

# Redeemer *link*

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## On Keeping the Faith

by R. Neil Spence, D. Min.

John Owen lived from 1616 to 1683 and was a faithful minister of Christ. Below is a lengthy quotation from one of his books. I commend it to you.



John Owen

Paul declared at the end of his ministry that “he had kept the faith” (2Tim. 4:6-8). This had been his major concern throughout his whole ministry.

It had not been easy for Paul to “keep the faith.” It involved severe warfare and conflict. How different was Paul from so many today who think it an easy matter “to keep the faith.”

It was Paul’s great concern that Timothy also should “keep the faith” (1Tim. 6:20; 2Tim. 1:13,14).

Titus was charged by Paul to rebuke those who were prone to neglect or forsake the truth of the gospel for Jewish fables and commands of men (Titus 1:13, 14).

Jude calls all Christians to “earnestly contend for the faith” because many are all too ready to corrupt it and turn away from it (Jude 3).

One would think that the first churches, planted by the apostles and taught by them, had the greatest advantage when it came to knowing the mystery and truth of the gospel. The apostles revealed to them “the whole counsel of God,” and withheld nothing that was profitable to them (Acts 20:18-21, 26, 27). Their authority was immediately from Christ and they were absolutely infallible in all that they taught. *You would have thought, then, that the early churches would have kept the faith pure and not departed from it.*

The church in Corinth was planted by Paul and watered by that great evangelist Apollos. Yet, in about five or six years, many in that church had denied the resurrection of the dead (1Cor. 15:12-18).

The churches of the Galatians were also planted by Paul. He instructed them in the whole counsel of God. They treated him as an angel of God, received him as if he were Jesus Christ Himself and esteemed him above the sight of their own eyes (Gal. 4:14, 15). Yet in a very short while, they fell from the doctrine of grace and justification by faith alone, to seek for righteousness, as it were, by the works of the law...

*So we ought not to think it strange if Christians today fall away so easily from the gospel after having received it...* (*Apostasy from the Gospel*, Published in 1676 and Abridged by R.J.K. Law. Banner of Truth Trust, 1992. pp. 44-46, *emphasis added*)

Owen is correct. We are always in danger of departing from the faith. It is only through **eternal vigilance** that we, by the grace of God, can maintain the purity of the gospel (Heb. 2:1). **God’s truth has never been popular** and Christians in every age have been tempted to conform their message, their morality, and their worship to likes and dislikes of sinners. The thought is that if the offence of the gospel (1Cor. 1:18) can be *removed*—or at least toned-down a little—more folks can

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be “won” to Christ than would be won by the old gospel. **Then** we can help them.

Beloved, **we are not wiser than God** who has entrusted to us His gospel and His ordinances. Human inventions and wisdom are *not* more powerful than the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 2:1-5) and are a **sorry substitute for the ordinary means of grace**—the word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.

As the ninth anniversary of our first Lord’s Day service approaches, I want us to **remember the very reason for our existence, that it is to believe and proclaim God’s own gospel**. Let us not be discouraged by our small number. The same God who has provided us with the gift of one another, with godly leaders, and who has provided for our every need, will bless us with more souls **as we are prepared to disciple them as we should and love them well**.

We are not perfect. Hopefully we have learned from our past mistakes and will not repeat them. Unfortunately, there are plenty more mistakes to be made. But let us take heart—we believe in the gospel of grace. In humble reliance upon God’s mercy, we can proclaim that **God’s grace is more than sufficient where our insufficiency is evident** (2 Cor. 3:5-6).

**I believe that being a part of Redeemer is a profound commitment of faith.** There are, of course, any number of churches available in our community. Your commitment to Redeemer shows that **you support the preaching of God’s word with depth and clarity**. You do not support the humanistic message that is so prevalent in our time. **You want to know the truth** of “what saith the Lord.” It demonstrates your **desire to worship God in the ways He has commanded** in a day when the distinction between worship and entertainment is lost. It shows that **you are a friend to all true Christians** in that the stand you take is a witness to them. **You are thinking of future generations** of Christians who will need a faithful witness to “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) and **you are seeing to it that such a church is established**.

I thank you for your partnership in the gospel and ask you to pray for our faithfulness. ✕

## Promises of God

by Laura Moore

Lately, I’ve noticed a big fact of life. Something we can’t control, something that we can’t figure out. And a lot of people ask me, “How are you?” or “Are you doing OK?”. And I say, “Yes, I’m doing good,” or “Yes, I’m fine.” The truth is I *am* doing good and I *am* fine. *But some people don’t understand how I can be.* They say “But, your father just passed away... How can you be OK? How can you still believe in a God? And if you still believe in all this, what if there is no heaven?”

It’s not an easy story to tell, but I feel it should be told. I am perfectly OK with my father being gone. That may sound weird, or like I didn’t care or something, but people who think this couldn’t be farther from the truth. I know my dad isn’t here anymore. But I also know where he is *now*. *I know he’s much* happier than he ever was here. And I know that Jesus is the reason for this. So, honestly, if Jesus is the reason for my dad being in heaven, how could I be mad or stop believing in God?

If Jesus really came on the earth, which science has somewhat proved, and there’s a book on His life, which science has also pretty much proved at least some of the stories, and in this book Heaven is discussed and talked about as a real thing, why would I not believe there is a Heaven?

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And lastly, a lot of this world's beliefs have to do with faith. Even though you'd think my faith would be shaken by this, it has not been. Trust me, it surprised me as much as it did you. For the longest time, I always thought if something terrible happened to me, I would not be strong enough to handle it. And then this happened, and sure, I was sad, and I miss my dad, but somehow, God granted me the peace and understanding to know that God didn't take away my dad to be mean. In fact, he didn't take *away* my dad—he brought him home, where he belongs.

So, to answer the question, I just smile and say, "My dad is perfectly fine. He may be gone from here, but he is not gone forever. He's with my Almighty Father, who sent his Son for us all, including my dad. How could I not believe when everything my dad's ever wanted is with him right now?" ✕

## Unfailing Love

by Robyn McKinney

The year was 1995, and a single desire consumed the mind of 15-year-old Robyn Smith: pierced ears. A rite of passage usually enjoyed by the Sesame Street crowd had been denied me until I managed to wear down my parents' resistance with my relentless harassment. Once I cleared this monumental hurdle, my path to the ear piercing stool was clear and easy. Or was it? First I had to find a suitable time slot after school that wasn't occupied by loathsome math tutorials. And then Mother Nature dropped a wintry mix atop Dickson County, leaving me snowbound and livid. Finally, I prevailed and was able make my way to Wal-Mart's jewelry department. My triumph was mere moments away! I greeted the saleslady with a wide smile and cheerfully announced that I wanted to pierce my ears. But, alas, my joy was short-lived. The ear-piercing lady was on vacation. Apparently piercing ears is a highly trained, specialized job, because no one on staff was willing to take it on.

I wilted. In a fit of teenage melodrama, I wailed, "I guess it's not in God's will for me to pierce my ears!"

My longsuffering mother smiled a weary smile, "I don't think God really cares if you get your ears pierced or not." she replied.

If I was wilted before, now I was positively crushed. A wave of chagrin pounded me, and tears sprang to my eyes. Which was actually not all that uncommon. I think I mentioned I was 15 years old. But something about my mom's offhand comment really jolted me. What made me think God cared about the small, pathetic hopes that dotted my small, pathetic life?

In Zephaniah 3:17, we read that, "The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." This description of God's love is quite different from the one I usually had in mind. Before I understood this, when I imagined God, I tended to see Him as a king, and myself as His subject. I imagined that He is a good and just King, and He cares for the well-being of His people. I believed He

### Happy Birthday to YOU!

Dee Chadwick  
Nan Traxler  
Dixie Taylor  
Richard Ashworth  
Jimmy Johnson  
Linda Greene  
Drake Landau  
Linda Joy Choate  
Lexi Becht  
Kayleigh Thomas  
Wanda Moore  
Avery Rist  
Mike Shipley  
Ronda Moore

### Happy Anniversary to YOU!

Blake & Luran Chadwick  
Jim & Anita Berkey

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provides for and protects His people, and in a collective sense, He loves them, but that He doesn't actually *know* any of them.

This is false idea of God. In Zephaniah, we see a portrait of God as a proud Father. Affectionate, personal, even doting. His power and protection are a result of His tenderness and warmth. This is a God who knows us, a God who cares.

Half a lifetime ago, I was made aware of the seeming insignificance of my quest for earrings. But God knew that I wanted more than just accessories. I was a dweeby, awkward girl who wanted to be attractive and interesting. I wanted to be liked. I would have settled for being noticed. But what I really wanted most of all was unfailing love. And as I have come to realize, that is something only God can provide. He is compassionate beyond comprehension. God doesn't just love us. He likes us. ✕

## Sacrifice

by Stephanie Castrillo

Since the birth of my daughter Lilly, it's as if a light switch has been flicked on inside of me. Call it excessive emotions or remnant hormones, but I am now the world's biggest sap. Before Lilly, I cannot recall ever crying let alone tearing up during a movie or television show. On one such recent occasion, my husband and I were watching an episode of Dateline about a family who got snowed-in their vehicle for nine days in the wilderness of Oregon. One error after another got this family of four stuck in a horrible predicament with no sign of hope. The husband finally set out to find help on the sixth day as things were getting dire. Through some gaps in information combined with inexperience they believed they were only four miles from civilization, and while my husband and I came up with all manner of solutions from the comfort of our living room, the situation was more disastrous than they anticipated. In the end, the wife and daughters were rescued three days later, but the husband succumbed to the elements in a futile, albeit heroic effort to save his young family. Even though it seemed as though all of it could have been easily prevented or resolved with a clear head, I still couldn't help crying my eyes out.

Later, I couldn't put it into words why this story moved me so much. I thought about it all through the night and I finally came to the conclusion that even though his death was avoidable, the episode underlined the truest form of God's love in which a person willingly gives his or her life in order to save another. That father could have stayed in the vehicle with his family and he would have been rescued after a few more days, but in light of the uncertainty of rescue and his family slowly withering away, he made the decision to risk his life in an effort to save them.

I was again reminded of what Jesus did for us on the cross. Being the Son of God, He could have avoided suffering or simply commanded His will be done, but through supreme sacrifice He reveals what love is. Because of His great love, God sent His only son to love us and save us from sin and death through His own self-sacrifice. While I've always felt moved by this in my Christian life, I suppose that it took the birth of my daughter for me to fully realize how important being willing to sacrifice oneself for the good of another is in living God's plan. ✕

## Important Announcements

**9th Church Anniversary Celebration (Sunday, March 6).** There will be a **fellowship luncheon** after the worship service.

**Evening Prayer Service (Sunday, March 6, 6:00PM).** We earnestly desire that the entire congregation be present for this time of corporate prayer.

**Men's Prayer Breakfast (Saturday, March 12, 8:30AM)** at Burns Church of Christ. Breakfast will be served by the American Heritage Girls Troop TN1004. Tickets are \$5. **All men are urged to attend!**