



Volume 11 Issue 4

# *West Suffolk Baptist Church West Suffolk Epistle*



April 2024

## *Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant*

### *Message from the Editor*



This month marks ten (10) years since this publication went into effect. It has been with greatest joy and delight that the good Lord has placed it upon my heart to be your editor-in-chief of this publication. For me it has been a labor of love and also a learning experience. The many articles that have been produced have taught me much about our Lord and Savior. Each issue has been a challenge to produce because there are so many facets of Reformed Theology. I have attempted to use those contributors to this newsletter who are of sound and solid doctrine. Please feel free to contact me (Walt Lawrence) either by phone (619-3268) or by e-mail ([gwlclf0415@gmail.com](mailto:gwlclf0415@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*

### *How and When to Offend*

I recently said in an interview that, as a Christian preacher, “My goal is to offend everyone.” That’s not an argument for boorish behavior in the pulpit. The gospel isn’t adorned by anti-social evangelists or cantankerous Christians. God’s people should strive to be polite, winsome, and well-mannered in dealing with the world.

Rather, my point was that I want to bring the offense of the gospel to bear on everyone I encounter. Faithfully confronting sinners with the depth of their depravity, the cost of their wickedness, and their desperate need to repent is rightly offensive. I want my speech and my behavior to adorn the gospel, and to let its offensive truths do the offending.

The apostle Paul understood that, and made every effort to be courteous to sinners on the mission field as the gospel did its work. His preaching on Mars’ Hill exemplified that approach.

*“Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects’” (Acts 17:22).* His audience was a collection of thinking men, of cultured minds, and he aimed at winning them by courteously declaring to them the gospel.

There is a legitimate sense in which the apostle matched his style to the people he was trying to win. To the Jews he became Jewish. In Athens he became Greek. He spoke to these men with great respect for their position. He addressed them as deferentially as if he were a citizen of the city they presided over.

*“While I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you” (Acts 17:23).* Note the tact with which Paul confronts them. Having noticed the altar to an unknown god, Paul used that to make the very powerful point that their religion was unable to give them certain knowledge of any god, much less the true God.



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### *How and When to Offend*

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He gently implied that the existence of such an altar was a plain admission that they did not know the truth about God at all. He clearly regarded the inscription on the altar as their own testimony of spiritual ignorance.

Paul framed his message in terminology that was diplomatic, courteous, and friendly (“*I observe that you are very religious in all respects*”)—yet he got right to the point (“*Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you*”). Boldly, he immediately established that he was going to declare the truth about the God they did not know. No careful posturing, no guarded rhetoric—he just came out with it. That dogmatic approach was no more typical in the Areopagus court than it is today. In fact, it may have been something of a shock to these men who represented the most elite minds of Athens. But Paul did not ease off, lose confidence, or try to soften the authority of the gospel. He spoke with as much boldness as he would have anywhere.

What was this altar to an unknown god? Actually, there were many of these in Athens. Six hundred years before Paul’s time, Athens had been stricken with a terrible plague. Hundreds were ill and dying, and the city grew desperate. A famous poet from Crete named Epimenides devised a plan to pacify whatever gods were causing the plague. He went to the Areopagus and turned loose a flock of sheep. The plan was to let the sheep roam the city freely. When the sheep lay down, they were to be sacrificed to the god of the nearest temple. The assumption was that the angry gods would draw the sheep to themselves. When the sheep were turned loose, however, many of them lay down in places with no temples nearby. Epimenides decided to sacrifice the sheep anyway and erect altars wherever they lay down, just to make sure no unfamiliar deities were overlooked. Since these were nameless gods, the people simply erected altars and shrines “*to an unknown god.*” It was undoubtedly one of these altars Paul spotted.

Paul boldly said, “*I know this unknown God. Let me tell you who He is.*” He then began with great authority to tell them very clearly and very thoroughly who God is. The offense of the gospel was about to do its work.  
~ **Dr. John MacArthur**

### *Preach the Word: Because It Is the Good News of Salvation*

You wouldn’t withhold the cure for cancer from someone in desperate need of it. Nor would you offer a home remedy in its place. And yet that’s what many pastors do when they substitute their own opinions and wisdom for the life-transforming truth of God’s Word.

