Mahdi's benefit, and Ahmadinejad has vowed to rid Iran of Christianity and all other offensive non-Islamic influences and practices. He is also agitating world chaos by inciting anti-Semitism, advocating genocide, bolstering his arsenal, courting dictators and stoking tension across the globe.

According to the myth, when the Mahdi returns Jesus will return from heaven to be his follower and pray behind him. Jesus will fight against the Dajjal, the deceiver or false messiah. There will be an apocalyptic battle between good and evil and Jesus will declare Islam to be the true religion and convert all Christians to Islam. The world will be transformed into a perfect Islamic society ruled over by the Mahdi. Then the Day of Resurrection will come. Hezbollah, an Iranian asset, holds the same ideology.

Persecution against the Iranian church increased as soon as Ahmadinejad was elected. In the latest incident an Iranian Christian named **Issa Motamadi** was imprisoned for his faith on 24 July in the north-western town of Resht. He will soon stand trial before a Revolutionary Tribunal. According to sources, Issa and his wife **Parvah**, both converts to Christianity, came to the attention of the authorities seven

months ago when they decided to give their new-born son a biblical Christian name.

A security official is said to have advised Issa to renounce his faith. He also intimated that it may take several executions before Iranians actually comprehend the reality of the religious situation. There are rumours that Parvah may also be targeted. The family desperately needs a lawyer courageous enough to advocate with conviction for Issa's and Parvah's rights. Issa's mother, who is not a Christian, is traumatised by the situation. All their Christian friends will be at risk.

Observers are concerned Ahmadinejad may increasingly persecute Christians while the eyes of the world are on the conflict in the Levant.

Assist News Service

A biblical tradition

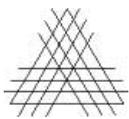
By Mark A. Noll

In 1911 the English-speaking world paused to mark the 300th anniversary of the **King James Version** (KJV) of the Bible, with American political leaders foremost in the chorus of exaltation. To former president **Theodore Roosevelt**, this Bible translation was "the Magna Carta of the poor and the oppressed... the most democratic book in the world". Soon-to-be president **Woodrow Wilson** said much the same thing: "The Bible (with its individual value of the human soul) is undoubtedly the book that has made democracy and been the source of all progress."

Americans at the time mostly agreed with these sentiments, because the impact of the KJV was everywhere so obvious. It was obvious for business, with major firms like **Harper & Brothers** having risen to prominence on the back of its Bible publishing.

It was obvious in the physical landscape and in many households because of the widespread use of Bible names for American places (95 variations on Salem) and the nation's children (John, James, Sarah, Rebecca).

It was obvious in literature, as with the memorable opening of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*: "Call me Ishmael." And it was obvious in politics, with no occasion more memorable than March 4, 1865, when four quotations from the KJV framed Abraham Lincoln's incomparable second inaugural address.



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Because the KJV was so widely read for religious purposes, it had also become a source of public ideals. Because it was so central in the churches, and because the churches were so central to the culture, the KJV functioned also as a common reservoir for the language. Hundreds of phrases (clear as crystal, powers that be, root of the matter, a perfect Babel, two-edged sword) and thousands of words (arguments, city, conflict, humanity, legacy, network, voiceless, zeal) were in the common speech because they had been in this translation.

But during the past half-century, we have come into a new situation. For believers who read the Bible because they think it is true, a welter of modern translations compete for the space once dominated by the KJV. For the public at large, the linguistic and narrative place that for more than two centuries had been occupied by the KJV is now substantially filled by the omnipresent electronic media. The domains that have been most successfully popularised by television, the movies and the internet are sport, crime, pornography, politics, warfare, medicine and the media itself. Within these domains there is minimal place for biblical themes of any sort, much less the ancient language of the KJV.

It was sometimes abused, as when

Roman Catholics and Jews were forced to recite it in public schools, yet nearly universal use also meant that its spiritual themes of reproof and liberation, its stories of human sin and divine grace, also exerted a great influence for good.

