

The Mountain Messenger

A CHRISTIAN VOICE FROM THE MOUNTAIN STATE AND BEYOND

**CHOSEN PRIESTS
CUT OFF**

**THE “SINNER’S
PRAYER” — IS IT
IN THE BIBLE?**

GOD BUILT ME USING CELLS

Along with other great articles by...
Debbie Kea, Mike Tincher, Donald Klieves, and more...

“...The churches of Christ greet you” (Romans 16:16).

Editor's Note

I have been blessed to see many of the youth preparing diligently for faith-strengthening events such as Lads to Leaders and Christian Youth Challenge. Their efforts would not be possible if it were not for the support of their congregations. Are we encouraging and supporting our future?

Even the world understands the investment we must place in our future. It is commonly attributed to Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, who said, "Give me the child until he is seven, and I will give you the man." Even those in the ancient world knew that we had limited time with our children, and it was in their early years that the character of the person was mostly formed. The clay is being molded while it is still soft, and as it ages, it hardens into its permanent form. The hands which work to mold our future are the hands of the entire congregation. An ancient Chinese proverb is, "A child's life is like a piece of paper on which every passerby leaves a mark." Who is leaving their mark on our children? I guarantee you that the world is leaving a mark on them all and, unfortunately, in most cases, a larger mark than the church is. Whose fault is that? I do not fault the child, and neither is God. The responsibility is given to the parents to provide the proper discipline. "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov 22:6 NKJV).

As the Scripture tells us, we have but a "few days" to leave our mark (Heb 12:10). Let us not waste our time and miss out on the opportunity to influence the future to Christ. We have been given such a blessing, and let us not fail by not living up to what God expects from us all. "...For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48).

The Mountain Messenger encourages adults and youth alike to be active in their faith. It is a publication for the whole congregation, an investment for the whole flock. See within these pages what is on the hearts of the Christian youth, Christian women, and Christian men. These writers in this issue come from all over the United States, such as West Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Ohio, and Arkansas. However, they are all united in Jesus Christ. Enjoy the fruit of their labor and be edified by their studies in the word of God.

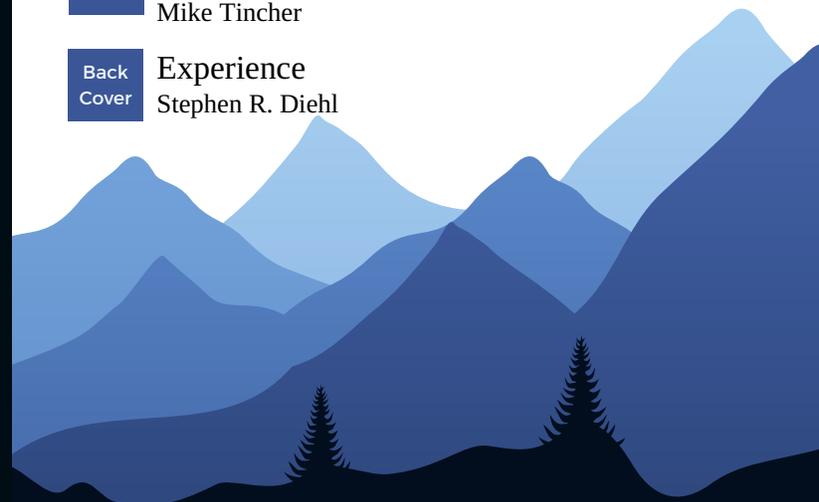
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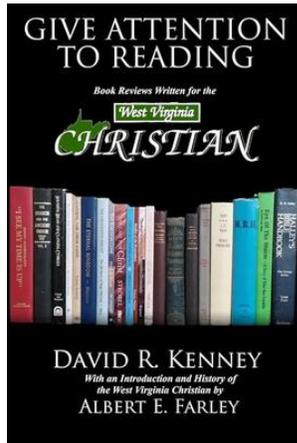
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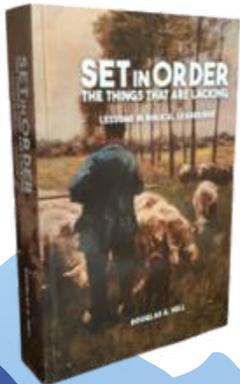
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CHOSEN PRIESTS CUT OFF

Mark Day

The wickedness of the sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas (1 Sam 1:3; 2:34), who were priests in Israel, is described in 1 Samuel 2:12–17. While the Lord had allocated certain

portions of the sacrificed animals to the priests (Lev 7:28–36; Deut 18:3), these wicked men intimidated worshippers and took other portions of meat to which they were not entitled.

They also committed fornication with the women at the tabernacle (1 Sam 2:22; cf. Exod. 38:8). While Phinehas' earlier namesake, the son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron, was commended because he forcibly stopped fornication in Israel (Num 25:6–18), this later Phinehas, son of



Eli, descendant of Aaron, would be punished because he engaged in fornication. Eli questioned his sons and told them not to do these evils (1 Sam 2:22–24). However, God asked Eli why do you, “honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?” (1 Sam 2:29). God knows the difference between that which is mere talk and what is truly in one's heart. Eli said “no” to his sons, but evidently was made fat from their stolen portions of meat.

The Levitical priests were chosen by God (Exod 28:1). God asked this rhetorical question to Eli regarding the descendants of Aaron, “Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod before Me?...” (1 Sam 2:28 NKJV). But God's election of them did not mean that God would not revoke their status and punish them if they fell away into wickedness. The text goes on to say: “Therefore the LORD God of Israel says: ‘I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever.’ But now the LORD says: ‘Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days are coming that I will cut off your arm and the arm of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house’” (1 Sam 2:30, 31).

Today as Christians, we are a chosen generation and a royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:9). We are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God...” (1 Pet 1:2). Many in the religious world view election as guaranteed salvation, but the Bible does not teach such. This religious error comes from John Calvin who taught unconditional election. Regarding elect in 1 Peter 1:2, Calvin stated, “Hence, when Peter calls them elect according to the precognition of God, he intimates that the cause of it depends on nothing else but on God alone, for he of his own free will has chosen us.”[1] Ephesians 1:4 says that God chose us before the foundation of the world. Calvin's comments on being chosen are thus: “...all our holiness and purity of life flow from the election of God. How comes it then that some men are religious, and live in the fear of God, while others give themselves up without reserve to all manner of wickedness? If Paul may be believed, the only reason is, that the latter retain their natural disposition, and the former have been chosen to holiness.”[2] Calvin's false teaching is that men have nothing to do with their salvation, God's choosing/election do everything; men really have no choice whether they are wicked or holy.

However, almost every page of the Bible has a lesson for us to choose to stay faithful and several passages in the Bible show that election cannot mean guaranteed salvation regardless of one's behavior. Let us not silence passages like 1 Samuel 2:27–36 from informing us of the nature of God's choosing/election. Since we, as Christians, are all priests to God today, then we must live holy lives (1 Pet 1:15,16; 2:9) to make our calling and election sure (2 Pet 1:10). We must continue in God's goodness, otherwise we will be cut off (Rom 11:22). ▲

[1] John Calvin and John Owen, Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 24–25.

[2] John Calvin and William Pringle, Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 199.



MAMA'S WEIGHT

Clista Heintzman

Weight. It's a touchy subject. Nobody wants to talk about it, especially after the holidays, but don't worry. This article is not about how many pounds you put on over the past few weeks.

On the contrary, it is about influence. What effect do your words and actions have on those around you? How do others perceive your words and actions? Does your weight have an impact for good or evil? Do you throw your weight AROUND in an unpleasant, assertive way or do you make it your goal to throw your weight BEHIND others in a helpful, supportive way to produce a good outcome?

First, let's talk about the mama who throws her weight AROUND. Some women can be conniving and domineering in their behavior. For example, we read in the book of Judges that Samson fell in love with Delilah, who unfairly, used her weight to get Samson to reveal the source of his strength (Judges 16).

The true story of Zerelda James reminds us of the fact that the more things change the more they stay the same. Mrs. James lived here, in America, not long ago. She was the mother of renowned Jesse James and had a heart full of hate for the Union army. "She was known for her forceful personality and steely gaze and was described as a woman of masculine will" (www.pbs.org). She was a mama who, for years, threw her weight AROUND and purposefully filled her son's mind with hate and forcefully taught him to torture and kill those he met who were associated with the Union.

In Numbers 12, Miriam erroneously believed God spoke through her as well as through her brother, Moses. She threw her weight AROUND in a domineering and aggressive manner, and God struck her with leprosy. God doesn't like it when mama throws her weight AROUND.

On the flip side, some women will, forever, be remembered for throwing their weight BEHIND another person or cause for a good outcome. Consider Isaac's wife, Rebekah. Her son, Esau, had broken her heart by marrying immoral Hittite women. Therefore, she strongly told Isaac she would rather die than see Jacob do the same thing. The urgency BEHIND her words carried much weight. Thus, Isaac sent Jacob away to find a godly wife. Rebekah's influence helped fulfill God's purpose in forming the Israelite nation.

The prophet, Nathan, knew the weight of mama's words. In I Chronicles 28, David proclaims to the people that God had chosen his son, Solomon, as the next king of Israel. Interestingly, though, at the end of David's life while he is bedridden, his spoiled son, Adonijah, makes himself king of Israel. David is totally unaware of his willful son's action, but Nathan is privy to it. Knowing that God has already chosen Solomon, Nathan immediately summons Solomon's mother, Bathsheba. He advises her to go into David, tell him what Adonijah has done and remind him of his promise to make her son, Solomon, king. She follows Nathan's advice and as a result, David proclaims again, "Solomon, your son, will be king after me and he will sit on my throne in my place" (1 Kings 1:30 NASB). The weight of her visit saved the kingdom of Israel.

As you begin a new year, be aware of and consider your weight—the weight of your influence. Don't throw AROUND. Throw it BEHIND good things and good ideas and good people. Use it for God's glory!▲



RESTITUTION

Debbie Kea



What does this big word mean? Restoring to its original state or returning something to its rightful owner; making up for or making amends. It's a word we rarely hear today and the action even less. Let's talk about restitution after we have sinned against someone and we ask for forgiveness, after repentance.

