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## The Secret of the Strength

- by Peter Hoover

### CHAPTER 22 On To Christian Service

The Mennonite church called my father into the Dienst (service) when I was five years old. After that, he went to sit with four other Diener (servants) and one elder behind a bare wooden pulpit along one side of the meeting house, and my brother David took charge of me in the young boys' corner. Our oldest Diener, Elam Martin, was a full servant (voller Diener). He did the baptizing and the marrying in our congregation. Sometimes we called him our bishop, although he was not ordained to any special office. Our one elder, my great-uncle Samuel Horst, took care of the church's money.

My wife first attended meetings among the Old Colony Mennonites at Chortitz, Manitoba. There, speaking Low German, they had a Lehrdienst (teaching service). The Lehrdienst included all the ordained men of the congregation who, as individuals, were often called Lehrer (teachers).

Both traditions, I learned later, are of Anabaptist origin: servants and teachers, the teaching-service of the Lord's

church. Menno Simons explained them in his Brief and Clear Confession of 1544:

The apostles ordained bishops and teachers wherever they established congregations. They ordained men who were sound in the faith and did not want pay. These were men of God, servants of Christ who labored, taught, sought out, pastored, and kept watch only through love. They did not do this only one or two hours a week. They did it at all places and at all hours in synagogues, streets, houses, mountains, and fields.

As freely as they had received the gospel, they were ready to give it. But the new congregations, driven by love and the Spirit of God, supplied the watchers of their souls with all the necessities of life. They assisted them and provided everything the servants of Christ could not obtain themselves.

#### Training for Service

In the same tract, Menno Simons continued:

Brothers, humble yourselves and become blameless disciples so that you may become servants called by the church community. Try your

spirit. Prove your love and your life before you begin to teach. Do not go on your own account. Wait until you are called by the Lord's church. Once you are called by the Spirit and constrained by love, then watch diligently over the sheep. Preach and teach valiantly.<sup>1</sup>

The brothers who gathered at Strasbourg in 1568 gave direction for training:

Let the servants of the Word travel through the communities to prevent, as much as possible, any spiritual lack. Let them comfort the brothers and sisters with wholesome teaching. Let ordained servants accompany the younger ones on these journeys so that the young may be instructed in the ways of the household.<sup>2</sup>

#### Who Calls the Servant?

"The calling of servants, according to the writings, takes place in two ways. Some are called by God alone without any agent," wrote Menno Simons. "This was the case with the prophets and apostles. Others are called through the Lord's church, as may be seen from Acts 1:23-26."

<sup>1</sup> Een korte ende klare belijdinge...van der menscherweringe onses lieven Heeren Jesus Christi...1544  
<sup>2</sup> Artikel und Ordnung...1568



**Pilgram Marpeck**, who lived in this house (on the left, with the bay window) held a good job at Rattenburg on the Inn. A mining engineer and government official, he lived far more comfortably than most people of his time. But when he turned to Jesus and became a servant of his church community, he lost everything he owned. Not just once, but time and again, as he moved from place to place to tend to Jesus' flock in need.

Dirk Philips wrote:

God punished Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who undertook to do things to which they were not called. God will punish all men likewise who go forth without being sent by Him. Let everyone see to it that he does not run ahead on his own before he is called of the Lord or by his church community in the right way.<sup>3</sup>

Anabaptist leaders meeting at Wismar in Mecklenburg decided in 1554:

No one is to undertake of himself to go from church to church preaching, unless he is sent and ordained by the congregation or the elders.<sup>4</sup>

### A Servant's Work

“A servant is to preach the gospel and feed the flock,” wrote Dirk Philips. “Preaching is more important than feeding the flock with the sacramental signs. But in this passage, the Lord puts them together.”

At Strasbourg, the Anabaptist leaders defined the servant's work:

Servants and elders are to take care of the widows and orphans among

<sup>3</sup> *Enchiridion*, 1564

<sup>4</sup> *Besluyt tot Wismar*, 1554

us. They are to visit and watch out for the physical needs of families in danger, especially where men are in prison. They are to bring them food if necessary and comfort them so that everyone may feel secure in the love of the brotherhood, and so that the men suffering in prison may have rest in regard to their families.<sup>5</sup>

### Signs for Service

Some people in the sixteenth century said they would believe the Anabaptists if they could prove by special signs that they were called of God. To this, Dirk Philips replied:

To require signs and not be satisfied with the Word is an evidence of unbelief. Jesus did not praise the Pharisees for wanting a sign. He praised the centurion for his humble attitude.



**Trachselwald Castle** in the Swiss Emmental held many Anabaptist prisoners. One of them, a servant named Benedikt Brechbühl (of the village of Trachselwald), after getting arrested and banished several times, led a group of refugees to settle in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the beginning of a large Mennonite settlement at that place, in 1717.

Suppose these people would see us doing miraculous signs. Would they not follow the Pharisees' example and ascribe our abilities to the devil? The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified...

Paul explicitly describes how a bishop shall be qualified. But he does not say that a bishop has to perform miracles. Nor do we read

<sup>5</sup> *op. cit.*

that Timothy, Titus, or other godly leaders of the early church did miracles. A man may be a bishop and not perform any sign, but he must preach the gospel and feed the flock of Christ (Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2).

It is true that miracles testified to the gospel in the beginning. They confirmed and verified the gospel because the gospel was new. But signs are no longer needed. The law was also given with miraculous signs. But when Josiah found the book of the law, nothing extraordinary happened. He just read it and carried out what it said. In the same way, we must be satisfied with the gospel that has now come to light. We must rest in this and remember that it is an “evil and adulterous generation that looks for signs.”

