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September-October 2026

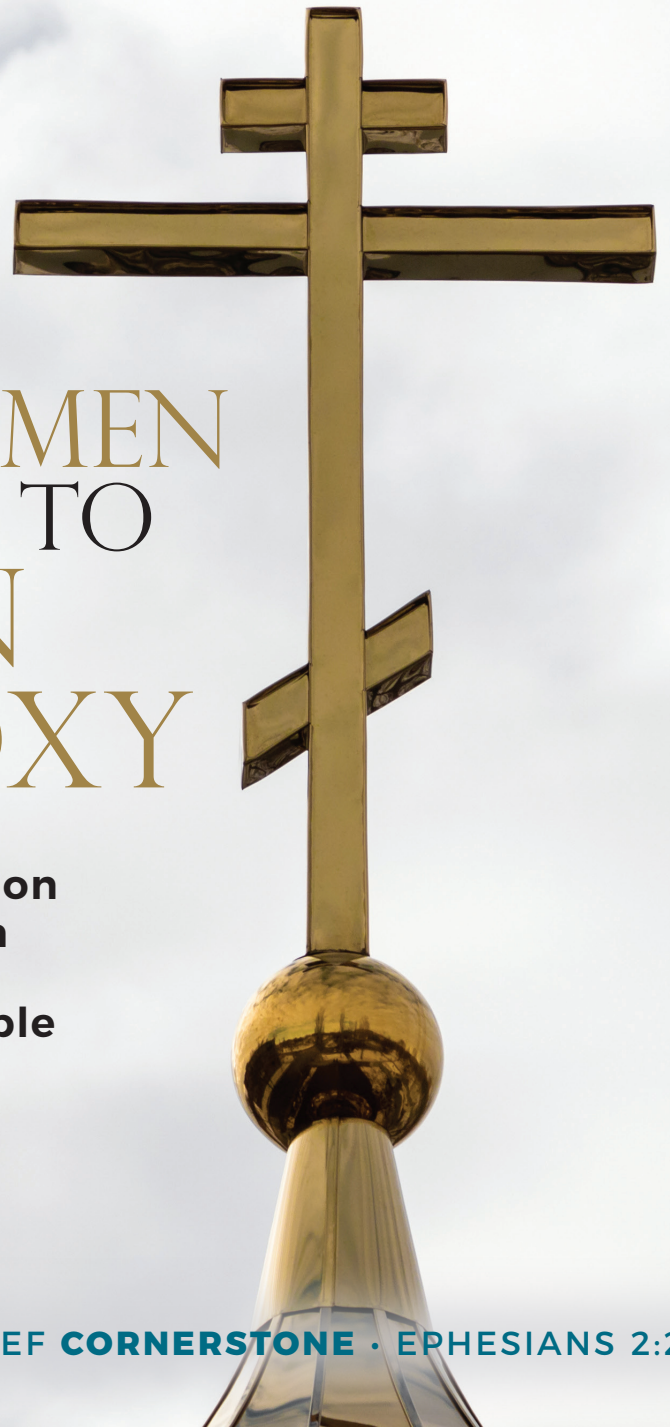
WHY YOUNG MEN ARE FLOCKING TO EASTERN ORTHODOXY

**The Doctrine of Justification
and Roman Catholicism**

The Godly Chain of Example

...and more

...JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF **CORNERSTONE** • EPHESIANS 2:20



From the Editor

Sola Fide

"Therefore, it is of faith that it might be according to grace..." Romans 4:16



by George T Ferrier

George lives in Southern Ontario and fellowships at Bethel-Park Bible Chapel (Brantford, ON). Commended to the Lord's work in 2013 from Bridlewood Bible Chapel (Ottawa, ON), he has travelled extensively, teaching and preaching God's Word in North America and abroad. He serves on the boards of Know the Word Ministries, Inc., the Associates for Biblical Research (<https://biblearchaeology.org/>), and Cornerstone Magazine Inc., where he also serves as managing editor.

Though we may not agree with everything that emerged from the sixteenth-century Reformation, we can affirm that it redirected many back to scriptural truths still held by Bible-believing Christians today: Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Solus Christus, and Soli Deo Gloria.

Scripture Alone

The Bible teaches that there are only two faith systems: a false way that leads to hell and the true way that leads to God and eternal blessing. Though it appears in many forms, the core teaching of the false way is, "What shall I do to get to heaven?" False religions and cults share this same extra-biblical thinking, whether in the form of Christ's work plus man's good deeds or "my good works" alone. By contrast, Scripture teaches that a person is justified—declared righteous—by faith apart from works (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:1–14; Titus 3:5; Heb. 10:38).

Grace Alone

Grace and works cannot coexist. Romans 11:6 teaches that if salvation is by grace, it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. The moment we try to add human merit, grace becomes earned, even in part. A birthday gift illustrates the point: the giver bears the full cost, and if the recipient contributes, it is no longer a gift. We are saved by grace, for it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8).

Faith Alone

Romans 3:28 says, *"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law"* (cf. Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8–9). Any teaching that adds meritorious value to human effort and works clearly denies the plain teaching of Scripture that *"all our righteousnesses [righteous deeds, NASB] are like filthy rags"* (Isa. 64:6). Christ said, *"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent"* (John 6:29). When the Philippian jailer asked, *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"* Paul replied, *"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved"* (Acts 16:30–31). Our good deeds have no currency in salvation. If our works were added to faith, they would still be contaminated by sin and could not justify us. The only accepted currency in heaven is Christ's righteousness, received by faith in His finished work at Calvary.

Christ Alone

Christ paid the penalty for all sin at Calvary, and God demonstrated His acceptance of that finished work by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:31; Rom. 4:25; Eph. 5:2; Heb. 9:12; 10:12–14). His work is complete and nothing can be added to it. Therefore, He alone is our Redeemer, Advocate, and Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5–6; Heb. 9:15; 12:24; 1 John 2:1). He alone is the object of our faith. If we add anything as a ground of acceptance with God, we imply that Christ's saving work is insufficient. Galatians 6:14 says, *"God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."* Each Lord's Day, we remember Christ's Person and work and echo the words of Samuel Rutherford: "The Lamb is all the glory of Emmanuel's land."

Glory to God Alone

We may ask many questions in heaven, but there is one question we will never ask, even of the most godly saint: "What did you do to get here?" Whether in creation or redemption, God must and will receive all the glory (Rev. 4–5). Not 99%, but 100% (Isa. 42:8). Salvation is completely the work of God (John 1:13), and all boasting in ourselves is excluded. Ephesians 2:9 says that salvation is *"not of works, lest anyone should boast."* We praise God alone for His work at Calvary and for regenerating the one who believes in Christ.

In the past few years, an increasing number of Gen Z and millennial men have turned to Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. Tragically, this trend is drawing many unbelievers away from the simplicity of the gospel, while believers have their spiritual growth stunted as they move away from the plain teaching of Scripture. According to God's Word, believers must worship the Lord *"in spirit and truth"* (John 4:24). May we all *"contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints"* (Jude 3). 



Managing Editor:

George T Ferrier, editor@cornerstonemagazine.org

Editorial Committee:

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Address Changes or New Subscriptions:

subscriptions@cornerstonemagazine.org

News & Notices:

Submit online at cornerstonemagazine.org/news or
email: news@cornerstonemagazine.org

Design and Layout:

Hosanna Milbrath

Website Design:

Matt Williams, Louise Street Marketing

Treasurer:

Eileen Lee (USA) • George T Ferrier (Canada)

Accountant:

Eileen Lee (USA) • Brian Gunning (Canada)

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WHY YOUNG MEN ARE FLOCKING TO EASTERN ORTHODOXY

Recently, there has been growing interest in Orthodox Christianity in the United States and Canada, especially among young men. Several major news outlets have covered the trend, including the New York Post with the headline “Young men leaving traditional churches for ‘masculine’ Orthodox Christianity in droves,”¹ the New York Times article “Orthodox Church Pews Are Overflowing With Converts,”² and a BBC piece titled “Young US men are joining Russian churches promising ‘absurd levels of manliness.’”³

Anecdotally, Eastern Orthodoxy is discussed more frequently on YouTube, and several friends have mentioned that their children attended Orthodox services while in college. One young man who was baptized and attended our evangelical assembly eventually left to join the Orthodox Church, despite extended conversations that challenged some of its beliefs, several of which are addressed below.