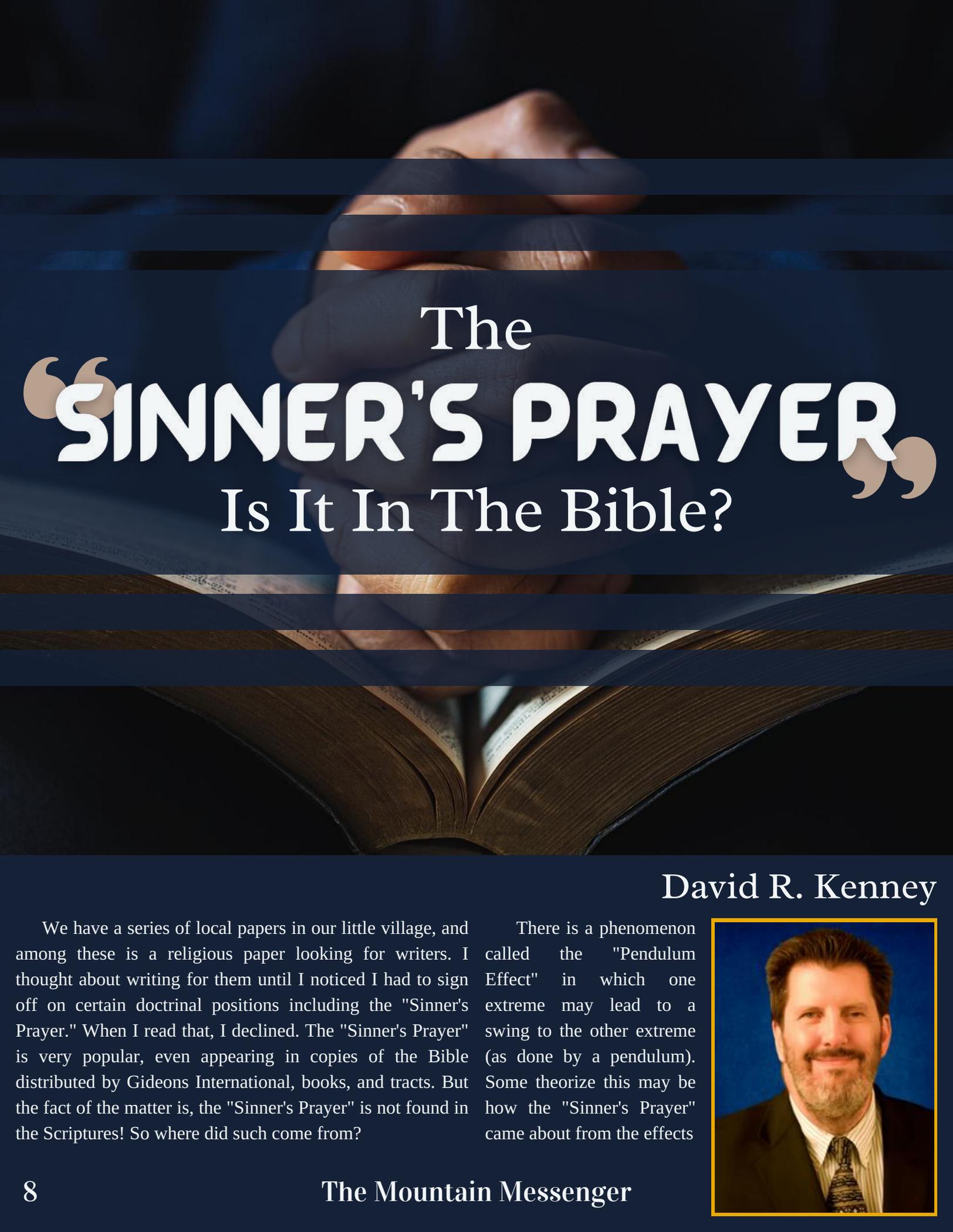
In the Old Testament, God commanded specific restitution. In Leviticus 6:5 if a man lied, deceived, or stole from his neighbor, he had to restore the principal and add a fifth part. In Exodus 22, he was commanded to restore double. In Numbers 5:6-7, if there was no kinsman to make restitution to, they had to make it to God. In Prov 6:30-31, the Bible also says: men don't despise a thief who steals because he's hungry, but if he's found, he has to restore it sevenfold. In the old days, the preachers used to say if you had stolen a man's horse, his wallet, or his wife, you had to return them all. Have you ever heard any preaching done about restitution lately? Why should we be teaching this to brethren, to our children? We usually teach our kids to say they're sorry, for instance, if they break another child's toy, but have you ever said, now give him one of yours, or if they are older, you will be replacing that with your money out of your allowance. Many times, you hear children or people say "Sorry," and we wonder how genuine it is, because they have made no effort to make amends, to make things right.

So, what does God say about this under the New Testament? John the Baptist said you must bear fruit meet for repentance (Matt 3:8). In other words, your actions should show that you have repented. So my question is, without restitution, is repentance truly complete? In Luke 19, we remember the story of Zaccheus. After his meeting and dinner with Jesus, Zaccheus repents of his former lifestyle in which, as a tax collector, he had cheated his own people for the Roman Empire. He declares to Jesus that he will make restitution to those he has cheated fourfold. This man knew what the Old Testament taught about restitution. Under Christ's law, is restitution taught? There are not specifics like under the Old Testament, but there are

principles specifically taught that teach it. Consider The Golden Rule of Matthew 7:12: "Therefore all things what-soever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them..." (KJV).

What about the 2nd Great Commandment in Matthew 22:39: "...Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Wouldn't that include restitution? Restitution is not the same thing as forgiveness. Even under the Old Law, after restitution was made, God expected sacrifice to be made with the help of the priest to attain atonement before God. Restitution demands that we help those recover from the damage we have inflicted. It demands that we divest ourselves of all hypocrisies and falsehoods (if you have lied about someone). It may include a public apology to restore someone's reputation or honor. Most of us have a past that needs to be corrected because we've all sinned.

What does restitution do? First, it's a sign of genuine repentance (2 Cor 7:10-11), and it restores peace (Rom 12:18). As mentioned, it fulfills the Golden Rule and shows love for God and your neighbor (Matt 22:37-39; Luke 6:31). Restitution helps us not to do that sin again and to live more righteously. Finally, the act of restitution helps us to move on, knowing we've done all we can to make things right. Judges order people to pay restitution for damages caused. God also expects us to have genuine guilt that moves us to repent and make amends. This allows for us to have a clear conscience before God and our fellowman. Obviously, there are some things you do that you cannot fix. (If you murder someone, you can't bring them back to life.) Some things you cannot do anything about except beg forgiveness. We need to get in the habit of not just saying I'm sorry, but saying I'm so sorry, what can I do to make this right, and then do what we can to make things better. If we make this effort, not only will it please God, but it will make it easier for the offended to forgive. ▲

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a pen, poised to write on an open Bible. The background is dark, and the lighting highlights the texture of the paper and the skin of the hand.

The “SINNER’S PRAYER” Is It In The Bible?

David R. Kenney

We have a series of local papers in our little village, and among these is a religious paper looking for writers. I thought about writing for them until I noticed I had to sign off on certain doctrinal positions including the "Sinner's Prayer." When I read that, I declined. The "Sinner's Prayer" is very popular, even appearing in copies of the Bible distributed by Gideons International, books, and tracts. But the fact of the matter is, the "Sinner's Prayer" is not found in the Scriptures! So where did such come from?

There is a phenomenon called the "Pendulum Effect" in which one extreme may lead to a swing to the other extreme (as done by a pendulum). Some theorize this may be how the "Sinner's Prayer" came about from the effects



The "Sinner's Prayer" - Is It In the Bible? • David R. Kenney

of Catholicism and the Protestant Reformation. From one end of the spectrum (salvation by meritorious works) to the other end (salvation by faith alone). One researcher found traces of the "Sinner's Prayer" among the writings of William Tyndale, who was a contemporary of Martin Luther.

One key factor in answering the question of whether the "Sinner's Prayer" is scripturally justifiable is the context being cited for justification. There are claims for justification in contexts where Judaism was the reigning system (e.g., Matt 19:16–17). Sometimes prayers are offered; however, these do not match the "Sinner's Prayer" (e.g., Luke 18:3). Passages which indeed connect prayer with salvation were actually directed to those who had previously obeyed the gospel through baptism (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9). Some cite Acts 2:21 as justification for the "Sinner's Prayer," however, such cannot be the case since it would negate the answer to the question of what must be done, which commands repentance and baptism before salvation (cf. Acts 2:37–38). The citation of "calling on the name of the Lord" in Acts 2:21 also appears in what Ananias said to Saul of Tarsus: "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16 NKJV). Note carefully that baptism occurred before Saul's sins were washed away. It is by Saul's obedience in baptism that he was calling on the name of the Lord. Recall that baptism is administered in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (cf. Matthew 28:19).

If there ever was justification for the "Sinner's Prayer," it would be found in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. After all, Ananias was instructed to seek Saul out: "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying" (Acts 9:11). Notice that Saul was already praying. In addition to his praying, he was also fasting (cf. Acts 9:9). If there ever was an example suitable for the "Sinner's Prayer" this would be it. But the fact remains that there is no record of the "Sinner's Prayer" or justification for such in the New Testament. What we do have is the command for baptism.

While having a chart or learning device to help someone understand the Scriptures better is a useful tool, it must teach truth! For example, the "Steps of Salvation" have been used as an effective teaching tool, but it is also scriptural. Of course, one will not find the complete "Plan of Salvation" in any one given text; one must study the entire context of Scripture. For example, the conversions recorded in Acts state certain steps, but others are implied. Why is this? Because the teacher begins where the student is at in their pursuit of salvation. This means one must read contextually rather than "cherry picking" passages.

I have observed that when I find the "Sinner's Prayer" present in literature that baptism is conspicuously absent. Ironically, I find many passages in the New Testament advocating baptism whereas the "Sinner's Prayer" is conspicuously absent. This should be a warning to the reader to be careful about reading such materials whether in commentaries, study bibles, books, tracts, etc. One must read with discernment and not allow themselves to be misled or deceived by partial truths. ▲

SOURCES:

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Yarnell, Malcolm. "The First Evangelical Sinner's Prayer Published in English." Southwestern Journal of Theology, 2004.



GOD BUILT ME USING CELLS

Deborah Amos (Ph.D. Biomedical Sciences)

In the last article of our series looking at the intricacies of God's design in the human body, we discussed the importance of water. As explained, water is the main component of blood, which is the life of the body (Lev 17:11). However, being transported through the blood are multiple other molecules and cells! A cell is the most basic unit of life. If you think back to primary or secondary school, you likely made a model of a cell. That was a "composite cell," meaning that it was a mix of the major components of all cells. However, God has woven us together (Psalm 139:13–14) so much more intricately than that! Within blood alone, you have what most would call white and red blood cells (RBCs) in addition to fragments of a huge cell (megakaryocyte) called platelets. In reality, RBCs are not even cells because as they mature, they lose their nucleus to give enough room for hemoglobin, a protein that, with the help of iron, carries both carbon dioxide and oxygen molecules. The five types of white blood cells (WBCs), on the other hand, are true cells. Their nucleus differs in shape depending on the type. WBCs play a major role in our immunity. Without them, we would have no way to fight foreign invaders. Despite their unique differences, including the nucleus shape, number of granules, color, and enzymes produced, the five types of WBCs all contain a nucleus, which is the control center of the cell. In fact, all true cells within humans, animals, and plants contain a nucleus. Here, the DNA is housed, which is the code unique to every individual. It is fascinating that every one of us has a unique DNA code that is unlike any other person's; hence, it is true that God has made every one of us unique and hand-crafted (Psalm 139:14–15; Isaiah 64:8). This same exact code is found in every one of our own individual cells, no matter if it is a skin, muscle, liver, or any other cell type, they have the exact same code. The reason the cells look and function differently is because, depending on the type of cell, certain components of the DNA (genes) are turned on and off giving the cells their distinct characteristics. Some other components of human cells that are found in most cells are mitochondria, lysosomes, Endoplasmic Reti-

