

# Focus on the Kingdom

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## Is the Trinity Obsolete? Is Archaic Theology Obsolete...Or Just Irrelevant?

by Bob Shutes, Wisconsin

**Please note:** This is from the *tongue-in-cheek* website [theologyallstars.com](http://theologyallstars.com)

Dearest Reader,

We trust you are enjoying our account of the All Stars Reunion! However, it has recently come to our attention that a growing number of people are no longer impressed with the “church fathers.” Many believers have even started to ask, “Is the Trinity obsolete?” This is shocking news! Those who are devoted to the writings of prestigious theologians from antiquity may find this very upsetting! If believers begin to doubt the relevance, indeed even the truth, of archaic theology, what will become of us? Could we survive such a calamity? In the spirit of brotherly love we invite you to consider a perspective that is sure to provide a measure of comfort.

### Ancient Theologians Did All the Thinking for Us!

Theologians from the distant past felt free to think for themselves, but modern believers should not attempt this on their own. It is well known that ancient theologians were much better at thinking than we are. Since all the good thinking was done long ago, we should probably just leave well enough alone. Today it is our duty to faithfully repeat their words and thoughts and that is enough! Sensible people know this is true. Just because ideas conceived nearly two thousand years ago are un-biblical, does it really make sense to discard them in favor of ideas that are biblically sound and understandable? You’ll just have to decide that for yourself.

### Obsolete Dogma #1: There Are Four Elements

The ancient Greeks believed earth, air, fire and water were the four elements that make up everything in the world! Aristotle added ether and made it five elements since he figured the stars couldn’t be made of the same stuff we have here on earth. Modern science claims the four “elements” of the Greeks aren’t elements at all, but so what? The Greek theory sure makes more sense than believing in a bunch of invisible atoms when you’re sitting around a campfire! Besides, do you really want to disagree with someone as smart

as Aristotle? If you insist on thinking like people thought a few thousand years ago, we say go right ahead!

### Obsolete Dogma #2: Women Are Imperfect Men

Plato and Aristotle had some pretty stunning ideas about women too. Plato was known to have said, “I give thanks to nature that I was born a human being and not a dumb animal, and that I was born a man rather than a woman.” The Greeks were convinced that men were superior to women! Aristotle wrote, “A woman is an imperfect male. She is female because her body is not properly made.” I beg to differ! To my eyes they look just wonderful and they are certainly not inferior to men. Could it be that Grecian thought about women was misguided and wrong? But...who are we to question?

### Obsolete Dogma #3: God is a Triune Pantheon

Greek philosophers were very sophisticated and their religion was intricate and complicated. It took a lot of personalities (persons) to make up the Greek Pantheon of Gods. Is it any surprise that the Trinity they proposed for Christianity was cut from the same cloth? They mixed Greek philosophy with the Bible and came up with some of the most scholarly unbiblical ideas ever invented! The Triune Pantheon (Trinity) they proposed even sounded Biblical in a strange kind of way! You have to love those Greek philosophers! They may have been wrong but took themselves very seriously...and expected everyone else to take them seriously too.

### Were the Dogmas of Antiquity Just Plain Wrong?

Is it true that ideas from the distant past are better than anything we can envision today? Do we believe the four elements that make up the world are earth, air, fire and water? Is it true that men are superior to women? Are we convinced that God is a Trinity of three “Persons” just as those Greek philosophers said? Or was the ancient world of Greek thought wrong about a lot of things — including the nature of God?

### Does Archaic Theology Really Matter?

Can anyone even imagine a gospel of salvation that dares to ignore what the ancient Greeks had to say? Shockingly, some modern believers have actually decided to read the Bible for themselves and reach their own conclusions! These radicals view the “church

fathers” and their misguided thinking as relics from a bygone era that have become irrelevant. This is an appalling trend! Greek-thinking people should reject this approach before it completely ruins their appreciation for Platonic philosophy and Trinitarian thought! On the other hand...

