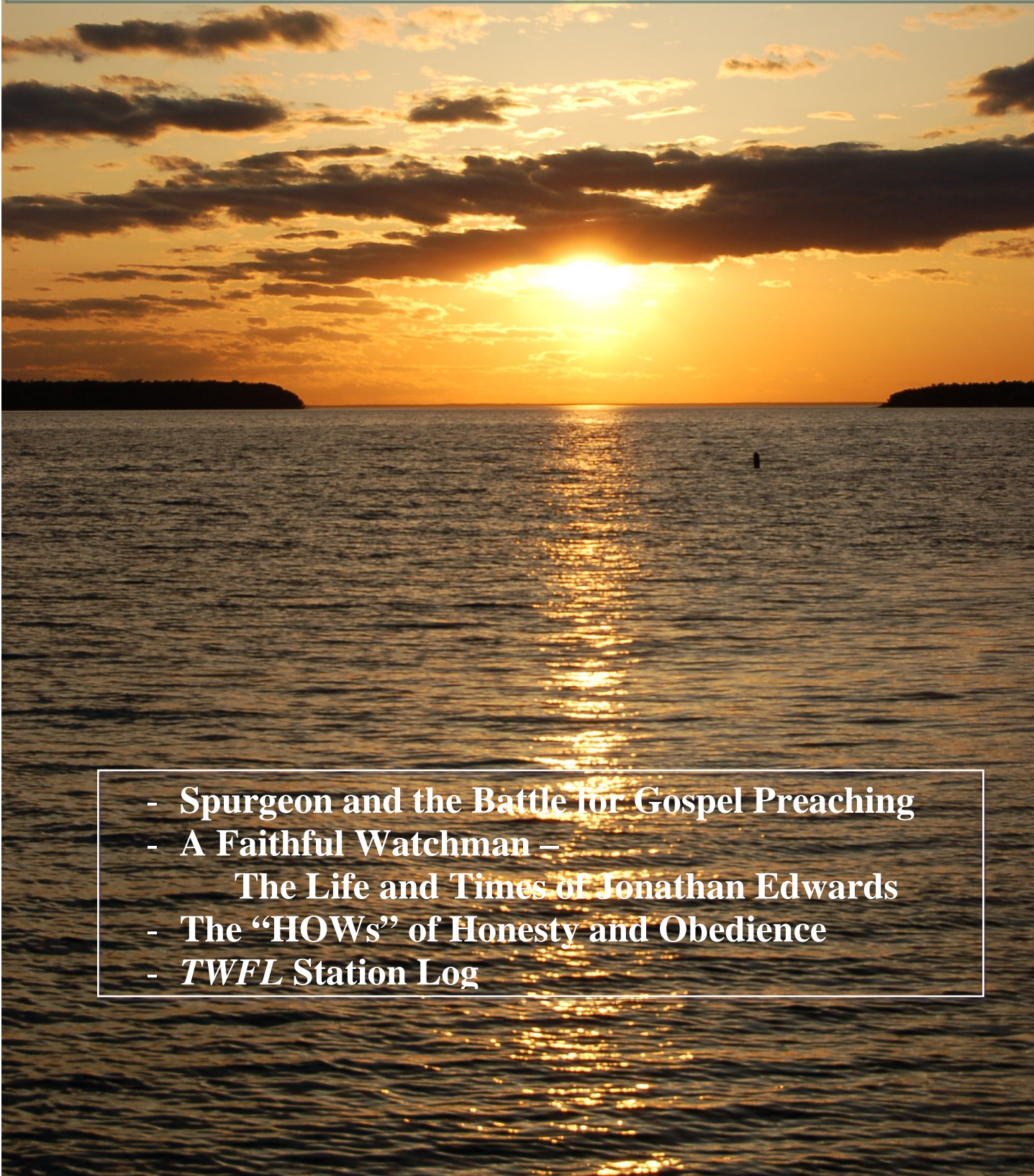



TRUTH TALK

A PUBLICATION OF THE WORD FOR LIFE

Helping you live a God-centered, truth-driven life

June, 2010

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- Spurgeon and the Battle for Gospel Preaching
 - A Faithful Watchman –
The Life and Times of Jonathan Edwards
 - The “HOWs” of Honesty and Obedience
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THE Word FOR Life
Helping You Live a God-Centered, Truth-Driven Life

