



The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator

“To testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24

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WILL ANY TRUE BELIEVER IN CHRIST EVER BE CAST INTO THE TORMENTS OF HELL?

Part II

IF SALVATION IS OF THE LORD THEN THERE IS NO WAY A TRULY BORN AGAIN BELIEVER COULD EVER END UP IN HELL

By Wayne Camp

TEXT: *Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

INTRODUCTION

In the last issue of the paper I dealt with our question by dealing with the torments of hell. In this message, I will set forth the assertion: ***If Salvation Is Of The Lord Then There Is No Way A Truly Born Again Believer Could Ever End Up In Hell.*** From what has Jesus saved his people? First, he has saved us from our sins—past, present and future sins. Second, being saved from our sins we have been saved from the penalty of our sins—the torments of everlasting fire. There are those who will argue that a child of God, one saved by the blood of Christ, can so sin as to be eternally lost in hell. But, we will see from Scripture that this is not only improbable but it is impossible.

Our texts declare the preservation and the perseverance of the child of God. In the texts it is obvious that it is the Lord who commences this good work of salvation in the saved. And, we see that it is God who continues this good

work of salvation; it is he who performs it. Finally, we see how long he will perform it. He will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ which points to the second coming of Christ when we shall be received unto him and be made like him. Paul was absolutely assured that when God begins the work of salvation in a person, ***HE*** will perform that work until the Lord Jesus Christ returns. He also affirms that when we are doing the good will of God it is because he is working in us to do so.

My purpose in this message is to show that our entire salvation, from its conception in the eternal ages to its completion in the day of the Lord Jesus, is a work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. Since God conceived the scheme of salvation, and God commences this good work of salvation, and God continues this good work of salvation, and God consummates this good work of salvation, there simply is no way that a child of God could go to hell. The declaration, ***“Salvation is of the Lord,”*** is absolutely true. Salvation is of the Lord in its origination, its execution, its application, its demonstration, and its consummation. I say this with the utmost reverence but if one of God’s chosen ones could go to hell, it would be a failure on the part of the One who is the author and finisher of our faith.

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EDITOR'S ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBERS AND E-MAIL ADDRESSES

The editor, Eld. Wayne Camp, may be reached at the address given above, or at his home address. His home address is: 2065 Tompkins Lane, Millington, TN 38053-5107.

Church Phone at Home: (901) 876-5015

Church Phone: (901) 357-0215.

E-mail address: RWcamp@cris.com

Visit our Home Page on the Internet

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IF YOU ARE IN MEMPHIS we invite you to attend our services:

Bible Study 10:00 A. M. Sunday

Worship Service 11:00 A. M. Sunday

Evening Service 5:00 P. M. Sunday

Mid-Week Service 7:00 P. M. Wednesday

You Are Welcome!

As my first postulate I shall show that,

IT WAS GOD WHO CONCEIVED THE SCHEME OF SALVATION BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.

The doctrine of election shows that the salvation of sinners originated in the mind of God before the foundation of the world. **2 Thessalonians 2:13** *But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from*

the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. When did God choose us to salvation? His word declares emphatically that we were chosen to salvation from the beginning. This reference to the beginning refers to eternity. This is clear from John 1:1. **John 1:1** *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

Scripture further shows that we were chosen by him and in Christ before the foundation of the world and predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. **Ephesians 1:4-5** *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. Romans 8:29-30* *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* From these two passages it is evident that our salvation was conceived and purposed in the mind of God before the foundation of the world. Moreover, in that same decree of salvation he predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.

That our salvation was conceived in the mind of God and all the details of it purposed by God before the foundation of the world is evident from the fact that Christ was foreordained before the foundation of the world to be the lamb whose blood would redeem us from the bondage of our sins. **1 Peter 1:18-20** *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.*

This redemption is entirely based on the

blood of Christ and we cannot taint the blood of our Redeemer, therefore it always stands as our redemption. What was conceived in the mind of God and purposed in his eternal purpose was paid for at the cross. **Ephesians 1:7** *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.* How could one whose sins have been forgiven on the grounds of the shed blood of our sinless Saviour ever be cast into hell?