While most Christians in the West are familiar with the Roman Catholic Church because of historical factors such as the Reformation and colonial expansion, the Eastern Orthodox Church has remained relatively mysterious to many Americans. Even amid the recent surge of interest, Orthodoxy remains a small segment of American Christianity. The New York Post article reported a 78% increase in converts in 2022 compared with pre-COVID levels in 2019. However, context matters: according to Pew Research Center’s 2023–2024 Religious Landscape Study, roughly 1% of U.S. adults identify as Orthodox.⁴ A decade earlier, Ryan Burge’s research showed a decline in practicing Orthodox Christians, from 817,000 in 2010 to 676,000 in 2020, with regular attendees dropping from 212,000 to 183,000.⁵ Thus, while the recent growth is noteworthy, it begins from a modest base. Nevertheless, it is worth examining why young men in particular are drawn to Orthodoxy, what their church teaches, and how those teachings compare with the Word of God.

Reasons for the Appeal

One clear takeaway from articles and videos is that many young men are seeking validation and purpose, which feels increasingly scarce in modern culture. The Post noted that while men and women historically converted in roughly equal numbers, vastly more men have joined since 2020. Father Moses McPherson, featured in the BBC article, expressed a common sentiment: “I don’t

want to go to services that feel like a Taylor Swift concert. If you look at the language of the ‘worship music,’ it’s all emotion—that’s not men.”

A second major attraction is the appeal of tradition and stability in a rapidly changing world. Orthodoxy offers ceremony, historic liturgy, and a claim to apostolic succession, positioning itself as an unchanging refuge. As convert Ben Christianson stated in *The Post*, “There is a sense of structure, of continuity... It’s the exact same. It hasn’t changed. It’s not going to change... I think there are a lot of Protestants who want a more traditional, grounded, historical faith.” These longings are understandable. Yet we must test whether Orthodoxy’s claims hold up against Scripture.

Problems with Orthodox Theology

Like the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church claims to be the one true church. Orthodoxy holds that Pope Leo IX effectively became the first Protestant when he excommunicated Patriarch Michael Cerularius of Constantinople in 1054. The split centered on disagreements over papal authority and the addition of the *filioque* (Latin for “and the Son”) to the Nicene Creed. Orthodoxy regards the first seven ecumenical councils as divinely inspired and unalterable. Because the Catholic Church attempted to alter the creed without the universal approval of the whole church, the Orthodox maintain that Rome departed from the inspired tradition and is therefore not the true Church.

Orthodox understanding of salvation (soteriology) closely parallels Roman Catholicism: salvation is a lifelong process involving faith and works, centered on participation in the seven sacraments—Baptism, Chrismation, Holy Eucharist, Confession, Holy Unction, Matrimony, and Holy Orders.⁶ The Orthodox Church rejects penal substitutionary atonement—the biblical teaching that Jesus satisfied God’s justice and wrath by becoming our substitute on the cross (Isa. 53:5–6, 10–12; Rom. 3:21–26; 2 Cor. 5:21).⁷ Instead, Orthodoxy emphasizes a therapeutic model of salvation, viewing sin primarily as a

spiritual sickness or disease that needs healing and restoration of human nature through union with God (theosis), rather than primarily as a legal guilt that demands satisfaction of divine justice. This therapeutic approach is achieved through the sacraments and ascetic practices of the Church.

Baptism, whether as an infant or after conversion and the catechumenate, is said to bring new birth,⁸ immediately followed by Chrismation,⁹ which bestows the Holy Spirit. The Eucharist,¹⁰ which is central in Orthodoxy is understood through the doctrine of transubstantiation: the bread and wine become the literal body and blood of Christ. In order to have eternal life, it is taught that one must partake of the Eucha-

rist (John 6:53-58), and because Christ's physical body is not divided, His spiritual body, the Church cannot be divided. Therefore, if one is not baptized into the Orthodox Church, one is not truly born again; one does not possess the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; and one does not have access to the flesh and blood of the Lord that grants salvation. As Metropolitan Sotirios writes in his Orthodox Catechism, "Everyone must become a member of this Church to be saved. Everyone, without exception...Whoever does not follow the true faith is a heretic and is cut off from the Church."¹¹

This authority rests on the Orthodox view of Scripture and tradition. Metropolitan Sotirios explains:

"Oral revelation is Holy Tradition, and written revelation is Holy Scripture; and both Holy Tradition and Holy Scripture are equal. [...] It is only Holy Tradition that can transmit the divine truths that are not written down in the Bible. Only Holy Tradition can correctly interpret Holy Scripture. When Holy Tradition is rejected and only Holy Scripture is accepted as the basis of our faith, as something to be interpreted by individuals, the unity of the faith is shattered."¹²

The Orthodox Church also argues that it determined the biblical canon, so Scripture derives its authority from the Church. However, this reasoning does not hold. The apostle Paul declares, "*For we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth*" (2 Cor. 13:8, NASB). The Lord Jesus is the Truth (John 14:6), God's Word is truth (John 17:17), Jesus is the Word (John 1:1), and His words will not pass away (Matt. 24:35). On what basis did the early church recognize which books would be included in the official canon of Scripture? Clearly, the decision was not made on the basis of the arbitrary authority of the church council, but rather on the evidence of the inspiration of the Scripture itself. If a particular book did not meet the criteria necessary to be accepted as divinely inspired, it would not qualify for inclusion. Therefore, the standard being used is Scripture itself, and thus the Word of God is again the final authority. This is the same standard that

must be used to evaluate all the creeds and decisions of councils throughout the history of the Church, and this is what is meant by the term used by the Reformers, *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone). Scripture must be the final authority in matters of doctrine and interpretation (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Based on this biblical understanding of the authority of Scripture, we must reject the Orthodox soteriology of faith and works and hold to salvation by faith alone, because of the grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ, who bore our sins in His body on the cross (Acts 16:31; 1 Pet. 2:24; Gal. 2:15-21). We must also reject as unbiblical the worship, or veneration, of Mary, whom the Orthodox Church honors as "the salvation of the Christian faith,"¹³ the "acceptable sacrifice," the "ewe-lamb of God without spot, the dove without blemish," one whose "body was never subject to the taint of sin," and through whom "we have been reconciled with God."¹⁴

Additionally, the Orthodox tradition of venerating relics, which goes so far as to declare those who knowingly reject this doctrine to be under anathema,¹⁵ does not stand up to the test of Scripture (Ex. 20:4-6) or history,¹⁶ as there is no evidence of this practice in the early Church. Furthermore, the fact that a teaching can be traced back to the early Church does not mean that it is a true doctrine, since false teachers and Judaizers were already a problem in the apostolic era (Gal. 1:6-9). The same applies to the Orthodox doctrines of praying to the saints (1 Tim.

2:5), forbidding bishops to marry, fasting before communion (1 Tim. 4:3), toll houses after death,¹⁷ and prayers for the dead.¹⁸

Conclusion

The recent interest in Eastern Orthodoxy among young men reflects a genuine hunger for depth, masculinity, historical rootedness, and transcendence in a shallow and unstable age. Orthodoxy's ancient liturgy, rigorous disciplines, and claim to unbroken tradition offer an attractive alternative to the emotionalism and constant innovation found in parts of contemporary Protestantism. Yet upon examination, its core teachings—particularly its understanding of salvation as a process mediated exclusively through the Church and its seven sacraments, its elevation of tradition as equal to and the interpreter of Scripture, its therapeutic model of salvation, and its rejection of penal substitution—depart from the clear teaching of the Bible.

The true Church is the body of all who hold fast to the truth of Scripture (Titus 1:9; Matt. 24:35). Scripture was not given to be interpreted ultimately by an institution, but by the illumination of the Holy Spirit to believers. Most importantly, the Bible gives believers wonderful assurance: "*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life...*" (1 John 5:13).

Continued on page 14...



THE DOCTRINE of JUSTIFICATION and ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Martin Luther had tried everything: sleeping on hard floors, fasting for days, even upon bloodied knees climbing the staircase of the church of St. John Lateran in Rome. His teachers said he was doing enough to have peace in his soul, but he had no peace, for his sense of sin was too deep. He had been studying the Psalms and he often noticed the term, the “*righteousness of God*.” This statement brought conviction to his soul. He knew that he was a sinner and did not possess this righteousness, and these words of Scripture condemned him all the more. One day he opened the Bible and began to read in Romans 1:17, “*For in it is the righteousness of God revealed...*”—there was that word again. But then he read on, “*The just shall live by faith*” and suddenly the truth of salvation by grace through faith alone came rushing into his soul. At that moment the torch was lit which would lead the world in a spiritual revolution: a return to the biblical doctrine of justification.