*Join us as we “take a break” from
Psalm 119
for a few months
to study some
topics that are relevant for today.*

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*Cover Photo: Sunset in Ephraim, Door County, Wisconsin,
Richard Melzer, Photographer*

TRUTH TALK

Spurgeon and the Battle for Gospel Preaching

Most students of preaching are familiar with the unusual ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. His rich spiritual heritage has been chronicled in scores of biographies related to his life. However, one aspect of his ministry has received little attention until recently – the prolonged doctrinal controversy surrounding his practice of openly inviting all men to respond to the invitation of the gospel. The details of this controversy have been set forth by Iain Murray in his book *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching* published in 1995 by Banner of Truth. In our day, a similar controversy is unfolding. Ironically, both sides claim Spurgeon as a champion for their views. Some whose preaching has a strong emphasis on human responsibility are often unfairly accused of being Arminian or even Semi-pelagianists. On the other hand, those who claim to follow the biblical teachings that Calvin later adopted are unfairly accused by the other side of holding a twisted

and life-killing theological system. Sadly, the misrepresentations have grown so great that even those who adhere to the particular system being attacked would reject their theological position as it is articulated by the opposing side. It is my contention that Spurgeon found himself embroiled in circumstances similar to the ones present today. Perhaps what Spurgeon experienced will be a stimulus to help both sides seek to live together in truth and harmony. To that end, let us listen to what Spurgeon has to say.

Though he clearly did not espouse Arminianism, Spurgeon exercised a charity toward those with whom he disagreed that is sadly lacking in the present controversy.

There is no soul living who holds more firmly to the doctrines of grace than I do, and if any man asks me whether I am ashamed to be called a Calvinist, I answer – I wish to be called nothing

but a Christian; but if you ask me, I do hold the doctrinal views which were held by John Calvin, I reply, I do in the main hold them, and rejoice to avow it. But far be it from me even to imagine that Zion contains none but Calvinistic Christians within her walls, or that there are none saved who do not hold our views. Most atrocious things have been spoken about the character and spiritual condition of John Wesley, the modern prince of Arminians. I can only say concerning him that, while I detest many of the doctrines which he preached, yet for the man himself I have a reverence second to no Wesleyan; and if there were wanted two apostles to be added to the number of the twelve, I do not believe that there could be found two men more fit to be so added than George Whitefield and John Wesley I believe there are multitudes of men who cannot see these truths, or, at least, cannot see them in the way in which we put them, who nevertheless have

received Christ as their saviour, and are dear to the heart of the God of grace as the soundest Calvinist in or out of Heaven.

Spurgeon also rejected Hyper-Calvinism and insisted on the necessity of preserving the theological tension found in Scripture regarding these matters.

The system of truth revealed in the Scriptures is not simply one straight line, but two; and no man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once. For instance, I read in one book of the Bible, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, Come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Yet I am taught, in another part of the same inspired Word, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." I see, in one place, God in providence presiding over all, and yet I see,

and I cannot help seeing, that man acts as he pleases, and that God has left his actions, in a great measure, to his own free-will. Now, if I were to declare that man was so free to act that there was no control of God over his actions, I should be driven very near to atheism; and if, on the other hand, I should declare that God so over-rules all things that man is not free enough to be responsible, I should be driven at once to Antinomianism, or fatalism. That God predestines, and yet that man is responsible, are two facts that few can see clearly. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory, but they are not. The fault is in our own weak judgment. Two truths cannot be contradictory to each other.

Additionally, he insisted that universal gospel invitations are both biblical and necessary.

Grown up among us is a school of men who say that they rightly preach the gospel

to sinners when they merely deliver statements of what the gospel is, and the result of dying unsaved, but they grow furious and talk of unsoundness if any venture to say to the sinner, “Believe,” or “Repent.” To this school Peter did not belong—into their secret he had never come, and with their assembly, were he alive now, he would not be joined.

Murray’s conclusion is perhaps the most impacting part of the book. I close with a portion of a message preached by Spurgeon on this topic in 1859 that is as relevant today as it was when it was first preached.

