



Volume 3, Issue 3

West Suffolk Epistle

West Suffolk Baptist Church

“Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant”



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Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America

The Necessity of Expository Preaching

According to the legendary golfer Jack Nicklaus, the best thing he ever did was to discover the “fundamentalist” teacher Jack Grout, who taught him the basics that he has followed ever since. Great preachers, like great golfers, follow basic rules. The more they practice these rules, the better they become.

One such rule, put succinctly in English prose that now sounds dated, but which is as needful now as when it was first penned, comes from the Directory for the Publick Worship of God, written in 1645 by the Westminster Assembly of Divines. When raising a point from the text, the directory says, preachers are to ensure that “*it be a truth contained in or grounded on that text, that the hearers may discern how God teacheth it from thence.*” In other words, preaching must enable those who hear it to understand their Bibles.

In laying down this principle, the divines were following the first book on homiletics to be produced by the English Reformation, William Perkins’ *The Arte of Prophecyng* (1617), which included this instruction: “*The Word of God alone is to be preached, in its perfection and inner consistency. Scripture is the exclusive subject of preaching, the only field in which the preacher is to labour.*”

As incredible as it seems, Perkins found it necessary to underline the fact that preachers are to preach the Bible and the Bible *alone*. As Paul urged Timothy, the preacher’s task is to “*preach the word*” (2 Timothy 4:2).

Earlier, Paul had assured the Corinthians that he and his companions were not “*like so many, peddlers of God’s Word*” (2 Corinthians 2:17). The word Paul employs here, *kapeleuô*, is rendered variously as “peddle,” “corrupt,” or “deal deceitfully”; the New Living Translation renders the verse, “we are not like those hucksters—and there are many of them—who preach just to make money.” This word comes from the world of ancient tavern-keeping. It suggests the practice of “blending, adulterating, and giving bad measure.” Paul was concerned for purity and honesty in handling the Scriptures.

He charged young Timothy again to present himself to God “*as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2:15). The word that is translated in many versions as “to handle” or “to divide” actually means “to cut” (*orthotomeo*). Timothy was to drive a straight path through the Word of God and not deviate to the left or to the right. He was to “preach the word,” meaning not only that he was to preach from the Bible, but that he was to *expound* the particular passage he was preaching on because Scripture, as Paul reminds Timothy, is “breathed out by God” (2 Timothy 3:16).



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The Necessity of Expository Preaching - Continued

Expository preaching is a *necessary* corollary of the doctrine of the God-breathed nature of Scripture. The idea is not so much that God breathed *into* the Scriptures, but that the Scriptures are the product of His breathing out. Independent of what we may feel about the Bible as we read it, Scripture maintains a “breath of God” quality. Thus, the preacher is to make God’s Word known and make it understandable. He is to limit himself to it without adding or subtracting. As Alec Motyer has written: “*An expository ministry is the proper response to a God-breathed Scripture. Central to it all is that concern which the word ‘exposition’ itself enshrines: a display of what is there.*”

Such word-focused ministry, based on divinely given Scripture (as Paul makes plain to the church at Ephesus), fulfills **four** goals all at once: (1) it builds up the church in faith and knowledge; (2) it brings believers to maturity marked by spiritual stability; (3) it produces a people whose lives are full of integrity; and (4) it equips the church for service so that each member is engaged in ministry to others (**Ephesians 4:12-16**). ~ **Dr. Derek W.H. Thomas - Senior minister of First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, S.C., and a Ligonier teaching fellow**

Difference or Contradiction?

We live in a day when consistency of thought is demeaned by many people, and individuals maintain that contradiction is the hallmark of truth, particularly in religious matters. Yet, in practice, human beings seek consistency. Consider liberal Protestantism. Decades ago, most of the mainline denominations abandoned the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture. Originally, these denominations thought they could continue affirming the other core tenets of Christianity. As the years passed, however, it became clear that the rejection of the infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures leads to the denial of Christian orthodoxy on other matters. Most churches that abandoned biblical inerrancy and infallibility eventually rejected the atonement, biblical sexual ethics, and other teachings. Those denominations had to do that for consistency’s sake. To deny that God’s Word is without error is to deny that we have a trustworthy revelation from Him. Thus, it doesn’t ultimately matter what the Bible says about anything.

When it comes to studying the actual consistency of Scripture, it’s not long before we have to deal with allegations that the Bible is full of contradictions. This can be devastating to the Christian faith, because we know that if the Bible has real contradictions, it’s not a consistent account, and if it’s not a consistent account, it can’t be divinely inspired.