A Recent Trend Toward Catholic Churches

Recent news broadcasts and newspaper articles are publishing reports that evangelical men are leaving Baptist and evangelical churches for Catholic churches in record numbers. Recently, Dr. Christopher Kaczor, in an online article entitled “Why Are So Many Young Adults Becoming Catholic?” wrote:

“This Easter, the University of Notre Dame, in South Bend, Indiana saw a record number of students enter the Catholic Church. This trend is happening not just at Notre Dame but around the country. Los Angeles dioceses reportedly welcomed 5,500 new Catholics in 2025. The New York Post ran an essay entitled “Young people are converting to Catholicism en masse...” As reporter Matthew McDonald posted in another article, “Dioceses are reporting increases of 30%, 40%, 50% and even more than 70%.”¹

Two commonly stated reasons many people are joining the Catholic Church are that it is considered more “masculine” and more “traditional” than evangelical churches. But what about the doctrine it espouses?

The Doctrinal Position of the Roman Catholic Church About Justification

While the light of this great truth of justification is proclaimed throughout the world today, the Roman Catholic church

continues to cling to a doctrinal position established in the 16th century at the Council of Trent. Alarmed by the teaching of Luther and Calvin brought to light during the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church formulated a doctrinal position through a series of decrees and canons. The “decrees” state the church’s teaching in a positive form, while the “canons” express it in negative form. Even to the present day, it has never repudiated or revised her position set forth at the Council of Trent.

What does the Roman Catholic Church teach? What do the majority of Roman Catholics believe about justification? Both of these questions are answered by looking more closely at the decisions of the Council of Trent, for these decisions form the foundation of the Roman Catholic Church’s teaching on this subject.

In Roman Catholic theology, according to Trent, justification is an infusion of grace that results in a change in man’s spiritual nature. As proof of this, we note the following decree from chapter 7 of session 6 of the Council of Trent, “Whence in the very act of being justified, at the same time that his sins are being remitted, a man receives through Jesus Christ, to whom he is joined, the infused gifts of faith, hope and charity.”² In Canon 9 of the same chapter, we read the following, “If anyone says that a sinful man is justified by faith alone,... let him be anathema.”³

Here Trent sharply attacks the biblical position by denying Romans 4:5: “*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*” On this point, the Roman Catholic Church rejects the very cornerstone of the Reformation: that man is justified by grace through faith alone. In a careful reading of Trent, one discovers that its primary concern is spiritual renewal rather than the forgiveness of sins.

How Does the Council of Trent Influence Doctrine?

According to Trent, justification is not the declaration that one is righteous, but rather an infusion of grace that brings about sanctification. At this juncture, it is important to stress the biblical distinction between justification and sanctification, a distinction that is crucial. Three points of contrast should be recognized.

1. Justification legally removes the guilt and penalty of sin, whereas sanctification removes the pollution of sin and enables believers to grow in their likeness to Christ.

2. Justification takes place outside the believer and is a legal declaration by God the Father, whereas sanctification takes place within the believer and transforms him.

3. Justification takes place once and is neither a process nor a repeated event. Sanctification is a process that continues throughout the believer's life.

According to Trent, faith does not have central significance in justification, whereas the Scriptures teach that we are justified by grace through faith alone. Romans 3:28 says, *"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law."* While Trent admits that there is a sense in which we can be justified by faith, its emphasis is upon works beginning with baptism. Trent says, "We may then be said to be justified through faith, in the sense that 'faith is the beginning of man's salvation'..."⁴ In the teaching of Trent, what really justifies is not faith but the sacrament of baptism. Is this still what the Roman Catholic Church teaches today? Notice what a recent Catholic catechism for adults teaches concerning salvation:

"What is necessary to be saved? You have to be brought into spiritual contact with the saving death of Jesus by faith and baptism and loyal membership in his church, by love of God and neighbor, and proved by obedience to His commandments, by other Sacraments especially Holy Communion, by prayer and good works and by final perseverance, that is persevering in God's friendship and grace until death."⁵

This teaching reaches the highest levels of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1983, Pope John Paul II also went on record as affirming that salvation is by works in a printed interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, "Man is justified by works and not by faith alone."⁶ Rome may admit that justification is by faith, but what she fails to affirm with conviction is that justification is by grace through faith alone. This was the heart cry of the Reformation: sola fide, faith alone!

According to Trent, justification can be earned through good works, but one of Paul's strongest emphases is that no one can earn eternal life by his or her good works. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God - not of works, lest anyone should boast."* Furthermore, the Bible guarantees that eternal life is a present possession for those who believe. In Romans 6:23, Paul states this truth emphatically, writing, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Yet, disregarding the crystal-clear words of Scripture, the Council of Trent states that one can merit eternal life through his or her good works. This point is made negatively in Canon 32 of the Council of Trent:

"If anyone says that the good works of a man are not the good merits of the justified man himself; or that, by the good works he performs the man does not truly merit an increase of grace, life everlasting, and, providing that he dies in a state of grace, the attainment of that life everlasting, and even an increase of glory: let him be anathema."⁷

It was this very point, the denial of salvation by grace through faith alone, that the leaders of the Reformation so vigorously opposed. They were convinced that Rome's teaching on this point obscured and threatened the gracious character of justification, and made it necessary to add works to the once-for-all finished work of Christ. Through Rome's teaching, the biblical truth of the grace of God and the work of Christ were not only in jeopardy but buried under a mountain of good works.

What is the Current Position of the Catholic Church Since Vatican II?

Has the Catholic Church reversed the teaching of the Council of Trent, as so many believe? In 1957, the Roman Catholic theologian Hans Küng wrote a book called *Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection*. The book caused quite a stir among Catholics and Protestants. Küng candidly admitted and argued that the Reformation view of justification was correct and that this view should be the position of the Catholic Church. One would expect that when a leading Catholic theologian revised his teaching on justification, it would have a deep and transformative effect on the Catholic Church and its teaching. Is this the case?

John Stott, a noted evangelical Anglican, has written concerning Küng's impact upon the Catholic church, "More than a quarter of a century has passed since the publication of his (Küng's) book, and one is not conscious of any widespread proclamation in the Roman Catholic Church of the gospel of justification by grace through faith alone."⁸ In fact, the very opposite is true. Notice a quotation from one of Rome's more progressive theologians, Karl Rahner, concerning Rome's position on justification: "Justification, understood as God's deed, transforms man down to the deepest roots of his being; it transfigures him and divinizes him."⁹ One can conclude that there is little evidence of any change in the

Catholic Church's teaching on justification since the Council of Trent. Furthermore, Catholic leaders disparagingly describe the evangelical view of justification as "legal fiction" or "merely a robe thrown over a corpse." Because this teaching opposes the plain teaching of Scripture, Christians must continue to oppose Rome on this crucial doctrinal point.

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THE GOSPEL HERALD



“Sing to the LORD, all the earth; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.”

1 Chronicles 16:23

How I Came Out of ROMAN CATHOLICISM THE TESTIMONY OF GERALD ST. LAURENT

I was born in 1957, one of nine children in a large Roman Catholic family in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, Quebec, Canada, on the northern shore of the Gaspé Peninsula along the St. Lawrence River estuary. This was just before major changes began to take place in the Roman Catholic Church. As a child, I experienced the old ways, including street processions during various festivals. In May, the month of Mary, there would be a procession through the streets with a large statue of Mary carried at the front. It would then go from house to house, staying in someone's home for several days. There was also a festival called Corpus Christi, during which the host was held up in a monstrance with rays all around it, resembling the sun. These events were impressive and solemn to me as a young child. Many of my teachers were nuns, and the director of my school was also a nun. We said the Rosary every night. Everyone in the town went to church, and the priests ruled with an iron fist. Anyone who opposed the priests was ostracized.

With the Second Vatican Council, held from 1962 to 1965, many changes were introduced in the Roman Catholic Church. Services began to be held in languages other than Latin, and modern music was brought in. Previously, the altar was farther away, and the priest had his back to the congregation. Now the altar was brought forward, and the priest faced the people. We

were taught to sing, “We are the builders of a new world,” and other new songs where love would unite everyone.

