

UNION UNIVERSITY BULLETIN

Equipping Today's Church Leaders

Volume II, Issue 1

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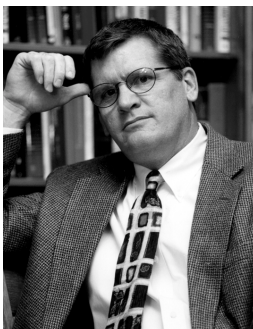
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Marc Glass
Hometown: Metropolis, IL

PREACHING



Are You Living Down to Your Potential?

Philippians 2:6-11

Paul N. Jackson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies

Although difficult to interpret due to some genuine exegetical complexities, Philippians 2:6-11 (verse 5 is introductory to the hymn itself) constitutes a beautifully crafted hymn of the early Christian church. Its beauty exists, however, in direct proportion to its difficulties. Many New Testament scholars maintain that this passage easily qualifies as one of the most hotly debated in the canon. The theological scope of the passage is astounding. Not only does it spotlight the nature of Christ's incarnation, it sheds light on Christ's preexistence, His equality with the Father, His identity with sinful humanity, and the supreme price He paid in the redemptive equation. All of these themes have huge practical significance for the contemporary Christian especially as we discover the "ethical" implications of the text. Preachers will want to explore in detail all of the exegetical problems associated with the text with the aid of a critical commentary such as that produced by Gerald Hawthorne in the *Word Biblical Commentary*. Additionally, a thorough reading of Frank Thielman's insights on this passage in the *NIV Application Commentary* will provide the "bridge building" kernels on which you can design the specific applications for your people.

I want to share a few thoughts concerning some of the key exegetical aspects of this passage critical for understanding its proper application. First, it is critical to translate this passage in context. Paul is trying to teach the Philippians that self interest always exists at the expense of unity. He continues his exhortation of 1:27-30 advocating unity (1:27) and fearlessness in light of martyrdom's reward (1:28; 2:9-11; also see 3:20-21). Operating much like an ancient moral writer Paul produces examples to prove his thesis. Exhibits A, B, C, and D are Jesus (2:5-11); himself (2:17-18), Timothy (2:19-24), and Epaphroditus (2:25-30).

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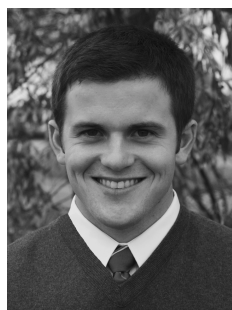
The Union University *Bulletin* is a bi-monthly publication designed to equip church leaders.

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Marcus Glass

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Junior

Major: Theology

Minor: International Studies

God uses many things in life to change and shape an individual. In my life, the institution of Union University has been one of those. Union has created an academic environment that seeks to see everything, from biology to political science, from a Christian worldview. It successfully integrates faith in Jesus Christ with the pursuit of academic achievement.

Through the rigors of college life, even those that are seemingly unbearable, God has slowly been teaching me what it means to persevere. In this process, I have learned much about commitment and circumstances. I have found that I must seek fulfillment in God alone to be satisfied in my circumstances and to be faithful to the commitment that I have made. God has also taught me much about my calling to serve Him.

WORSHIPPING

Scripture and Hymns



Richard Joiner, Ph.D.

Professor of Music and Department Chair

Throughout history a great deal of study has been devoted to the process of Biblical interpretation, and rightfully so. Christian hymnody, however, is another repository of verse which is an evolving human testimony to God's work among us. While hymns cannot be regarded as literature which is "inspired" in the same way as scripture, much of this vast body has been written in response to God's Word or to personal experiences with God.

One very obvious group of hymns embraces our very reverence for scripture and its power in our lives. These are grouped in the Baptist Hymnal (1991) under the heading God's Word. Most of these are used frequently in our churches, but two deserve much more exposure. One was selected by the Hymn Society of America as an outstanding new hymn in commemoration of the printing of the new Revised Standard Version in 1952:

Word of God, across the ages, comes the message to our life;
Source of hope forever present in our toil and fears and strife;
Constant witness to God's mercy, still our grace whate'er befall,
Guide unfailing, strength eternal, offered freely to us all.

