

P.O. Box 13

989 Hardin Wadesboro Rd.

Hardin, Ky. 42048

Phone (270) 437-4172

Email—contact@lifeonthehill.org *To receive this publication via email only, just email us your address. Thanks*

It is amazing the number of times I have walked through our home in the past six months and said, “If I didn’t know what I know, I don’t know.” I have greatly appreciated the truth in times past, but never to the degree that I appreciate it today. It is the absolute bedrock of my soul, my most precious possession. It, for sure, is what keeps me from (1) a padded cell or (2) a life of total denial or (3) an existence classified as hopelessness. Truth is a Person (John 14:6), Jesus Christ, who came to earth to demonstrate what truth means to the Godhead as well as what it should mean to man. A wealth of God’s truth is recorded in what we call the Bible, a collection of Scriptures that reveal His heart. Therefore, His infallible book, the Bible, is filled with absolutes that never, in any circumstance, violate the law of non-contradiction. And why must this be the case? God is an illusion, a fantasy, a figment of man’s imagination, if in any way He violates His infallible word. This is why He has been so amazingly intriguing to me. I have never seen my God bend His truth, compromise His truth, nor abandon His truth. He has never been late, wrong, mistaken, forgetful, or unfair. He is more dear to me today than ever before. Why? He is all I have. Through knowing Him, however, I have been blessed with a wonderful family and a wealth of godly friends—and so very much more. Therefore, I am more thankful than ever that, some thirty-six years ago, I put all of my eggs in His basket and never looked back. He is either who He says He is or I have totally wasted my life. I am of all people most to be pitied if Jesus is not the Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And yes, through all the disappointments, trials, adversity, and persecutions, He has always been more than enough. In fact, the good has so outweighed the bad that it seems as though the bad never happened. It is for this reason that I love Him more today than at any time in the past. In fact, I am more convinced that He is who He says He is than I am convinced of anything in life. To Him be the glory.

With this said, I would like to pose a question. Do you frequently hear statements such as “they say that such and such is true”? I used to be naive enough to believe that “they,” whoever “they” were, knew more about the subject than anyone else. Not any more. Not after hearing the plethora of “ideas” that exist within Christendom relating to any particular theological issue. Such exists due to the decision (in many circles) to emphasize unity at the expense of doctrine, a decision that is leaving a host of listeners vulnerable to non-truths. It is for this reason that Ezekiel 3:17 has become especially meaningful to me:

“Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me. (Ezekiel 3:17)

The longer I teach God’s word, the more I realize that a teacher is a “watchman.” A watchman warns those whom he has opportunity to instruct by feeding them untainted truth—factual, contextual, honest, and uncompromised expressions that line up with all the verses in God’s word rather than just a few (Acts 20:27). Therefore, the context of Ezekiel 3:17 is intriguing for several reasons. First off, Ezekiel, along with many of the inhabitants of Judah, had been exiled to Babylon. Second, most of the exiled Jews expected to be relieved of their captivity in the short term. Why? False prophets were prophesying that the return to their homeland was imminent (Jeremiah 29:4-10). Jeremiah, on the other hand, had prophesied that the duration of the captivity would be seventy years (Jeremiah 25:11). It was not until Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon burned Jerusalem and King Solomon’s temple to the ground (subsequent to Judah’s arrival in Babylon) that the exiles realized their captivity would be anything but short lived. This explains why Ezekiel was instructed to encourage the Jews to walk in God’s ways, even though in a foreign land. It is intriguing that, although the Jews enjoyed listening to Ezekiel’s words, they were far from desiring to obey them (Ezekiel 33:30-33).

Ezekiel could have related well to our day, especially considering the number of people who never question what they are being taught concerning who God is. It seems that the latest craze is to equate truth with a passionate voice and (or) a scholarly intellect. When will we ever learn that passion and scholarship, void of “revealed” truth, are one hundred percent error—no matter who has written or stated it. Few these days are willing to “search the Scriptures” to know if what they are hearing is God’s words or the words of mere man. This has served to handicap many within Christ’s body to where they can no longer discern between truth and error, fact and fiction, grace and law, freedom and bondage, life and religion, spiritual rest and self-generated activity, along with a horde of other things that give them a big smile and unhappy eyes, with very few desiring the Christ that they supposedly represent.

A crisis exists that has reared its head on numerous occasions since Jesus’ First Coming. Did you realize that issues as important as the deity of our Lord were being questioned soon after the death of the apostles? Did you

know that some of the *supposedly* great men of the faith (subsequent to the apostles' ministry) were less than accurate in their view of the Scriptures? Who, then, are you going to believe? Who has your ear? Can any and everyone on God's earth be wrong, to some degree at least, in regard to their view of the Scriptures? Absolutely! And that includes you and me. What, then, is our only hope? Our only hope is to, time and time again, expose everything we read or hear to the exactness of the Scriptures. Many in Christ's body aren't doing that today. The fallout is that scores of people are left at the mercy of the teacher, leaving them vulnerable to passionate personalities that can lead them astray. Passion energized by truth is as good as it gets, but passion in itself is never to be equated with rightness.