During the same period, the Quiet Revolution was taking place in Quebec. From 1944 to 1960, Quebec was governed by the conservative Union Nationale under Premier Maurice Duplessis. This period is often referred to in Quebec history as *La Grande Noirceur*, or “The Great Darkness,” because of its deeply conservative, rural, and religiously focused policies. The priests would say, “Heaven is blue; hell is red,” with red referring to the Liberal Party. The election of the Liberal Party in 1960 sparked the modernization and secularization of the Quiet Revolution, which threw off the shackles of the Catholic Church.

In first grade, we began learning the Roman Catholic catechism, and then, in second or third grade, it was time for First Communion. We had to practice receiving the host using pretend ones, being careful not to touch it with our teeth because we were told it was God. A little later, around fifth grade, it was time for Confirmation. Someone else made the decision for you at your baptism as an infant. Now, at Confirmation, the bishop ceremonially and gently slapped you on the cheek¹ and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” In this moment, you were embracing the faith of your own volition. In seventh grade came your solemn profession of faith.

These were sacraments that made you part of the Catholic Church and were intended to help you work toward your own salvation through good works, in the hope that when you stood before God, your good works would be weighed in the balance and outweigh your sins. If you still fell short, there was always Purgatory to complete the purification over an unknown number of years, and then, finally, you would make it to heaven. Before you took your First Communion, you were also introduced to sacramental confession, where you would tell the priest your sins, hoping you had not forgotten any of them. He had the authority to give you absolution and assign a penance that you were required to complete after confession, so that you could then receive God in the host.

Because of this upbringing, I was taught to fear God and given a desire to be with Him in heaven for eternity. The adults showed reverence for these things when they were in church or in the presence of the priest, but in everyday life they seemed to forget all about them. We were told that if we swore, we would go to hell, yet the adults I loved were swearing, and even my dad, who usually did not swear, would do it when he was angry. This broke my heart. I began to wonder, "Will I do the same when I grow up?" As a child, I found it too hard to live that way. I decided to wait until I was older, thinking it would be easier, only to discover that it became harder as I grew up in a world full of sin.

In addition, the Catholic Church was changing with the Second Vatican Council. This was the beginning of the ecumenical movement within the Roman Catholic Church, with its emphasis on uniting all religions on the basis of love and acceptance. Though not stated openly, the Second Vatican Council seemed to desire bringing other religions under the umbrella of the Roman Catholic Church. This did not help me much in my struggle to live a good life. There was no assurance of salvation.

My brother Philippe had been reading the Bible with his religious girlfriend. She invited him to a Catholic retreat, where he met a cloistered monk who was 73 years old. My brother asked him, "Sir, are you sure of heaven?" The monk replied, "I will only find out when I get there." Philippe concluded that if this man was not sure of heaven after a life of self-denial, then he would never make it. So he gave up all hope, and his thoughts turned to, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," which became our way of thinking. Philippe told me, "We cannot read the Bible because all we do is sin." We gave up on the church but not on God. My four brothers and I thought about God all the time. As we grew older, we became increasingly discouraged, thinking we would never be able to live a good enough life.

My pregnant girlfriend Denise, our child, and I were living a transient life, traveling from place to place and spending ten months in the United States. I worked in drywall installation and construction. Later, we spent time in western Canada, living in different towns and cities in Alberta. Through the influence of a childhood friend's brother-in-law, I began attending a home Bible study in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts in the fall of 1980, led by a full-time worker named Jean Lepine. I had been reading the book of



Left to right: My brother, father, brother, sister, mother, and myself

Revelation. Jean encouraged me to read the Gospel of Matthew instead, asking the Lord for His help.

One time, as I read Matthew 13, I prayed, "Lord, I want to be the good ground." Romans 3:23, 6:23, and John 3:16 helped me understand that salvation is a gift. To have true eternal life, we must repent and trust in a work that is complete and accepted by God. That work was fully accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross on our behalf. I was saved on March 31, 1981. Denise was saved three days later, and three weeks after that, we were married. My four brothers and I were very close, and I went to Edmonton, Alberta, to share the Gospel with them. In a very short time, they were all saved.

Eventually, our family settled in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. For eight years, I led a home Bible study for construction workers and military personnel, and we were blessed to see some come to Christ. In 1999, my home assembly, Bethany Gospel Chapel in Dartmouth, commended me to full-time work. I now spend half of my time with the assembly in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts.

I believe my mother received Christ just before she passed into eternity in 2020 at the age of 90. Shortly after that, my father had a very clear conversion, and four years later, in 2024, he went to be with the Lord at the age of 100.

"Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a Chief Cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame'" (1 Pet. 2:6). 

Endnotes

¹ The symbolic facial tap or "slap" during Catholic confirmation was officially removed worldwide in 1971–1972 following the reforms of the Second Vatican Council.



by Gerald St. Laurent As Told to George T Ferrier

Gerald resides in Moncton, New Brunswick with his dear wife Denise. They have four children and twelve grandchildren, including one deceased grandchild. Gerald has been active for several decades in full-time Gospel preaching and Bible teaching among assemblies throughout the Maritimes, Quebec, and Ontario. He also engages in personal visitation work for encouragement and witnessing.



FOUNDATIONS *of the* FAITH

THE MERCY *of* GOD

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)."

Ephesians 2:4-5

Depending on the translation, "mercy" appears more than 200 times in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word *chesed* (or *hesed*) is often translated as *mercy*, though in some verses it is also rendered *lovingkindness* or *kindness*. The word "mercy" can be difficult to define. Thankfully, the Lord not only tells us about mercy in words but also illustrates it in His teachings.

Relieving Misery

Mercy often conveys strong feelings of compassion, pity, and sympathy. When God looks upon suffering people, He feels love, tenderness, kindness, and compassion toward them in their need. The true essence of mercy is clearly seen in the Lord's parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37). Beaten, robbed, and left for dead, the victim in the story was in a miserable condition. A priest and a Levite merely looked at him and passed by. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion on him (Luke 10:33). Yet mercy does not stop with tender feelings. The Samaritan acted on his compassion by caring for the man and his needs, relieving his misery. His compassion moved him to do so.

Humanity's greatest misery is caused by sin. To relieve that misery, God must deal with sin. In our salvation, both grace and mercy are at work. Richard L. Strauss explains the distinction between grace and mercy in this way:

"Grace describes God's attitude toward guilty lawbreakers and rebels, while mercy describes His attitude toward those who

are suffering and distressed. The first letter of each word helps us remember the distinction: grace for the guilty, mercy for the miserable ... Mercy comes first in the mind of God. He loved us so much and cared about us so intensely in our miserable condition that in grace He sent His Son to die in our place. Mercy motivates His actions. But in the application of salvation to our lives the order is reversed. Only after we receive God's gracious gift of salvation does He begin to alleviate the misery which our sin has caused us. We receive His grace, then we enjoy His mercy. That explains why grace precedes mercy in every one of the apostolic salutations where both words appear (cf. 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; 2 John 3)."¹

Withholding Judgment

God's grace has often been described as giving us favor that we do not deserve, while His mercy holds back the judgment that we do deserve. The Psalmist declares, "*The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy*" (Ps. 103:8). Notice how His abundant mercy causes Him to act toward us: "*He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities*" (Ps. 103:10).

God's mercy means that He withholds from us the judgment we deserve. Yet His gracious dealings with us are not grounded in sentiment alone. He does not repay us according to our iniquities because His Son bore our sins and suffered in our place (1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18). Christ paid the penalty we deserved, making it possible for God to deal with us in both grace and mercy.

Magnanimous Mercy

One magnificent example of mercy in the Old Testament is found in the life of Joseph. Wronged and mistreated by his brothers, sold into slavery, and carried off to a foreign land, Joseph eventually rose to the most prominent position in the land under Pharaoh. Many years later, his brothers stood before him. Though they did not recognize him, Joseph knew exactly who they were. Now he had the chance to exact revenge. Who could have blamed him? After all, they deserved what was coming to them.

But, moved with compassion, Joseph withheld judgment. Once his brothers were brought to confession for their wrongdoing, he embraced them and kissed them. He also gave them land and food during the famine (Gen. 45:10–15). What a remarkable demonstration of mercy toward the undeserving!