The second is a very recent creation, receiving its inspiration from Hebrews 4:12: "The Word of God is living and active."

The Word of God is alive, it lives in the world today;
Correcting, consoling, connecting mankind, the Word of God is alive.
The Word of God is a fire, it flames with eternal truth;
Refining, revealing, reclaiming our love, the Word of God is a fire."

Outside of hymns about the Bible, the number of hymns which draw their moment of birth from personal experiences and encounters with scripture is vast. One example chronicles the spiritual journey of the Wesley brothers. In London, 1738, Charles and John Wesley struggled with their faith, and within the space of two days, settled the matter with dramatic declarations of their conversions. Charles wrote two hymns during that brief period. One is a powerful, yet eloquent expression born out of a faith experience, yet rooted soundly in scripture, in this case Ephesians 2:7-10: "...How immense are the resources of his grace...It is God's gift."

The hymn begins:

"And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood?,"
and contains the rousing refrain:

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REVIEWING

Recommended Books for 2003

by David S. Dockery

President, Union University

Basic Christian Leadership

by John Stott. InterVarsity, 2002

Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad?

by Timothy George. Zondervan, 2002

Christianity at the Religious Roundtable

by Timothy C. Tennent. Baker, 2002

Hero for Humanity: A Biography of William Wilberforce

by Kevin Belmonte. NavPress 2002

Paul and Jesus: The True Story

by David Wenham. Eerdmans, 2002

First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics

by Kevin Vanhoozer. InterVarsity, 2002

Finding the Will of God: A Pagan Notion

by Bruce K. Waltke. Eerdmans, 2002

Worldview, the History of a Concept

by David K. Naugle. Eerdmans, 2002

Engaging God's World

by Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. Eerdmans, 2002

America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln

by Mark Noll. Oxford, 2002.

The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics

by Robert A.J. Gagnon. Abingdon, 2002

Jesus According to Scripture

by Darrell L. Bock. Baker, 2002

Scribbling in the Sand: Christ and Creativity, by Michael Card.

InterVarsity, 2002

How to Win the Culture War

by Peter Kreeft. InterVarsity, 2002



The Power and the Promise of the Word

Ray Van Neste, Ph.D.

Director, Ryan Center for Biblical Studies

Assistant Professor of Christian Studies

Usually in this column I recommend various resources which can be helpful in the task of preaching. This issue, in light of our focus on Bible study and interpretation, I want to recommend our first R. C. Ryan Center for Biblical Studies Conference, ***The Power and Promise of the Word: Enhancing skills for interpreting and applying scripture***, April 3-5, 2003.

This conference grows out of the mission of the Center for Biblical Studies which is to encourage and increase the reading, understanding and proper applying of scripture in our pulpits and pews.

Ten years ago J. I. Packer stated, "The Bible no longer has the place in the homes of our country that once it had, and ignorance of the Bible confronts us today not only in the secular world but in the churches as well. That is thoroughly bad news." The polls and statistics suggest the situation today is worse than ten years ago. We need desperately to equip our people to properly read and understand the Bible for themselves, and we need to challenge ourselves in modeling this to them in our sermons. The power we need for effective living and ministry, for impacting our culture lies in the Word, properly understood and applied. This conference is designed to help you and your people in this awesome and wonderful task of understanding and applying scripture.

