



West Suffolk Epistle



Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America

West Suffolk Baptist Church

“Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant”

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Comfort for Christian Parents of Unconverted Children

All Christian parents wish that God would show us something to do to secure our child’s salvation, and then “we’ll do it with all our might” because we love our child so much. Yet, God has not made salvation the effect of somebody else’s faith; our son or daughter must come to Christ on his or her own. John shows us that all Christians are born into God’s family “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, [that is, somebody else's will] but of God.” (John 1:13)

Although salvation is the work of God and not something that we can do for our child, there is hope. Consider the following:

1. A true burden in prayer for your child is a gift from God. A persistent burden may indicate that God intends to give your child eternal life because authentic prayer always begins with God. Though we cannot be absolutely certain that we know all that God is doing, we should be optimistic if the burden continues.
2. The miracle of the new birth is no less possible for God if our child is attentive to Him or running away from Him. Our child is like all other children when it comes to God’s grace. He is dead spiritually whether he is in church or not, whether he listened well to the truths we tried to teach him or did not, whether he has some interest in God now or has none at all. He may be converted in the pig pen or the pew and we do not know in this case what is preferred by God.
3. God does hear our prayers. Though God has taught us that He chooses all who are His before the foundation of the world, He also taught us that we should pray, and not only pray, but expect the answer to our prayers. It is true that God is sovereign and it is just as true that He answers prayer. In fact, He could not answer prayer if He were not in control of all things.
4. We may have hope because of God’s election of those who will come to Him. Every child is on his way to hell unless God stops him. God’s election is our friend. We would have no hope for our child’s salvation without it, because no child would turn to Christ if left in his or her depravity (Romans 3:9-11). But given God’s election of people for Himself, we can be encouraged.
5. Your child has some clear knowledge of what it means to be a true Christian. The Spirit certainly may bring this to bear at any time if this is His chosen method. Though it is no less a miracle for a knowledgeable child to be converted than a child with little knowledge; God always uses the gospel seed in every conversion.
6. Your own disobedience in the past will not ultimately keep your child from becoming a believer. It is pointless to berate yourself for any wrong behavior on your part as if it were the reason your child is without Christ. This doesn’t mean that we as parents should not repent and do better, and even admit wrong to our children. But the reason your child is without Christ is ultimately related to his or her own sin. Every Christian parent is inconsistent in some way and is in a process of sanctification that leaves the parent short of perfection. This has never been a barrier to God if He desires to save your child. Illustrations abound of children who come from far less godly families who are nonetheless converted to Christ. In fact, this may have been the case in your own experience.



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Comfort for Christian Parents of Unconverted Children

6. Your own disobedience in the past will not ultimately keep your child from becoming a believer. It is pointless to berate yourself for any wrong behavior on your part as if it were the reason your child is without Christ. This doesn't mean that we as parents should not repent and do better, and even admit wrong to our children. But the reason your child is without Christ is ultimately related to his or her own sin. Every Christian parent is inconsistent in some way and is in a process of sanctification that leaves the parent short of perfection. This has never been a barrier to God if He desires to save your child. Illustrations abound of children who come from far less godly families who are nonetheless converted to Christ. In fact, this may have been the case in your own experience.

7. Some children may need the experience of being away from parental care in order to face up to their own need for Christ. The sense of need for many may be discovered only in the context of difficulties. We should not be surprised if it takes some solo flying before a child learns that he or she really needs another as his pilot.

8. Remember that there are lots of people who have come to appreciate their history prior to coming to Christ. I'm not saying that these people would not have wanted conversion earlier, but that the pain of their pre-conversion history has left them with compassion, understanding, knowledge, testimony, and a burden that they would perhaps not have had any other way. They've seen God's wisdom in the timing of their conversion. This may well be so with your child. Paul said that there was a reason he was chosen to be converted even though he was a murderer, blasphemer and violent aggressor—so that people will see and have hope that God can save anyone. God has a unique journey for each child.

9. You cannot save your child yourself no matter how hard you try. You are in a position of trust alone. This is good because it is the only way to please God (Heb. 11:6). Your rest in God, while simultaneously praying to the God who answers prayer, will be an encouragement to others in the same situation. It will also help you respond to your child more positively, and will make your life far more joyful than your anxiety ever could.

