

Volume VI, Issue 3 • March 2013

PERSPECTIVE

THE MONTHLY JOURNAL OF MOUNT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH

The Christian Worldview





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SERMON SCHEDULE

March 3 Jesus, the Son of Man <i>John 9:35 – 41</i>	March 10 Jesus, the Good Shepherd <i>John 10:1 – 21</i>
March 17 The Treasure of Moses <i>Hebrews 11:23 – 26</i> Dr. Michael Haykin, Guest Preacher	March 24 Jesus, the Son of God <i>John 22 – 42</i>

FIGHTER VERSE

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,
 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.
 James 1:2-3

INSIDE THIS EDITION

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Use the QR reader on
 your mobile device
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Perspective by email.

CHURCH-WIDE PICNIC

On Sunday, April 7, immediately following the morning service, everyone is invited to a church-wide picnic on the grounds. Everyone is responsible for bringing their own lunch. Drinks will be provided. Members are encouraged to bring yard activities, and there will be pick-up games for anyone interested in participating. Please contact the church office at 404-255-3133 or info@mvbchurch.org if you are able to help with setup or cleanup.

THE JESUS YOU NEED

SEVEN STUDIES FROM THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

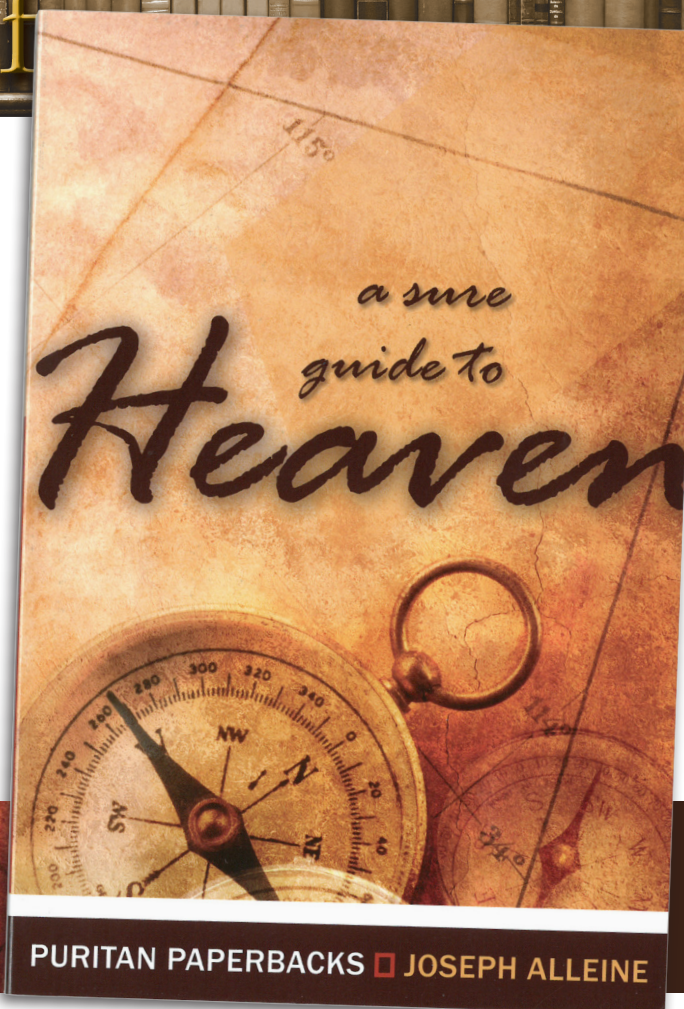
Pastor Aaron will continue leading us through a seven-part sermon series on the ninth through eleventh chapters of the Gospel of John. Each sermon will be available the Monday after it is delivered through the Mount Vernon Podcast on iTunes and on the church's website at www.mvbchurch.org.

Sermons are also available on CD for \$5 per copy.

A Sure Guide to Heaven

by Joseph Alleine

Reviewed by Jim Reimann



THE GOSPEL HAS BEEN UNDER constant attack since Bible times, and today is no exception. What is different today, however, is that much of the attack is actually coming from within the evangelical church itself. For a generation or more, mainline denominations have compromised the gospel, but in the past ten years or so we've seen evangelicalism begin to chip away at the biblical gospel as well. Therefore, we as a church, and as individual Christians, need to make sure we know the gospel—not only knowing what is, but also what it is not.

