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A LONG TIME AGO

Never, never, never take anyone for granted

FINISHING WELL

What a wonderful year 2022 was for Mrs. H and me! We had our ups and downs, but how you feel about your life is so much a matter of your perspective. It's easy to see only thorns when you're in a garden of glorious roses. Most of the time, those feeling the greatest joy are facing the biggest hardships and trials. I really like the old admonition which says, "*As you travel through life, brother; whatever be your goal, keep your eye on the doughnut, and not on the hole.*" Christ is our joy for all who know Him as personal Savior.

2022 privileged me to preach and teach 70 times. Nine of those were funerals of dear loved ones. Forty-two times I was blessed to speak in my own home church, [Northwest Baptist](#) in Houston. That included a seminar on *The Reliability of Your Bible* and an 8-sermon series on *Big Events on God's Prophetic Calendar*. I also presented that series at Midway Baptist Church in McKinney, Texas. I am thankful to have preached for the [Highland Missionary Baptist Church](#) in Dublin, Texas, the [Prairie Vista Baptist Church](#) in Godley, Texas and for the [Lighthouse Baptist Church](#) in Missouri City, Texas. A true highlight of my year was the blessing to preach during the annual Missions Conference of the [Rodgers Baptist Church](#) in Garland, Texas.

Another area of great blessing to me in 2022 was the privilege to invest myself in the lives of a sizeable number of dear men whom God has put into His ministry. Men of God face a menagerie of challenges on my fronts. I feel humbled and honored that some of them let me offer them counsel and advice. I ask you to pray that I will always be a true and honest friend to those who seek help.

You are aware that my main passion is in leaving a legacy of

godly written and spoken materials. In 2022, I was able to finish writing the Christian apologetics book which I have titled, *What's So Wrong with Doing Right*. Pray that God will use it to His advantage.

Along the way, God gave me glorious times with friends and family. Mrs. H and I started the year with our daughter and son-in-law at their home in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. It was my first rodeo at dog-sledding. Wow! I am glad to have a car, and live in Texas. I also caught some nice trout through a hole in the ice on a frozen lake just outside Steamboat. In June, two of my dearest friends joined my son and me on the spectacularly beautiful Rio Grande Reservoir between Creede and Silverton, Colorado. I suspect you've heard the famous fisherman's prayer: *Lord, help me to catch a fish so big that I won't have to lie when I tell about it.* The four of us caught and released lots of trout. I mean LOTS of trout, and we did it mostly on flies. The ice had just melted off this 10,500 feet high lake, the fish were hungry and we were in the right place at the right time. What an unforgettable experience! Like a dream come true!

In August, Mrs. H and I did something that few people ever experience; we took a 60th anniversary honeymoon. I know firsthand that there are no limits to love; she's more beautiful, precious and special to me than she's ever been. We rented a house right beside the Rio Grande River in South Fork, Colorado. We relived so many precious memories, visited our son and daughter-in-law in Durango and took stock of where we are in life. Yes, there comes a time when things will dramatically change. One or the other falls and breaks a hip, has a stroke or comes down with cancer or a heart attack. Then what? Sadly, most people are unprepared; physically, financially

and emotionally. The kids (sometimes relative or even strangers) have to step in and call the shots. It can be most painful. For everybody involved! Mrs. H and I made some hard decisions, and set our house in better order.

Shortly after we got home, the Houston Astros found themselves in a pennant race. Mrs. H was really caught up. In October, we went with Margaret's baby sister and a dear friend of many years to Providence, Rhode Island. Visiting the place where the first Baptist church in America was planted had long been on my *Bucket List*. Well, I finally got there; with great glee! While in the area, we visited the Plymouth Rock, toured Gettysburg, were guided through an Amish community, saw *David* at the Sight and Sound Theatre Lancaster, Pennsylvania, visited the Museum of the Bible in Washington, DC and went to church at Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia. It was a blessing to again see my old alma mater, Liberty University. We got home on a Tuesday just in time to go to Lackland Airforce Base in San Antonio and see the Coin Ceremony and graduation from Basic Military Training of our dear grandson, Airman Nathan Matthew Shugart. Our daughter and son-in-law secretly bought two World Series tickets to Game 6. Yes, we were there when the Astros clinched it. I've never experienced anything like it. Wow!

For a long time, I've said that I'd like to cross the finish-line wide open. So far, I'm pretty close.

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"NEVER PASS UP AN OPPORTUNITY TO KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT."