Those who insist on signs and wait on workers of miracles are in error. They should watch out lest they accept and receive Satan, mistaking him for Christ. Satan is very clever and a good hypocrite.<sup>6</sup>

### The Servant's Dues

The first Anabaptists opposed the state church's idea of supporting religious leaders with taxes and obligatory tithes. Simon Stumpf and Felix Manz both admonished Zwingli that servants of the Gospel were “not to live from tithes and wages,” but were to be supported by voluntary gifts from the church community. Conrad Grebel wrote the same in his letter to Thomas Muntzer.

Menno Simons counseled servants to despise money and, if necessary, to “do manual labor like Paul: rent a farm, milk cows, or learn a trade if possible. Then whatever you fall short of will doubtlessly be given to you by the brothers, not in superfluity, but as necessity requires.”

<sup>6</sup> *op. cit.*

The elders at Strasbourg wrote:

Servants of the word cannot fulfill their calling without neglecting their earthly labor. They have great responsibilities and are often gone from home for several days, and sometimes weeks at a time. Therefore, it is right and proper that we supply them with perishable and earthly goods. Especially responsible are the members of the congregations that they serve.<sup>7</sup>

The first Anabaptists considered the work of preaching and establishing congregations so important that they did not want their servants tied down with material responsibilities. At the meeting in Schleithem, in Switzerland, in 1527, the leaders decided that “the shepherd shall be supported by the community that has chosen him. He shall be given what he needs so that he may live of the Gospel as the Lord has commanded.”

<sup>7</sup> *op. cit.*

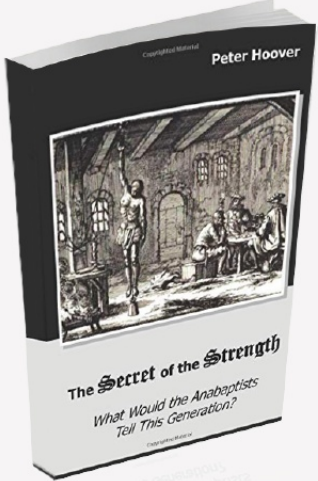
## Dangerous Service

The challenge faced by Anabaptist messengers and servants of the word were well illustrated by the meeting at Schlatten. During the meeting, they had decided:

When a shepherd is banished or martyred, another man shall be called right away so that God’s little flock may not be destroyed.

Right after the meeting, Michael Sattler, with his wife, as well as Wilhelm Reublin and his wife, Matthias Hiller, Veit Verringer, and a number of other Anabaptist men and women, fell into the hands of the police. They lay in prison until one by one they either recanted or were drowned or burned at the stake. Those were the options faced by servants of the word in the sixteenth century.

But in weakness and great tribulation, the work of Christ went on...



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## To all of the parents out there:

Don't feel sorry for or fear for your children because the world they are going to grow up in is not what it used to be. God created them and called them for the exact moment in time that they're in. Their life wasn't a coincidence or an accident.

Raise them up to know the power they walk in as children of God. Train them up in the authority of His Word. Teach them to walk in faith, knowing that God is in control. Empower them to know that through God, they can change the world. Don't teach them to be fearful and disheartened by the state of the world, but hopeful that they can do something about it.

Every person in all of history has been placed in time because of God's sovereign plan. He knew. Don't be scared for your children, but be honored that God chose you to parent them! Teach them God's love and share it with everyone!

Rise up to the challenge. Raise Daniels, Davids, Esthers, and Peters! God isn't scratching His head wondering what He's going to do with this mess of a world.

He knew Daniel could handle the lion's den.

He knew David could handle Goliath.

He knew Esther could handle Haman.

He knew Peter could handle persecution.

He knows your child can handle whatever challenges they face in life, by the grace of God! He specifically created them for it! Don't let your fear steal the determination that God placed in them. As parents, we want to protect them from anything difficult or painful, but they were born for such a time as this!

**God doesn't make mistakes. Teach your children to trust God.**

At first, we saw a spirit of accusation rise in government, with one side against the other. Over time, it slowly escalated and grew stronger. Now, it seems, our government leaders are completely out of control.

About ten years ago, I began to wonder how this same spirit that is devouring our local and national governments might one day affect the church of Jesus Christ. Sadly, I believe we are seeing it now. In many ways, the church has fallen into the same pattern.

This is not something that only affects the outside world. It finds its way into homes, families, churches, and ministries. It causes suspicion, hurt feelings, broken trust, and division. When this spirit is at work, even sincere believers can end up fighting one another.

We must ask an important question.

## Where Does Accusation Come From?

Some people call it a spirit of accusation. What they mean is this: we must look beyond what we can see with our eyes and recognize that an unseen spiritual world is at work around us. The Bible teaches us that not everything is flesh and blood.

*Finally, my brethren, be strong IN the Lord, and IN the power of HIS might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles (strategies) of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to with-*

*stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand (Eph 6:10-13).*

## Scripture is Very Clear about the Source of Accusation.

In Revelation 12:10, Satan is plainly called “the accuser of our brethren.” Accusation does not come from nowhere. It comes from a source beyond the seen world. The very root of accusation comes from Satan and his minions.

We see a clear picture of this in Zechariah 3:1, where Joshua, the high priest, stands before the angel of the LORD and Satan stands at his right hand to resist and accuse him. Joshua was God’s servant, yet Satan’s aim was still to accuse, resist, and discourage.

This is important to understand. When accusation takes hold, it is often faithful people who are being targeted.

Scripture also reminds us that our real struggle is not with people. We may see faces and hear words, but behind the scenes, a deeper battle is taking place. When we forget this, brothers and sisters in Christ begin fighting each other instead of standing together.

When accusation rules, unity is torn apart. Trust is weakened. Ministries suffer. And the work of reaching a lost and dying world is damaged.

