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Turning “Greeks” into “Jews”

- by Ken Ham

In 1959 I turned eight years old. It was a historic year for my homeland of Australia because a famous American evangelist conducted a series of crusades in the cities of Melbourne and Sydney.

Some commentators claimed this was the closest Australia ever came to revival.

Australia has never seen such an impact for the gospel since then. Similar crusades did not seem to match the results of 1959. Today when such outreaches are conducted, whether in Australia, America, or other countries, statistics indicate that the small percentage of people who go forward for first-time commitments seem to fall away or are not incorporated into any church.

Why was it that even though the Australian culture “buzzed” as a result of these 1959 crusades, they seemed to produce no lasting major impact on the culture itself? And why have Australia and other Western countries continually declined in regard to Christian morality, despite numerous evangelistic campaigns?

Understanding the Differences

It really comes down to understanding the difference between *Jews* and *Greeks*, using these terms as types.

In 1 Corinthians 1:23 we read, “but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness.”

In Acts 2, the apostle Peter preached a bold message that was primarily directed to the Jewish people (or those familiar with the Jewish religion). His main thrust concerned Jesus’ death and resurrection and mankind’s need for salvation.

Scripture records that 3,000 people responded positively. This was a phenomenally successful “crusade.”

However, in Acts 17 Paul preached a similar message to the Greek philosophers, but they thought it was foolishness.

Why the different responses?

In Acts 2 Peter preached to people who believed in the God of creation as recorded in the Old Testament. They understood the meaning of sin and knew about the spiritual fall of the first human couple. They also had the Law of Moses, so they knew exactly what God expected of them and that they fell short. They were not indoctrinated in evolutionary ideas. The Word of God had credibility in their eyes and was

considered sacred.

They also understood the need for a sacrifice for sin because, after all, they were in Jerusalem on that particular day to sacrifice animals, as they had always done. However, most of the Jewish people had rejected Jesus as the Messiah (Christ), so Peter challenged them concerning who Christ was and what He had accomplished on the cross.

Here, then, is an important observation: The Jews had the foundational knowledge of creation and sin, which is necessary to understand the message of salvation. Peter did not have to convince them that God was Creator or that man had sinned. He could concentrate on the message of the cross. Peter did not have to establish the credibility of God’s Word or convince the Jewish people that naturalistic explanations of origins was wrong or deal with the teaching of an Earth that was supposedly millions of years old. These were not issues in the Jewish culture at that time.

However, in Acts 17 Paul was preaching to Greek philosophers. They had no understanding of the God of creation, as did the Jews. They believed in many gods and that the gods, like humans, had evolved. The Epicureans, for instance, believed man evolved from the dirt; in fact, they were the atheists of that age.

The Greeks had no understanding of sin or what was necessary to atone for it. God’s Word to the Jewish people had no credibility in this evolution-based culture. Thus when Paul, in Acts 17, preached the same basic message as Peter in Acts 2, the Greeks did not understand; it was foolishness to them.

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It is fascinating to see what Paul did as a result. He talked to the Greeks about the “unknown God” referred to on one of their altars, and he defined for them the true God of creation. He also explained that all people were made from “one blood” (from one man), thus laying the foundational history necessary to understand the meaning of sin and the need for salvation. He countered their evolutionary beliefs and thus challenged their entire way of thinking.

Then Paul again preached the message of Christ and the resurrection. Although some continued to sneer, others wanted to hear more. Their hearts were receptive, and some were converted to Christ.

Even though Paul didn’t see 3,000 people saved as Peter did, he was successful nonetheless. Think about what he had to do: Change “Greeks” into “Jews.” In other words, he had to take pagan, evolutionist Greeks, change their entire way of thinking about life and the universe, and then get them to think like Jewish people concerning the true foundation of history.

No wonder only a few came to Christ at first. Such a change is dramatic. Imagine, for example, trying to get an Australian Aborigine to think like an American. Such a change would be extremely difficult, to say the least.

Now let’s return to 1959. At that time in Australia’s history, it was common for public school students to pray at assembly before the start of the day. In elementary schools, it was common for students to be read a section of the Bible before they started the day. Many children went to Sunday school, and ministers of religion even visited schools each week and taught students about the Bible.