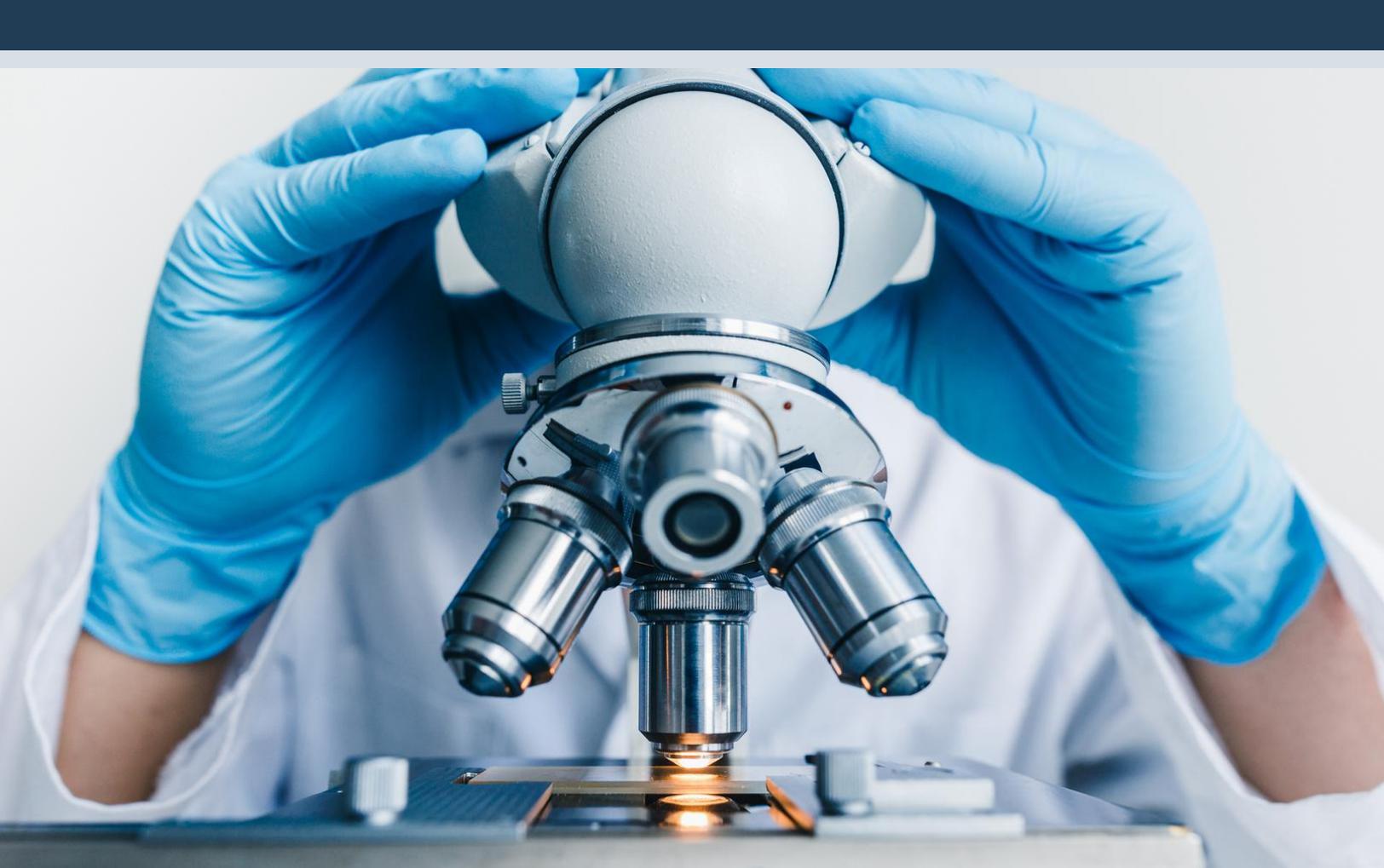
culum, ribosomes, the Golgi Apparatus, and the cell membrane. Most people know the mitochondria as the "powerhouse" of the cell. Indeed, it is the component of the cell in charge of creating energy in the form of ATP. Depending on if it is a heart cell (cardiomyocyte), liver cell (hepatocyte), egg or sperm cell (gametes), or something like a skin cell, there are going to be variable amounts of mitochondria. This is because the function of each is different. As you likely know, your muscles, especially the heart, use A LOT of energy and therefore need a lot of mitochondria. This same concept is true for all the other organelles; the presence and number of organelles per cell type are dependent on that cell's role. It's interesting to think that in the body of Christ, each one of us has a role too (Rom 12:4–6). Our roles reflect our God-given, and perhaps yet-to-be-discovered, abilities and talents. Another important organelle is the lysosome, a small yet mighty organelle that can bind with some WBCs to clean up the cell, essentially a janitor. They try to irradiate dysfunctional cell components, and foreign invaders that may be found lurking or wreaking havoc (e.g., microbes or cancer cells). The Endoplasmic Reticulum is found in two types; each has a different structure and, therefore, a different function. Smooth Endoplasmic Reticulum (SER) synthesizes or produces lipids, while the rough sort (RER) synthesizes proteins. Proteins are able to be produced because of the ribosomes that are connected to the RER, but we also find ribosomes within the cytosol of the cell, which is the liquid portion of the cytoplasm. Despite what many learn in primary school, the cytoplasm is not just goop around a cell's components; it is actually alive! It has various protein components that help transport products produced by the cell from one place to another.



God Built Me Using Cells · Deborah Amos (Ph.D. Biomedical Sciences)

Ribosomes are very important because of their role in protein production. Proteins have numerous vital roles, including enzymatic activity, which is important in bodily biochemical reactions, transporting materials in and out of the cell, structural components such as muscle and bone, hormonal action, blood sugar regulation, transport through blood, and more! The Golgi Apparatus is essentially a mailroom and takes lipids, proteins, and other components produced by the cell and prepares them for transport for use in another location of the cell itself or to another cell. Last but not least, the cell membrane is the cell's barrier and functions as a very complex bouncer. Its primary component is a fatty, phospholipid bilayer in addition to structural and protein transporters, cholesterol, and carbo-

hydrates. Yes, cholesterol is important, just in the appropriate amount. The cell membrane is protective of the cell, but it's more than that. Without it, we would not be able to conduct nervous impulses, control the contraction of the heart or skeletal muscle, or regulate hormonal action. These are just some of the basic components of a cell that scientists have discovered up to this point in time. It's interesting to see how complex the most basic unit of life is, but we should also consider this is what we know from our understanding. God is the Creator (Isaiah 64:8), and our wisdom is foolishness in His sight (1 Cor 3:19). How great is our God! Please look for the next article, where we will analyze the function of the WBCs much closer and their vital role in our immune system. ▲



THE WORD OF GOD PENNED BY MAN?