As church-going people, we would never want our ministries to keep lost people from hearing the truth. We would never intentionally withhold the gospel that set us free. Yet that is exactly what happens when the spirit of accusation drives our marriages and families, our church fellowships, and our communities. The focus shifts from Christ to warfare.

## Why Accusation Finds a Foothold

It is fair to say that accusation often enters through personal pride.

Pride is something every one of us must guard against.

- Pride makes us defend ourselves instead of trusting the Lord.
- Pride causes us to assume the worst.
- Pride makes us feel justified in our anger.

When pride takes root, the unseen enemy finds easy ground to work.

For Amish people especially, humility, submission, and community have always been valued. Yet pride can quietly slip in under the cover of tradition, personal offense, or the need to be right. When that happens, even good intentions can lead to division.

Scripture gives us a better way.

In Philippians 2:5–9 we are reminded of the mind of Christ:

*“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant... He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him...”*

Jesus overcame, not by accusation, but by humility. He laid aside His rights, trusted the Father, and walked in obedience. That same mind must be in us.

## How Do We Find Freedom?

Freedom from the spirit of accusation begins with simple steps, given to us from God’s Word.

1. We must recognize the source. Accusation does not come from God. God convicts in order to restore. Satan accuses in order to destroy.
  - In Revelation 12:10, Satan is called “the accuser of our brethren.”

- *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy”* (John 10:10).
2. We must lay down our pride. Pride pushes us to keep fighting. Humility invites God to step in. When we surrender our status and our need to be right, we make room for the Lord to defend us.
    - *“Pride goeth before destruction”*(Proverbs 16:8).
    - *“God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble”*(James 4:6).
  3. We must refuse to participate. We do not have to repeat accusations, spread suspicion, or take sides in a conflict that does not honor the Lord who set us free. Silence, prayer, and patience are often powerful acts of faith.
    - *“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth”* (Ephesians 4:29).
    - *“Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord”* (Romans 12:19).

4. We must rest in Christ’s victory. We are not left to fight alone. The battle belongs to the Lord (Read 2 Chronicles chapter 20).
  - *“Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4).
  - *“The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace”* (Exodus 14:14).

When we rest in Christ and let Him fight our battles, accusations lose their power.

1 John 4:4 reminds us:

*“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”*

Christ in us is greater than any accusing voice around us. When we humble ourselves and trust Him, He fights the unseen battle on our behalf.

May God help us guard unity, walk in humility, and keep the gospel clear before a world that desperately needs truth and hope.

### A Prayer for All of Us

Lord God Almighty, all-seeing, all-knowing, and everywhere present, we come to You knowing that we are weak, but You are strong. Forgive us for the pride that so easily rises in our hearts. Help us to see beyond flesh and blood and recognize the true enemy. Protect our homes, our churches, and our ministries from accusation and division. Give us the mind of Christ, a humble and obedient spirit, and hearts that love truth and peace. Teach us to rest in You and trust You to fight our battles. May Your church stand united, so that the lost may clearly see Jesus and be drawn to Him. In Jesus name, we ask these things. Amen.

The author invites you  
to text or call with  
questions or comments!  
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## Did You Know?



Crows are widely known for their problem-solving skills. They will often take an “ant bath” by picking up ants and rubbing them on their feathers! Ants secrete formic acid as a defense mechanism. This formic acid is a potent natural insecticide and fungicide that will give the crow relief from parasites such as mites, lice, and feather mites! God’s design is wonderful!

## Gratitude

- by Joe Keim

Depression often comes from carrying life’s burdens, feeling alone, or feeling distant from God. How do we overcome?

Turn to gratitude.

Start simple. Draw near to God. Begin by thanking God for the breath He gave you this morning. Thank Him for the things you may have taken for granted. We are so blessed and take so much for granted.

Worship with music. Write to a few friends and thank them for standing by your side, or for how they have helped shape your life.

As you do this, something begins to change. Depression and discouragement starts to lift.

*“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”*

If you do that, then...

*...the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6–7)*

Thankful people do not live in depression. Thankful people bubble over with joy.

Part one of this three part series took a look at the Bible and the Triune God.

## Created in His Image

Adam, the first created person, was modeled after Jesus. *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...”* (Genesis 1:26). “Our likeness” and “our image” are both plurals. The Triune God created man with three distinct parts. After the formation of Adam, Jesus breathed the breath of life into him. *“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul”* (Genesis 2:7). God did not create our breath; He gave us His!

In the closing comments of the first letter to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul said, *“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Like the Triune God, a person also has three parts—the spirit (listed first due to its importance), the soul, and the body.

## The Spirit

The first and most important part of a person is their spirit. The spiritual part of a person is where God and man meet, commune, fellowship, and where God gives all spiritual direction. *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”* (1 Corinthians 6:19). It is one thing to know and believe there is a God and another thing to have Him as your Saviour (being born again). *“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble”* (James 2:19). The Holy Spirit living in a believer will direct him in

paths of righteousness. *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...”* (John 16:13).

The spirit in man is the part that communicates with God in all spiritual matters. *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24). A dead spirit cannot communicate with a living God! *“But the natural man (the unbeliever) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Once a person hears God’s simple plan of salvation, the opportunity to invite Jesus into their lives to save them from everlasting damnation and give them an eternal home in Heaven will be accepted or denied. If the choice is to trust Jesus, their spirit immediately becomes alive! *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:”* (Romans 8:16). If denied, the flames of Hell await them—believe it or not. *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ”* (2 Corinthians 11:3). Eternal salvation is simple. Jesus made the way, and all you have to do is believe and receive!

