

Summer 2009

We trust that Jesus, our sufficiency, is making Himself known through the normal activities of your day. I am very much aware (as you must be as well) of the constant tension that exists between truth and error. Yet, truth uses this backdrop to vibrantly manifest itself before those sensitive to its presence. In fact, to catch God at work, regardless of the circumstance, transforms the mundane into an adventure rivaled by nothing else. This is the life of faith addressed in the Scriptures, a life of anticipation, a life of constant expectation that the supernatural will manifest itself in the most ordinary places and during the most ordinary times. This is adventure at its best, an adventure, not for sissies, but for warriors willing to trust God—no matter what.

If you know Jesus, and passionately pursue His heart, I don't have to tell you that we are experiencing a more than interesting season, not only within our land, but on a global basis as well. Yet it may be a season of opportunity unlike anything we have experienced during our lifetimes. In fact, I believe that the best years of ministry are ahead of us due to the corruptness that believers are exposed to on a daily basis. More who know Jesus are saying, "Enough!" and exchanging a lifestyle inundated with mediocrity for a fervent pursuit of the "Christ, who is our life" (Colossians 3:4). Only the passionate will make it in the days ahead, having their faith fueled, not by duty but by the never ending love of the Godhead (Galatians 5:6).

Not only must we equip ourselves with the truth; but we must also refuse to allow anything we see, hear, or experience in the world, even among believers, to shock, much less discourage us. Jesus is truth no matter what the world does with Him. He is also truth no matter what the body of Christ does with Him. Therefore, our faces must be set (as Jesus' was in Luke 9:51), no matter what comes our way. The absence of truth in the world, nor the abuse of the truth among believers, must never cause us to trade our passion, our first love (Revelation 2:4), for a life of compromise. The price is too great, the consequence too staggering. Therefore, resolve to trust Jesus to finish the work He began in you (Philippians 1:6), His life to see you through (Romans 5:10), and His love to heal and comfort regardless of the circumstance (1 John 4:8, 16). Therein lies the key to finding life (John 10:10), the life the world despises, yet the life the Father energizes (1 Corinthians 15:10; Colossians 1:29). What a journey!

I would like for you to consider an "event" that recently occurred in one of the largest cities in our land. A dear friend of mine visited a jewelry store to purchase a gift for his wife. Two girls were shopping as well, one of which asked the clerk about the possibility of acquiring a specific piece of jewelry—a cross. As the girl was speaking with the clerk, she said, "I hear that the crosses with the little man on them are more popular these days." You have to know my friend to receive the full impact of what follows; but needless to say, he had to say something considering what he had just heard. He proceeded to ask the girl who she thought the "little man" was; and low and behold, she had no clue. (Again, this happened in a major city within our land.) My friend proceeded to tell her that the "little man" was Jesus Christ, stated a few more words, and left with even a better grasp of where we live in America. As I stated earlier, we must never be startled by what we see, hear, or experience these days. The great news is that the "little man" is no longer on the cross, even though it may be politically correct to attempt to keep Him there. Hey gang, if He is still nailed to the cross, He never went to the grave, much less came out of it. No resurrection—no salvation (1 Corinthians 15:17)—simple as that. In fact, no resurrection and "we are of all men most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:19). In other words, we are wasting our time. Yes, it is that big of a deal!

Obviously, doctrine (what the Scriptures teach concerning Jesus) is vital, even at the expense of unity. But, unity is being elevated above doctrine on many fronts these days. We must accept that fact, in fact, get used to it—as disappointing and hurtful as that may be. Meanwhile, we walk in the strength of the resurrected Christ, viewing every obstacle as opportunity. Yes, He is even capable of loving through us those in opposition, even when we don't “feel” like loving in return. After all, He died for them, just as He died for all mankind (John 3:16), to the glory of the Father.

Ministry News

I am presently writing and teaching a series that has been more than enjoyable. It addresses those highly contested topics such as predestination, foreknowledge, election, depravity, free will, God's sovereignty, and etc. After completing this series, I plan to write and teach a course on Romans 9-11, some of the most thought provoking verses in all of God's word. The response last semester, as we addressed foreknowledge and predestination, was pretty much what I had anticipated. There was much interest and much dialogue. If you would desire to receive any of the CD's or written materials from those sessions, just get in touch. I am convinced that this series may very well be the most important of any I have written or taught to date. We absolutely must know where we stand on predestination, election, foreknowledge, God's sovereignty, and etc.; for few subjects determine the manner in which we view our Lord more than these. As you well know, a proper understanding of God's heart, who He is in His essence, is the most important truth available to man. So, who has your ear? Whom are you listening to (or reading) these days as you sort through the host of theological ideas relating to these subjects? Your only protection is the full counsel of God's word, not a few verses taken out of context coupled with the logic of man.