We’re looking at some specific reasons I still preach the Bible after more than four decades of pulpit ministry. I have in one of my previous messages discussed how the message of Scripture is timeless and truly powerful.

A second reason to faithfully preach the Word is that Scripture alone unfolds God’s plan of salvation. As Peter said to Jesus, “*To whom [else] shall we go? You have words of eternal life*” (John 6:68). Why would I ever go anywhere else for spiritual answers than to the inspired revelation of Jesus Christ? Scripture reveals “*the mind of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 2:16). I certainly don’t have the words of life; nor does anyone else. Only He does.



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## *Preach the Word: Because It Is the Good News of Salvation*

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The Bible makes it clear that no matter what people’s “felt needs” may be, their real need is for forgiveness and salvation from sin, so as to escape eternal hell and enter the bliss of heaven. A fulfilled life, a happy marriage, a loving friendship, a successful career—those “needs” pale in comparison with the eternal issue facing every human being. It does not make any sense, then, for pastors to focus all of their energies on temporal surface attitudes while leaving the most profound eternal needs unaddressed. Besides, a true understanding of eternal life changes how you react to the passing troubles of this life.

The Bible also makes it clear that genuine belief includes more than just mental assent (cf. James 2:19). Biblical faith is more than just a profession of faith; it is a change of allegiance—from the mastery of sin to the lordship of Christ. It certainly would be convenient for me to preach a gospel that says, “If you’ve ever made a profession of faith in Jesus, then you’re saved, even if there’s nothing in your life to validate that claim.” But I can’t do that, because that’s not the true gospel. The true gospel repeatedly commands unbelievers to repent (Matthew 4:17; 11:20–21; Mark 6:12; Luke 5:32; 13:3,5; 15:7, 10; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 2 Corinthians 7:9–10; 2 Timothy 2:25) and declares, “*If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth*” (1 John 1:6). It urges you to “test” yourself “to see if you are in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5), and reminds you that believers will be known “*by their fruits*” (Matthew 7:16–18; cf. Luke 6:43–44). So I preach the Bible because I want to make sure I’m preaching the true gospel, not a gospel of my own imagination.

When I came out of seminary, I really did not expect to fight the battles I have fought over the last several decades. I knew I would face some different paradigms of ministry and opinions about ecclesiology. I understood that there were various views of eschatology, biblical inspiration, etc. But I never thought I would spend most of my life on the broader evangelical front defending the biblical gospel and sound doctrine from so-called believers who attempted to undermine both. The Word of God, rightly interpreted, defines the truth. ~ *Dr. John MacArthur*

## *The transgender revolutionaries want our children: And Ohio’s Republican governor gets their applause with a veto*

The vast revolutions in morality that have reshaped the modern landscape have been spectacularly successful, with very few exceptions. In the last half-century, the basic moral judgments held by many (if not most) within our society have been transformed, and the issues cover massive moral terrain, including divorce, gambling, and biomedical issues. But the main current of the moral revolution is sexual, and the liberalization of sexual ethics continues to advance and to amaze. Taken as just one example among many, the LGBTQ revolution has advanced even faster than its early prophets had imagined.

But the transgender revolution has hit a major snag. It turns out the vast majority of people in the increasingly secular West are ready to abandon just about any vestige of the inherited sexual morality, but they are apparently unready to abandon biology. The transgender revolution is taking on water, and it is the only major part of the LGBTQ revolution to do so, at least thus far.



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## *The transgender revolutionaries want our children: And Ohio's Republican governor gets their applause with a veto*

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As a matter of fact, serious research now indicates that Americans have actually cooled toward transgender and non-binary arguments. The same is even more true in Europe, where restrictions on so-called “gender affirming” treatments for children and adolescents are increasingly common and medically supported. Common sense and biology are quite difficult to ignore when it comes to a teenager demanding trans or non-binary identity, and concerns about medical “treatments” for such children and teenagers are growing, not shrinking.