Today the legacy of the KJV remains fixed in the common speech, even if awareness of the language's debt to this translation is fading (another KJV word). Whether any modern translation of the Scriptures, or any other moral guide, can anchor the culture as the KJV once did, is a question worth serious consideration in the run-up to 2011 and the 400th anniversary of this unsurpassed cultural force.

Creation museum to open

Like most natural history museums, this one has exhibits showing dinosaurs roaming the Earth. Except here, the giant reptiles share the forest with Adam and Eve.

That, of course, is contradicted by science, but that's the point of the \$25 million creation museum rising fast in rural Kentucky in the United States.

Its inspiration is the Bible — the literal interpretation that contends God created the heavens and the Earth and everything in them just a few thousand years ago.

"If the Bible is the word of God, and its history really is true, that's our presupposition or axiom, and we are starting there," museum founder **Ken Ham** said during a recent tour of the sleek and modern facility, which is due to open next year.

Ham, an Australian who started the Christian publishing company **Answers in Genesis** in the late 1970s, said the goal of his privately funded museum is to change minds and rebut the scientific point of view.

"We're going to show you that we can make sense of the different people groups, we can make sense of fossils, we can make sense of what you see in the world," he said.

Visitors to the museum, a few miles from Cincinnati, will be able to watch the story of creation unfold in a 180-seat special-effects theater, see a 40-foot-tall recreation of a section of Noah's Ark and stare into the jaws of robotic dinosaurs.

"It's education, but it's also doing it in an entertaining way," Ham said.

Mark Looy, a vice president at Answers in Genesis, said the museum has received at least \$21 million in private donations. He said two anonymous donors have given \$1 million, and he expects the museum to be debt-free when it opens next May.

Associated Press

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Retail therapy

How shopping trips ended a painful delusion.

My legs are rubber, knees about to buckle, calves cramping. In my delirium I grope for a resting place but find nothing. I can't feel my toes. I see mirages — chairs, benches — they flicker invitingly, only to vanish as I approach. I teeter on the verge of fainting.

Suddenly a voice rings out from the blinding light: "Oh, stop acting like a baby! We've only been shopping for an hour."

It's a familiar voice, a cruel voice — my wife, whose endurance far exceeds mine on such days. For her the "accessories" section at Nordstrom is paradise. For me it's somewhere between the Sahara desert and Dante's Seventh Circle of Hell.

OK, maybe I'm exaggerating. Truthfully, I don't mind shopping done the right way. *My way* — with the speed and efficiency of a military operation. Alas, I may never set the agenda when my wife and I hit the mall, but I find day-dreaming cathartic. So please excuse me while I switch to fantasy mode. Click.

Shopping à la Drew: First, the shopping trip would have a clear objective. If

**Drew
Dyck**

you go to the mall before determining what you need, something odd happens. Suddenly you find out that you "need" all sorts of things, even stuff you didn't know existed! One hour of mall trudging

She accompanies me without producing the low, haunting moans of a humpback whale that characterise my trips to the mall.

rubberises your legs. Two, and your torso slouches. At the three-hour mark, fatigue flashes up your spine and seizes your brain. Suddenly the line between needs and wants blurs. You begin to ponder strange questions: How did I ever sleep without a bed that

realigns my body's energy with the earth's magnetic field? How will I summon rodents without this rodent whistle?

If it were up to me, we wouldn't stick around long enough for this to happen. We'd hit the ground running. Secure the items. March them to the counter. Dispatch the plastic. Vacate the premises and make it home in time for the ball game. The perfect shopping trip!

Click. Back to reality. Such trips are a fading memory from my bachelor days. The real scene plays something like this:

Walking. Looking at clothes. Looking at clothes. More walking. Arguing. Silence. Apologising. More arguing. Trying on clothes. Leaving store. Coming back to store. Putting clothes on hold. Walking. Weeping (me). Gnashing teeth (mine). More walking.

Well, you get the picture. Shopping causes consternation in my marriage. This took me by surprise. Just two years ago we were giddy and engaged, not even a hint of conflict on the horizon. We both liked cuddling, kissing, and a guy named Drew. Then we got married and started

shopping together.

