

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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Why Are We Sending Our Children to War?

by Alane Rozelle, Michigan

I write this article with sadness in my heart. We are failing in our mission of discipleship, of training people for living in and reigning in a *peaceable and peaceful* Kingdom. Another young, recently baptized, Jesus-confessing believer has signed up for the military. Oh, they may end up in a non-combat posting, but they will still be part of the war machine and will be trained for combat and will be required to pledge allegiance to the system. Even the non-combat positions can be called up to battle if needed.

The recruiting system is deceptive. It persuades our youths with promises to pay for college and fat sign-on bonuses in exchange for a mere three to four years of one's life. It promises to make a "man" out of a boy (or a girl?). It swears that the training received can get a person a great job later, a good pension after 20 years, care for the rest of one's life — that is, if a person lives. The risks and dangers are down-played, hidden.

The system should be required to loudly proclaim all the downsides of its "product," the same way that pharmaceutical commercials must list the dozens of negative side effects of their "wonder drug." Or how about an honest commercial showing the results of long exposure to war, like the old anti-smoking commercials that showed the guy with a tracheotomy after getting throat cancer from years of sucking in carcinogens.

But that's the world system of this present evil age. It is not honest. The responsibility for telling the truth lies in the hands of the church. *We* are the ones tasked with teaching, training, discipling, and guiding new (and old) believers in God's Truth. If we shirk our duty, the world will certainly not teach the Truth, but it most certainly will fill the gap. The world, like the serpent in the Garden of Eden, is expert at twisting the truth, luring with sly words, enticing the naïve with shiny baubles and empty promises.

We cannot look to the world for true guidance. Only God is the perfect source. And so, in regard to war, the military, violence, and non-violence, let us look at what God's words in Scripture tell us. Many seekers refer to the abundant battles and genocides in

the Old Testament as justification for Christian participation in war. That is a topic for another writing.

When Jesus began his ministry, however, he turned many ancient Jewish practices and beliefs on their head. He repeatedly made statements such as "You have heard that it was said... **but I say...**" (Matt. 5). He railed against their practices of adultery, divorce, and oaths. Of the six "I say..." statements in the chapter, however, the other three all have to do with non-violence: loving one's enemy, not seeking revenge, and not murdering.

In actuality, Jesus was revealing the true heart of God, the true understanding and carrying out of God's laws. For in Matthew 5:17 he said, "Do not think that I came to do away with or undo the Law [of Moses] or the writings [of the prophets]; I did not come to destroy but to fulfill them" (Amplified). The Jews had become legalistic in their religion. Jesus called the leaders "whitewashed tombs"; they did everything right on the outside, but their hearts were dark and dead on the inside. He came to "set the captive free" (Luke 4:18), to illuminate the freedom that is in God's statutes. Therefore, John 8:36 assures us, "If the Son makes you free, then you are unquestionably free" (Amplified).

Returning to the statements in Matthew 5, we read, "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not murder,' but I say to you that everyone who continues to be angry with his brother...and who says 'You fool!' shall be in danger of the fire [of Gehenna]" (Matt. 5:21-22). This declaration refers to relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ, with our fellow believers. Not only are we **not** to murder them, but we are not even to hold grudges, anger, or malice towards them. There are Christians in every country around the world. When wars occur, Christians are killed right along with non-Christians. Bombs and bullets have no preference for one or the other. How then can a true believer in God's saving love be a part of a war or a military that is causing the deaths of His beloved ones? This should not be!

In Matthew 5:38-39 we see, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth [punishment that fits the offense].' But I say to you, do not resist an evil person" (Amplified). No paybacks, no revenge is allowed for the Christian. When 9-11 occurred, many Americans wanted to avenge all those deaths. Even Christians signed up for the army as fast as they could for their chance to hit back, while others held prayer circles in which they denounced not just

the actual evildoers but everyone from “over there.” This also should not be!