### Please Update Your Thinking!

There are many elements that make up the world, but they are certainly not earth, air, fire and water. Women are not defective men. Most importantly, God is not a pantheon of three divine Persons! He is one God! The God of Israel is the singular, supreme and personal Being who created everything. We know Him as the Father, and Jesus Christ is His only Son. Jesus is the uniquely and miraculously conceived human Son of the God of Israel. He is our Messiah, our mediator and kinsman redeemer. This may not square with the Trinitarian view of God inspired by Greek philosophy, but it squares very nicely with the Bible. There now! Doesn't it feel good to bring your thinking up to date?

**PS:** Do not be afraid of rejecting the Trinitarian theology we inherited from long ago! You will not fall off the edge of Christianity. In fact, there's a very good chance you will land in the faith that was once delivered to the saints!

**PPS:** These thoughts will not hurt you...and they won't hurt your friends either. Why not send them a link to [theologyallstars.com](http://theologyallstars.com) and to [www.wonderfultheology.com](http://www.wonderfultheology.com) too? Thanks and God bless. ✧

### The Meaning of “Name” in the Bible

“How long will they go on plotting to make My people forget **who I am** [Heb. ‘**My name**’] through the dreams they tell one another?” (Jer. 23:27)

“Heb. ‘my name.’ In the OT, the ‘name’ reflected the person’s character (cf. Gen 27:36; 1 Sam 25:25) or his reputation (Gen 11:4; 2 Sam 8:13). To speak in someone’s name was to act as his representative or carry his authority (1 Sam 25:9; 1 Kgs 21:8). To call one’s name over something was to claim it for one’s own (2 Sam 12:28). Hence, here **to forget God’s name is equivalent to forgetting who he is** in his essential character (cf. Exod. 3:13-15; 6:3; 34:5-7). By preaching lies they had obliterated part of his essential character and caused people to forget who he really was” (NET Bible).

## Repentance: What Does It Look Like?

by Kenneth LaPrade, Texas

After about three decades of having assumed that I had “repented” in a biblical manner, I came to starkly doubt my previous indoctrination! As a young man involved in overt “dispensationalist” theology, while deeply engrossed in an OSAS (“once saved, always saved”) mindset, I sincerely thought that repentance merely meant initially confessing Jesus as lord in a methodical way according to Romans 10:9 (as extracted from its context). Consequently, I had been heavily influenced for decades by my so-called Bible teacher who emphasized the following lightweight concept of easy-believism, based on his formulaic interpretation of the KJV of Romans 10:9:

“‘Confess with thy mouth’ does not say confess one’s sins. If it had said ‘confess your sins,’ salvation would be of works; and we are not saved by works, but by grace. A man does not confess his sins; he confesses the Savior from sin, the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

Even though such a saying might have an appealing, catchy ring to it, it is deeply deceiving within the overall context of authentic new covenant repentance! First of all, as having been convinced “dispensationalists,” we (of our old group) had ironically missed the point that Jesus had emphasized repeatedly the dire importance of **not separating** him [Jesus] from his own vital words: “Why do you call me ‘lord, lord,’ when you refuse to do what I say?” (Luke 6:46). Also, see Matthew 7:21-27 and John 12:44-50. Sadly, classic dispensationalists regard Jesus’ urgent words as the outdated relics of a previous “dispensation” (or “administration”) — directly applicable **only** to Jews back before the Acts, chapter 2, day of Pentecost.

In addition to the above-mentioned aspect of grave dispensational error, there is another error in disassociating repentance from the dire need to confess sins, and also deliberately move away from them. This is very misleading! Dispensationalists tend to ignore the dynamic implications of Luke 16:16: “The time of the Law and prophets lasted until John; from then on the Gospel about the Kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is urgently invited to enter it.” So John’s ministry of repentance (as a precursor to Jesus’ preaching) was equally pertinent to Kingdom-Gospel truths (Matt. 3:1-2). John and Jesus both brought **newness** to the scene, not a mere regurgitation

<sup>1</sup> Victor Paul Wierwille, *Power for Abundant Living* (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1971), p. 296.

of “the letter of the Law,” but a new emphasis on its spirituality (Rom. 7:6).

