



West Suffolk Epistle



Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America



West Suffolk Baptist Church

“Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant”

Volume 1, Issue 1

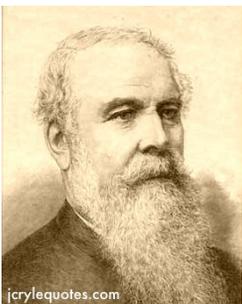
April 2014

Message from the Editor



It is with greatest joy and delight that the Lord has laid it upon my heart to present you with our first edition of the “West Suffolk Epistle.” It is my desire to make this your newsletter and what a wonderful way for all of us to communicate with one another. For me it is a labor of love, a joy and a learning experience. It is my desire to provide information relevant to our faith and how to live in a sinful world. Subsequently, the newsletter will be used as a tool to promote the ministries we have here at West Suffolk. It is also my desire with the Lord’s strength to publish one every month. With your input I pray that this will be honoring to our Lord. In addition, I will be including each month portions of the The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 (in modern English) for your edification. Please feel free to contact me (Walt Lawrence) either by phone (619-3268) or by e-mail (gwlcf10415@gmail.com) if you have any suggestions to make this publication better. *“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.” Numbers 6:24 - 26*

The Chief Business of the Church



Let it be a settled principle in our minds that the first and chief business of the Church of Christ is to preach the Gospel. The words of Paul ought to be constantly remembered – *“For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power”* (1 Corinthians 1:17). When the Gospel of Christ is faithfully and fully preached we need not fear that the sacraments will be undervalued. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper will always be most truly revered in those churches where the truth of Jesus is most fully taught and known. ~ *J.C. Ryle [1816-1900] was a prolific writer, vigorous preacher, faithful pastor in England.*

Seeing Sin For What it Really Is

The Christianity which is from the Holy Spirit will always have a very deep view of the sinfulness of sin. It will not merely regard sin as a blemish and misfortune, which makes men and women objects of pity, and compassion. It will see in sin the abominable thing which God hates, the thing which makes people guilty and lost in his Maker’s sight, the thing which deserves God’s wrath and condemnation. It will look on sin as the cause of all sorrow and unhappiness, of strife and wars, of quarrels and contentions, of sickness and death – the curse which cursed God’s beautiful creation, the cursed thing which makes the whole earth groan and struggle in pain. Above all, it will see in sin the thing which will ruin us eternally, unless we can find a ransom, – lead us captive, except we can get its chains broken, – and destroy our happiness, both here and hereafter, except we fight against it, even unto death. ~ *J.C. Ryle*



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All are Yours



All the attributes of Christ, as God and man, are at our disposal. All the fullness of the Godhead, whatever that marvelous term may encompass, is ours to make us complete. He cannot endow us with the attributes of Deity; but He has done all that can be done, for He has made even His divine power and Godhead subservient to our salvation. His omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, immutability and infallibility are all combined for our defense.

Stand up, believer, and witness the Lord Jesus hitching the whole of His divine Godhead to the chariot of salvation! How vast His grace, how firm His faithfulness, how unswerving His immutability, how infinite His power, how limitless His knowledge! The Lord Jesus made all these pillars of the temple of salvation; and all, without any lessening of their infinity, are covenanted to us as our perpetual inheritance. The fathomless love of the Savior's heart is ours in every drop; every sinew in the arm of strength, every jewel in the crown of majesty, the immensity of divine knowledge, and the sternness of divine justice--all are ours and shall be employed for us.

The whole of Christ, in His adorable character as the Son of God, is by Himself made ours to most richly enjoy. His wisdom is our direction, His knowledge our instruction, His power our protection, His justice our guarantee, His love our comfort, His mercy our solace, and His immutability our trust. He holds nothing back but opens the recesses of the Mount of God and bids us dig in its mines for the hidden treasures. "All, all, all are yours," He says, "sated with favor, and full of the blessing of the Lord." How wonderful to see Jesus in this way, and to call upon Him with the certain confidence that in seeking the intervention of His love or power, we are simply asking for what He has already faithfully promised. ~ *written by C.H. Spurgeon and revised by Dr. Alistair Begg - Graduate of The London School of Theology and presently Senior Pastor at Parkside church near Cleveland, Ohio*