The main thing I want to say about this issue is that most alleged contradictions turn out not to be contradictions at all. When I was a seminary student, my professors frequently taught the theories of “higher” critics who refused to affirm the infallibility of Scripture. One of my fellow seminarians, a brilliant fellow, struggled with these theories.



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Difference or Contradiction? - Continued

He had come to seminary believing in Scripture's consistency, but by the time he was a senior, he was one of the casualties of the exposure to this relentless skepticism about the Bible. I remember one discussion in the hallway of the seminary where he said: "R.C., how can you still believe in the inerrancy of Scripture after all we've gone through here? Don't you see that the Bible is full of contradictions?"

At the time, he couldn't list even ten examples of contradictions in the Bible. So I suggested he go home and come up with thirty contradictions that we could look at together. When we met the next day, he brought a list of about twenty. He gave me the first "contradiction," and we looked at the apparently contradictory passages together, and we found that there was variation between the two accounts. But variation and contradiction aren't the same thing. We're familiar with how two eyewitnesses might see the same crime but report it differently. They remember different things about the event because of their different perspectives, but the details of the two accounts don't conflict. In fact, the authorities like to have many witnesses to a crime because comparing the stories gives a fuller view of what happened. The same thing happens when historians research an event and read eyewitness accounts of it.

As my friend and I looked at the first alleged biblical problem, we found it was possible for the two accounts to agree. Then, we looked at the rest of the "contradictions." Some examples were more challenging than others, but what happened was this: in every example, we concluded together that there was no real contradiction.

Read the Bible carefully, and you'll find variations of perspective. Consider the Gospels' presentation of the resurrection. For example, [Matthew 28:1-10](#) and [Mark 16:1-8](#) say there was one angel at the empty tomb, while [Luke 24:1-12](#) mentions the presence of two angels at Jesus' grave. That was one of the "contradictions" my friend brought to me. So I said we should assume for the sake of argument that two angels were present. If so, would it not be possible for one eyewitness to be more concerned about who wasn't there—Jesus—than he was about the number of angels present, especially if one of them did not speak? The disciple could have said, "I went there, and I saw an angel, who said x, y, and z," without mentioning the second angel because the presence of two angels wasn't that significant to the disciple who was writing. I asked my friend, "What word is conspicuously absent from this disciple's report that must be there to have a true contradiction?" The answer was clear: the word *only*. If there were two angels, we know there had to be at least one; thus, since Mark and Matthew don't say there was *only* one angel there, there's no contradiction between them and Luke. Instead, there's variation in perspectives because they're relying on different eyewitness reports of the same event. Such variation is exactly what we should expect from independent accounts.

It took many centuries and many different writers to give us the Bible. It didn't drop from heaven on a parachute. The doctrine of inspiration doesn't mean we won't find difficult-to-reconcile texts in Scripture. The Bible is a divine book—but it's also a very human book, not in that it is filled with human errors but in that it reflects how human beings tell stories. No two people write in exactly the same way, and no two human beings report their perspectives on the same event identically. Two people can accurately represent the same event without covering all the same details. That's the kind of thing we find in Scripture. Difference does not mean contradiction. ~ *Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.*



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You Just Need to Obey

Can you imagine a Christian couple actually praying about living together before marriage? Can you fathom a young woman who professes Christ even bothering to pray about whether she should marry an unbeliever? Can you grasp a Christian businessman having to pray about whether he should tell the truth in a transaction? When the Word of God is so clear, praying to discern God's will becomes a convenient excuse—or even a prolonged filibuster—to avoid doing what Scripture commands.

Many who profess Christ today emphasize a wrong view of grace that makes it a free pass to do whatever they please. Tragically, they have convinced themselves that the Christian life can be lived without any binding obligation to the moral law of God. In this hyper-grace distortion, the need for obedience has been neutered. The commandments of God are no longer in the driver's seat of Christian living, but have been relegated to the backseat, if not the trunk—like a spare tire—to be used only in case of an emergency. With such a spirit of antinomianism, what needs to be reinforced again is the necessity of obedience.

For all true followers of Christ, obedience is never peripheral. At the heart of what it means to be a disciple of our Lord is living in loving devotion to God. But if such love is real, the acid test is obedience. Jesus maintained, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" ([John 14:15](#)). Genuine love for Christ will always manifest itself in obedience.

