

**SONGS:** My Saviour First of All (When my life-work is ended); I've Got A Mansion (I'm satisfied with a cottage below);  
**CLOSE:**

**Chosen ... With Enthusiasm**  
**Profiling Christians – Part 2 of 6**

**TEXT:** 1 Peter 1:1-2a

**AIM:** The biblical doctrine of election is meant to encourage us, not divide us, as we sojourn in a world that is not our home.

**INTRODUCTION:**

***A. Back in the summer of 2016, an anti-terrorism bill pass both houses of the Russian Parliament and signed into law by Russian President, Vladimir Putin.***

The bill was labelled anti-terrorism, but in reality it was a smokescreen to pass nothing less than what insiders are calling a new Russian Anti-Missionary law. The bill severely restricts any unsanctioned religious activity by any religious organization, with one exception – the Russian Orthodox Church, which is closely aligned with the Russian Government and – for many decades – the enemy of the gospel.

It is no surprise that the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church is a former KGB officer – the highest religious leader in the land who calls Putin's reign in Russia a miracle of God.

According to the Slavic Gospel Association, this Anti-Missionary – officially called, Anti-terrorism Bill, will demand that the gospel can only be preached inside the walls of a registered church building; in a facility rented by a registered church and only by a pastor or church leader who has obtained official state-sanctioned identification.

Everything outside the registered church, performed by an unlicensed church official will bring heavy fines and punishment.

As we pray for our brothers and sisters in Russia, keep in mind that 90% of the evangelical churches meet in homes, because during Communism, churches weren't allowed to own property. Even in post-communist Russia, local churches have been unable to obtain permission to purchase property or construct buildings.

This law will pave the way for the government to shut down 90% of the evangelical churches in Russia. Also, this bill requires the citizens of Russia to report any violation to the authorities.

The door that had opened in the former Soviet Union is beginning to creak and groan, as it swings shut. And the true church will once again, adapt to secret meetings and underground churches and quiet, careful, winsome, joyful lives and testimonies that attract curiosity and then questions about the gospel of Christ that has transformed them.

If you broaden your prayer for the gospel worldwide, according to the non-profit Open Doors organization<sup>1</sup> & Voice of the Martyrs,<sup>2</sup> each month on average around the world consider that:

322 Christians are killed for their faith in Jesus Christ

214 Churches and church properties are destroyed

722 Acts of violence are committed against Christians such as beating, abduction, rape, forced marriages and prison sentences.

Frankly, Christians in every generation are experiencing:

- Far more violence than safety

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/> (May 2017)

<sup>2</sup> Juan R. Sanchez, *1 Peter For You* (The Good Book Company, 2016), p. 15,

- Far more antagonism than appreciation
- Far more threats and abuse and ridicule than agreement and appreciation and respect

In 25 years of chronicling and ranking the political and societal restrictions on religious freedom experienced by Christians worldwide, Open Doors researchers identified 2016 as the “worst year yet.”

A report corroborated by the Turin, Italy-based Centre for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), found that during the year 2016, some 90,000 Christians were killed for their faith around the world.<sup>3</sup> I must point out that this organisation has a reputation for being mostly uncritical and, in fact, supportive of movements considered to be cults by secular anti-cult and/or Christian counter-cult professionals.

Someone said 99% of all reported Christian persecution is against Roman Catholic Christians and Churches.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, I don't think those who are killing these folks take into account that they aren't born-again, immersed Baptists.

### **B. As I mention this...**

I am reminded of a story about a Baptist church that was invaded by black-garbed ninja time warriors bearing automatic weapons. As they invaded the church auditorium, they began to fire their weapons at the ceiling of the church using blank bullets. One of the men shouted, “Everyone who is not willing to die for their faith, may leave immediately.” Better that 80% of the congregation hurriedly left the church. Once everyone cleared out, the same man shouted, “there's your true church Pastor, you can preach to them and the masked men walked out of the church. It's just a story, but it's a story that illustrates a powerful truth. When real persecution comes and in time, it surely will, how willing will you be to die for your faith in Christ?