Even in Christian families, what evil will a distorted gospel produce! I have seen the young believer, just saved from sin, happy in his early Christian career, and walking humbly with his God. But evil has crept in, disguised in the mantle of truth. The finger of partial blindness was laid upon their eyes, and but one doctrine could be

seen. Sovereignty was seen, but not responsibility. The minister once beloved was hated; he who had been honest to preach God's Word, was accounted as the off-scouring of all things. And what became the effect? The very reverse of good and gracious. Bigotry usurped the place of love; bitterness lived where once there had been a loveliness of character. I could point you to innumerable instances where harping upon one peculiar doctrine has driven men to excess of bigotry and bitterness. And when a man has once come there, he is ready enough for sin of any kind to which the devil may please to tempt him. There is a necessity that the whole gospel should be preached, or else the spirits, even of Christians, will become marred and maimed. I have known men diligent for Christ, labouring to win souls with both hands; and on a sudden they have espoused one particular doctrine and not the whole truth,

and they have subsided into lethargy. On the other hand, where men have only taken the practical side of the truth, and left out the doctrinal, too many professors have run over into legality, have talked as if they were to be saved by works, and have almost forgotten that grace by which they were called. . . . Let me get but one part of the truth, and always dwell upon it, to the exclusion of every other, and I cannot expect my Master's blessing. If I preach as he would have me preach, he will certainly own the word; he will never leave it without his own living witness. But let me imagine that I can improve the gospel, that I can make it consistent, that I can dress it up and make it look finer, I shall find that my Master is departed, and that Ichabod is written on the walls of the sanctuary. How many there are kept in bondage through neglect of gospel invitations.

TRUTH TALK

A Faithful Watchman – The Life and Times of Jonathan Edwards

Some weeks ago I began a biography that I had no real intention of finishing. Frankly, at the present time the evangelical world seems overly enamored with all things “Edwardian,” and so another biography on the life of Jonathan Edwards was not met with enthusiastic anticipation on my part. However, the more I read, the more I was caught up and before I knew it, I had turned the last page and was disappointed to have arrived at the end.

Written by Douglas Sweeney, a church history professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, *Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word* is a concise and captivating summary of the life and ministry of one of the most influential Protestant theologians to appear in America. It was pub-

lished by InterVarsity Press in 2009 and is readily available for purchase online.

In his introduction, Sweeney concedes that an abundance of material has been written on Edwards’ life and ministry. “He remains one of the best-studied figures in our past. But few have written books on Edwards aimed at fellow Christians, people looking for a state-of-the-art discussion of his life in order to use him as a model of Christian faith and ministry. This is such a book.” And indeed it is!

I found the introduction to be uncommonly interesting and of great help in understanding both Edwards and his ministry context. Sweeney sets out to describe what life was like in Edwards’ world in an effort to show how religion, in

general, and Protestant theology, in particular, was much more integrated into the warp and woof of the culture and daily life of society in that day – and this played a significant factor in the success of Edwards’ varied ministry in the Word.

One sample should suffice to illustrate the value of this chapter. “In sum, Puritan New England may have been the most biblically-oriented and literate society in the world before the time of Edwards’ ministry. Its inhabitants owned no televisions, went without the Internet, and had no access to cell phones or video games. Their skies were dark at night, pitch-black on cloudy nights. They had no light bulbs, gas lights or even the means to power them. Most would spend their evenings reading or socializing by candlelight, or huddling round the fire, ruminating about the things that mattered most. Moreover, even during the day, while working hard to make ends meet, Puritans thought about the Bible and the challenges of faith.” In this context, the pastor-theologian occu-

pled a prominent place – and the chiefest of them was Edwards.

The first two chapters deal with Edwards’ early years, his conversion to Christ, and his first ministry experiences. I was personally struck by the innovativeness of Edwards’ ministry and its radical departure from what had come to pass for preaching in the pulpits of his day. While his sermons may seem obtuse to our modern ear (or eye), they were vibrant, engaging, and relevant messages that powerfully impacted his hearers.

However, by the far the most valuable chapter in the book, in my opinion, is the fourth chapter entitled, “Try the Spirits.” Sweeney has captured the essence of the religious awakenings for which Edwards is so well-known, and presented multiple facets of those awakenings in a wonderfully concise manner, while managing to provide the reader with the information necessary for properly evaluating them.

To be honest, I was captivated by this chapter. I felt as though I had

a ring-side seat to the joy, the concern, and the disappointment that Edwards felt at different points during these strange and marvelous doings of the Lord. Sweeney's summary of Edwards' assessment of the marks of a true work of God, as opposed to a false work, are worth the price of the book.