Another great example is found in David's dealings with Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9:1–13). David asks, *"Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul..."* (2 Sam. 9:1). In that context, the implications were obvious and ominous. A king who had recently risen to power would ordinarily seek to eliminate any potential threat from his enemies. Yet David continues, *"...that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"* (v.1). Kindness toward the family of one's enemies? Here the word *kindness* is the same as *mercy*. David's compassion extended to the family of his enemies, and he brought Mephibosheth in and treated him as a son of the king. It is not difficult to hear in this story a beautiful foreshadowing of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. One hymnwriter writes:

He saw me ruined by the fall,
Yet loved me notwithstanding all;
He saved me from my lost estate,
His lovingkindness, oh, how great!²

New Mercies

Jeremiah had been focused on the misery and failure all around him. Everywhere he looked, he saw bleakness, bitterness, and hopelessness. The failure and ruin were real; there was no point in denying it. But then his focus shifts: *"This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope"* (Lam. 3:21). He begins to look not inward or outward, but to the character of God: *"It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness"* (Lam. 3:22–23). Strauss illustrates:

"Even better than waking up to the delectable aroma of fresh pastries hot out of the oven, accompanied by the tantalizing smell of fresh coffee brewing, we wake up to a fresh supply of God's mercy when we open our eyes to greet each new day. He is there to meet us and to help us through our difficult times."³

The New Testament echoes this by pointing us to the source of mercies: *"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God"* (2 Cor. 1:3–4). Here we find the fountainhead of mercy, the Father and source of all mercies. Whatever our distress or need, there is mercy available to meet it.

Mercy's Appeal

The incredible depth of God's mercies is seen in Romans 1–11. We were all under sin and had no claim on God. We all deserved judgment. Then, *"...the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us..."* (Titus 3:4–5). What has been done by Jesus Christ to save us is gathered up here and summarized as the mercy of God. The Bible therefore directs our hearts and wills to the mercies of God by pleading with us to dedicate our lives as living sacrifices to Him: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service"* (Rom. 12:1).

We must ask ourselves how we have responded to God's appeal. In magnificent mercy, God has looked upon hell-deserving sinners with compassion, seen our condition, and provided His Son to die for our sins. On that basis, God now appeals to believers to yield their lives to Him.

He will not force the unbeliever to receive His mercy. If a person chooses to resist Him, He will permit that person to receive justice instead. He calls such a one to acknowledge his need and to cast himself, in simple faith, upon the divine mercy made available only through Christ (John 3:16). 

Endnotes

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³ Strauss, "Rich in Mercy."



by Larry Price

Larry Price is an itinerant Bible teacher and travels extensively teaching and preaching the Word of God. He and his wife Wanda are in fellowship at Grace Gospel Chapel, Gilbertsville, PA. Larry's testimony can be obtained by going to <https://www.larryrprice.com>.



The Godly Chain of Example

"Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." 1 Timothy 4:12, ESV

In that single sentence, the apostle collapses age barriers, cultural expectations, and spiritual excuses: "Set an example," for a godly example can shape a generation.

The Kid from Lystra

Timothy came from Lystra, a city located in what is now modern-day Turkey. In Paul's time, it was a Roman colony steeped in pagan worship and moral corruption. A church had been planted there during Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 14:22). When Paul returned with Silas on his second missionary journey, Timothy was a teenager with a growing godly reputation. His father was Greek, likely a pagan, but his mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois, were women shaped by Scripture. From childhood, they had taught him the holy Scriptures, which pointed him to salvation through faith in Christ (2 Tim. 3:15). The Word invested in him bore fruit. Timothy had grown in faith, and the believers in both Lystra and nearby Iconium spoke well of him. Paul then told Timothy to pack his bags and join the missionary journey.

The Student Is Now the Teacher

Years later, Paul left his young apprentice, Timothy, in Ephesus. Timothy was tasked with guarding the gospel, confronting false teaching, and establishing biblical leadership. Others preferred that he stay quiet, and he was tempted to shrink back. It was then that he received a letter from Paul, reminding him to be an example to the believers.

This principle of setting an example extends far beyond elders or church leaders. It applies to children watching their parents, students observing their teachers, and younger believers learning from older saints. The gospel spreads not only through sermons, but also through patterns of life that can be imitated.

Why Right Examples Matter

The Greek word Paul used for "example" is *tupos*. It carries the idea of an imprint or stamp. In the ancient world, it referred to a die striking an image into a coin, a mold shaping molten metal, or the mark left by a blow. An example is not just something observed; it is something that presses a shape into another life. If the mold is crooked, the statue will be crooked. If the stamp is precise, the image will be precise.

Every home is a workshop of impressions. Children absorb what adults celebrate, fear, pursue, and ignore. What parents treat as optional, children regard as unnecessary. What parents treasure, children learn to treasure.

Timothy's life demonstrates the power of faithful influence. Paul reminds us that sincere faith first lived in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Before Timothy ever traveled with an apostle, the gospel had already traveled through his family.

Over the years, Paul became his example. This is described in Paul's second letter to Timothy (3:10–11). A godly chain was being formed: Christ shapes Paul (1 Cor. 11:1), Paul shapes Timothy, and Timothy will shape others. This does not have to remain only Timothy's story—it can be the story of every Christian home, every church, and every generation that desires the next to know Christ.

Thankfully, Timothy did not follow his father's example, since it seems his father did not share his faith. Godly parents long for their children to follow godly examples, and Psalm 71 captures that longing when the psalmist desires to proclaim God's power to the next generation. On the other hand, Judges 2 reflects the fear that children may take the wrong path, describing a genera-

tion that arose who did not know the Lord. Between that longing and that fear stands the daily reality of example.

Faith is always personal, but it is never isolated. Each generation either strengthens or weakens the bridge to the next. Timothy's story reminds us that quiet, steady faithfulness matters more than dramatic moments. Years spent reading Scripture, praying, modeling repentance, and practicing love become spiritual architecture. A child may not remember every lesson, but they remember the life that carried the lesson.

If you have not had good examples to follow, or if you are worried that you may not be a good example yourself, do not despair. God's redeeming power is not limited by the failures of previous generations. A crooked mold can be replaced, and a new image can be stamped. Ultimately, the true and perfect *tupos* is Jesus Christ. The chain begins with Christ, and Paul understood Timothy's situation well, offering practical examples of daily Christian living. His list in 1 Timothy 4:12 is wonderfully concrete: holiness is not abstract, but visible in five everyday arenas.

Speech

Words reveal the heart's direction. To be an example in speech means speaking in ways shaped by truth and grace. It rejects cruelty disguised as humor, exaggeration disguised as confidence, and gossip disguised as concern. Christian speech builds up rather than erodes. It reflects a Savior who is full of grace and truth and who is gentle and lowly in heart (John 1:14; Matt. 11:28). In a culture that prizes sharp tongues, gentle and truthful words become a quiet testimony.

Conduct

Conduct is the pattern of daily behavior. It includes how we treat the overlooked, how we respond when frustrated, and how we carry responsibility. The New Testament warns against bullying, manipulation, and self-promotion. Christian living is not theatrical; it is a cruciform pattern of conduct shaped by the cross. Jesus calls His followers to deny themselves and carry their cross daily. That kind of life cannot be sustained by willpower alone; instead, it depends on the Spirit's strength. To be an example in conduct is not to be perfect, but to be consistently marked by repentance, humility, and obedience.

Faith

Christian faith cannot be modeled without personally belonging to Christ; example begins with conversion. Second, faith expresses itself in reliability. A faithful believer is steady; their allegiance to Christ is not seasonal. Such faith is especially powerful when it endures under pressure. Quiet perseverance often speaks louder than public victories.

Love

Love redirects the center of our lives. Instead of orbiting self-interest, the believer learns to orbit God and neighbor. Christian love is not merely sentiment; it is expressed through patience, generosity, and forgiveness. It refuses to treat people as tools for personal advancement. Martin Luther once said of a gentle pastor, "What we preach, he lived." That is love embodied. A loving example shows that Christ is not an accessory to life, but its transforming core.

Purity

Purity gathers the other four traits into a unified heart. It is more than avoiding scandal; it is undivided devotion to God (Ps. 86:11–12). Paul later instructs Timothy to treat others with familial honor and careful boundaries (1 Tim. 5:1–2). Purity guards the eyes, the imagination, and the intentions. It recognizes that holiness is not repression, but freedom to love rightly. A pure life shines with clarity, showing that allegiance to Christ reaches into private spaces as well as public ones.

The Godly Chain Continues

The command to be an example is not reserved for a spiritual elite; it is given to ordinary believers living visible lives. The church is healthiest when older believers model endurance and younger believers model earnest devotion, each strengthening the other. As believers reflect Christ, they shape the next generation, and that generation, in turn, shapes the one after it. Every link matters.