Generations ago, even in Australia, which has not had the Christian heritage of America, the culture was somewhat like that of the “Jews:” People were familiar with the Bible. Most knew the basic concepts of Christianity concerning creation, sin, and the message of salvation. So when an evangelist came and preached the message of the cross, it was somewhat like Peter preaching to the Jewish people in Acts 2. Australians had the foundational knowledge to understand the message and respond accordingly.

However, I believe most church leaders did not understand that these people really were already “Greeks” in their thinking about reality. Even at this stage, students were being taught evolutionary ideas in a low-key way that was subtly undermining the credibility of the Bible’s history.

Consequently, there was no real, lasting impact on Australian culture, which has progressively become more anti-Christian. Underneath it all, people had questions about the validity of the Bible.

In Australia today, praying during an assembly or telling Bible stories to start the assembly or telling Bible stories to start the day would be unheard of in public schools. Furthermore, evolution is taught as fact throughout the educational system.

Generations of Australians now have little or no knowledge of the Bible. They have been thoroughly indoctrinated in an atheistic, evolutionary philosophy. Children don’t automatically

go to Sunday school or church programs as they used to. Ministers of religion find it more and more difficult to conduct programs in schools. And most church leaders tell their congregations it is fine to believe in the millions-of-years notion of creation and/or evolutionary ideas, as long as God is somehow involved.

After years of subtle indoctrination and an emphasis on rejecting the book of Genesis as literal, generations today see the Genesis history as not credible and, thus, doubt the reliability of the entire Bible.

Reaching the “Greeks”

Whether it is Australia, America, Great Britain, or another country, Western culture today is no longer one of mainly “Jews” but is more like “Greeks”—genuine, pagan “Greeks”—increasingly anti-Christian, with a predominantly atheistic, evolutionary, secular philosophy. Indeed, they are probably even worse than Paul’s opponents, who at least asked to hear him out. Now many secularists try to suppress Christian teachings. Today there is a remnant of “Jews” who still understand biblical and Christian terminology, but they are quickly becoming the minority.

Today’s “Greeks” do not have the foundational knowledge to understand the gospel. Because people have been taught to believe evolution and that creation took millions of years, they have been led to believe the Bible is not credible and its history in Genesis (creation in six days and the Noachic Flood) is not true. Thus when an evangelist preaches the message of the cross, like the Greeks in Acts 17, they see it as foolishness.

How then can we reach today’s “Greeks?” Like the literal Greeks of Paul’s day, they need to be turned into “Jews.” Their faulty foundation concerning evolution needs to be rebuilt. They need to understand and believe that the Bible’s account of creation and the Fall of Man (i.e., that man is a sinner) is true. Once they have this foundation, they can better understand the message of the Messiah, who came to provide forgiveness for them by being the final blood sacrifice for their sin (Isaiah 53). Then, hopefully, they would respond accordingly.

America and Britain are in similar circumstances as Australia. Generations ago, the Bible, prayer, and the Genesis history of creation were a part of everyday life in public (government-run) schools. But the seeds of “Greek” thinking were subtly sown through the educational system. Even in

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Important Notices...

- Please remember FCM in your end-of-year giving. We greatly need ongoing support.
- FCM is open to providing weekend Bible Conferences in various communities. If your congregation would like to host such a conference, please contact us and suggest a theme of interest.

Building a Better Brotherhood

- by J. Mark Horst

I'm confident all of us want to be better followers of the Lord. But we can't reach that goal on our own! We need accountability, counsel and correction from those in our local body of Believers.

From Galatians 6:1-4 let's note three **COMMITMENTS** needed in "Building a Better Brotherhood."

The First Commitment is,

The Commitment to Restoration

Paul says, "*If a [person] is overtaken by a fault, you who are spiritual restore such an one.*" The primary focus here is on the one doing and restoring. How are you and I to restore the erring one? With the spirit of meekness.

This word is very much misunderstood; partly, I think, because it rhymes with weakness. Meekness is sometimes illustrated by a lion that has been tamed. He has this tremendous strength that would allow him to tear his trainer to pieces, but it is kept under control by his training. That control in our lives is the power of the Holy Spirit. Meekness is a key part of our commitment to restoration. It is a willingness to yield my personal rights for the good of my brother.

