

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***  
*107 East Austin*  
*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*  
*830-997-8834    [jthomas@fbgbible.org](mailto:jthomas@fbgbible.org)*

**C0910 – March 11, 2009 – Justification By Faith & Mysticism**

As the Lord has granted me the time and distance away from Roman Catholicism, I have become more acutely aware how important the doctrine of Justification by Faith is regarding its objectivity of the Gospel message in the life of the Church, and the lives lead by its members.

The second thing that has struck me, as I try to understand who is teaching what, whether they be authors, lecturers, teachers, or preachers, is that I need to know the truths of the Bible in order to judge these ideas, thoughts and principles being brought forth for general consumption.

Jeremy Thomas, in September 2008, made declaration of purpose for this church:

“A chief purpose of Fredericksburg Bible Church is to counteract the irrationalism of the age and to expose the errors of the teachers of the church. Our emphasis—on the Bible as the sole source of knowledge, on the primacy of truth, on the supreme importance of correct doctrine, and on the necessity for systematic and logical thinking—is rare. To the extent that the church survives—and she will survive and flourish—it will be because of her increasing acceptance of these basic ideas and their logical implications.”

As an elder in this church, I heartily agree. Thank you Jeremy!

There’s a lot of religious confusion in the world today and a lot of religious “ticklers” who sincerely want you to believe their way to spiritual life.

**Who are some of these false teachers?**

**Neale Donald Walsch** is such a one. This man bears watching. We’ll see him again as we look at the [Emerging Church Movement](#) in a few weeks.

Here's how he looks at things:  
(from his website)

“Listen to you feelings  
Listen to your highest thoughts  
Listen to your experience”.

“Whenever any on these differ from what you've been told by your teachers or read in your books, forget the words. Words are the least reliable purveyor of truth”.

Strange words coming from a man who has published 17 works. His *Conversations With God* series has been translated into 34 languages.

Mr. Walsch talks about his *With God* series.

“This series explains and encourages what I have come to call the new Spirituality. Among other things, it teaches that there are no villains and no victims in the world, that there is no such thing as "right" and "wrong," and that we are all One. It also says that if we *acted* as if we were all one, most of the ills of human society would disappear over night.”

Here's another one: **Eckhart Tolle**

This spiritual teacher and author was born in Germany and educated at the Universities of London and Cambridge. He says that at the age of twenty-nine a profound inner transformation radically changed the course of his life. The next few years were devoted to understanding, integrating and deepening that transformation, which marked the beginning of an intense inward journey.

What are some of his catch phrases?

“Heaven is not a location but refers to the inner realm of consciousness.”

“The man on the cross is an archetypal image. He is every man and every woman.”

“My mind is part of God's. I am very holy.

“My holiness is my salvation.”

“My salvation comes from me.”

”Let me remember there is no sin.”

“Do not make the pathetic error of ‘Clinging to the Old Wooden Cross.’”

“The only message of the crucifixion is that you can overcome the cross.”

He is supported by Oprah Winfrey.

And how does Oprah feel about the teachings of Mr. Tolle? She’s enraptured.

Here’s another false teacher: **Marianne Williamson**. A woman very popular among women

**Marianne Williamson** (born July 8, 1952, is a spiritual activist, author, lecturer and founder of The Peace Alliance, a grass roots campaign supporting legislation currently before Congress to establish a United States Department of Peace. Her book **A Return to Love** is considered a must-read of The New Spirituality. A paragraph from that book, beginning *“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure”*- often misattributed to Nelson Mandela's Inaugural address - is considered an anthem for a contemporary generation of seekers.

Here are some of her thoughts about war:

She refers to Carl Jung’s idea that “humanity's biggest problems cannot be solved; they must be outgrown”. She asks, “So how do we outgrow war? The first thing we do is to accept the possibility that the end of war is possible..... In fact, we must embrace the possibility that a world without war could exist.”

Her insights on the “Israeli-Palestinian” conflict: “On a spiritual level, our greatest service to both Israelis and Palestinians is to reach for a higher truth within our own minds. An essential principle of metaphysical reality is that all minds are joined; as any of us are drawn to higher thoughts, then all of us are drawn to higher thoughts. As we ourselves embrace a higher truth, we help create an anti-gravitational force field that lifts all minds above separation, hatred and war.”