The Free Will of Christ to Suffer

Let us carefully remember that our blessed Lord suffered and died of His own free will. He did not die because He could not help it; He did not suffer because He could not escape. All the soldiers of Pilate's army could not have taken Him, if He had not been willing to be taken. They could not have hurt a hair of His head, if He had not given them permission. But here, as in all His earthly ministry, Jesus was a willing sufferer. He had set His heart on accomplishing our redemption. He loved us, and gave Himself for us, cheerfully, willingly, gladly, in order to make atonement for our sins. It was "the joy set before Him" which made Him endure the cross, and despise the shame, and yield Himself up without reluctance into the bands of His enemies. Let this thought abide in our hearts, and refresh our souls. We have a Savior who was far more willing to save us than we are willing to be saved. If we are not saved, the fault is all our own. Christ is just as willing to receive and pardon, as He was willing to be taken prisoner, to bleed, and to die. ~ *J.C. Ryle*

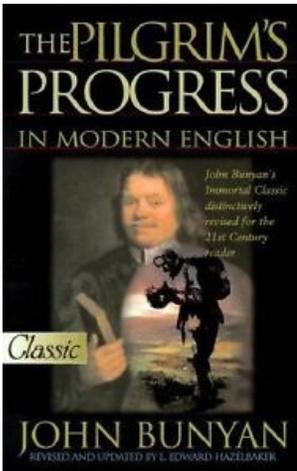


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Book Reviews

The Pilgrim's Progress in Modern English revised and updated by Edward Hazelbaker



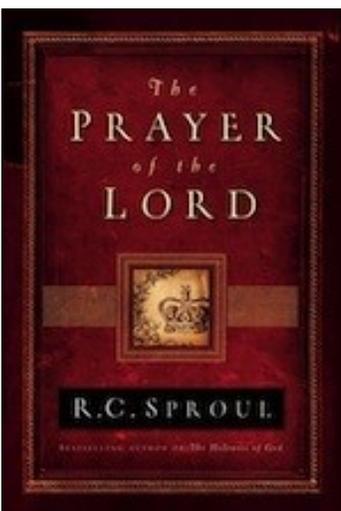
Now in modern English and packed full of helpful features, this new edition will enable you to enjoy this “classic of classics” more than ever before.

The Pilgrim's Progress has been called “the greatest allegory ever written.” Its appeal sweeps across the scopes of age, intellect, and education. Children read it for the excitement of the story; eager believers are challenged and trained by its invaluable teaching; Bible students and scholars alike read it for its depth of doctrine.

Just as relevant today as it was when John Bunyan wrote it from his cell in prison, **The Pilgrim's Progress** is the story of every Christian—from the first stirrings of the Holy Spirit beckoning us to follow Christ to our final arrival in the Celestial City of God.

This new, complete edition, written in plain, modern English, is an enriching complement to any Christian's library. The Pilgrim's Progress in Modern English will be enjoyed and treasured by people of all ages for years to come. This version is revised and updated by Edward Hazelbaker.

The Prayer of the Lord - Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.



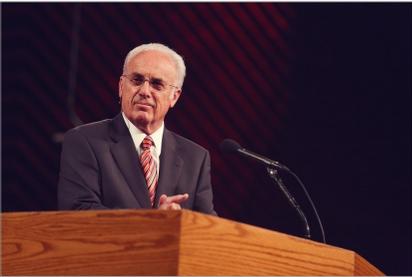
In this book R.C. Sproul teaches on prayer by drawing principles from the Lord's Prayer. I don't know that I can easily quantify the ways in which this book impacted me, and yet I know it did. What I did draw from it was a long list of excellent quotes on prayer—the kinds of quotes you want to write out and chew on for a while. “Prayer does change things, all kinds of things. But the most important thing it changes is us. As we engage in this communion with God more deeply and come to know the One with whom we are speaking more intimately, that growing knowledge of God reveals to us all the more brilliantly who we are and our need to change in conformity to Him. Prayer changes us profoundly.” Or this one: “I find it striking that when Jesus taught the church how to pray, the first thing He chose to tell us to pray about is that the name of God might be regarded as sacred. Very few people today would list the hallowing of the name of God as a top priority for the supplications of the people of God. It almost seems foreign to our environment to place so much emphasis on proper treatment of a name.” ~ **Tim Challies**



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Do Babies or Others Incapable of Professing Faith in Christ Automatically go to Heaven?



People often wonder about the eternal destiny of the unborn, babies, and those unable to intellectually understand the gospel. That question is a difficult one. Unfortunately, the Bible offers us no explicit answer. However, based on several passages, as well as an understanding of God's character and His dealings with men, we can develop a good idea of how He works in such situations.