Then for a third time Jesus addresses the issue of a proper attitude towards offense: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love [that is, unselfishly seek the best or higher good for] your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may show yourselves to be the children of your Father who is in heaven” (Amplified).

Could Jesus have stated this in a clearer fashion? **Love** your enemies. What aspect of shooting, dropping bombs on, or destroying the houses of people is **loving them**? Put yourself in their shoes: Would you feel loved by Christians who were chasing you from your home or murdering your family members? Does it make a difference if you, a devout churchgoer, say a prayer before taking part in genocide or carry a Bible while manning a machine gun? Does God only see the intent in your heart or does He see your actions too? We are to prove to the world that we are **children of our Father in heaven** by doing what the world does not do: LOVE. Love our fellow believers, love our neighbors, love even our enemies!

By continuing to participate in the military system, we prove that we are no different from the world in our attitudes toward those who harm us and offend us. Being vengeful and killing others is the world’s way of dealing with problems. Joining ourselves to the war machine, pledging allegiance to it, training to kill and destroy, and supporting it with our money and prayers is anathema to God. Those who call themselves God’s people should never, ever be a part of that. We must stop feeding our children to this juggernaut.

I cannot even begin to address the after-effects of military action. It would take up far too many pages. This is a pre-emptive paper rather than a post-action one. We must teach our children the way of peace now, so that they will know how to live in a Kingdom of peace in the future. We must teach them how to love their enemies so that, God willing, those enemies may one day become believers. For it is not God’s will that anyone should perish, but that **all** should come to repentance, and receive the life of the age to come in the peaceful Kingdom of God (2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4). ✧

¹ This is not to diminish the rest of the commandments, but simply a broad overview.

The Challenges We Face

by Barbara Buzzard

Superficially, at least, it seems that it was comparatively simple for our ancient ancestors in the faith. God said these are the rules: **no other Gods, and no idols.**¹ They were quick to agree. Only six weeks later they were found to be creating a golden calf as a replica of an Egyptian god which they worshipped. Israel had made a solemn vow of fidelity and obedience to God. But God had to repeat that command and that warning often. His words couldn’t have been clearer. He impressed upon them the seriousness of their worshipping Him and Him alone as their God and the danger of worshipping any but Him. (In our day, which of us cannot remember being told: “If I have told you once, I have told you a thousand times?”) But time and time again, our ancestors in the faith would veer off the path. A summary of many of the chapters in the Old Testament might read like this: “the people did what was evil in the sight of God.” Often the sin in question was idol worship. They took alternative routes, strayed time and time again, then repented and sinned yet again.

How are we linked to these people? Consider the term “Judeo-Christian”; there is no Christian without first the “Judeo” part. Our Savior, the one whose words give us Christianity, also gives us that “Judeo” part, as Jesus is that Jew seated at the right hand of God. And Israel’s God is Jesus’ God.

So serious were God’s warnings to Israel that He said: “Make no treaties with them and have nothing to do with their gods. Do not even let them live among you! If you do, they will infect you with their sin of idol worship, and that would be disastrous for you.” (Ex. 23:32-33). God ordained that His people be separate. That separation was a good thing in that it afforded a wall of protection. But then as now, people didn’t understand that and wanted to be like all the other nations. This is disastrous to the faith.

What does our non-acceptance of the Trinity do? It separates us. (Or should, if we own up to it.) Consider this:

“To worship Christ with the wrong beliefs about him is to worship a false Christ, by whatever name we call him, for we in so doing falsely imagine him to be other than he is, and other than he is revealed in Scripture to be.”² This nothing-short-of stunning warning was written during a different theological atmosphere than today’s, when such things could be said without “Christian” wrath being poured out.

² R.A. Cole, *Tyndale NT Commentaries on Mark*, p. 199.

Today many “Christians” will not be pleased to read these words and will deem them divisive and judgmental. Please read that quote again. Has the thought ever occurred to you that the God-Jesus could be an idol?

As I write this, a reader has just sent the words to a chorus which he could not sing: “You are the one true God, Jesus...There’s no one stronger, none greater.” Is this not blasphemy?