Her newest book (which I have not read and don’t intend to) called: The Age of Miracles: Embracing the New Midlife, has, in its Table of Contents, chapters named:

The Long and Winding Road

Do you believe in Magic?

The Nick of Time

God Only Knows

The Way She’d Act and the Color of Her Hair

I will Survive

In the Midnight Hour  
Abraham, Martin, and John  
We are the World

Do these recall any song lyrics to you? If so, you can begin to see where she draws her inspiration. Why is it that we are drawn to inspiration for our lives from song lyrics, poems, short, “catchy” phrases? Because we want to be buoyed up by quick, memorable inspiring phrases that we can recall when we are down on hard times.

From the Bible Believer’s side - that’s what the Faith-Rest Drill is, isn’t it?

Because we are human, fallen, trying to find some sense out of life – we know there is a God, we know that we do “bad” things; and maybe if I do some “good” for others, it will make up for the “bad” things. We want to do it on our own. The lyrics, poems, and catchy phrases are from other humans trying to bring hope to others like themselves. Inspiration, motivation, and spiritual advice comes in these forms,

as well as many “inspirational” books that “lift the spirit” (the spirit of man).

Man seeking meaning

Man seeking solace in hard times

Man helping man to feel better about himself because “we are all in the same boat”.

It comes down to your view of man, doesn’t it? If you believe, as Roman Catholics do, that Adam did not totally die spiritually, but that he was only wounded at the Fall event, then your interpretation of Scripture will be colored by that view. If you believe that man has a special relationship with God and that God leads you by means of urges, intuition, a surge of emotion, or some other “sign” that you have a “direct line” to God, you will interpret Scripture in that manner.

What are some of the dangers for Believers when they get caught up in this kind of thinking? First of all, they deny the Creator-creature distinction. They belittle the doctrines of Sin and Total Depravity. They, therefore, deny the need for Jesus Christ’s work on the Cross. Now, they may deny this, but in fact they do. There is so much misinformation and plain bad, false teaching floating around so called Christian circles that it is not surprising that there is confusion between Biblical doctrine and worldly “feel good” stuff.

Take, for example, the criticism coming from the Charismatic side that Bible believers use their head (reason/study) too much and need to use their heart (emotion/feeling) more. This springs from their distrust of the human mind. However, this leads to the problem of their deficiency in careful Biblical analysis, which, in turn, prevents the identification of the error of mysticism. So, we have a vicious cycle – error prevents study; lack of study prevents discovery of the error.

Well, one quick reference answers the “heart” promotion. Look at Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”

Whenever we read a book, magazine article, poem, inspirational piece, etc, we really need – particularly in these final days – a Biblical discernment of what’s being offered for our acceptance. That’s why, as fundamentalist Bible Believers, we insist that the only way to Biblical spiritual discernment, is that:

We learn spiritual discernment through proper doctrine;  
We learn proper doctrine through proper Biblical teaching;  
We learn proper Biblical teaching through proper exegesis;  
We learn proper exegesis through proper hermeneutics;  
We learn proper hermeneutics through proper theological training.

or, inversly:

Proper theological training leads to  
proper hermeneutics, which leads to  
proper exegesis, which leads to  
proper Biblical teaching, which leads to  
proper doctrine, and thus we learn spiritual discernment.

How did this confusion start? Let’s look at how cleverly Satan blinds the mind of man into thinking that if he (man) has the means to strive to live a “good” life with the help of man devised stepping stones, and can ultimately stand before an all Holy God and demand entrance into heaven. Notice that he (Satan) starts with the Word of God (he MUST – because that’s where the truth is kept) and begins to draw men away from the truth of God’s Word to create confusion!

Let me ask you this. Where do you go when you set aside the Word of God?

The mind of autonomous man – where truth is relative, can be manipulated, can be mixed with reason, or non-reason (mysticism). You have denied the Creator – creature distinction.

Let's see how Satan manipulates man into a position of attaining self righteousness.

Well, first of all Romans 1:18-20 tells us that man suppresses the truth in unrighteousness. What truth? That God, the CREATOR, truly exists!

And they KNOW that He exists because God has made it evident within them, that is, in their conscience. They “know”, but cannot ACKNOWLEDGE it because if they do, they have to place themselves in a submissive position and give up their autonomous superiority. That's not what fallen man wants to do!