Second Samuel 12:23 is one of the passages often quoted to imply that babies go to heaven. Though the verse doesn't explicitly say that, David clearly does expect to one day be reunited with his departed child. Since we know David is a believer whose destiny was heaven, we can infer that his hope of reunion means he expected his child to be in heaven. Thus, 2 Samuel 12:23 suggests strong evidence for a heavenly destiny of the unborn and children who die young. *"But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."*

If this were all we had to support our position, it would be admittedly less than stalwart. However, there are other evidences that point us to the same conclusion. **First**, the Bible clearly teaches that God cares deeply for children. Passages like Matthew 18:1-6 and 19:13-15 affirm the Lord's love for them. Those verses don't state that children go to heaven, but they do show God's heart toward children. He created and cares for children, and beyond that, He always accomplishes His perfect will in every circumstance.

The psalmist reminds us that God is "full of compassion and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth" (Psalm 86:15). He is the God who became flesh that He might carry our sins away by His death on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21). He is the God who will comfort Christians in heaven, for "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death; nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain" (Revelation 21:4). We can be assured that God will do what is right and loving because He is the standard of rightness and love. Those considerations alone seem to be evidence enough of God's particular, electing love shown to the unborn and those who die young.

However, another point may be helpful in answering this question. While infants and children have neither sensed their personal sin and need for salvation nor placed their faith in Christ, Scripture teaches that condemnation is based on the clear rejection of God's revelation--whether general or specific--not simple ignorance of it (Luke 10:16; John 12:48; 1 Thessalonians 4:8).

Can we definitely say that the unborn and young children have comprehended the truth displayed by God's general revelation that renders them "without excuse" (Romans 1:18-20)? They will be judged according to the light they received. Scripture is clear that children and the unborn have original sin--including both the propensity to sin as well as the inherent guilt of original sin. But could it be that somehow Christ's atonement did pay for the guilt for these helpless ones throughout all time? Yes, and therefore it is a credible assumption that a child who dies at an age too young to have made a conscious, willful *rejection* of Jesus Christ will be taken to be with the Lord. ~ **Dr. John MacArthur - Pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California**



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The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 *Chapter 1 - The Holy Scripture*

1. The Holy Scripture is the all-sufficient, certain and infallible rule or standard of the knowledge, faith and obedience that constitute salvation. Although the light of nature, and God's works of creation and providence, give such clear testimony to His goodness, wisdom and power that men who spurn them are left inexcusable, yet they are not sufficient of themselves to give that knowledge of God and His will which is necessary for salvation. In consequence the merciful Lord from time to time and in a variety of ways has revealed Himself, and made known His will to His church. And furthermore, in order to ensure the preservation and propagation of the truth, and the establishment and comfort of the church against the corrupt nature of man and the malice of Satan and the world, He caused this revelation of Himself and His will to be written down in all its fullness. And as the manner in which God formerly revealed His will has long ceased, the Holy Scripture becomes absolutely essential to men.

2. The Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, consists of the following books which together make up the Old and New Testaments: Of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, II Kings, I Chronicles, II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. Of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, The Acts of the Apostles, Paul's Epistle to the Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, I Timothy, II Timothy, To Titus, To Philemon, The Epistle to the Hebrews, Epistle of James, The first and second Epistles of Peter, The first, second, and third Epistles of John, The Epistle of Jude, The Revelation. All of which are given by the inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life.

3. The books commonly called the Apocrypha were not given by divine inspiration and are not part of the canon or rule of Scripture. Therefore they do not possess any authority in the church of God, and are to be regarded and used in the same way as other writings of men.

4. The Scripture is self-authenticating. Its authority does not depend upon the testimony of any man or church, but entirely upon God, its author, who is truth itself. It is to be received because it is the Word of God.

5. The testimony of the church of God may influence and persuade us to hold the Scripture in the highest esteem. The heavenliness of its contents, the efficacy of its doctrine, the majesty of its style, the agreement between all its parts from first to last, the fact that throughout it gives all glory to God, the full revelation it gives of the only way of salvation-these, together with many other incomparably high qualities and full perfections, supply abundant evidence that it is the Word of God. At the same time, however, we recognize that our full persuasion and assurance of its infallible truth and divine authority is the outcome of the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

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The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 Chapter 1 - The Holy Scripture

6. The sum total of God's revelation concerning all things essential to His own glory, and to the salvation and faith and life of men, is either explicitly set down or implicitly contained in the Holy Scripture. Nothing, whether a supposed revelation of the Spirit or man's traditions, is ever to be added to Scripture.