Part of the basis for our commitment to restoration is the possibility of our own failure. The word, consider, in the Greek is, *skopeo*. It means to take aim at. When you take aim, you focus exclusively on the target. In our attempt to restore we must never be condemning, and we must be willing to put a microscope to our own motives.

And who does the restoring? "*You who are spiritual.*" Spiritual means "non-carnal," not controlled by the desires of the flesh. In the past I've had the idea, and it's very carnal, that if this particular person would do things differently, or maybe if they'd just leave and go somewhere else, we'd have a better brotherhood. That attitude made me part of the problem.

God is in the business of restoration, and we as His children are His accomplices. My own failures help me maintain a spirit of meekness toward others. I desire a deeper level of commitment to restoration. I hope you do too.

The Second Commitment is,

The Commitment to Affirmation

All of us want to be accepted, to feel needed, like we're making a contribution to the group. We want others to value our opinions and listen to our ideas. The brotherhood of Believers should be a safe place for us—a place where we can be ourselves and still be loved and accepted, a place where we know we're not going to be held at arm's length because of

our past.

Paul says, "*Bear each other's burdens.*" In the context, we understand the burdens can be a result of personal failure. And those burdens can be "a crushing weight." We may be tempted to say, "Serves them right, they should've known better, let them suffer." I'm so glad Jesus didn't say that about me!

Bearing each other's burdens fulfills the law of Christ. What is the law of Christ? "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind; and love your neighbor as yourself.*"

It's easier to bear some burdens than others. It's easier to affirm some people than others. In illness, accident or death, we tend to rally around the hurting ones. But what if the burden is the result of personal sin? We often back away because we don't want to be identified with that person. But is that what Jesus did? He was willing to identify with the "social outcasts" of His day.

Affirmation also requires us to confront sin in the church, but it must be done with compassion. We don't do it to "put the screws" to someone. We do it to help bring him to repentance and restoration. We can't function properly without his part in the body.

Obviously, in congregation you don't bond with everyone at the same level. But each of us needs someone to confide in, someone to hold us accountable for spiritual growth and victory. If we're going to build a better brotherhood we must learn how to bring affirmation to others in the body.

The Final Commitment is,

The Commitment to Examination

Here Paul zeroes in on each of us individually. The examination he commands is self-examination. Our personal view of who we are has a big impact on our ability, or inability, to be committed to affirmation and restoration. If I have an elevated opinion of myself, then I think everyone ought to see things my way. But if I know my weaknesses, and I'm not afraid to admit them, I can be much more open to the ideas of others.

In verse four Paul says, "*Let every man prove his own work.*" "Prove" means we are to examine ourselves. This must be an ongoing process in our lives. Paul said in Acts 24:16, "*Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men.*" That can only happen if we look at ourselves as God does.

Verse four says self-examination will bring rejoicing into our lives. We will rejoice because God is at work in our lives.

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Pastoral Implications of Open Theism

- by Thomas K. Ascol

Part 4 of 4. Continued from the September/October 2005 issue of the FCM Informer.

Undermines Confident Living

The Openness view rejects the idea that a person can be genuinely free if his actions are in any way determined by God. By defining freedom in libertarian terms, Open theists exclude all thought of God's precise control over the world. This stems from an unwillingness to recognize a distinction between God's revealed will and His decreed will. Sanders gratuitously dismisses this distinction as "another example of the attempt to discover a God beyond the God of Scripture on the basis of a human ideal."¹ But Scripture gives ample reason to think in these terms: "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29). If one does not distinguish between God's secret will and His revealed will, then the biblical claims regarding God's designs, intentions, and desires become terribly confusing.²

If God is not in control, then who is? No one, according to free will theists. In their scheme the world is at the collective mercy of libertarian human wills, libertarian free angelic wills and God. Of course, neither people nor angels have as much power as God, but neither does God have complete control over them.³ One of the most devastating implications of this is the existence of gratuitous evil in the world. Sanders admits that "at least some evil is pointless" and "God does not have a specific divine purpose for each and every occurrence of evil."⁴ Boyd also concedes this point: "It is true that according to the Open view things can happen in our lives that God didn't plan or even foreknow with certainty (though he always foreknew they were possible). This means that in the Open view things can happen to us that have no overarching divine purpose."⁵

This thought, which is rightfully disconcerting for those who have come to see God's unmitigated sovereignty taught in Scripture, is applauded by Open theists as a significant theodicy. Boyd believes that "it offers the most plausible way out of the dilemma of assuming God has a purpose for allowing particular evils."⁶ Bassinger is even more enthusiastic:

Moreover, viewing evil in this manner has practical significance. For instance, it means that we, unlike proponents of specific sovereignty, need not assume that some divine purpose exists for each evil that we encounter.