The conference is intended for preachers, Bible study leaders and other interested students of the Word. Plenary sessions, beginning Thursday afternoon, will focus on aspects of bible study and will model expositional preaching. Breakout sessions will focus on method for Bible study, reference tools for Bible study, and insights for properly interpreting specific portions of Scripture. We will be blessed to have some very gifted preachers and teachers for the conference. Dr. Sandy Willson, Senior Minister of Second Presbyterian in Memphis, TN, and Dr. Robert Smith, Jr., Professor of Preaching at Beeson Divinity School, will share with us in plenary sessions. Both men are gifted and much sought after preachers. Dr. Daniel Block of Southern Seminary and Dr. Grant Osborne of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, who are both prominent scholars as well as accomplished preachers, will share in plenary sessions and lead breakout sessions. Dr. Block will lead a breakout session on interpreting the Old Testament prophets, and Dr. Osborne, who has just recently finished an important commentary on Revelation, will lead a breakout session on interpreting this important but perplexing book. Additionally Drs. George Guthrie, Paul Jackson and Mark Dubis from our

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Union faculty will lead breakout sessions.

The conference will begin Thursday afternoon and conclude Saturday by noon. The cost of registration is \$40.00 (\$45.00 after March 1) which includes the evening meal on Thursday and Friday. For churches who bring 10 or more people there is a reduced rate of \$30.00 per person. Those who have to work during the day Thursday and Friday can attend the evening meals and lectures on those days and the final sessions on Saturday. For those traveling from a distance, a block of rooms has been reserved at a special conference rate at the Garden Plaza Hotel near campus. You will be receiving more information regarding the conference, but you can already direct registration and accommodation questions to Mrs. Cindy Meredith at 731-661-5202.

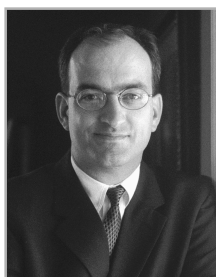
Please pray with us that this conference might be blessed by God in leading us to a better grasp of Scripture- for there is Power and Promise in His Word!



Mission Statement

Union University provides
Christ-centered higher
education that promotes
excellence and character
development in service to
Church and society.

ENGAGING



Why Bible Study and Interpretation Matter

George H. Guthrie, Ph.D.

Benjamin W. Perry Associate Professor of Bible and
Department Chair of Christian Studies

The story is told of a lady who went to catch a flight at the airport. She was in a hurry and had not had time to eat, so on the way to her gate she stopped at a newsstand to pick up a pack of cookies. When she arrived at the gate she found a seat, and in the seat next to her, just on the other side of a little table, sat an older gentleman. After a few minutes, and to her shock, the man picked up the pack of cookies from the table, opened it, and, with a smile, popped a cookie in his mouth. He placed the cookies back on the table and munched away happily. She was shocked and stunned for a moment! Nevertheless, not wanting to make a scene, the lady picked up the pack of cookies, took one out, and too began eating. She then placed the pack back on the table, thinking the man would not have the audacity to repeat his offence. Yet, he did. Again he took a cookie, looked at it thoughtfully, nibbled, and then gobbled the rest down. Now she was seething inside. How dare he help himself to her cookies! Still fuming, the lady took another cookie from its wrapper and popped it in her mouth. Now there was just one cookie left. To add insult to injury, the gentleman took the last cookie, broke it in half, slid one half to her, and ate the remaining half. Then, with a smile and a nod, the gentleman got up and left. Boy, was she mad! Thankfully, her flight number was called and passengers asked to board. Mumbling to herself about the selfishness of some people, she got up and made her way to the gate. On the way to the gate the lady reached into her purse to get out her boarding pass and there found her pack of cookies!

How embarrassing! The lady traveler was so caught up in the hurry and hunger of the moment, she did not even know whose cookies were at stake! I am sure we all can identify with losing perspective in the rush and crush of life, and one of the areas that tends to suffer is our intake of God's Word, which further affects our lack of focus! In Mark 4:18-19 Jesus interprets the seed that fell on thorny ground as the Word falling into a life that, due to the cares of life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for nice things, has no room for the Word and, therefore, has an unhealthy existence.

You probably are interested in God's Word and in being used in God's work. Yet, being a person who is meaningfully studying and interpreting God's Word is not automatic. The pressures of life can affect us negatively and squeeze out both "heart space" (a posture of submission to God's will and ways) and "life space" (blocks of time) for interacting with the Word. There are three very important reasons why we need to think

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“Amazing love, how can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me!”