So instead of promoting the old covenant rituals concerning animal sacrifices for sins in the Jerusalem temple, John (and later Jesus) emphasized **repentance** in a simple, new way! Baptism in water by John (which Jesus also supervised, and to which he also submitted, and later commanded as relevant for our whole age: John 3:22-26, 4:1-3; Mt. 28:19) was **not** a part of Mosaic Law — and it was very clearly accompanied by the confession of sins (Matt. 3:6).<sup>2</sup> As well as confessing sins, the folks were warned by John to proactively “produce fruit which corresponds to **repentance**” (Matt. 3:8: *metanoia* — a change of mind, a deliberate change in life direction).

Listeners to John were sternly warned not to place false confidence in being descendants of Abraham. It makes me think of how, nowadays, pop-culture type “Christians” might wrongly depend on superficial adherence to an unbiblical version of Jesus! John also described certain details of repentant actions (Luke 3:10-14) by speaking of honest generosity, strict financial integrity, and not abusing power. In general, the New Testament speaks frequently of “putting off” defective, sinful tendencies and pursuing thoughts, words, and actions which lovingly honor God. This **must** truly be available to us, with God’s merciful help, as simple folks with free will choice-making abilities; otherwise, God would be asking us to do the impossible!

For example, according to Galatians 5:16-26 we **can** “walk by the spirit” and actively avoid practicing “the works of the flesh”: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and similar things. We are reminded that those who habitually practice such things will **not** inherit the Kingdom of God. But we can clothe ourselves, so to speak, with “the fruit of the spirit”: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Colossians 3:5-11 also speaks of urgently **putting to death** a list of dark, worldly things which previously enslaved us. 2 Peter 1:5-11 provides a list of noble, godly qualities to **diligently and carefully** build within our lives — providing a rich entrance into God’s coming Kingdom! Other lists serve as either bold, useful warnings (1 Cor. 6:9-11) or as kind-hearted realities to emulate (Phil. 2:1-2, 4:8-9). Such dramatic, potential changes, acted upon from the “heart” (the center of our decision-making faculties) constitute the

bona fide nature of initial and continuous **repentance** during a vibrantly new life of devotion.

When one perceives the meaning of biblical baptism in Romans 6:3-4, one can clearly grasp that our Christian identification with Christ’s death, burial and resurrection is to be vividly translated into a **new** lifestyle! We are to consider our old, sinful nature to have been definitively identified with Messiah’s death, so that we are no longer slaves of sin. We are thus to consider ourselves to be alive to God — fully enabled to live for Him! We **can freely** give our body parts to be useful to God instead of giving into the sinful habits which once dominated us: Romans 6:1-23. The required **obedient effort** portrayed in this chapter 6 of Romans is never described as mere “icing on the cake” or frivolous, optional behavior! It is the solidly viewed commitment or pledge (1 Pet. 3:21) that one is making, upon deciding to get baptized in water as a function of **repentance** (genuine devotion to loyally changed thinking).

Upon initially repenting in this biblically dedicated way, what if one is still immature and prone to making blunders? After all, one does not immediately acquire all of God’s nuanced, practical wisdom upon making an initial commitment to obey Jesus’ Gospel of the coming Kingdom. One obviously needs to grow (2 Pet. 3:18). There are many Scriptural truths to encourage us **not to give up**, despite our possible lack of maturity or weak tendencies to fall into unintentional mistakes. Keep in mind that Scriptural letters (by Paul and others) addressed several key detrimental errors which could possibly impede us — but **Paul never gave up** on struggling folks!

For example, in his early travels Paul had worked diligently — through great personal suffering (he had even been stoned and left for dead!) — in southern **Galatia** (Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe: Acts 13:14-14:24, 16:1-6). He had frankly clarified to Jews and Gentiles alike (13:39b) that according to Kingdom-Gospel integrity, “Everyone who believes is made right from all things from which you could not be put right by the Law of Moses.” When Paul later wrote Galatians to these folks (perhaps the very first of his letters), he was somewhat exasperated that they (mostly from a Gentile background) had been seductively misled into thinking that they could improve themselves through embracing circumcision (and old covenant legalism), pointing out their logical foolishness. He wrote, “My children, I am again suffering birth pains until Messiah is formed in you. I wish I could be present with you now and change my

<sup>2</sup> Please see my previous article: “Why Not Get Baptized in Water?” in the December, 2021 issue of *Focus on the Kingdom*, to see precise details about why **not** to go

along with faulty, dispensationalist ideas which downplay the importance of baptism in water.

tone, because I am perplexed about you” (Gal. 4:19-20). Nevertheless, he keeps making ardent appeals to them to truly perceive that according to new covenant standards, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision (6:15) **now** means anything! Those who would respond correctly would (6:16), through peace and mercy, be part of “the Israel of God” (a metaphorical reference to the new covenant, international family of genuine Christian believers).