We must understand that many of the "movements" within Christendom have been built by passionate men whose presuppositions were less than accurate. In other words, if we start at the wrong place in our thinking, we end up at even a worse place in our thinking. Case in point is the popular assumption (in some circles at least) that "man always responds according to his strongest inclination" (if you don't understand this statement, you will shortly). Is this an accurate assumption that lines up with all of the Scriptures, or is it presumption that can be refuted by the same? The present issue of *Thoughts From The Hill* addresses this subject. You will notice that the identity principles taught in New Testament (the fact that believers, at the point of justification, are made into holy, perfect, blameless saints, with the sinful nature eradicated) are a major player in working through this highly controversial topic. If you should disagree with my conclusions, I understand. But, at least consider them. I owe it to you, if I love you, to speak what I deem to be the truth. Hopefully, I won't become your enemy by doing so (Galatians 4:16).

Ministry News

For an assortment of reasons, Rick Underhill and Bob Fichtinger (a friend who works on graphics from his home in Indiana) are working together to design a website that will contain many new features for those who want more access to the events on the Hill. We are hoping to launch the new website in January 2010. For starters, we plan to offer audio access to our Tuesday night Bible study. The study meets weekly on the same semester schedule as Murray State University, and will be recorded each Tuesday evening. God's sovereignty and the free will of man, depravity, election, limited or unlimited atonement (which is it?), as well as other related topics, will be covered in as much detail as possible. Each topic will be individually recorded, edited, and made available online later that same week. Relevant weekly study notes that accompany this series will also be accessible online. A brief archive will exist if you should miss a week, or desire to listen again. The updated website will be located at the same address as now (www.lifeonthehill.org), and will also allow us to regularly post new thoughts that we are considering from the Scriptures.

We have had an eventful year here on the hill. In fact, we consider ourselves to have the greatest friends on God's earth. We are most blessed to know all of you, and we want to thank you for your hearts and love for our Lord. We look forward to many more years of pursuing the truth with you. How humbling to know that you love us and pray for us.

Events to Consider Attending on the Hill

<u>January 12, 2010</u>	Tuesday night Bible study here on The Hill (7:00 pm). Depravity, election, atonement (limited or unlimited, which is it?), grace, the security of the believer, and etc....
<u>January 15-17, 2010</u>	Annual winter youth retreat
<u>April 29-May 2, 2010</u>	Annual men's retreat for fathers, their sons, and single men of all ages.
<u>July 11-17, 2010</u>	Annual summer camp for youth (ages 13-18)
<u>August 6-7, 2010</u>	Annual Romans retreat
<u>September 3-5, 2010</u>	Annual discipleship retreat
<u>October 15-17, 2010</u>	Annual fall retreat for couples and singles

A Word of Thanks

Considering the fact that an economic crisis exists within our land, we want to especially thank you for your continued support and encouragement. Our prayer is that God might grant you peace and favor as a result of your generous spirit, supplying your needs from His more than bountiful supply. We are humbled by your generosity and totally amazed that God would bless us so.

Thoughts From The Hill

The following was taken from last semester's study of Sovereignty / Free Will. You can contact us if you would like more input concerning the subject—and yes, there is much more input available.

Can a proper, non-contradictory answer exist as to why God only saves some while desiring that all be saved (1Timothy 2:4; 2Peter 3:9)? I believe so! We will pursue this answer, not through the use of logic or tradition, but through God's word alone. It will be sought for no other reason than to protect God's name and reputation—not for the purpose of criticizing those in disagreement. My hope is that the answer might encourage every man, woman, and child on God's earth to view Him correctly and according to the full counsel of His word. In my opinion, what follows is one of the most profound truths recorded in all the Scriptures.

Every person was in Adam's gene pool when Adam sinned (Romans 5:17-18). This causes man to be born with a sinful nature, a nature that is dead (separated) from God (Ephesians 2:3, 5). In fact, to have introduced me properly prior to my becoming part of God's family, you would have needed to say, "This is Bob Warren, the sinful nature." Consequently, before I became a believer, I woke up enjoying sin and went to bed enjoying sin. I was on the throne of my life, and so were you. We were good sinners, weren't we? Consequently, our absolute "strongest inclination" was to wallow in sin.