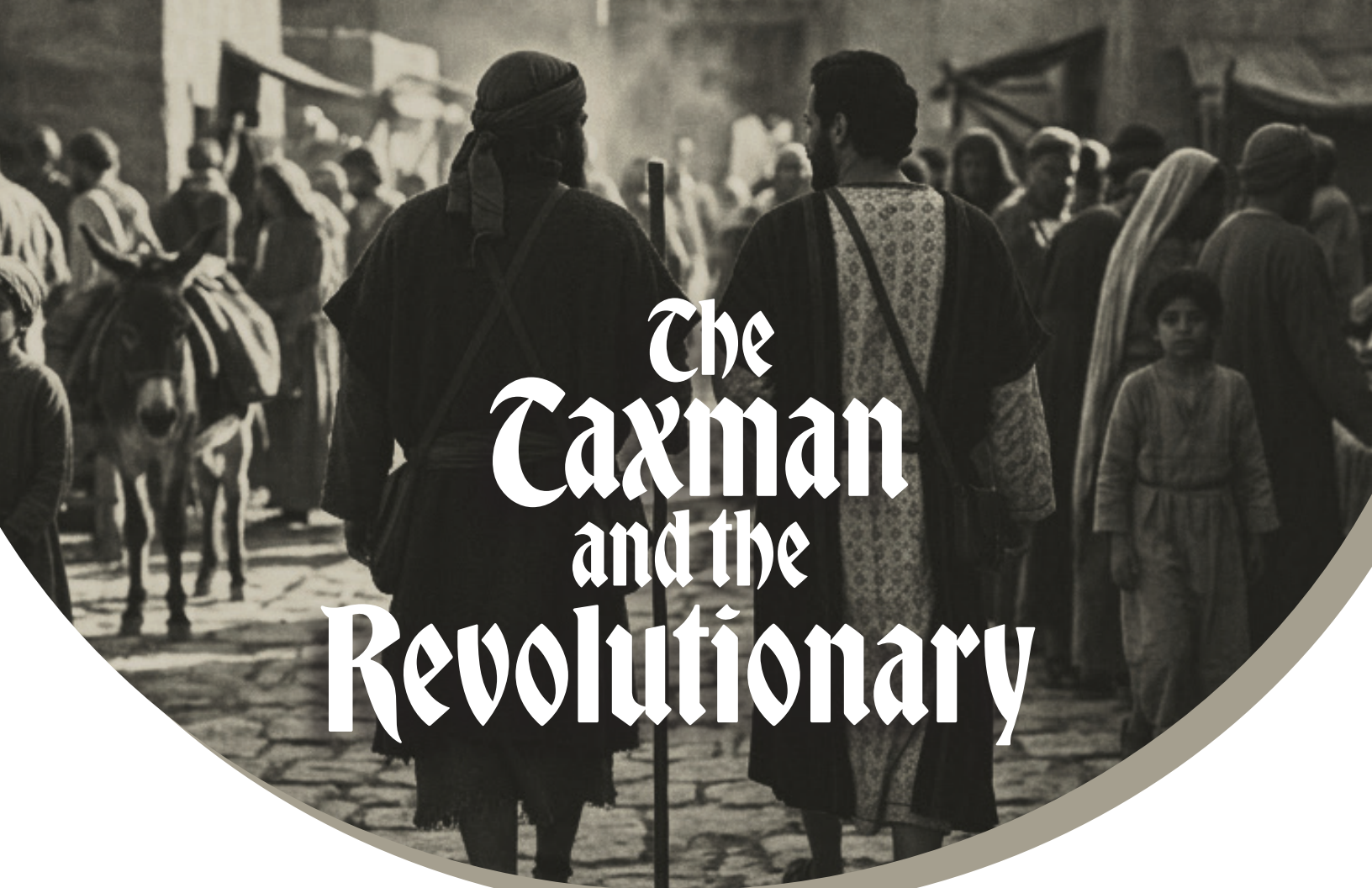
Timothy's story reminds us that a life shaped by Scripture, strengthened by faithful mentors, and surrendered to Christ can influence far beyond its starting point. A teenager from a troubled city became a pillar of the early church because the image stamped on him was clear. The same invitation stands today: learn from godly examples, become a godly example, and reflect Christ so faithfully that others can see the outline of the Savior in the pattern of your life. 

“As believers reflect Christ, they shape the next generation, and that generation, in turn, shapes the one after it. Every link matters.”



by Viji Roberts

Viji Roberts is an elder and a full-time worker at New Life Bible Chapel, Mississauga, ON. He is on the Biblical Eldership team and a trustee at Emmaus University. He is married to Joyce Roberts, and they have one adult son, Daniel.



The Taxman and the Revolutionary

In the political powder keg of first-century Judea, two men sat at the same table who, under any other circumstances, would have been sworn enemies. One was a collaborator with the Roman occupiers; the other was a radical revolutionary committed to their violent overthrow. Their names were Matthew and Simon, and their presence in the same inner circle is perhaps the most vivid illustration of the transformative power of the Gospel.

Matthew: The Scandal of the Tax Booth

In first-century Judea, few professions were as universally loathed as that of the publican. Matthew—or Levi, as he is called by Mark and Luke—was a Jew who collected taxes from his own countrymen on behalf of the Roman government. To his neighbors, Matthew was more than just a government official; he was a traitor to his heritage and an apostate to his God.

The reputation of the tax collector was one of systemic corruption. They were notorious for extorting more than was required to line their own pockets, living lives characterized by luxury at the expense of their neighbors' poverty. Socially and religiously, they were outcasts, categorized in the Gospels alongside prostitutes and sinners. Surely, a holy Teacher would avoid such company.

The Physician's Call

The call of Matthew is recorded in all three Synoptic Gospels with striking consistency. Luke 5:27–32 captures the scene: Jesus saw Levi sitting at his booth—the very place where he facilitated the Roman occupation—and simply said, “*Follow me.*” To the astonishment of the onlookers, Levi did not hesitate. He rose, left the ledger and the coin table behind, and followed. Immediately, Matthew hosted a great feast at his house, inviting a “*large company of tax collectors*” (ESV) to meet Jesus. When the Pharisees grumbled, asking why Jesus would eat with such “*sinners,*” the Lord offered a definitive mission statement: “*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.*”

The Impact of Radical Love

The first lesson we learn from Matthew's calling is that no one is beyond the grace of God. We often write off those with “undesirable” qualities, but Matthew's presence reminds us that our mission is to reach the spiritually sick.

Consider the social significance of this moment. It is unlikely that anyone other than his fellow outcasts ever invited Matthew anywhere. Then comes Jesus, a man of great renown, who had just healed a paralytic in a house so crowded that men had to cut

through the roof to reach Him. When this famous Teacher approached the tax booth, Matthew likely expected a rebuke; instead, he received an invitation. He responded to the profound impact of being seen and loved by the Master.

Leaving the Old Master

Luke adds a vital detail: Matthew rose and followed, “*leaving everything*” (ESV). On the surface, this meant his job and his wealth. But there is a deeper abandonment at play. Matthew was leaving old masters—greed and Rome—to follow a new one; this is the essence of discipleship. While salvation is a matter of believing; discipleship is a matter of following. Matthew’s surrender shows that true faith becomes visible when it seeks to model its life after Christ. He moved from recording taxes collected and owed to recording the life of the King of Kings, proving that the greatest change in the human heart begins with surrender to the Physician’s call.

Simon the Zealot: A Reignited Heart

While Matthew represented the establishment collaborator, the next disciple represented the radical anti-establishment firebrand. Simon is identified by the provocative title “*the Zealot*.” This was not just a description of his personality; it was his political identity.

The Way of the Sword

The Zealots were a Jewish political sect that rejected any authority over Israel other than God Himself. In the Roman province of Judea, this was a recipe for insurrection. The Zealots were aggressive activists who supported the forceful removal of pagan Roman authorities. Their movement had been simmering for decades and would eventually lead to the Great Jewish Revolt of 66–73 AD. They were the religious nationalists of their day, willing to use violence to end the Roman occupation.

An Unlikely Candidate

Given this background, Simon is a curious choice for a disciple. The Zealots believed the religious authority of the Pharisees was the only righteous path; yet here was Jesus, constantly challenging the Pharisees’ legalism. Furthermore, Jesus’ seemingly indifferent attitude toward Roman occupation—famously saying, “*Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s*”—would have been an affront to everything Simon stood for. To a Zealot, the Messiah was expected to be a military conqueror who would crush the Roman legions. Instead, Simon found himself following a Teacher who spoke of turning the other cheek.

