

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

A1340 – October 6, 2013 – 2 Corinthians 5:11
Persuading Men

Last week we continued the theme of the ministry in 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 and this week we want to press further. To do so let's review briefly what we saw last week in the context of chapters 4-5. Paul is discussing his suffering due to the ministry and yet the courage he has in continuing to minister because of the certainty of resurrection. In 4:14 his certainty is based on Christ's resurrection; in 5:5 his certainty is based on the fact that God gave us the Spirit as a down payment. Therefore in 5:6 we are "always of good courage." We fearlessly preach the gospel message. Further, he knows "that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the" resurrection presence of the "Lord" and therefore, verse 7, the way we must "walk" is "by faith, not by sight." We have to live by faith because Jesus' resurrection body is outside of our visual field as He is seated at the right hand of the Father. Nevertheless, verse 8, we would much prefer to be in Christ's resurrection presence in heaven. But in any case, verse 9, "we have as our ambition, whether" here in this body or there in His resurrection presence, "to be pleasing to Him," that is, to live in all respects of our life in a way that bears fruit and increases our knowledge of Him. The reason for such an ambition is verse 10, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for" what we have done with our Christian life, "whether good or bad."

In short, verse 10 is describing the judgment seat of Christ or the *bema*. The *bema* was a raised marble platform in the ancient world where judges heard individual cases. In a similar way Christ, the believer's judge, will evaluate us individually with respect to what we did with our Christian lives, whether good or bad. He will look at our lives as a whole and not piece by piece, but he will look at our Christian lives as a total package and will reward us accordingly.

Today we want to start by elaborating the doctrine of the judgment seat of Christ. This doctrine is causing division right now within the Free Grace movement. The Free Grace movement was started years ago in opposition to Lordship Salvation. It began to protect the integrity of the gospel. However, it has now divided into three groups because of internal disagreements. One of the disagreements causing these fractures is the nature of the judgment seat of Christ and what exactly Christ is going to judge? Are we going to be judged for our sins? If so then how does this fit with the work of Christ on the cross? Or is the judgment seat simply an evaluation of our service? These are serious questions that we have to answer biblically.

I want to show you three or four views so you see how far some people have gone and then try to express what I see to be the biblical view. First, some Christians say that we will face punitive judgment for our sins that result in exclusion from the millennium in the lake of fire, after which we will be released and go into eternal life. Faust says, “The unfaithful Christian goes to the same place as the unbeliever and hypocrite until after the millennium.”ⁱ This, Faust says, is corrective and necessary to fulfill the justice of God. So unfaithful Christians will spend 1,000 years in a sort of protestant purgatory before being raised eternal and entering into eternal life. A sermon preached by George Dollar at a church in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, taught the same thing of carnal believers. “For a thousand years when the Lord rules and reigns over the earth, you’ll not rule. But throughout that one thousand years, up there in the outer darkness there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”ⁱⁱ This millennial exclusion view is clearly extreme and contradicts John 3:3 that the only necessity of entering the kingdom of God is to be “born again.” It also divides the body of Christ since it places some outside the kingdom for the 1,000 years and others within. It seems clearly contrary to the work of Christ on the cross since Christ actually punishes some believers by not allowing them to enter the kingdom which He clearly taught in the gospels all would.

Others take a less extreme view and hold that all believers will enter the kingdom but will be bound and cast into outer darkness, not allowed to enter the joy of the wedding feast that initiates the kingdom. This outer darkness, we are told, is not a reference to hell, nor is it a literal place outside of the kingdom, but simply a metaphor for lack of joy. Joseph Dillow is

representative when he says, “We are to imagine...that there comes a point in the opening of the festivities where Christ says something like, “Please, lead outside the banquet those who have not have not [sic] kept on believing and those who have not endured with Me.”ⁱⁱⁱ So here Jesus would be dividing the body of Christ in the millennium, some would have joy and others would have weeping and gnashing of teeth which he explains as lack of joy. Is Jesus really going to do that to believers? This is again punitive because Jesus is punishing some believers for their failures in this life. Is He really going to do that? I don’t think so. The passages he marshals for support are passages like the parable of Matt 25 which is discussing Israel and the Kingdom not the Church and the judgment seat. Combined with this error he confuses the failure of elements within the servant nation Israel with believers in the Church. The results are dangerous.