A wonderful way for us to do this is to read great books from the past—books that are not only theologically correct, but also have stood the test of time. One of those is *A Sure Guide to Heaven* by Joseph Alleine.

Alleine was a Puritan preacher and author who lived in England from 1634 to 1668. When his older brother Edward died, Joseph underwent a spiritual crisis, which he would later call a “thorough conversion.” Edward had been studying for the ministry and Joseph pleaded with his father to be allowed to take his place. His father agreed and Joseph headed off to school. Soon thereafter he became an assistant pastor of a Puritan congregation.

When the Act of Uniformity of 1662 ordered Puritans to conform to the Church of England or get out of the pulpit, Alleine was one of over 2,000 pastors evicted. However, he never stopped preaching, and since he did so within 5 miles of his former pulpit, he was in violation of the law. On May 28, 1663, he was thrown into prison, and remained jailed for almost a year. Over the next few years he went back to prison several more times until, worn out from overwork and abuse, he died at the early age of

thirty-four. Yet even though he died so young, he is still one of the most beloved Puritan writers of all time.

A Sure Guide to Heaven was originally titled *An Alarm to the Unconverted*, as Alleine saw the primary audience for the book to be unbelievers. Even well-known preachers, such as Charles Spurgeon and George Whitefield, testified that Alleine's *Alarm to the Unconverted* helped bring them to Christ. More than 20,000 copies were sold when it was first published in 1672, and 50,000 copies three years later, when it was published as *A Sure Guide to Heaven*. Even in modern times, these numbers would be respectable, but especially in the 1600s these numbers made *A Sure Guide to Heaven* a prominent bestseller. It has since been frequently reprinted over the centuries, and has helped to make Alleine one of the most beloved Puritan writers of all time.

This young preacher's heart beat passionately for the lost, and *A Sure Guide to Heaven* was his earnest plea to unconverted sinners. In it he strongly appeals to the reader:

Oh, better were it for you to die in a jail, in a ditch, in a dungeon, than die in your sins.... Your sins will not die with you as a prisoner's other debts will; but they will go to judgment with you there to be your accusers; and they will go to hell with you there to be your tormentors. ... Can any other but Christ save you? He tells you He will never do it except you be regenerated and converted.

In this book, Alleine's passion for the lost is palpable. For example, he says, “With what shall I win them? O that I could tell! I would write to

them in tears, I would weep out every argument, I would empty my veins for ink, I would petition them on my knees. O how thankful should I be if they would be prevailed with to repent and turn.”

Alleine's introduction serves as a good outline for the book, for in it he relates the following:

Some of you do not know what I mean by conversion, and in vain shall I attempt to persuade you to that which you do not understand. Therefore for your sakes I will show *what conversion is*. Others cherish secret hopes of mercy, though they continue as they are. For them I must show *the necessity of conversion*. Others are likely to harden themselves with a vain conceit that they are converted already. To them I must show *the marks of the unconverted*. Others, because they feel no harm, fear none, and so sleep as upon the top of a mast. To them I shall show *the misery of the unconverted*. Others sit still, because they do not see the way of escape. To them I shall show *the means of conversion*. And finally, for the quickening of all, I shall close with *the motives to conversion*. (Emphasis added.)

It was interesting to read what others had to say about this book. For example, one reviewer on Amazon.com said the following:

To me the best chapter is where Alleine gives us the Marks of the Unconverted. Upon reading this I found my soul deeply disturbed, as it was obvious that I was in an unconverted state, 25 years after praying to ‘receive Christ.’ I soon made a total surrender of my all to Christ, vowing to live a holy life before Him. He points out our lives, not our lips, are the truest evidence of a saving faith.... When I get to heaven after I first embrace the Savior, I will search out Joseph Alleine.