Also, buried in this chapter was a nugget I had not expected to find. Sweeney took time to explain Edwards' long-standing opposition to Arminianism by identifying the essence of his concern. "Edwards probably never met an evangelical Arminian. He would later hear of the Wesley brothers' Methodist Arminianism. His own neck of the wood, though, was dominated by Calvinists. New Englanders associated Arminianism with liberalism – broad-minded, moralistic, rationalistic liberalism. "Arminian, to Edwards, meant

"Arminian, to Edwards, meant opposed to the Reformation and its glorious doctrines of grace, opposed to the biblical truth that sinners are saved supernaturally – and only supernaturally – by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone."

opposed to the Reformation and its glorious doctrines of grace, opposed to the biblical truth that sinners are saved supernaturally – and only supernaturally – by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone." This helped me to

set Edwards' strong statements against Arminianism in a more defined context.

The fifth chapter is almost as helpful. Sweeney surveys and explains the basic tenets of several of Edwards' most important literary contributions. For a reader with only passing familiarity with Edwards' writings, this chapter is a must read. For instance, I have not read a clearer or more helpful summary of Edwards' famous work, *The Freedom of the Will*.

The illustrations that Sweeney pulls out to show what Edwards means, as well as what he doesn't mean, are priceless!

The sixth chapter makes a compelling case for Edwards' theology as the fountain for the modern missions movement. In a day when many are leveling reckless charges against the gospel fervor of those who are more Calvinistic than they, this chapter stands as an undeniable rebuttal and as a testimony that both Calvinists and Arminianists have been greatly used to advance the gospel in spite of their theological differences.

Sweeney ends this wonderful little biography by posing seven theses to his readers in an effort to get

them to bridge Edwards' world and their own. These observations cut through the theological and ministerial distance and bring home valuable and indispensable lessons from Edwards' life and ministry that are of great benefit to modern ministers and their congregations. While we are not called to duplicate Edwards' ministry, we can profit from it.

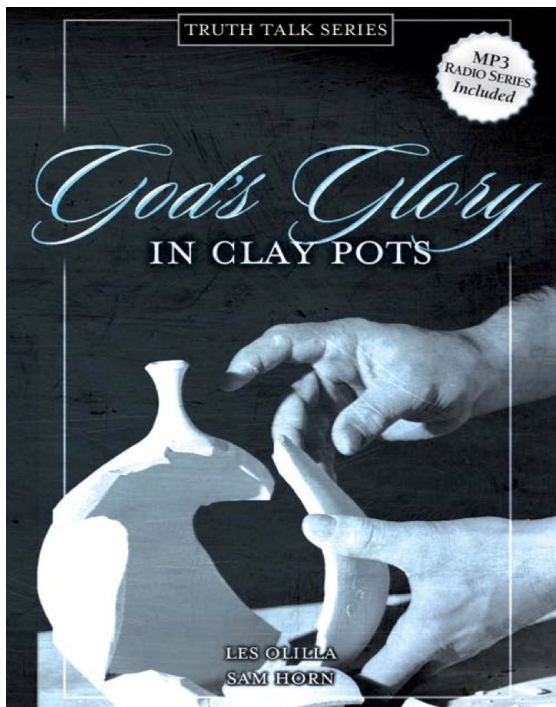
So, I would encourage you to pick up your own copy of Sweeney's biography and read for yourself what has been such a wonderful blessing to me.



Dr. Sam Horn is the featured teacher and Host of The Word For Life, Senior Pastor of Brookside Baptist Church in Brookfield, Wisconsin, and Vice President of Ministerial Training at Northland International University in Dunbar, Wisconsin.

NEW BOOK RELEASE!

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THE “HOWS” OF HONESTY AND OBEEDIENCE

Life is a Vapor – Part 14

Join Pastor Sam Horn (SH) and Dr. Les Ollila (LO) for a discussion that originally aired on THE WORD FOR LIFE.

SH: Good morning! With me in the studio this morning is my co-host, Dr. Les Ollila who is the Chancellor of Northland International University. We have had an exciting study, and I'm sad that it is nearing the end. We've been talking now for a number of our programs on the topic, what is your life...the question that James asks in chapter 4 of his letter. Doc, you've given us some great teaching, and we've answered that question in many different ways. We started out by talking about Joseph.