Such views are not consistent with our condition at the judgment seat of Christ. Our sins have already been paid for by Christ on the cross once for all. We cannot be judged for them again. Further we have been counted righteous at the moment of faith in Christ. This righteousness is not an attribute of God but a legal declaration of righteous in God’s court. We therefore have a perfect standing before God. John 3:18, “He who believes in Him is not judged.” Finally, we are in resurrection bodies and therefore there simply is no sin to deal with. These passages and others exclude us from any penal judgment which was born on our behalf in the past by Christ, once for all.

Other Christians take less extreme views but still questionable. For example, popular Christian devotional author M.R. DeHaan says, “While the sin question is settled at Calvary, our walk is judged by God’s chastening in this life, and all unconfessed sin will be taken care of at the Judgment Seat of Christ.”^{iv} While most of what is said here is true the last portion about unconfessed sin being judged at the judgment seat seems strange considering the fact that we are in resurrection bodies and we are therefore totally without sin in any sense. Sin is something we are to take care of in this life by self-judgment and confession, 1 John 1:9. Paul says, “if we judged ourselves rightly we would not be judged.” That is to say, if we judge ourselves rightly we would confess our sins and thus avoid divine discipline. Many of the Corinthians were not judging themselves rightly and were consequently sick and some slept. God was disciplining them for their sin. However, when we stand before Him won’t we be in resurrection bodies? How

can we be judged for unconfessed sin if we are in resurrection bodies totally without sin? It makes no sense. The Scriptures teach clearly that when we are raised we will stand before Him blameless. For example, 1 Cor 1:7-8, “who will confirm you blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” and 1 Thess 3:13, “that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.” So we will not be judged for any unconfessed sin. We will have no sin nature or personal sin and so it is impossible that sin, whether by nature or by personal act, either confessed or unconfessed, will be the subject of the judgment seat of Christ. We will stand before Him in resurrected bodies experientially perfect.

The only thing left to judge will be our service - how we served Christ during our lives as believers, how we used or missed opportunities, etc...This is the fourth view. This view says that the judgment is an evaluation of our service. Samuel Hoyt explains by showing the connection with this present life.

“Although the believer is not forensically punished for his sin, nevertheless, there will be temporal consequences as well as eternal consequences. Present unconfessed sin results in a loss of desire for service as one is out of experiential fellowship with God. Unconfessed sin also results in loss of power in the believer’s life since the sin grieves the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, unconfessed sin results in loss of opportunity since the sinning believer is not living according to the will of God. Although these are three present consequences of unconfessed sin in the believer’s life, likewise, there are future consequences. When a believer is not walking in experiential fellowship with God, he is passing up opportunities for reward which he will never have again. As a result he will lose the reward that God would have so lavishly bestowed upon him had he been faithful. This will be a real and eternal loss indeed.”^v I agree with his assessment here of the relationship of unconfessed sins to the future judgment seat of Christ.

There are only two negative consequences I can see at the judgment seat. First, temporal shame, 1 John 2:28, “abide in Him so that when He appears we will not shrink back from Him in shame at His coming.” This shame I think is related to the fact that we have just been raised and are in Christ’s presence and we briefly realize in hindsight how much we lived for ourselves rather than for Him, a shame that is only momentary, at the moment of His coming. Second, loss of rewards, 1 Cor 3:15, “If any man’s work is burned up,

he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” So rewards can be lost; they are lost by missing opportunities, not taking advantage of privileges and failing to use our spiritual gifts. But no sin is going to be brought up and Christ is not going to meet out punishment. He’s not going to point his finger at you and say, “You worthless slave.” I believe all Christians will have something rewardable; 1 Cor 4:5, “do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes...and then each man’s praise will come to him from God.” All Christians will have something the Lord can commend. I also believe that Christ is going to be a very merciful judge. He will be more merciful to those who are merciful to others, Js 2:13, but I think the overall tone of the judgment is a merciful one.