At the same time, however, we acknowledge that inward enlightenment from the Spirit of God is necessary for the right understanding of what Scripture reveals. We also accept that certain aspects of the worship of God and of church government, which are matters of common usage, are to be determined by the light of nature and Christian common sense, in line with the general rules of God's Word from which there must be no departure.

7. The contents of the Scripture vary in their degree of clarity, and some men have a better understanding of them than others. Yet those things which are essential to man's salvation and which must be known, believed and obeyed, are so clearly propounded and explained in one place or another, that men educated or uneducated may attain to a sufficient understanding of them if they but use the ordinary means.

8. The Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek (that is to say, in their original languages before translation) were inspired by God at first hand, and ever since, by His particular care and providence, they have been kept pure. They are therefore authentic and, for the church, constitute the final court of appeal in all religious controversies. All God's people have a right to, and an interest in, the Scripture, and they are commanded in the fear of God to read and search it. But as the Hebrew and Greek are not known to all such readers, Scripture is to be translated into every human language, so that as men thus acquire knowledge of God they may worship Him in an acceptable manner, and 'through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope'.

9. It is an infallible rule that Scripture is to be interpreted by Scripture, that is to say, one part by another. Hence any dispute as to the true, full and evident meaning of a particular passage must be determined in the light of clearer, comparable passages.

10. All religious controversies are to be settled by Scripture, and by Scripture alone. All decrees of Councils, opinions of ancient writers, and doctrines of men collectively or individually, are similarly to be accepted or rejected according to the verdict of the Scripture given to us by the Holy Spirit. In that verdict faith finds its final rest.

Change



Scripture speaks about God working everything together "for the good" of those who love him (Romans 8:28). But what is this "good". It consists of believers being conformed (changed and remade) to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). Thus, all the experiences of life are intended, under the sovereign hand of God, to help us to grow towards the great goal of the Christian life - Christ-likeness. ~ **Dr. Sinclair B. Ferguson - Professor at Redeemer Seminary - Dallas, Texas**



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What Do You Expect From Your Hired Minister?

Ministers must preach without apology and deliver the Word of God without fear

What should one expect from one's hired minister? One should expect them to speak only that which the Lord has revealed. One should also expect some of the minister's sermons to be most pleasant and encouraging, while others are irritating and convicting. And what should the hired minister expect? He should expect that some will greatly appreciate and support God-prioritizing ministers. He should also expect dissatisfaction, slander and persecution from others who believe that because they fund, they should therefore approve, the minister's message.

King Balak was a religious man who believed in God. Rightly, Balak understood his own finite limitations. He understood that God was sovereign and possessed the power to bless some people while cursing others. Therefore, with this theological concept in mind, King Balak hired Balaam to bring forth a word from the Lord. Balaam was promised honor and gold if he would come and warm King Balak's heart by delivering an appropriate sermon. Ultimately, King Balak had no real interest in hearing God's man reveal God's will. He merely desired to sufficiently salute God and tip God's minister in order for God to do that which King Balak desired.

Balaam was not a perfect man of the cloth. Frankly, he showed himself to be somewhat dull and sinful. Ultimately, he was only saved from divine execution by the grace of God and the sermon of a donkey. However, despite his flaws, Balaam proved to have a degree of wisdom in understanding his calling. His chief duty was not to please himself or his financial benefactors. Ultimately, his only responsibility was to proclaim God's undiluted truth and let the chips fall where they may. Perhaps he would receive gold and silver. Perhaps he would be killed. Regardless, of what happened to him, his duty was to deliver God's mail and not mess with the contents.

As a fellow preacher, Moses appreciated this truth and made sure his readers understood the preacher's duty: Read Numbers 22:8 through 23:26.

King Balak was pleased to pay Balaam a handsome sum of money. A pleasant and non-offensive minister, who danced according to the will of a puppeteer, was a good thing to keep around. However, following Balaam's third unacceptable sermon, King Balak's anger was kindled. It was clear that King Balak did not control Balaam. It was clear that Balaam was no rich man's puppet. Sure, Balaam liked honor and respect. Sure, Balaam liked gold and silver. But Balaam was one who preferred the approval of God over the approval of his audience, and this was unacceptable to King Balak. Therefore, consumed with anger, King Balak commanded the minister to flee to his own place. (Numbers 24:10-11) There would be no more gold, silver, respect and honor coming from King Balak. His minister was fired because he had not performed to the liking of the king.