Christianity worldwide is experiencing what Jesus Christ promised, through His Apostles when He said, *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you”* (Jn. 15:18). Being maligned and mocked and mistreated isn't new ... in fact, it's normal.

### **C. Some of this sounds like it's coming close to home:**

- Where it is becoming increasingly difficult to verbalize your Christian convictions without being sent to sensitivity classes at your school or company
- Where to disagree with the moral depravity of your co-workers is to invite open rebuke and perhaps the loss of your own job
- Where educators in some places are now told to no longer refer to children in class as boys and girls – because that will pressure them while they are in the midst of determining for themselves if they are a boy or a girl.

If all this sounds like you've been sleeping and you think surely you'll wake up and find it was just a bad dream, think again. We have awakened to a new normal – with new definitions and cultural norms that have been developing for decades.

As believers, we need to realise that we live in a time when we have the opportunity to bear witness in a culture that no longer pretends to believe what we believe.

We are going to realize an opportunity where true Christians will become obviously different – because what we believe is nowhere near what our culture believes.

**To prove this to yourselves just ask your co-workers and neighbours and classmates to now define words like these:**

God (i.e. who is God?); What is Sin (i.e. what's sinful?)

Sacred Scriptures (what are they and where can they be found?)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/01/13/report-2016-worst-year-yet-christian-persecution/>

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Larry Hufhand, Editor, Hufhand Report, May 19, 2017, email posting

Define Sexual preference and Gender identity

Truth; Family; Marriage

Judgment; Eternity

And then hold on to your hat – because NOT many will agree with your definitions that you have derived from Scripture.

You see, we've entered a pre-Christian culture where we have to begin with the definitions that are no longer shared or even understood culture wide. What an incredible opportunity – and if we understand the word of God, and our mission, we can approach this future and this culture – without clenching our fists in anger or wringing our hands in fear.

We have the promise of our Lord that *“lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world”* (Mat. 28:20) — He will be with us to the end of the age – and evidently that age isn't over yet.

And our end goal remains the same – it is the exaltation of Jesus Christ and a fulfilling of His Great Commission reach out to every tongue and tribe and nation.

And we get to do the same thing that Jesus Christ did – and His Apostles did – and the early church did – in a first century culture that defined:

- God as multiplicity of gods
- The origin of life as – “your guess is as good as mine”
- That religious writings, including the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, as basically saying the same thing
- They defined a future judgment as being nothing more than a religious scare tactic
- They defined marriage as a short-term contract
- Bisexuality and homosexuality as normal practice
- AND truth, to be as whatever you wanted it to be

***D. These conditions welcomed us to the 1<sup>st</sup> century ... BUT you can say hello to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.***

1. Today's church can say hello to the growing tension of living so obviously suspended between two worlds.
2. The world you currently live in and work in, and bless and pray for, and warn and witness to ... between this world and the world to come where Christ will reign one day.
3. I can't think of a better time to open the first letter from the Apostle Peter, than at this point in our lives.
  - a. Because when Peter wrote this letter, persecution was not official nor was it spread through out the empire
  - b. It wasn't sanctioned by the Senate of Rome
    - 1) But it was growing—it was localized and random
    - 2) In some cases it was brutal, as in the practice of Nero who hated Christianity
    - 3) But it was not at the level of persecution that would eventually erupt in a decade or two.
4. Even as Peter's first letter opens, the signs are all there ... the marginalization of Christianity had begun.
  - a. Death threats were common. Some had already lost everything they owned.

- b. Like the Jews in Germany during the years leading up to the Holocaust;
  - 1) Their shops were being boycotted or vandalized
  - 2) Their personal rights and privileges were being erased
  - 3) They were targeted with mockery and violence without repercussion.