Elizabeth Elliot

REMEMBERING PRECIOUS PEOPLE



Charles and JoAnn Thomas

God has blessed me by putting some of the best of the best into my life. The people in this picture are right there; no question about it, *the best of the best!*

Charles Thomas was pastor of [Rodgers Baptist Church](#) for lots of years. I first met him about 1959-1960. I was just a young, backward preacher from deep East Texas; Charles Thomas put his arm around my shoulder, and made me feel so special. It was obvious that he really cared about who I was. Instantly, I felt like I'd known him a long time. Right there on that spot, I wanted his mantle to fall on me. I knew I needed what he had.

Almost as if time was standing still, the years rolled by. I went to those powerful Rodgers Baptist Church Missions Conferences. Good seeds fell into my heart. I met great men of God like Roy and James Dearmore, Al Locke, Edgar Carlisle, Raleigh Campbell, M. L. Mosier, Jr. and a host of others. At the time, I didn't realize how much they were molding my life. For the better! Time and again, Charles Thomas would ease along-side me, give me a big hug and treat me like I was somebody. He encouraged me: to preach with conviction, to write and to love. I don't have enough power with words to tell you how much this man meant to me.

When I was pastor of the Eleventh Street Baptist Church in Beaumont, Bro. Thomas came and gave us a glorious week of his life and powerful ministry. He came to Berean in Houston. JoAnn was right there every step of his way. She treated me like I was her son. I stayed in their home in Garland, and visited them at their home on Lake Palestine. It wouldn't be long before his generous old heart would stop beating, and he'd be with his Savior and Lord where he is today. JoAnn would join him.

Friends, don't take the good people in your lives for granted. We're all just passing through here. Before long, all of the good people you know will be gone. Love them! Learn from them! Make their good yours!

IN THE LONG RUN, NOTHING ELSE REALLY MATTERS

So many things are immediately important: health, education, job, mate, family, home, comfort, freedom, money, power, acceptance and so much more. Regardless of how much money, prestige or power a person has, it's all quite fleeting. At best, our earthly trip is very short. King Solomon pointed out that there is one common equalizer out there. *"For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast," Ecclesiastes 3:19.* Death levels the playing-field. Status, money, health, gender, color do not matter. When the casket comes (and it always comes), the true question is not *"What did he do?"* It's *"Where did he go? Where is he now?"*

Where are you going when you leave here? You know you're going to leave; it's just a matter of time. That spirit of yours is going somewhere. There are only two options; it's either heaven or hell. Nobody accidentally stumbles into heaven; people go to heaven only by deliberate choice. Eternity beyond the grave hinges entirely on what a person does with Jesus Christ during his mortal journey on this earth. Those who accept Him as Savior will go to heaven when they die. Those who don't, won't. It's clear-cut. *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him," John 3:36. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life," 1 John 5:12.*

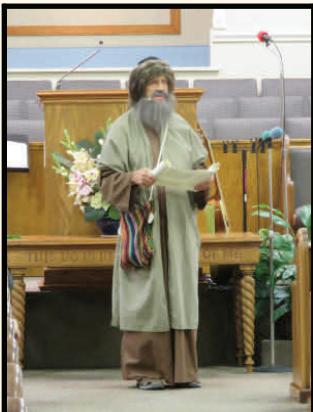
In the name of God and religion, men have screw-up and confused lots of things, including how to be saved from eternal damnation. They have brought in baptism, all kinds of good works, church membership, holy living, every imaginable ceremony, sincerity and mental gymnastics. Jesus made preparation for death which is inevitable extremely simple. He said, *"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God," John 3:16-18.* That's downright simple. Where you go when you die depends on what you do with Jesus Christ in your heart; not all that other stuff. The instant you trust Him in your heart, He'll save you. Until you trust Him, nothing else will count.

I plead with you to come to Him right now. Face up to the fact that you are a sinner who without external help will spend eternity in hell. Come to grips with the fact that cannot make heaven on your own; you're not capable of somehow rescuing yourself from eternal damnation. Only one person can help you when death, the great equalizer of all men arrives. That person is Jesus Christ who came to this planet to save you by doing for you that which you couldn't do for yourself. He took your sins into His own body, went to the cross, shed His own blood for you, died in your place and rose again in three days. He's alive today, and forever more. He stands ready to save you this very instant. All he asks you to do is believe on Him. He used the word *"believe"* in the sense of personal trust, not simply believing the facts about Him.

It happens in the heart, and there is no salvation or hope beyond the grave until it happens there. A trip down front in a church, baptism, sincerity, penance, turning over a new leaf, passionate praying, confessing your sins and all the good works in the world will never get the job done. You have to have a Savior, and there's only one. You must come to the end of yourself, give up on you and all other hope. You must trust Him as your only hope. It's not merely a pretty or emotional religious experience; it's a crisis moment in the heart when Jesus Christ becomes your only hope beyond this mortal life.