A second group of hymns not only receives inspiration from experiences with God, but describes such experiences in eloquent verse drawn from God’s word to us. As such, these hymns have splendid possibilities for use in worship with the scriptures they profess. Some are either inspired by scripture, or were deliberately written as versifications or metrical studies of scripture. In essence, they become scripture set to music. Here are several examples with the Biblical phrases which inspired them:

“Man of Sorrows!” what a name for the Son of God who came...”

He was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

Isaiah 53:3

“Jesus, Thy boundless love to me no thought can reach, no tongue declare.”

To comprehend...the breadth, and length, and depth, and height...of the love of Christ...
Ephesians 3:18

“Worthy of Worship,” with its refrain, “You are worthy, Father, Creator, You are worthy, Savior, sustainer, You are worthy, worthy and wonderful, worthy of worship and praise.”

You are worthy...to receive glory and honor and power.
Revelation 4:11

Several hymns are deliberate paraphrases of Psalms, structured to allow congregations to sing near-literal scripture expressions

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during decisive periods of history when the privilege of congregational expression was bound strongly to movements toward congregational freedom.

The most obvious example is Martin Luther’s great hymn, drawn from Psalm 46, a symbol of the right of all peoples to lift voices in praise:

“A Mighty Fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing.”

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble.
Psalm 46:1.

A second example is a result of the 18th century movement toward “metricizing” the Psalms. After John Calvin’s reforms, congregations were forced to sing the Psalms from the scriptural translations in the Bibles of that day. These were beautiful when read, but difficult to fit to tunes and sung by untrained congregations. As a result, choirs were compelled to learn these complex renderings, and congregations lost the joy of singing in worship. Isaac Watts helped return congregational singing to worship by creating a metrical version of every Psalm, appropriate to at least one of the hymn tunes available in his day. His most famous example is a paraphrase in meter of Psalm 90. Each line of the hymn reflects the thought of the corresponding line in the Psalm:

“O God, Our help in ages past, our hope for years to come.”

Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Psalm 90:1

The hymnal is a storehouse of Christian experience, drawn from life-changing events and filled with scriptural truth and application. Using the scriptures on which hymns are based, complete worship services or portions of services may be built out of readings of these passages and singing of the hymns which have grown from their truths. Such a congregational hymn service can remind our churches that hymn writers were believers who, like us, wrestled with the trials of living, but found a road to faith through God’s Word and then recounted their struggles and victories in verse and song.

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in fresh ways about Bible study and interpretation, and they all revolve around why God created us in the first place. The reason why we exist has everything to do with why we should take biblical interpretation very seriously.

First, we need to study and interpret the Word well to know God. Passages such as Hebrews 1:1-2 and John 20:31 tell us that God has initiated a conversation with us, he has spoken to us, so that we might know him. As we spend time in the Word, we grow in our understanding of God, but also in our relationship with him. Second, we need to study and interpret the Word well to know what God expects of us and to have a fulfilling life (not necessarily an easy life!). 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable in several ways. It instructs us, corrects us, and guides us in living righteously. The Word, rightly interpreted, gives us a solid foundation for life and a means of fulfillment (John 15:11). Third, we need to study and interpret the Word

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well to minister to others. 2 Timothy 2:15 says that we should work hard to show ourselves approved to God as workers who are handling the Word accurately. A lot is at stake here. We may lose perspective due to our lack of studying the Word ourselves, but it is a grave responsibility to minister to others through the Word. If we are mishandling the Word, or treating it in a shallow manner, we affect those God has committed to our care. On the other hand, when we study diligently and interpret responsibly, the people to whom we minister are built up in the faith and provided with strong encouragement (Ephesians 4:15).