**E. For those in Peter's day, it was only a matter of time.**

1. You need to understand in the context of First Peter. When the first church began just 30 years or so earlier in Jerusalem, the Roman Empire regarded the Christians as a sect of Judaism.
2. Among all the pagan religions in the Roman world, Judaism was the only legal religion not required to offer annual sacrifices to the Roman emperor.
  - a. Instead, they were allowed to offer prayers on the Emperor's behalf.
  - b. So long as Christians were viewed as a sect of Judaism, they were under the umbrella of a religious exemption.
3. But then the Christians courageously began to leave the synagogue
  - a. They boldly worshipped, NOT in the synagogues on Saturday, but in homes and buildings on Sunday – calling it, the Lord's Day!
  - b. They were fully aware that they were revealing to the Empire of Rome that they were not a sect of Judaism – but entirely different.
  - c. And with this action their exemption—**AND** their protection would end.
    - 1) It would become illegal to be a practicing Christian – just as it is in many countries today – where, for instance, to convert from Islam to Christianity is a capital offense worthy of death.
    - 2) So, by the time you read the opening words of this letter, the believers have been uprooted ... unwanted, rejected, preparing for even more waves of persecution, which would indeed come.

**F. Now, when you're facing ridicule, mockery, persecution of some form or another, your instincts tell you to either flee or fight back.**

1. Persevering and responding with grace would be incredibly difficult – if not unnatural
2. What do you do when you've been wronged
  - a. In fact, what if you've been discriminated against for what you believe
  - b. Imagine, you've lost your home; your job; everything you've worked for is now up for grabs
  - c. You would definitely feel it wasn't right ... You'd say, "It's not fair ... Listen, this is my country too – in fact, I'm older than you are – so it was mine before you ever got here."
3. To defend yourself—to lash back—to get even is our first reaction. And it was the self-same feelings of these folks in this chapter.

Peter writes to them so that they can gain their composure and find hope in the truth he's going to give them. And he does it in the most interesting way.

**I. FIRST HE ACKNOWLEDGES, SO TO SPEAK, THEIR PAIN – VS.1**

*"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the **strangers** scattered throughout" Asia Minor*

### A. Notice in vs. 1 they were “strangers”

1. This term ‘stranger’ could be render “alien”, or “foreigner”.
2. Peter refers to them as “strangers” in their own country. And they would have responded, “Yea, that’s how we feel, Peter ... you understand!”
3. This term here translated ‘stranger’, is a term that refers to a temporary resident, a traveller whose stay is only a matter of weeks or months.
  - a. In today’s world, this person would have a tourist visa and more than likely pack only a bag or two.
  - b. Whenever they arrive, it’s pretty clear that they’re not from around here ... they’re here for only a short time and don’t perfectly fit into the culture where they are.
  - c. They don’t necessarily like the same food ... they miss their lives as they used to be. Depending on how hospitable their temporary home is their stay will be affected.
4. By the way, you are hosting international students who travel here to attend Bible Baptist Theological Seminary.
5. This term “strangers” that Peter uses for *alien or foreigner* also indicates that these scattered believers are without any legal protection or personal individual rights that would be provided the citizens of these nations where they had moved.
6. They are alone and do they ever feel like the words of that little chorus – “*this world is not my home, I’m just a passin’ through.*”

### B. Notice the second term Peter uses here in verse 1 for them; to those who reside as foreigners – they were “scattered”

1. “Scattered” – a compound noun in the Greek – has the nuance of scattering seed.
  - a. This Greek word also formed the technical term – *diaspora* – or exiled people of the dispersion –those scattered abroad.
  - b. In particular, it referred to the Jewish exiles who were dispersed among the Gentile world as a minority.
2. But Peter here in this verse drops the definite article – ‘the’ – and uses the word as a metaphor—not to just refer to the scattered Jewish nation—but to both Gentile and Jewish believers who make up God’s people through the ages.
  - a. The believers were scattered like seed; wherever it seemed the wind would take them – wherever they could find a place to settle down and survive.
  - b. They were always going to be in the minority and they never would feel like they belonged—and that was because they didn’t.
3. Now Peter goes on to tell us **where** this letter was traveling; it was intended as a circular letter to be handed off time and time again throughout this region.
4. He refers to a region we know as modern day Turkey.  
In the New Testament, the geographical term is Asia Minor.
  - a. Asia Minor is a more historic term that does not occur as frequently in modern usage as it did in the ancient Hellenic and Roman worlds.
  - b. It has been used mostly to refer to the *Anatolian Peninsula*, which the Greeks originally called Asia—it is the westernmost protrusion of Asia, which makes up the majority of modern-day Turkey