LO: We started with Joseph, used some illustrations from Lot's life, and then went on to David's life.

SH: We looked at how God took flawed men, and yet in the midst of all of their flaws and all of the difficulties of their circumstances, He was able to use their lives and make their lives count. This comes back to the verse that you started with..."Teach us to number our days and to apply wisdom to our hearts." That's how we want to end. I know that as a counselor and as a preacher, and with your ministry in revivals, you have observed how people have applied the principles we have been talking about. I'd like you to comment on that. I know you call them the "HOWs" of the Christian life.

LO: When we were in revival ministries, we would always start out by combining Sunday School classes and then continuing on into the morning service. We would emphasize two key words for that time together. We would plan on a ten or eleven-day meeting, but then if it was evident that the Lord would have us go on longer, we would do so.

But it started with two key words. The first word was “honesty,” and the second word was “obedience.” We’d talk about making a commitment to be honest...when God shows us something in our lives, we must be honest about that.

That’s really the essence of confession – agreeing with God about my sin. When God shows us, we must be obedient. Honesty is really the basis of God beginning to work in our lives...when we are willing to get honest about our condition.

Honesty is really the basis of God beginning to work in our lives...when we are willing to get honest about our condition.

The parable of the four grounds is interesting. The seed was broadcast and some fell on the wayside, which is the hardened path, with no penetration. Some fell on stony ground, and it’s not picturing a surface of all little rocks. It was solid rock underneath a layer of thin soil, and no fruit took place. Then there was the thorny ground, where the seed seemingly got choked.

But then we read about the good ground in Luke 8:15, “But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” There are two different words that are indicating good, but the first one indicates an honest heart. That is the beginning of fruit in the life.

SH: I heard someone describe honesty as being transparent in appropriate ways about my life to God and others. How do you define honesty?

LO: It is getting to the “what I am” level in my life, where I tear off the masks.

SH: What do you mean by the “what I am” level?

LO: Several years ago I heard a man from a radio communications background speak on five levels of communication. I thought how fitting that was, and how clearly it fit Scripture. The first level that he mentioned is the cliché level.

This is the level of “what I am not,” or you could call it the horseplay level. That doesn’t reveal what I really am. It’s like you and me joking back and forth. It could be with a total stranger...someone you don’t know at all that you’re joking with. So that’s the cliché level...that’s “what I am not.”

Then there’s the information level...that’s “what I know.” That would be teachers, preachers, communicators – people who are working as a boss in an organization communicating what they know. Even as lay people, we do this all the time. We can be standing in a post office line with a

stranger and say, “Boy, it’s cold...20 below zero!” We know these are truths, and we communicate what we know.

SH: You see, the people in Florida would never understand that.

LO: No. No. Be a part of the frozen few.

SH: Yes. “This isn’t even cold weather,” they’d say.

LO: Many are called and few are frozen. Then there’s the third level, which is the intellectual level...that’s “what I think.” This gets a little deeper – it is revealing the heart of my opinion. When we go through a political season, we hear a lot of intellectual communication. Not only information, but we begin to understand what we really think about the issues and candidates.

Sometimes in church business meetings, people go from information level to intellectual level. Going from “what I know” to “what I think” about this matter. They’re communicating, and often in a way we have never seen

before. Suddenly they reveal a little more about themselves.

The fourth level is the emotion level...that's "what I feel." Most people do not reveal that.

SH: So, first is the cliché level, and then there is the information level, "what I know." Then there's the intellectual level, "what I think," and now we're at the emotional level, or "what I feel" about what I think.

LO: Right. A parent, for example, would reflect this in expressing love for a child or a disappointment in a child by tears or by laughter, by rejoicing. At the level of "what I feel," the peak level is "what I am."

Now, when you look through the Scriptures, God is always trying to get us to the "what I am" level. Isaiah, the prophet, who was used so greatly, said when King Uzziah died, that he saw the Lord high and lifted up. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts." And Isaiah said, "Woe is me, for I am undone." He got a new concept of God, which gave him a new con-

cept of himself, which brought a new confession, a new cleansing, a new commission. There was "Here am I." That's location. "Send me." That's locomotion. But how did he get to that new commission? It came from that step of cleansing that came from honesty-- this is "what I am."