Similar deficiencies could be pointed out about the immature Corinthians. About how many significant subjects were they either terribly ignorant (even the resurrection: 1 Cor. chapter 15) or extremely divisive? How many stern rebukes were meted out in Paul’s two letters to them? Nevertheless, Paul expresses deep joy that such bold reproof from him (2 Cor. 7:8-11) was met with repentant “godly sorrow,” which would truly restore them, getting them back on track!

According to 1 John 1:5-2:2, even if one were to be temporarily deceived so as “to walk in darkness,” God’s provision of **forgiveness** is totally applicable (through the all-encompassing blood sacrifice of the Messiah), **if** one confesses his/her sin (of having walked in darkness) and repents — by walking in the light. Restorative help by God’s unfathomable grace and mercy, even when one has natural weaknesses and misunderstandings (Heb. 4:14-16), should be continually sought and embraced!

Therefore, the fact is abundantly clear that one **must strive** (with a continuous, diligent effort) to enter God’s promised, future Kingdom (Matt. 7:13-14). Nevertheless, such a daunting challenge should not deter us at all from faithful, **repentant** dedication (with changed priorities and focus) toward a resplendent, transformed life! It is **always** by God’s extensive grace and mercy that one can perceive obstacles and be spiritually enabled (through God’s protection and vast wisdom) to deal honestly with life’s twists and turns.

We are repeatedly exhorted **not to give up** on taking fervent, obedient steps forward. See the following passages:

- Colossians 1:23: “**If** you remain solidly in the faith.”
- Hebrews 3:6 “**If** we hold fast our confidence and the hope...firm to the end.”
- Hebrews 3:14, 6:11-12, 10:35-39, as well as many other similar Scriptures.

So let us “run” (1 Cor. 9:24b) to win! ✧

## Levi Meets Melchizedek in the Loins of Abraham

### The Federal Headship of Our Faith

*Unlocking the Secret of Understanding the Pre-existence of Jesus*

Thoughts by Larry Harris, Kentucky

**D**o you remember the song entitled “Father Abraham”? The words go: “Father Abraham had many sons; many sons had father Abraham; I am one of them, and so are you...” Then it repeats itself over and over again. The following passage reminds me of this song, in that it is about Levi being present in the loins of “father Abraham”:

“And so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, **for Levi was still in the loins of his father Abraham when Melchizedek met him**” (Heb. 7:9-10).

Understanding how this is possible, when Abraham is really Levi’s great-grandfather, is going to help us better understand a number of similar thoughts found in our Bible. At first this passage seems somewhat difficult to understand, especially if you are not acquainted with similar Scriptures found in our Bible; but as we will carefully examine this passage and other similar ones, like the Bereans (Acts 17:10-11), we will better understand what is meant by the fact that Levi meets Melchizedek through the loins of his great-grandfather Abraham. And in particular, it will correct a lot of misunderstanding about the so-called pre-existence of Jesus as the Messiah.

When I was growing up I heard something like this from my mother, who was so proud to say that our side of her family were related to Abraham Lincoln. As kids, we thought that to be cool. The truth is that we are related through Abraham Lincoln’s wife’s side of the family, because Mary Todd Lincoln’s relatives are connected to my mother’s line. My mother was proud of the fact that we had even such a small connection to Abraham Lincoln.

Levi had more of a direct lineage connection to Abraham; that is, Abraham had only one son, Isaac; Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob; and Jacob had twelve sons, one of whom was Levi. That is four generations over a number of years, so Abraham was Levi’s great-grandfather.