We need not, for example, assume when someone dies that God "took him home" for some reason, or that the horrors many experience in this world in some mysterious way fit into God's perfect plan. We can justifiably assume, rather, that God is often as disappointed as are we that someone's earthly existence has ended at an early age or that someone is experiencing severe depression or that someone is being tortured.⁷

He continues,

From our perspective, to view specific tragedies in this world as the result of a system over which God has chosen not to exercise complete control is more appealing than to view such events as the outworking of some specific, preordained divine plan.⁸

This perspective fails to deal adequately with the death of Jesus. The paradigm by which all evil in the world must be judged is that which took place at the cross. In the crucifixion we are forced to recognize the two different ways of willing in God. We find ground for hopeful and confident living in a fallen world. The death of Jesus Christ is the greatest miscarriage of justice which the world has ever witnessed. The only innocent man who has ever lived was crucified as a common criminal. Yet, how does the Bible require us to think about the cross? Was it God's will? Or was it a violation of His will? The Open Theist must choose between these two questions, because he refuses to see any distinction in the ways that God wills things. The classical theist sees the cross as the fulfillment of God's decreed will (which He purposed from eternity) and a violation of His revealed will (namely, the commandment not to murder).

The early apostles did not view the death of Jesus from an Open theistic point of view. At Pentecost, Peter preached Christ as, "Him, being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death" (Acts 2:23). "Determined counsel and foreknowledge of God" means it was God's (decreed) will. "Lawless hands" means it was contrary to God's (revealed) will. This same perspective is found in the disciples' prayer recorded in Acts 4:24-30. It is difficult to understand, in the light of this apostolic viewpoint, why Boyd is driven to help us "rid ourselves of any lingering suspicion

that evil somehow fits into the eternal purposes of God.”⁹

If the greatest evil in all the world, though a clear violation of God’s revealed will, was definitely decreed by God for the good of His people, then why would we not believe that in a similar way all lesser evils in the world, though contrary to God’s commandments, nevertheless fall within His good, wise, and sovereign will for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose? Such a view of God’s ways with us in no way diminishes the tragedy of evil and suffering. But it does give us reason to live with joy and hope in the midst of suffering. For though the pain which a child of God endures may seem pointless, it cannot be. No suffering by believers in this world is ever wasted. Joseph, Job, Stephen, Paul, and any other believer who, like their Lord, experience evil in this world may take hope and be confident that God is working out His good and wise purposes through their sufferings.¹⁰

The opening question and answer in the Heidelberg Catechism summarizes this hopeful vision of the Christian life in a wonderful way. The question is, “What is your only comfort in life and in death?” to which the following answer is given.

That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to Him, Christ, by His Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for Him.

No Open theist will ever know such comfort.

Conclusion

The devotional house in which one lives will be largely determined by the doctrinal foundation on which he builds. The vibrant, joyful life of faith that marked the New Testament church was rooted in a steadfast commitment to the “apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42). The Apostle Paul regularly structured his arguments in his letters to the early churches so that his imperatives rested upon his indicatives. First he laid a doctrinal foundation (for example, in Rom. 1-2 and Eph. 1-3), then he exhorted his readers to live up to that which they believed (as in Rom. 12-16 and Eph. 4-6). Right believing leads to right living.

It is hard to understand, then, the almost nonchalant attitude of Boyd when he writes, “Next to the central doctrines of the Christian faith, the issue of whether the future is exhaustively settled or partially Open is relatively unimportant. It is certainly not a doctrine Christians should ever divide over.”¹¹ Contrary to the way Boyd makes it sound, Open theism is not simply a philosopher’s debate. Redefine reality and the God of reality changes with it. What is at stake is the very doctrine of God, and with that, every aspect of the Christian life.