SH: And that's so hard to get to as people.

LO: It is hard.

SH: What makes it hard for us?

LO: Pride – I want to protect myself.

SH: We just finished talking about David in a prior broadcast, and we noted that David ended up falling and was restored. We ended on an incredible positive note about his restoration, but there's a year-long period where he didn't get to the "what I am" level. Psalm 32 says, "When I kept silence...your hand was heavy upon me."

LO: He cried out in Psalm 51, and he wanted to be restored back

to that level. He had always lived as a transparent person. He'd always lived as an honest person.

I think the best Bible character that pictured these progressions is Peter. What was Jesus trying to get Peter to do? Trying to get Peter to admit what he was.

Jesus told Peter, "You don't know what you are, Peter. You will deny me." And Peter said, "No, no, no." So you see Peter on the cliché level. He said, "I will never do that."

You see Peter on the information level in Matthew, chapter 16, and Jesus said, "Who do men say that I am?" Well, one responded that He was John the Baptist or that He was Elijah. And then Jesus said, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Perfect information communicated.

SH: You don't get any better than that.

LO: No. You don't get any better, because it was accurate in-

formation. So we saw that about Peter. Then we saw Peter on the intellectual level. Jesus, in that same chapter, tells them that He must die. Peter said, "Far be that from you, Lord." He knew the Messiah was there, and he didn't want the plan messed up!

SH: Yes. He knew all the verses, didn't he?

LO: He knew the information, but now we see intellectually he started giving Jesus his opinion about what he thought about that plan. And Jesus said, "Get thee behind me, Satan. Thou savorest not the things of God." Peter revealed another piece of himself.

SH: What he revealed was what he was thinking fleshly. In other words, he was thinking like the world was thinking.

LO: Right. He was thinking for self benefit...who would sit on His right hand.

LO: Then they got to the level of emotion. Malchus got a hint of Peter's emotion when he lost an ear. Whether Peter was bad at

aiming that sword or whether Malchus ducked and Peter got an ear instead of a neck, we don't know. But we do know that Peter got very distraught, and we saw him very emotional. But what point was Jesus trying to get him to? He was trying to get Peter to admit what he was...the "what I am" level, which we call the level of revival.

You see this very clearly in Nehemiah, chapter 8, when the people heard the truth and acknowledged "Amen, amen." They confessed in chapter 9. They read a fourth part of the day and confessed a fourth part of the day because they were getting honest about what was being revealed about them.

Finally, Jesus said to Peter, "You'll deny me three times before the rooster crows." And the rooster began to crow and Peter finally got to the "what I am" level. Even when Jesus came and said, "Cast your nets on the other side," and out came out a great

draught of fish, Peter said, "Depart from me Lord, for I am a sinful man." Jesus was showing who He was. This proud fisherman who knew the trade was catching nothing, but yet we see Jesus came and did the miracle.

SH: And what's interesting is, as soon as Peter broke...as soon as Peter got to the "what I am" level, that's when he became most usable.

...as soon as Peter broke...as soon as Peter got to the "what I am" level, that's when he became the most usable.

LO: You see the powerful preacher at Pentecost, imbued with power from on high. Every place where Peter was strong, Jesus broke him. He was strong in loyalty and strong physically. Every place he considered himself strong, God showed

him he was weak in order that God might show Himself mighty through Peter.

That's really where God wants to get all of us...when we finally acknowledge what we are. And how much more refreshing it would be to go to church, and when someone asks how you are,

you would get honest with them. You could say, “Frankly do you have a few minutes, I need you to pray with me.” It’s important to say, “This is what I am,” and get

to the point where we are willing to be honest.

SH: We’ll never get to the next level till we get to that level first.



Dr. Sam Horn, Host of The Word For Life, and the Senior Pastor of Brookside Baptist Church in Brookfield, Wisconsin.



Dr. Les Ollila, Co-host of The Word For Life, and the Chancellor of Northland International University in Dunbar, Wisconsin.



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THE Word FOR Life

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Following is a testimony from one of our listeners:

Dr. O. and Brother Sam, thanks for the fellowship around the Word...my own cup of coffee tastes so much better as I sit and listen early in the morning with you. Thanks for the fellowship, exhortation, encouragement, and excitement to live for our Lord Jesus Christ! Psalm 73:28, “But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works.” - John



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