So how do we understand, “And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father Abraham when Melchizedek met him” (Heb. 7:9)? If you know the Old Testament well, you realize that Abraham is the only Old Testament person who we know for sure ever met Melchizedek in person (Gen. 14:17-24). The point is that we are not told of any other of Abraham’s

descendants ever meeting Melchizedek, and the likelihood is that too many years passed between Abraham and his great-grandson, Levi, for Levi to have met Melchizedek. Levi had not yet been conceived; but in Jewish thinking that makes *Levi present with Abraham* when Abraham comes into contact with Melchizedek years earlier, because Levi was in his father's "loins."

The technical term for this is "federal headship." Federal headship refers to one representing a group united under a federation or **covenant**. The leader of the group, the federal head, is seen as representing the whole group. For example, a country's president may be seen as the federal head of the nation, representing and speaking on its behalf before the rest of the world (Wikipedia).

Abraham qualifies as the federal head of the covenant Yehovah made with Israel, and he is our father as well: "Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham...And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:7, 29). Since Levi was present with Abraham in his loins, then we too in a similar manner were present when Abraham met Melchizedek, but that is only figuratively speaking — not that we were literally present with them any more than Levi was with Abraham.

### Other Examples in the Scriptures

I have always enjoyed doing puzzles; the Bible is like a 31,102-piece puzzle (that's the number of verses in the Bible). It is not until you first get the border pieces to frame the sides that you begin to get a better picture, what I call the foundation. Then as you gather certain pieces of the same color together, the picture becomes clearer, but then you have those pieces which help you to connect sections together. That is what Hebrews 7:9-10 does for me; it connects so many otherwise difficult passages together to make the complete picture.

In the same manner David is frequently referred to as the "father" of not only his immediate sons, but also the father of his grandsons, great-grandsons, and through multiple generations down the road. As Abraham is the federal head of his lineage, so David is also the federal head of his lineage; thus, David's succeeding descendants, who years later sit on his same throne, still refer to him as their father, which includes Jesus. As it is recorded in Matthew's Gospel, the first verse, "The record of the origin of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). If we took this at face value, Jesus would have two fathers, not one! We know not to think that way.

If we can understand that, we can understand that the Father is the Federal Head of all creation. Jesus

continues the creation process of his Father by equipping us to become sons of God, like him. We too are being built up into a dwelling place for His Holy Spirit to live (Eph. 2:19-21). As Paul said that we are always building on a foundation that others built (1 Cor 3:10), the Father started this creating process and it continues through Jesus His Son, and through us today as we await his reappearing to usher in his Father's Kingdom on earth.

This same federal headship manner of thinking relates to other passages. "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Cor 15:22). Not everyone actually dies when Adam dies, but symbolically all die in their sins just as Adam died for his sins; thus Adam sinned and since he is the federal head of all men, we die like him, not die at the same time as he did. Now just as in Adam all died, so in Christ all are made alive; which does not mean that at the time that Jesus died, we all become alive; rather, in the federal headship sense of his resurrection, we also will be resurrected in our time.

One last great example of this style of writing is found in Proverbs 8 about wisdom. Wisdom is described metaphorically as being with Yehovah when He created the universe (Prov. 8:1, 22-ff). Notice the language about "wisdom" as if wisdom was actually a person present when God created the universe. Once again, the same is true of the Messiah. He was not actually present physically at creation, but he was in the "loins" or thinking of his Father Yehovah at that time.

I'll not take the time to share other examples, but only mention a couple for your further study as they apply to the same concept of being connected by means of the loins of someone, or by federal headship:

- Messiah as the second Adam (Rom. 5:18-19; 1 Cor. 15:47)
- Jesus the Messiah as the rock that Moses struck in order to bring forth water (1 Cor. 10:4; Num. 20:11).

This Hebrews 7:9-10 passage opens our understanding to so many major references in the Scriptures. Trying to connect the puzzle sections without it, we would be simply arguing over words (2 Tim. 2:14-15). That only brings about divisions, when we are exhorted by the Apostle Paul that there be no divisions among us (1 Cor. 1:10-13). We worship only one God, the Father! Jesus is the man Messiah, the Messiah lord of Luke 2:11. ✧

## The Words of Jesus

by Robin Todd, Washington

A major theme of the gospel of John is **the words of Jesus**. In fact the first chapter of this book sets up that theme when it says that God's word (*logos*, not a person) became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn. 1:1-14). The mechanism by which that happened was holy spirit moving on the womb of Jesus' mother in order to bring the Christ into existence (Luke 1:35). Jesus the Christ is the human embodiment of God's own *logos* (word, divine wisdom and plan), which he then conveyed throughout his ministry through the words he spoke.