This little book, in a mere 148 pages, gives a clear explanation of the gospel. In it you'll see that conversion is more than what today has commonly become known as “praying to receive Christ”—but often without any sign of repentance or life change. Alleine expounds on each of the following subjects, and much more:

Mistakes about conversion

1. Conversion is not the taking upon us the profession of Christianity.
2. Conversion is not putting on the badge of Christ in baptism.
3. Conversion does not lie in moral righteousness.
4. Conversion does not consist in an external conformity to the rules of piety.

5. Conversion is not the mere chaining up of corruption by education, human laws or the force of affliction.
6. Conversion does not consist in illumination or conviction or in a superficial change or partial reformation.

The nature of conversion

1. The Author of conversion is the Spirit of God.
2. The efficient cause of conversion is both internal and external. (The internal cause is free grace alone. The external cause is the merit and intercession of the blessed Jesus.)
3. The instrument of conversion is personal and real. (The personal instrument is the ministry. The real instrument is the Word.)
4. The final cause or end of conversion is man's salvation and God's glory.
5. The subject of conversion is the elect sinner.

Alleine would never have acknowledged the idea of simply praying a prayer, asking Jesus into your heart, and then being “good to go.” To him the signs of a changed life must be obvious and clear. The evidence of a biblical gospel being preached, believed, and applied was a changed life—one that brings glory to God.

As you already may have gleaned from this review, some of the terminology in this book is dated and difficult by today's standards. However, I encourage you to forge ahead, for although the language may be a bit archaic at times, it is incredibly beautiful in its expression.

My prayer for us as a church is that the Lord would grant us the passion for the lost that Alleine had, and his knowledge of the truth of the gospel. Perhaps reading *A Sure Guide to Heaven* would be a way for us to see that prayer answered.

O Lord, choose my stones out of the brook. I come in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel. I come forth, like the stripling David against Goliath, to wrestle, not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world. This day let the Lord smite the Philistines, spoil the strong man of his armour, and give me the captives out of his hand. Lord, choose my words, choose my weapons for me; and when I put my hand into the bag, and take out a stone and sling it, do Thou carry it to the mark, and make it sink, not into the forehead, but into the heart of the unconverted sinner, and smite him to the ground like Saul of Tarsus. —Joseph Alleine's prayer from *A Sure Guide to Heaven*

(*A Sure Guide to Heaven* is available at the MVBC bookstore.) ■

GOOD FRIDAY

SERVICE

MARCH 29

12:00 PM

Please join us on Friday, March 29, from 12:00 – 1:00 PM for a time of prayer, singing, and a devotional from God's Word. This is a special service to remember Christ's death with the hope of the resurrection on Easter Sunday. All are invited to attend.

The Christian Worldview

When I was in seminary, I had the great privilege of studying under the well-regarded Christian philosopher, Ronald H. Nash. He died in 2006 after training ministers at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary, and before that, teaching philosophy for almost thirty years at Western Kentucky University. Over the course of his career, he wrote more than 35 books, most of them driving home the point that, in a world of competing ideas and values, the historic teaching of the Christian faith is the only sound alternative. Nash taught me to believe that it takes more faith to deny the biblical God than to believe him. If you want a deeper study of the ideas I'm only going to bring up briefly in this article, consider reading his book, *Worldviews in Conflict*.



What is a worldview?

Nash wanted his students (and his readers) to understand that everyone has a way of looking at the world, of making sense of life, and of making decisions. He called this a worldview: “A worldview is a set of beliefs about the most important issues in life.” These beliefs are what everyone depends upon to make sense of life.

He encouraged us to think of a worldview as a set of corrective eyeglasses that bring life into focus. But the lenses of our worldview are not made out of glass, they consist of the answers to five questions:

1. What do you think about God?
2. What do you think about reality?
3. What do you think about knowledge?
4. What do you think about morality?
5. What do you think about humanity?

Everyone has an opinion about God. The atheist, for example, denies God’s existence. But something in his life must take God’s place as an authority. The atheist becomes his own authority, his own god.

Everyone has an opinion about reality. Is creation limited to what we can see? Is this world all there is? If that’s the case, then all that matters is the here-and-now. You’ll spend your whole life getting as much and enjoying as much as you can.