Andrew J. Robison V

There are some who bear the name “Christian” who teach a certain deceptive and destructive false doctrine in which they question the authority of the writers of the New Testament in an attempt to claim that the apostles were not inspired by God through the Holy Spirit to deliver the continuing message of Christ. Be watchful for those who teach such things.



Those who teach this false doctrine may do so for any number of reasons. They may truly believe that only the words of Jesus Christ are of any import. This burdens any holder of such belief with the responsibility to prove the legitimacy and accuracy of His words as written by the human men Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. If one cannot trust Paul, Peter, or James in their writings, how can the gospel writers be any more trustworthy? Some may discredit the validity of the New Testament because they do not like its teachings. This bold claim arguably requires absolute proof that these writers had no “breath of God” in them at all. Such evidence is impossible to attain. Thankfully, all through the Scriptures are hundreds of proofs for its divine nature. Let the reader be encouraged to consult some of the numerous sources that highlight such evidence, which simply lies outside the scope of this article. For now, we will bring forth a few brief examples from Scripture that affirm its completely inspired nature.

First, before leaving this Earth, Jesus himself indicated that there was still more to be taught that would be brought to the apostles through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-15). He also noted that the Spirit would not just

“teach [them] all things,” but would also “bring to [their] remembrance” everything that He had said (John 14:26 ESV). This gives us assurance that the gospel writers were able to accurately record what Christ taught while on Earth and that the apostles were guided by the Spirit to write the remainder of Christ’s teachings for the church.

Then, the New Testament writers claimed that their writings were Scripture. Kruger sums it up well in his book *Canon Revisited* when he writes, “From the very earliest days, believers received Paul’s letters as Scripture (1 Thess. 2:13), Paul clearly intended them to be received as Scripture (Gal. 1:1-24), and even other writers thought they were Scripture (2 Pet. 3:16)” [1]. In these passages, Paul affirms the apostles as delivering the “word of God” they received through “revelation of Jesus Christ,” then Peter alludes to Paul’s writings as Scripture. **The fact is that James, Peter, Paul, and Jude were just as much guided by the Holy Spirit when they wrote their letters as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were when they wrote the Gospels.**

Finally, the early church acknowledged and accepted the writings of the New Testament as the Word of God from as early as the first century, and they showed this by teaching and practicing the doctrine of Christ as revealed by the Spirit through these writers.

At the end of the day, one must recognize the evidence surrounding the inspiration of the entire Bible. God has a message for us, which He has accurately preserved for over two-thousand years. The rest is left to the reader—will you reject it because it requires commitment, sacrifice, and a drastic change to your life, or will you “deny yourself” and follow Christ’s teaching for a life of service on Earth and eternal life of comfort in Heaven? ▲

[1] Michael J. Kruger, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012) 45.

God's House Law

Dale J. Babinsky

Typically, when we visit someone in their home, we tend to obey whatever their house laws are. For instance, some people might want you to take off your shoes before entering. Others may not want anyone to smoke in their house. It is customary and courteous that we respect their desires and wishes for what takes place in their house. Likewise, when we are in God's house, it is important that we respect and adhere to His house law.

The Bible indicates this in Paul's first letter to the young evangelist, Timothy. Notice that like many books of the Bible, the book of 1 Timothy has what is known as a purpose statement. That is, the author himself indicates the purpose of the writing. Paul states, "These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim 3:14–15 NKJV). Paul says that what he has written in this letter is to help guide Timothy and the church at Ephesus, where Timothy is preaching, so that they will know how to conduct themselves in the church—God's house. In God's house, there is a house law.

This corresponds with how Paul begins the letter. He tells Timothy that he has a job to do in shutting down those who are false teachers. He is to charge, or command, certain people that they teach no other doctrine (1 Tim 1:3). He is not to make suggestions. He is not to accept their view of Scripture if it is incorrect. He is to command them to adhere to the doctrine of Christ. The idea of other doctrines carries with it the idea that these false teachings are not authorized by God. The NASB translation uses the term 'strange' with regards to these doctrines. It's not that they are strange in being weird, but the strangeness has to do with being unauthorized, much like the fire that Nadab and Abihu offered in Leviticus 10. In God's house, He does not want what He has not authorized.

Paul goes on to tell Timothy that these false teachings cause disputes. Without a firm foundation in the Holy Scriptures, fables, speculations, and opinions cannot be bound. So, they tend to lead to arguments rather than what it is that God wants (1 Tim 1:4). If you utilize several English translations in your study, and I would encourage you to do so, you will notice some difficulty in the translation of verse 4. The NKJV refers to godly edification. The NASB translates the same Greek word into the administration of God. The ESV refers to stewardship from God, and the ASV translates the Greek into a dispensation of God. These differences in translation indicate a difficulty in translating the Greek.

