

A CRITIQUE OF ZANE HODGES' *THE GOSPEL UNDER SIEGE*: A REVIEW ARTICLE

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Zane Hodges, a man with a mission, seeks to rescue the gospel of grace from the ominous shadow of works-righteousness that he sees hovering above it. To this end he has written three books that underscore the absolute, unconditional "freeness" of divine salvation: *The Hungry Inherit* (1972), *The Gospel Under Siege* (1981), and *Grace in Eclipse* (1985). The subtitle of the first volume sums up what Hodges seeks to offer: "Refreshing Insights on Salvation, Discipleship, and Rewards."

The central thrust of Hodges' position is that a person can be saved—and really know it—and yet not manifest any fruit or good works in his life as a result. He argues that

the New Testament Gospel offers the assurance of eternal life to all who will accept that life by faith in Christ. The assurance of the believer rests squarely on the direct promises in which this offer is made, and on nothing else. It follows from this that the assertion that a believer must find his assurance in his works, is a grave and fundamental theological error.¹

My purpose in this article is to demonstrate my disagreement with that contention. Limited space prevents a thorough examination of Hodges' trilogy, so I will concentrate on the important second volume, *The Gospel Under Siege*. This critique is designed to evaluate its Biblical foundations and thereby the underpinnings of Hodges' soteriological system. The procedure will be to quote various statements he makes in several key chapters and then to assess their validity hermeneutically and theologically.

I. CHAP. 3: "WHAT IS DEAD FAITH?"

(1) According to Hodges, the phrase "save your souls" in Jas 1:21 is pivotal to an interpretation of 2:14-26. The phrase does not mean "to be delivered from hell" but "to save the life" physically (pp. 23-24). "The issue that concerns James is an issue of life or death. (He is not discussing salvation from hell!)" (p. 27). Thus for Christians to have dead or dying faith—the focus of 2:14-26—"can end our physical lives" (p. 33). Such is the warning James is issuing here.

But it is highly doubtful that James intended "save your souls" in 1:21 to designate physical rather than spiritual deliverance, for the following reasons:

In v 18 the apostle sees the "word of truth" as God's instrument in "bringing

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¹Z. Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege* (Dallas: Redencion Viva, 1981) 121.

us forth”—regenerating us unto eternal life, as Hodges himself affirms (p. 20). Is it not logical to assume, then, that just three verses later (v 21), when James is still discussing the power of the Word and its reception in our lives, he would mean for the salvation of our souls to be understood in the same way: as deliverance from hell and regeneration unto eternal life?

W. E. Oesterly cogently points out that James patterned his statement in v 21 about the saving power of the Word after the Jewish teaching that the Torah (the Word of God through Moses) was the means of eternal salvation. James simply broadens the scope to include the NT Word of God in Christ and the gospel.²

A reference to eternal salvation in this context is consistent with James' description of God in 4:12 as “the One who is able to save and destroy” in the ultimate sense since God's role as “Lawgiver and Judge” is featured there.

G. Harder asserts that “the death from which it is said [in Jas 1:21; 5:20] that the soul will be saved is eternal death, exclusion from eternal life. The salvation of souls in this sense is the goal of faith and the content of the whole saving activity of God.” He confirms this by citing the following Petrine passages as cross-references: 1 Pet 1:9, 22; 2:11, 25; 4:19.³

(2) Hodges states: “In James 2, James plainly makes works a *condition* for salvation. The failure to admit this is the chief source of the problems supposedly arising from this passage for most evangelicals” (p. 22).