Everyone has an opinion about knowledge. Some people argue that, when push comes to shove, we don’t really know anything! We can’t see (so to speak) beyond our nose. Such people would say it is the height of arrogance to claim to know God. The wise man, they insist, is the man who, when presented with questions about God and eternity, simply says, “I don’t know.”

Everyone has an opinion about morality. We all have to decide between right and wrong. Some people have very democratic ideas of what is right and wrong. “Right” is what the people decide to be right. “Wrong” is what the people decide to be wrong. Others have very relative ideas of right and wrong. Right is what I believe to be right. Wrong is what I believe to be wrong. Others simply deny these categories exist at all — there is no such thing as right and wrong (though I’m pretty sure if someone broke into their house and stole their stuff, they’d change their mind!).

Finally, everyone has an opinion about humanity. Those who think people are basically good will have no use for the God of the Bible because they believe everyone is on the right track already. The most that can be said is that we need a little fine-tuning. Of course the popular argument today is delivered by proponents of evolutionary biology who argue that we are nothing more than our genetic code. Written into our DNA is a desire to survive. Our genes will direct us to do what we need to do to continue on, and these actions are neither “good” nor “bad” they are simply who we are.

The point is simply that we all have a worldview, a way to make sense of the world in which we live. This worldview, properly understood, will expose your understanding of God, reality, knowledge, morality, and humanity.

What is a Christian worldview?

Nash devoted most of his career to helping people understand the value of wearing, so to speak, Christian glasses. We are best served when we adopt a Christian worldview. When it comes to God, we believe in the Trinity. God is one God who has made himself known in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And as we peer into this mystery, we are humbled with a vision of the majesty, holiness, love, and eternity of God.

About reality, every Christian believes that God created the world *ex nihilo* (from nothing). This means that before the world even existed, God existed. We cannot properly think of reality, then, without thinking

about God. Many people argue that creation is like a carefully sealed box, which could not possibly be penetrated by God. But the Christian worldview is open to the miraculous. Into this world, God speaks his power (special revelation, the Bible) and God shows his power (general revelation, creation). In this world, God acts with providential care.

The Christian believes we can know God. Because we have been created in God’s image, we can know both creation and the Creator. That doesn’t mean we can know everything, and it doesn’t mean we can know anything perfectly. I recently went to a museum that had an exhibit of optical illusions. Each display proved that my mind can play tricks on me. But just because we don’t know anything perfectly, doesn’t mean we can’t know anything at all. As creatures made in the image of God we can

Everyone has a worldview — whether they admit it or not.

truly know there is a God, that he made us, that he made what is around us, and that he made us to know him. By the way, what’s the alternative to saying we can have real knowledge? If I was forced to doubt this basic fact, how could I be sure I was typing on my computer right now? Maybe I’m napping on a beach in the Caribbean with the sound of the ocean waves in the background... (I gave it some time, just to be sure, and it seems I really am in my living room, typing. Bummer.

Then there’s morality. We are moral beings. We were made with a conscience. Our conscience is not a perfect guide — we need God’s Word. But we seem to have been made with a moral sense, an awareness of good and evil, a desire for justice. Nash was emphatic here: “God is the ground of all moral laws that ought to govern human behavior and that make possible order between humans and within humans.” You don’t have to be a Christian to be upset at bullying or rape or murder or genocide. We are moral beings. The stamp of God’s glory is in all of us. People can and do suppress this morality, but that doesn’t change the fact that we are moral creatures with great capacities for good and for evil.

This takes us to the final piece of the Christian worldview, our understanding of humanity. We may be moral creatures, but we are not good. We are sinful and in need of forgiveness. This is fundamental to the Christian worldview. I think everyone understands this. It’s why we love tales of redemption. Deep down we all know that we need to be redeemed! We are more than our genetic code — we are fallen creatures who need to be rescued from our sin and from God’s wrath.

Everyone has a worldview — whether they admit it or not. Just like your computer has certain default settings, everyone has a worldview setting. We default to the setting that makes the most sense of the world in which we live. Or, to continue our eyeglass metaphor, we all choose the glasses that help us see the world most clearly.

Is naturalism a good worldview?