That brings us to last week’s decision by Ohio governor Michael DeWine to veto legislation overwhelmingly passed by the state’s legislature that would have protected children and teenagers in that state from such procedures. DeWine, a Republican who previously served in the U.S. House of Representatives and in the Senate, had sent signals that he was uncomfortable with the legislation, known as “House Bill 68.” The bill would have protected minors in Ohio from hormone and surgical treatments. Furthermore, the legislation would have prevented biological males from playing on female sports teams in both high school and college.

DeWine’s veto places him at odds with biology, common sense, Christian morality, and centuries of moral wisdom. His public display of angst over the issue is exactly what we come to expect from public officials taking such actions, especially when the officials are Republicans and the states are conservative. Former Arkansas governor Asa Hutchinson did and said basically the same just a couple of years ago.

In his veto message, DeWine said that he was acting according to medical advice and in support of parental rights. He said his action was “about protecting human life.” He summarized his argument with these words: “Parents are making decisions about the most precious thing in their life, their child, and none of us should underestimate the gravity and difficulty of those decisions.”

Conservatives certainly agree about the priority of parental rights and authority. But, as DeWine conceded in his statement, “there are rare times in the law, in other circumstances, where the State overrules the medical decisions made by the parents.” Those circumstances should be exceedingly rare, but we are talking about the hormonal modification and surgical mutilation of children and teenagers here. As if to argue with himself, DeWine then turned around and announced that he is “directing our agencies” to prevent “surgery of this kind” for those under age 18.

So much for granting parents that decision. A look at the details indicates that DeWine vetoed legislation that would have banned both hormonal and surgical treatments and would have banned biological males from competing as females on sports teams. He vetoed the bill and announced that he was going to ban the surgical procedures by administrative action. That apparently leaves the hormonal treatments and would still allow biological males to compete as females.





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## *The transgender revolutionaries want our children: And Ohio's Republican governor gets their applause with a veto*

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LGBTQ activists cheered DeWine's veto, as did the Endocrine Society. The medical establishment in the United States is overwhelmingly committed (at least in public) to the LGBTQ revolution. There is also the matter of big business for the medical establishment with the conveniently defined new standards of care. All this now comes with clear and present danger to the children and teenagers of Ohio, and to the integrity of sports in the state as well. Gov. DeWine also knows full well that his veto will almost certainly be overcome by the state's legislature, since the original legislation passed by veto-proof majorities in both houses.

As a result of this veto, Gov. DeWine's future in the Republican Party at the national level is now about that of ... former Gov. Asa Hutchinson. Hutchinson, you can forgive yourself for forgetting, is making a run for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination. In most polls, Hutchinson's support has not yet broken 1 percent in Iowa. That is just about what Mike DeWine's future looks like as well.

The really bad news is that all this has happened in Ohio, and not in California or New Jersey. In that sense, Gov. DeWine's veto is yet another wake up call for us all. This fight is not going to be over any time soon, and the revolutionaries have even bigger plans for the future. They have already told us so. ~ *Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.*

## *Does the Doctrine of Limited Atonement Undermine Evangelism?*

A frequently cited objection against the doctrine of limited atonement is that it undermines evangelism. All orthodox Christians, Calvinists included, believe and teach that the atonement of Jesus Christ is to be proclaimed to all men. We are to say that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life. The misconception exists that because Calvinists believe in the doctrine of limited atonement, they have no passion to go out and preach the cross to everyone. Calvinists have been careful since Augustine to insist that the gospel is to be offered to all men—even though we know that not everyone will respond to it. Many Calvinists have been zealous evangelists.

The doctrine of limited atonement, in reality, is helpful in evangelism. The Calvinist knows that not everyone will respond to the gospel message, but he also knows with certainty that some will respond to it. By contrast, the Arminian doesn't know that not everyone will respond. In the Arminian's mind, it's a theoretical possibility that everybody will repent and believe. However, the Arminian also must deal with the possibility that no one will respond. He can only hope that his gospel presentation will be so persuasive that the unbeliever, lost and dead in his trespasses and sins, will choose to cooperate with divine grace so as to take advantage of the benefits offered in the atonement.