On the personal side, there is no way to express what Rick and Donna Underhill mean to this ministry. As many of you know, they moved here two years ago and have taken over a majority of the administrative responsibilities here on the hill. I have never liked the organizational end of things; so to delegate such a huge responsibility to such capable saints has been a delight for Kim and me. Rick and Donna also share the vision of equipping believers in the truth; and with Rick's gift of teaching, we see new doors of opportunity opening for them on a regular basis. We are very excited about what is transpiring on their behalf.

We have had an extremely encouraging year with all who have visited for Bible studies, camps, and retreats. We have also mailed out a great deal of study materials, all for the purpose of allowing the passionate within the body of Christ to know Jesus intimately. However, the more this ministry grows the more we realize that Christ must do the work through us. Rick, Donna, Kim, and I cannot, and I repeat, “cannot” make this thing work. God is at work here, and that alone is why we remain. Therefore, your prayers are appreciated now more than at any time in the past. A spiritual war takes place on this hill; but, oh, what a journey! I wouldn't swap places with anyone, even when our hearts are broken by the overall apathy within Christ's body coupled with the fruit it has born in our land. America is where she is today, not because of the blatant rebelliousness of the lost but because of the spiritual immaturity of the saved. We, however, as many of you realize, are privileged to meet regularly with some of the most wonderful saints, hungry saints who desire God's best for their lives. It is unquestionable that we have been blessed with the greatest of friends, friends who know, beyond a doubt, that Christ is anything but a “little man” on a cross who has yet to be buried and raised.

Events to Consider Attending on the Hill

August 7-8, 2009 Annual Romans Retreat

August 18, 2009 Tuesday night Bible study here on The Hill (7:00 pm). Topic: God's sovereignty and the free will of man, depravity, election, limited or unlimited atonement (which is it), and etc.

September 4-6, 2009 Discipleship Retreat

October 16-18, 2009 Annual Fall Retreat

January 15-17, 2010 Annual winter youth retreat

April 30-May 2, 2010 Annual men's retreat for fathers, their sons, and single men of all ages.

July 11-17, 2010 Annual summer camp for youth (ages 13-18)

Because all of these events are posted on our website, you can register online if you desire.

A Word of Thanks

Your prayers and support are so very much appreciated. We thank God that we continue to operate debt free during this downward economic spiral. The decision we made many years ago is paying huge dividends these days. The decision was that this ministry would not solicit funds nor borrow capital. We could write a book as to how God has honored that commitment. Thanks for being the vessel through which He perpetuates the dream.

Have a great day enjoying the presence of the Creator. Truly, what a friend we have in Jesus!

Thoughts From The Hill

For the past thirty years, we have attempted to inform you of our concerns, the major of which is the general apathy (lack of passion) for the truth among believers. What God's people have paid for this indifference is appalling. It has not only left many at the mercy of every teacher, author, or high-powered personality they are exposed to, but also at the mercy of every craze, movement, or trend that comes down the pike. I speak from experience; for in my early days as a believer, knowing little truth, I was swept away as well. I bear the scars from those days, but I allow them to serve as a reminder of the importance of truth, not truth based on a few verses from God's word, but truth based on the full counsel—every word, of every phrase, of every verse, of every chapter, of every book. In the thirty-five years I have known the Lord, I have seen many movements come and go—some good, some bad. As I have observed the fruit of these movements, it has not only interested me to know why such movements have been birthed, but also driven me to research the foundation on which they rest. It has been an amazing journey, one which I have greatly enjoyed.

As I mentioned in the introduction of this newsletter, we will be studying some very stimulating

subjects this next semester on Tuesday nights. Having addressed foreknowledge and predestination last semester, we will begin the fall semester by studying, in much depth, God's sovereignty, an interesting subject indeed. There is no doubt that God is autonomous, all powerful, has no rivals, and always wins—this is what “sovereignty” is all about. However, did you realize that there is a resurgence of a movement which promotes the idea that all things which transpire, every action, event, everything that occurs in space and time, has been ordained (caused) by God? It stems from an unhealthy view of God's sovereignty, which presupposes that God must ordain (cause) all things to know all things. Consider the following.