However, let me suggest a second and more essential reason for the continued confusion:

The Catholic Church was influenced early by Origen's (185 - 254 AD) method of interpreting Scripture allegorically. He saw man as body, soul, and spirit and wanted to find meaning for these three as he interpreted scripture. In his treatise On First Principles, Origen states, “The bodily level of Scripture, the bare letter, is normally helpful as it stands to meet the needs of the more simple. The psychic level, corresponding to the soul, is for making progress in perfection.... [The] spiritual interpretation deals with 'unspeakable mysteries' so as to make humanity a "partaker of all the doctrines of the Spirit's counsel".

In reality he only discussed two levels - those of the letter and the spirit. For Origen, the universal application - what the text teaches about Christ and how the reader can become like Him - was the original meaning of the text. If a text did not appear to be speaking about how you might advance towards perfection then you had misunderstood it. Did you catch that? “advance towards perfection”? That's man becoming self righteous! This was the key that showed Origen that he had interpreted a text correctly. His work infiltrated the Church somewhere around 250 AD.

Who or what gave Origen such power to influence great theologians to abandon the normal, straightforward reading of God's Word?

So, ~250 AD, allegorical and/or misdirected interpretation sets in and, sanctioned by Augustine (354 – 340), becomes the appropriate way to interpret Scripture. To complicate things further, Jerome is commissioned to translate the Bible from Greek to Latin, which will become the official language of the Catholic Church at Rome. This is accomplished in or around the year 400 AD.

As we look at the breakdown of Church history, in particular the “Ancient” Church, we see a division of the years 100 – 600 like this:

Apostolic Fathers: 100-150AD

Apologists: 150-300AD

Age of the Theologians: 300-600AD

Looking at this from when Origen’s faulty methodology of interpretation affected the church (~250 AD), we can see that when we get to the “Age of the Theologians” (300-600), the Scriptural interpretation they have to work with is laced with humanistic philosophy, and the road to self righteousness.

So, it’s no wonder that from ~500 to 1517 AD the Catholic Church at Rome builds error upon error into a religious system that states that you can, by God’s grace and the sacramental system of the “true” Church, become holy before God. The Catholic Church also allows for the possibility of private revelation (mysticism).

In the years 1545-46 AD, the Council of Trent publicly (and emphatically) formally defines the “Roman” Catholic Church, (no longer the Catholic Church at Rome) with her identified doctrines, as she repudiates Scripture as the final authority. As I studied this, the Reformation was a “God conscious” moment, if you will, for the Church at Rome to repent of her misuse of Scriptures and return to the Word of God as written and understand in the normal, literal, straightforward fashion that the Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists understood. But by now it’s too late in their apostasy. The power, prestige, and politics had placed layer after layer of callousness and the Roman Church stood too tall and proud to recognize anything different. Her die was cast.

~ 1620 AD: The “protestant” movement begins to move away from Scripture as “private interpretation” spreads and the Holiness movement begins.

With the great Enlightenment period in the 18<sup>th</sup> century came the thinking that **reason** was supreme and again man is still in control.

~1900 AD: Liberal theology, following evolutionary thinking, reexamines the translations of the Bible – their reasoning? The Bible must be relevant to the times. Conservative theology suffers a defeat, and theology, once thought of as the Queen of the Sciences is subjugated to science and evolutionary thought.

Here's a more contemporary analysis of modern confusion:

Josef Ton, a Romanian Baptist pastor who suffered for his faith at the hands of the communists said,

'I came to the conclusion that there were two factors which destroyed Christianity in Western Europe. One was the theory of evolution, and the other, liberal theology ... Liberal theology is just evolution applied to the Bible and our faith.' Wonderful insight!

Let me repeat that: **Liberal theology is just evolution applied to the Bible and our faith.**

~1960: I read that the two defining events of the 60s were: the **Woodstock** festival and the movie, music, and stage play of "**Hair**". These truly captivated a worldwide audience of young people. This was described as the dawning of the age of "Aquarius" (one of the horoscope's 12 signs) - a time when everyone could "let the sunshine in" and start anew by "finding the divine place within you through drug induced meditation, and the New Age movement followed quickly after that.

~1985 AD: The Emerging Church Movement begins. I'll have more to say about them then next time we meet.

With that bird's eye view of how Satan maneuvers and encourages unregenerate man to create the confusion we're in now, let's look at confusion of mysticism in particular.

### **Definitions:**

**Mysticism** (from the Greek *μυστικός* – *mystikos*-

'seeing with the eyes closed'.

μυστήρια – *mysteria* meaning "initiation") is the pursuit of achieving **communion, identity with, or conscious awareness** of ultimate reality, the Other, divinity, spiritual truth, or God through direct experience, intuition, or insight.

*Wikipedia*

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## **Mysticism**

*Noun*

1. belief in or experience of a reality beyond normal human understanding or experience
2. the use of prayer and meditation in an attempt to achieve direct intuitive experience of the divine

*Collins Essential English Dictionary*

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**Mysticism** (From *myein*, to initiate).

*Mysticism*, according to its etymology, implies a relation to mystery. In philosophy, Mysticism is either a religious tendency and desire of the human soul towards an intimate union with the Divinity, or a system growing out of such a tendency and desire.

As a philosophical system, Mysticism considers as the end of philosophy the direct union of the human soul with the Divinity through contemplation and love, and attempts to determine the processes and the means of realizing this end. This contemplation, according to Mysticism, is not based on a merely analogical knowledge of the Infinite, but as a direct and immediate intuition of the Infinite.

*Catholic Encyclopedia*

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The mystical experience, then, is an event that is completely within the person, and therefore totally subjective. It is not shared by anyone else. It is only given to the one person. It's a private affair.

Let's examine mysticism from three perspectives: psychologically, philosophically, and theologically.

**Psychologically:**

This involves assigning primary significance or a strong value to inner, non-rational, subjective impressions. It involves seeing intense, non-rational, subjective experiences as having such deep significance that they should be sought after and, in fact, one should direct one's life accordingly.

**Philosophically:**

This belief sees truth and knowledge as attainable through mystical experience, whereby all truth is tested by these subjective impressions rather than by the logic and reasoning of the mind. In fact, the powers of the mind are played down.

**Theologically:**

This view equates the inner impressions, urges, or feelings with the voice of God. If such a person is a Christian, they would tend to believe that the activity of the Holy Spirit within us is expressed primarily through emotional or other non-cognitive aspects of our being. They would believe that having and "obeying" such experiences is what "being spiritual" is all about.

There is a denial of the Fall event, whether they would admit it or not. If people are more interested in being led by their hunches, inner urges, feelings, and emotions rather than the plain truth of Scripture, they are saying that they have a special relationship with the Divine and can be directed by this Divine in ways that will bring them to God.

At first glance after seeing mysticism from these perspectives, you might tend to see these people as sincere and honest, but if mysticism is pushed to the extreme, it is a prescription for mental breakdown.

I'm sure that many a person striving after this "closeness" with the Divine has had mental problems. Catholic Mystics of the 11th – 14<sup>th</sup> centuries are held in high regard by those in the church seeking holiness and unity with the Divine. Unfortunately, the casualties of those trying to lead a mystical life have not been numbered or written about – at least to my knowledge.

However, even in evangelical circles, mysticism is having an influence. The Emerging Church Movement is desirous of reviving early church practices and medieval mysticism.

The conclusion of this “holiness seeking” is that these persons are pretty much “self contained”. They “follow the Spirit’s leading” which they perceive in a variety of ways - “God told me to ..., I felt lead to .., the Spirit moved me to..., I felt this tug on my heart”..., God gave me a “sign”, etc. We have all said this at one time or another.

It’s the desire to know that we are “special” to God so we recognize these special “signals” used to guide our lives and confirm that we are pleasing to God and doing His will. (See footnote <sup>1</sup>). But be careful! This sets you up for a very confusing spiritual life, and that’s not Biblical sanctification. Through the doctrine of Justification by Faith alone we are said to be “in Christ”. We have stability.

While we’re in our mortal bodies, we’re in the experiential part of sanctification - the day to day learning to be obedient.

## **The Elect Plan of God.**

### **The eternal view:**

But now, I want to give you a sense of the eternal love that God has for us who have been saved by Grace, through faith alone in Christ alone. I hope this will help us see the bigger picture.

Here are some verses that seem to give this eternal, outside-of-us view from the New Testament:

1 Cor. 1:2 “.. to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:...” **Saints by calling, who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus. Already done.**

Eph.1:3-4 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,....” **He has given**

**us all possible blessings already, having chosen us as sons and daughters from all eternity.**

Eph 2:5 “..even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus,....” **We already sit with Him forever.**

2 Tim 1:9 “...who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,....” **All these things granted to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.**

**In God’s Mind, we are already with Him! Isn’t that amazing?**

1 Cor. 1:30 says, “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,...”

Christ is the One that has done the work! When we say that we receive the “Righteousness of Christ”, it is because He “earned” that righteousness in His earthly life by being perfectly obedient to the Father. Through His obedience Christ satisfied the wrath of God by giving up His Life for all the sins of the world, and has now been resurrected in a glorified body. Therefore because we are “in Him” and He is the “first fruit”, we too, will receive a glorified body at the Rapture. It’s a done deal. Count on it!

**What does Rom 5:1 say?**

“Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....” This is the peace that surpasses all understanding.

**In 1 Cor. 6:11** we read, (after Paul describes the unrighteous and their sinful acts) “And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, ...”

We need to get our eyes off ourselves and onto Jesus Christ. He is our life. He is the only One that the Father can be pleased with. If you are not saved, you are under the wrath of God, right? On the other hand, if you are saved, you are “in Christ” – eternally secure.

That is what motivates us to be loyal and obedient servants. Christ told His disciples, “If you love, keep My commandments.” Love, then, is being obedient. Sanctification isn’t being morally upright. It is recognizing Jesus Christ for who He is, what He has done. Then we become thankful, loyal, and obedient servants.

Right now, we are still sinners, saved by grace. Remember, we don’t have a righteousness of our own. The “prayer of the righteous man that avails much” is the prayer of a man who knows he has no righteousness of his own, but he has the Righteous of Christ imputed to him because he is “in Christ”.

To conclude, what has Jeremy been teaching us, in the Framework Series, about sanctification? The three phases of sanctification are: Positional, Experiential, and Ultimate. The “positional” is secured by our Justification by Faith. Our “experiential” is in either obeying or disobeying. Obedience is something we learn through God’s Word. Adam and Eve had to learn, Jesus Himself had to learn. Even as a child of twelve, as He stayed behind after the Feast of Passover, and His parents finally found Him in the Temple what does Luke 2:51 say? “And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and He continued in subjection to them;...” He continued to learn obedience.

The whole aim of sanctification is to learn loyalty to God through trusting His word. The NT says, “Love one another.” We can obey that or disobey that. But why does God tell us to do that? It’s because of our “position”. So the command to which we can be obedient or disobedient is rooted in our position. God has a right to expect that of us because He gave us that position. The understanding and the meaning of everything that happens in your experience is controlled and depends upon your position in the elect plan of God. We have no doubt about the ultimate outcome, regardless of the experience of the moment. That’s a comforting thought and we need to keep reminding ourselves about that. The Bible has to be the final criterion of truth and the standard by which truth-claims are tested.

Being “godly” is being a maturing Believer, who studies the Bible (using the mind) in order to understand (by reasoning) what God has done, is doing, and will be doing in His plan for history. We begin to understand that He is Trustworthy. God has done so many wondrous things, that, as we read and study His Word, emotions will be touched – like amazement, thanksgiving, wonderment, awe, and love for our Creator and Redeemer, who gives us such

wonderful gifts. And, as we “learn” and “obey”, we become the obedient, loyal sons and daughters that God desires us to be.

.....Please join me in prayer.

<sup>1</sup> **Note:** It is not my intent here to discuss how or what things God uses to help you make decisions in your life. I would suggest a book called Decision Making and the Will of God by Garry Frieson, where this is handled in finer detail.

Major sources:

Faith Misguided by Arthur L. Johnson

Dr. Robert Dean: Bible study of Hebrews

Jeremy Thomas: The Phases & Aims Of Sanctification

[www.eckharttolle.com](http://www.eckharttolle.com)

[www.nealedonaldwalsch.com](http://www.nealedonaldwalsch.com)

[www.marianne.com](http://www.marianne.com)

[www.earlychurch.org.uk/origen.php](http://www.earlychurch.org.uk/origen.php)

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