In summary, when we become believer’s we receive gifts and throughout our Christian lives we are given opportunities and privileges to use these gifts for the glory of God. Christ as our Master expects us to use them for His glory. The judgment seat of Christ is an evaluation of how well we used our gifts, opportunities and privileges. The result of this evaluation will be rewards for faithfulness or loss of rewards for unfaithfulness.

The logical conclusion is 2 Cor 5:11, **Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men.** **Knowing** is a perfect participle, meaning we have come to know in the past with the effect that we presently know **the fear of the Lord** or it might be looked at as a thorough knowledge.

Therefore, since we have a thorough **fear of the Lord** we take action by persuading **men** of the truth of the gospel. It’s the fear of the Lord here that provides the proper motive of engaging in persuading men of the gospel.

To clarify the proper motive of fearing the Lord we need to discard some unbiblical concepts often generated in people’s minds by certain translations. The KJV, for example, translates this “the terror of the Lord.” The word “terror” in our day evokes the wrong image in our minds since it is associated with a terrifying situation or even terrorism. We should not be thinking of our appearance at the judgment seat of Christ in those terms. Our presence there will not be a terrifying experience. Otherwise how could Paul say in verse 8 that we prefer to be at home with the Lord? Surely if we expected that our first meeting at home with Him would be a terrifying one we would be very apprehensive about appearing before Him. So the concept of terror is inappropriate and we should not envision our experience at the judgment

seat as one invoking terror. Instead, the Greek word *phobos* is properly translated as the NASB and most other translations as “fear.” What does it mean to fear the Lord? It means to have a deep and healthy respect for the Lord. While there is a hint of apprehension in the fear of the Lord, since there is the possibility of inner shame and loss of rewards at the judgment seat, the overwhelming emphasis is on a reverential awe or respect of the Lord. Paul had a thorough knowledge of what it meant to fear the Lord and it was this reverential awe that kept his ambition of always pleasing the Lord constantly in focus thereby motivating him to persuade men of the gospel in preparation for his appearance at the future judgment seat of Christ.

In preaching the gospel what did Paul seek to do? **persuade men.** The Greek word **persuade** means “to cause to come to a particular point of view or course of action.” We need only look at the other uses of this term as it is used in Paul’s missionary journey’s to see what is involved in persuading men.

First, to persuade men we must have a *dialogue with men.* Without a dialogue we cannot persuade anyone. Acts 17:17, “So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present.” Paul dialogued with people and we must dialogue with people if we hope to win them to Christ. Giving the gospel is not as simple as knocking on a door, saying your piece and hoping they won’t ask you a question before moving on to the next door. If you love men you will do as Paul and dialogue with men, keep buying them the next cup of coffee, so to speak. Dialogue is not a one way conversation, it’s give and take, and this has to be allowed for in the persuading of men. So first, dialoguing with men is necessary in order to persuade men of the gospel.

Second, the method of dialogue is to *reason from the Scriptures.* The starting point of dialogue is always the Scriptures. You can never leave the Scriptures except for argument’s sake to show the impossibility of the contrary. Acts 17:2, “And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.” Notice that Paul reasoned *from* the Scriptures not *to* the Scriptures. He didn’t try to prove the Scriptures were true. He set forth the Scriptures as the self-

authenticating authority of Jesus Christ. Some may think that assuming the Bible is true and not proving it is true would exclude any fruitful discussion. However, as Van Til says, “The unqualified acceptance of the authority of Christ speaking in Scripture, so far from excluding the possibility of fruitful discussion with unbelievers, is rather the only possible foundation for it. If reality were the sort of thing that non-Christian thinking assumes it to be, something not created and not controlled by God, then there would be no possibility of human knowledge of it at all.” What he means is that if reality were really what the non-Christian assumes it to be, that is something sprung by chance from chance, then all discussion would be meaningless as chance does not have meaning. So it’s just because the world is the way the Scriptures say it is, that it is created by God and controlled by God and there is not chance but a plan, that any meaningful discussion can even take place. Therefore we must not be afraid to start with the Scriptures because it is the only foundation for persuading men.