The word “omniscience” is a theological term that points to God's ability to know all. In other words, He, being God, not only knows what has transpired in the past, but also knows what will occur in the future. But, if God's knowledge of all events, including the events which are yet future, are contingent upon His causing them, His omniscience is compromised. For instance, which would be the greater God, the God who is required to cause all things to know all things, thus eliminating man's free will in the process, or the God who knows all things simply because He sees all things at once, having ordained that man possess the freedom of choice? Would He not be more omniscient if He knew what will transpire in the future without causing it?

What if, within the realm of His sovereignty, and without anyone holding Him at gunpoint, God chose to grant mankind a free will? This in no way would diminish His right to rule as the one and only Sovereign. Why? He, operating totally within the realm of His sovereignty, would have made the choice to make man a free moral agent. God, however, does set limits on Himself in many instances. For example, He promised to never again flood the entire earth (Genesis 9:15). Does this mean that He lacks the power to do so, or does it mean that He has set limits on what He will do? Obviously, He has set limits on Himself without the loss of power; for such things were done as a result of His own choice, not man's.

Those who view God as needing to ordain (cause) all things to retain His sovereignty use verses such as Ephesians 1:11c in an attempt to prove their logic. But, when such verses are studied in context, it becomes evident that they confirm otherwise.

who works all things after the counsel of His will, (Ephesians 1:11c)

The word "works," from the root word "energeo," can also be interpreted "energizes." Thus God "energizes all things after the counsel of his will." In Colossians 1:29 we read "And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me." The word "works" in this case is "energeo"; so we can view the verse as follows: "And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily energizes within me." This is a positive energizing that is done by God, not a controlled exploitation or manipulation. Even in Philippians 2:12-13 (and other places as well), Paul teaches that God works in (energizes) those who are His. But does all "energizing" come from God? Not according to 2 Thessalonians 2:9—"that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders." The word "activity" in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 can be viewed as an energizing since it comes from the Greek word "energeia," meaning "operative power." Thus Satan also energizes whomever he can in an attempt to thwart God's ultimate plan for man. Also read Ephesians 2:1-2, realizing that the word "working" is from the Greek word "energeo." Since both God and Satan are in the business of energizing (after all, Satan is not bound in our day, as is the present belief of some), what the believer must do is possess the discernment to choose the proper energy source. Such discernment is obtained through one avenue only, through the word

of God activated by means of the Spirit of God. Therefore, if a believer has no passion for the truth, discernment dismisses itself. Where there is no discernment, the improper energy source, many times, seems the only option.

We next need to consider the words "all things" in the phrase "who works all things after the counsel of His will" (Ephesians 1:11c). The "all things" cannot mean "all events" or "all that transpires"; for Luke 7:30 states, "For the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John." A hoard of additional verses confirm the same. What we learn here is that God's ultimate plan and purpose will stand even though some, on an individual basis, refuse to participate in it. Can we even imagine what God desires as His plan unfolds? He desires that not one individual perish—"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Therefore, if man perishes, he does so as a result of his own choice, confirming the free will of man (read Isaiah 65:12, Matthew 7:21, 12:50, Mark 3:35, John 1:11-12, Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9-10, 1Thessalonians 5:12-18, Hebrews 10:36, and 1Peter 2:15-16 for starters).

This brings us to another interesting topic—the counsel of God's will, which is addressed in Ephesians 1:11c, "who works all things after the counsel of His will." The word "counsel" is huge; for without it the verse would read, "who works all things after His will." But, if God works all things after His will, sin would be God's will and Satan His friend and ally. Thus, Paul inserts the word "counsel" to make sure that he is not communicating such. Consequently, "the counsel of His will" points to the fact that God made a choice, on His own, to grant man the freedom to choose without losing one ounce of His sovereignty.

Did you realize that God's will can be resisted by man without harming God's overall sovereignty? In other words, God may will something for an individual only to see that individual reject His will for his own. Jesus substantiates this in Matthew 23:37 by stating, "How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling" (Matthew 23:37). Obviously, man has a free will and can choose what he desires. However, regardless of the number who choose to disobey, God's ultimate plan cannot be thwarted—that of summing up all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:9-10). Thus, the phrase, "who works all things after the counsel of His will" is dealing with the fulfillment of His ultimate plan even with man possessing the ability to choose. By no stretch of the imagination is Paul communicating that men are preprogrammed beings, unable to do anything outside of what God has preordained.

If you should desire to receive more input, just get in touch. We would be happy to send you the notes and CD's from the upcoming semester. In the meantime, make use of what was addressed here each time you hear someone discussing the subject of "God's sovereignty." Remember, context is everything.

B.A.S.I.C. Training, P.O. Box 13 989 Hardin Wadesboro Rd. Hardin, Ky. 42048 Phone (270) 437-4172 contact@lifeonthehill.org