

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

A Controversial Newsletter "The Printed Voice of Summit Theological Seminary"

~ All articles written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

Vol. 39 No. 4

October 2026

Terry Carter, Editor

Beauty in Death A Communion Meditation



When you see the leaves change colors in the fall, most of us think first and foremost of the beauty of that time of year. But when you stop and think about it, what you are really seeing is the death of all those leaves. How is it that there can be so much beauty in so much death? Only God can do that.

When the leaves die in the fall and fall off the trees, there is also hope. The leaves die so that the tree can go into a dormant state and not be harmed by the harsh winter weather. By doing this, the tree is protected so that, in the spring, it can reawaken to new life.

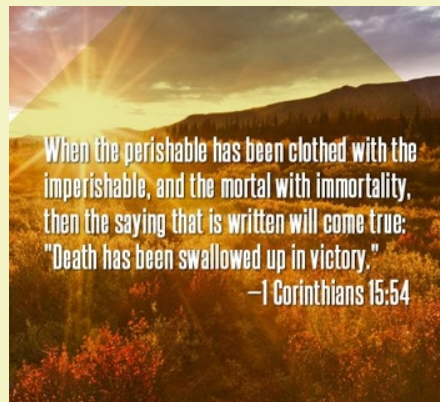
God has also created both beauty and hope in the death of His Son, Jesus. When we come together to remember the death of Jesus, it is a beautiful thing because it reminds us of the love He has for us. He died so that we might live.

His death protects us from the harsh punishment of sin so that we have hope. When we face our own death, we have the hope that, at His return, we will awaken to new life.

God has turned even death into a beautiful thing that is filled with hope.

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that **through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,**" **Hebrews 2:14 (NKJV)**

As we partake, let us be mindful of the beauty of God's love for us and the hope of our own resurrection to new life both found in the death of our Savior, Jesus.



What Is Your Sermon Sunday?

By Mike Roberts



There is a dangerous temptation that quietly works its way into the heart of every preacher. It is the temptation to preach what people prefer to hear rather than what people genuinely need to hear.

In a culture driven by preference, comfort, and approval, even preaching can slowly become shaped more by audience expectation than by divine burden. Sermons can become polished presentations designed to encourage attendance, maintain momentum, or avoid discomfort. Yet when we study the ministry of Jeremiah, we are confronted with a prophet who preached with an entirely different priority. Jeremiah did not preach according to popularity. He preached according to necessity.

That reality forces every preacher to ask a serious question: "What is your sermon Sunday?"

Not simply: "What can I preach?" or "What will people enjoy?" but rather: "What does the congregation spiritually need to hear?"

Jeremiah ministered during one of the darkest spiritual periods in Judah's history. The people still attended the Temple. Religion was active. Worship activities continued. Yet beneath the outward appearance of spirituality was a nation filled with idolatry, compromise, injustice, and rebellion against God. The tragedy was not that Judah had abandoned religion; the tragedy was that they had substituted religious appearance for genuine repentance.

What made Jeremiah's ministry so difficult was that he often stood in direct opposition to the messages people preferred. While false prophets promised peace, safety, and blessing, Jeremiah preached repentance, judgment, and surrender to God's discipline. False prophets told the people what would calm them. Jeremiah told them what could save them. The difference was not merely tone. It was truth.

Modern church culture faces a similar danger. Congregations can become accustomed to sermons that inspire emotionally while never confronting spiritually. Churches can unintentionally reward messages that are

comfortable, motivational, and affirming while resisting preaching that exposes sin, calls for repentance, or demands surrender. In that environment, preachers must constantly guard their hearts from becoming servants of preference rather than servants of truth.

Jeremiah reminds us that faithful preaching is not determined by applause, visible response, or immediate popularity. Jeremiah preached for decades with little outward success. He was rejected, opposed, isolated, and often emotionally exhausted. Yet he remained faithful because his assignment was not to manufacture acceptance but to deliver God's Word.

That is one of the most sobering lessons for modern ministry.

A preacher's responsibility is not merely to discern what people want discussed. It is to prayerfully discern what God is saying to His people in the present moment. Sometimes that message will encourage. Sometimes it will comfort. Sometimes it will strengthen. But at other times it must confront, correct, warn, and call people back to covenant faithfulness.

Jeremiah also teaches us that true preaching requires spiritual courage. It takes courage to preach against cultural drift. It takes courage to address hidden compromise. It takes courage to speak about repentance in an age that prefers affirmation. Yet

throughout Jeremiah's ministry, God continually reminded the prophet not to fear the faces of men but to faithfully proclaim the message he had been given.

Every preacher eventually decides which voice matters most: the voice of public approval or the voice of divine commission.

One of the most revealing moments in Jeremiah occurs when false prophet Hananiah publicly contradicts Jeremiah's warning from God. Hananiah preached the message everyone wanted to hear that peace was coming quickly, Babylon would fall, and everything would soon return to normal. Jeremiah's message sounded heavy, difficult, and unpopular by comparison. Yet history proved that truth is not measured by how comforting it feels in the moment.

The Church today desperately needs preaching that carries both truth and burden. Not angry preaching. Not sensational preaching. But preaching shaped by conviction, Biblical authority, and genuine love for God's people. Jeremiah wept over the same people he warned. His message was severe because his burden was sincere.

That is the deeper issue behind the question: "What is your sermon Sunday?"

The answer should not primarily come from trends, pressure, reaction, or convenience. It must come from time spent before God

with an open Bible and a discerning heart. Great preaching has never simply been the art of saying impressive things. Great preaching is the faithful delivery of what God knows His people need most.

The modern church does not merely need better communication. It needs prophetic clarity. It needs Biblical conviction. It needs courageous compassion. And it needs preachers who would rather be faithful than merely well-received.

Jeremiah's ministry reminds us that the success of a sermon is not always measured by immediate acceptance. Sometimes the most important sermons are the ones people resist first but remember later. Faithful preaching plants truth deeply enough that God may use it long after the sermon has ended.

So before preparing the next outline, choosing the next title, or selecting the next text, every preacher should pause long enough to ask: "What is my sermon Sunday?" And even more importantly: "Is this what God wants said to His people?"

Mike Roberts is the evangelist at Auburn Church of Christ in Auburn, Indiana.

Repent and Be Converted

In Acts 3, we have Peter's second recorded sermon after the Holy Spirit fell on the Apostles in

chapter 2. It came on the heels of the lame man being healed at the Temple.

In verse 19, Peter instructs his listeners as to what they need to do to have their "sins blotted out" and receive "times of refreshing from the Lord". The **NKJV** translates this verse as follows:

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord," Acts 3:19 (NKJV)

The way that this reads in the **NKJV**, it looks like conversion is a passive act. That is, it looks like conversion is something that happens to you rather than something that you actively do. However, that is not the idea that is expressed in the original Greek.

It seems that the **NKJV** simply followed the lead of the **KJV** here.

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;" Acts 3:19 (KJV)

It is worth noting that several other translations render this in an active voice as seen in several examples below:

"Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord;" (ASV)

"Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be

blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord," **(RSV)**

"Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;" (NASB)

"19 Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (ESV) Note: the ESV breaks verses 19 and 20 differently than most translations.

"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord," (NIV)

These translations have good reason to render this in an active voice rather than a passive one, because that is how the original Greek is worded.

Barnes says the following in reference to the **KJV** translation of "and be converted":

"This expression conveys an idea not at all to be found in the original. It conveys the idea of *passivity*, BE *converted*, as if they were to yield to some foreign influence that they were now resisting. But the idea of being *passive* in this is not conveyed in the original word. The word means properly to *turn*; to return to a path from which one has gone astray; and then to turn away from sins, or to forsake them. It is a word used in a general sense to denote the whole *turning* to God...The expression, therefore, would have been more appropriately rendered '*repent*,

and *turn*, '...To be converted cannot be a matter of obligation, but to turn to God is the duty of every sinner [emphasis his]."

Gareth Reese gives the following comments on this translation:

"Unfortunately, in the KJV this word has been translated 'be converted'; i.e. the verb is given in the passive sense – and this has given some support to the Calvinistic concept that in conversion the individual sinner is wholly passive and that conversion is a miraculous act brought about by the direct influence of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. It should be therefore noted that the verb (in the original) is an aorist ACTIVE [emphasis his] imperative, and indicates that the 'returning' is a responsibility that each individual man has."