Here at Union we are trying to help our brothers and sisters in Christ's Body to study and interpret the Word well. For about nine years we have offered a course entitled Introduction to Bible Study and Interpretation, and the classes have been full every semester. In Spring of 2003 we will open the Ryan Center for Biblical Studies, which will be available to our students, pastors, and laypeople as a model library for doing sound Bible study. Finally, you are invited to our first conference on Bible Study and Interpretation, to be held at Union on April 3-5. At this conference there will be seminars such as "The Best Recent Tools for Bible Study for Preaching," "How to Interpret the Prophets," "Bible Study Step-by-Step," and "Moving from the Ancient Text to Modern Life." It will be a great time for pastors, Sunday school teachers, and Bible study leaders,

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as well as the common layperson in your church. An ongoing process of Bible study is essential to a healthy Christian life. Let's work at "studying to show ourselves approved to God" in this important area!

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Establishing this context is seminal for a proper understanding of what is popularly known as the "kenotic passage" in 2:5-11.

Examining the immediate context reveals that the first main idea (here known technically as the apodosis) is found in verse 2: "Then make my joy complete..." This phrase is preceded by the fourfold "if" clause (technically known as the protasis) found in verse 1: "Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, then . . ." Paul clearly indicates how the Philippians are to accomplish this exhortation with four modifying subordinate elements in verse 2: 1) that you think the same thing ; 2) having the same love; 3) being in harmony of mind; and 4) being concerned for the one thing. The second exhortation appears in verse 3: "Do nothing for personal advantage nor vainglory." The Greek terms translated "personal advantage" and "vainglory" syntactically are adverbial accusatives of purposive termination. Vainglory occurs only here in the New Testament and should be understood as "empty pride." Vainglory is an interesting word. Its root idea is "empty opinion" or "error." So a person driven by this fractious sort of spirit arrogantly asserts personal agendas, but who is evidently in error. Consequently this person is one who will fight to prove he is right. Paul had practice dealing with this issue as it had surfaced in the Corinthian church six to eight years earlier. Changing the verb from "say" to "think" is the only difference in the Philippian admonition when one compares the command "That you say the same thing" found in 1 Cor. 1:10. Later, Paul says, "Love . . . does not seek the things of itself." Essentially the main problem was the same in both churches and is just as potentially destructive today. In other words, these two negative attitudes should never characterize the Christian's attitude if unity is the ultimate goal. For a good discussion of the contemporary significance of these verses see Thielman's comments on pages 103-108, especially the reference to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's penetrating insights on the subject.

A third negative attitude is balanced by positive exhortations surfacing in verses 3-4 as Paul says, "Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." With these introductory thoughts in mind verses 5-11 it is easier to see how they should be interpreted along "ethical" lines rather than "kerygmatic" lines. Paul is doing more than merely a kerygmatic rehearsing of the story of Jesus' incarnation, death, and exaltation. As an ethical injunction Jesus is presented as Paul's primary piece of evidence to prove his case. Verse 5 is the hinge connecting Paul's charge to his most brilliant example of servanthood: Jesus Christ. "Have this mind among yourselves, which was

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also in Christ Jesus!!”

This early Christian hymn about Christ in verses 6-11, therefore according to Hawthorne, “. . . presents Jesus as the supreme illustration of the humble, self-sacrificing, self-denying, self-giving service that Paul has just been urging the Philippians to practice in their relations one toward another” (79). We begin our examination of the hymn by examining verse 6: “Who, although being in the form of God, did not consider being like God a privilege for grasping.” Incarnational Christian living begins at the point of understanding the character of God. The adverbial concessive participle “although being” is functioning in subordination to the main verb “did not consider.” Generally, the concessive idea expresses the unfavorable circumstances despite which the action of the main verb takes place. Paul is not saying anything negative about the divine status of Jesus. Condescension was made possible because Jesus displayed the proper attitude of his equality to God. Although being God, he did not consider that status as something of which he would take advantage. The word translated “robbery” (KJV, NKJV), “something to be exploited” (RSV), “something to be grasped” (NIV), or “grounds for grasping” (Hawthorne) is somewhat problematic as it only appears in the Greek Bible at this point and occurs rarely so in secular Greek. Eusebius used it several times in the sense of advantage. Consider these two

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passages included in Thielman’s discussion:

And Peter considered death by means of the cross *harpagmon* on account of the hope of salvation (Eis to kata Loucan Evangelion, 6).