- c. When more lands started to be discovered to what they referred to as Asia, they started calling it Asia Minor in the Late Antiquity.
5. **You'll notice that Peter refers here to:**
  - ⇒ **Pontus**, in the far north, which was the home of Aquila and Pricilla
  - ⇒ **Galatia**, in the central region where Paul often travelled
  - ⇒ **Cappadocia** which was located in the eastern portion of Asia Minor; Jews from this region travelled to Jerusalem and were there to hear Peter preach on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9) – and they returned to Cappadocia as the first missionaries
  - ⇒ Peter next mentions **Asia** – this included most of Western Asia, with cities like Lydia and Phrygia
  - ⇒ Finally, Peter mentions **Bithynia** – which was on the southern shore of the Black sea, just west of Pontus
6. These areas that Peter mentions represented millions of people. The area he writes to is roughly the same size geographically if you started with Texas in the US and went all the way west to California<sup>5</sup>
7. This letter wasn't a little postcard for a few churches – this was extensive, desperately needed revelation for thousands and thousands of Christians who were feeling like they didn't belong anywhere – and what were they supposed to do about it?!
  - a. I'll tell you what they did best ... Pliny, the Younger, a Roman attorney near the end of the first century, wrote a letter to the Emperor in which he described Christianity as having influenced all ages of Bithynia, both young and old, both in the country and in the cities, so much so that the pagan temples were almost completely deserted.<sup>6</sup>
  - b. I'll tell you that is a testimony of the power of the gospel of Christ as it went with these believers who were scattered like seed over 750,000 square miles.

**NOW, what do you say to these people? As a scattered people, they are vulnerable ... without protection from their government ... they've been uprooted ... they've been marginalized and mocked and reminded that they do not belong! Just what do you say?**

**Exactly what Peter says next!**

## **II. WHAT DO YOU TELL SOMEONE WHO FEELS LIKE THEY DON'T BELONG TO THIS WORLD? YOU TELL THEM THEY BELONG TO THE WORLD THAT IS TO COME – VS. 1**

Notice again near the beginning of **vs. 2** – *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2] Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...”*

Peter effectively says, “You might be an outsider as it relates to the kingdom of this world; but I want you to know that you are an insider, in the kingdom of God – the world to come!”

Now what Peter does here is reveal the work of salvation as it relates to all three members of the Godhead.

In fact, this is a powerful text to prove the existence and unique role of God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit, in the matter of your salvation and mind.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel M. Doriani, *1 Peter* (P & R Publishing, 2014), p. 5

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (BMH Books, 1992), p. 49 & from Duane F. Watson and Terrance Callan, *First and Second Peter* (Baker Academic, 2012), p. 8

But before we get there, we need to address this word that has caused so much heartburn throughout church history – and still divides believers and kindles the fire of debate in the church today.

#### A. *It's this word at the end of vs. 1 – the word, “elect” – the chosen*

1. It's from the Greek word *eklektos*, which gives us the word, *elect* or *election*. That word *elect* or *chosen* was a word that was **once reserved** for Israel alone.
  - a. In fact, most Christians don't seem to have any problem with the fact that God chose the Israelites even though they proved to be no more deserving than any other nation, which God did **NOT CHOOSE**, like the Amalekites or the Hittites or the Jebusites or the Perrizites or the Moabites or any of those other mosquito bites. But He chose the Israelites.
  - b. Moses informs the nation, “...*the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth*” (Deut. 7:6).
2. And now Peter uses this term for these scattered believers, made up of both Jews and Gentiles who were chosen by God.
  - a. In fact, he presents this verbal adjective “elect” or “chosen” as passive, which further highlights the fact that the believer is the object of the electing action of God.<sup>7</sup>
  - b. Which is exactly what the writer of Hebrews means when he writes that God is “*the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*” (Hebrews 5:9)
    - 1) That means – God takes the first step.
    - 2) He writes the first sentence – He takes the initiative – He makes the first move.