James is not making works a condition of salvation, however, but rather a characteristic of salvation. The one who is truly saved will possess a living faith that produces works of righteousness. These works do not earn a right standing with God but exhibit it before people. On this point both James and Paul agreed, as Acts 26:20; Rom 2:5–11; Eph 2:8–10; Gal 5:6; Titus 3:5, 8, 14 demonstrate. Hodges' failure to understand this fundamental harmony between James and Paul leads him to charge that “they *do* contradict each other” if they are “talking about the same thing” (p. 23). Yet they are indeed talking about the same thing—justification—but doing so without contradiction, as Leon Morris explains:

James . . . has often been held to be in opposition to Paul in this matter. . . . There is no more than a verbal contradiction, however. The kind of “faith” that James is opposing is not that warm personal trust in a living Saviour of which Paul speaks. It is a faith which James himself describes: “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (Jas. ii.19). He has in mind an intellectual assent to certain truths, an assent which is not backed up by a life lived in accordance with those truths (Jas. ii.15f). So far is James from opposing faith in the full sense that he everywhere presupposes it He criticizes a wrong faith but assumes that everyone will recognize the need for a right faith. Moreover, by “works” James does not mean what Paul means by that term. Paul thinks of obedience to the commands of the law regarded as a system

²W. E. Oesterly, “The General Epistle of James,” in *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 4. 433.

³G. Harder, “Soul,” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (hereafter *NIDNTT*) (ed. C. Brown; Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1979), 3. 685–686.

whereby a man may merit salvation. For James the law is "the law of liberty" (Jas. ii.12). His "works" look uncommonly like "the fruit of the Spirit" of which Paul speaks. They are warm deeds of love springing from a right attitude to God. They are the fruits of faith. What James objects to is the claim that faith is there when there is no fruit to attest it.⁴

Colin Brown adds: "It may be said that for both Paul and James 'justify' means to *declare righteous*. In the case of Paul, it is God who declares the believer righteous. In the case of James, it is a man's works which declare him righteous by showing that he is a man of faith."⁵

(3) "Faith . . . is nothing more than a response to a divine initiative. It is the means by which the gift of life is received" (p. 21).

Perhaps the fatal flaw in Hodges' soteriology lies in his conception of faith, which he would define in terms of response to God while at the same time limiting that response to appropriating God's gifts. The Scriptures, however, portray faith as embracing confidence in God's pronouncements and obedience to God's commands as well. Thus a man with genuine, saving faith agrees with, depends on and obeys God. "Whereas Christian theologians, following Paul's supposed distinction, often contrast faith with obedience, this dichotomy is unknown to the Old Testament," writes Gordon Wenham.

Faith is the correct response to God's word, whether it is a word of promise or a word of command. Psalm 119:66 can say, "I *believe* in thy *commandments*." The opposite of faith is rebellion or disobedience (e.g. Dt 9:23; 2 Ki 17:14).⁶

But the marriage of faith and obedience is found not only in the OT but in the NT as well. "Christian [that is, NT] faith," observes J. I. Packer, "means hearing, noting, and doing what God says."⁷ Indeed Jesus himself asks: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' [a confession essential to salvation, according to Rom 10:9] and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). Paul, too, speaks of the obedience-engendering effect of saving faith. In Rom 6:17-18 he praises the Romans for becoming "obedient from the heart" to the apostolic teaching they had accepted in faith to the extent that "having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."

(4) "If we allow this illustration [in Jas 2:26] to speak for itself, then the presence of a dead faith shows that this faith was once alive" (p. 20). "Whenever a Christian ceases to act on his faith, that faith atrophies and becomes little more than a creedal corpse" (p. 33).

But according to the NT, "faith is not a passing phase. It is a continuing

⁴L. Morris, "Faith," in *New Bible Dictionary* (ed. J. D. Douglas; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) 413.

⁵C. Brown, "Faith," in *NIDNTT*, 1. 605. Cf. also A. Ross, *The Epistles of James and John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 53; R. Ward, "James," in *New Bible Commentary: Revised* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 1229.

⁶G. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester/Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1981) 150.

⁷J. I. Packer, *I Want To Be A Christian* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1977) 25.

attitude."⁸ It is he who "keeps on believing" (Greek present tense) that Jesus is the Christ who "is born of God" (1 John 5:1—a verse indicating that "our present, continuing activity of believing is the result, and therefore the evidence, of our past experience of new birth by which we became and remain God's children"⁹). A born-again Christian with a dead faith is a contradiction in terms.

II. CHAP. 4: "THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP"

(1) "It is an interpretative mistake of the first magnitude to confuse the terms of discipleship with the offer of eternal life as a free gift" (p. 37). Salvation is "an unconditional benefaction" (p. 37). Discipleship, on the other hand, "is a conditional relationship that can be interrupted or terminated after it is begun" (p. 42). Thus it is possible to be a Christian without being a disciple (pp. 36, 45).

But Christ himself defined the mission of the Church in this age as "making disciples of all the nations" (Matt 28:19)—that is, "evangelizing, enlisting men under the lordship of Christ" as born-again Christians.¹⁰ To Christ and his apostles there was no difference between a true disciple and a genuine Christian. In John's gospel "disciple" (*mathētēs*) "is often simply a term for 'Christian' (Jn 8:31; 13:35; 15:8). . . . It denotes those who have come out of the sphere of darkness into the sphere of light (3:21; cf. the farewell discourses, chs. 13—17)." So also in Acts, "*mathētēs* has the general sense of 'Christian,' one who believes in Jesus (Acts 6:1f., 7; 9:1, 10, 19, 25f., 38; 11:26, 29; 13:52; 14:20, 22, 28; 15:10; 16:1; 18:23, 27; 19:1, 9, 30; 20:1, 30; 21:4, 16)."¹¹ Indeed, "not to be a disciple of Jesus means to be a disciple of the powers of darkness"—an unbeliever.¹²

(2) According to Hodges, Jesus' teaching in Luke 14:26—33 sets forth the conditions of discipleship, not "the 'inevitable result' of regeneration" (p. 36).

As is so often the case with Hodges, he here labels as conditions of discipleship what in reality are characteristics of salvation. In Luke 14:26 ff. Jesus is addressing the "great multitudes" who were going along with him (v 25). His audience is thus composed of would-be disciples and committed disciples.¹³ F.

⁸Morris, "Faith" 412.

⁹J. R. W. Stott, *The Epistles of John: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 172.

¹⁰H. A. Kent, Jr., "The Gospel According to Matthew," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Southwestern, 1968) 985.

¹¹D. Müller, "Disciple," in *NIDNTT*, 1. 490.

¹²N. Goldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952) 399.

¹³I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 597.

Godet captures the gist of Jesus' message to them:

Seeing these crowds, Jesus is aware that between Him and them there is a misunderstanding. The gospel, rightly apprehended, will not be the concern of the multitude. He lifts His voice to reveal this false situation: You are going up with me to Jerusalem, as if you were repairing to a feast. But do you know what it is for a man to join himself to my company? It is to abandon what is dearest and most vital (ver. 26) and to accept what is most painful—the cross (ver. 27).—*Coming to me* (ver. 26) denotes outward attachment to Jesus: *being my disciple*, at the end of the verse, actual dependence on His person and the Spirit. That the former may be changed into the latter, and that the bond between Jesus and the professor may be durable, there must be effected in him a painful breach with everything which is naturally dear to him.¹⁴

Thus Jesus is challenging those following him to examine themselves carefully to make sure they grasp what commitment to him is all about. He is not laying down conditions for being his disciple so much as characteristics to be seen in those who have become his disciples by faith and are therefore saved.

(3) Hodges affirms that “it can be said that the believers of John 8:30 received eternal life in response to their faith. . . . But to these who now had that life, Jesus set forth a *conditional* relationship: ‘if you continue in My word, then you are My disciples indeed’. . . . Plainly we have there, as also in Luke 14, a relationship which is contingent on the individual’s continuing commitment to the discipleship experience. Should this commitment fail, he would become like the man who ‘began to build and was not able to finish.’ But this reality should not be confused with a man’s permanent possession of the gifts of eternal life” (p. 38).

