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TRUTH Magazine

Summer 2016 Edition

FOLLOWING

GOD

BE YE THEREFORE FOLLOWERS OF
GOD, AS DEAR CHILDREN

EPHESIANS 5:1

*Working Together to Advance the Grace of God
and Impact the World for Christ*



**GRACE GOSPEL
FELLOWSHIP**

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TRUTH Magazine

Endeavoring to set forth God's purpose and
grace according to 2 Timothy 1:8-11

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by Timothy and Sharon McGarvey



In Pastor Rick Owsley's article in this issue entitled "Following God," he lays out several points where the believer is instructed to have certain traits alive and visible in one's life. Among those traits are love, long-suffering, mercy, graciousness, and holiness—not always easy in the world today but an imperative nonetheless. He also makes the following statement: "First, it is made clear that each redeemed individual is an Ambassador for Christ, without exception. *"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ..." (2 Corinthians 5:20)*. It is imperative that we communicate that our Lord has *"committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19)*. You are an ambassador! You might be a poor one and might not take this job as seriously as you should, but you are one. As an heir of God, you can't decline the position! Unfortunately, far too many believers choose not to carry out this assigned duty. As an ambassador, it is also important to make certain the gospel we share is the gospel for today.

It's an easy question, but how do you spell gospel? When asked, any person would say "G-O-S-P-E-L" and they would be correct. As we read the New Testament we can find more than one answer to, "What must I do to be saved?" One says, "Sell all that you have and give to the poor." Another says, "Keep the law contained in the commandments." Still another says, "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins." But Paul tells us to "believe" in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Since Paul is the apostle for this age, then it is his gospel that we should follow. If we add to or subtract from the threefold aspect as laid out for us in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, then do we still have the gospel?

The Scripps National Spelling Bee was held in Washington, DC, at the end of May. If you asked any of those young people how to spell the word gospel, they would all do it just as I have above. If they added any letters or took away any letters their answer would be wrong. The same is true with the gospel. If we try to add to it or subtract from it, then we no longer have the gospel.

Salvation is not found in the partaking of the Eucharist. It isn't in or associated with the element of water. It isn't worked for or earned. Salvation is a free gift of grace. The Apostle Paul fought this perverting of grace when he addressed the church in Galatia. He said if any *"...preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8)*. In the ecumenical world in which we live today, the "Galatian" church is alive and well. In the last issue of TRUTH there was an article and editor's thoughts regarding the Bride of Christ not being the church of this age. One person came and personally thanked us for taking a stand for a Pauline distinctive. They said it is something we hear about less and less.

We have been given instructions to be followers of God, but we have also been told to follow the Apostle Paul as he followed Christ. That sacred truth which was deposited with him is the truth for today and the truth we ought not be ashamed to proclaim. Whether it is a Sunday School class or a college class, the distinctive message of the mystery is the message that should...no, *must* be taught. If not, the message will be lost and the world will await another Bullinger or Darby or O'Hair to uncover it and fight the battles all over again.

Enjoy Pastor Owsley's article. A "Followers of Paul" sequel will run in a future edition of TRUTH Magazine. ■

An advertisement for "Letters to the Editors". It features a computer monitor on the left displaying the contact information for Truth Editors: "Write to us at trutheditors@gmail.com or Truth Editors PO Box 9432 Grand Rapids, MI 49509". Below the monitor is a wooden tray filled with a stack of letters. To the right of the monitor, the text "Letters TO THE Editors" is written in a large, stylized font. Further right, a paragraph of text invites readers to help mold the magazine. At the bottom right, the contact information is repeated: "Truth Editors • PO Box 9432 • Grand Rapids MI 49509 trutheditors@gmail.com • 616-581-1243".

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FOR HEALTHY LIVES AND CHURCHES

by
GGF Church Health Task Force
Cal Lowder
Gary Hansen
Jim Shemaria

An Ever-Present Need

What ever happened to Pastor So-and-So? Did you hear what is going on at [name of church]? These types of questions are heard all too often, both within and outside of our Fellowship. The need has been present for a long time to more adequately address the struggles of our pastors and churches. The GGF has a Pastoral Care and Credentialing Committee which is tasked with the responsibility to simply license and ordain men for the ministry of the GGF, but no avenue beyond the work of our president has existed to assist these men in their future ministries.



...as we began to explore the issues around church health, we quickly realized that there is fluidity around the idea of a “healthy church.”



Recently, the GGF National Council (our leadership team) has developed a vision statement centered on strengthening the ministry of the GGF by planting new churches and building up, equipping, and caring for our existing congregations. We have churches and pastors who are presently a part of the Grace Gospel Fellowship struggling with many similar concerns and problems. At the Council meetings we would occasionally hear with sadness about a situation of a struggling church. We would pause and pray about it, but then move on to other business, assuming somebody would take care of it.

With the autonomy of churches within the GGF and our desire to keep problems from becoming gossip, church and pastoral care are primarily left to our president to carry out alone. He might have one or two confidants with whom to share these burdens, but the work still fell to him to travel throughout the country helping churches and pastors through their difficult times. Often these problems were multifaceted and required extended time working through their situations. At times pastors would become so discouraged they would leave the ministry or the problems would escalate to the point of church splits with many hurt feelings. It became evident to the Council that no one person could effectively handle all the needs in our existing churches. We became keenly aware that as the GGF we needed to be more proactive in helping churches and pastors be as vibrant and healthy as they could be rather than struggle alone to navigate their ministry needs.

As the National Council began to craft *Vision 2020*, the new vision statement for the GGF, it was determined that we needed to use a two-pronged approach in order to have a healthy Fellowship. First, we need many more pastors and an evergrowing number of new churches. The Church Planting Task Force was asked to formulate a plan and develop methods to accomplish this.

Secondly, we established a new committee called the Church Health Task Force (CHT) to address the needs of existing

churches and pastors. Our assignment is to help and encourage these churches to be vibrant testimonies of the grace of God. For some churches this simply means celebrating their accomplishments and striving for greater effectiveness. For others it may mean a serious reevaluation of their present status, current goals, and plans for revitalization that would be unique to their local situation. Therefore, the goal of the CHT is to focus on the portion of the vision statement that calls for 10 revitalized churches.

Health Check

As we began to discuss how best to invest toward healthy churches within the GGF, we kept coming back to two key ideas.

First, we would need to be able to give a clear definition of what constitutes a healthy church, so that we would know our aims. As we looked at existing resources from various church growth and church health organizations, we were not able to find one that fit exactly what we were looking for. We wanted a definition of church health that made sense to our Grace churches and was grounded in a biblical understanding of the Church and its mission in the world that would make sense for our communities.

We went to the Pauline epistles and surveyed all of the ways in which he addresses issues of church health to his congregations. These letters are full of admonition and encouragement for the ways in which these local bodies are living out the life of the gospel together. As we studied, we found eight important, recurring themes that regularly arose in Paul's letters: 1) worship, 2) balanced practical theology, 3) unity, 4) the gospel in the city, 5) the gospel in the world, 6) discipling leaders, 7) avoiding legalism, 8) confronting sin.

Second, as we began to explore the issues around church health, we quickly realized that there is fluidity around the idea of a “healthy church.” In our own bodies we can define health in regards to sickness (how sick is actually sick? life



...we challenge you to begin thinking about your church in terms of overall health and growth before any of our resources are available.”



threatening illness? a cold?), or we may define health in regards to fitness (maybe I don't have an illness, but am I in good shape? is my body well cared for?). At the same time, we may be making healthy choices in some areas of our lives, but not others. Even the most skilled, fit professional athlete recognizes that to maintain their abilities, they must continue to work and grow. The same principles are true for the local church. Our goal then is not only to create a tool that is useful for the churches who might see themselves as "sick," but churches all across the spectrum. We want to provide a resource that will serve to develop an ongoing, healthy, active lifestyle for our churches for years to come.