Leaving the Ideology Behind

We do not know the specific details of Simon’s call, but we know he was present for the miracles of Christ’s ministry and the fire of Pentecost. For Simon, leaving everything meant more than abandoning a trade—it meant abandoning an ideology.

As a Zealot, Simon would have been opposed—perhaps even violently—to anyone who helped Rome. Yet, in the circle of the Twelve, he was called to love Matthew, the very man he once would have considered a target. This is the miracle of the Gospel: that a “traitor” and a “revolutionary” could sit at the same table because they both served a new Master. The only way a heart as hard-coded as a Zealot’s can be conformed to the ways of Christ is through the grace found in a daily walk with Him.

Re-Motivating the Activist

The lesson of Simon the Zealot is a cautionary tale for our modern age. It is easy to become so attached to causes and politics that they dictate our worldview more than Christ does. There is nothing wrong with having an opinion or seeking justice, but Simon proves that our primary calling is to love and grace—to show forth Christ in our lives.

“As they went forward to bring the message of salvation to the world, they stood as living proof that no divide is too wide for the Prince of Peace to bridge.”

If an ideology—no matter how righteous it seems—causes us to treat a specific group of people in an unloving manner, it must be abandoned. Like Simon, we must spend time walking with the Lord and reading His Word so that He can be our example and, by His grace, rekindle our hearts.

The Miracle of the Table

Imagine the first time Matthew and Simon shared a meal. Simon had likely spent his life dreaming of eliminating men like Matthew. Matthew had likely spent his life fearing the shadow of men like Simon. Yet here they were, bound by a common call.

This illustrates that Christ’s Kingdom is not a compromise between earthly factions, but a total transcendence of them. He does not ask us to ignore our backgrounds, but He does ask us to surrender our earthly loyalties. In Christ, the collaborator and the revolutionary found a unity that politics could never provide. The grace of a daily walk with Christ conformed their clashing hearts into a singular mission. As they went forward to bring the message of salvation to the world, they stood as living proof that no divide is too wide for the Prince of Peace to bridge. 



by Stephen March

Stephen March serves as the President of FBH International, leading the ministry’s mission to share the Gospel through modern media. An elder at Scottlea Gospel Chapel, Stephen is dedicated to digital evangelism and biblical teaching. He lives in St. Catharines, Ontario, with his wife, Corinne, and their four children.

If we have placed our faith and trust in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ—His substitutionary death on the cross and victorious resurrection—we already possess eternal life. It is not a future goal to be attained through sacraments and works, but a present reality received by grace through faith alone. This is the sure and certain hope of the Gospel. 



by Joshua Kline

Joshua Kline, his wife Meghan and their family fellowship at Grace Gospel Chapel in Allentown, PA where Josh serves as an elder. Josh is employed as a high school history teacher and blessed to be able to preach at various assemblies in the northeast.

Endnotes

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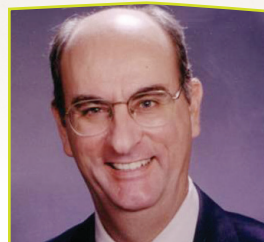


... "The Doctrine of Justification and Roman Catholicism" continued

Why then, are so many evangelicals joining hands with Rome, even to the point of calling them "brothers and sisters in Christ"? On March 29, 1994, eight Protestant and seven Roman Catholic leaders drew up a statement of cooperation called *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium*. This effort was led by Charles Colson and signed by such noted and respected evangelicals as J. I. Packer and Bill Bright, the former president of Campus Crusade.¹⁰ How will this trend of drawing together with Roman Catholics affect the witness and work of the church of Christ to the lost? Moreover, how will it affect the doctrinal purity of the gospel of salvation, which the Reformers, Scottish Covenanters, and others risked, and sometimes lost, their lives to

protect from compromise? Sadly, even now seeds are being sown that portend ominously for the spiritual and doctrinal future of the Church.

This account illustrates the perilous situation in which the evangelical church now finds itself. In compromising its historic position concerning justification, the evangelical church is also compelled to compromise further its mission and character. May we resist every subtle attack and every attempt to further compromise the truth of the Word of God. 



by David Dunlap

David Dunlap is president of Cornerstone Magazine. He has been a full-time worker for over thirty years. He is in fellowship at Land O' Lakes Bible Chapel in Lutz, FL. He and his wife Faith live in Land O' Lakes, FL.

Endnotes

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ISSUES & ANSWERS

“SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES...”
JOHN 5:39



What does it mean to “*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*”? Philippians 2:12

It is important to understand this phrase in its immediate context in Philippians 2, as well as in the broader context of the rest of the Bible. Salvation is by faith in Christ alone, entirely apart from human works (Acts 16:31; Rom. 3:22-26; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-7). God cannot save people because of their works, because they are tainted by sin. His standard is moral perfection, which none of us ever reach: “*For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all*” (Jas. 2:10; Ps. 14:3). Instead, He saves us to perform good works, because they are the fruit of the Spirit of God’s work in the believer (Gal. 5:22-24; Titus 2:14).

The verse opens with “*Therefore*” (v.12), which calls the reader back to the preceding teaching on Christ’s selfless service and death. He is the example of our proper attitude: putting others first (Phil. 2:5-11). What is more, this shows that this is a believing community; otherwise, exhorting them to think like the Lord would be impossible. The renewed mind is the product of God’s work in the believer (Heb. 10:16). Paul also addresses them as “*beloved*,” demonstrating the familial love among believers (John 13:34-35). His own remarks in verse 17 show that he was willing to pour out his life like a drink offering for the advancement of their faith.

He instructs them to “*work out your salvation*,” not to work for your salvation. He also mentions their past and present obedience, clearly discussing spiritual effort in the Christian life. Their past obedience gives the apostle confidence that they will continue to obey in the future, further developing their sanctification. While verse twelve emphasizes believers’ diligent cooperation in progressive sanctification, the next verse explains: “*for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*” (v.13). The true Vine energizes the saints by His Spirit to produce fruit; therefore, their progress in holiness requires dependence on Him (John 15:5; Gal. 5:16). As many teachers have said, “One must work out what God works in.”

They are told to do this “*with fear and trembling*,” displaying the serious attitude required for personal holiness. Vine explains that these words “. . . do not suggest a dread of, or shrinking from, God, but a watchfulness against grieving Him, an eagerness to avoid displeasing Him, and a reverent and constant consciousness of His presence, the spirit described in Isaiah 66:2 (end), the very opposite of the spirit mentioned in 2 Peter 2:10.”¹ This phrase accentuates the purposeful nature of growth in holy living.

Verses 14-16 declare the believers’ responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). Unlike the complaining Israelites of the Old Testament wilderness, they are to be positive examples and will “*become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation*.” Their gospel-altered lifestyle will cause them to shine “*as lights in the world*.” They are called to hold forth the Word of life (KJV), meaning that they are to be witnesses to what the biblical gospel is. Others translate it “*holding fast the Word of life*” (NKJV), and, of course, the church must cling to the Bible as the only manual for faith and practice.

Lastly, there is internal evidence in Philippians that some beloved saints, like Euodia and Syntyche, were disagreeing (4:2). As a church, they needed to develop the love that the Lord puts within our hearts for fellow believers (Rom. 5:1-5). Progressive growth in Christ demonstrates increasing love in the church and outside in the world. When the Lord comes to receive believers to Himself, all aspects of salvation will be completed in them; then salvation will be fulfilled as the glorified saints are completely conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:28-30). 

Endnotes

¹ W. E. Vine, *Collected Writings: Philippians*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997).



by Keith Keyser

Keith Keyser has served the Lord full time in Bible teaching and preaching throughout the USA, Canada, and other countries. Keith and his wife Naomi were commended to the Lord’s work in 1999 and fellowship with the saints who meet in the Lord’s name at Grace Gospel Chapel, Gilbertsville, PA.

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112th Annual Atlantic Iowa Bible Conference

► September 11-13, 2026

Atlantic Gospel Chapel,
Cass County Community Building

Hosted by Atlantic Gospel Chapel, Sunnyside Bible Chapel and The Lyman Assembly, the 112th Annual Atlantic Iowa Bible Conference will be held from September 11-13. The expected speakers are Craig Shakarji and David Nicholson. For more information or lodging contact Brian Meyer at 712-249-6332 or roadrunnerfarms@icloud.com. Friday evening meeting will be held at Atlantic Gospel Chapel, and the Saturday and Sunday meetings at Cass County Community Building.