10. Finally, remember that God has a purpose in all He does. We will one day rejoice that God has done a perfect job of ruling His universe. When we acknowledge this and put God even above our children, we will actually demonstrate to our child the way a Christian is to live. ~ *Jim Elliff - Christian Communicators World wide, Inc - ccwtoday.org.*

Grieving Over the Sins of Others

Grief over the sins of others is one leading evidence of true grace. The person who is really converted, will always regard the unconverted with pity and concern. This was the mind of David —“I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved” (Psalm 119:158). This was the mind of the godly in the days of Ezekiel —“They sighed and cried for the abominations done in the land.” (Ezekiel 9:4). This was the mind of Lot —“He vexed his righteous soul with the unlawful deeds” of those around him (2 Peter 2:8). This was the mind of Paul —“I have great heaviness and continual sorrow for my brethren” (Romans 9:2). In all these cases we see something of the mind of Christ. As the great Head feels, so feel the members. They all grieve when they see sin. ~ *J.C. Ryle*

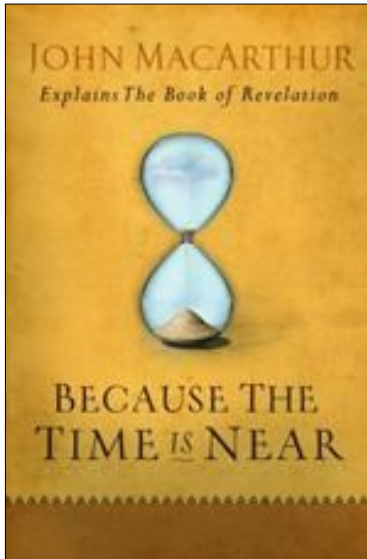


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Book Reviews

Because the Time is Near *By Dr. John MacArthur*



"The end of the world is coming." From roadside signs to science fiction films, this slogan underscores our society's nervous fascination with the future. Whether it's a giant asteroid, a worldwide plague, or some other global catastrophe, the end of the world is a terrifying prospect - at least for those who have no idea what it will be like.

For Christians, however, the end of the world should be anything but dreadful. In fact, it should be something we actually look forward to. Why? Because God has told us how the world will end. And He has assured us that the end of this age will mark the beginning of a new, glorious one in which we will serve and worship Him in sinless perfection. Our eternal hope, as believers, is intimately tied to the end of this world.

All of this is laid out in the book of Revelation. Not only is Revelation the inspired Word of God, it is also the only New Testament book that includes a promised spiritual blessing for those who study and apply its message. As such, it is an essential part of every Christian's devotional life. Those who ignore Revelation deprive themselves of a rich treasure of divine truth, and the promised blessings that come from understanding that truth. Join John MacArthur as he explains the book of Revelation in a way that is both doctrinally

precise and intensely practical.

Safe in the Arms of God *By Dr. John MacArthur*

Hopeful Words for Broken-Hearted Parents

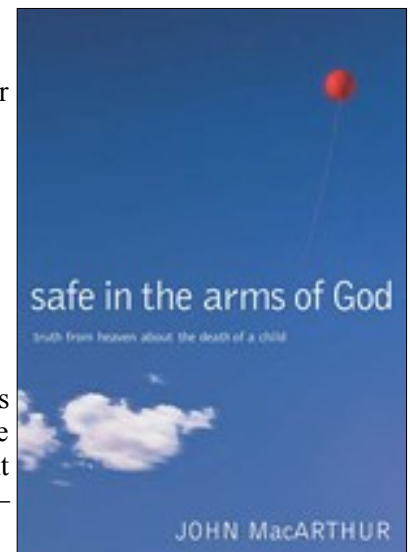
If you have ever faced the death of a child, or you have ever had to comfort a mom or dad whose little one died, you need to be able to answer some crucial questions:

Where do babies go when they die?

How can I know my baby is in heaven?

Why did my child have to die?

In his book *Safe in the Arms of God*, John MacArthur offers biblical comfort to parents grieving the death of an infant, small child, or mentally disabled adult child incapable of exercising faith in the Lord Jesus. The book also features real-life encouragement from Christian couples who have lost children and have found true peace—even joy—through faith in Christ.





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The Culture of Death Bares its Teeth: Planned Parenthood Leader Says Life Begins at Delivery

Cecile Richards is no stranger to controversy. As the president of Planned Parenthood she leads one of the central institutions of the Culture of Death — an organization that was born in the dark vision of Margaret Sanger and now exists as the nation’s most visible promoter and provider of abortion. Cecile Richards has been an ardent defender of a woman’s “right” to abort her baby at any time for any reason. She also believes that women should be able to abort their babies for free, with taxpayers footing the bill.