THINGS I WANT AS I GROW OLDER

- ✓ To be genuinely humble
- ✓ To listen more
- ✓ To not be so hasty
- ✓ To keep learning
- ✓ To be reasonable
- ✓ To respect more
- ✓ To be kind
- ✓ To be positive
- ✓ To have deep convictions, but not be ugly
- ✓ To be known for love and all it produces
- ✓ To be more like Jesus



Preaching God's Word has always been a joy and privilege for me. Occasionally, I have found impersonating a Bible person to be a liberating way to pour your entire being into that person.

Faces were stunned on Sunday morning at Northwest Baptist Church as this stranger walked in at preaching time and began to unfold the glorious message of Jesus Christ as seen through the eyes of the apostle Paul. I can identify with Paul who said, *"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry."*

**"The COUNTRY is controlled by LAWS>
LAWS are controlled by POLITICIANS>
POLITICIANS are controlled by VOTERS>
VOTERS are controlled by PUBLIC OPINION>
PUBLIC OPINION is controlled by the MEDIA (News,
Hollywood, Internet...) and EDUCATION.
So. whoever controls MEDIA and EDUCATION, controls the COUNTRY."**

— William J Federer, [Change to Chains-The 6,000 Year Quest for Control -Volume I-Rise of the Republic](#)

YEP! PEOPLE WILL SURPRISE YOU

Tech Support: "I need you to right-click on the Open Desktop."

Customer: "OK."

Tech Support: "Did you get a pop-up menu?"

Customer: "No."

Tech Support: "OK. Right-Click again. Do you see a pop-up menu?"

Customer: "No."

Tech Support: "OK, sir. Can you tell me what you have done up until this point?"

Customer: "Sure. You told me to write 'click' and I wrote 'click'."

A BOOK I HAVE RECENTLY READ & HIGHLY RECOMMEND

Christianophobia: A Faith Under Attack

By Rupert Shortt

William Eerdmans Publishing Company
Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U. K.
2013

ISBN: 978-0-8028-6985-2

This is an excellent book which surely should be read, especially by every person who values freedom; and particularly by Christians. Though the book is in its second printing, it is doubtful that it will ever get the readership it deserves, especially in the United States. (1) Free people are apathetic, (2) too many Christians are unconcerned about what's going on beyond their comfort zones and (3) the book is not an easy, quick read. Furthermore, (4) it has a painful, eerily sobering message.

Christianophobia is about widespread, rampant religious and secular intolerance against Christians and Christian communities in multiple countries. Mr. Shortt says the problem has worsened dramatically since the turn of the millennium. When he first published this book in 2012, about 200,000 million Christians were under threat. *Christianophobia* looks in depth at 12 nations where hatred of Christians and persecution are the most rampant and severe. The 13th chapter takes a short glance at 6 other anti-Christian nations

An ironic, but common thread in all of these anti-Christian nations is their claims of *Freedom of Religion*. In actual practice, the claims mean very little. The claims of *Freedom of Religion* are erased in the details and definitions of what religious liberty looks like, who qualifies and lack of enforcement. Regardless of what the constitutions of these countries say about religious liberty, it doesn't exist. In country after country, violence includes burning of churches and seizure properties, arrests of pastors and church members, destruction of their homes and properties, beatings, rapes, murders and long prison times with hard labor. Christians are often denied basic food, shelter, jobs and police protection. Civil authorities routinely ignore complaints even for the vilest of acts. Police commonly stand by while Christians are being raped and murdered, churches and homes are being burned and little children are beheaded. It is common for those under attack to be arrested and jailed while the perpetrators are untouched.

A common denominator across the board is the blurring of religion and nationalism. Families, clans and ethnic groups, communities and those who embrace certain religions view Christianity (and other religions) as a threat to their unity, ways of life and nationalism. They see converts as traitors, and those who make converts as enemies. Locals, communities and nations often accuse Christians of converting them by force. They lose their wrath on the Christians whom they perceive as enemies. When the Christians defend themselves or fight back, they're accused of being trouble-makers. They're usually falsely accused and arrested. Their enemies tell families, friends and law enforcement. The media plays a huge role. They paint Christians as corrosive, evil, troublemakers and dividers of families and communities. They fan the fires of hatred against Christians. Many times, the result is mob violence and unjust retaliation.

Christianophobia is well researched and documented. There are 269 pages of country-by-country analysis. Many of the countries are Mideastern and eastern from Egypt and Turkey through Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, India and on to China, Viet Nam and North Korea. Mr. Shrott takes a short look at Cuba, Venezuela, Belarus, Sri Lanka, Laos and the Sudan. There are 15 pages of references.