Camp Iroquoia Fall Retreats

2341 Camp Rd Hallstead, PA 18822

Join Camp Iroquoia for their fall retreats:

- Autumn Awakening Bible Retreat: Friday September 25-27, 2026 (Ages: 8-14) Speaker: Nate Louro;
- Ladies Retreat: Friday October 2-4, 2026 Speaker: Sylvia Amos;
- Rooted: Men and Women Intensive Study: Friday October 9-11, 2026 (Ages: High School, College, and Career) Speaker: Matt Hunt; Theme: Striving Under Persecution (Exposition of 1 Peter).

For more information, please contact John Jackson at info@iroquoia.org or 570-967-2577.

Fall Young Peoples Conference

► October 3, 2026

502 Jack Street, Baltimore, MD

Brooklyn Bible Chapel will host their Annual Young Peoples Conference on Saturday, October 3. The speaker will be Pablo Torres (Peru). It will run from 10:00 A.M. to 9:30 P.M. For more information or registration contact Tim Young at (410) 303-7520 or tim.young001697@gmail.com. Overnight accommodations are available for those traveling a long distance. Response by September 23 is appreciated.

Midwest Counseling Conference

► October 9-10, 2026

Living Waters Bible Camp, Westby, WI

Midwest Counseling Conference is for assembly leaders and believers who desire to help struggling people. It will be held from Friday afternoon, October 9, through Saturday evening, October 10, at Living Waters Bible Camp, Westby, WI. On Sunday, October 11, Remembrance and Family Bible Hour meetings are available at Grace and Truth Bible Chapel, Westby, WI. The featured speaker will be Paul Rabideau (NJ). For more information please contact Ron Manning at c141manning@gmail.com or 608-647-4102.

5th Annual Danforth Bible Conference

► October 30-November 1, 2026

Danforth Gospel Hall
2237 Danforth Ave. Toronto, ON

The theme of this year's conference is yet to be determined. The invited speakers are Sean O'Byrne and Gary Weeks. For more information please contact Michael Thomas at big_m_prop@hotmail.com or 416-795-0389.

Claremont Bible Chapel Fall Conference

► November 13-15, 2026

432 Harrison Ave. Claremont, CA

Claremont Bible Chapel invites you to their fall conference with invited speakers Micah Tuttle and John Glock. The conference begins at 7:00 pm with two sessions, continues with four sessions on Saturday, and two on Sunday. Lunch will be served on both Saturday and Sunday, and there will be a time of fellowship on Saturday evening at a local home. Nursery is available during all the meetings. Please join them for a challenging time in God's Word and an abundance of fellowship. For more information contact Geoffrey Owers at Geoffrey.owers@gmail.com or (909) 285-7466.

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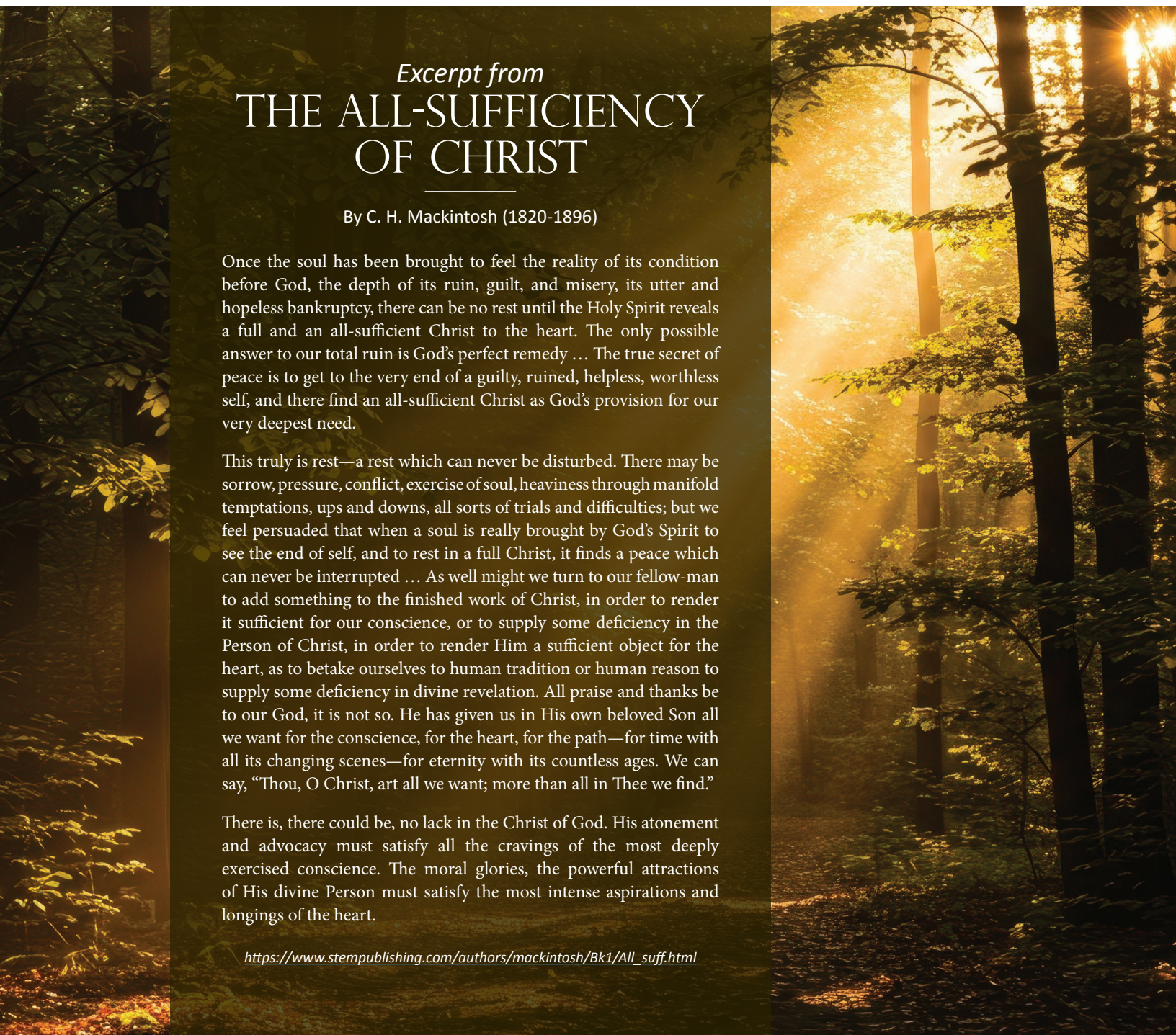
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A full-page background image of a forest. Sunlight filters through the trees, creating a warm, golden glow. The trees are tall and thin, with dense foliage. The light creates a hazy, ethereal atmosphere.

Excerpt from THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST

By C. H. Mackintosh (1820-1896)

Once the soul has been brought to feel the reality of its condition before God, the depth of its ruin, guilt, and misery, its utter and hopeless bankruptcy, there can be no rest until the Holy Spirit reveals a full and an all-sufficient Christ to the heart. The only possible answer to our total ruin is God's perfect remedy ... The true secret of peace is to get to the very end of a guilty, ruined, helpless, worthless self, and there find an all-sufficient Christ as God's provision for our very deepest need.

This truly is rest—a rest which can never be disturbed. There may be sorrow, pressure, conflict, exercise of soul, heaviness through manifold temptations, ups and downs, all sorts of trials and difficulties; but we feel persuaded that when a soul is really brought by God's Spirit to see the end of self, and to rest in a full Christ, it finds a peace which can never be interrupted ... As well might we turn to our fellow-man to add something to the finished work of Christ, in order to render it sufficient for our conscience, or to supply some deficiency in the Person of Christ, in order to render Him a sufficient object for the heart, as to betake ourselves to human tradition or human reason to supply some deficiency in divine revelation. All praise and thanks be to our God, it is not so. He has given us in His own beloved Son all we want for the conscience, for the heart, for the path—for time with all its changing scenes—for eternity with its countless ages. We can say, "Thou, O Christ, art all we want; more than all in Thee we find."

There is, there could be, no lack in the Christ of God. His atonement and advocacy must satisfy all the cravings of the most deeply exercised conscience. The moral glories, the powerful attractions of His divine Person must satisfy the most intense aspirations and longings of the heart.

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