Hodges argues that the faith of the Jews in John 8:30 resulted in salvation because of the *pisteō eis* construction John uses there: “This specialized expression is John’s standard way of describing the act of saving faith by which eternal life is obtained. To deny this in John 8:30 would be to go directly counter to the well-established usage of the author” (pp. 37–38). But Hodges’ list of verses in John where this expression appears (p. 37) leaves out 2:23; 7:31; 12:42, which demonstrate that “not all faith is saving faith (cf. 6:26).”¹⁵

William Hendriksen comments on John 8:30–31 as follows:

There is nothing that compels us to view the men described in verse 30 as being genuine believers. The finite verb *believed* (*episteusan*) followed by *in him* (*eis auton*) or *in his name* does not always indicate a change of heart. . . . What is true is that the *present participle* (*pisteuōn, -ontes*) in such cases always indicates genuine faith (3:16, 18, 36; 6:35, 40, 47; 7:38; 11:25, 26; 12:44, 46; 14:12; 17:20). . . . But the present participle is not used here in 8:30. Hence, whether the faith here indicated is genuine or not will have to be indicated by the following verses (the context).¹⁶

¹⁴F. Godet, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1878), 2. 138.

¹⁵W. Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 1. 127.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 2. 51. Cf. also A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman, 1932), 5. 149.

(4) "In John 10:27 the term 'follow' is simply another Johannine metaphor for saving faith. . . . It is a mistake to construe the word 'follow' in John 10:27 as though it indicates something about the future of the believer's experience *after* he receives eternal life. In fact, it has nothing to do with it at all" (pp. 44-45).

Again, John is describing here the "nature of true believers"—the characteristics of being saved. "Following Christ" involves more than having faith in him. It also speaks of "obedience" to him.¹⁷ The verbs for "hear" (*akouousin*) and "follow" (*akolouthousin*) here are present active indicatives denoting "action in progress or state in persistence"¹⁸—that is, "habit, continuity, unbroken sequence."¹⁹ Thus Christ's true sheep keep on following him from the moment of conversion to the hour of glorification when they will take complete possession of the eternal life he gives to them (v 28). They have that life now (3:15), but its full potential for blessing awaits a future fulfillment (Rom 13:11; Jas 1:12; Rev 22:14). Toward that goal the Good Shepherd now leads his sheep.

Construing the sheep's following as a lifelong experience is also consistent with the pastoral metaphor Jesus invokes in 10:2-5:

The shepherd, having put out all his own, goes on ahead of them, and the sheep follow. That is the custom in the Orient. . . . The reason why the sheep follow their own shepherd is given in the words: "for they know his voice." In the Word of God the true shepherd addresses his sheep. They recognize his voice, and follow—i.e., trust and obey—him.²⁰

III. CHAP. 5: "I JOHN: TESTS OF LIFE?"

(1) 1 John 5:13 is "very frequently, and wrongly, taken as a statement of purpose for the entire epistle. It assumes, without further enquiry, that the expression 'these things' refers to the letter as a whole" (p. 51).

Donald Burdick represents the disagreement of the majority:

Although verse 13 is rooted in the immediately preceding context, the expression "these things" must not be limited to the matters discussed there, for as Lenski points out, what John wrote in those verses really involves all of the rest of the epistle. Thus, as the author begins this concluding section, he is looking back on the book as a whole and explaining his aim in writing. The purpose of the fourth gospel was that unbelievers might believe and thus receive life (Jn. 20:31-31); the purpose of the first epistle is that those who do "believe on the name of the Son of God" may know that they "have eternal life." John has written that believers who are confronted with false teaching, such as Gnosticism, may have assurance and not be shaken by the error with which they are confronted. If one finds that he is walking in the light (1:7), confessing his sins (1:9), obeying Christ's commands (2:3-5), loving his fellow believers (2:9-11; 3:14-17), believing in

¹⁷M. C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 167.

¹⁸H. E. Dana and J. R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1957) 182.

¹⁹Stott, *Epistles* 135.

²⁰Hendriksen, *John*, 2. 105; cf. also p. 122.

Jesus as God's incarnate Son (2:22–23; 4:1–6; 5:1, 5), and practicing righteousness (2:29; 3:6–10a), he can be assured by “these things” that he has eternal life. And because he possesses this assurance, he will not be shaken by any of the disturbing assertions of vendors of error.²¹

(2) “It almost goes without saying that ‘fellowship’ [in 1 John 1:3] is not to be defined as a virtual synonym for being a Christian. . . . The equation of ‘fellowship’ with ‘being a Christian’ (or something similar) is extremely far-fetched” (p. 53).