Thus, the translations that render this in the passive voice are not true to the original language while those that render it in an active voice are.

There are a couple of other points that should be made about this verse:

First, this makes it clear that "to turn" is something more than "repentance". While repentance involves a change of mind, turning to God or turning back to God goes further than that. This leads us to the second thing that should be noted here.

Second, we must ask what it means to "turn" or "turn back" to God in this verse. Since this is a command, we must know what is meant and how to obey. The

results of repenting and turning to God are too important to miss. We all need our sins to be blotted out, and we all need times of refreshing from the Lord. Peter's intention here is probably best seen by noticing the parallel between this verse and Acts 2:38. In that passage, Peter is also instructing his listeners as to how they might have their sins forgiven.

"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" **Acts 2:38 (NKJV)**

Of course, Peter is not contradicting himself in these two verses. We see that these verses parallel each other wonderfully as we might expect. This parallel is shown below:

Acts 2:38	Acts 3:19
Repent	Repent
Be baptized	Turn to God
For the remission of sins	That your sins may be blotted out
Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit	Times of refreshing may come from the Lord

In both passages, there are two commands to be followed and two promises that are received as a result of obedience. It should be clear from this that the "times of refreshing from the Lord" is another way of referring to "the gift of the Holy Spirit". It should also be clear that "turning to God" is another way of saying "be baptized". In short, we turn to God by being baptized.

Was Mary Magdalene a Prostitute?



Mary Magdalene is probably one of the most misunderstood and misrepresented people mentioned in Scripture. There have been several books, TV programs, and even movies portraying Mary in any number of ways that go way beyond (and often contrary to) anything that the Scriptures record about her. This is not new; she has been portrayed in various ways throughout the history of Christianity.

The Scriptures are the only reliable source that we have for discovering who Mary really was and what role she played in the Gospels. Mary is only mentioned in twelve passages in the whole New Testament. While there are some things we learn from these passages, there are many other things that we are simply not told about her. This leads to some confusion as people are always wanting to invent things to "fill in the gaps".

Another fact that leads to confusion is that there are so many women named Mary that are mentioned in the New Testament. This causes confusion as it is sometimes difficult to know which Mary is referred to in any specific passage. Even attempting to make a list of these women can be difficult to do with certainty.

There are as many as seven different women who are named Mary.

1. Mary the mother of Jesus, **Luke 1:30-31**
2. Mary the sister of Lazarus and Martha, **John 11:1**
3. Mary the mother of James and Joses, **Matthew 27:56** (some believe that this is Jesus' mother Mary, **Matthew 13:55**)
4. Mary the wife of Clopas, **John 19:25**
5. Mary the mother of John Mark, **Acts 12:12**
6. Mary a laborer at Rome, **Romans 16:6**
7. Mary Magdalene, **Luke 8:2**

Sometimes Mary Magdalene is equated to, and confused with, one or more of the other women with the same name which leads to even more confusion. When someone calls me and says, "This is Bob," I usually have to ask which Bob I am talking to as I know several. The same thing is true with names like "John", or "Mike", etc.

Here is a list of the twelve passages in the New Testament which certainly mention Mary Magdalene: **Matthew 27:55-56, 27:61, 28:1, Mark 15:40-41, 15:47, 16:1, 16:9-11, Luke 8:2-3, 24:10-11, John 19:25-26, 20:1, 20:11-18**. It is probably worth noting here that she is specifically called, "Mary Magdalene" in twelve of the verses listed above. Although we cannot be dogmatic about this, it seems that she is referred to this way to make it clear which Mary is being referred to. That may indicate that any time we read of "Mary" without the additional designation of

"Magdalene" that it is a different Mary being referred to.

From the twelve passages named above, we learn the following things about Mary Magdalene:

1. Jesus cast seven demons from her.
2. She was one of the women from Galilee that ministered to Jesus.
3. This group likely provided financial support.
4. She was at the cross.
5. She was at the tomb as Jesus was buried.
6. She came to the tomb on Sunday morning to finish anointing His body with spices.
7. She was the first witness of the resurrection outside of the soldiers at the tomb.