The translators have missed an important point in verse 4. The Greek word they are struggling with is *oikonomian*. This is a compound word being made up of *oikos*, which means house, and *nomos*, which means law.[1] These false doctrines, which are not authorized by God, do not promote His house law. It's God's house. He expects us to obey His rules in His house. The rest of the letter to Timothy details how we are to conduct ourselves in the church. We find out about the roles of men and women in the church in chapter 2. We have the characteristics and qualifications of elders and deacons in chapter 3. We have how every group in the church is to behave in chapters 4–6. From old men, young men, old women, young women, different groups of widows, slaves, masters, those who desire to be rich, to those who are rich in this present age, every demographic group within the church is covered.

God's house law is for us today as well. God's rules have not changed just because our society has. We do best to observe God's rules in God's house. ▲

[1] Arndt, William, et al. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., University of Chicago Press, 2000, p. 697



OUR HOPE

Donald Klieves

The following song, "The Solid Rock," has said: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness." The church, or the "called out," was built on the blood of Jesus Christ. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (NKJV) Our hope is in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, for it was His blood that bought His church (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 1:1).

David wrote in the book of Psalms about hope and let us look at three texts. The first is, "For You are my hope, O Lord God; You are my trust from my youth" (Psalm 71:5 NKJV). The word "Lord" in Hebrew is "יְיָ 'Ādônây, ad-o-noy,"[1] a title spoken in place of Yahweh, in Jewish display of reverence toward God (Strong H136). Our hope is also to have reverence for God.

The second text is Psalm 33:18: "Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, On those who hope in His mercy," According to Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon, II 3,6, Mercies means "the kindness of God." Our hope is also to be in the kindness of God in Jesus Christ.

Finally, Psalms 119:43, "And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; For I have hoped in thy judgments" (KJV). The Hebrew word for "judgments" in this passage does not mean a sentence given by God. In Hebrew, it means "ordinance" again, according to Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon, Strong H4941, 3. Our hope is in the word of God, "All scripture is breathed out by God..." (2 Tim 3:16 ESV).

Our hope is in reverence toward God, in the kindness of God, and finally, in the word of God. That is every word that comes from His mouth. ▲

[1] James Strong, in A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009) 8.



Youth Group
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Remember Your Creator

Cole Curry

Ecclesiastes 12:1 says to remember your Creator in the days of your youth before the difficult days come. When you are young, you have much more time than when you are older. So how do you use this time? There are so many things that you can do with your time: school, video games, etc. But the best thing to do is to set a habit of studying and serving God. If you set a habit of studying and serving God, it will help you when you are older. Let's look at Timothy. Timothy was taught by his mother and grandmother (2 Tim 1:5; 3:14-17). When Timothy was a child, he was taught the Scripture, which led him to be a disciple and a good servant of the Lord (Rom 16:21). When you are young, use your time to serve God before you don't have that time anymore, before the hard times come. Be a good, faithful servant, just like Timothy was. ▲

Where Is Your Faith? • Cheyenne Blizzard

In the book of Luke, we see a close-up of Jesus' life. Many times, Luke tells us about how He healed people from their afflictions and sickness. But notice what He says to them. To the blind man in chapter 18, he said, "... 'Receive your sight; your faith has made you well' (Luke 18:42 NKJV). To the Samaritan leper, he said, "... 'Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well' (Luke 17:19). To the woman who touched His cloak in chapter 8, He said, "Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace" (Luke 8:48).

There is one special phrase used here, "Your faith has made you well." These few people and others throughout the whole book of Luke simply had faith that they could be healed by the one and only God.

In Matthew 14, we read a story of someone whose faith slipped away by fear. Jesus came to His disciples walking on the sea. When the disciples saw Him, they were struck with fear. Jesus said, "Be of good cheer it is I" (vs 27). Peter said, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to You on the water." Jesus said to Him, "Come" (vs 28–29). Peter left the boat, but once he saw the waves, he was frightened. His faith left him, and he started to sink. Jesus took him out of the water and asked him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (vs 31). Peter doubted Jesus because of his fear.

We all do this in our lives. The world makes us fear, thus making us react in our own way because of this fear. The world sometimes makes us forget that we have someone to go to in times of fear. In Matthew 17, Jesus tells us that if we have faith, even as the size of a mustard seed, nothing will be impossible for us. If we have faith in Jesus and His power and give our cares over to Him in prayer, wouldn't He take them from us? Or if we are hurting from life's cares and trials, if we pray to Him, would He not turn that hurt to joy? Knowing this, I want you to ask yourself, where is your faith? Do you have faith but turn from it in times of fear like Peter? Or do you have continual faith like a mustard seed, knowing God can and will care for you? Your faith is the most important thing to have in life. Keep it and hold on to it, for it can help you in times of trouble. ▲



Be Well Pleasing • Connor Curry

In Luke 16:19–31, we read of two people: one was poor, and the other was rich. The poor man, also known as Lazarus, was incredibly poor, so poor in fact that he longed to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. This rich man had lots of riches, and he lived a life of luxury, so he probably thought he had a good life in his eyes. But in Luke 16:22–31, we read how the rich man dies and how he lifts up his eyes in torment. Verse 24 goes on to state that he cried out to Abraham to have mercy on him and to send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off his tongue, for he was in agony. But Abraham responded to him and told him that in his life, he received his good things, and likewise Lazarus received bad things, but now he is being comforted here, and he is in agony (vs. 25). Just in this passage, we read of a man who lived a life of splendor and glory, who had it all and a man who lived his life for God, as we see, but still suffered and had to beg for his food, and yet he was a righteous man and how he (Lazarus) kept his aim on God. 2 Corinthians 5:9 tells us, "Therefore we make it our aim, (whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him" (NKJV). And so, I plead to you that you make it your aim that you will be pleasing unto God, that you will put God first in your life, and make him your top priority; that you will be well pleasing unto him. ▲



Misuse and Unrealistic Expectations of

Preachers in the Lord's Church

Mike Tincher

The role of a preacher in the Lord's Church is one of great responsibility. Preachers are called to be spiritual leaders, teachers, and guides, helping their congregations grow in faith and understanding of God's Word. However, in some churches, unrealistic expectations can place unnecessary pressure on preachers, leading to frustration, burnout, and even strained relationships with the congregation. And, my brethren, this view is NOT scriptural. In extreme cases, it can cause the church to become spiritually stagnant. I feel it also is a major cause of our lack of men entering the ministry. This article examines the role of the preacher and addresses how some congregations misunderstand or misuse that role.