Therefore, rather than developing a numerical scoring system for each of these categories as some surveys do, we have crafted a Church Health Survey consisting of a series of open-ended questions. These questions are intended to direct community reflection and evaluation, leading toward "next steps" for each area of church health. Thus, regardless of whether your church identifies a certain category as a weakness or as a strength, the Church Health Survey will contain questions which allow you to continue to exercise those areas to work toward ongoing health and fitness.

What's Next?

We believe in the power of the local church and are confident in the ability of the gospel to equip and build up each of these congregations. In order to join in on this process, the goal of the Church Health Taskforce is to help churches begin to ask these questions. By the end of the summer, the Church Health Survey will be digitally published and distributed (with a print copy available upon request). Our goal is to have the elders, pastors, and other leadership groups at each Grace church dedicate themselves to this task. We hope this will be a time of encouragement as well as growth as our fellowship unites in a desire to build up our congregations with the goal of being faithful to the gospel. As your church works through this material, it might be beneficial to connect with another Grace church in your city, state, or region to provide feedback and encouragement to one another.

Just as each congregation is a body made up of many parts, our churches function best in community with each other. We challenge you to commit to taking part in this survey during this calendar year.

While the survey is a congregation-specific tool, we also want to provide direction for us all as we work through this material together. In order to do this, the Church Health Taskforce will be offering a series of articles in the next several editions of *TRUTH Magazine* which will directly address many of the issues, questions, and topics of church health. Specifically, we will be addressing each of the eight growth areas in more detail. Our goal is to provide direction while also giving examples of how other churches have been engaging with this material by sharing stories of success as well as challenge. We hope to post these articles on the GGF Blog and Facebook page in an effort to provide a space for churches to interact with one another.

We hope to be a resource for church health within our Fellowship, but the beauty of this effort is that our task force is not the essential component for your church's health! In fact, we challenge you to begin thinking about your church in terms of overall health and growth before any of our resources are available. Why not start this week? Maybe for your church, this would take the form of a directed discussion at your next board meeting to think about issues of church unity, mentoring the next generation, community engagement, or worship. If you are a pastor, start thinking of ways you can talk about church health in your teachings. If you are a church member, ask your pastor how you can help in this effort (he will love to hear that!). If you are a young person, think of one way in which you can invest in the life of your church. If you are an older member of the congregation, reach out to someone younger and see how you can serve your church together. When our congregations begin to take ownership of their local church - with all of its strengths, weaknesses, success stories, and shortcomings - our Fellowship will begin to flourish as we work together to advance the grace of God and impact the world for Christ. ■

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Picture from Song of Solomon book

Ken B. Kemper, *President*
Grace Bible College

Leadership's Real Value of Teams

Everyone seems to buy into the concept of teams. It is very difficult to stubbornly disagree with this idea because it appears arrogant to do so. Surprisingly enough, along with conceptual agreement, there often can be very little practical team outcome. Take a look at some of the more common myths about team practice:

- Great teams are primarily advisors to the top person who makes the decision.
- Meetings are not places to make decisions, but to work through decisions already made.
- Teams first build trust, and then they learn to work together.
- Bigger teams are better, drawing from eight to twelve people.
- Shorter meetings are better than longer meetings.
- Team leaders cannot really be accountable to their group if they are the lead pastor.
- The senior pastor (or member) who has been there the longest is the best team leader.
- Most team improvement is haphazard, largely based on each member's growth outside of team meetings (Hartwig & Bird, 2015, p. 25, 26).

I have held or considered all of these positions at one time or another! However, these are myths which can keep the individuals on a staff or board from working well as a team for the benefit of the organization. In the last copy of *TRUTH* (Spring 2016), I wrote about the need for a plurality of leadership and spoke in detail about the biblical emphasis which

clearly anticipates and describes how each of us needs others to lead well. Assuming you believe the Bible and agree that teams are important, let's explore how effective groups of people who are responsible for leadership can function well as a team to accomplish the responsibility God has entrusted to their care. This might be a family, a ministry, or more importantly, a local church with multiple staff who may be full-time, part-time, or all volunteer. It is often a combination of these with a board or group of leaders endeavoring to lead well together.

It All Starts with Purpose

In order for any team of individuals to lead, they must first understand the purpose for the organization or ministry. Often the constitution or history of the organization will contain a concise purpose or mission statement. This is a conceptual idea that describes why the organization came into existence and what it is supposed to do. In the local church, this statement normally consists of such elements as:

- glorifying God or worshiping God through...
- teaching the believers to know the faith
- building up believers to maturity in the faith
- encouraging believers to share the faith with those outside the church
- cultivating authentic commitment and worship
- influencing a community or doing good in the world, both locally and internationally.

To understand the purpose as a whole is the groundwork for the team's leadership. This will be accompanied by the "core values," which make the church or organization distinct and valuable to its members and to those it brings into the fold. More than simply understanding the purpose of the church or organization, the leadership team must stop to consider the question of purpose. What is the purpose of this leadership team? In other words, the deacon or deaconess team should have an awareness of the particular (and distinct) purpose for which they are responsible in light of the larger vision. The board of directors or elder board must also be able to clearly define their purpose as well. The student ministry leadership team must understand their distinct purpose. For members to serve as a team, there must be unity of purpose. Many teams when questioned will simply recite the purpose or mission statement of the entire church, but that is just not accurate! Each particular team within the church has a specific purpose which best suits them, and is a portion of the overall purpose of the organization. They are not all the same (uniformity) but they all act in unity (common purpose).

independently write down the purpose of your team. Collect the cards, shuffle them, and read them back to the group. After this, have a healthy discussion as to what the team's purpose really should be. If you use an open discussion to facilitate this you will find that simply by doing this exercise there is a culture of team leadership already developing on your board or ministry team. Now compare this team purpose to the overall purpose of the organization, identify the role of your team, and recognize the necessary roles of other teams within the church. Actually, it could be said that your team's purpose is the unspoken leader of your team. If there is no clarity of purpose your team will not be led properly, no matter who takes the reins of leadership or how participatory its practices are. The team's purpose sets the agenda and helps narrow the focus of work to that which fits the purpose.

The Environment of Team Leadership

We have all been on teams where we were assigned roles to perform, coming back to our leader and reporting on the

“ *...in a team, members collaborate or work together to decide the best form of action while celebrating the diverse gifts and abilities of the team members God has assembled.* ”

I was recently on a lovely dinner cruise with some good friends. As we slowly wafted down the Mississippi, we came upon a couple of rowing teams from the University of Minnesota out practicing in their sculls. In the men's boat, four men were facing the stern (back) of the boat, each with their oars, and one young lady (the coxswain) was in the stern facing them with no oars. They moved ahead at great speed and with coordinated precision. They were mostly silent except for the occasional grunts which accompanied their strenuous muscle exertion. Yet, one member never touched the water, but simply voiced a consistent tempo. They agreed to the common purpose of the team (to glide across the water at maximum speed), after which they aligned into roles (rowers, coxswain) to achieve the clear purpose as best as possible. It only seems reasonable that each one has a role on the team that best evidences their own ability, but that in coordination with others their strength is exercised for the benefit of the team to accomplish its purpose. Imagine one member deciding to take over the team and not trust the others, or one member deciding to not contribute. What effect would this have on the team's purpose? Or to use one of the aforementioned myths, what would happen if they decided place by age, or rank, or just gave advice and then they all did as they desired in practice? Here is a good exercise to do with your team. At your next meeting, hand each person a 3" x 5" card and ask them to

progress. This is often how groups work in the secular workplace, and it can easily seep into the church as well. The accountability is wonderful, but in reality, this group is not a "team" but rather a workgroup which meets to assure that the work gets done for the organization. Work, by nature, must be accomplished. People must be held accountable to meet deadlines. However, in a team, members collaborate or work together to decide the best form of action while celebrating the diverse gifts and abilities of the team members God has assembled. In the church, Lord willing, teams can be representative of the church (men, women, young people, singles, professionals, laborers, ethnicity, new or long term) as a whole. But members don't come on a team to "speak on behalf" of others; they come to participate with their unique perspective and to seek God together in prayer. The best teams work in a collaborative manner to plan goals, assign tasks based on the individual talents of members of the group, even structuring the decision-making to allow for serious seeking of the Lord's leading, while listening to others as well. The activities that are done between monthly meetings are strategic to accomplish the team's purpose. The directions must be clear, because the whole team established the directions and agreed to be held accountable for the actions and results. The inspiration of the team members stems from their desire to fulfill the purpose and not from some "control" by a team leader or pastoral staff. This

can feel like a pre-teenager doing a chore such as cleaning the bathroom because “cleanliness is next to godliness!” She doesn’t want to be clean or godly; she just wants to go out with her friends! Team members will volunteer, do highly motivated work with other team members, and recruit others when they participate in planning the work and know the team’s purpose.

Teams Train and Multiply Disciples

The biblical examples I wrote about in the last article show clearly how the work of teams has a multiplying effect on others. A good team is always adding new members and spinning off team members who have served well and move to other teams to do more work in greater capacities. Jesus’ twelve disciples served with Him, and after His ascension, they served on other teams and multiplied many times over. Paul and Barnabas became Paul and Silas, and Barnabas and John Mark. Timothy was added and spun off to build other teams. Priscilla and Aquila left Paul and added Apollos. Later, Luke was also added and then spun off. God has worked to bring leaders into teams. They grow through working together, viewing others, exercising their own gifts, receiving confirmation, and being sent out to try to lead then reporting back to the team (2 Timothy 2:2). This is the story of the book of Acts for Peter and the twelve, then for Paul and his apostolic teams. Teams, if operating properly, will be a leadership and ministry multiplication factory.

Don’t be afraid to include young people or new members on your teams, eliciting their input and perspectives. You will be shocked how they see so much that we have become accustomed to not noticing about our ministry. Refreshing and updating our ministry approach is the only way to be influential and to grow in a new generation of rapid change. To ignore this perspective is to relegate our ministries and churches to serve the aging, and those who have already been reached. Unfortunately, many churches have discov-

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”



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ered this phenomenon too late as they look around at their “quite comfortable” retired folks but have no one to pick up the mantle of leadership.

How can this be avoided? By including people on teams to be part of the purpose! Listen to and understand their perspectives. You are not making them the new pastor, but by including younger and different individuals, you have an opportunity to plan more effective ministry to a wider population. Your attempt is not to “be fair” to more people, but rather to fulfill the mission or cause which you serve as a church, according to God’s design. How many times have we heard of churches closing their doors after a long-standing pastor retires? They state that they have “served their purpose.” Sadly, the purposes should have been consistently refreshed and teams recruited who could express the best ways to fulfill these purposes in a changing world. We must value the collaborative effort of the many people God brings to our churches and neighborhoods. The adaptations needed are much more friendly and easier to handle when teams talk and pray together, seeking the glory of God and His best for the ministry.

Be a team player! Find where God has gifted you and serve in your local church or other Christian organization. Seek to participate through the shaping of the team and focus on the purpose of the team. Engage and include others who are not like you for team planning and ministry execution. Unity and trust develops on a team as you move toward a goal in light of a purpose, not by doing “staged exercises” together in the woods. Those may be helpful, but ultimately, we desire to serve in meaningful ways, not just be trusted in games and role plays.

When is the last time you were on a team that really valued your contribution and made you feel alive and enthusiastic? Ask God to help you build that type of team with others in your church or organization for His glory. “Ready...‘Team’ on three...1, 2, 3, Team!” ■

by Jeremy Clark
Executive Director

2016 -
Jeremy works
with Marvin

2010 - Marvin reads
his Bible
study books

2016 -
Land is being
cleared for the
new ministry
center

2012 -
Bible study
with Marvin
in Nagarote

GMI
Grace Ministries International

HOPE BLOOMS IN NICARAGUA

Just enough chairs were set up in front of Harold's home, located on a dirt street in a neighborhood on the west side of the Nicaraguan town of Nagarote, to accommodate those whom Marvin Montes invited to a Bible study that humid evening in 2012. After sundown the air would usually stop moving which meant that meeting inside would have proven all but suffocating. With an underpowered, but serviceable lightbulb hanging overhead and attached to a plank protruding from the front of the house, it was as good a venue as any. The list of Bible verses the small team from Costa Rica presented—a member of whom is current GMI missionary Emiliano Seravalli—developed the theme for the study: salvation by grace through faith without works. These passages (Romans 4:4-5, Ephesians 2:8-9, Philippians 3:9, Titus 3:4-7, 2 Timothy 1:8-9) affirmed that salvation is NOT of works, but one receives it because of grace through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.



For the Christian, the temporal doubts and uncertainties native to a fallen world are (or should be) overshadowed by those things which are certain and the Lord guarantees.



Legalism defines much of Nicaraguan religious culture. It is essentially the idea that one can generate righteousness and thus improve his or her standing before God because of the works one does. Though God offers the sinner His righteousness (Romans 4:25, 1 Corinthians 1:30), the notion is we can best His offer by adding a little extra righteousness of our own. Unfortunately, this general sense of legalism applies as much to the Christian as it does to the one who wants to become a Christian. You must do good works to be saved and continue doing them to make your salvation stick. If the Apostle Paul were in the midst of many congregations in Nicaragua, there is little doubt he would reply to them much as he responded to the Galatians: "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:1-3).

Having been well grounded in legalism, one of the men at the Bible study was quick to realize the affront these Bible verses were to his view of salvation and the "Christian" life. If it is true that works do not play a role in obtaining salvation then it would be equally true that one is eternally secure. This was anathema to him as if it were another gospel. Calmly, but firmly affirming his position that salvation is something to be lost, the stage was set for a pivotal conversation. For the previous six years, teams from the work affiliated with Grace Ministries International in Costa Rica had been traveling to Nicaragua looking for a place to establish a more permanent ministry. Eventually, it was decided Nagarote was going to be that place and Emiliano and his wife, Raquel, were going to be our missionaries there. While that was the long-term plan, the course of this conversation could have altered that plan significantly. After all, seated in the chairs gathered in front of Harold's home were all of the men with whom we were working in Nagarote. How would

they respond after hearing about God's grace and then the passionate rebuttal from one of their peers?

For the Christian, the temporal doubts and uncertainties native to a fallen world are (or should be) overshadowed by those things which are certain and the Lord guarantees. Regardless of what the next moments bring, we can be certain of the Lord's return as we look "for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). When He does appear, we can be certain that "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Why? Because we do not grieve "as others who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13b). Addressing the Colossian believers, the Apostle Paul reminds them "of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel" (Colossians 1:5).