The impossibility of a child of God going to hell is further sustained by the fact that our redemption is permanent. The redemption that Christ obtained for us by his blood is eternal redemption and cannot, therefore, ever be revoked or nullified. **Hebrews 9:12** *Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

Though it is experienced or applied in time, salvation is according to the foreordained plan and purpose of God. **Acts 2:22-23** *Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.* The God who determined to send his Son into the world and who delivered him up to be crucified and slain by the wicked hands of men, would surely not besmirch the sacrifice of his Son by casting one for whom he died into hell. Did he not pay our sin debt in full? Did he not fully satisfy every demand of infinite justice? Was not God fully propitiated by his sufferings? Surely, he who is infinitely just would not demand payment for our sins from his beloved Son and then demand payment again at the hands of those for whom he died. My Dear Readers, rest assured that every blood-bought child of God will be brought home to glory. Every one of those for whom Christ died will be presented faultless before the presence of his glory, not before the face of his wrath.

Salvation was given us in the purpose and grace of God before the foundation of the world.

2 Timothy 1:8-9 *Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.* Why would God save us and call us in his eternal purpose and grace given us in Christ before the foundation of the world and then disown and cast us into hell?

Also, there is God's infallible promise of eternal life for every believer, a promise made in and to Jesus Christ for his elect. Salvation was promised us in Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world. **Titus 1:2** *In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.* Why would God, before the foundation of the world, promise eternal life to his people, his elect, and then hand them down a sentence of eternal death in the lake of fire? Is his eternally given promise not good for time and eternity? Are all his promises not sure and certain in Christ? Paul certainly seemed to think so. And, the Holy Spirit must have been sure of it when he inspired Paul to declare that the promises of God are sure and certain in Jesus Christ. **2 Corinthians 1:20** *For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*

It is God who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. **Ephesians 1:3** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.* These spiritual blessings were given us in our Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, before the foundation of the world. Surely God will not take back that with which he has blessed us in the heavenlies—**all spiritual blessings**. I will deal with this again, but let me remind the reader that God never repents nor revokes his gifts and calling. **Romans 11:29** *For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.* God has given us all spiritual blessings in Christ and going to the torments of hell could certainly not be considered a spiritual blessing.

Not only is it God who conceived and

purposed our salvation in eternity,

IT IS GOD WHO COMMENCES THIS GOOD WORK OF SALVATION

I believe a definition is in order at this point. I said that it is God who commences this good work of salvation. **COMMENCE**=*to begin, to start, to originate, to set going.* **Jonah 2:9** *But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.* It is God who commences this work of salvation. There is a sense in which he commenced it before the foundation of the world as we have already seen. Then he continued that work in another sense in time when he sent his Son to die on the cross.

Jesus Christ did not die by accident! He did not die by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. In fact, the very opposite is true. Jesus Christ was at the right place at the right time to pay our sin debt in full. **Galatians 4:4** *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.*

God sent his Son to save his people from their sins. **Matthew 1:21** *And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.* The salvation that was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (II Tim. 1:8-9) was purchased for us at the cross. Need I point out that the verse does not merely say that Jesus will make salvation available to all men; it says he shall save his people. He did not come to make men savable; he came to save his people from their sins. He did not save his people from some of their sins but from their sins without exception or qualification. How could one who has been saved from all his sins ever be cast into hell?

God made his Son sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. **2 Corinthians 5:21** *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* Again we see that this salvation is of the Lord. It is the wicked, not true believers, who shall be turned into hell. **Psalms 9:17** *The wicked shall*

be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. How could one has been made the righteousness of God in Christ by God himself, ever justly be cast into the torments of hell?

God gave his Son that believers might have eternal, everlasting life in him. **John 3:14-18** *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* It was God who sent his Son into the world to be lifted up on the cross for the purpose of saving his people. The one who believes on him has everlasting life. Hell is a place of spiritual death. In fact, the lake that burns with fire and brimstone is called the second death. **Revelation 21:8** *But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.* How could one who has everlasting life and who can never come into condemnation ever end up in a place that is called the second death?

God delivered up his Son for us and through him he freely gives us all things needed in salvation. **Romans 8:32** *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Again is obvious that it is God who has set all things in order for the giving of salvation to his people. He that delivered him up for us of his own will and purpose shall surely with him freely give us all things. That being true, we can be assured that he will not give one of his children the torments of hell. Not only is it contrary to Scripture that a child of God go to hell, it is contrary to reason as Paul is arguing in

this verse. God did not hold back his Son from suffering for any of our sins and he, therefore, will freely give us all things that Christ has purchased for us. The word “**freely**” used in this verse means **graciously**. It is the Greek word *χαρισεται* a form of the word *χαρίζομαι* which is from the word *χάρις* from which we get our word **grace**. Since the giving of all those things procured by Christ is done graciously without any regard to any works or lack thereof on the part of the child of God, it is contrary to reason that a child of God could ever go to hell.