The Greek term used for “fellowship” here is *koinōnia*, the basic meaning of which is “sharing in something with someone.”²² The context in 1 John 1 indicates that what we share with God as believers is “the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us” (v 2). Hence, in the Johannine sense of the term, having fellowship with God is indeed a synonym for being a Christian—that is, one who possesses eternal life in the Son (5:11–13). “To be a Christian is the same as being in fellowship with Him. . . . Thus, the New Testament *koinōnia* includes all who are saved.”²³

(3) “While it can be said that in one sense all true Christians know God (John 17:3), it is possible to conceive of a sense in which a true Christian may *not* know God” (p. 56). From 1 John 4:7–8 “it would be natural to deduce that ‘new birth’ and ‘knowing God’ are distinguishable experiences. If a man loves—in the Christian sense of that word—both experiences can be predicated of him. If he does *not* love, all that John affirms is that he does *not* know God. John does not say, however, that he is *not* born of God!” (pp. 57–58).

Hodges’ failure to relate John’s letter to its historical background has misled him here. As M. H. Cressey points out:

Both Paul and John write at times in conscious contrast with and in opposition to systems of alleged esoteric knowledge purveyed by the mystery cults and syncretistic “philosophy” of their day (cf. I Tim. vi. 20; Col. ii. 8). To these knowledge was the result of an initiation or illumination which put the initiate in possession of spiritual discernment beyond mere reason or faith. Against them Paul . . . and all the Johannine writings stress that knowledge of God springs from committal to the historic Christ; it is not opposed to faith but forms its completion. We need no revelation other than that of Christ.²⁴

Thus to John the “new birth” and “knowing God,” far from being distinguishable experiences, are in actuality identical experiences.²⁵ Furthermore, in John’s writings knowledge of God is equivalent to faith in God, which Hodges himself asserts is the means of receiving eternal life (p. 21). A comparison of John 17:3 (where eternal life is attributed to the knowledge of God) with 3:36

²¹D. Burdick, *The Epistles of John* (Chicago: Moody, 1970) 91–92.

²²R. P. Martin, “Communion,” in *New Bible Dictionary* (ed. Douglas) 245–246.

²³Burdick, *Epistles* 21; cf. also Stott, *Epistles* 63.

²⁴M. H. Cressey, “Knowledge,” in *New Bible Dictionary* (ed. Douglas) 703.

²⁵E. D. Schmitz, “Knowledge,” in *NIDNTT*, 2. 404.

(where eternal life is attributed to faith in God) substantiates Schmitz' observation.²⁶ Moreover such statements on knowing God as those in 1 John 2:3-4; 3:6; 5:20 cannot be predicated of one who is not born of God.

With regard to 1 John 4:8 in particular, Burdick notes: "The tense of the verb 'knoweth' is aorist, indicating that he has never come to know God. He has never known anything other than estrangement from his Maker."²⁷

(4) "The claims of [1 John] 3:6 and 9 pertain to the believer when he is viewed only as 'abiding' or as one who is 'born of God.' That is, sin is never the product of our abiding experience. It is never an act of the regenerate self per se" (p. 60).

Stott speaks forcefully against such an interpretation:

Apart from the fact that such an argument would play into the hands of the heretics John is opposing, it is very doubtful if we can find biblical warrant for thus isolating a man's "natures" from his "person." Our two natures can be separated in their desires and promptings, but not in their activities. . . . We can distinguish between desires within ourselves, attributing some to the flesh and some to the Spirit. But we cannot ascribe an act to one of our two natures *in such a way as to distinguish ourselves from it*. We cannot say of a sin: "my old nature did it; I did not." What either of my natures prompts me to do, *I* do, and I cannot relieve myself of the responsibility for it. . . . So throughout this paragraph [1 John 3:4-9], it is a person who sins or does not sin, not one of his natures. The subject of the verbs "to sin" and "not to sin" is in each case "he," a person, not "it," a nature. This is particularly clear in verse 9, where John does not write "his seed remaineth in him: and *it* cannot sin," but "his seed remaineth in him: and *he* cannot sin." There can be no doubt that this is the correct translation, since John goes on "because *he* is born of God." It is not the "seed" which is born of God but the "person," through the implantation of the seed; and it is, therefore, the "person" in whom the seed remains who "cannot sin."²⁸