But recently I discovered that something else was causing problems in our marriage, something much worse than shopping — my selfishness. The descriptions above make my wife look like the bad guy. Some serious qualifiers are due.

For starters, though my wife likes to shop, she rarely buys anything. It's one of those mysteries, like Bigfoot or the Bermuda Triangle. But the point is I'm lucky. I've witnessed many full-grown men weep over their wives' spending habits. When my wife actually purchases something, it's usually after a good deal of prodding from me.

Second, she accompanies me on many activities she doesn't enjoy, and without producing the low, haunting moans of a humpback whale that characterise my trips to the mall. She doesn't like basketball, but she watches games with me. Though she enjoys reading, my habit of camping out at the local bookstore stretches her resolve. Still, she rarely complains.

Most of the time I was too selfish to notice her sacrifices. Now looking back, I can see the signs. Weak smiles when I announced date night was going to be a live NBA game. Glazed eyes after hours of me perusing tomes in our bookstore's theology section. Trips to the movie store featured more of my selfishness: she wanted Emma; we got Arnold.

Though I'm tempted to blame my single years for my oblivion to others' feelings, the truth is more sinister: I want my own way. Like a toddler clutching a toy and screaming "Mine!", I was letting my will run roughshod over our relationship.

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My wife was doing her part, making concessions and sacrifices. But I was failing to respect her wishes. With the exception of the odd shopping trip, which I ruined by whining, we did what I wanted, my way.

I've always been aware the Bible comes down hard on selfishness. Perhaps since it didn't specifically address selfishness in the context of a shopping mall, I missed the application. Still, the Bible's teaching on the subject is clear: "Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others" (1 Cor. 10:24). "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" (Mt 7:12). "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3).

Those verses nailed the problem. I had a habit of putting myself before others. While I could disguise this voice while I was single, being married brought it into sharp focus. I had to change.

I tried a few avenues to recovery. First, I employed what I now call the "martyr method". I agreed to my wife's plans, even encouraged her to make choices customarily made by me. Then during the activity I'd wallow in self-pity. We went shopping; I suffered, but in silence. We watched romances; both our faces were

wet with tears. Although the misery was delicious, I wasn't fooling anyone. We both knew my "selflessness" was disingenuous. The only sacrifice I made was to appease my overgrown ego. I was still putting myself first, just in a different way.



Old habits die hard, if they ever die. But something interesting happened as I fought my selfish inclinations.

Then I switched to a second tactic: score keeping. OK, I'd think, tonight we'll do your thing. Tomorrow we'll do mine. 50/50. Sure it was a tad legalistic, but it was fair. Keeping everything even was the only way to ensure my selfishness remained in check, I thought. But that didn't work either. It was only another way of looking out for myself, making

sure I still got my way. Besides, even when we did my things, I couldn't enjoy myself. I was using up valuable points!

Finally I broke down and tried God's way. This required more than adjusting my behaviour; it meant overhauling my attitude. I endeavoured to truly put my wife's interests before my own, viewing the world from her perspective and asking myself what would make her happy.

I haven't mastered this. I keep slipping back into my selfish persona. Old habits die hard, if they ever die. But something interesting happened as I fought my selfish inclinations. I actually started enjoying things I never thought I could. Even shopping trips weren't all that bad.

I'm realising that God doesn't give us commands to make us miserable. He extends instruction because he loves us. His rules are not arbitrary; they constitute a code of love. Abandoning my selfishness not only benefited those around me, it gave me more joy as well. I'm learning that God's peace can fill my heart no matter what I'm doing—even shopping.

Drew Dyck, a freelance writer, lives in California. This article is reprinted from Christianity Today International/Marriage Partnership magazine.

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Christ's feminism

Beauty is more than china tea cups, pretty hair and painted toenails.

I am a feminist because of Christ, the world's most avant-garde emancipator. When He praised Mary for choosing to learn from Him over kitchen work (which we will always have with us), He was more radical than Gloria Steinem. But I know enough neurobiology to part ranks with feminists who say that gender is a social construct. Maybe because of some primordial wiring, I like to wear peasant skirts and make borscht, and I want to become a mother.