God initiates salvation in the heart of the sinner. It is God who quickens the spiritually dead sinner. ***Ephesians 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.*** The initial work of God in effecting his salvation in one of his elect is the act of quickening that one who is by nature dead in trespasses and sins. In quickening he actually imparts spiritual life to the one in whom he is beginning the work of salvation. This is a sovereign work of God in which the sinner is totally passive. ***John 3:8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*** Paul again affirms that it is God who quickens the sinner even though he is dead in sins. ***Ephesians 2:4-5 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;).***

Regeneration is in no way the operation or work of man; it is not even of the will of man. ***John 1:12-13 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*** In these verses we are clearly informed that being born of God is not something that runs in the bloodline. This was one of the great errors of the Jews. They thought that their being descended from Abraham was spiritual life in itself. They needed no additional operation of the Holy Spirit. They were spiritually alive because the blood of

Abraham ran in their veins.

As humbling as it may be, we are also informed that our regeneration is not the product of the will of the flesh. In this day when “free will” is king in many religious circles, men suppose that their regeneration came about because they willed that it take place. As one man said, “I just did it of my own free will.” Conversion does involve the God-enabled will of the quickened man but not regeneration. We are not born of the will of the flesh. One can no more will the new birth for himself than he can will himself to be one foot taller or shorter.

It is God who enables the sinner to come to Jesus Christ for everlasting life. ***John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. John 6:65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.*** As much as some professing Christians would like to take credit for their coming to Christ, no one is able to come to Jesus Christ unless the Father gives him the ability to do so. One cannot even will to come to Christ in his unregenerate state. ***Psalms 110:3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.*** It is not the power of one’s alleged free will that enables him to come to Christ; it is the quickening power of God that makes him willing to come to the Saviour.

It is God who grants repentance to the sinner. ***Acts 5:31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.*** It is obvious from this statement of the Apostle Peter that ***Acts 11:18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life. 2 Timothy 2:25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.***

It is God who gives the sinner the faith to receive the Lord Jesus Christ. One Baptist

preacher once told me that he was saved by a faith that he conjured up within himself. When I asked him where the faith came from with which he trusted Christ he replied, "I conjured it up within myself." I told him that if he had no faith but something he had conjured up within himself he would go to hell. Faith that truly lays hold of Jesus Christ comes from God. It is a gift of God given in regeneration. **Philippians 1:29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake. Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that [that faith, RWC] not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.**

It is God who makes the sinner willing to come to Jesus Christ. **Psalms 110:3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.** As I mentioned before, many like to boast of their coming to Christ of their own alleged freewill. As the Psalmist indicates one is only willing in the day of God's power. He does not come to Christ by his own motivation or inclination. He is made willing by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. Man by nature is dead spiritually and cannot do anything to motivate his dead soul to move toward God savingly. He must be made willing.

It is Christ who calls his sheep and brings them into the fold. **John 10:16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.** Notice that he does not say he must invite them to come of their own will. He does not say he is going to try to get them to come. He is going to **bring** them into the fold; in fact, he **must bring** them into the fold. I think it would be profitable if we look at this expression "**I must bring**" in the Greek. Of the five definitions of the word *dei* ($\delta\epsilon\iota$) all five begin with the word "**necessity.**" The definition that refers to this case is "necessity established by the counsel and decree of God, especially by that purpose of his which relates to the salvation of men by the intervention of Christ and which is disclosed in

the Old Testament prophecies." God has decreed and purposed the salvation of his sheep through the mediatorial death of Jesus Christ. Therefore, Jesus said, "**them also I must bring.**" The word **bring** is also of interest in this matter. The word means "to lead by laying hold of, and in this way to bring to the point of destination." Jesus does not simply invite his sheep to enter the fold. Out of necessity set forth in the Divine decree to save them he must lay hold of them and bring them to the purposed destination—his "**one fold**" of which he is the shepherd.

Jesus must, of absolute necessity based on the decree of God, lay hold of his sheep and bring them into the fold and bring them on to the purposed destination that is heaven. Like the shepherd in Luke 15 he takes up his sheep and carries them all the way home. **Luke 15:5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.** Once the sheep are safely in the fold would our Lord not be deeply dishonored if even one of them could be removed from the fold and cast into hell?

It is Christ who gives eternal life to his sheep. **John 10:27-28 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.** When Jesus brings one of his sheep into the fold that sheep has eternal life. It shall never perish and no one can pluck it out of his hand. And, neither can anyone pluck it out of the Father's powerful hand. How could one who is so securely held in the omnipotent hands of the Father and the Son ever possibly perish or go to hell. How safe are his sheep! How wonderfully securely safe!

It is God who, according to his exceeding great and precious promises, makes us partakers of his Divine nature. **II Peter 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.** What God has promised he is able also to perform. That was the unwavering persuasion of faithful Abraham, the father of the faithful.

It is Christ who has redeemed us and paid our sin debt in full. **Ephesians 1:7 In whom we**

have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Romans 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. We did not redeem ourselves. We did not buy ourselves out of the slave market of sin's bondage. We did not have the price required for our redemption. **1 Peter 1:18-19 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.** If we were capable or redeeming ourselves and had done so then I could conceive of the possibility of our selling ourselves back into the slavery of sin. But, we were incapable of redeeming ourselves. Christ has redeemed us for himself and whom he has redeemed he must have. Surely, he would not pay such a price for our redemption and then not secure whom he has redeemed. Paul was persuaded better than that. **2 Timothy 1:12 I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.**

It is wholly of grace that we are saved; we can claim no part of salvation in its grand origin. **Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.** We are his workmanship. From start to finish God is the one who saves. For one of God's children to go to hell would be a failure on the part of the Saviour, not the saved.

I recently went to Sam's Club to buy some tires for my pickup. One of the tires I was replacing had 40,000 miles on it and the other had about 20,000 miles on it. Both tires were out of round and were causing road noise and vibration on my truck. This had gone on for a long time but I had not done anything about it. When they checked the tread wear on the tires they told me that I would receive full reimbursement of the price I had paid for the tires because the trouble was a factory defect. The workmanship of the factory was flawed and therefore the tires were replaced.

There are no flaws in God's workmanship.

We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus and there are no flaws. How then could one who is a product of God's workmanship ever go to hell? Is God's work imperfect? It is the Lord who will perfect that which pertains to his elect. **Psalm 138:8 The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.**

Someone might be tempted to argue that David's prayer that God not forsake the works of his hand is an implication that he might forsake some of his people. He has promised, **"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."** Since the Lord will never leave us or forsake us and since he will perfect what he has started in us, how could any of his children ever go to hell?

I know that I keep asking this question, "How could any of God's children go to hell?" But, it is a valid question in the light of the fact that salvation is a work of God, not man. **"Salvation is of the Lord."** Dear Reader, we can be assured that what God has begun in us he will surely perfect and perform until the day of Jesus Christ. **Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.**

The salvation of God's elect people is the work of the blessed Trinity. He planned and purposed it. He begins it in the heart of the sinner in regeneration. He continues it in the heart and life of the elect sinner in granting him repentance and faith. He sanctifies us completely. **1 Thessalonians 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** The righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to our account so that our standing before God is in the very beauty of holiness. Jesus Christ will one day present us faultless before the presence of his glory and do it with exceeding joy.

Therefore, I ask, **"How could a truly born again believer ever be found in Hell with the fearful, the unbelieving, whoremongers, the beast, the false prophet and Satan himself?"**

(To be continued in a future issue).



YES, GOD WILLING, I WILL BE RETURNING TO THAILAND FOR FOUR MONTHS

By Wayne Camp

I appreciate all the interest that is being shown in the work of ***The Sovereign Grace Independent Baptist School of Theology*** that we started in Chiang Mai, Thailand, last year. I have been asked many times as I have traveled with Bro. Anond and have gone to Bible Conferences if I would be returning for another session of school this year. The group of students pictured above have been inquiring of Bro. Anond just as often as to when I will be returning. They are eager for school to start again. It also appears that there will be several new students this year.

By the time you have received this, a new student house will be completed for the Lisu preachers. This house is built entirely on the style of the Lahu houses in the villages. It will have a bamboo floor in it, rather than just dirt such as the Lisu normally use in their houses.

Then, we must finish and repair the house for the Lahu students that all the students used last year. The lower floor was gravel except in the sleeping area. We are putting bamboo floors throughout the house for this year and doing some

other things to it.

Bro. Anond broke his camera and could not send me any pictures. My wife has sent him a camera just like the one he had but it has not arrived yet.

Last year we projected the expenses for the school and related matters such as travel at about \$14,000. Even though we are expecting more students this year, I suspect the expenses will be about the same as last year. I appreciate all those who supported the work last year with your prayers and with offerings. I am trusting the Lord to lay it on the hearts of his people to provide again this year and will appreciate anything that is received.

Tentatively, I plan to leave Memphis on October 27, 2003, and depart Chiang Mai for home on February 26, 2004. My wife is planning to go over for a visit the first two weeks of January, 2004, as she did last year. I will be sending out letters and email with more details in the near future. Please keep me, my wife, and Pilgrims Hope Baptist Church in your prayers.

Bouquets and Brickbats

Pastor Camp

I am so grateful to the Lord for your faithfulness to His Word. I read your 11 or so articles addressing the Promise Keepers on a website, and was very impressed.

I am on active duty with the US Air Force until next July. I will write a more detailed e-mail later, but just wanted to let you know that my wife and I are praying for you, your wife and your entire congregation. I look forward to corresponding with you in the near future.

ENGLAND: Sir there is not one word nor one expression in the Bible that mentions any resemblance between dipping under water and the death and burial of Christ, nor one word that mentions a resemblance between our rising out of the water and the resurrection of Christ. Buried with Him by baptism refers exclusively to the baptism of the Holy Ghost. This is biblical doctrine and always has been. I too once shared the baptist position so I'm aware of all the methods and arguments against the baptism of children, sprinkling, the Greek meaning of baptizo etc,etc all of which I've faced one by one and discarded them all as the inventions of men. I hope and pray that you will do the same. For the sake of His Church.

BOSNIA: Your church was listed on a link that was a book about the Bogomils of Bosnia. I am working a lot with the Islamic peoples of Bosnia. I find the words of the author who wrote the book on the Bogomils of Bosnia very true. Can you put me in touch with the author of that book?

Thanks so much for putting the book on the Internet. So much of the history of the Bogomils is (pardon the pun) BOGUS because it was written by entrenched church authorities (Roman and Greek). Bog, as you know is the Bosnian word for "God." Some of the senior leaders of Islam in Bosnia are still very much aware of their essential Christian, Protestant-like heritage.

Incidentally, I am a graduate of Central Baptist Seminary in Kansas City, Kansas. My Master of Divinity degree was on 17th Century Quaker Life and Thought—very similar to the type of spirituality the early Bogomils professed.

CALIFORNIA: Have read your article '**THE WORLD'S WORST POSSIBLE FAMINE**' and have been blessed by it - praise the Lord! I agree that there is a terrible famine for the true meat of God's Word out there; please join me in praying for a revival of interest in God's word among His people!

WWW: Subject: pastoral authority

Mr. Camp,

While I do believe that the pastor may indeed have the ultimate authority as an "overseer" I also believe that this can lead to a spiritually abusive control over the church. I have known, and worked with, several 'pastors' who made it clear that they did not have to answer to anyone. They had the final authority, and don't think that they did not use it readily. As minister of music, called by God to minister through music, and called by a church to minister to its people, I feel as though my choices of music, whether they be anthems or hymns or spiritual songs, based upon many years of education and experience, are Spirit-ordained and generally more acceptable than what the 'pastor' decides to change them to. Pastors, some, not all, relish their "authority" so much that they are willing to lead a worship service that is disjointed, and unthematic, rather than let the minister of music do their job to support his message. Sad isn't it? I'd like to know your thoughts on this situation. I realize, from your article, that perhaps our worship is more liturgical than yours, but nevertheless, I find myself in a despair as to how to deal with a controlling, dictator of a man who thinks he is 'pastoring' our congregation; I call it manipulation.

EDITOR'S RESPONSE TO THIS LETTER

Dear Sean,

I have chosen to answer your letter within the context of what you have written. In order to set off my response, I am putting what I write in another font so that there will be no confusion about what I have written.

You wrote:

While I do believe that the pastor may indeed have the ultimate authority as an "overseer" I also believe that this can lead to a spiritually abusive control over the church.

Sean, there is no doubt from Scripture that the pastor is the overseer and the only overseer of a congregation. There is no other office that has such spiritual authority attached to it. ***Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*** Eating could lead to overeating and to obesity but surely one should not refrain from eating just because some abuse food and themselves by gluttonous behaviour. The fact that some pastors might over extend their authority is no reason they should not exercise that authority which is commensurate with the responsibility of the office as overseer or bishop of the congregation. ***1 Timothy 3:1 This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.***

You wrote:

I have known, and worked with, several 'pastors' who made it clear that they did not have to answer to anyone. They had the final authority, and don't think that they did not use it readily. As minister of music, called by God to minister through music, and called by a church to minister to its people, I feel as though my choices of music, whether they be anthems or hymns or spiritual songs, based upon many years of education and experience, are Spirit-ordained and generally more acceptable than what the 'pastor' decides to change them to.

Sean, all my ministerial life I have heard men and women talk about being called by God to be ministers of music and for the life of me, I cannot find it in the Word of God. I think any person who is saved should worship God by singing but the notion of a special Divine call to the musing ministry is, to my knowledge, never suggested in Scripture. Can you tell me where you find the Scripture to support your idea.

Furthermore, your suggestion that you are more spiritually qualified to determine what is

appropriate for the worship service than is the pastor is rather presumptuous since it is the pastor who is supposed to be called of God to oversee the work of the church.

Of course, I do not know in what kind of church you are working. If it is not a scriptural church then what I am writing has no real bearing for those churches that are not scriptural in origin, doctrine and practice are not governed by Scripture anyway.

You wrote:

Pastors, some, not all, relish their "authority" so much that they are willing to lead a worship service that is disjointed, and unthematic, rather than let the minister of music do their job to support his message. Sad isn't it? I'd like to know your thoughts on this situation. I realize, from your article, that perhaps our worship is more liturgical than yours, but nevertheless, I find myself in a despair as to how to deal with a controlling, dictator of a man who thinks he is 'pastoring' our congregation; I call it manipulation.

Sean, let me say finally that I rarely suggest a hymn for services but it amazes me sometimes how well our song service which our song leader conducts supports the message even though he rarely knows on what I am going to preach unless I am in a series. I attribute that to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. But, when I have suggested hymns that I think will go well he has never hesitated or rebelled against my suggestions as you apparently do with your pastor.

If you are not willing to work under the oversight of the pastor as song director I suggest you resign and find you another place to work. If you always find yourself chafing under the oversight of pastors as it seems you do, I suspect you need to leave the field of labor you have chosen. You sound a little like a private who wants to tell the Colonel how things ought to be done.

I had a choir director at one church I pastored tell me that his service on one Sunday

was going to run longer than usual and that I would need to cut my preaching time down. Before I could answer, his father who was also a member of the church, spoke up and said, "If any part of the service needs to be cut back it should be the singing, not the preaching."

Sean, the word of God speaks on what is most important in the services of the church. *1 Corinthians 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* Note that it is not by the foolishness of singing but by the foolishness of preaching. I like worshipful, scriptural hymn singing but it should never be put on a level with the preaching of the Word.

You speak of abusive pastors, I have also known of abusive "ministers of music." I know of one church where the "minister of music" had been there through three or four pastors' tenure. During the time without a pastor he was in charge of the services, introduced the guest speakers, etc. With each succeeding pastor, he assumed more and more authority until many in the congregation were disgusted with him and his presumptuous attitude. He simply thought that he was the cock of the walk and the pastor was just there to preach, not oversee the work of the church.

Sean, you wrote, "I'd like to know your thoughts on this situation." I am glad you did. I close with a question, "What person in the church is the overseer—the pastor or the minister of music?"

If you will find the scriptural answer to this question, and if you believe the Bible to be the final authority in all matters of faith and practice, and if you personally bow to the authority of God's word, some or all of your problem will be solved. *Isaiah 8:20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*

Yours for Truth,
Wayne Camp

UNFOLDING A ROSE

A young, new preacher was walking with an older, more seasoned preacher in the garden one day. Feeling a bit insecure about what God had for him to do, he was asking the older preacher for some advice. The older preacher walked up to a rose bush and handed the young preacher a rosebud and told him to open it without tearing any of the petals. The young preacher looked in disbelief at the older preacher and was trying to figure out what a rosebud could possibly have to do with his wanting to know the will of God for his life and ministry. But, because of his great respect for the older preacher, he proceeded to try and unfold the rosebud while keeping every petal intact.

It wasn't long before he realized how impossible this was to do. Noticing the young preacher's inability to unfold the rosebud without tearing it, the older preacher began to recite the following poem:

It is only a tiny rosebud
A flower of God's design;
But I cannot unfold the petals
With these clumsy hands of mine.

The secret of unfolding flowers
Is not known to such as I.
GOD opens this flower so sweetly,
Then, in my hands, they die.

If I cannot unfold a rosebud,
The flower of God's design,
Then how can I have the wisdom
To unfold this life of mine?

So, I'll trust in Him for leading
Each moment of my day.
I will look to Him for His guidance
Each step of the Pilgrim's way.

The pathway that lies before me
Only my Heavenly Father knows.
I'll trust him to unfold the moments,
Just as He unfolds the rose.

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