## The Body

The body leaves little to explain. It is simply our physical being. Our body houses our spirit and soul while we are still breathing. God gives us this short period in our earthly bodies to determine where we will spend eternity. If God forced people to believe, He would be a dictator playing with His creation. The truth is, He will use the Bible, His Holy Word, to instruct you how to go from His created being to His child. *“But as many*

*as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name”* (John 1:12). Many people think that we are all God’s children; this is wishful thinking! According to this text, one becomes a son of God after receiving Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour. *“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:26). The Bible is very clear about who is the father of all unbelievers. Jesus was having a discussion with the religious leaders of the day when He recorded this truth:

*“Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it”* (John 8:42-44).

## The Soul

The soul is who you are. It’s your mind, your will, your intellect, and where you form decisions. The eyes are the physical instruments that gather light, but your soul puts everything together to give you the vision of the object. Your soul is where you sense pain and express concern for others. Your memory is also a part of your soul.

Luke 16:19-31 tells the story of two men; one a poor beggar named “Lazarus” (a real name for a real person) and the other known as a “certain rich man.” Lazarus did not go to Heaven because he was a poor beggar; he went because he had been born again.

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried (his physical body was buried); And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, (pain) and seeth Abraham afar off (vision), and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, (he heard Abraham speak) Son, remember (memory) that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment (compassion for the lost). Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” (Luke 16:19-31) (Underlines added, explanations noted in parentheses)

The account of Lazarus and the rich man acknowledges the Biblical truth of a literal, eternal place of torment. The fact that Jesus recorded the name of Lazarus is proof that this is an actual historical event and not a parable.

Notice the events recorded for us in this passage:

1. The rich man died, and they buried him in a tomb.
2. While his dead body is still in the grave, observe that the rich man still has his sight, hearing, memory, a sensation of pain, and he displays compassion for his lost family.
3. At the moment of his death, his eternal soul, the part of man that contains all his emotions, such as his ability to see, hear, think, feel pain, and have compassion for the lost, was immediately in torment.
4. Verse 23 clearly states that his memory was also very sharp; he called the beggar by name.

The nameless rich man provides an eternal truth concerning those who choose to deny Jesus. “Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence” (Jeremiah 23:39). Heaven could not be a place of worship and rejoicing if we knew our loved ones were in Hell. They will be wiped from our memory and, worse yet, God’s memory! “Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous” (Psalm 69:28). The moment a sinner puts their faith in Christ alone for salvation, their name appears in the Book of Life. This book records their reservation in Heaven for all of eternity:

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were

*judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”* (Revelation 20:12-15).

Only those who did not receive the free gift of eternal life (the spiritually dead) will be judged for their sins recorded in the other books. “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). For the born again Christian, all of their evil deeds were paid for by the blood of Jesus. “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 10:17).

According to Scripture, they buried the rich man’s body, and his soul immediately went to Hell. His body and soul will remain separated until the final judgment. Then, when judgment day arrives, his soul and body will reunite to face God for the Great White Throne Judgment. “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; (the physical body) and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: (the living soul in Hell) and they were judged every man according to their works” (Revelation 20:13). Once he receives the verdict, he will begin to serve an eternal sentence in a literal, burning Hell. “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” (Revelation 20:14).

A man’s soul is precious to the LORD. “But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah” (Psalm 49:15). Unfortunately, many people have led extremely

wicked lives; some even claim to have sold their souls to the devil. This has caused them to believe that God would not forgive them. The truth is, the soul does not belong to the individual; it belongs to God. *“Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die”* (Ezekiel 18:4).

You cannot sell something that is not yours! As long as a person is still breathing, they can become a child of God! Sin brought death, but Jesus came to bring life! The Apostle Paul said it like this: *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief”* (1 Timothy

1:15). Because of His love for sinners, God gave the Apostle Paul the opportunity to be born again. Before converting to Christ, Paul made his living by killing and persecuting Christians. After being born again, God used him to pen down over half of the New Testament! Listen carefully to his testimony:

*“I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.”* (Acts 26:9-11)

Do not put God in a box! No matter what

they have done, there is not a person alive that Jesus would not forgive! Christ died for sinners! Please do not believe the devil’s lie. You can become a child of God this very moment!

To deny Jesus is to choose eternal damnation! Therefore, do not wait another minute, call on Him today. *“(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured (assisted) thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)”* (2 Corinthians 6:2).

YOUR UNBELIEF IN HELL  
WILL NOT CHANGE THE  
FACT OF ITS EXISTENCE!

## Assurance

- by Samuel Girod

A saved person knows two things with certainty:

1. I deserve hell.
2. I am saved by the blood of Jesus.

Recently, I asked someone a simple question, “Do you deserve hell?” His answer was, “I often wonder.”

That answer is the problem.

The Bible says all have sinned. A saved person doesn’t wonder: God has already shown them their guilt.

*“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23).

Salvation doesn’t stop there. A born-again believer doesn’t trust in works, obedience, church, or tradition. He trusts in the finished work of Christ.

*“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”* (Romans 5:9).

That’s why the Bible doesn’t say “hope,” “guess,” or “wait and see.”

It says **KNOW**.

*“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that*

*ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”* (1 John 5:13)

If you say:

- “I hope I’m saved”
- “I’ll find out someday”
- “I’m doing my best”

You do not have biblical assurance.

A saved person says:

“I deserve hell but Jesus paid it all, and I KNOW I’m saved.”

That’s not pride. It is faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.

## All

- by Gerald Hochstetler

Being clothed in God’s righteousness relieves us of the stress of having to put on a show of goodness in ourselves. We can freely speak of the un-goodness of our own selves, because our goodness is not of ourselves.

Confessions of sin or other ugly issues in our lives come much more easily. There is no one to impress.

That is hard for most of us. Human nature always wants to self-justify. If we can discuss the faults and sins of others, it shifts the focus off of us.

“Oh, did you hear of the horrible so-and-so’s? They are just REALLY bad people!”