There are some other observations that we could make from these passages, but these are the main ones for our purpose here. However, there are two things that we do not find in any of these passages which are key to this discussion:

1. There is no mention of her being a prostitute.
2. We do not see her anointing Jesus in any of these passages.

Since the Bible nowhere calls Mary Magdalene a prostitute, why do so many people believe that she was? The answer to this has to do with passages that do not mention Mary Magdalene at all. First is the passage in Luke where a woman anointed the feet of Jesus with fragrant oil from an alabaster flask.

"36 Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. 37 And behold, **a woman in the city who was a sinner**, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, 38 and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil." **Luke 7:36-38 (NKJV)**

There are two things to notice carefully about this incident:

1. The woman who anointed Jesus' feet is unnamed.
2. Though she is called a sinner, her sin is not specified. She is certainly not called a prostitute. It is possible that that was her sin, but such a conclusion is nothing more than an assumption.

This incident, recorded by Luke, gets associated with Mary Magdalene because people connect it with the incident that John records of Mary, the sister of Lazarus, anointing Jesus' feet with the costly spikenard.

"1 Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. 2 There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. 3 **Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair.** And the house was

filled with the fragrance of the oil. 4 Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, 5 'Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?' 6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. 7 But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. 8 'For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always.'" **John 12:1-8 (NKJV)**

John makes it clear that this Mary is the sister of Lazarus.

"1 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 **It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.**" **John 11:1-2 (NKJV)**

There are some who have tried to argue that this is the same incident that Luke recorded. Their arguments are not convincing but that is a topic for a separate article. However, even if they could prove that Mary, the sister of Lazarus, was the woman in Luke, this still falls short of proving that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute for two important reasons:

1. They would still need to prove that Mary, the sister of Lazarus, is the same person as Mary Magdalene. While some try to argue this, there is certainly no proof.
2. They would have to prove that the sinful woman in Luke was, in fact, a

prostitute. This is merely an assumption on their part.

The truth is that none of the women in the New Testament who are called Mary are referred to as a prostitute. The idea that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute seems to have originated from Gregory I in 591 A.D. In a sermon that he preached on Luke 7, he equated Mary, the sister of Lazarus, with Mary Magdalene and the sinful woman in his text. He then concluded that the sin of this woman must be immorality. Though he never called her a prostitute, that seemed to be the implication. This then became the official position of the Roman Catholic Church until the Vatican issued a retraction in 1969. Interestingly, the Eastern Orthodox Church never claimed that Mary Magdalene was the same as Mary the sister of Lazarus.

There is an important lesson in all of this for everyone, but especially for those who teach and preach. Be careful you have your facts straight before you speak.

"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment." **James 3:1 (NKJV)**

While it is easy to pass along common misconceptions, it is not good teaching or preaching. Further, it does injury to the reputation of Biblical figures that they simply do not deserve. Yes, Mary Magdalene had seven demons that Jesus cast out, but she is not called a prostitute in the Scripture.

The Thief Comes to Destroy



One Sunday morning, as I was driving to the congregation where I was scheduled to preach, I passed an old church building. The building had obviously been abandoned some time back. What caught my attention that day was that some workers were carrying debris out of the building and throwing it into a dumpster. It was obvious that they were doing some demolition work inside.

It struck me as strange that they would be doing this on a Sunday morning. After all, shouldn't they be worshipping? It just seemed so wrong that men would be tearing things down in a church building on a Sunday morning of all times. On my way home later, they were still hard at work destroying what was inside.

This got me to thinking. I wonder how many people go to church on Sunday morning to destroy it. They are not there to worship, encourage and edify others, learn and grow; they are there to destroy. They may get there early and stay late, but they are not there with good intentions.

As I considered this, I was reminded of what Jesus said about the thief.

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to

destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” **John 10:10 (NKJV)**

Thieves take the very thing that is meant to bring abundant life to us as Christians and turn it into an opportunity to steal our joy, kill our enthusiasm, and destroy the Lord’s Church.

Paul warned us about destroying the temple of the Lord (the Church).

“If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” **I Corinthians 3:17 (NKJV)**

The Greek word that is translated “defiles” in the **NKJV** has the idea of destroying or tearing down as some versions render it here.