That He will appear and gather us together with Him in heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) where our hope has been laid up is certain because this hope, based upon the fact of our justification through faith (Romans 5:1), is a hope which "does not disappoint" (Romans 5:5). Likewise, we are no longer subject to God's future wrath because He justified us in the past, "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Romans 5:9). Our hope is eternal and it is secure because of the promise afforded us by His blood through His grace.

During a trip to Nicaragua in the summer of 2010, Emiliano met Marvin who was guarding the mayor of Nagarote's home two doors down from where our team was staying. The team gave Marvin some Bible study books which he began reading immediately. During subsequent trips to Nicaragua our teams studied with Marvin and he even took a distance course or two offered through Grace Bible Institute of Costa Rica. Almost two years after we met Marvin



For those in ministry and especially those on the mission field, where the work often begins from zero, hope is essential.



he was now in a position to articulate what he had learned about God’s grace. He had known the folks sitting in front of Harold’s home for years and, likewise, grew up in the same legalistic religious culture as they had. Without much pause any of those from the Costa Rica team could have responded and explained our eternally secure hope. This would have been effective, but something much more effective and powerful occurred. Marvin spoke up, directed our attention to Romans 3:20-21, and shared how these verses confirm that salvation is not by works of the law and how, by implication, our salvation is secure—in other words, our hope will not disappoint!

Even as we possess a confident hope for our eternal future, we have the freedom to hope for those things which are not so certain, but yet may very well have eternal consequences. Paul hoped to see the Romans on a planned trip to Spain (Romans 15:24), but he was also aware that he might have been killed in Jerusalem (Acts 21:13) effectively terminating any plans to travel to Rome. Similarly, to the Corinthians he wrote, “For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits” (1 Corinthians 16:7). Likewise, Paul hoped to send Timothy to the Philippian believers as soon as he saw how it would go with him (Philippians 2:23). To Timothy, Paul penned, “These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God” (1 Timothy 3:14).

Throughout the Apostle Paul’s ministry he hoped to accomplish certain goals which would further the Lord’s work

around the world. He modeled this approach to the Christian life for us though neither he nor we are able to dictate the outcome of those things we hope to accomplish for the Lord. Then again, why would we want to? When we hope in accordance with God’s will expressed in His Word, we place ourselves in a position where we have to depend on Him. Oftentimes we have to enlist other members of the Body of Christ to work alongside us. Also, not knowing how things will turn out causes us to work with greater diligence to achieve our goals.

It was not more than a few trips after we met Marvin that he began to ask when the ministry in Costa Rica would send missionaries to live in Nicaragua and share God’s grace. This too was our hope. The goal had always been to send missionaries though no one was completely sure who would go or how they would get there. Looking further into the future, how and when would a church be planted and where would the resources come from to obtain a place to meet? All of these hopes were anything but sure.

For those in ministry and especially those on the mission field where the work often begins from zero, hope is essential. It is the starting point or the seed from which a ministry begins and then grows into something for which only God could receive the glory. Not all things hoped for follow this process. In fact, I would dare say that many if not most hopes and dreams are never realized—even on the mission field. However, when they are, it excites and animates God’s people and it satisfies the soul if, and only if, God Himself is given the honor and credit. In great part, it is what makes the missionary life fun and worth it—seeing the Lord work to bring about results beyond what we could imagine even when tossing about that first hope in our minds.

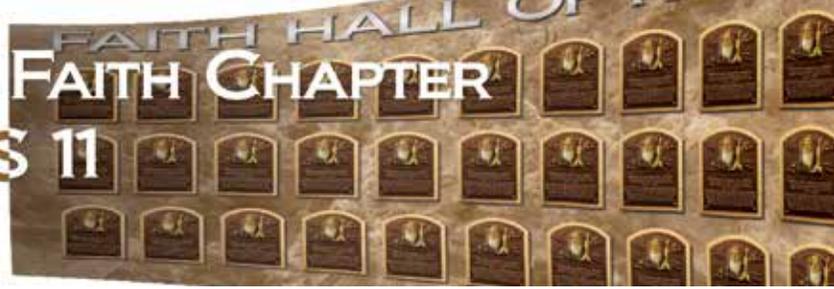
In April 2016, my family and I traveled to Nicaragua and spent a week in the home of GMI missionaries Emiliano and Raquel. We attended their worship service where Marvin and his whole family were in attendance. We worked on the land side by side with Marvin which will be the site of the first church/ministry center in the town of Nagarote. How did this all happen? It started with hope. It took a team effort of Costa Rican believers and folks from the U.S. to invest in and support Emiliano and Raquel and then buy land in Nagarote. More than anything, this hope required all of us to depend upon the Lord in whose hands our eternal salvation and hope rests forever secure.

What are you hoping for in the Lord? ■

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE FAITH HALL OF FAMERS

HEBREWS 11

BY JERRY STERCHI



“The just shall live by faith” is a phrase found in four places in the Bible—Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38. Someone stated the latter three verses quote from Habakkuk and that each focuses on only a part of the phrase while quoting the whole. For example: 1) Romans 1:17 concentrates on the just who shall live by faith, since Romans has a major emphasis on the doctrine of justification and how it is attained by faith; 2) Galatians 3:11 addresses the middle part, that is, the just shall live by faith, because it is used to counter the Judaizers who insisted that faith was not enough—there were additions to Paul’s gospel for the Galatians to live and accept, such as circumcision and keeping the Law of Moses; and 3) the writer of Hebrews puts his emphasis upon the tail end of the phrase—the just shall live by faith (10:38). So, while it is true, i.e., the just shall live by faith, whether living in Old Testament or so-called New Testament times, far too often (citing the Habakkuk passage) Hebrews 11 is presented as evidence, as a proof text, or as an illustration to support a teaching that by faith these “heroes of the faith” obtained salvation by faith.

BUT, this writer believes that after taking another, closer reading of Hebrews 11, this chapter is not dealing with the subject of how to become justified by faith or how to obtain salvation by faith. Those named and listed in this chapter were already followers of God, were already saints, they were already JUSTIFIED. They were the perfect personal examples of how “to live by faith,” after already having been “justified by faith,” after already having come into a right relationship with God by faith.

There are three terms or phrases that are used here in conjunction with “the just shall live by faith.” They are:

- salvation by faith
- justified by faith
- a right/just relationship with God

These terms could be likened to the many variegated colors that make up a rainbow. They are not the only ones that can be found in the Scriptures to describe the many-sided views that help finite minds understand an infinite God’s work of salvation. All of these terms are not all found in every verse, chapter, or epistle in our Bibles.

With these terms in mind, let us look again at these “Faith Hall of Famers.” Were they obtaining salvation or were they, by faith, through their actions, now witnessing, now demonstrating a salvation/justification they already possessed? We need to discern the difference between a faith that justifies and the faith that one lives out of that very same justification, after experiencing justification by faith. We need to ask the question, “How did the just become justified, and then live by faith?” We need to ask the question, “Is Hebrews Chapter 11 the wrong text to use to define justification by faith?”

Our study will demonstrate how Hebrews 10:38 is unfolded in chapter 11, using that emphasis of the just shall live by faith.

When Abel “by faith” offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, did he obtain salvation, then and there, on the spot or did he obtain witness through the sacrifice, that he was righteous/just already? Was not his sacrifice, a “faith” expression of the faith, which he already possessed out of a right relationship with God?

When Enoch “by faith” was translated, was this for initial salvation or a subsequent act of faith that would deliver him from that present calamity of physical death? The verse continues, stating that before his translation, he had this testimony, that he pleased God. Hebrews 11:6 continues the conversation, stating that one must have faith to please God. He that cometh to God must believe that He is. Enoch had the “faith” that pleased God, before he “by faith” was translated. Enoch was already in a right relationship with God by faith, before he was “by faith” translated.

When Noah “by faith” built the ark, was it to obtain salvation, a right standing before God, or was it a result of already having a justifying faith that moved him to act by faith to build the ark? (Hebrews 11:7). If Noah was a preacher of righteousness, did he become that preacher before he entered the ark or after? And, how long did he preach and to whom was he preaching? Was not Noah in a right standing, a right relationship before God, as a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5)?

When Abraham “by faith,” was called to go out unto a place which he should later receive for an inheritance, obeyed, was that salvation or did Abraham have that right relationship - faith before he was called to do something and then, by faith obeyed? Abraham had several other “by faith” experiences, but none were brought forth to illustrate a salvation experience—cf. 11:9; 11:17.

“By faith” Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come, but this “by faith” experience was not to obtain salvation, was it? (Hebrews 11:20). This is interesting. The more we read the chapter, the less evidence that all of these “believers” were “by faith” entering into a saving relationship with God.

(continued on page 21)

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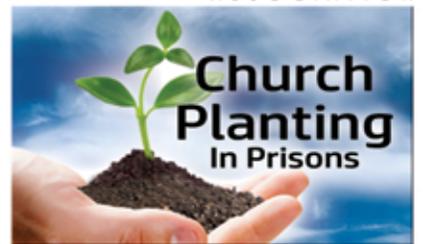
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by Pastor Rick Owsley
St. Louis Bible Fellowship

MARANATHA! "Our Lord Comes!" That is the how we start nearly every worship service at St. Louis Bible Fellowship. As the new week begins, it is an encouraging reminder of that "blessed hope" we have in Christ Jesus. E.W. Bullinger points out in *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament* that Maranatha is "a solemn watchword, reminding them and us of the nearness of His coming, and the duty of being ready for it." Starting out each new week with this encouragement is intended to prepare us for the tasks ahead as we face a world that seems to be becoming more hostile each day.

There are several doctrinal truths that we strive to integrate each and every week. The fact that our Savior's return is imminent is one of them, although a very important one. Of course, we present the gospel of the grace of God and

make sure that every person who has gathered there on that Sunday realizes what God's Word says concerning His plan of salvation. We want no one leaving the building wondering what they must do to be saved. God's plan of redemption is clearly presented!

But we also want to remind the saints of two important responsibilities that have been placed on them. First, it is made clear that each redeemed individual is an ambassador for Christ, without exception. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ..." (2 Corinthians 5:20). It is imperative that we communicate that our Lord has "...committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19). You are an ambassador! You might be a poor one and might not take this job as seriously as you should, but you are one. As an heir of God, you can't decline the position! Unfortunately,

far too many believers choose not to carry out this assigned duty. It is a staggering reality that an overwhelming majority of Christians have never led anyone to Christ. If the truth be known, a very small percentage of believers have even attempted to share the gospel.

We stress, by virtue of your position in Christ, you have a responsibility to share the gospel. It is a glorious thought that God allows us the privilege of being an integral part in reaching the lost—of being a part of His plan of redemption. Without the Body of Christ sharing the gospel, no one would be saved! “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). The gospel is the “power of God unto salvation,” but we remind our people that if they do not open their mouths and share this good news, no one will believe. Yes, it is the Holy Spirit who convicts of sin and bears witness that what you are sharing is true. But, regardless of the tremendous amount of conviction, it is not until the lost hears that Christ died for their sin, was buried, and rose again and by believing in this finished work of Christ can they be saved. It is wonderful to share with individuals what Christ has done for you, but the message is not complete until you have shared what our Lord has done for them.

“...it is made clear that each redeemed individual is an ambassador for Christ, without exception.”

In some manner, each week we attempt to remind our local body of believers that their citizenship is in Heaven. It is that fair land they represent as ambassadors. We are authorized to share a message and instructed to live a lifestyle, while serving in a manner that is glorifying to the one who sent us. That is our “Grace Commission”! The message over the door of the main exit of our building clearly states, “You are now entering the mission field!” It is with that mindset we send our people out, and prayerfully, with a sense of urgency, our message and lives become, “Our Lord comes.”

This brings us to the next truth we strive to encourage one another to embrace each week, and that is to take very seriously Paul’s imperative to “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children” (Ephesians 5:1). “Followers” in the Greek is “mimetes.” It literally means to imitate God: to strive to

resemble. It has been said that the greatest form of flattery is impersonation. It is not simple flattery that God seeks, but for us to glorify and exalt Him, as we endeavor to resemble His character.

As the redeemed of the Lord, we are instructed to imitate the attributes and characteristics of God! Of course, there are several attributes we are not capable of imitating. He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. But, as those who were created in His image, and now as “new creations,” we are called upon to reflect many of His attributes in our daily lives.

The attributes we should earnestly strive to mimic include, but are certainly not limited to:

LOVE

“And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. GOD IS LOVE; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16). Even non-Christians are familiar with this verse, or at least a part of it. They are quick to use it in describing God, as if that is all He is. Nevertheless, it does describe an attribute that believers are to mimic. Romans 13:8 tells us, “Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loves another has fulfilled the law.” Our Lord’s commandment to His disciples in John 15:12 was, “This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you.”

It is noteworthy that the Lord Jesus tells His disciples that they will have the authority to move mountains, heal the sick, make the blind see, cause the lame to walk, raise the dead, cast out demons, and actually do greater things than He did. These are all very impressive indicators that they were His followers. However, it was not by these remarkable signs and wonders that men would know that they were His followers. “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). A skeptical world would know they were disciples, not by their ability to raise the dead, but by the love they demonstrated. And we are called to mimic His love. “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us...” (Ephesians 5:2).

LONGSUFFERING

“And the Lord passed by before him [Moses], and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, LONGSUFFERING, and abundant in goodness and truth”

(Exodus 34:6). Romans 2:4 speaks of the longsuffering and forbearance of God. This Dispensation of the Grace of God speaks volumes of His longsuffering. The fact that our loving God is not willing that any should perish clearly indicates how longsuffering our Redeemer is.

The Body of Christ is instructed to be longsuffering. "With all lowliness and meekness, with LONGSUFFERING, forbearing one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2). Colossians 1:11 tells us we are to be longsuffering and do it with joyfulness. I admit, longsuffering is not one of my strengths! I struggle being longsuffering at times (okay, most of the time!). But, to be longsuffering with JOYFULNESS? (I looked it up! It is in the original). Isn't that asking a little much? It is not if we truly desire to imitate our Lord!

MERCY

"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23). Jeremiah 3:12 tells us, "for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever." These truths concerning His mercy came at a very low and desperate point in Judah's history. As Judah was heading into Babylonian captivity, God was letting His people know that He is merciful. Titus 3:5 says, "Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but by His MERCY He saves us. Mercy has been defined as not getting what we deserve, while grace is getting something good that we don't deserve. As "followers" of God may we ever be mindful that we too are to demonstrate mercy towards all those with whom we come in contact.