As A. W. Tozer noted in the middle of the last century, “The gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like.” He goes on to observe, “Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, ‘What comes into your mind when you think about God?’ we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man.”¹² Open theism’s redefinition of God bodes ill for those who embrace it. If our vision of God is diminished, vital godliness is sure to shrink with it.

1 Sanders, *Risks*, 331, fn. 5.

2 Theologians have made this distinction in various ways throughout history. For a very helpful treatment of the issue from a biblical-theological perspective, see John Piper, “Are There Two Wills in God?”

3 Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 153; Tiessen, 100-2. Boyd has called attention to the demonic realm of influence from the Openness viewpoint in his *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

4 Sanders, *Risks*, 261-62.

5 Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 153.

6 *Ibid.*, 99.

7 Bassinger, “Implications,” 170.

8 *Ibid.*, 171.

9 Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 102.

10 Piper has a good, brief essay on this point entitled, *Pastoral Implications of Greg Boyd’s View in Dealing with Suffering*, 8 April 1998, available at <http://www.bgc.bethel.edu/4know/pessays.htm>

11 Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 8.

12 A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1961), 1.



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1925, public school students in America learned from a textbook that taught Caucasians were the “highest race” and that the Earth was millions of years old. That textbook also promoted eugenics.

Generations have now passed through an educational system that is basically devoid of the knowledge of God. In fact, most schools teach *against* Christianity or relegate it to mere personal belief instead of objective truth about world history. The Bible, prayer, and creation have been thrown out of public education. Students are taught evolution as fact; and in their eyes, the Bible is not a credible book. They are “Greeks.”

Today, if we want to evangelize the once “Christianized” Western world, we must understand that the message of the cross will not be understood until people can be changed from “Greeks” into “Jews.”

The culture today needs answers from science and the Bible to counter the evolutionary/million-of-years teaching, so the literal history of Genesis 1–11 is established, thus giving credibility to the gospel (in fact, all Christian doctrine) founded in this history.

Reprinted from the July/August issue of Israel My Glory.

Our Essential Confrontation

Taken from Manly Dominion in a Passive-Purple-Four-Ball-World

- by Mark Chanski

The two-year-old boy walks into his grandma's living room and sees a beautiful flower arrangement in the middle of the coffee table. Instinctively, he wants to touch it, and maybe even maul it. But his mother, sitting on the sofa says, "Joey, don't touch the flowers. No!" Joey fully understands, but is not in the mood to obey. He defiantly reaches for the flowers.

Now what's a mother to do? She could *remove* the flower arrangement and place it high atop the bookcase. She could remove her hairbrush from her purse and use this intriguing article to *divert* Joey's attention. Or she could physically *restrain* Joey by holding him straightjacket style in her lap. However, I believe that none of the above measures would be a biblical solution. Neither *confiscation*, *diversion*, nor *incarceration* would be appropriate. The child needs *confrontation*.

Simply put, we need to reject worldly techniques:

Exodus 20:12 *Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you...*

Ephesians 6:1 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

In Joey's meeting the authority of his mother regarding the dried flowers, he's meeting the authority of his God and Maker, Who commands him to submissively obey and honor his parents. This is a solemn moment. It's no time for playing games. It's time for Joey to bend his will and submit to God. It's time for holy *confrontation*. Joey's will must be directly confronted. He needs to be required to obey.

Now, I realize that the typical secular psychologist is horrified by my analysis that calls for confrontation. But that is no surprise, because he knows neither the *identity* of Joey, nor the *expectation* God has placed on Joey. To the psychologist, Joey is basically good, and views principles like *honoring*, *obeying*, and *submitting* as developmentally stifling. Therefore, the psychologist recommends that we avoid at all cost the technique of confrontation. Keep the waters calm and don't capsize the little boy's boat!

Later that day, Joey may be riding in the grocery cart in the check-out aisle. He wants the colorful flashlight. Mom says, "No!" Joey throws a tantrum. Mom is embarrassed, so she tries to divert his attention with bribery. "Here, let's buy this box of mint candies. See the noise it makes when you shake it!" Or maybe: "When we get home, I'll give you some ice cream, if you'll please just be nice."