If we can get past such perceived problems with the doctrine of limited atonement, we can begin to see the glory of it—that the atonement Christ made on the cross was real and effectual. It wasn't just a hypothetical atonement. It was an actual atonement. He didn't offer a hypothetical expiation for the sins of His people; their sins were expiated.



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## *Does the Doctrine of Limited Atonement Undermine Evangelism?*

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He didn't give a hypothetical propitiation for our sins; He actually placated God's wrath toward us. By contrast, according to the other view, the atonement is only a potentiality. Jesus went to the cross, paid the penalty for sin, and made the atonement, but now He sits in heaven wringing His hands and hoping that someone will take advantage of the work He performed. This is foreign to the biblical understanding of the triumph and the victory Christ achieved in His atoning death.

In His High Priestly Prayer in John 17:6–9a, Jesus said:

*I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. . . . They have . . . known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. I pray for them.*

This was Jesus, the Savior, speaking here. Notice that He said He was praying for His disciples—not for the world. In the most poignant prayer of intercession He offered in this world as our High Priest, Jesus explicitly said He was not praying for everybody. Instead, He was praying for the elect.

Is it conceivable that Jesus would be willing to die for the whole world but not pray for the whole world? That doesn't make sense. He was being consistent. He had come to lay down His life for His sheep. He was going to die for His people, and He made it clear here that those were the ones for whom He was about to die. There is no question here of indiscrimination. Jesus was about to make atonement, and that atonement would be effective for everyone for whom He intended it to be effective.

If you are of the flock of Christ, one of His lambs, then you can know with certainty that an atonement has been made for your sins. You may wonder how you can know you're numbered among the elect. I cannot read your heart or the secrets of the Lamb's Book of Life, but Jesus said: "*My sheep hear My voice*" (John 10:27a). If you want Christ's atonement to avail for you, and if you put your trust in that atonement and rely on it to reconcile you to almighty God, in a practical sense, you don't need to worry about the abstract questions of election. If you put your trust in Christ's death for your redemption and you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, then you can be sure that the atonement was made for you. That, more than anything else, will settle for you the question of the mystery of God's election. Unless you're elect, you won't believe on Christ; you won't embrace the atonement or rest on His shed blood for your salvation. If you want it, you can have it. It is offered to you if you believe and if you trust.

One of the sweetest statements from the lips of Jesus in the New Testament is this: "*Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*" (Matthew 25:34b). There is a plan of God designed for your salvation. It is not an afterthought or an attempt to correct a mistake. Rather, from all eternity, God determined that He would redeem for Himself a people, and that which He determined to do was, in fact, accomplished in the work of Jesus Christ, His atonement on the cross. Your salvation has been accomplished by a Savior Who is not merely a potential Savior but an actual Savior, One Who did for you what the Father determined He should do. He is your Surety, your Mediator, your Substitute, your Redeemer. He atoned for your sins on the cross. ~ *Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.*



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If you have a birthday or anniversary in April that is not posted here or is listed in error or you do not want to be published in this newsletter, please contact Walt or e-mail him at [gwlcf10415@gmail.com](mailto:gwlcf10415@gmail.com).

### ***Birthdays and Anniversaries Corner April 2024***

#### **Birthdays**

***Amber H. (4)***  
***Carol L. (7)***  
***David A. (8)***  
***Raena Grace P. (20)***

#### **Anniversaries**

***Walt and Carol L. (15)***  
***Jack and Rita B. (16)***

### **God Given Task—Ecclesiastes 3: 9 - 15**

<sup>9</sup> What gain has the worker from his toil? <sup>10</sup> I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. <sup>11</sup> He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. <sup>12</sup> I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; <sup>13</sup> also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man. <sup>14</sup> I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him. <sup>15</sup> That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God seeks what has been driven away. ~ *ESV*



### ***West Suffolk Baptist Church Leadership***

The West Suffolk Epistle is a monthly publication of West Suffolk Baptist Church.

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Please submit information to the editor by the second Sunday of each 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.

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