GRACIOUSNESS

"If so be you have tasted that the Lord is GRACIOUS" (1 Peter 2:3). God's Word tells us that Jonah was angry with the Lord because he "knew that you are a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness..." (Jonah 4:2). Grace is defined as unmerited favor; receiving what we do not deserve. It is by God's grace that we can declare with certainty

that eternal life is ours through Christ. It is by God's grace that we have been justified. Therefore, as those who have been saved by grace, we are instructed to be mimics of this godly attribute. As we minister to a lost world that hates the things of God, may we ever be mindful of this calling on our lives to exercise graciousness.

HOLINESS

"But as He who has called you is HOLY, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, BE YE HOLY; FOR I AM HOLY" (1 Peter 1:15-16). To be holy means to be separate, set apart, high above. It is imperative that as believers, we understand that we have a responsibility to practice separated lives from the world. Second Corinthians 6:14 through 17 is clear in this matter, as we are instructed, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord...."

The Scriptures are quite clear, we are to be "imitators" of God. And therefore, if instructed to mimic His attributes then, by God's power and might, we will be enabled to carry out this mandate. The Apostle Paul was not indicating that he was depending on his own resurrection in order to finally realize victorious power over sin or live a life that reflected the attributes of God when he wrote, "That I might know Him, and the power of His might..." (Philippians 3:10). He understood that it is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that provides that ability to us presently! It is the "exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:19-20). It is our great God and Savior who provides us with the ability, through the resurrection, to carry out our mission to be His ambassadors, His ministers of the word of reconciliation. May we all take seriously our instruction to be "Imitators" of God and earnestly strive to resemble the Lord Jesus Christ in all we do and say. MARANATHA! ■

***NOTE: All Bible verses quoted in this article are from the KJV.*



Pastor Rick Owsley and his wife, Fay, live in Owensville, MO. Rick has been the pastor of St. Louis Bible Fellowship for almost 18 years and is President Emeritus of St. Louis Theological Seminary. Pastor Rick also serves on the board of Children's Relief Mission and Hope Givers Working Ranch. Rick and Fay have two daughters, two sons-in-law, and three GRANDchildren.

Upsetting the Status Quo

And Saul approved of his [Stephen's] murder. That very day the church in Jerusalem began to suffer cruel persecution. All the believers, except the apostles, were scattered throughout the provinces of Judea and Samaria" (Acts 8:1 Today's English Version). "So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone" (Acts 11:19). Just what was the urgency for that persecution?

I was once asked to solve the following math problem. It asked, "If you have 20 sheep in a pen and one of them escapes, how many are left? I said, "19." It was a setup and they all laughed because if one sheep could escape, others probably would follow.

Saul of Tarsus, as a Pharisee, had a position of authority in the Hebrew hierarchy, a zeal for the Law of Moses, and a love for his Hebrew countrymen. He wanted to keep the religious status quo by obliterating what was called the Way. This group was represented by Stephen who said that Jesus really was Israel's Messiah.

The risen Lord could have just squashed Saul, but instead appeared to him on the road to Damascus and rechanneled his zeal, the most fruitful recorded in the Bible. On the road to Damascus, Saul realized that God was speaking to him, but which of the Hebrew names of God (from Adoni to Yahweh) was He using? "Who are You, Lord?" "And the Lord said, I am Jesus [Joshua, Savior] whom you are persecuting..." (Acts 26:14). Can you imagine how the name Jesus "totally reframed" Saul's understanding of God? From that arresting instant onward, Saul who was later renamed Paul, referred to himself as the prisoner of the Lord rather than the prisoner of an earthly government.

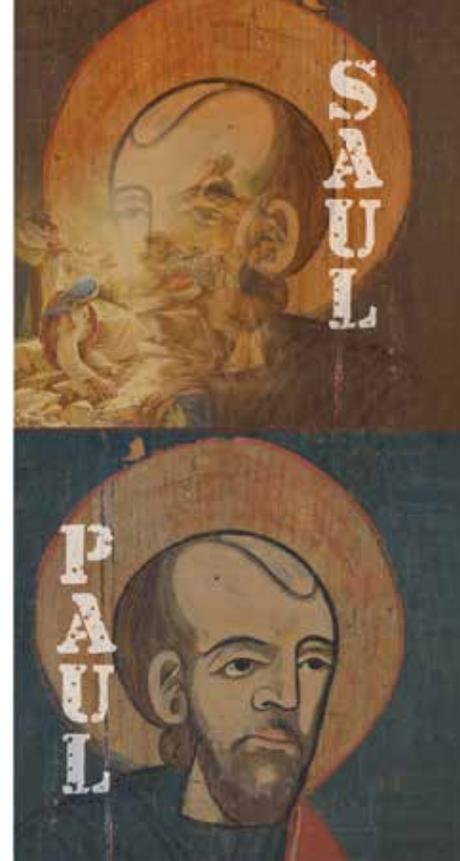
What a display of pure grace by God not only to spare the chief earthly adversary but also to choose him as the channel through which God's entirely new program and entity would be revealed, the present day church, the Body of Christ. "...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffer-

ing as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life" (1 Tim. 1:15,16).

Even as the 12 apostles of Christ's earthly ministry spent more than three years with Him pertaining to God's prophetic program, the "Kingdom from Heaven on Earth," Paul in his new assignment as "the apostle to the gentiles" (Rom. 11:13) spent some three years with the risen Lord pertaining to the new entity "that is the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but now has been manifested..." (Col. 1:26). Jesus said, "...I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you..." (Acts 26:16). What's so different about this new program and entity that was hidden in God (not hidden in the Bible) until God's appointed time when He revealed it to and through Paul?

- We were chosen in Him before the ages began (Eph. 1:4), not "...things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21 KJV).
- The Holy Spirit, seals us unto the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30).
- We were "...made alive together with Christ and raised up with Him, and seated with Him in heavenly places..." (Eph. 2:5,6).
- We are not under law but under grace (Rom. 6:14).
- ...and many more truths that are revealed only in the writings of Paul.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). God also wants each of us to be "...a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15 NKJV). ■

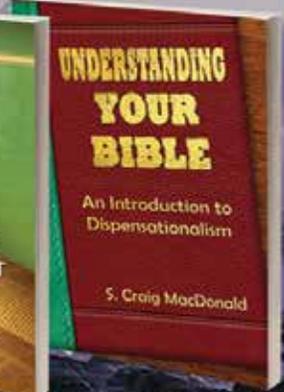
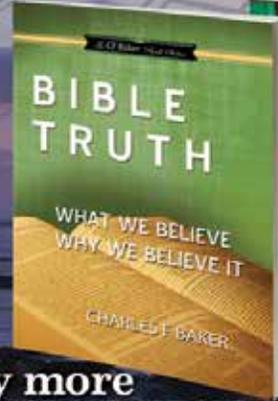
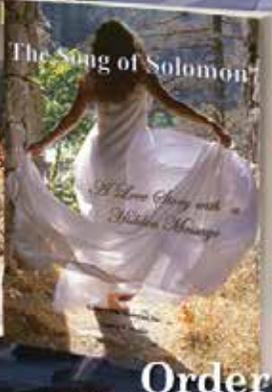