Readers of this book should keep in mind that Mr. Shrott uses the term *Christian* in a broad sense as do most who persecute Christians. To them "Christians" are all basically alike; and to be hated, resisted and persecuted, if not eliminated. They are considered to be divisive, trouble-makers and dangerous to national unity and loyalty. Enemies of Christianity do not quibble about theology, doctrine and differences.

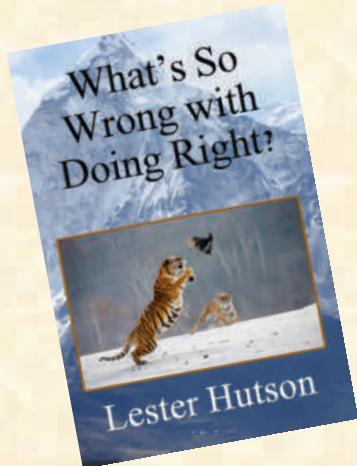
Every true Christian should read this sobering book. Most American Christians feel pretty insulated and secure. We don't seem to think it can happen here. I'm afraid we're in for a rude awakening. Read your Bible, and a little Christian history about our forefathers. Look around the world today. There is no reason to think we are better than our Christian forefathers, and our Christian brothers and sisters around the world today.

Christianophobia is a shot over the bow. I strongly recommend it.

"The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

WHAT'S SO WRONG WITH DOING RIGHT?

If you were choosing people to write books, I would probably be way down toward the end of your list. In spite of my limitations, God has burdened my heart to put in writing thoughts, concepts and ideas which are burning like coals of fire in my heart. We're in this crazy world where "*Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter,*" **Isaiah 59:14**. It seems to me that somebody ought to say something, but too few of us are.



What's So Wrong with Doing Right grew out of the passion of my own heart, the responses that spontaneously leap from my soul in view of the flow of glaring evil that is before us. It is not another book of Bible studies or sermons. I'm obviously not against good commentaries and better preaching, but *What's So Wrong with Doing Right* is Christian apologetic. The apostle Peter said, "*Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear,*" **1 Peter 3:15**. To the best of my ability, that's what *What's So Wrong with Doing Right* is. It doesn't answer everything; it does address many of the devastating ills in this world in which we live. An underlying theme is that true biblical Christianity is the only medicine that can cure the ills facing this world today.

Except for a few technical issues, the book is done. Unexpected complications asserted themselves in the fall. They set us back about three months. *What's So Wrong with Doing Right* should be available on Amazon in the near future. I appreciate your patience.



THE GLORIOUS CITY OF GOD

It has been my marvellous blessing to visit this great city many times. I never cease to be overwhelmed with Jerusalem, the city of God; and with Israel, the land of the Bible. Several years ago, while standing on the Mount of Olivet overlooking the Kidron Valley, I snapped this picture.

I have decided to go back. Lord willing, the day after Christmas (December 26, 2023) I will take another group. It's a 10-day tour; we will return January 4, 2024. All of our time will be in Israel.

One day, I am going to live there. In the New Jerusalem. I'll have a new body. There will be no more curse, and my Blessed Redeemer and Lord will be the light of the place. All of the saints of the ages will be there. And, it's forever. No more death, and no more parting!

Oh, how thankful I am that Christ died for me. I have hope beyond the grave. The trip at the end of this year is just a warm-up, a precursor of things to come! Hallelujah!

DUST IF YOU MUST

Life is short. Enjoy it.

Dust if you must . . .

But, wouldn't it be better to paint a picture or write a letter,
bake cookies or a cake and lick the spoon or plant a seed?

Ponder the difference between want and need.

Dust if you must . . .

But, there's not much time.
With chocolate to eat, rivers to swim and mountains to climb,
music to hear and books to read, friends to cherish and life to lead.

Dust if you must . . .

But, the world's out there with the sun in your eyes,
the wind in your hair, a flutter of snow, a shower of rain.
This day will not come around again.

Dust if you must . . .

But, bear in mind, old age will come, and it's not kind.
And, when you go, and go you must, you, yourself will make more dust.

NOTABLE EVENTS

⇒ **Lakeworth Preaching Workshop**

Lakeworth Baptist, Fort Worth
February 3-5

⇒ **History of Churches -**

The Unbroken Line
Northwest Baptist, Houston
April 27-30

⇒ **Rodgers Missions Conference**

Rodgers Baptist, Garland
July 17-19

⇒ **Holy Land Tour**

December 26, 2023 - January 4, 2024
Email lesterhutson@gmail.com

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved