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Hello Friends,

We trust that you are doing well, never surprised by a day's circumstances or the moral compromise inundating our land. Isn't it amazing how truth trumps error not just some of the time but every time they face off in "a winner take all"? Thus, today's America presents more opportunities for believers than at any time I have known the Lord—maybe since the inception of our nation. The enemy's hand is exposed, his agenda revealed. We who attempt to know and apply truth, therefore, who have "*put on the full armor of God*" (Ephesians 6:11), experience an adventure second to none.

Satan perceives us (and our God) as "fools." His perception is ill-founded, for our arsenal of weaponry consists of truth, "*the sword of the Spirit, ...the word of God*" (Ephesians 6:17)—the deterrent he fears most. Defensively it intercepts his blows; offensively it draws his blood.

Satan, although void of wisdom, is no dummy—realizing that many (maybe most) believers are ill prepared to resist his onslaught. Sadly, with swords lying dormant in their sheaths, they make themselves vulnerable to the being who despises them.

Believers who view God properly use their swords effectively. Believers who possess a warped view of God use their swords ineffectively—if at all! My question, therefore, is, "What shaped your perception of God—the Scriptures studied in context or the opinion of man?" The reason for my asking is explained in the subsequent portion of this publication, consisting of topics frequently debated and often misunderstood.

### ***The Pitfalls of Following a Misguided "They"***

We have all heard the phrase, "According to what *they* say such and such is true." As a child, I was foolish enough to assume that the unknown "they" got it right one hundred percent of the time—after all, "they" seemed to represent the majority, and the majority (in my estimation and immaturity) had to "be right." Later in life (when I submitted to Christ), I learned that "they" could be mistaken—that on many occasions "they" got it wrong. A large dose of truth (along with a boatload of hard knocks) brought me to this realization, but once understood, I was introduced to a most exhilarating trek through life. In fact, now, I never (ever) believe "they" until I have done my homework. Why? Many times "they" place the first button in the second buttonhole, leaving the last button with nowhere to go but the first (buttonhole)—an embarrassing and contradictory predicament indeed.

A friend (who lived in Japan for a brief stint) found the Japanese to be the most law-abiding people imaginable. He discovered, in fact, that only two murders had occurred in Japan during the previous calendar year. He also learned that alcoholic beverages are made available to the general public in vending machines. While inquiring if teenagers purchased these beverages, a Japanese man answered, "Japan doesn't allow a person to partake of alcohol until the age of twenty." Only after my friend repeated the question and received an identical response did he realize the seriousness of the matter. Obviously, the Japanese people refrain from purchasing alcohol prior to their twentieth birthday—confirming their commitment to rules and regulations. Yet, their suicide rate exceeds that of any country in the world! Why? They believe that what they do is who they are. Thus, when they fail to measure up, they deem themselves unworthy to live. Hence, the "they" of that nation has gotten it wrong, to the ruin of many!

This example validates Paul's words of 2Corinthians 3:6—"*the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*" Rules and regulations are incapable of generating peace within the soul of man. I imagine, however, that many individuals would perceive the Japanese culture as "having it together" until discovering the truth regarding its suicide rate. Hence, the "bottom button" invalidates the methodology of their entire system. No doubt, bottom buttons are wonderful barometers when seeking proper ideology.

Several examples of how “they” (whoever “they” may be within our culture) have misrepresented the Godhead (through placing the first button in the second buttonhole) will be presented next, followed by a Scriptural rebuttal. Should you disagree with my conclusions, I understand. The recent theological shift within Christendom is diametrically opposed to many of my core beliefs, but know that I appreciate your willingness to at least hear my heart.

“They” teach that the believer is to work “hard” for God. Yet, the Scriptures teach that God saves repentant sinners so they might enjoy Him and enter His “rest” (Hebrews 4:9-10). When this truth is understood, every second of the believer’s experience is ministry—his “faith” working “by love” rather than duty (Galatians 5:6).

“They” teach that the believer is to generate the strength (from within himself) to live the Christian life. Scripture teaches, rather, that the Christian life is impossible to live by one’s own effort—that the power necessary for abundant living resides in Christ, the believer’s very “life” (Romans 5:10; Colossians 3:4). Thus, Jesus lives the Christian life through church saints as they (over time) learn to yield to His indwelling presence (Galatians 2:20).

“They” teach that we become worthless sinners saved by grace once we repent and accept Christ. The Scriptures teach just the opposite—that we become holy, blameless, and righteous saints (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 5:17, 21; Ephesians 1:4; etc.) in our souls and spirits at the point of salvation/justification.