So I'm surprised that there isn't much room for women like me in the world of Stasi and John Eldredge as described in *Captivating*, which *Publishers Weekly* listed at number one on a June list of hardcover religion bestsellers in the United States. Many fans of *Captivating* are the women who bought the men in their lives the crazily popular *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul* by John Eldredge. They credit the Eldredges with transforming their faith from a duty-bound program to an ascent of the heart to its greatest lover. Sounds innocuous enough.

I worry, though, that the readers of *Captivating* have been sold a finicky idea of femininity — one that disregards the wondrous complexity God breathed into them.

Beware of "the domineering women", the Eldredges warn. They describe these vixens as the kind who "room alone when [they] travel". Who "receive corporate promotions". And who are "put in charge of our women's ministries". The gall!

Ironically, the Eldredges scoff at bossy women just after they quote God's words of lament to Eve, predicting that, in the fallen world, the man would rule

Agnieszka Tennant

over her. They wrap their pronouncements in pop psychology, sentimentality, eisegesis, and clichés borrowed from Harlequin paperbacks: "How does a woman best love a man? The answer is simple: Seduce him."

The gist of *Captivating* is this: "Every woman longs for three things: to be swept

Beauty draws blood to the heart and speeds up the pulse; sometimes it evokes repentance.

up into a romance, to play an irreplaceable role in a great adventure, and to be the Beauty of the story." I used to want such things — when I was a girl who didn't understand how her womanising father messed up her heart and when I

fed my imagination with soft heart-porn like the film *Pretty Woman*. But doesn't there come a time when we must grow out of the kind of self-regard that was cute when we were girls?

What do I long for? To trust God always, no matter what happens. That's my trembling prayer.

And this: To figure out why, in a country as filled with devout churchgoers as my motherland, Poland, corruption is much more prominent and insidious than in the reputed atheistic countries of Europe. That's why I'm going to grad school this autumn. I want to do my little part to fight a battle against corruption. It will be an adventure.

(But wait: Does this kind of talk make me sound like a man, since "in the heart of every man is a desperate desire for a battle to fight, an adventure to live, and a beauty to rescue" — and since intellectual curiosity doesn't seem to mark a truly *Captivating* woman?)

I may not be an Eldredge kind of lady,

but I know beauty when I see it. And the most regrettable failure of *Captivating* is its tame idea of beauty. "Beauty is core to a woman — who she is and what she longs to be," Stasi Eldredge writes. "Beauty is what the world longs to experience from a woman." She gives examples: "Pioneer women brought china teacups into the wilderness, and I bring a pretty tablecloth to eat on when my family camps. We wear perfume, paint our toenails, color our hair, and pierce our ears, all in an effort to be ever more beautiful." Sure. But there's so much more.

Beauty draws blood to the heart and speeds up the pulse; sometimes it evokes repentance. I wish more Christians were comfortable with its pull. Too often, beauty raptures us so forcibly that we fear it will lead to temptation. So we avert our eyes. What if we turned our ecstasy into worship?

With provocative hyperbole, a character in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel *The Idiot* predicts that beauty will save the world. Commenting on this line, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn imagined that "if the too obvious, too straight branches of Truth and Good are crushed or amputated and cannot reach the light", then "perhaps the whimsical, unpredictable, unexpected branches of Beauty will make their way through and soar up to that very place and in this way perform the work of all three".

But it won't be the beauty described in *Captivating*. That beauty isn't wild enough; it's mere prettification, a tendency toward sentimental adornment. For some reason, the Eldredges restrict the source of beauty to women. Sorry, Rubens, Michelangelo, Da Vinci, Bach, and men with stunning looks — you don't make the list.

True beauty is precarious, unbound.

It cannot be confined to pre-approved tastes or to one gender. It is wild at heart. Like Christ. And like the complicated men and women who follow Him (some of whom room alone when they travel).

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This side of heaven

On earth, every silver lining has a cloud.