This reminds me of a little portion of scripture:

*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* (Romans 3:23)

If you look up the word “all” in the Greek text, it means “all.” All as in **ALL**. That is the same word we use for all in the English language!

While I was dead in sins and trespasses, He came looking for me. Eph. 2:1. That’s my Saviour.

Imagine it is the day after Easter. The pews are empty. Summer is now the focus. The anticipation of Easter Sunday is now another full year away. There is an empty feeling in our hearts and minds as we start “normal” again.

This same empty feeling, and the “back to normal” reality found itself permeating many after the death of Christ (Luke 24; John 21).

The followers of Christ were broken and fearful. He was gone. Their hope of restoration and victory died at the hands of the Romans.

Imagine the joy and excitement exhibited by the disciples as they found their Savior and friend was no longer dead! Their hope was renewed when He appeared to them in His resurrected body. The mix of emotions that they experienced in just a forty-eight-hour period was more than most could imagine.

Christ had seen them on various occasions, and in their minds, it was time for another visit. They eagerly anticipated this visit with questions and a desire for closer fellowship, but He never came. What little hope they had vanished. Was He gone for good? Had He ascended to heaven? What were they supposed to do now?

In John 21, we find the disciples in an emotional state of defeat. Despite the foretelling of death and resurrection, they had no idea what was in store for them in the coming weeks. It was a difficult place for them to be. Their teacher, their guide, their friend, their leader was gone. There were no written instructions, no direct commands, no plan for them to follow. They were lost.

In the midst of uncertainty, they did the only other thing they knew. They went fishing.

Many of us have found ourselves in the same state of defeat. We need or desire an answer from God, and He doesn't seem to be listening. Honestly, He seems nowhere to be found. Our response to times like this is very similar to that of the disciples.

**So then, in times of emptiness or loss, what should our course of action be?**

## 1. Don't Get Ahead of God.

We are creatures of time and routine. We like our schedules and do not handle disruptions well. We bring frustration and disappointment upon ourselves when we try to hold God to our timeline.

Singles rush into marriage. Bosses rush to hire a replacement. Pastors rush to another opportunity.

Don't get ahead of God! Take time to be still and know Him. The Word is full of promises of God's leading. We often miss His plan because we fail to wait. Proverbs 3:5-6, Romans 8:14, Psalm 27:11,14.

## 2. Don't Rush to the Familiar.

Fishing was what the disciples knew. The nets felt so familiar in their hands. The smells and sounds of that night brought back many memories for them.

It also brought back memories of the past three years. They remembered the last time they were on a boat. Peter reflected on the last time he caught a fish. In the back of their minds, you wonder if the phrase “fishers of men” was resounding.

The familiar is a fascinating prospect when you are unsure of the future. We shy away from those things that make us uncomfortable, and we despise the uncertain. God might be prompting you to take that step, but something is holding you back.

## 3. Don't Stop Looking for Jesus.

When a man yelled out from shore, John was the only one to identify Him. Don't give up! Don't get so caught up in what needs to be done that you forget about the only One who can do it. Don't stop praying. Don't stop reading the Bible. Keep looking for Jesus.

## 4. Don't Forget that God is Sovereign.

Was it all a part of the Lord's plan to have them on the shore for breakfast? Possibly. Could God have shown up again in the upper room and accomplished the same? Yes. Is God's purpose thwarted because of our impatience? No. But the disciples could have enjoyed a good night's sleep and saved themselves a lot of headaches if they had stayed and waited.

Don't cause yourself or your family more stress, pain, or heartache because of your uncertainties or impatience. “Wait, I say on the Lord.”



Some have accused me of being “sinful” or promoting carnality because I preach free grace. “Free grace” does not mean “no good works.”

Let me say this plainly:

I have never said believers should not have good works.

What I have said, and will continue to say, is that

Salvation is completely free and not determined by works, fruit, or performance.

There is a difference between standing and state. When those two are mixed, confusion follows.

## 1. Salvation Is a Free Gift, Not a Reward for Works

Scripture is clear:

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith... not of works...”* (Ephesians 2:8–9)

If works determine whether someone is saved, then salvation is no longer by grace.

Grace plus works is not grace.

Salvation is based entirely on what Christ accomplished, not what we accomplish.

- Fruit does not determine salvation.
- Performance does not maintain salvation.
- Works do not secure salvation.

Salvation was settled by the cross.

2. Standing vs. State (Position vs. Practice) This is where many confuse the issue.

### Standing (Position in Christ):

- Perfect
- Complete

- Sealed
- Chosen in Him
- Holy and without blame before God

*“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy...”* (Ephesians 1:4)

That is position.

### State (Daily Walk):

- Can be faithful or carnal
- Can be fruitful or unfruitful
- Affects fellowship and reward
- Does not determine eternal destiny

*“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord...”* (Colossians 1:10).

Believers are exhorted to walk worthy because walking worthy is not automatic proof of salvation. It is a responsibility of those who are already saved.

## 3. Good Works Are the Result, Not the Root

Notice the order carefully:

*“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works...”* (Ephesians 2:10)

Verses 8–9: Saved by grace through faith, not of works.

Verse 10: Created unto good works.

Works follow salvation.

They do not cause it.

*“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”* (Titus 2:14)

Redemption comes first. Zeal for good works follows.

## 4. Believers Are Commanded to Maintain Good Works

If good works automatically prove salvation, why are believers told to maintain them?

*“...that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works...”* (Titus 3:8).

*“Let ours also learn to maintain good works...”* (Titus 3:14).

*“If a man therefore purge himself...he shall be a vessel unto honour...prepared unto every good work.”* (2 Timothy 2:21).

These are exhortations to saved people. Commands to maintain good works would be unnecessary if works were automatic evidence of salvation.