“They” teach that the New Testament believer must seek forgiveness for sins committed after salvation. The Scriptures teach, rather, that sin is to be confessed after accepting Christ, not for the purpose of receiving forgiveness but to have fellowship restored with the Father. All past, present, and future sin is forgiven at the point of salvation. Why should we seek what we already possess?

“They” teach that the New Testament believer is dual natured—that the old person we used to be remains, warring against the new person we became. Yet, the Scriptures teach that the old person we used to be (the “old self”—Romans 6:6) was crucified and eradicated when we were saved—confirming that the war raging inside us is between the new creation (2 Corinthians 5:21) we became and the power of sin living in our physical bodies (Romans 7:23). In fact, the power of sin disguises itself as the old self in hopes of convincing us that the person we used to be is still alive! Should that person remain, we truly would be worthless sinners saved by grace.

“They” teach that the believer is to keep himself saved, or worse yet, prove that he is part of the elect through performing good deeds. Nowhere in Scripture do we find such legalistic thought. The believer is “sealed” in Christ (Ephesians 1:13), “kept for Jesus Christ” (Jude 1), and can never be taken out of Christ’s “hand” (John 10:28) nor “the Father’s hand” (John 10:29). Our high priest, Jesus, will make certain that we remain part of God’s household (Hebrews 7:25) due to our new birth that results in a hatred of sin.

“They” teach that God is done with physical Israel and is dealing exclusively with the church. This mindset is known as Replacement Theology in most theological circles—with the church replacing Israel as God’s chosen people. The allegorical method of Biblical interpretation must be implemented to arrive at this conclusion, a subject addressed next.

“They” teach that God’s Word is to be interpreted allegorically rather than literally—that the deeper, “hidden” meaning of a verse is the core issue rather than a contextually sound conclusion based on the full counsel of God’s Word (all of the Scriptures instead of a select few interpreted out of context). Yet, the allegorical method leaves the final authority with the teacher rather than the Scriptures. Two critical questions reveal the unreliability of this system’s philosophy: (1) Once the literal is exchanged for the allegorical, at what point does the allegorizing cease? (2) Is Isaiah 7:14 (regarding the virgin birth of Christ) an allegory or a literal prophecy fulfilled in space and time? The prophecy better be literal or we are all wasting our time!

“They” teach that the sovereignty of God and the free will of man is impossible to reconcile void of contradiction. Yet, Scripture confirms just the opposite. (The *God’s Heart* series produced by this ministry addresses this topic in great depth along with the topics covered in the next three paragraphs.)

“They” teach that the first button in the first buttonhole (regarding the issue of salvation) is viewing the depraved as incapable of believing—that God must spiritually regenerate the depraved, give them repentance and faith, before they can repent, believe, and be saved. In fact, “they” teach that the depraved are spiritual corpses. Scripture teaches otherwise—that the depraved possess ample truth to believe, yet,

in many cases, exchange that truth for a lie, resulting in an enhanced state of spiritual darkness (Romans 1:18-32). A spiritual corpse who could experience an exacerbated state of darkness would prove that he previously possessed a measure of light—negating the spiritual corpse theory altogether. Also, would God have stretched out his hands (offered salvation) to lost Jews who never believed (referenced in Romans 10:21) should the depraved be incapable of exercising personal repentance and faith? Such an arrangement would make Him anything but the all-wise Sovereign the Scriptures declare Him to be. Hence, the idea that the depraved are incapable of believing is equivalent to placing the first button in the second buttonhole, leaving a theological “train wreck” in its wake.

“They” teach that a work would be performed should the depraved possess the capacity to exercise personal repentance and faith. Yet, Paul contrasts faith with works in Romans 3:27-28, 4:4-5, and 9:32, negating their argument altogether.

“They” teach that all believers are elected and predestined to salvation from eternity past by means of an eternal decree. Romans 8:30 refutes such a notion due to “*predestined*,” “*called*,” “*justified*,” and “*glorified*” in this passage being in the past tense (aorist indicative in the Greek). Thus, had all past, present, and future believers been predestined to salvation from eternity past, they would be born called, justified, and glorified (“chew” on that thought for a moment). Yet Scripture teaches that all persons are born “*children of wrath*” (Ephesians 2:3). Predestination, actually, is simple to understand. Ephesians 1:5 teaches that we were “*predestined to adoption as sons*.” Romans 8:23 defines the “*adoption as sons*” as, “*the redemption of the body*.” Therefore, we were predestined to receive a glorified body once we were placed in Christ subsequent to repenting and believing while depraved—an immortal body we will receive at the Rapture of the church. We were not predestined to be saved from eternity past by means of an eternal decree. Again, our *God’s Heart* series addresses these matters in depth.