Some [persecuted Christians] . . . regarded death as *harpagma* in comparison with the depravity of ungodly men (Historia Ecclesiastica 8.12.2).

Evidently, Peter and the persecuted Christians saw death as something of which to take advantage. In a paradoxical sense, death was not viewed as ultimately abhorrent, but beneficial!! This particular attitude remains secret unless it is disclosed in some observable way such as through the incarnation.

When we move to verse 7 we see Paul setting up a definite contrast by the introduction of the coordinate conjunction “but” and the main verb of the next clause. The verb translated “he emptied,” “poured out,” or “stripped” is modified by three adverbial participial phrases “by taking on the form of a servant” and “by being born in the likeness of human beings,” and “by being found in human form.” These three participles express the means by which the action of the verb “emptied” was effected. This action should not be taken as negative or subtracting from who he was before; the humiliation of Christ *added* to what he was before. So what is the point? In stark contrast to the many people today who seek upward mobility in terms of power, fame, and fortune, Jesus was downwardly mobile as he moved from a position of ultimate power to utter powerlessness. By making this transition he established the best possible example of servanthood for us to follow. What is more astounding is that this was accomplished by the only one who deserves to be worshipped and served! Verse 8 introduces the next main verb translated “he humbled himself.” The manner by which Jesus expressed himself in lowly and humble service is expressed by another participial phrase “by becoming obedient to the point of death.” This idea is intensified with the repetition of the phrase “even a *cross kind of death*.” This translation interprets “cross” as a genitive of description. In his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, A. T. Robertson reflects in reference to this cross, “The bottom rung in the ladder from the Throne of God. Jesus came all the way down to the most despised death of all, a condemned criminal on the accursed cross” (4.445). This was Jesus’ humiliation. Christians are challenged to take the daring step of conforming our own character to this aspect of the character of God.

Verses 9-11 round out the hymn as Paul now emphasizes the exaltation of Christ when, as Thielman says, “The passage reminds us of the final day, when God will respond to the lives of his obedient servants with commendation, just as he responded to Christ’s obedient life” (128). Through the Christ Hymn the paradoxes of the teachings of Jesus are truly apparent: He who exalts himself, will be humbled; the first shall be last, and the last first; and the greatest among you shall be the least. Keeping the supreme example of Jesus and our responsibilities as disciples of Christ in mind the important question is: *Are we living down to our potential?*

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



Greetings from Union University!
I trust all is well with you and your ministry. I pray that you have begun 2003 with an expectant heart for all that God is going to do through you this year.


Recently, someone preached a dynamic message and challenged me with II Timothy 4:2. This is a very familiar verse that reads, "Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season...." Like you, I have heard many sermons drawn from this text and have used it many times myself. However, I heard this particular message with fresh ears. One way to interpret "season" in this verse is the readiness of the listener. This means, we need to "preach the Word!" when people want to hear it ("in season") and when they do not ("out of season"). I feel certain that you preach "out of season" far more than you would like. It seems our society is increasingly skeptical of the application of God's Word to contemporary life and therefore, many have chosen not to listen. I am

thankful that God's Sovereignty and the Authority of His Inspired Word are not subject to the fickleness of our society. The power of His Name and the Revelation of His love through His Divine Word transcend the cynicism of our world and offer the only real Hope for being reconciled to a Holy God. I pray you always preach His Truth with conviction and power with the hope that some will hear and respond faithfully to God's call on their life. First Corinthians 1:18 reads, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

This issue of the *Bulletin* is dedicated to the Word of God. I trust this issue will encourage you and that you will be motivated to thoughtfully engage our secular culture with the Truth and power of His Word.

God is so gracious to allow you and me to serve as His instruments to build and equip His Church. I pray He uses this publication to be a blessing to your ministry.

For His Glory,


Charles A. Fowler