Third, we must maintain the Scriptures teaching that *all men know God but are suppressing this truth in unrighteousness*. Romans 1:18, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.” If we intend to dialogue with an unbeliever and persuade them, and at the same time grant that they are telling the truth when they tell us that God is not clear to them, we are accepting their word as true and calling God a liar. The Scriptures teach that they know God very well but are suppressing that truth in unrighteousness, willfully holding it down so as not to have a face to face confrontation with the God they very well know. This is self-imposed blindness. As John 3:19-20 says, “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.” Unbelief is hiding from God and the way they hide is to suppress the truth they know, thereby becoming willfully blind. And yet the Scriptures teach us that we should still preach and reason from the Scriptures with blind men because it is how God breaks through the blindness. As Van Til says, “Scripture teaches

us to speak and preach to, as well as to reason with blind men, because God, in whose name we speak and reason, can cause the blind to see. Jesus told Lazarus while dead to arise and come forth from the grave...Once we were blind; God reasoned with us, perhaps through some human agency, and we saw.”^{vi} So the third thing is we must always maintain that unbelievers know God but are suppressing this truth.

Fourth, *we must assert that the world and man are what God says they are.* The world is created by God and controlled by God and man is a creature of God designed to worship God. Unbelief rejects both points; that is the essence of unbelief. God could not possibly have created the world because that would make me a creature of God, responsible to Him. Therefore possibility is back of God in which case all is chance, there is no meaning, there is no plan, all is up in the air. Therefore men worship idols in place of God and re-interpret every fact as opposite of what it truly is. As Paul says in Acts 14:15ff, “Men, why are you doing these things (i.e. worshipping men)? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM. ¹⁶“In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; ¹⁷and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.” Paul taught that God is the creator of every fact and that every fact is what God says it is by virtue of His plan. Therefore every fact continually pays witness to Him. Unbelief seeks to re-interpret every fact as saying otherwise but in doing so must presuppose that Christian is true, namely, that there are such things as facts and order and meaning and the only pre-condition for such stability is the God who created and interpreted the facts. Left to itself, unbelief cannot even generate a concept of fact since all that is left is chance.

Fifth, it is because of the fact that God has a plan from the beginning to the end that Paul would say, *the world is headed for judgment day and therefore men ought to repent.* Acts 17:30, “God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because he has fixed a day in which He will judge the world through a Man He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” Now that Christ has come we must declare that a day of judgment is coming, a day that God has fixed from all eternity past. And men must repent, that is, have a repentant faith, a faith that

involves a change of mind concerning the person and work of Christ in order to avoid that judgment.

What I have laid out for you in five or six steps is what it looks like to reason from the Scripture. On the contrary, to allow the non-Christian's presuppositions to control the discussion is to forfeit Christianity and affirm the non-Christian in his unbelief. We can never do this if we desire, like Paul, to persuade men of the Gospel and be prepared for the judgment seat of Christ.

God is who He says He is, our creator, this cannot be compromised; God created all things good and man in His own image, this cannot be compromised; all facts testify of Him continually so that no man has an excuse, this can never be compromised; men are as God says they are, sinful and ignorant, professing to be wise they become fools; unbelief must be shown to be what it is, vanity; men will exchange the worship of God for the worship of the creation; this is what the Bible teaches; all men are in rebellion against God and do not want to come to the light lest their deeds be exposed. But God sent His Christ to pay the penalty for our sin in full, as evidence of His acceptance with God He raised Him from the dead. He now proclaims that all men should have a repentant faith in Christ because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world through Christ.