In 1971 Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones reminisced on Welsh radio: "I shall never forget myself travelling in a train back from Plymouth to London once. We arrived at Newton Abbot and a woman with two small girls came into the compartment where I was sitting. It was obvious that the children were returning to a boarding school after the holidays. After placing the children in their seats the mother got out and stood on the platform until the train started.

"As the carriage began to move slowly away the smaller of the two little girls kept on looking after her mother longingly with tears filling her eyes. And then the elder sister told her sharply – and she was as near to tears herself – 'Don't look at her, you fool!'

"I am not ashamed to say that I lifted the book which I was reading to hide my face and I cried with the little girls. I was back in my lodgings at Tregaron once again, and it took me a great deal of time to recompose myself. I believe that I shall never totally recover from this until I reach the country where we shall meet never to part anymore."

Such soft sympathy – from a man who refused to be interrupted when a German doodle bug landed near Westminster chapel on 18 June 1944, and so continued in public prayer!

The little incident that Martyn Lloyd-Jones recalled is just another indication that this is a world that is fallen and disappointing. We seek happiness, but can never grasp it for long. We cannot bottle it and then sip from it when we feel the need. We always live knowing that eventually all that we have in this world will be



Peter Barnes

taken from us. We came into this world with nothing and we will leave it with nothing (1 Tim. 6:7). It is an Ecclesiastes kind of world – it has "vanity" or "meaninglessness" written all over it. The ultimate satisfaction is always elusive; here we only ever catch glimmers of it.

Most of the population thinks in evolutionary terms – millions of years ago we emerged out of some primeval sludge, and it has been onwards and upwards ever since. Such an outlook makes

for misery. It ignores the reality of the Fall, as recorded in Genesis 3. The entry of sin into the world means that we now do not experience unsullied delight in God and His world.

Before the Fall, all was very good; now it is a mixture of good and evil. As William Blake put it:

*Man was made for Joy and Woe;
And when this we rightly know,
Thro' the World we safely go,
Joy and woe are woven fine,
A clothing for the soul divine.*

Actually, we were not *made* for joy and woe, but that is what we now experience.

In sin, we knew shame for the first time. Adam and Eve became aware that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin cloths. We all experience an alienation within us. The world is not right because we are not right. Adam was also alienated from Eve. He blamed her for his sad predicament: "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate" (Gen.3:13).

Where before there was only love and

joy, now there was mutual recrimination and selfishness. And the world was now a difficult place. Adam would labour in work – there would be thorns and thistles and sweat in all he did (Gen.3:17-19). Eve would labour in child-bearing – she would have to submit to a sinful husband and bear children in pain (Gen.3:16). All of this comes from being alienated from God – Adam and Eve hid from His presence (Gen.3:8). It is God who has to cry out to Adam: "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9)

Man – alienated from himself, from his fellow human beings, from the world, and from God – is lost, and is so unaware of his true condition that his natural inclination is to prefer being lost, away from God.

Such is this world. At best we are strangers in a strange land. In every flash of light, there is a shaft of darkness; and in every shaft of darkness, there is a flash of light. Plato compared human beings to jars that leak and are never filled. It is the gospel that transforms everything. Sin, misery, alienation, and death are all overcome in Christ. Here we see through the glass darkly, but in heaven believers will see with undimmed eyes. Augustine concluded his magisterial work, *The City of God*, by referring to the beatific vision: "He will be the goal of all our longings; and we shall see Him for ever; we shall love Him without satiety; we shall praise Him without wearying. This will be the duty, the delight, the activity of all, shared by all who share the life of eternity ... For what is our end but to reach that kingdom which has no end?"

Peter Barnes is minister of Revesby

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Books

Evangelistic Calvinism

John Benton

Banner of Truth, 2006.

Reviewed by Peter Barnes

It is the received wisdom in many circles that a belief in the five points of Calvinism has a deadening effect on spiritual life and fervour. This little booklet was written to demonstrate the opposite. Benton uses the five points in a warm-hearted, cogent and evangelistic way.

To cite Charles Spurgeon: "Now, I had rather put my foot upon a [narrow] bridge ... which went all the way across, than on a bridge that was as wide as the world, if it did not go all the way across the stream." That, in essence, is the difference between Calvinism, and other evangelical presentations of the gospel.

Benton's booklet is an encouragement that, armed with the five points of Calvinism, the evangelist can – and of necessity *must* – present a full-orbed gospel of salvation to woo and overcome the most hardened sinner.

Peter Barnes is books editor of AP.

Elizabeth Prentiss 'More Love to Thee'

Sharon James

Banner of Truth, 2006.

Reviewed by Mignon Goswell

This beautifully presented book opened up to me a woman whom I must admit I previously did not know. Elizabeth Prentiss is the writer of hymns and books and is best known for the hymn which subtitled the book, *More Love to Thee*. When I went back to my books on hymns that hymn was featured in many of them! *Stepping Homeward* is her best known novel.

We are led through the life of a woman who desired above all from a very young age to serve her Lord and Master. We enter the world of a woman who struggled with the death of family members. *More Love to Thee* was written after the death of two of her children and the life-threatening illness of another. Sickness afflicted her children and herself for months at a time, with the disappoint-

ment that this hindered her involvement in her husband's ministry for long periods. For years on end she suffered from insomnia which sapped her strength.

The lines of that hymn are full of her desire to know God better such as "Once earthly joy I craved, sought peace and rest; Now Thee alone I seek". To make physical health our number one aim in life is not what God would have us do. This is a book that shows us we learn more of God and draw closer to Him in tragedy than in the good times. In 1872 she wrote to a friend, "...if it all ends in sanctification I don't care what I suffer."

Prentiss was an intelligent, well educated woman who used her gifts in ministry with her husband and in her writing, which became a much needed and much appreciated outlet in her life. Sometimes our generation is tempted to think we are busier than any other generation has been, however there are many difficulties earlier generations faced that we do not have. We are not to use our busyness as an excuse not to spend time in Bible study and prayer, to teach our children God's truths, to write letters and to seek our role at every differing stage of our lives. This is what we can learn from Elizabeth Prentiss. I am glad I met her in the pages of this book.

Mignon Goswell is the manager of PTC Media at the Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne.

Getting the Gospel Right Assessing the Reformation and New Perspectives on Paul

Cornelis P. Venema

Banner of Truth, 2006.

Reviewed by Peter Barnes

This book of just 92 pages is a condensed version of a proposed larger work on the same subject. Its conclusion reads: "In a biblically and theologically satisfying manner, the Reformation perspective continues to capture one of the great themes of the Christian gospel: the amazing grace of God, who justifies, not the righteous, but the ungodly, for the sake of Christ."

Venema makes some telling points against what James Dunn has called 'the New Perspective' on Paul. In the end, the new perspective does not answer the question "How can I who am unrighteous find favour with God who is righteous?"

Tom Wright claims that "justification, at the last, will be on the basis of performance, not possession". In saying this, he is not restating Romans 2:13, as he thinks, but undermining verses like Romans 8:1 and the assurance given in Romans 8:31-39. The glory of the gospel is that God justifies the ungodly, those who are most unlike Himself (Rom. 4:5). This is not to say that works play no part in our salvation, but that Wright and Dunn misinterpret their role.

According to Tom Wright, the righteousness of God is God's covenantal faithfulness in action. That is a truncated view, as it also includes God's just retribution against sinners (Rom. 1:18-32; 3:21-26) and the new status that He grants to believers (Rom. 1:17; 3:5, 21-22, 25; 10:3). Venema has penned a helpful work, although I must confess to preferring Guy Prentiss Waters, *Justification and the New Perspectives on Paul*, published in 2004. But whoever wields the sword against the new perspective, may he be victorious!

Vital Christianity The Life and Spirituality of William Wilberforce

Murray Andrew Pura

Christian Focus Press, 2003

Reviewed by Stuart Bonnington

This is a great introduction to William Wilberforce. If you have not read a book on him this is a very good place to start. Pura is a model of clarity and brevity. *Vital Christianity* is highly recommended to Christians working in "secular" contexts and occupations, as shining a clear light on the pathway forward in such situations.