IV. CHAP. 7: "PROBLEM PASSAGES IN PAUL"

Hodges' theme here is this: "Certain passages in the Pauline letters have been taken to prove that good works are an inevitable outcome of genuine saving faith. . . . This kind of deduction destroys the believer's ground of assurance" (p. 79).

Paul's true position on the necessary and legitimate place of good works in the believer's life, however, has been ably stated by Herman Ridderbos:

Here we wish to confine ourselves to rejecting the view that the Pauline conception of the new life does not really admit of being reconciled with the laying down of individual precepts and commandments, and that their occurrence in the epistles of Paul would require further explanation. We have to do here with a conception of liberty and "Christian" autonomy that stems more from the world of the Enlightenment and Kantian philosophy than from that of Paul. The whole

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Burdick, *Epistles* 72.

²⁸Stott, *Epistles* 131-132; cf. further A. T. Robertson as quoted in Ross, *Epistles* 183.

idea that these individual precepts, were one compelled to grant a binding character to them, would signify the way back to Jewish legalism so forcefully opposed by him is obviously alien to Paul's own world of thought. . . . After having first emphatically rejected man's own righteousness before God as a dead-end street, he nevertheless qualifies the whole of the new life as servitude to "righteousness," in the religious-ethical sense of the word. And the same thing applies to the concept of "work" and "good works." That man is justified without the works of the law does not for a moment prevent him from vigorously demanding good works as the fruit of the new life and giving all kinds of prescriptions, commandments, advice, for these good works. If the nature of the new life and the new obedience demanded on the basis of it is in conflict with being subjected to new precepts and commandments, then Paul's epistles from first to last are no longer comprehensible; for they are full of them.²⁹

Hodges argues that Titus 3:5 expresses Paul's "true conviction" about salvation's being a product of God's grace rather than man's works (p. 79). No one familiar with Paul's thinking would deny that. But what is disturbing about Hodges' treatment of this passage is his failure to mention Paul's statements in the surrounding context about the role of good works in the lives of those who have experienced God's grace in salvation. In 2:11-14 the apostle declares that "the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age" as a people redeemed "for his own possession, zealous for good deeds." In 3:8 he directs Titus to speak confidently about the plan of salvation he has just delineated in vv 3-7 "so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds." Indeed he adds: "These things are good and profitable for all." Titus 3:14 hammers away at the same truth: "And let our people also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful." Clearly "Paul was confident that good works were the certain result of a theology which gave prominence to the free and unmerited grace of God to the sinner. It is the logical result of a true apprehension of the grace of God."³⁰

Acts 26:20 "contains a *summary* of [Paul's] labors [as an apostle] in obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus."³¹ There Paul surveys his ministry as a preacher of the gospel and reduces the essence of his message to both Jews and Gentiles to this striking dictum: "that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance"—that is, doing good works that confirm the sincerity of their repentance and the reality of their salvation. Such works provide assurance that one does indeed belong to God and is indwelt by his righteousness-producing Spirit (Rom 8:3-4, 12-17).

²⁹H. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 274-275; cf. H. C. Hahn, "Work," in *NIDNTT*, 3. 1151.

³⁰D. E. Hiebert, *Titus and Philemon* (Chicago: Moody, 1957) 73; cf. also R. Ward, *Commentary on I and II Timothy and Titus* (Waco: Word, 1979) 277.

³¹A. Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: Explanatory and Practical: Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975) 352.