“They” teach that bigger is always better, that the number of people attending a gathering of believers validates or invalidates the group’s effectiveness. Not so. Jesus poured His life into twelve men and changed the world!

“They” teach that a message directed toward a group of believers should be at the maturity level of the least mature person present. Yet, people who truly love Jesus desire to be challenged—especially teenagers, college students, and young adults. No passionate young person I have met over the past forty years of ministry has desired a dumbed-down message relating to Jesus’ infinitely profound gospel.

“They” teach that the attention span of a teenager is fifteen to twenty minutes max. We have discovered just the opposite—that a teenager’s mind is only being awakened after that span of time. The thirteen to eighteen year olds who attend our summer camp sit through at least four one-hour sessions of Bible study per day—and actually come back for more.

“They” teach that a leader must never say, “I have been wrong,” or reveal his weaknesses. Yet, the Bible is inundated with instances where God revealed the behavioral flaws of the men carrying His message. Therefore, never trust a man who doesn’t walk with a limp (who is unwilling to admit his error) or refuses to “come clean” regarding his doctrinal beliefs. The teaching of Biblical doctrine is extremely divisive, causing many “leaders” to avoid it—severely handicapping those influenced by their compromised message. No doctrinally malnourished believer can defend what he believes, a direct violation of 1Peter 3:15.

A new “they” lurks on the horizon that espouses universalism—that all mankind will be saved. Passages such as 2Thessalonians 1:6-9 and Revelation 20:11-15 refute such nonsense.

“They,” obviously, turns out to be a significant word for the passionate believer. Hence, be careful as to which “they” you classify as a bearer of the truth. The size of their platforms and the notoriety of their voices are no indication that “they” are doctrinally sound. Only by taking their teachings through the entirety of Scripture can we determine if “they” “got it right.”

### ***Ministry News***

Growth pains that we perceive as positive have arrived in force. Logos Bible Software has published our updated *Romans 1-8* and *Hebrews* studies, meaning that those resources are now available (in an electronic format) to seminary professors, seminary students, pastors, and the overall body of Christ. Logos’ goal, in fact, is to publish the bulk of the materials we have produced over the years. Thus, I spent the summer rewriting our Ephesians study, adding input that addresses the major theological shifts that

have swept through Christendom since that study was first published in 1990. Logos is also (at this moment) preparing to publish the first book of the *God's Heart* series, *God's Heart as it Relates to Foreknowledge/Predestination*—which encourages us greatly (they estimate that it can be ordered off their website around the middle of August). We are preparing the second book of the *God's Heart* series, *God's Heart as it Relates to Sovereignty/Free Will*, for publication as well. (We certainly hope you can make our August 8-9 *Sovereignty/Free Will* retreat here on The Hill.) All of the above-mentioned resources have been (or will be) published in hardback and softback, and can be obtained through Amazon or this ministry. The final two books of the *God's Heart* series (*God's Heart as it Relates to Depravity* and *God's Heart as it Relates to Election/Atonement/Grace/Perseverance*) we hope to have available within a year.

Last semester we finished our verse-by-verse study of Romans 9—what a fascinating section of Scripture! I look forward to teaching Romans 10 and 11 beginning Tuesday, August 19, at 7:00 pm. Each weekly session will be posted on our website. We hope that those of you who live locally can join us here on The Hill.

Our staff (Brent, Glenna, and Mike) remains a constant source of encouragement to me, my family, and all who pass through. The college students who live on The Hill are a tremendous blessing also. Kim and Benjamin are doing well and assist greatly in our calling as a family. Benjamin will be a freshman at Murray State this fall, majoring in Ag Business. My, how time flies!

A calendar of events is posted below, so feel free to visit as often as possible. It humbles me to think of the time I am privileged to devote to study, writing, and teaching. Without your support, such would be impossible. So, thanks to God's provision through you, the vision marches on! Can hardly wait to see what lies ahead!

We love you in Jesus!

### *Upcoming Events*

**August 8-9, 2014**—Sovereignty/Free Will Retreat **August 19, 2014**— Tuesday night Bible Study begins (7:00 pm weekly; Romans 10-11) **October 17-19, 2014**—Fall Retreat **January 9-11, 2015**—College Winter Retreat **January 16-18, 2015**—Youth Winter Retreat **February 20-21, 2015**—God's Heart; Depravity Retreat **April 24-26, 2015**—Men's Retreat; **July 5-11, 2015**—Summer Leadership Camp (ages 13-18)

These dates are posted on our website, along with additional information regarding retreats, camps, and materials. This newsletter is posted there as well.