Here is a list of some of the references to the words of Jesus in his ministry, as recounted by John:

John 3:34: Jesus speaks the words of God

John 4:41: Samaritans believed because of his words

John 5:24: eternal life involves hearing his word and believing God

John 5:38: we must believe Jesus in order for God's word to abide in us

John 5:48: if we believe the words of Moses we should also believe the words of Jesus

John 6:27-63: we are to imbibe the words of Jesus; they are the words of life

John 6:68: disciples believe Jesus has the words of life

John 7:16-18: Jesus' words came from the Father to His glory

John 7:46: officers exclaimed that no one ever spoke as Jesus spoke

John 8:26, 38: he speaks what the Father taught him

John 8:31: if we continue in his words we are truly his disciples

John 8:43: Jews could not understand Jesus because they could not hear his words

John 8:47: those who are of God hear the words of God

John 8:51: if we keep Jesus' words we will not see death

John 12:47-48: the one who does not accept Jesus' words will be judged at the last day

John 14:23-24: the words Jesus speaks are God's words; we should keep his words

John 15:7-8: if the words of Jesus remain in us we will bear fruit to God

These numerous (but not exhaustive) references are certainly evidence of a major theme of John — the central importance of Jesus' words. With these as a backdrop we come now to John, chapter 17. In this

prayer, Jesus again puts major focus on his words which are his Father's words. But what is missed by so many is that he also declares that these words not only bring God glory, but also bring glory to those who speak them, hear them, and believe them.

In this prayer, Jesus recounts how in his ministry he had made the Father known to his disciples by giving them His words (vs. 3-12). Those words which he conveyed would make the receivers holy (vs. 13-21). These words are described as "glory," which Jesus passed along to his followers so that they might be perfected in unity with each other (vs. 22-23). He then concludes his prayer by requesting of the Father that believers would all share with him in the ultimate glory yet to come (vs. 24). In the meantime he would continue to make his Father known to men (vs. 26).

The theme of John 17 has little to do with Jesus' ultimate glory in resurrection, although it does include that. And it has nothing at all to do with some kind of a past life. Rather, it is about the work Jesus did in revealing and glorifying the Father through his earthly message and ministry — his **words**. This chapter, along with the rest of Jesus' ministry prior to his crucifixion and resurrection, is primarily about the words of Jesus. No wonder that those words are spirit and life (John 6:63). The one disaster we are to avoid is to claim to "accept Jesus" but not believe and obey his words/teachings! ✧

## Resolutions: Life on Purpose

by Barbara Buzzard

New year? New attitude! Resolutions? Yes, they would be the minimum prerequisite. But the history of failure is mammoth. In fact — a universal joke. The very somber and motivating factor of Christian resolutions is the determination we must make in deciding what to do with the time that is given to us. Taking inventory is essential, especially in some of those corners of our lives where time just evaporates. Is it just at the New Year that *resolve* comes into play? Without *daily resolve* we are at the whim of any manner of time stealers and time wasters and brain numb-ers and dumbing-down devices. We are vulnerable in the extreme. The high cost of intentions-not-followed-through-on leaves us diminished and fragile. Instead of the "Here I stand" — it's the old and tired "Here I am — again." It need not be.

Christians have a decided advantage here. We have examples of how to do this and beat the odds. We have Job's brilliant formula: "I have made a covenant with my eyes..." (Job 31:1). That is more than ever necessary in today's world. We have Paul who resolved "not to be dominated by anything" (1 Cor. 6:12). And

we have David: “I will walk with integrity of heart” (Ps. 101:2).

Talk about resolve: I *will...That is resolve* for us in a nutshell and also “I *will not...*” And we have a decided advantage too in the promise of help. The promise that we can do all things through Jesus who gives us the strength is worth more than any other imaginable thing.

### Army of Activists

One of the best resolutions one could make is to be an activist for the faith, i.e. to *speak* about it. Remember? Both in season and out of season (2 Tim. 4:2). No bailing out. And it is here that mindset *really* matters. I am not aware of any excuses that are acceptable. No battle plan equals no success. No combat strategy equals no victory. Revelation 21 sums up the requirements: Anyone who is a coward (and I fear that the sin of silence could be included here), who does not confess faith, who is immoral, who is a murderer...who tells lies...is not going to survive. Clearly, being a coward is not acceptable Christian behavior.

1 Timothy 4:16b is compelling: “Stay true to what is right, and God will save you and those who **hear** you.” Elementary — but there is no hearing without speaking; you can’t have one without the other. We (the church) are to be the *support* of the Truth (1 Tim. 3:15b). There is no other organization to do this. Our best gift to God would be to become an army of activists defending and speaking Truth. (And yes, in today’s world, this amounts almost to a revolutionary act.) Imagine if we all obeyed Ephesians 4:25: “So put away all falsehood and tell your neighbor the truth.” Consider the Chinese Christians and other underground and persecuted Christians and their incredible bravery and determination, the risks which they take in order to worship, but at the expense of their lives. They display the *courage of their convictions* in an awe-inspiring way. Perhaps they could send us missionaries? ✧

### Comments

- “Last night I finished reading *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity’s Self-Inflicted Wound* for the second time. It’s nearly 13 years since I’d read it the first time. It isn’t light reading, so it was a slow, thoughtful process through it — but apart from the Bible, this book has impacted my life more than any other. I dare people to read it! About 13 years ago I reluctantly read it to prove to someone that it was wrong. It was the biggest piece of humble pie I’ve ever eaten! Time, many discussions and Bible studies later, and multiple times reading the whole Bible over the last

13 years, have only confirmed the truth written in this book. The cost is high — but it always has been so down through the centuries.” — *Australia*

- “I am an independent Bible scholar. I am against the teaching of the Trinity, the immortal soul and the observance of a weekly Sabbath. I find your approach to the Bible very interesting and would like to read more material for my research. Unfortunately I don’t know English well, but with the Google translator I solve the problem. Thanks for your work.” — *Italy*

- “The Trinity believers I converse with aren’t too keen on continuing the conversation. I don’t think they are used to someone challenging them on their faith. Something that I have noticed is that there are as many explanatory models for the Trinity as there are Trinity believers.” — *Sweden*

“Calvinists, who deny that salvation can ever be lost, reason on the subject in a marvelous way. [!] They tell us that no virgin’s lamp can go out; no promising harvest be choked with thorns; no branch in Christ can ever be cut off from unfruitfulness; no pardon can ever be forfeited, and no name blotted out of God’s book! They insist that no salt can ever lose its savor; nobody can ever ‘receive the grace of God in vain’; ‘bury his talents’; ‘neglect such great salvation’; trifle away ‘a day of grace’; ‘look back’ after putting his hand to the gospel plow. Nobody can ‘grieve the Spirit’... nor ‘deny the Lord that bought them’; nor ‘bring upon themselves swift destruction.’ Nobody, or body of believers, can ever get so lukewarm that Jesus will ‘spew them out of His mouth.’

“They use reams of paper to argue that if one ever got lost he was never found (John 17:12); that if one falls, he never stood (Rom. 11:16-22 and Heb. 6:4-6); if one was ever ‘cast forth,’ he was never in, and ‘if one ever withered,’ he was never green (John 15:1-6); and that ‘if any man draws back,’ it proves that he never had anything to draw back from (Heb. 10:38, 39); that if one ever ‘falls away into spiritual darkness,’ he was never enlightened (Heb 6:4-6)...that if you ‘again get entangled in the pollutions of the world,’ it shows that you never escaped (2 Pet 2:20); that if you ‘put salvation away’ you never had it to put away, and if you make shipwreck of faith, there was no ship of faith there!! **In short they say: If you get it, you can’t lose it; and if you lose it you never had it.** May God save us from accepting a doctrine, that must be defended by such fallacious reasoning!”

— Aaron Merritt Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology*, 1931, Vol. 2, p. 280-281 (quotation popularly attributed to John Wesley)