V. CHAP. 9: "WHO ARE THE HEIRS?"

(1) In Rom 8:17 Paul, according to Hodges, distinguishes between "two forms of heirship. One of these is predicated on being children of God. The other is predicated on suffering with Christ. . . . Paul may be understood as saying that *all* of God's children are heirs, simply because they are children. But those who suffer with Christ have a special 'joint heirship' with Him" (pp. 109–110).

Paul is not distinguishing here between two separate heirships, however. He is describing the one heirship promised to all Christians, for the inheritance is "the life that awaits the people of God."³²

(2) "In speaking of heirship in I Cor. 6:9, 10, the Apostle did not threaten his readers with the loss of eternal salvation. He did not even raise a question about their salvation. But he warned them plainly that if they did not correct their unrighteous behavior, they confronted a serious consequence. They would not inherit the Kingdom of God" (p. 115).

Hodges justifies this peculiar interpretation by suggesting that there is a difference between inheriting the kingdom of God and entering it (p. 115). Thus a believer who has failed spiritually in this life (p. 120) could eventually enter the kingdom—that is, live in it—without actually inheriting it (p. 116). Bertold Klappert, however, argues that "inheriting the kingdom" and "entering the kingdom" are, for all intents and purposes, synonymous expressions,³³ in witness whereof Leon Morris defines *kleronomeō* in 1 Cor 6:10 as "enter into full possession of."³⁴ All believers will receive/obtain/inherit the blessings and privileges of the kingdom (though admittedly in differing degrees depending on their faithfulness in earthly service; 3:10—4:5), as the following passages make clear: Matt 5:3; 13:43; 25:34; Luke 12:31–32; John 3:3, 5; Acts 14:22; Jas 2:5.

Hodges' interpretation of Gal 5:21 is open to the same criticism. He takes Paul there as warning believers that by fulfilling the lust of the flesh they can forfeit their inheritance in the kingdom of God. But, as James Montgomery Boice contends, it is not believers but unbelievers whom Paul views as forfeiting the kingdom here:

Paul adds a solemn warning, saying that those who habitually practice such things will never inherit God's kingdom. This does not mean that if a Christian falls into sin through getting drunk, or some such thing, he thereby loses his salvation. The tense of the verb (present) indicates a habitual continuation in fleshly sins rather than an isolated lapse, and the point is that those who habitually practice such sins give evidence of having never received God's Spirit. . . . The phrase "will not inherit" carries the thought back to Paul's words about Abraham in chapter 3. The point is that those who keep on living in the flesh

³²J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 1. 298–299.

³³B. Klappert, "King," in *NIDNTT*, 2. 387–388.

³⁴L. Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 97; cf. further J. Eichler, "Inheritance," in *NIDNTT*, 2. 300.

give evidence that they are not Abraham's seed and therefore will not inherit salvation.³⁵

(3) "There is absolutely nothing in these letters [to the seven churches] to suggest that all Christians are 'overcomers.' If Revelation 2 and 3 are read thoughtfully, it will be found that they suggest the reverse!" (p. 118).

But "overcoming" in Revelation 2—3 is virtually the same as "believing," according to Robertson, who states that

nikaō [is] a common Johannine verb (John 16:33; I John 2:13f; 4:4; 5:4f; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 5:5; 12:11; 15:2; 17:14; 21:7). Faith is dominant in Paul, victory in John, faith is victory (I John 5:4). So in each promise to these churches.³⁶

John also uses the present tense in these promises, implying that continuous victory is characteristic of believers just as continuous faith is (see 1 John 5:1, where *pisteuō* is in the present tense). Lehman Strauss contends that "the overcomer is the truly born-again one"³⁷ and "the promises made to the overcomers are a part of the great salvation provided by God in grace for all those who have been redeemed through faith in Christ's blood."³⁸ His work should be consulted for a thorough refutation of the view represented by Hodges.

³⁵J. M. Boice, "Galatians," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 10, 497.

³⁶Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 6, 300.

³⁷L. Strauss, *The Book of Revelation* (Neptune: Loizeaux, 1964) 109.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 108; cf. also J. E. Rosscup, "The Overcomer of the Apocalypse," *GTJ* 3 (1982) 261–286.