According to Scripture, the primary responsibility of the preacher is to preach the gospel. This includes teaching sound doctrine, instructing, and encouraging the congregation in their walk with God. Preachers are not intermediaries between the people and God; instead, they help interpret and communicate the Bible to encourage

personal study and spiritual growth. Jesus' command to His disciples is clear: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19-20 KJV).



The New Testament also teaches that preachers should equip the saints for ministry and help the church mature in faith. They are called to preach the truth without compromise and live as examples of integrity and holiness: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim 4:16).

Moreover, preachers should not do everything within the church but work alongside others. The apostle Paul writes that the various roles in the church—including that of the preacher—are meant to build up the body of Christ: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11-12).

Despite the clarity of Scripture, some congregations place unrealistic expectations on preachers. One common misunderstanding is the belief that the preacher is responsible for everything within the church, from preaching to teaching Bible classes, visiting the sick, organizing events, and resolving conflicts. This creates a heavy burden, often leading to burnout.

The Bible teaches that the church is made up of many members, each with its own role. The preacher is not called to handle every aspect of church life alone. Paul wrote: "For the body is not one member, but many... But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (1 Cor 12:14, 18).

Some congregations also expect the preacher to be available 24/7 for counseling, emergencies, and personal issues. While the preacher is called to serve, this does not

mean they should neglect their own well-being or family. Jesus Himself experienced times of rest: "And Jesus saith unto him, ... the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt 8:20).

Preachers are human, and they need time for personal spiritual growth and family care.

Another unrealistic expectation is that the preacher should solve all the problems in the church, such as disputes, financial issues, or declining attendance. However, the church is a body of believers, and all members share responsibility for its spiritual health. Paul writes: "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ and every one members one of another" (Rom 12:4-5).

The preacher is not meant to bear the weight of the church's problems alone. Every member has a part to play in the life of the church.

Preachers are often held to unrealistic standards of perfection. This may include flawless sermons, the ability to answer every difficult question, or an image of perfection in their personal and professional lives. However, the Bible teaches that perfection is unattainable for anyone: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23).

Preachers, like all Christians, are imperfect and fall short. Expecting them to meet such high standards can lead to stress and discouragement.

Some congregations judge preachers by the growth of the church, whether in attendance or financial contributions. While church growth is important, it is ultimately God who gives the increase: "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Cor 3:7).

When preachers are pressured to grow the church, they may be tempted to compromise the truth to attract a crowd. The preacher's role is to faithfully preach the gospel, not to

be a corporate leader or entertainer.

To avoid these pressures, congregations must develop realistic and biblical expectations of their preachers. The primary role of the preacher is to preach and teach the Word, while also setting an example of godliness. Preachers should not be expected to be perfect or to do everything in the church. Congregations should support their preachers through prayer, fellowship, and collaboration in ministry. Paul encouraged the church to support its leaders: "Brethren, pray for us" (1 Thess 5:25).

Moreover, the church is a body of believers, and all members have a role in its functioning. Elders, deacons, Bible class teachers, and other members should share the workload, helping the preacher focus on preaching and teaching. When the workload is shared, it helps prevent burnout and spiritual stagnation, as was the case with the Laodicean church, which Christ rebuked for being self-satisfied and lazy: "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:16).

The church should strive to be united and active, with every member working together for the edification of the body: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph 4:15-16).

The role of the preacher is vital but not all-encompassing. Congregations must have a clear understanding of the preacher's biblical role and work together to support the preacher, share responsibilities, and maintain a healthy church environment. By doing so, both preachers and members can grow spiritually and serve God more effectively. Let us return to the old paths found in God's Word for instruction in righteousness. ▲





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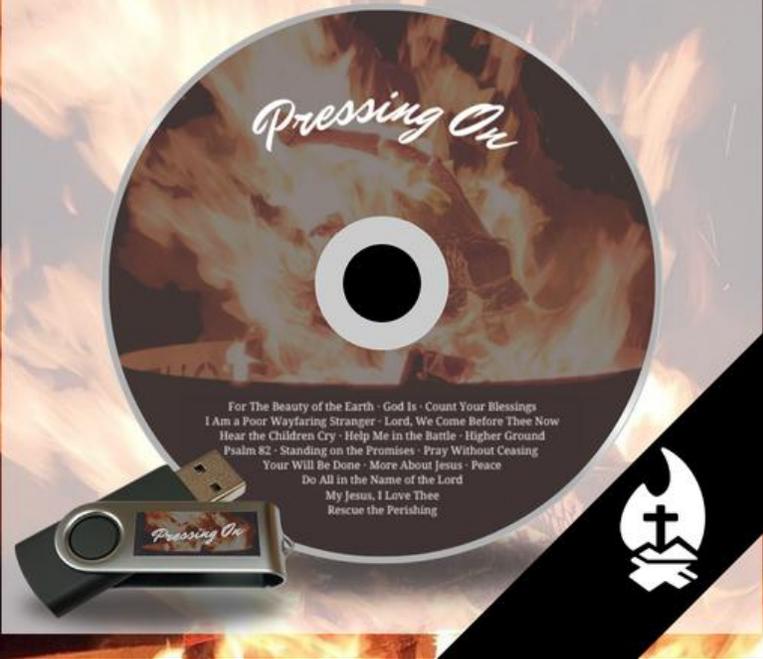
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