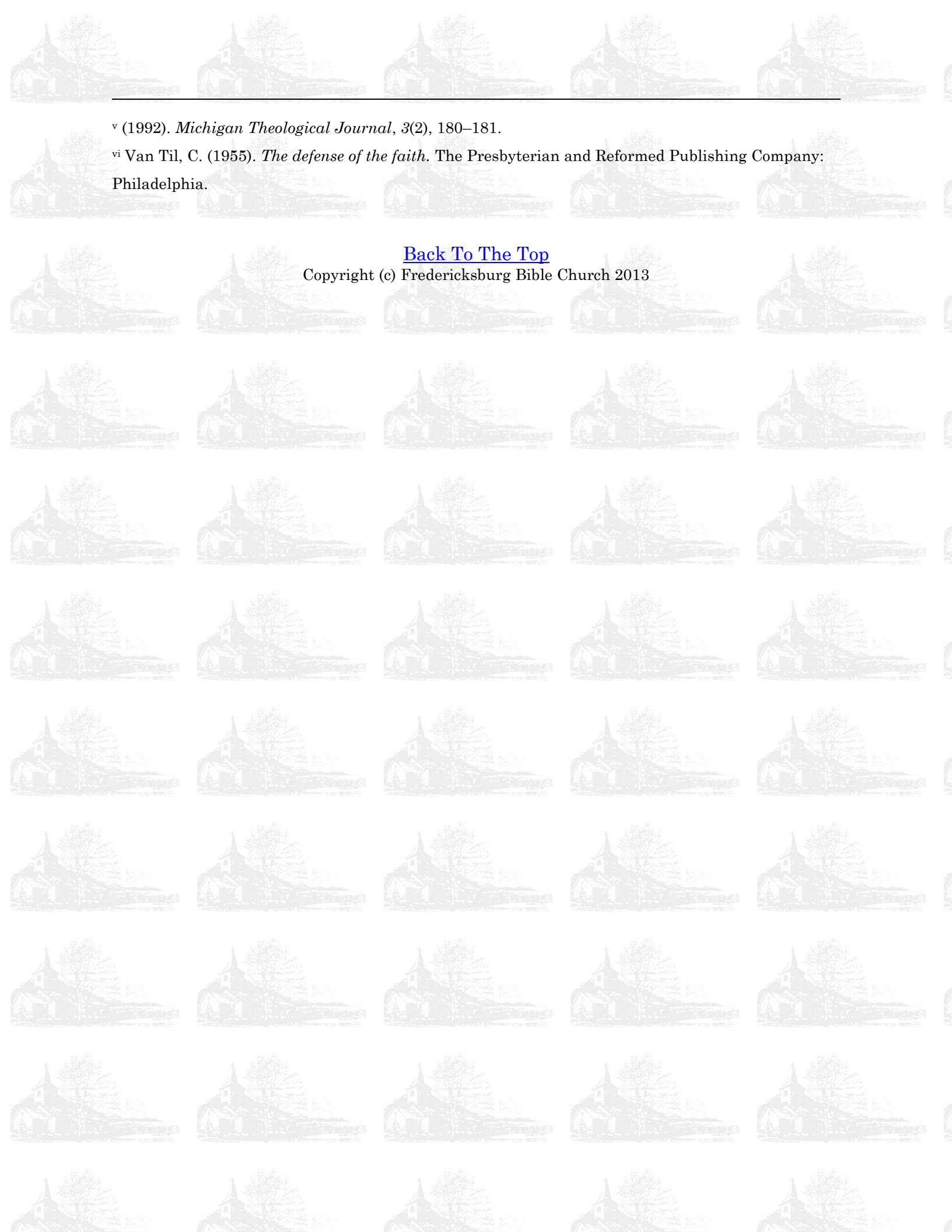
If we, as those who have a repentant faith in Jesus Christ and have thereby been saved, truly want to persuade men of the gospel then we will never compromise the Scriptures but we will reason from the Scriptures and watch as the power of God unveils the eyes of some; not all. We will do this, not because we are scared of meeting Christ at the judgment seat but because we have a reverential respect for Him and know that He will evaluate what we have done in the body, whether good or bad. Therefore, let us make it our ambition that we please God in every way and at all times by honoring Him and His self-authenticating testimony in the Scripture which is His power unto salvation.

ⁱ Faust, *The Rod*, p. 408.

ⁱⁱ (1992). *Michigan Theological Journal*, 3(2), 184.

ⁱⁱⁱ Joseph Dillow, *Final Destiny*, 767.

^{iv} (1992). *Michigan Theological Journal*, 3(2), 187.



v (1992). *Michigan Theological Journal*, 3(2), 180–181.

vi Van Til, C. (1955). *The defense of the faith*. The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company: Philadelphia.

[Back To The Top](#)

Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2013