Naturalists believe that only nature exists and, therefore, miracles are impossible. Many people, of course, claim to believe in God, but they have really adopted the naturalist worldview. They live as if God does not exist. They pay lip service to the existence of objective morality (a standard outside themselves) but, truth be told, they decide for themselves what is right and wrong. Naturalists don’t have a lot of patience for Christians. They see us as too religious.

Nash argued that naturalism is itself a religion, which offers no evidence to support its denial of the supernatural. All we need to do to

prove that naturalism is a bad worldview is find one thing that cannot be explained by naturalism. Borrowing an argument from C. S. Lewis, Nash said that a God-less nature can neither explain the amazing complexity of the mind nor the universal reality of moral principles. How can you explain the fact, for example, that at one time or another everyone has feelings of guilt? The man or woman with no sense of the biblical God cannot explain this feeling. The Christian worldview, however, can. We all experience feelings of guilt because we are guilty. Why would someone without a biblical view of God try to be good and try to encourage others to be good as well? Nothing in the naturalist worldview demands it. But as Christians, we have a solid reason to pursue holiness: God has made us for his glory.

Who cares?

Maybe you’ve read this far and are now asking the question, “Really, why did I read this far?” Here’s why: many of us are not as evangelistic as we should be because we aren’t convinced that we can truly defend the faith we’ve been given. We know we believe in God and the gospel and we know we can’t really prove it, and so we are afraid to get into a conversation that might put our faith to the test.

The first thing that we need to remember is that we don’t have to be amazing apologists (defenders of the faith) to be faithful. Like the blind beggar of John 9 we can all point to the fact that, though we were once


blind, now we see. In other words, each and every Christian should be able to point to a change in his or her life as evidence of the power of the gospel. Moreover, we must all give credit to Christ for that change. We can all say with Peter, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live for righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24). Before you get worried about defending your faith, work on explaining simply and carefully that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the reason for the change in your life.

The second thing we need to remember is that every non-Christian has some explaining to do. Whether they know it or not, unbelievers have a worldview that they live by. They have a set of beliefs they cling to. Sometimes, the best thing we can do is to gently, humbly, and lovingly question those beliefs. Consider asking your friend some simple questions:

- Why do you believe God would never punish a sinner?
- Why do think this world is all there is?
- Why do you think we can’t truly know God?
- Why do you feel guilty sometimes?
- Why do you think people are basically good?

Who knows, you might find that your unbelieving friend has a hard time defending his faith. ■

~ Aaron Menikoff



We have an opportunity to partner with a dynamic ministry that serves the homeless community. Seven Bridges to Recovery is a street ministry that serves the homeless by providing food, hygiene, and practical help to those who seek shelter under the bridges downtown. The Lord has provided two homes for the ministry — a women’s home and a men’s home. We are planning to visit the women’s home, which currently houses about 65 women and approximately 35 children. These women participate in three Bible studies per day and are in various stages of recovery. For more information, contact Doug Young at dougyoung@mvbchurch.org.

WHEN: March 23, from 11:30 am – 2:00 pm
WHERE: 7 Bridges to Recovery
2840 Plant Atkinson Rd. SE
Smyrna, GA 30080

March 2013

1								
2								
3	9:15 am 12:00 pm 6:00 pm 7:00 pm	Knowing MVBC: Session 1 Knowing MVBC: Sessions 2-4 Lord's Supper LS Fellowship Meal	4	11				
5	6:00 pm	Youth Basketball Banquet	6	13	6:30 pm	New Equipping Matters Classes Begin	7	21
6			4	11				
7			6	13				
8			5	12				
9			4	11				
10			3	10	Daylight Savings Begins			
11			2	9				
12			1	8				
13			31	30	Easter Sunday No Evening Service			
14			24	23	12:15 pm 4:30 pm	Baby Shower Church in Conference	15	22
15			17	16	10:30 am	Guest Preacher; Dr. Michael Haykin	14	21
16			18	15	8:30 am	Feed My Sheep Conference	13	20
17			25	14	12:00 pm	RW&A Luncheon	12	19
18			26	13			11	18
19			27	14			10	17
20			28	15			9	16
21			29	16			8	15
22			30	17			7	14
23	11:30 am	Family Mission Trip		18			6	13
24				19			5	12
25				20			4	11
26				21			3	10
27				22			2	9
28				23			1	8
29	12:00 pm	Good Friday Service Church Office Closed after noon.		24				7
30				25				6
				26				5
				27				4
				28				3
				29				2
				30				1