When a person makes a choice to receive Christ (John 1:12), God kills (eradicates) that person, the person being the sinful nature (Romans 6:6; 7:4; etc.). As a result, the being that loved to sin no longer lives (Galatians 2:20). This means that God, after killing (eradicating) who originally lived in my body (the sinful nature, or old man), created a totally new person to live in this same body (2Corinthians 5:17). The person who lived in it originally was the sinful nature, Bob Warren. The person who lives in it now is the new man, Bob Warren. Do you see what the Scriptures are communicating? If you are a believer, the person you used to be is gone, never to be dealt with again. That person, the moment you chose to receive Christ, was crucified with Christ on His cross in 30 AD (Romans 6:6; 7:4). How could this occur? God took who you were, the sinful nature, and placed it into Christ through the avenue of the Holy Spirit (1Corinthians 12:13), killed it (Romans 6:6; 7:4; Galatians 2:20), buried it (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12), and created the new man to take its place (2Corinthians 5:17). Due to having received Christ's kind of life (Colossians 3:4), this new man is an eternal being, with no beginning and no end. If the new man (the believer) has no beginning and no end, the new man was in Christ when Christ was crucified, buried, and raised. It is for this reason that Paul could say, "*I have been crucified with Christ*" (Galatians 2:20). It is also why He could teach that the believer has been buried (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12) and raised with Christ (Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 2:12).

With the above in mind, we can conclude that in your unredeemed state, you were (fill in your name), _____ the sinful nature. Today you are (fill in your name) _____, the new man. It is obvious that God did more than just wound who you were (the sinful nature). How could He possibly allow the sinful nature to live inside your body alongside the new man? If both the old man and new man were to cohabit your body, you would be part evil and part good, making you nothing more than a dirty sinner saved by grace. The Scriptures teach that you became anything but a dirty sinner when you accepted Christ. In fact, you were made into a righteous (2Corinthians 5:21), holy (Ephesians 1:4), perfect (Hebrews 10:14), complete (Colossians 2:10), forgiven (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 2:13; 1John 2:12), glorified (Romans 8:30), justified (Romans 5:1), never to be condemned (Romans 8:1) saint (1Corinthians 1:2), who sometimes sins. This means that the most natural thing you do is walk in righteousness, proving that the most unnatural thing you do is walk in sin. Yes, you sin at times; but it is unnatural, and very troubling to the soul.

Consider this as well. If the sinful nature were alive in you, though wounded (as some teach today), living alongside the holy, blameless, and glorified new man, it would still be somewhat natural for you to desire to sin. However, with the sinful nature eradicated, your "strongest inclination" is to walk in as righteous a manner as possible. To state it differently, your "strongest inclination," the moment you accepted Christ, was (and continues to be) to never sin again. How do we know this? When a believer's body dies, the believer ejects out of it and is ushered into the presence of God (2Corinthians 5:8). Once in heaven, believers will walk in sinless perfection for the first time in their existence (1John 3:2), never once disobeying the Master. Why? They will no longer dwell in their unredeemed body which housed Satan's agent, the power of sin (Romans 7:23)—the means through which Satan tempts the believer during his/her stay on earth. We can conclude, therefore, that the only reason believers sin today is due to the power of sin's presence in their unredeemed body (Romans 7:23). If the soul and spirit of a believer are perfected (made holy, righteous, and complete) the moment he/she accepts Christ, then the holiness, righteousness, and completeness of the believer's soul and spirit will not be improved upon when he/she is taken to heaven. Yes, the believer's behavior becomes increasingly holy as

he/she matures in the faith while on earth (and will be made completely holy once the believer is in heaven); but the soul and spirit (who the believer really is) will never be more holy and blameless than at the point of the new birth. (All of this is addressed in detail in the Romans course distributed by this ministry.)

What is my point? My point is this. The moment I accepted Christ, my “strongest inclination” was to walk in holiness. In fact, my “strongest inclination” today remains the same, and will remain as such throughout eternity. I never want to sin again, but at times I still sin. When I sin, I hate my sin. Why? My “strongest inclination” is to not sin. How do I know that this is my “strongest inclination”? Let my body cease operating, and I will never sin again. Why? In heaven, the new man (Bob Warren) will cease being tempted and will respond according to his “strongest inclination” one hundred percent of the time. Therefore, My “strongest inclination,” from the moment I became a child of God, has been to avoid sin. This was Paul’s desire as well, but the Scriptures confirm that he, the great apostle, disobeyed at times:

For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. (Romans 7:15)

...for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. (Romans 7:18)

For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. (Romans 7:19)

As a believer, Paul’s “strongest inclination” was to walk in unwavering obedience. These verses verify, however, that in certain situations he made choices opposite his “strongest inclination.”

Clearly, the idea that man is incapable of responding opposite his “strongest inclination” is false. This means that an unredeemed person can make a choice to accept Christ (with the assistance of the Father’s drawing—John 6:44) *before* he/she is spiritually regenerated. Why else would Paul teach that, “*the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ*” (Galatians 3:24) and John write, “*And He (the Spirit), when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment.*” Why the Law and the conviction of the Spirit if the unredeemed are incapable of responding opposite their strongest inclination? Think about it! Obviously, Romans 7 was penned subsequent to Paul’s conversion, not beforehand, as some have incorrectly assumed.