It is ridiculous for me to speak about courage and not strive to display it myself. And so I admit to my being hesitant about using the above quotation because it has been shown to be explosive. Even some with our views of God and His Messiah don’t wish this to be aired! (The commentary further compares worship of a false Christ with Baal worship.)

God’s rules were both restraining and prohibiting. “It is therefore no cause for surprise that the New Testament writers appear to have submitted to this constraint and to have avoided using the word ‘god’ or ‘divine’ of Jesus. Jesus himself is recorded as having endorsed the standard Jewish confession of monotheism (Mark 12:29) and accepted the prohibition which this implied of any moral comparison between himself and God.”³

I hope that the refrain “no other gods and no idols” will ring in our heads as we examine this subject.

Part Two, i.e. the New Covenant

When the Great Deceiver deceived us by ushering in the mathematical impossibility of one being more than one, we were “off to the races” and multiplying God.

Some say: “Yes, but my church (Trinitarian) has the most loving, the most dedicated, the sincerest people I have ever known.” Sincerity is a wonderful quality. Where would we be without it? *But God said: No other Gods and no idols.* Sincerity is no substitute for Truth. Breaking this first commandment of God is surely the most destructive thing we could do. The idea that Jesus is God has for all intents and purposes been institutionalized, breaking the first commandment. And yet we are told to “Worship the LORD your God and serve only Him” (Luke 4:8). If we worship Jesus as God, we are doing something that is *expressly forbidden* by Almighty God. And we are not immune to having idols, even though brilliantly disguised; that terrible twist of saying that Jesus is God blinds us to the supreme truth of the One True God and breaks both covenant and commandment.

Much rests on who Scripture reveals Jesus to be. (Who do you say that I am?) It must be said that as Christians it is right and proper that we worship Jesus as Messiah Lord. That is a far cry from worshipping him as The One God. Jesus *always* deflects worship back to God.

How is it possible to hold two opposing ideas at the same time? This is cognitive dissonance. We know that Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples” (John 8:31). Blessing those who *do not hold* to Jesus’ teaching about who he is and who the Father is creates a contradiction: “no other gods and no idols.”

Doubly Difficult

Here is another relevant and astonishing quotation from a present-day reader: “It is easier to teach someone the Truth⁴ than it is to make someone who knows the Truth see that it is *important to hold it!*” There is a chasm between believing the Truth and regarding it as important, let alone essential. So there are two fronts or bastions of unbelief that we battle — the first is the Scripture’s Truth about the identity of the Father and the Son, and the second is the *importance* of that Truth. There is no victory in knowing the Truth unless you have also engaged with its huge ramifications, its ultimate value, why it matters. What lies hidden is that our *reaction* to Truth reveals our heart.

It would be good to see ourselves as recipients of truth in the same way that those in the parable of the sower reacted. Which of the four categories of soils would you fit into? The fact that we must have a passion for the truth in order to be saved should speak volumes — but does it? Blessed are your eyes when you see the truth — but then what? The next step is to come to love it, enough to defend it, and enough to be willing to pay the price, perhaps even being a target of derision.

A valiant Bible teacher puts it this way: What a cemented load of misunderstanding is it our task to shift!

What did Jesus say about this question? He said that the Shema (a prayer stating that the LORD our God is one LORD) is the most important of all the commandments. Shockingly, the Shema is virtually absent from much of Christianity. The Shema formed the infrastructure of Jesus’ teaching. It is the centerpiece of Jesus’ faith. And so the question must be asked: Do we have the same faith as Jesus did?

³ A.E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History*, p. 157

⁴ And we know only too well how very difficult that can be!

Dangerous Truth?

What is the price of a dangerous truth? For Socrates, it was hemlock. For Jesus, it was the cross. History's greatest truth-tellers and bravest voices share one fate: silencing. Today, the weapons are digital. And the battlefield is your mind.