## 5. Works Are for Reward, Not for Remaining Saved

Believers will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Works will be tested, not to determine heaven or hell, but to determine reward.

Some works endure. Some works burn. But the believer is still saved.

Salvation is a gift. Rewards are earned. If we mix those two, we shift assurance from Christ’s finished work to human performance. That produces fear, and uncertainty, not faith.

## 6. Even Lost People Can Do Good Works

External morality is not proof of salvation. Many unbelievers:

- Give to charity
- Help the poor
- Love their families
- Live disciplined lives

If visible fruit proves salvation, then many religious but lost people would be saved. Works cannot be the measuring stick of justification. Only faith in Christ is.

## 7. Free Grace Has Always Been Accused of Promoting Sin

This accusation is not new. Paul faced it himself. In 2 Cor 10:2, he writes:

*“Which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.”*

Some accused Paul and his ministry of being fleshly. Grace strips away religious boasting. Grace removes performance as a badge of righteousness. Grace threatens systems built on outward appearance.

Paul also dealt with this mindset in Romans:

*“Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.”*

Grace does not promote sin. Grace exposes pride. And grace teaches us:

*“That, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly...” (Titus 2:12).*

Grace is the greatest motivator for holy living, but it is never the condition for justification.

### Final Clarification

I absolutely believe believers should:

- Walk worthy
- Be zealous of good works
- Maintain good works
- Be fruitful

Scripture commands these things.

But those works:

- Do not save us
- Do not keep us saved
- Do not prove we are saved
- Do not complete what Christ finished

Works are the result of salvation, not the requirement for it.

If we confuse standing with state, we will produce either pride or fear. If we keep them separate, we preserve the purity of grace.

Salvation is free. Rewards are earned.

Discipleship costs. Justification does not.

I will continue to defend the purity of grace, because:

*“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” (Galatians 5:9).*

When you mix works into salvation, even a little, it perverts it.

**Grace must remain pure.  
Walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh.**

For His glory, Ray B.

P.S. A person cannot walk in the Spirit if they do not understand the difference between standing and state, which is exactly why it is so important to keep them separated.

***“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh”  
(Galatians 5:16)***

## To All Believers

- by Ray Burkholder

*“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4)*

God desires two things:

1. That all be saved.
2. That all come to the knowledge of the truth.

Salvation is just the beginning — God wants us to grow in truth. So ask yourself:

- Do you desire to grow?
- Are you teachable?

There are many kinds of believers:

- Young
- Carnal
- Solid
- Mature

Some don't care.

Some are comfortable.

Some are always hungry for more truth.

Some say they're Bible believers — others truly are.

Some rarely open their Bible.

Some search the Scriptures daily.

That's why when truth is shared, reactions differ.

- Some get offended.
- Some ignore it.
- Some search the Scriptures to see if these things are so.

So... which one are you?

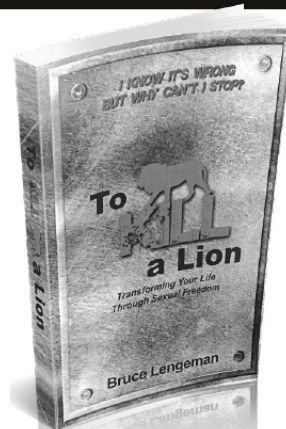
Satisfied with what you know — or open to anything supported by Scripture?

*“...ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).*

Stay teachable.

Study the Word.

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## May

### Hope Talks: Finding Your Purpose in Life

For many, finding purpose happens gradually over time with setbacks, questions, and ongoing discovery. Trying to answer, “Why am I here? What is my purpose?” can feel overwhelming.

### How the Parables of Jesus Wrecked Religion

(part 3 of 3)

But grace! It shocks, offends, and frees. Grace throws a party. Legalism: It stands in the corner, arms crossed, hating every second of it. Message by Andrew Farley.

### Life Lessons: Pursuing Your Purpose

There are tons of tests and assessments to help you discover who you are and what you are supposed to do. Chip Ingram asks what you do after that. Chip will help you pursue God’s purpose and confidently live it out every day.

### Get Out of Your Head: The Remedy for Pride

C.S. Lewis once said, “Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man.” Guest teacher Jennie Allen continues her series by describing the subtle dangers of self-importance and how we can shift our focus onto making a genuine difference with our lives.

## June

### 101 Bible Questions

(Part 1 of 11)

The truth about salvation. By Andrew Farley.

### 101 Bible Questions

(Part 2 of 11)

How Secure is my salvation? By Andrew Farley.

### Life Lessons: Answering Your Adversities

Are you in a painful, confusing season of life right now? Maybe you’ve lost your job, have a conflict, or just received a sudden diagnosis. Whatever it is, do you wish there was a biblical guide to respond to adversity? Chip Ingram shares three questions to ask when challenges come. Discover how these prompts will get you through the most trying experiences and grow your faith.

### Get Out of Your Head: The Remedy for Victimhood and Complacency

The Bible says that we’re more than conquerors in Jesus. Some days it really doesn’t feel that way, and you’re convinced life truly isn’t fair. Jennie Allen wraps up her series “Get Out of Your Head.” She’ll tackle the last two toxic thoughts that pollute our minds: victimhood and complacency. Don’t miss how these mindsets can destroy our lives, and unravel our relationship with God.

## July

### 101 Bible Questions

(Part 3 of 11)

The truth about forgiveness. By Andrew Farley.

### 101 Bible Questions

(Part 4 of 11)

The truth about judgement. By Andrew Farley.

### Life Lessons: Recalibrating Your Walk with God

Do you sense that something is off in your spiritual walk with Jesus? You are doing all the right things and working hard, but you don’t feel the same connection? In this program, Chip Ingram shares what he does when that uneasy feeling disturbs his soul. Learn how to stop, reflect, and recalibrate your relationship with God and why that begins with reprioritizing your personal time with Him.