Balaam was alright with this. His response was simple and straight forward: ***Numbers 24:12-14*** "Did I not tell your messengers whom you sent to me, 'If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go beyond the word of the LORD, to do either good or bad of my own will. What the LORD speaks, that will I speak' And now, behold, I am going to my people"

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What Do You Expect From Your Hired Minister?

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Balaam was done with this relationship. He would find his place with the people of the Lord. He would use his ministerial gifts before people who valued a “word from the Lord” instead of a motivational speech or inspirational homily.

So, how does this apply to individuals today?

While modern men do not often see sword-waving angels, hear donkeys speak, and receive direct revelation from God, men today still receive an internal calling from the Holy Spirit and an external calling from the church to speak forth God’s word. Prophets are no more, but preachers are present. Therefore, what should one expect from one’s hired minister? One should expect them to speak only that which the Lord has revealed. One should also expect some of the minister’s sermons to be most pleasant and encouraging, while others are irritating and convicting.

And what should the hired minister expect? He should expect that some will greatly appreciate and support God-prioritizing ministers. He should also expect dissatisfaction, slander and persecution from others who believe that because they fund, they should therefore approve, the minister’s message.

The church of Jesus Christ is not a monarchy or a democracy. It is not the will of the pastor or of the congregation that matters most. The church of Jesus Christ is a theocracy. If the minister stands and without apology delivers the mail of God, leave him be and thank him for his words of encouragement or chastisement. If the minister preaches something other than the word of God, regardless of style, creativity or content, let him go elsewhere. God’s people love God’s message and are satisfied with nothing else. ~ ***Joseph A. Franks, IV - Pastor of Palmetto Hills Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Simpsonville, South Carolina.***

Life begins at 80

I have news for you. The first 80 years are the hardest. The second 80 are a succession of birthday parties. Everybody wants to carry your luggage and help you up steps. If you forget your name, or anybody else’s name, for that matter, or what day it is, or an appointment, or promise to be in two or three places at the same time, spell words wrong—you need only to explain that you are 80.

If you spill soup on your necktie or dress, or fail to shave on one side of your face, or forget to zip up your dress or pants, if your shoes don’t match, or you carry a letter around for a week before mailing it, that’s alright. You’re 80, you know!

At 80 you can relax without any misgiving. You have a special alibi for everything. Nobody expects much of you. It is a great deal better than 65 or 70; at that time they expect you to retire to a little house in Florida or Arizona and become a discontented, grumbling has-been.

But if you survive until you’re 80, everybody is surprised. At 80, they forgive you for anything. If you ask me, life begins at 80. ~ ***Anonymous***



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Peace

Peace
Indescribable peace
Peace that surpasses all understanding
I hear a voice saying
"Peace!"

Peace when the storms rage
Peace when the earth trembles
Peace for the turbulent seas
Peace for you and for me!
God's peace is so amazing
We cannot even begin to fathom it
Again, I hear a voice saying
"Peace!"

"Be still and know that I am God."
He will never leave us
Nor forsake us
He is always near
And never far away
You can always trust Him
He gives peace
When we feel like we're at the end
When we think we've lost a friend
When everything seems to be going wrong
When we have everything stacked on our plate
That's when we hear a voice saying
"Peace!"

"My child, the Peace I give to you
Is so much different than that of the world
My peace is real
My peace is fulfilling
My peace is assurance that you have nothing to fear
I am in control
I am sovereign
I am faithful
Do not be afraid
Do not worry
Peace."

*~Written by: Carrie Purser~
Inspired by John 14:27*



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“Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant”



WEST SUFFOLK BAPTIST CHURCH
ASSOCIATION OF REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCHES OF AMERICA

Birthday and Anniversary Corner

Carol Lawrence - April 7
David Allesandro - April 8

Walt and Carol Lawrence - April 15



**Please welcome our
new members!**



Marlin and Sadie Halsey

Walt and Carol Lawrence

Things to Consider

“Doctrines of Grace” - A Bible conference will be held on May 2 - 4 with our special guest speaker - Pastor Brian Russell. Please set this event on your calendar and tell all of your friends. Specifics will soon follow.

The **"Ladies Spring Salad Luncheon"** is scheduled for 11:00 a.m., Saturday, April 12th at our parsonage on Quaker Road. If you have any questions, please contact Charlene.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions from the contributors to this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of West Suffolk Baptist Church or its leadership.



West Suffolk Baptist
Church

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Please submit information to Walt Lawrence by the second Sunday of the month preceding publication by e-mail, in person or at the church office. The editor reserves the right to edit for content or space. May the Father be glorified in every word.