This does not mean that a Christian can ascend to sinless perfection. This will never be realized this side of glory. Neither does it imply that a believer will never disobey God again. Isolated acts of disobedience will still occur. But the new birth does give a new heart that desires to obey the Word. In regeneration, God says:

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. ([Ezekiel 36:26–27](#))

In this heart transplant, God causes the believer to pursue Spirit-energized obedience. The Apostle John agrees when he writes, "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments" ([1 John 2:3](#)). In the new birth, the elect are granted saving faith, and they immediately begin to walk in "the obedience of faith" ([Romans 1:5](#)). There is no time lapse between the time of conversion and when one begins to obey Christ. The exercise of saving faith is the first step of a life of obedience. When Jesus preached, "Repent and believe in the gospel" ([Mark 1:14–15](#)), this was issued as an urgent imperative. The gospel is more than an offer to be considered—it is a word from God to be obeyed. John writes, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life" ([John 3:36](#)). In this verse, believing in Christ and obeying Him are used synonymously. Simply put, true faith is obedient faith. Our obedience of faith is not the grounds upon which God declares us righteous, but it reveals our faith to be genuine.



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You Just Need to Obey - Continued

At the moment of conversion, we transfer our allegiance from our old master, sin, to a new Master, Jesus Christ. Paul explains, “Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?” (**Romans 6:16**). Here, the Apostle quotes a general axiom in life, namely, that slaves live in obedience to their ruling master. In conversion, there is an exchange of masters, a relinquishing of our old bondage to sin for a new loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul further stresses this truth: “You who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, became slaves of righteousness” (**Romans 6:17–18**). Everyone is a slave, either of sin or of righteousness. Before conversion, we were slaves of sin and lived in obedience to sin. But in conversion, we became slaves of Christ and live in obedience to Him.

Throughout one’s Christian life, John claims that genuine believers will continue to “keep his commandments.” “Keep” is in the present tense, indicating an ongoing obedience throughout the entirety of a believer’s life. Here is the perseverance of the saints. All who are born again will pursue obedience to the end. “Commandments” is plural, indicating obedience to the full spectrum of the divine requirements. Following Christ does not allow for selective obedience. Rather, we must obey all the commandments of God, not merely the convenient ones.

When John says believers “keep” the commandments, this pictures a guard or watchman watching over a priceless treasure. In like manner, the one who knows God will keep a sharp watch over all that His Word requires. “And his commandments are not burdensome” (**1 John 5:3**), but they are a blessing (**Psalms 1:1**). Every step of heart-prompted obedience leads to experiencing abundant life in Christ. Conversely, every step of disobedience takes us away from the joy of divine goodness.

Far from being optional, grace-fueled obedience is absolutely necessary for Christlikeness. Is there any need to pray about whether or not to obey God’s Word? You just need to obey. ~ **Dr. Steven J. Lawson - President and founder of OnePassion Ministries**

The Ligonier Statement on Christology

For the glory of Christ and the edification of His people, the Ligonier Statement on Christology seeks to encapsulate the historic, orthodox, biblical Christology of the Christian church in a form that is simple to confess, useful to help teach the church’s enduring faith, and able to serve as a common confession around which believers from different churches can rally for mission together. This statement is not a replacement for the church’s historic creeds and confessions but a supplement that articulates their collective teaching on who Christ is and what He has done.



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The Ligonier Statement on Christology - Continued

Dr. R.C. Sproul and Ligonier Ministries announce the release of *The Word Made Flesh: The Ligonier Statement on Christology*. A few years ago, an interviewer asked Dr. Sproul what he thought was the biggest battle that the church of today and of the next generation faces. Without blinking, he answered that it is Christology, the doctrine of the person and work of Christ.

“In our day, the most critical issue that the church faces is the issue over who Jesus is,” said the founder and chairman of Ligonier. “The residue of the full measured attack of the last two centuries on the person and work of Christ carries on today and is deeply rooted and entrenched even in the church. Now, like never before, it’s incumbent upon orthodox Christians to stand up and declare clearly what the church believes about Jesus.”

Preface: The Ligonier Statement on Christology

Who is Jesus? Nearly every adult person has formed some opinion of Jesus. These opinions may be superficial, uninformed, or downright heretical. The truth about Jesus, not mere opinion, matters . . . and it matters eternally.

Those who bear the name Christian profess to follow Christ as His disciples. They hold a Christology—a doctrine of Christ—that reflects their view of Christ. This Christology may be articulated implicitly or explicitly. It may represent the depth of biblical revelation and historic Christian reflection on Scripture, or it may be novel and disconnected from God’s Word. But no professing Christian lacks a Christology.

Since following Christ is central to Christianity, the church has labored for centuries to proclaim the Christ of history and Scripture, not the Christ of our imaginations. In such historic statements of faith such as the Nicene Creed, the Definition of Chalcedon, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Westminster Confession, Christians have articulated the biblical teaching on Christ.