Her support of abortion for any reason and for any stage of fetal development — including the most barbarous partial-birth abortions — was explained, perhaps accidentally, in an interview she recently gave to Jorge Ramos of Fusion TV. When Ramos asked Richards when life begins, she said: “It’s not something I really feel like is really part of this conversation ... every woman needs to make their own decision.”

Her non-answer to one of the most fundamental questions of human dignity was shocking enough, but there was more to come. As it turns out, Richards does have a belief about when life begins.

Ramos was apparently surprised by her evasion of the question and asked, “Why would it be controversial for you to say when you think life starts?”

Richards offered another non-answer: “I don’t know that it’s controversial. I don’t know that it’s really relevant to the conversation.”

Seriously? When the conversation is about abortion?

Then she dropped the bombshell:

“For me, I’m the mother of three children. For me, life began when I delivered them. They’ve been probably the most important thing in my life ever since. But that was my own personal decision.”

So life begins at delivery. Until then, no life, no dignity, no sanctity at all. This defies any moral sense, but it also defies modern biology. Cecile Richards did not try to argue the now infamous trimester argument of *Roe v. Wade* or a point of viability or any other argument about fetal development. As her comment makes clear, in her worldview the fetus doesn’t matter at all.

She identified her three children as “probably the most important thing in my life” since their delivery. Were they nothing to her in her womb? Each of those three precious children was precious in the womb — at every point of development.

Candid admissions of a worldview like this one are rare, but Cecile Richards’ statement perfectly explains her advocacy of abortion at any time for any reason. In her interview the Culture of Death bares its teeth. ~ **Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. - President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary**



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How Should a Pastor Respond When He is Praised for a Good Sermon?

The great temptation when complimented about a sermon is to think the fruit of our labors ultimately is about us and because of us. When a kind word is extended to us about our sermon, make sure God is credited and praised. Not superficially, but sincerely. We can give God glory with our lips in response, but inside be eaten up with pride.

“Great job...good sermon...that really spoke to me.” The list of phrases a pastor may hear as church members exit the church goes on. Inevitably, whether the sermon was good or not, these quick comments will be spoken to us with varying levels of sincerity and it is important that we know how to respond in a God-honoring way. *Here are 4 suggestions:*

1) Say Thank You

It is sad when a pastor tries to wear a false humility to hide either his insecurities or inability to know how to receive a kind word. It usually shows up in a pastor’s response after a kind, encouraging comment in this way, “Uh...no it wasn’t a good sermon. I missed it here, stumbled over my words here...” Just stop it and say “thank you for your kind words.”

2) Be grateful for the encouragement

Regardless the comment, if it was meant to encourage you, thank them for their encouraging words. Be grateful that however small, simple, or even shallow the comment, someone took the time to share their thoughts with you. Be grateful and receive it that way.

3) Be Humble that the Lord would dare use you

What should humble us more than a hearer taking time to encourage us about our sermon, is the fact that God would choose to use broken vessels like us week after week, Sunday after Sunday to feed God’s people with God’s word. That should amaze us with every kind word extended to us. When it ceases to amaze us, then we should start worrying.

4) Give God all the Glory

The great temptation when complimented about a sermon is to think the fruit of our labors ultimately is about us and because of us. When a kind word is extended to us about our sermon, make sure God is credited and praised. Not superficially, but sincerely. We can give God glory with our lips in response, but inside be eaten up with pride.

Pastors, receive the kind words offered to you. Be encouraged by it. It will help you through the discouragement that often comes on Monday. And stay humble for in 6 days you get to do it all over again. ~ **Brian Croft - Senior Pastor/Auburndale Baptist Church - Louisville, Kentucky**



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The Severity of Hell

Charles Spurgeon once advised fellow-preachers, “Shun all views of future punishment that would make it appear less terrible.” Yet another timely word from Spurgeon—efforts to extinguish the flames of hell abound in our day, just as they did in his.

As you listen to popular views about hell, you can test what you hear with a few biblically-discerning questions:

- Does this view of hell diminish the threat of God’s judgment?
- Does this teaching soften the urgency of repentance?
- Is this offering the sinner any hope of salvation beyond this life?