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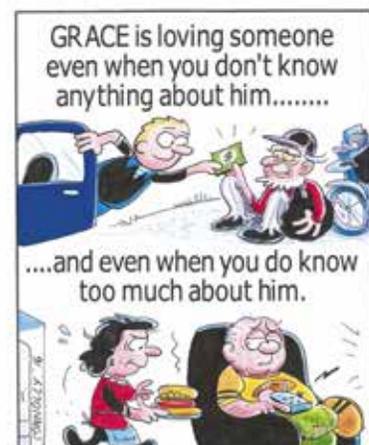
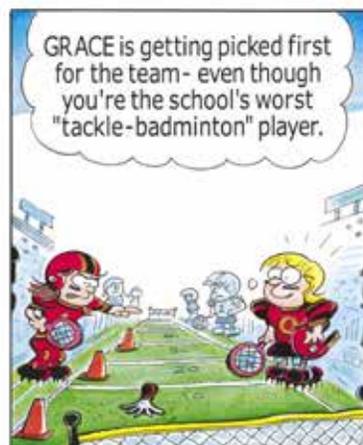
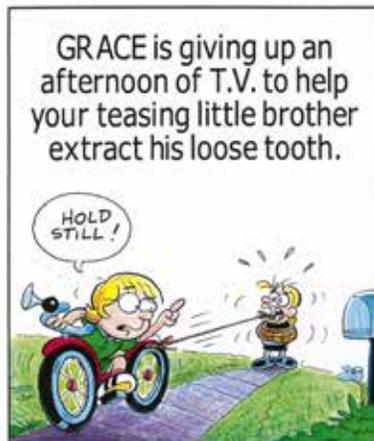
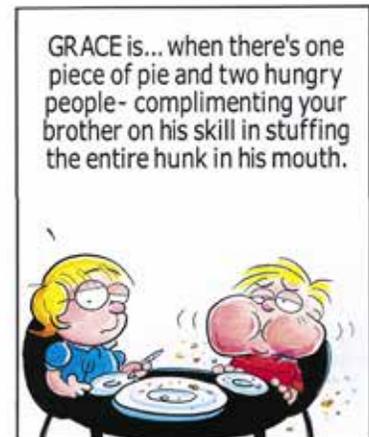
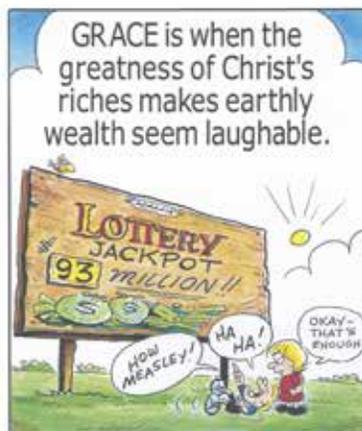
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Region 1: Northwest
Chad Stephens

Exciting things are happening in Region 1! Jon Marshall reports: “Yes, we are here [[Grace Bible Church](#), Grants Pass, OR]. I’ve had the privilege to preach the last three Sundays with this Sunday being my 4th time. There seems to be a new ambiance of excitement in the church. Lord willing, we will be able to turn that excitement to others in the community. The Lord knows. We are having the installation service on the 12th of June. Dave Rachoy, Steve Fosnot, and Craig Robertson will all be presiding during the service. I am very excited. We’ll, continue to pray for the church as God is (and always has been) directing.”

The Women’s Ministries Committee of [Berean Bible Church](#) in Shoreline, WA, hosted 67 women at Ladies Camp in April. The retreat was held at Falls Creek Conference Center in southwest Washington and we were blessed with absolutely gorgeous weather. Women attended from not only Berean Shoreline, but also [Grace Bible Church](#) in Port Orchard, [Cascade Mountain Bible Church](#) in Leavenworth, and [Northwest Bible Church](#) in Enumclaw. Kathy Molenkamp brought us a study on Conscious Contentment, and we had a great time of fellowship, relaxation, and refreshment. Watch for Ladies Camp again in spring of 2018.

A group of twelve from [Grace Bible Church](#) in Port Orchard will travel to Grants Pass for a mission trip this August to do a mixture of work projects at the church and people’s homes from the church and in the community, host a kids’ day, and canvass the community with flyers containing information about the church. ■

[Northwest Grace Youth Camp](#) is just around the corner (July 31-August 5). Please pray with us as camp ministry is instrumental in the spiritual lives of many teens!

We look forward to hosting those of you who join us for the Family Bible Conference in Spokane this July! ■



Region 2: Southwest
Chuck Williams

Anaheim, CA, [Grace Bible Church](#) held a barbecue on Saturday, May 14, that was enjoyed by all in attendance. Robert Rodart brought his barbecue talents to the fore with all the delicious meat one could imagine. He was aided by Eva Malloy laying out the salads and desserts in the fellowship hall which were brought by the attendees. Pastor Joel Molina plans to do this several times a year. ■



Region 3: West
Steve Blackwell

[Cope Community Church](#)-Cope, CO-Terry Covert, Pastor: This is a season of graduations. High School kids and college young adults from our church and community are moving on to the next stage of life. We have Vacation Bible School coming up in June. It is a time of controlled madness for my wife trying to deal with all the details, and I get to play “Cooper” the dog in the skits. Bible camp is next on our summer agenda. Always a time of fun, laughter, and Bible learning. I am once again doing “Grief Support

Groups” with our local hospice—a time of attending to the loss and grief of people living in our area. What a great ministry! Hope you all have a super summer filled with joy and Jesus!

[Denver Bible Church](#)-Arvada,

CO-Pastor Bob Enyart: The first service ever held at Denver Bible Church was in January 2000 but our daily radio broadcasts began much earlier, in 1991. So we’re now celebrating the 25th anniversary of airing our Mid-Acts-based Bible teaching! This summer folks are coming from as far as Alaska to Massachusetts, and California to Texas, and a number of places in between, to celebrate with DBC the goodness of our God!

[Grace Bible Church of Lakewood](#)-

Lakewood, CO-Pastors Harl Hargett and Mark Smith: Grace Bible Church of Lakewood is beginning a series of workshops (we started with “Love and Logic for Parents” taught by Pastor Mark Smith) and will include “Roles of Men and Women and Divorce” for the summer months. These presentations will be open to our community and church fellowship on Sunday mornings. We believe that our world needs to be given Truth in the areas where our society is letting down our children and families.

[Harvest Fellowship](#)-Brighton,

CO-Pastors Steve Blackwell and Bob Hill: We had a great Easter with a small passion play during the sermon and lots of tears and sharing afterwards. Several people responded to the gospel that was given and have started coming regularly. Our Mission Team is evaluating how and who we will be supporting this year. We are still sending a few of our people to the mission field (short term). We have been working on operational/organizational values throughout our ministries to help with unifying the ministries and the church as a whole, and at the same time, knowing whether we are winning or losing the battle in this ministry! In the Denver area, statistics say that if we grow 15% a year in attendance, we are just breaking even with the population(!), because of the transient effect of so many moving into the Denver area! Statistics say 101,000 people

moved into the Denver area last year! So we continue to pray and look for opportunities to grow in both number and spiritual depth.

The Point -Westminster, CO-Pastor Jesse Vaught: Just a note, Pastor Jesse is in Malaysia and Cambodia with his daughter Abby doing mission work until June 7. ■



Region 4: Upper Midwest
Les Takkinen

Grace Bible Church of West Allis—God is so special as we minister to the community of West Allis and the surrounding cities and rural areas. Our congregation is constantly looking for others who need to be saved and grow in their spiritual lives. As our congregation grows numerically, we are finding that God is drawing us closer to each other.

We have five people in our congregation who completed a course of *Bible Doctrine I* through Berean Bible Institute in Slinger, Wisconsin. Our church was used as an extension site and we were thrilled to allow them to use our building for this ministry. There will be another course offered this fall at our church. We hope more take advantage of this way to grow in God's Word and apply it to their lives.

One of the challenges that we have had in April and May is our church website. We had two attacks on our website from Russia and the Ukraine which also happened to many other organizations and American companies. The daily devotionals that Pastor Les sends out five days a week are still feeling the impact of that attack. Pray for us as we continue to exalt Jesus Christ through the written Word and electronic communications in our culture.

God has blessed us with a great number of people involved in the ministries of our church (about 60%). What an exciting time that we have had as we work together to glorify our

Savior. We rejoice in people sharing their time, their talents, gifts, and finances that the gospel might be proclaimed and lives might be changed. What a blessing to be pastors in a church that the Bible and the person of Jesus Christ are magnified! ■



Region 5: Lower Midwest
Ed Jeude

The Grace Regional Meeting took place on May 19 and it was decided that rather than meeting quarterly, they would now meet three times a year. The next meeting will be September 15, 2016, at Ryan's in Effingham, IL, 10:45 am - 2:30 pm (Central Time).

Don Hosfeld of **Quincy Bible Fellowship Church** in Quincy, IL, reports that he and his wife, Valerie, have officially moved to Quincy as of May 21, 2016 to be part of the community and to grow the church. They are both looking for work.

Valerie has already begun reaching out to pro-life agencies in the community and advertising a women's Bible study. Don will begin a midweek study as well. We have a planning meeting scheduled this week to determine next steps to evangelize in Quincy. We have VBS scheduled for the first week of August.

Grace Church in Indianapolis, IN, has a number of activities planned during the summer months for outreach and building fellowship. The church has a tradition of hosting a fellowship meal every month with a 5th Sunday; our last one was May 29. On May 31 the church went to an Indianapolis Indians minor league baseball game. Starting June 9 we once again started offering two sessions of our *Getting to Know Grace Church* for new attendees. On June 26 several members of the church participating in a community street fair called, "Old Settler's Day." We will have a booth on the street in which we offer free ice water, take photographs of children in costume that can be downloaded from

literature about the church. Finally, on July 15-16 we will have a campout for families on our church property. We have a busy summer schedule and we are looking forward to lots of opportunity for ministry. ■



Region 9: Western, MI
Kathy Molenkamp

Berean Church of Muskegon, MI, has recently said goodbye to Pastor Craig Apel who retired from the church after serving there since 1999. The church hosted a special dinner in honor of Craig and Pat on March 20 with many friends and family members attending as well as the Berean Church family. A special "Through the Years" PowerPoint presentation was put together by their daughter Becca Zuber of family and ministry moments highlighting their service to the Lord. Many people shared how Pastor Craig and Pat had blessed them and they were thanked for their ministry. The church presented them with a "retirement" parting love gift of an Alaskan Cruise! Thank you Pastor Craig and Pat for all you have done for our church and the other churches you have served through the years.

Of course, with a pastor leaving, that meant a Pastoral Search Committee had to get to work. After a nationwide pastoral search, Berean Church called Pastor Rob Renberg as the 9th senior pastor to serve the church since it began in 1921. Pastor Rob began his ministry at Berean on April 17 and a formal installation took place June 26. He and Amy are excited to be back in West Michigan and for this new opportunity to serve the Lord and the people in Muskegon and the surrounding area.

The church also has a GBC pastoral track student, Nick Brown, who will be working as a summer youth leader intern under Pastor Rob's leadership, and they are excited to see how God will use this gifted young man in the lives of their youth both in the church and community.

Parkside Bible Church in Holland, Michigan, is planning a busy summer with events for all ages!

They will be sponsoring *KidsGames* from June 20-24 at Rose Park Elementary School in Holland from 9am to 12:30pm for children ages 6-14. The *KidsGames* programs are happening on every continent across the globe. After launching in the year 2000 in seven countries, by 2003 over 75 countries had participated with the number growing quickly. At the heart of the program is the desire to share the love of God with children. *KidsGames* provides a caring place to have fun with children while sharing biblical stories, values, and messages in a creative and unique way.

The goal of *KidsGames* is to build strong character, morals, and values based on a biblical curriculum while playing sports and games. *KidsGames* shares positive life values. It harnesses the power of sports to build relationships and grow healthy, active children. It helps children learn important messages about life and gives them opportunities to develop compassion and community spirit. The Bible is communicated through experiential learning games, dramas, stories, discussion, and the testimonies of famous athletes.

Parkside will be holding Hymn Sings every Sunday evening from 6-7pm during the months of June and July.

On Thursday evenings during the summer starting at 6pm, there will be bike trips for the whole family and church BBQs to connect people to one another.

With services beginning at 9:30am in the summer months, they will be holding a summer Family Bible Hour at 11am geared for all ages.

Two mission trips will be held, one with Grace Ministries International and one with their own congregation.

Pastor Gary Spykerman looks forward to summer with a multitude of new church offerings to build relationships and worship our Almighty God! Parkside Bible Church is located at 14461 James Street in Holland. If you have questions on any programs, you can contact our church office at 616-399-4410 or go to the website: parksidebibleholland.org.

At **Coopersville Bible Church**, we have paused in our study of dispensational truth and the true message of grace as presented in the Pauline epistles. We have been watching *The American Heritage* series from The Wallbuilders. With the presidential election this year, it was felt that we

needed to review our nation's founders and see the place the Bible had in their lives and thinking. Contrary to what we are led to believe, their Christian thinking formed the very basis of our constitutional republic.

After a long winter we are gearing up for our annual summer activities. This year our VBS program will be from Answers in Genesis—*Ocean Commotion* centers around Noah's ark. This theme coincides with the Ark Encounter which opens this summer at the Creation Museum.

The city of Coopersville has an historic flavor to the downtown area. For the past 25 years it has hosted the Del Shannon Classic Car Show (one of the largest in the state with hundreds of cars). Del Shannon was from Coopersville and was a popular rock singer in the '50s and '60s. Our church was the very first organization asked if we would be interested in having a food booth. We have had one every year since. This has been a great time of fellowship for the workers but an even better time of outreach into the community which is the most important aspect of the day. Profits have gone into church and mission projects over the years. We praise the Lord that we have raised over \$10,000.00 through this annual one-day event. ■

(FAITH CHAPTER...continued from page 12)

Should we proceed? Should we be like the writer of Hebrews who states in 11:32, "What shall I more say?" Should we deal more with Sarah, Jacob, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, David, Samuel, and the prophets? If we did deal with all of these heroes of faith, would the results be the same as we have dealt with Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Isaac?

The listings of all the acts of faith from 11:33 through 11:38 show beyond a shadow of doubt, that the aim of these heroes was not to obtain salvation by faith, but as the just, who were living by faith.

The answer is "yes," the results will be the same. All of the actions performed by faith were actions, not to gain salvation, but to proclaim, to witness to a fact of lives lived, displaying a right relationship with God. They had already gained a right standing with God. They were already the just. Hebrews 11 records these "just ones" living by faith. These heroes of faith were the examples for the readers of Hebrews. These readers needed encouragement to press on. These readers needed to express their right relationship with God, (which they already possessed) by a living faith, just as these historical heroes of another day did. It is interesting that the writer of Hebrews does not use his/her own faith-life as an example, a model for how these readers were to follow.

Today, teachers of the Word need to repeat what the writer of Hebrews wrote. That would be a repeat of what this writer wrote about what the writer of Hebrews wrote. This is not double talk.

Editor's note: This is certainly what Paul addressed in Ephesians 2:8-10. We are not saved by works, but good works grow out of our salvation by faith. ■

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