And He has to because we “*were dead in trespasses and sins...*” (Eph. 2:1).

“*We love him*” – **WHY?** – “*Because he first loved us*” (1 John 4:19).

Paul tells the church in Thessalonica “*we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, **BECAUSE** God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:*” (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

#### B. *Throughout His ministry, Jesus never hesitated to teach the truth of election.*

1. For instance, in **John 6:44** he said, “*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him...*” Every man that responds to God's love, hearing and learning from the Father will come unto him (Jn. 6:45; 3:14-15; 12:32; Jer. 31:1-3; Hosea 11:4).
2. **John 13:18** – “*I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen...*”
3. In the upper room before His crucifixion he again referred to divine election when He told His disciples in (John 15:16) in no uncertain terms, “*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain...*”
4. When the gospel was preached after the resurrection and the early church began to evangelize their world, Luke records that following a sermon by Paul and Barnabas. “*For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. ...And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed*” (Acts 13:46-49).

<sup>7</sup> Adapted from D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (BMH Books, 1992), p. 46

### C. Now keep in mind a couple of thoughts.

1. First, the writers of Scripture don't answer all the questions or issues that obviously cluster around this doctrine; in fact, they don't even try to harmonize it with the other side of the coin that stresses our response to God's initiative in believing the gospel and repenting of our sin.
  - a. That would be an attempt to harmonize an eternal truth, from God's perspective, with an earthly truth, from our perspective.
  - b. We can understand our will – and the decision we made to believe the gospel and trust Christ – we can understand that part of it.
  - c. But we can only believe the Godward side of it, because the Bible clearly and simply reveals to us that God chose us in His omniscience, before we were even born. But we can't understand it.
2. The believer not only lives in tension between two worlds; he lives in tension between two truths.
  - a. God chose us – in eternity past – that's divine election.
  - b. We chose God – in a moment in time – that's human will acting in faith on God's initiating work of grace.
  - c. The Bible makes it clear that both are **absolutely** necessary for salvation. In fact, Scripture tends to emphasize one of these truths in certain settings and the other truth in other settings. **Salvation involves both!**
3. When Paul and Silas were miraculously released from prison following an earthquake, the Jailer, who had evidently been listening to Paul preach and Paul and Silas sing duets in the prison – he rushed out to where they were and said, *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved"* (Acts 16:30).
  - a. And Paul did not say, "Well, listen, if you're asking that kind of question, you're obviously elect, so don't worry about it ... you're obviously in."
  - b. No, he responded to this Jailer, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved..."* (Acts 16:31).
  - c. I also find it interesting that Paul did not say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus because you have *already* been saved."
    - 1) I mean, Jailer, since you're asking how to be saved, it's obvious that God the Father has already taken the initiative in opening your eyes to the gospel –therefore you really don't need anything more.
    - 2) No, Paul didn't say that. He said, *"Believe on – i.e. place your trust in - the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved..."* **And he was!**

### CONCLUSION:

Maybe you're wondering, how do I know if I'm one of the elect?  
How do I know if I've been chosen by God?

I mean, didn't Peter say for the believer to *"...give diligence to make your calling and election sure"*? (2 Peter 1:10).

Someone says, don't *feel sure* about it. Well, Peter didn't tell you to *feel sure* about your election, but to make your election sure.

It has **absolutely nothing** to do with how you *feel*.

It has **EVERYTHING** to do with Who you *trust* in order to make your election sure.

**A. Charles Spurgeon, the great pastor/teacher in London during the mid-1800s, often spoke on the doctrines of grace.**



He was a prolific author as well and in one of his books – it presented just an incredible balance and encouragement to the believer.

He comments on the text in **1 Thessalonians 1:4** where Paul writes, “For we know, brothers loved by God, that He has chosen you.” Spurgeon writes, “Many persons want to know of their election before they look [or trust] in Christ. But election cannot be known that way; it is only to be discovered by looking to Jesus. If you desire to ascertain your own election – this is how you shall assure your heart.

Do you [consider] yourself to be a lost sinner? Go straightway to the cross of Christ, and tell Jesus so, and tell him that you have read in the Bible, “Whoever comes to Me I will never drive away.” Look to Jesus and believe in Him, and you shall make proof of your election; for as surely as you believe—you are elect.

If you will give yourself wholly up to Christ and trust Him, then you are one of God’s chosen ones; but if you stop and say, “I want to know first whether I am elect,” you do not know what you are asking. Leave all curious inquiry about election alone. Go straight to Christ and hide in His wounds, and you shall know your election.

The assurance of the Holy Spirit shall be given to you, so that you will say, “I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him.” Go and put your trust in Him, and His answer will be – “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” Then he ends with this profound, yet simple and wise statement ... there will be no doubt about His having chosen you, when you have chosen Him.<sup>8</sup>

1. Keep in mind that Peter here is bringing up the issue of election as an encouragement to these scattered believers.
2. He didn’t bring it up for them to start heated debates ... not to create doubt ... but to cause them to thank God for His eternal grace and divine sovereignty.

**B. And here’s the practical application to this doctrine...**

1. These scattered Christians seemingly had every reason to believe that perhaps God wasn’t in control of the chaos —or that they had somehow slipped off the Divine radar—that that God some how lost track of them—or worse yet, that He no longer loved them or cared about them!
2. Humanly speaking, these folk would have had many failures in their scattering ... many self-centred moments ... plenty of doubts and misgivings ... and plenty of sin ... they thought maybe God was finished with them?
3. And so Peter informs them that they were chosen by God to be the people of God ... as if to remind them that if before the creation of the world God had chosen them, He wasn’t about to lose sight of them now! **And might I add you either!**

If God has loved you from eternity past ... and opened your blinded eyes to the truth of the gospel ... He isn’t going to stop loving you until eternity future comes to an end ... think about that! — Eternity never will come to an end.

You are not an accident ... **you are a divine choice** ... everything about you—from your conception to your birth to your new birth to every ability and every disability—everything about your past, present, and future is according to God’s divine sovereign plan.

**Lavish** grace and **incredible** eternal divinely initiated love has been given to you simply because He chose you! We love Him because He first loved us!

**C. Garrison Keillor (is an American author, storyteller, humorist, voice actor, and radio personality) recalled in one story he told of the childhood the pain of being chosen last for the baseball teams that would start up after school.**

<sup>8</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening* (Hendrickson Publishers, reprinted 1995), p. 398

The captains are down to their last grudging choices; a slow kid for catcher, someone to stick in the right outfield where nobody hit the ball. They choose the last ones two at a time – “You and you” – because it makes no difference. And the remaining kids – the scrubs, the excess – are [bartered] – “If I take him, you gotta take him,” they say.

Sometimes I would get chosen as high as the sixth choice, but usually lower. But just once I hoped Darrel would pick me first and say, “Him! I want Him! The skinny kid with the glasses and the black shoes. You, c’mon!” But I’ve never been chosen with much enthusiasm.”<sup>9</sup>

When I read this, I can’t help but think – imagine, God chose me, God chose you beloved, **WITH ENTHUSIASM!**

It was not ... “you and you and, yeah, you too” ... **BUT “I want you—I choose you!”**

Can you imagine how much this truth was an encouragement to these scattered, marginalized, unappreciated, misunderstood, displaced, mistreated Christians ... and to every Christian to this day?

**We are rejected by the world ... chosen by God forever!**

21 May 2017 – River Valley BC – Maynooth, Co. Kildare

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<sup>9</sup> Citation: <http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2000/june/12499.html>