Stuart Bonnington is minister of Scots Kirk, Fremantle.

Single-minded

Two minds are not better than one when it comes to faith.

Expect that when you hear the phrase “living by faith,” you think only of Christians trying to exist without guaranteed financial support and that when you hear the word “fundamentalism” you think only of a version of evangelicalism that seems to you coarse, crass, combative, crude, and best avoided. Thus noble words get narrowed and debased.

“Fundamentalism” was actually coined to identify the virtue of faithfulness to Christian fundamentals and “living by faith” was a Reformational way of characterizing Christian existence. That is why Richard Baxter’s treatise, *The Life of Faith*, written three centuries ago, is an analysis of the Christian response to all life-situations. This piece is about that, too.

What is the life of faith? Well, what is faith? Do not take seriously the legendary child’s definition of faith as “believing what you know ain’t so”, even when (as happens) unbelieving adults embrace it. The human mind cannot believe what seems false; skepticism rots belief as a chinnook turns snow to slush. Scripture is clear that faith is the positive response of the whole person to God’s total revelation, perceived as such.

By faith “a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein: and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come” (Westminster Confession, 14:2).

Faith, then, is an exercise of mind and heart whereby we learn what God tells us in Scripture about Himself and ourselves; we shudder at what is said about our loss without Christ; promises of grace to



J. I. Packer

sinner, and the Christ whom those promises set forth; and we apply to ourselves Bible teaching about God’s work, will and ways, in order to see what attitudes honor God, and what actions will please Him, in each situation.

Faith knows that God shapes all situations as means to our final good and in light of that knowledge seeks biblical guidance on what to aim at, pray for, hope for, prepare for, and actually do; how to handle one’s relationship to God and to

**Strains put on
our faith and
obedience
are God’s
Outward
Bound course,
toughening us
up spiritually.**



the rest of creation and how to use one’s opportunities for glorifying God.

Thus the life of faith must be thoughtful, conscientious and, at the same time, enterprising. Every Christian’s life should reflect, first in private prayer and then in public performance too, Carey’s famous maxim: “Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God.”

It is a sad fact that people who profess faith often come short of its fullness. Sometimes knowledge and belief of God’s truth are divorced from personal trust and obedience. That is the “dead” faith of which James speaks in his first and second chapters. Sometimes trust is not guided by truth, so that faith becomes superstition. Sometimes real trust for salvation in the Christ of the gospel fails to lead us to interpret what God sends by what He says in His Word. That is the vice of “double-mindedness,” which ruins both one’s prayers and one’s walk.

When James says “double-minded” (literally, “two-souled”) he means more than “irresolute, “undecided,” and “unable to make up his mind”, as various modern versions render the word. He is detecting not temperamental ditheriness, as these translations imply, but unbelief: doubting — that is, mistrusting — the good will of the God whom one trusts for salvation, prays to and calls Father. The text shows this.

Welcome trials — meaning “temptations” — says James. Why? Because handling trials produces resilience, strains put on our faith and obedience are God’s Outward Bound course, toughening us up spiritually. The maturing that results leads us on to the victor’s crown. So anyone under pressure should ask God for the wisdom needed to keep living right. Will God supply it? Yes. He is a generous giver, always glad to answer this request.

But the two-minded person, while professing faith in Christ as divine Saviour and Lord, panics under pressure, thinks with his feelings rather than his brains and concludes that since God evidently no longer cares for him, his prayers for wisdom cannot expect an answer. Yet God is unchanging in His love and free from any shadow of inconsistency. Don’t insult Him by indulging such unbelief, says James.

What, then, is James’ answer to the double-mindedness that juxtaposes trust in God’s Word about the hope of salvation with mistrust of His Word about His help under trials? Why, single-mindedness, of course, believing all that God says, not just some of it, putting faith in His faithfulness about everything, joyfully trusting His goodness at all times and seeking to honour Him by consistent holiness. That is true purity of heart and that is the only life of faith worthy of the name. How, I wonder, do we measure up?

J.I. Packer is professor of historical and systematic theology at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. This article was previously published in Eternity Magazine, November 1988.

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