Later in this letter to the Corinthian Church, Paul told them that they came together for the worse, not the better because of their divisions.

“17 Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since **you come together not for the better but for the worse.** 18 For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that **there are divisions among you,** and in part I believe it.” **I Corinthians 11:17-18 (NKJV)**

Our attitudes, motives, and behaviors matter when we come to the assembly. If we come to divide, defile, destroy, or tear down the Lord’s Church, the Lord will destroy you. It is noteworthy that just a few verses after this

rebuke, Paul instructs us to examine ourselves when we partake of the Lord’s Supper.

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” **I Corinthians 11:28 (NKJV)**

Paul further says that if we would judge ourselves, we will not be judged.

“For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.” I Corinthians 11:31 (NKJV)

Before we even leave our homes to go to the assembly, we ought to examine our attitudes. Are we going there to worship, encourage and edify, learn and grow, or to tear down and destroy? If it is the latter, perhaps we ought to stay home and not come together for the worse rather than the better. Our own salvation and the salvation of others just might be at stake. Do not act like a thief who destroys the sheep when you are supposed to be a sheep yourself. Do not come to church to demolish it; come there to build it up.

Do Not Worry

By Mike McDonald

Christians are not completely immune to anxiety. However, as Holy Spirit-filled followers of the will of God, we do have access to a God who cares for us and who will help us cope with this human reality. Consider, for instance, some things that have been discovered about human anxiety. Objective studies indicate that the average person’s anxiety is focused on...

- 40% - things that will never happen.
- 30% - things about the past that can’t be changed.
- 12% - things about criticism by others, mostly untrue.
- 10% - about health, which gets worse with stress.
- 8% - about real problems that will be faced.

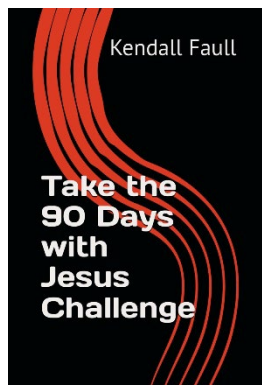
The greatest “real problem” is the reality of sin in life and the consequences thereof. This is the heaviest burden one can bear. By grace, God gave us Jesus Christ who pleads: “Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (**Matt. 11:28-30**).

“31 Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 “For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” **Matthew 6:31-34 (NKJV)**

TAKE YOUR BURDEN TO THE LORD & LEAVE IT THERE...

Mike McDonald is an elder at Millersburg Church of Christ in Millersburg, Indiana.

Available on Amazon!



Kendall Faull's popular study of the Gospels is now available on Amazon. This study will take you through the Gospels in 90 days. This study is great

for individuals as well as groups. This book also includes the small group study guide for these lessons.

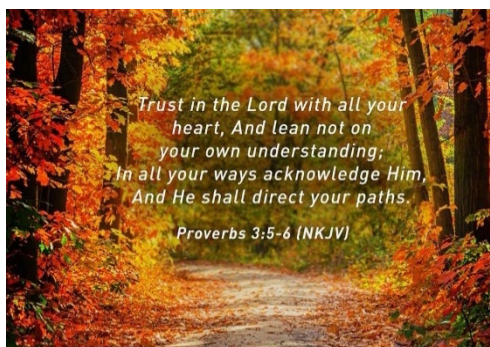
LEAP Seminar

Spring LEAP Seminar with Charley Gerber speaking on the Prodigal Son. Dates to be announced soon.

To Renew Subscription

Be sure to renew your subscription before your expiration date by submitting your payment via mail, calling the office, or at www.summit1.org. The cost of *The Gospel Unashamed* subscription is \$5.00 per year.

Note: If your address has changed, please notify us at office@summit1.org.



Important Notice

Beginning in 2027, the cost of the *Gospel Unashamed* subscription will increase to \$7.00 per year for mailed copies. Also, in 2027, we will begin offering the *Gospel Unashamed* subscription to be delivered via email for \$5.00 per year. Electronic delivery will ensure that your copy makes it to you in a timely manner and intact. If you would like to switch your subscription to be delivered electronically starting in 2027, please contact us at (765) 472-4111 or office@summit1.org and provide us with your email address. Otherwise, we will continue to mail your subscription to you.

Professor Books Available on Amazon