Today these statements are often neglected and misunderstood, resulting in widespread confusion regarding the person and work of Christ. For the glory of Christ and the edification of His people, the Ligonier Statement on Christology seeks to encapsulate the historic, orthodox, biblical Christology of the Christian church in a form that is simple to confess, useful to help teach the church’s enduring faith, and able to serve as a common confession around which believers from different churches can rally for mission together. This statement is not a replacement for the church’s historic creeds and confessions but a supplement that articulates their collective teaching on who Christ is and what He has done. May Christ use it for His kingdom.

In the name of God’s Son incarnate, our Prophet, Priest, and King,

You can read the full statement at <http://christologystatement.com/>

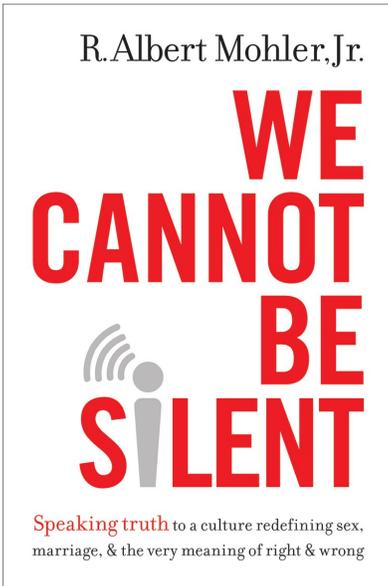


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Book Reviews

We Cannot be Silent Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.



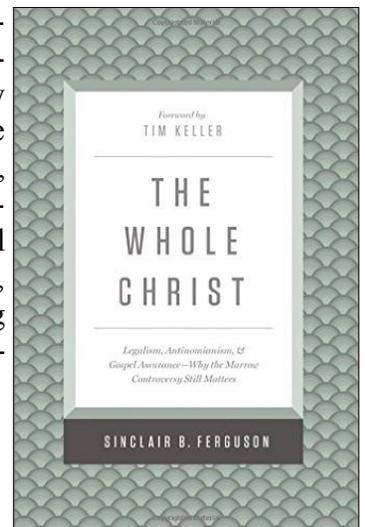
Twenty years ago, not one nation on earth had legal same-sex marriage. Now, access to same-sex marriage is increasingly seen as a basic human right. In a matter of less than a generation, western cultures have experienced a moral revolution.

Dr. R. Albert Mohler examines how this transformation occurred, revealing the underlying cultural shifts behind this revolution: the acceptance of divorce culture, liberation of sex from reproduction, the prevalence of heterosexual cohabitation, the normalization of homosexuality, and the rise of the transgender movement. He then offers a deep look at how the Bible and Christian moral tradition provide a comprehensive understanding upon which Christians can build their personal lives, their marriages, church ministry, and cultural engagement.

Dr. Mohler helps Christians in their understanding of the underlying issues of this significant cultural shift and how to face the challenge of believing faithfully, living faithfully, and engaging the culture faithfully in light of this massive change.

The Whole Christ Dr. Sinclair B. Ferguson

Since the days of the early church, Christians have struggled to understand the relationship between two seemingly contradictory concepts in the Bible: law and gospel. If, as the apostle Paul says, the law cannot save, what can it do? Is it merely an ancient relic from Old Testament Israel to be discarded? Or is it still valuable for Christians today? Helping modern Christians think through this complex issue, seasoned pastor and theologian Dr. Sinclair Ferguson carefully leads readers to rediscover an eighteenth-century debate that sheds light on this present-day doctrinal conundrum: the Marrow Controversy. After sketching the history of the debate, Ferguson moves on to discuss the theology itself, acting as a wise guide for walking the path between legalism (overemphasis on the law) on the one side and antinomianism (wholesale rejection of the law) on the other.





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Salvation: A Sovereign Work of God

God has always been selective. The blessing came through Isaac. Then the blessing came through Jacob. “Jacob I loved, Esau I hated.” (Romans 9:13) You say, “Wow, you mean God is that discriminating?” Verse 14 then says (and this is what the responder would say) “What shall we say then? Is this unjust? There is no injustice with God is there?” *Mē genoito*—the strongest negative in the Greek language—no, no, no, no. This isn’t out of character for God to be selective. God never intended every Jew to be in the kingdom. For He says to Moses, God says, “I’ll have mercy on whom I’ll have mercy. I’ll have compassion on whom I’ll have compassion.” And it doesn’t depend on “the man who wills or the man who runs but on God who has mercy” (Romans 9:15-16).