### Hope Talks: Managing Your Time Wisely

In this episode, Haley and Dustin discuss what the Bible says about time management. They explore roadblocks to effective time management and how we manage our time can reveal deeper emotional and spiritual issues.



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# Feedback and Response

1

I always appreciate the people who call after reading an article in The Amish Voice. Sometimes they call to agree. Sometimes they call to disagree. Other times, they simply want a clearer understanding. I truly enjoy those conversations. None of us knows everything, and we all grow by talking things through.

Solomon wrote in Proverbs 27:17, *“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”* We need one another. Just as iron sharpens iron, believers strengthen, correct, and encourage each other as we walk with the Lord.

One recent question came from an article by Simon Fry titled "Members-Only Baptism," published in the March 2026 issue.

The Question: **Must a person be walking in obedience to every command before God can save him?** – Simon Fry

## My Response:

That is a very important question, and I was so glad the caller felt comfortable seeking a better explanation. The question deserves a clear, biblical answer.

The simple answer is no. A person does not have to be walking in obedience to every command before God can save them. If that were true, no one could ever be saved.

Romans 5:8-9 says:

*“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”*

God saves sinners, not cleaned-up people. We do not obey first and then get saved. We are saved by grace through faith.

Ephesians 2:8–9 says:

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not*

*of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*

Salvation is not earned by obedience. It is received by faith in Jesus Christ.

That said, real salvation produces obedience. After we are saved, God begins changing us.

Ephesians 2:10 continues:

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”*

And 2 Corinthians 5:17 says:

*“Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

So obedience is not the root of salvation. It is the fruit of salvation.  
- Joe Keim (419) 651-6813

2

**Daniel Asks:** Can you share your thoughts about what the stumbling block is in the following verses? *But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak* (Romans 14:15-22).

**Joe Keim Responds:** Paul wrote this letter to a mostly Gentile church. Before they were saved, the Gentiles were idol worshipers who often sacrificed meat to idols. Afterward, some believers felt free to eat that meat, while others were uncomfortable because it had been used in idol worship.

Paul is saying it is not sinful to eat the meat itself, but if eating it offends a brother in the church, you should not eat the meat in his presence. Eating idol-offered meat in front of a weaker believer could cause him to stumble in his new faith.

Later, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 8:9, *“But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak.”*

**Daniel Asks:** So what would you say to someone who compares the meat to technology and says they feel uncomfortable as your brothers in Christ if you have, for example, a phone or a truck? Am I being a stumbling block to my brothers if I keep these things, knowing they have a problem with them, even though I personally believe there is nothing wrong with them?

**Joe Keim Responds:** Daniel, those are very good questions. In Romans 14, two main areas of contention are mentioned: idol worship and alcohol.

### 1. Idol Worship

Throughout the Old Testament, God repeatedly warned His people not to serve or worship other gods. (See Deuteronomy 8:19; Joshua 23:7, 16; Judges 2:11–13; 1 Kings 9:6–9; 2 Kings 17:35–39; Jeremiah 25:6.)

For example:

- Exodus 20:4–5 forbids making or bowing down to idols.
- Deuteronomy 6:14–15 says, “*Ye shall not go after other gods.*”

Eating meat that had been offered to idols was closely tied to idol worship. Though the meat itself was not sinful, eating it could easily appear as participation in idolatry, especially to those with weak consciences.

### 2. Alcohol

Alcohol in itself is not sinful. Jesus turned water into wine. But drunkenness is clearly condemned in Scripture.

In 1 Corinthians 11:17–34, Paul rebukes the church at Corinth for turning the Lord’s Supper into a self-centered feast. Some were even getting drunk. Because of this mockery, verse 30 says, “*For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*” (Some had died under God’s judgment.)

Likewise, Galatians 5 lists drunkenness among sins that keep a person from inheriting the kingdom of God. So, while wine itself is not sinful, drunkenness is. Some believers avoided even a sip of wine out of concern for others who might struggle with it.

That is why Paul says in Romans 14:21:

*“It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.”*

### Applying This to Technology and Vehicles

So what about technology, electricity in the home, or owning a vehicle? Yes, these things may offend some of the brethren in the church. But does that mean you are a stumbling block simply for having them?

Common sense tells us we cannot please everyone all the time. It is impossible. Scripture also makes clear that Jesus freed us from man-made rules and restrictions.

*“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us... and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Colossians 2:14).*

Owning a vehicle, having electricity, or using a smartphone are modern conveniences that make life easier. They are not spiritual issues like idol worship or drunkenness.

- Vehicle vs. horse and buggy = both are transportation.
- Electricity vs. batteries = both provide power.
- Phone vs. pen and paper = both are ways to communicate.

These things fall under Colossians 2, not Romans 14. They are practical matters, not moral ones. In short, Paul’s teaching in Romans 14 applies when our actions might lead another believer into sin, not simply when they make someone uncomfortable with our modern tools.

The truth is that much of what we have today are modern tools that were not around in Jesus’ day or even 600 years ago, such as: printing press, thrashing machine, chain saw, phone, electricity, car, tractor, corn binder, combine, baler, septic system, refrigerator, gas lantern, clothing patterns, etc.

Paul warns believers not to go back under legalism after being set free through Christ.

*“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1)*

Paul calls believers to stay free and not return to legal bondage. Salvation and acceptance with God are not earned by keeping rules. True freedom is found in walking by the Spirit.

The old written code brought death, but the Spirit gives life.

*“Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Corinthians 3:6-11).*

In Matthew 23:24, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for their hypocrisy: “*Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.*”

### Meaning of Matthew 23:24

Jesus was speaking to the scribes and Pharisees, religious leaders who focused on very small details of the law but ignored the weightier matters like mercy, justice, and faith.

The phrase “strain at a gnat” refers to their habit of filtering or straining their drink to make sure no tiny, unclean insect (like a gnat) would accidentally be swallowed, because that would make them “unclean” under their traditions.

But then Jesus said they would “swallow a camel,” meaning they committed far greater sins, such as pride, greed, and hypocrisy, while congratulating themselves for keeping small outward rules.

*(continued at the bottom of the next page)*

# Honor in Marriage

- by Dorothy Miller

A lot of the hardest seasons in our marriage weren't because we didn't love each other. They were because we were living out what we had learned about how a man relates to his wife...and it wasn't always healthy, balanced, protective or gentle.

There were years when I had to be strong in ways I was never meant to be. I stepped outside of my role as a helpmeet and carried things that shouldn't have been mine to carry. I've always had an independent personality — those seasons made me even more so.

But here's the part I don't skip over anymore: There was a time early in our marriage when I exploited my husband's greatest character strength; his empathy. He feels deeply. Every emotion I carry, he carries. What I feel, he mirrors. It's something I later came to understand.

But before I understood, I mishandled it. I grew up learning how to relate to men by watching my father. My dad was a command-type man, strong and direct. You didn't push him. He carried himself with authority. That was my framework.

So when I married a man whose strength wasn't command — but compassion — I didn't know what to do with that.

And instead of recognizing it as a strength, I tested it. I pushed it. At times, I ran him into the ground emotionally. And the hardest part? I knew it.

I knew in my heart I was hurting him. I didn't want to destroy him — but I also didn't yet understand him. It took me years to realize that just because he didn't respond as my father would have, it didn't mean he was weak. If anything, I now believe he is stronger.

Beneath what you see on the surface is a deep well of emotion. And wells run deep. They hold more than you realize.

You cannot expect to learn how to relate to someone who is completely different from you in a short amount of time. It takes years. It takes humility. It takes failure.

I made so many mistakes. I have regrets. I stepped out of my role more times than I can count. And still do! And yet — here is the part that humbles me most: He forgave me. Over and over again.

If there is a true strength in our marriage, it's not my searching for wisdom. It's not my trying to analyze and fix everything. It's his willingness to forgive.

His empathy didn't just make him feel what I felt — it made him understand me. It made him accept me. He saw my strong personality. He saw my independence. And instead of being threatened by it, he loved me through it.

There was a time I could have looked him in the eye and said, "I don't need you. I am capable." And I meant it. But strength isn't the same thing as health. Because after all we've walked through, I can say this with clarity: I need my husband. Not because I can't function. But because of who he is.

My husband is gone this weekend. And yes, I'm capable. The house runs. The responsibilities get handled. I miss him. I miss the depth. I miss the empathy. I miss the quiet way he carries what I feel.

Marriage isn't about proving you can survive alone. It's about learning how to honor the way God wired the person you chose, and protecting the very trait you once misunderstood.

## Simple Explanation

They were careful about little things that did not matter much, but careless about big things that mattered most to God. In other words, they majored on the minors and minored on the majors.

## Lesson for Us

- We can be so focused on small outward things that we forget the bigger issues of the heart — the ones that truly affect us in eternity.
- God cares more about truth, mercy, and humility than about outward appearances or man-made rules.
- Jesus wants us to live with a pure heart, not just a clean cup on the outside.

- Joe Keim (419) 651-6813

## Distracted: Galatians

Phone sermon series by Andrew Farley - <https://andrewfarley.org>

Paul wrote Galatians warning churches not to turn away from the true gospel. False teachers were convincing them they needed to keep the Old Testament law to be right with God, but Paul firmly taught that salvation comes only by God's grace through faith in Jesus, not by works. Galatians makes it clear that the Christian life is about faith working through love, not about keeping a list of rules. Available through 2026.



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## Newness of Life

- by John Weaver

The first few verses of Romans 7 contain some of the clearest teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage you will ever find in scripture. I wonder how many of us realize that, even though this portion of scripture gives clear teaching on these subjects, that is not the primary purpose for which it is there. In other words, the teaching on divorce and remarriage is being used to clarify something else: the absolute necessity to be free from the Law (the Old Covenant) in order to be free to enter into a New Covenant relationship.

I see many people who want a New Covenant relationship, but they want to hang on to the Law. Romans 7 teaches us that we must die to the Law. Just as it takes death to break a marriage relationship, it also takes death to break away from the Old Covenant.

If we become dead to the Law, we are free to be married to Christ, but only after we become dead to the law. Romans 7 would call a person who claims to be in a New Covenant relationship with Christ while still clinging to the law an adulteress. This is serious indeed.

Just as we who are married are not willing to share our partners in intimacy with another, so Jesus is not willing to share an inti-

mate relationship with us if we are still married to the Law. Only after we become dead to the Law are we eligible to enter into that relationship with Jesus Christ.

I believe that this is a serious problem in many of our churches. My people are being destroyed by lack of knowledge. To walk in the newness of life, we need to let go of the oldness of life, if I may say it that way. Within us is something that finds satisfaction in keeping laws, that is, in keeping laws for righteousness.

Romans 10:4 says, *“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”*

I wonder what would happen if we all understood that clinging to the Law at the same time we are in a relationship with Christ is considered by God as adultery. Some of the strongest opponents of divorce and remarriage are those

who embrace the law, no disrespect intended. The Word of God is clear. Romans 7 continues and paints a picture of the frustration a person experiences in trying, by their own efforts, to attain the standing with God they sincerely seek.

God has a New Covenant for us. If we become dead to the Old Covenant, He will write the New Covenant in our hearts. It will no longer be in stone. And if we let go of the Old to embrace the New, He walks with us, He talks with us, and He tells us we are His own! And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known!