EVENTS

CHURCHWIDE

March 3 6:00 pm Lord's Supper & Fellowship Meal
We encourage members to examine their hearts and relationship with one another in preparation for this celebration of Christ's death and resurrection. Immediately following the evening service, we will have a great time of fellowship around a chili dinner.

March 18 8:30 am Feed My Sheep Conference
Mount Vernon will be hosting a one-day conference for local church pastors and leaders to encourage truth, leadership, and fellowship.

March 24 4:30 pm Church in Conference
All members are encouraged to attend our quarterly Church in Conference as we consider many matters related to the life of Mount Vernon.

March 29 12:00 pm Good Friday Service
All are welcome to our annual Good Friday Service where we reflect on the sacrificial death of Christ.

NEW MEMBERS

March 3 9:15 am Knowing MVBC: Session 1
12:00 pm Knowing MVBC: Sessions 2-4
(See ad to the right.)

RECREATION

March 5 6:00 pm Youth Basketball Banquet
This is an annual banquet to recognize all of those that participated in our youth basketball league over the past season.

ADULT

March 6 6:30 pm New Equipping Matters Classes Begin
All are invited to attend our Equipping Matters topical studies. This quarter, we are offering classes on Financial Stewardship and Christian discipleship.

March 25 12:00 pm RW&A Luncheon
Everyone 50 and older is invited to the monthly RW&A luncheon. Bring a covered dish.

CHILDREN

March 23 11:30 am Family Mission Trip
There will be a Family Mission trip at Seven Bridges to Recovery, a street ministry that serves the homeless by providing food, hygiene, and practical help to those who seek shelter under the bridges downtown. We will provide organized activities for the children at the home, help serve lunch, and participate in a short Bible study. Everyone is invited!

WOMEN

March 24 12:15 pm Baby Shower
The ladies of Mount Vernon are invited to a light lunch and time of celebration for first time mother, Katie Bediova.

BIRTHDAYS

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|--|
| 2 | Jocelyn Davis
Diane Hughs
Brad Thayer | 17 | Ash Anderson
Becky Luttrell |
| 3 | Bethany Houser | 20 | Jesse Brannen |
| 4 | Steve Chamblee
Daniel Spratlin
Joy Sullivan
Carol Thurman | 21 | Lisa Timmons |
| 5 | Terry Earl | 22 | Dee Carter
Keith Cooper
Charlotte Haigler
Tony Watson |
| 6 | Joy Derrer
Jaime Fulcher
Johnny Hall
Mary Turner | 23 | Dianne Hoover
John Pattillo
Mary Robinson |
| 8 | Frank Louthan
Ferrell Ryan | 25 | Bob Linker |
| 9 | Scott Sullivan | 26 | Hal Barnes
Everett Hodge
Ann Nable
Anita Shipley |
| 10 | Erin Nable | 28 | Donna Reid
Lois Shank |
| 13 | Alice Nelson | 30 | Georgiana Brannen |
| 14 | Julie Metry | 31 | John Anderson
Renée Moultrie |
| 16 | Anne Goodgame | | |



Knowing MVBC is a four-session course that introduces you to life at Mount Vernon, covering the following topics:

- Knowing Our Commitments: Church Covenant
- Knowing Our Beliefs: Statement of Faith
- Knowing Our Structure: Leadership
- Knowing How to Be Involved: Discipling & Serving

All four sessions will be offered Sunday, March 3, during the Sunday School hour (session 1) and from 12:00 – 2:30 pm (sessions 2 – 3). Lunch will be provided. You may sign up on the edge of the bulletin, or by contacting the church office at 404-255-3133 or info@mvbchurch.org.



Mount Vernon

BAPTIST CHURCH

850 Mount Vernon Highway NW
Sandy Springs, GA 30327