And then He goes to Pharaoh, “‘For this very purpose I raised you up to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.’ So then He has mercy on whom He desires and He hardens whom He desires.” Wow. “You will say to me then, ‘Why does he still find fault?’” How can God then find fault with us if He’s the one who makes the decision? For who can resist His will? And the next verse says, shut ... up. That’s what it says in the vernacular. “On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, ‘Why did you make me like this,’ will it?” Pots don’t talk back. The potter has the right over the clay. “What if God willing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?” (v. 22).

Do you understand that God has a right to put His wrath and His judgment and His justice and His fury on display to His own glory as much as He has a right to put His mercy and His grace on display to His own glory? Do you understand that God gets as much glory out of His wrath as He gets out of His grace? Paul understands that. That this is a sovereign work, and that God is not unjust. Psalm 119 says, “Your righteousness is an ever-lasting righteousness.” Psalm 7:9, “You are the righteous one.” God will do what God will do. Paul understands that this work of salvation is a sovereign work done by God. But then come to verse 30. “What shall we say then? Gentiles, who didn’t pursue righteousness, attained righteousness.”

Isn’t that something? He’s talking about the church, the gentile church. They were not even pursuing it, but they received it. Even the righteousness which is by what?—faith. “But Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness,” that is righteousness by law, “did not arrive at that law.” Why? Because they didn’t pursue it by faith. They didn’t pursue it by faith because the one in whom you must place your faith was to them a stumbling stone and a rock of offense.

So he says it’s all the sovereignty of God. He hardens whom He hardens, He has mercy on whom He decides to have mercy. He loves who He loves, He hates who He hates. But Israel didn’t receive the imputed righteousness of God because they sought it by law and not by faith in Christ. They’re fully responsible for pursuing righteousness in a false way, and denying righteousness in the only way that it can ever come to the sinner, through faith in Christ. ~ *Dr. John MacArthur*



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The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689

Civil Government - Chapter 24

1. God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, has ordained civil authorities to be under him and over the people, for his own glory and the public good. For this purpose he has armed them with the authority to use force, to defend and encourage those who do good, and to punish evil doers.
2. It is lawful for Christians to accept and carry out the duties of public office when called upon to so. In the performance of such office they are particularly responsible for maintaining justice and peace in accordance with the wholesome laws of the nation. For that purpose they may (in terms of the New Testament) lawfully engage in war if it is just and necessary.
3. As civil authorities are established by God for the purposes given, we ought to be subject to all their lawful commands for the Lord's sake, not merely to avoid punishment, but for conscience' sake. We ought also to make supplications and prayers for rulers and all who are in authority, that under them we may live a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty.

Spring Bible Conference

March 4 - 6, 2016



This passed week we had the honor and privilege of hosting our spring Bible conference at West Suffolk Baptist Church of which our main theme was ***“Biblical Faith ...in a Pagan World”***. Our guest speaker was Pastor Brian Russell who was born in South Africa and who studied at the University of South Africa and the Baptist Theological College, Johannesburg, before entering the pastoral ministry in 1962. Our first session began on Friday evening with a lasagna dinner which also included salads and desserts. Afterwards Pastor Russell preached on Daniel 1:1 - 21 which was entitled *‘Biblical Faith cannot compromise with the world’*. On Saturday morning Pastor Russell preached on Daniel 3:1 - 30 *‘Biblical Faith must worship*

God alone’. Afterwards we had lunch which included subs, salads and of course desserts. Finally on Sunday morning Pastor Russell preached on Daniel 6:1 - 28 *‘Biblical Faith arouses the hostility of the World’*. After the message we celebrated the Lord's Table. At the conclusion of the services we all had a meal together enjoying great Christian fellowship together capping off a glorious conference. We were all encouraged and edified about our duty and responsibility to act in a world which is hostile toward the Gospel.



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Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America

Birthday and Anniversary Corner - March 2016

Birthdays

Rose Myers - March 15
Les Twilley - March 19
James Dillard - March 22
Lydia Hurst - March 22
Jonathan Fox - March 26
Robyn Hall - March 28
Tom Skora - March 29

Anniversaries

Mitch and Beth Buchta - March 12

Truth

Withhold no part of the precious truth, but speak what you know and declare what you have seen. Do not allow the toil or darkness or possible unbelief of your friends to dissuade you. Let us rise and march to the place of duty, and there declare what great things God has shown to our soul. ~ **Dr. Alistair Begg**

For not only does sound reason direct us to refuse the guidance of those who do or teach anything wrong, but it is by all means vital for the lover of truth, regardless of the threat of death, to choose to do and say what is right even before saving his own life. ~ **A.W. Tozer**

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.