"One of the fundamental problems with the charismatic movement (going all the way back to its origins over 100 years ago) is that the intellect is the enemy of faith. The disengaged mind is the enemy of the Christian. It is the friend of the false teacher."⁵ The intellect must be engaged in order to tell us whether what we are hearing is the faith of Jesus. Failure to ask that question and make the comparison will lead to acceptance of false teaching.

Would that there were a Truth serum, a faster way to see Truth, a kind of early recognition that we could cultivate in this world of endless noise. We know that it could not be that easy, but we can and must develop a kind of practical discernment along with a hunger for Truth which will feed that passion. If as believers in the One God, any of us have been seen to be arrogant, then shame on us, for that turns people away and is a betrayal of the very Truth in question. Shame on believers who tarnish the very Truth they hold. And it is direct disobedience to Paul's words when he tells us to imitate Jesus in his humility.

As biblical unitarians we possess an idea almost unheard of in Christian settings and by most people. How do we live up to the truth of the One God? Here again both passion for Truth and courage enter the picture. We are surrounded by weakness but we *must not respect it in others nor tolerate it in ourselves*. We seem to have a "courage outage," but as the body must have a spine, so too believers must develop courage. The alternative is to be useless, a truly awful thing to be said of one or of an organization. We must hone the skill of living as biblical unitarians in all humility. We have no license to be anything but obedient and courageous.

Sometimes we must ask ourselves – what are we *doing*? What is the example of my life *saying*? What is the lesson that our life teaches? Do we validate the substitution of sincerity for Truth? Is it possible that the beliefs of many Christians are beliefs that Scripture *warns against*? Is it possible that these beliefs actually *dishonor* both God and Jesus? How do the Father and Son feel about our silence as to who they are?

It is not my place nor that of Restoration Fellowship to direct your fellowship, but only to urge

⁵ Justin Peters

⁶ God approved of and blessed Jesus as he introduced the new covenant.

that we stand openly and honestly for the One God and His Messiah, and — it must be said — all that our Messiah taught. This is where *courage intersects with faith*. *Are we not to contend for the faith?*

No Other Gods and No Idols

While I placed great emphasis in this article on our belief in our Father as the only true God, this is not to say or imply that the rest of Jesus' teaching is not essential. Nor can the belief in one God be isolated from God's Gospel of the Kingdom (God without His Gospel of the Kingdom is unthinkable). The accompanying teachings of one hope, one faith, one baptism, and one spirit are also essential.

Let us walk a road less traveled together with those of "like precious faith." Let us live up to the Truth we have obtained and anchor ourselves to that Truth by anchoring ourselves to Jesus' teaching, which is exactly that of his Father.⁶ Without those words we are lost at sea and vulnerable to every wind blowing our way. Let us consider how our beliefs should restrain and constrain our behavior. Surely we are limited by God's commands?! Let us translate our faith into actions. ✧

Standing for the Hope of Israel

by Anthony Buzzard
from the 1999 Theological Conference

My purpose in this article is to focus on the Kingdom understanding of the Gospel which I believe is an absolutely necessary correction to current popular and pervasive accounts of the Gospel. I understand the Gospel of salvation to be a message of hope for mankind based on the seed and land — "seed and soil" — promises made by God to Abraham and David and executed by God through the Messiah and Son of God, the lord Jesus.⁷ The biblical Gospel thus addresses more than the salvation of the individual. It provides the Grand Scheme by which God is recovering rebel planet earth for Himself. Our task as believers is to come in line with that divine program and to play our part in the restoration exercise in which God is engaged.

First a bit of personal experience: In the spring of 1956 I was in my room at Oxford pondering my new-found delight in the Bible and the teachings of

⁷ The "my lord" (*adoni*) of Ps. 110:1, a verse alluded to 23 times in the NT. *Adoni* is always the title of a human or angelic superior (195 times), never of God who is *Adonai* (449 times).

Jesus. (Mum and Dad had just set up a visit to the psychologist to see if my brain was still functioning as it should: I was later pronounced sane, despite my religious enthusiasm which was not considered normal by friends and relatives in the Church of England.) I was pondering specifically the way in which my evangelical friends of the Oxford Intercollegiate Christian Union (OICU) were working their presentation of what they called the Gospel. And note that their urging the likes of myself to “get saved” implied that the *normal* Church of England procedure (infant baptism, confirmation by the Bishop and nominal attendance at church “as and when,” in the case of many to be “hatched, matched and dispatched”) had not in fact saved me at all.

From the very first I developed an uneasy feeling about the way evangelicals did their “get saved” theology. It seemed potted, canned, lacking the richness of the biblical documents. It relied on a rather slick combining of verses out of Romans, and possibly John. But what struck me even then was that **Jesus’ teaching** seemed to be much less prominent in the “evangelical” gospel. And yet was not *Jesus* the model preacher of the Gospel? No, I was told, Jesus somehow *was* the Gospel! And inquiring into the saving Message/Gospel, as preached by the historical Jesus, seemed to be taboo.

I have spent some 45 years wondering how and why things had gone off track. I continue to think that there is something methodologically flawed with a system which presents the Gospel as Jesus dying and rising, but not as having *preached and taught the Gospel*. “You call me **teacher** and Lord,” Jesus said, “and you do well” (John 13:13). We hear much about calling Jesus Lord, but should he not be called Rabbi also?

We can put the problem this way: “Jesus came to do three days’ work,” said Billy Graham, “to die, to be buried, and to be raised.” Contrast that with Luke 4:43: “I must proclaim the Gospel about the Kingdom of God to the other cities also; that is the reason why God commissioned me.” This strikes me as a brilliant mission statement, but how many churches have adopted it as their mission statement?

Paul and Acts

Let’s look at Paul and the Gospel. I think we may find as we examine our subject that the solution to all current problems in teaching and preaching is to put the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, back into the prominent position it enjoys in the teaching

of all those New Testament pioneers of the faith, Jesus being the prime example of a preacher/teacher steeped in the Hebrew Bible and the Kingdom Hope of Israel.

Some of the most revealing and essential teachings of the faith are contained in Luke’s reports about what Paul taught as Gospel, as found in the book of Acts. A persistent tendency in popular evangelicalism is to study Paul out of his epistles only (often to the practical neglect of Jesus in the Synoptics). Paul is first of all difficult for the unstable and the uninstructed, Peter remarks in 2 Peter 3:16: “In his letters are some things which are difficult to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they also twist the rest of the Scriptures.”

Secondly, Paul was not writing to unconverted people in his epistles, to tell them how to become a Christian. He assumes a basic foundation and takes quite a bit for granted. Yet tracts offering salvation insist on giving us *isolated verses* from Romans as a presentation of the saving Gospel.

So Acts fills in the gaps for us beautifully. In Acts 20 Paul’s farewell speech in Miletus is recorded for us. Farewell speeches are particularly valuable as testimony to what is nearest and dearest to a man’s heart. In a farewell speech famous last words are delivered, in Paul’s case, to posterity.

Listen then to Paul in Acts 20: “I testified to both Jews and Gentiles about repentance toward God and faith in our lord Jesus Messiah...My desire is to finish my task and the ministry which I received from the lord Jesus: to testify to the Gospel of the grace of God...Among all of you **I went around preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom**...I have not held back from declaring to you the whole plan of God” (Acts 20:21, 24, 25, 27).

The Gospel of the grace of God (v. 24) is simply a synonymous term for the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (v. 25). As F.F. Bruce, with an eye on his opponents in the dispensationalist camp, states:

“The grace of God revealed in Christ is the subject of the Good News. It is evident from a comparison of this verse [Acts 20:24] with the next verse that the preaching of this Gospel is identical with the proclamation of the Kingdom” (*Commentary on Acts*).

Paul was fearless in his presentation of the sacred trust which Jesus had deposited with him: The Gospel of the Kingdom of God. In typical New Testament fashion Paul goes on to equate the Gospel of the Kingdom with the “**word** which is

able to build you up and give you the inheritance [of the Kingdom], among all those who are holy" (v. 32).

But now note the sorry state of confusion into which evangelicalism has fallen. I wrote in October, 1996 to Dr. Erwin Lutzer of Moody Bible Institute and asked about the Gospel of Grace and the Gospel of the Kingdom. Here was his reply:

"I believe that the Gospel of the Kingdom is different from the Gospel of the grace of God. The Gospel of the Kingdom had to do with the preparation of the people of Israel for the coming millennial Kingdom...The Gospel of grace has nothing to do with the Kingdom per se, but is a message of repentance which makes us members of God's family."

Here we see the division and consequent confusion that attends the current preaching of the Gospel. This opinion of the Moody Bible Institute is all pervasive. But it divides Paul from Jesus, complicates the Gospel and ultimately puts Jesus' Kingdom Gospel into eclipse.

It is a curious thing, but evangelicals are fond of the phrase "Gospel of grace," but seldom if ever do they provide Paul's defining phrase in the very next verse: The Gospel of the Kingdom. In Dispensationalism the equation of the two terms is systematically denied.

There are other wonderful glimpses into the mind of Paul which show him to be a true Pharisee and Christian in his grasp of the future hope — and thus an adherent to the Hebrew Bible as the essential source of the Gospel.

"This I admit to you," Paul says with ringing confidence to Governor Felix: "according to the way which they call a sect, I serve the God of our forefathers [the God of Jewish unitary monotheism], believing everything written in the Law and the prophets. I have the same hope in God as they [his accusers] have — that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust...It is for the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today" (Acts 24:14-21).

How trivial all these great issues appeared to Felix's successor Festus is recorded by Luke in Acts 25:19: The Jews "had several points of disagreement with Paul about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul said was alive."

From the Roman point of view, it was just another wacky superstition and an "in-house" dispute amongst Jews. Festus knew better than

many modern Christians that Paul's Christianity was the supreme flowering of Judaism, allowing of course for the new conception of the unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ and the breaking down of the partition wall.

Notice how firmly rooted Paul remains in his Pharisaic background, which was entirely compatible with the faith as it is in Jesus: "I lived as a Pharisee, the strictest sect of our religion. Now I stand here on trial for my hope in the promise made by God to our forefathers, the promise which our twelve tribes hope to reach as they earnestly worship God night and day. It is for this hope that I am being accused by the Jews, Your Majesty! Why do any of you here think it is unbelievable that God resurrects the dead?" (Acts 26:5-8).

Once again the vital focal points of Paul's theology remained always those with which Jesus himself had launched Paul into his ministry: "I appoint you as a servant and a witness...I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you. You are to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the domain of Satan to God [cp. Col. 1:13], so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance [i.e. of the Kingdom] among those who are made holy by faith in me...God has helped me to this day [the year was about 60 AD], so I am standing here to testify to people of every status, stating nothing except what the prophets and Moses said was going to happen: that the Messiah would suffer, and as the first to be resurrected from the dead he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:16-23).

In Acts 28 Paul declares again: "It is for the hope of Israel that I am tied with this chain" (Acts 28:20). Paul has only one Gospel which as we see in Acts 28:23 he takes first to the Jewish people. Note his evangelistic method: After Paul's Jewish audience has reminded him that he belongs to a "sect which is spoken against everywhere" (v. 22), Paul proceeds to the business of proclaiming the Gospel. This is much more than "three easy steps to salvation in Romans 10." A full day is set for the task of declaring the Gospel:

"They set a day to meet with him, and then they came in even greater numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till night Paul explained to them, solemnly testifying about the Kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the prophets. Some of

them were persuaded by what Paul said, but some refused to believe” (Acts 28:23-24).

Paul then took “**this** salvation” — there is no change in the Gospel message; it is still “this salvation of God” — to the Gentiles (Acts 28:28). We are reminded of Jesus’ preaching of God’s Gospel (Mark 1:14-15) and “**This** Gospel of the Kingdom” (Matt. 24:14). That very same salvation message, Paul says, is to go to the Gentiles and they indeed will listen. He then remains two full years in his own rented quarters, welcoming all who came to him, “proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and teaching about the lord Jesus Messiah with complete openness and without restriction” (Acts 28:30-31).

How very much Paul was a man of the Great Commission. Had not Jesus said that the Apostles were to teach *everything* he had taught, to all the nations? Paul was exactly like his master. Compare their Gospel styles:

Jesus “welcomed the crowds and began speaking to them about the Kingdom of God” (Luke 9:11)

Paul “welcomed all who came to him and proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and taught about the lord Jesus Messiah” (Acts 28:30-31).

It is therefore a major, systematic mistake to pit the words of Paul in Romans 10:9-10 against the plain evidence of what Paul preached as the Gospel. Romans 10:9-10 is made to say that confession of Jesus as Lord and belief in his resurrection is the only essential core of the Gospel. But context is all-important, and just as “absent from the body and present with the Lord” is extracted without context from the middle of Paul’s discussion about the resurrection and thus misunderstood, so Romans 10:9-10 is extracted from the context in Romans 10:17 where Paul concludes that “faith comes by hearing the Messiah’s Gospel.”

In conclusion, I have always tried to impress on my students the fact that “the **word**” in the Bible is not a general term for the Bible. The Bible normally calls itself “the Scriptures,” but “the **word**” is the technical term for the saving Gospel concerning the Kingdom of God and the truth about Jesus. Paul concluded his amazing career by “solemnly testifying to Jesus’ appearing and his Kingdom.” He then says, “Preach the **word**” (2 Tim. 4:1-2). It is not difficult to see what he meant by “the **word**.” It was the same **word** which had driven Jesus to a tireless circuit ministry in Galilee (Luke 4:43). It

was to hear that “**word of God**” that the crowds pressed in on him (Luke 5:1). And it was that same salvation which Paul doggedly took to the Gentiles (Acts 28:28-31). ✧

Comments

- “Thank you for all your monthly newsletters which are inspiring and insightful. I’ll just make some comments regarding the April issue:

“Terry Anderson writes a great article of inspiration and gives great direction to our blessed hope. Having of late learnt a lot more as to how false religious organizations work and how they control people, I see there will be a lot of work to unravel and re-teach people true life as God intended it in the future. It’s just so unbelievable as to what people can be deceived into and the control leaders can have over people. Revelation talks about repaying Babylon double for everything she did (18:6). If I’m thinking right on this, however that will be carried out, when those leaders are finished experiencing that, they will *never* re-offend.

“Anthony, in your well written article you state, ‘Idolatry is the greatest of all theological crimes, as bad as prostitution.’ I agree, except to say, you state it too softly. Having listened to many testimonies from people who have come out of false religions, I’d say idolatry is many times worse than prostitution. No doubt, there’s levels of effect as to the wrecking ball of prostitution, but the magnitude of false religion runs a lot larger.

“The article on ‘hell’ by Dr. Clark Pinnock is good, but so much more could be said about it. There’s one chapter in the late Thomas Allin’s book *Christ Triumphant* where he asks two questions that prove that *nobody* truly believes that lie. One question is, who could ever have children if there was the slightest chance that their child would end up in the ‘hell’ they imagine? Secondly, as he correctly points out, there’s nobody who acts like they believe it. To make a long story short, as in much of church history, it’s all about power and control of the people. These false churches are there, not to teach God’s truths and His true hope, but to control the people. The doctrine of ‘hell-fire’ in reality makes God Almighty into a monster worse than all the dictators of the past and present combined.

“I also want to thank you, Anthony, and all who need to be thanked for the recent 2026 Theological Conference. Thank you for all the great messages, keeping the truth alive in an era when things grow harder because of all the splitting of doctrines that’s going on.”

— Canada