Modern views of hell won’t survive the test of biblical fidelity. They’ll allow the sinner to feel more comfortable and complacent by defanging God, making Him appear less severe.

Challenges to the doctrine of hell start out by questioning what the Bible clearly says, but they don’t end there. Wayne Grudem, recognizing the trend to make hell appear more bearable, noticed a tragic pattern:

The doctrine of eternal conscious punishment...tends to be one of the first doctrines given up by people who are moving away from a commitment to the Bible as absolutely truthful [...]. Among liberal theologians who do not accept the absolute truthfulness of the Bible, there is probably no one today who believes in the doctrine of eternal conscious punishment. (Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology)

Two of the more prominent campaigns against hell are attacks against its eternality and severity. Let’s take a look at hell’s severity.

Will hell really be that bad?

Whenever Jesus described hell, He was never flippant or dismissive. He used vivid, terrifying terms to describe the final destination of sinners, shocking and scaring His audiences with frighteningly graphic metaphors. Hell is a place so bad that you should be willing to cut off sensitive, irreplaceable parts of your body to avoid it (Matthew 5:29-30); even martyrdom would be worth avoiding the torment of hell (Matthew 10:28). He always presented hell as a horrific place of intolerable suffering.

His descriptions are consistent with other biblical writers. Daniel referred to hell as a place of shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2). Paul called it a place of endless destruction and punishment (2 Thessalonians 1:5-10). Jude called hell a place of eternal fire and darkness (Jude 7). The Apostle John described hell as a place where sinners suffer everlasting torment, with no rest day or night (Revelation 14:9-11).



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The Severity of Hell - Continued

Taken together, all those descriptions of hell communicate pain, fear, loss, anger, separation, and hopelessness. It's utter agony, eternal torment.

Agony and Torment

The New Testament describes hell as a place of unimaginable torment. Biblical writers help us picture scenes of unspeakable horror, and most of the time they're merely quoting what Jesus said about hell:

- Weeping and gnashing of teeth - Matthew 8:12
- Spiritual and bodily destruction - Matthew 10:28
- Fiery Furnaces - Matthew 13:42, 50
- Outer Darkness - Matthew 22:13
- Unquenchable Fires - Mark 9:48-49
- Endless Torments - Luke 16:23-24

John Calvin, commenting on those descriptions, wrote, "By such expressions, the Holy Spirit certainly intended to confound all our senses with dread." Calvin understood the Bible's appeal to our senses. When you read about hell in Scripture, you can almost hear the agonizing wails, smell the smoke and burning sulfur, see the flames from the lake of fire, and feel the seething anger of the wicked as they gnash their teeth at the Righteous Judge.

Jesus used pictures and metaphors to help us understand the horror of hell. Darkness represents loneliness, insecurity, the sense of being lost and disoriented; fire represents the excruciating pain of burning; and a lake of fire represents the sense of drowning, suffocating, taking the burning sulfur internally. These vivid pictures of hell's environment should provoke a reasonable sense of fear in a normal, thinking person. No one can come away with the idea that hell is a tolerable place to spend eternity.

Abandonment

While it's true that hell is a place of untold physical pain and suffering (fire, scorching, being cut to pieces), I think we often overlook the mental agony of being completely forsaken—abandoned for all eternity. After all, the most chilling cry from our Lord as He suffered God's wrath on the cross stemmed not from physical pain, but from being forsaken by the Father. Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew. 27:46).

John MacArthur explained the significance of God forsaking the Son in relation to hell: "This is a reminder to all sinners that while hell is the full fury of God's personal punishment presence, He will never be there to comfort. He will never be there to show sympathy. He will never bring relief. [...] it is both the punishment of God and the absence of comfort. [...] That's hell—punishment without relief ("The King Crucified: Consummation at Calvary"). As the Puritan Thomas Vincent put it, "Not only will the unbeliever be in hell, but hell will be in him too."



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The Severity of Hell - Continued

Imprisonment

The New Testament frequently presents hell as a prison—a place of eternal confinement (Matthew 22:13; Jude 13; 2 Peter 2:9). It's impossible to understand first-century prison conditions by looking at American prisons today where accommodations include cable television, three square meals, educational opportunities, outdoor exercise, and toilet/shower facilities. In many of the world's jails throughout history, jailors didn't just treat prisoners like criminals, but rather as sub-humans, as animals.

But even the worst of earthly prison conditions serve as weak analogies to the eternal dungeon of God's hell. God will offer nothing to comfort or relieve his agony—ever. In hell, sinners will forever be hopeless, helpless, and powerless. God casts them into hell for one reason—punishment (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

Look at the Cross

If you want an inside glimpse of the agonies of hell, look at the Savior in Gethsemane as He anticipated the cross. See the bloody drops of sweat falling from his body as He faced the reality of absorbing His Father's eternal wrath. Hear His agonizing screams from the cross as His Father—for the first and last time—abandoned His sin-bearing Son. Feel His loneliness as He faced those agonies alone.

Hell is a place where God's full wrath and fury will be poured out eternally on sinners. Possessing in Himself the essence and omniscience of deity, Christ knew what He spoke of. And as our sin-bearing substitute, He anticipated the torments of hell and finally experienced the full outpouring of divine wrath for all those who believe.

Scripture is abundantly clear about the doctrine of hell. Nothing good can come from advocating a view of hell that makes it out to be anything less than a hopeless, agonizing, eternal separation from the good and gracious presence of God. If you reject, diminish, or neglect the doctrine of hell, you undermine the gravity of our sin in contrast to the holiness of God. But armed with accurate teaching on hell, you help the sinner understand why he must flee from the wrath of God to the mercy of Jesus Christ. ~ *Grace to You - Dr. John MacArthur*

Pockets with Holes

The last phrase [Boice is referring to Haggai 1:6] is a classic description of inflation, the scourge of the latter third of our century: 'You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.' We save, but our savings dribble away, eaten up by taxes and the progressive devaluation of our currencies through government over-spending."

"What is the solution? It is not a few more government programs. It is not prayer in Congress or the schools. It is not a crusade or a demonstration or a campaign to mail letters to our senators. It is obedience! It is getting on with what God has given us to do." ~ *James Boice, The Minor Prophets (1986)*



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The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 Of Divine Providence - Chapter 5

1. God the good Creator of all things, in His infinite power and wisdom does uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according unto His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will; to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.
2. Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly; so that there is not anything befalls any by chance, or without His providence; yet by the same providence He ordered them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.
3. God, in his ordinary providence makes use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them at His pleasure.
4. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in His providence, that His determinate counsel extends itself even to the first fall, and all other sinful actions both of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, which also He most wisely and powerfully binds, and otherwise orders and governs, in a manifold dispensation to His most holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness of their acts proceeds only from the creatures, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.
5. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God does often times leave for a season His own children to manifold temptations and the corruptions of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon Himself; and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for other just and holy ends. So that whatsoever befalls any of His elect is by His appointment, for His glory, and their good.
6. As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as the righteous judge, for former sin does blind and harden; from them He not only withholds His grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understanding, and wrought upon their hearts; but sometimes also withdraws the gifts which they had, and exposes them to such objects as their corruption makes occasion of sin; and withal, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, under those means which God uses for the softening of others.
7. As the providence of God does in general reach to all creatures, so after a more special manner it takes care of His church, and disposes of all things to the good thereof.



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Birthday and Anniversary Corner - August 2014

Ben Scofield - 8/8
Marlin Halsey - 8/27
Phyllis Carter - 8/27

Mike and Cheryl Prince - 8/9

How Trials Separate the True and False

A person’s religion may look well for a season. An ignorant eye may detect no difference between the possessor of such a religion, and a true Christian. Both may worship in the same Church. Both may use the same ordinances. Both may profess the same faith. The outward appearance of the house built on the rock, and the house without any solid foundation, may be much the same. But the day of trial and affliction is the test which the religion of the mere outward professor cannot stand. When storm and tempest beat on the house which has no foundation, the walls which looked well in sunshine and fair weather, are sure to come to the ground. The Christianity which consists of merely hearing religion taught, without doing anything, is a building which must finally fall. Great indeed will be the ruin! There is no loss like the loss of a soul. ~ *J.C. Ryle*

When the only Place to Look is Up

Suffering isn’t designed by God to destroy our faith but to intensify it. That will never happen, however, if we fail to look beyond the pain to the purpose of our loving heavenly Father. His design is to knock out from underneath us every false prop so that we might rely wholly on Him. His aim is to create in us such desperation that we have nowhere else to look but to His promises and abiding presence.” ~ *Sam Storms, To the One Who Conquers: 50 Daily Meditations on the Seven Letters of Revelation 2-3*

Disclaimer

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



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