Maybe when he's older, Joey's told by his father that it's bedtime. Joey announces that he doesn't want to go to bed

right now. Dad, wanting to avoid a collision with Joey's will, semi-apologetically gives an explanation for his command. "Now Joey, you know that if you don't go to bed right now, you'll be ornery tomorrow. It'll be best for us all in the long run if you'll just cooperate. Please!" Joey stomps angrily. Dad responds: "Hey, if you'll go up right now, I'll read you a book. What do you say, buddy?"

All of these non-confrontational strategies do great harm to the child. They evade and skirt the heart issue of a child's solemn need to submit his will to the authority of his parents (fifth commandment). They cower before the child with a dread to cross or challenge his will. When confrontation is avoided, and diversionary tactics are employed, the crucial issue of authority is left unaddressed. Willful submission under God is never rendered. The sad harvest is an unmanageable, undisciplined, ungodly young adult. Today, we're seeing a bumper crop of them.

Employ Biblical Measures

Biblical psychology insists we must confront the wills of our children. And the Scriptures tell us precisely how.

Proverbs 29:15 *The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.*

Proverbs 20:30 *Stripes that wound scour away evil, And strokes reach the innermost parts.*

When a child premeditatedly challenges and defies a parent's authority, by purposefully crossing a verbally drawn line, he must be given reason to regret it. The *rod* (Hebrew: *shebet*: stick, branch, *paddle*) is an eloquent communicator. The Lord tells us it's able to register a wholesome impression on young minds, as *strokes reach the inmost parts*. It penetrates far deeper into a little soul than logical argumentation. It teaches its student to *honor* (weigh as heavy versus blow off as light) father and mother. The rod confronts a child's rebellious will like no other device.

Proverbs 22:15 *Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.*

Whenever a child's behavior represents a defiant challenge of parental authority, it's not time for "a time out." The devil within the child's heart is rearing his rebellious head. It's no time to lie back until the serpent retreats back underground. It's time to give a strong blow to that serpentine head by a principled spanking to the child's behind.

We wonder why Joey keeps on disobeying, while we keep on letting him rule the field. Parents must exercise *manly dominion* by committing themselves to subdue and rule in the

field of their offspring. And this project is not one for the faint of heart.

John S. C. Abbott's insightful book, *The Mother At Home*, written in 1833, is filled with good, old fashioned, biblical counsel, untainted by the nonsense of modern "politically correct" psychology. The following is an actual contest of wills described by John Abbot's pen. Note the name of the little boy in the account:

A gentleman, sitting by his fireside one evening, with his family around him, took the spelling-book and called upon one of his little sons to come and read. *John* was about four years old. He knew all the letters of the alphabet perfectly, but happened at that moment to be in rather a sullen humor, and was not at all disposed to gratify his father. Very reluctantly he came as he was bid, but when his father pointed with his knife to the first letter of the alphabet, and said, "What letter is that, John?" he could get no answer. John looked upon the book, sulky and silent.

"My son," said the father, pleasantly, "you know the letter A."

"I cannot say A," said John.

"You must," said the father in a serious and decided tone. "What letter is that?"

John refused to answer.

The contest was now fairly commenced. John was willful, and determined that he could not read. His father knew that it would be ruinous to his son to allow him to conquer. He felt that he must, at all hazards, subdue him. He took him into another room, and punished him. He then returned, and again showed John the letter. But John still refused to name it. The father again retired with his son, and punished him more severely. But it was unavailing; the stubborn child still refused to name the letter, and when the father inflicted punishment as he dared to do it, and still the child, with his whole frame in agitation, refused to yield.

The father was suffering from the most intense solicitude. He regretted exceedingly that he had been drawn into the contest. He had already punished his child with a severity which he feared to exceed. And yet the willful sufferer stood before him, sobbing and trembling, but apparently as unyielding as a rock.

I have often heard that parent mention the acuteness of his feelings at that moment. His heart was bleeding at the pain which he had been compelled to inflict upon his son. He knew that the question was now to be settled, who should be master. And after his son had withstood so long and so much, he greatly feared the result.

The mother sat by, suffering, of course, most acutely, but perfectly satisfied that it was their duty to subdue the child, and that in such a trying hour a mother's feelings must not interfere.

With a heavy heart the father again took the hand of his son to lead him out of the room for further punishment. But, to his inconceivable joy, the child shrunk from enduring any more suffering, and cried, "Father, I'll tell the letter." The father with feelings not easily conceived, took the book and pointed to the letter.

"A," said John, distinctly and fully.

"And what is that?" said the father, pointing to the next letter.

"B," said John.

"And what is that?"

"C," he continued.

"And what is that?" pointing again to the first letter.

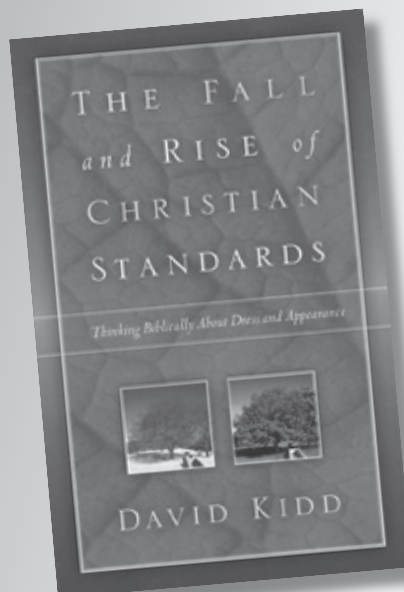
"A," said the now humbled child.

"Now carry the book to your mother, and tell her what the letter is."

"What is that, my son?" said the mother.

"A," said John. He was evidently perfectly subdued. The rest of the children were sitting by, and they saw the contest, and they saw where the victory was. And John learnt a lesson which he never forgot, that his father had an arm too strong for him. He learnt that it was the safest and happiest course for him to obey. He learned never again to wage such an unequal warfare.

But perhaps some one says it was cruel to punish the child so severely. Cruel! It was mercy and love. It would indeed have been cruel had the father, in that hour, been unfaithful, and shrunk from his painful duty. The passions he was then, with so much self-sacrifice, striving to subdue, if left unchecked, would in all probability have been a curse to



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his friends. It is by no means improbable that upon the decisions of that hour depended the character and happiness of that child for life, and even for eternity. It is far from improbable that, had he then conquered, all future efforts to subdue him would have been in vain, and that he would have broken away from all restraint, and have been miserable in life, and lost in death. Cruelty! The Lord preserve children from the tender mercies of those who so regret self-denying kindness.¹

Proverbs 13:24 **He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.**

We must not hate our children by passively, naively, and cowardly curling up into *passive-purple four-balls*. We must courageously stand up like men to subdue their young hearts for their good and God's glory.

Employ manly dominion by faithfully *confronting* your children.

Reprinted from *Manly Dominion*, Calvary Press Publishing, Merrick, NY

¹ John S. C. Abbot, *The Mother At Home* (Sterling, VA: Grace Abounding Ministries, 1984), pp.29-31



Continued from page 3

He is redeeming us from our faults and failures and conforming us into His image. Only we will know the depths of the transformation taking place in our hearts. Our hearts will overflow with thanksgiving to God.

This section closes by saying, "*For every man shall bear his own burden.*" Verse two seems to say the opposite, "*Bear each other's burdens.*" But there are two different Greek words used in these two verses. The burdens spoken about in verse two are "a crushing weight," the kind that pushes you so far down you can't get up without help. The burdens mentioned here are simply "a load to be carried." There is no reference to how heavy they are. These are the "normal" burdens we all must carry. These keep us humble and help us maintain a proper perspective of who we are in relation to God and each other.

Building a better brotherhood is up to you and me. If we're willing to pay the price we can have what we desire. But it won't come cheaply or easily.

We must be committed to restoration, regardless of the offense. That may not always be possible, but we must pursue it with determination.

We must be committed to affirmation, valuing each member as an integral part of the body. We must come alongside and help lift that heavy burden they carry.

And, we must be committed to self-examination, seeing ourselves as God sees us. Knowing how much we've been forgiven will help us be more understanding of each other in our struggles.

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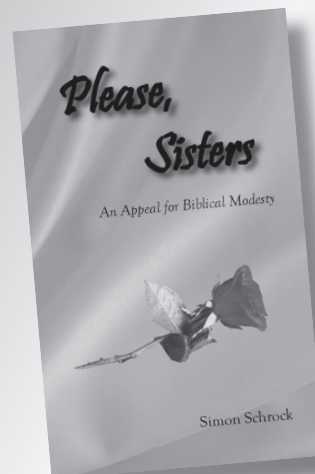
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