

That's a great couple of paragraphs if you ask me. And what I want to say then is that the concern with the issues that relate to the gospel is a concern that reaches across ecclesiastical lines and professional lines and theological lines and there are people all over the evangelical world who feel that this is a major issue and that unless the professing church is very careful it is in serious danger of losing the message of God's love and unconditional grace.⁷

50. What Drs. Hodges and Bell describe has continued to increase in its appeal to the masses. Supralapsarianism and Lordship Salvation have won over the leadership of some mainline denominations, infiltrated their seminaries, and gained access to their pulpits.
51. The content of the gospel is clearly presented in John 3:16; the doctrine of election may be developed throughout the Bible. The sovereignty of God which sustains the integrity of each and the divine imputation of volition to the souls of all human beings.
52. From these resources, we are enabled to declare this principle: In human history the sovereignty of God and the free will of man must coexist by divine decree.
53. To have confidence in the biblical authenticity of this declaration the believer must submit to years of accumulating numerous doctrines from Scripture so that this statement is confirmed in his soul and has meaning in his volitional application.
54. The tragedy that now exists in Christendom is that for far too long the erroneous doctrines of supralapsarianism and Lordship Salvation are accepted as true for an ever-enlarging adult population.
55. The error was introduced to a majority of them in Sunday Schools or similar gatherings in many Protestant churches. This error and its ultimate comeuppance are addressed by our Lord in:

Matthew 18:6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin [**σκανδαλίζω** (*skandalízō*): cause to stumble; see explanation below], it would be better for him to have a **huge millstone** [**μύλος** + **ὄνικός** (*múlos* + *onikós*): see explanation below] hung around his neck and to be drowned **in the open sea** [**in the high seas**]. (NET)

⁷ Hodges, *Lordship Salvation*, audiotope.

56. The verb “to sin” is **σκανδαλίζω** (*skandalízō*): “to cause to fall.” Its meaning in the Classical Greek is helpful in understanding its use in our context:

σκανδάλη [*skandálē*]: A *stick in a trap* on which the bait is placed, and which, when touched by the animal, springs up and shuts the trap. Metaphorically, setting word-traps, i.e., throwing out words which one’s adversary will catch at, and so be caught himself. To cause to stumble or be made to stumble.⁸

57. This metaphorical meaning is being used by our Lord as He warns the disciples to beware of saying anything to a child that would cause him to go astray. Amplification on this usage is found in this reference:

σκάνδαλον (*skándalon*); **σκανδαλίζω** (*skandalízō*). The stick in a trap. Used metaphorically in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* [a-kar’-ni-anz], line 687. The stem **σκανδ-** (*skand-*) means originally “to spring forward and back,” “to slam to.” The nouns from this denote “the means whereby one closes something,” e.g., the stick in a trap.⁹

58. Aristophanes’ *The Acharnians* was written in 425 B.C. and is his first surviving play. It won first prize in the dramatic competition. The Acharnians were citizens of an Attic *dēme* [**δῆμος** (*dēmos*): country district; the inhabitants of such a district; common people.¹⁰]

The Athenians had for six years been suffering the horrors of the Peloponnesian War, the devastation of their territory, plague in the overcrowded city, and shortage of food, but their spirits were unbroken. The Acharnians, of whom the chorus of the play is composed, had been among the chief sufferers, their territory having been repeatedly ravaged.¹¹

59. In Matthew 18:6 the first phrase by the Lord is “if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin.” More precise or metaphorical translations are found in the lexicons we’ve noted: “to cause to fall,” “the stick in a trap,” and “to cause to stumble.”

⁸ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., rev. and aug. Henry Stuart Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940), s.v. “σκανδάλη.”

⁹ Gustav Stählin, “σκανδαλίζω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 7:339.

¹⁰ Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “δῆμος.”

¹¹ M. C. Howatson, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, 2d ed. (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1989). 3.

60. Aristophanes uses the phrase, “setting little verbal traps,” in *The Acharnians*. Here are lines 676 through 691:

We the veterans blame the City.
Is it meet and right that we,
Who of old, in manhood’s vigour,
fought your battles on the sea,
Should in age be left untended,
yea exposed to shame and ill?
Is it right to let the youngsters
air their pert forensic skill,
Grappling us with writs and warrants,
holding up our age to scorn?
We who now have lost our music,
feeble nothings, dull, forlorn,
We whose only “Safe Poseidon”¹²
is the staff we lean upon,
There we stand, decayed and muttering,
hard beside the Court-house Stone,
Nought discerning all around us
save the darkness of our case.
Comes the youngster, who has compassed
for himself the accuser’s place,
Slings his tight and nipping phrases
tackling us with legal scraps,
Pulls us up and cross-examines,
setting little verbal traps, (687)
Rends and rattles old Tithonus¹³
till the man is dazed and blind;
Till with toothless gums he mumbles,
then departs condemned and fined;
Sobbing, weeping, as he passes,
to his friends he murmurs low,
“All I’ve saved to buy a coffin
now to pay the fine must go.”¹⁴

61. “Setting little verbal traps” reads in the Greek: **ἐπωτῶ σκανδάλῃθρ ἱστὰς ἐπῶν** (*epōtá skandálēthr histás epōn*): “he sets traps with his questions.” This is verbal prestidigitation used to trick the old man into a confession in order to get his last dime.

(End JAS1-37. See JAS1-38 for continuation of study at p. 371.)

¹² Ibid., “Poseidon, in Greek myth, the God of earthquakes and later of the sea,” 458.

¹³ “Τιθωνός (*Tithōnós*): Tithonus: Metaphorical of a decrepit old man, because, as the tale went, Eos [Ἠώς (*Hēōs*): goddess of the dawn] begged Zeus to grant immortality to Tithonus, but forgot to ask for eternal youth, (Aristophanes’ *The Acharnians* 688” (Liddell and Scott, [A *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “Τιθωνός”], 1792).

¹⁴ Aristophanes, “The Plays of Aristophanes: *The Acharnians*,” in *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), 5:463, lines 676–691.

62. “Setting little verbal traps” is far more than little. The Bible must never be forced to comply with the will of the reader. The reader must, through humility and respect, comply with the will of the Holy Spirit.
63. These two approaches to the immutable Word of God are described by two nouns: (1) exegesis and (2) eisegesis. The former is orthodox and legitimate and the latter is unorthodox and illegitimate.
- Exegesis from the Greek [ἐξήγησις] *exēgésis*, an explanation. The exposition, critical analysis, or interpretation of a word, literary passage, etc., especially from the Bible.**
- Eisegesis from the Greek [εἰσηγήσις] *eisēgésis*. An improper method of exposition by which the expounder introduces his own ideas into the interpretation of a text: opposed to exegesis.¹**
64. The literary and theological crime that Theodore Bèza perpetrated was based on the error of eisegesis which was the primary system of biblical analysis utilized by the Catholic Church.
65. When that system led him to an intractable dead end, rather than admitting his error he used his own imagination to devise the heresy of supralapsarianism.
66. The lapse of man in Eden is widely accepted among theologians as a legitimate doctrine. How one positions the fall in the development of his systematic theology varies dependent on where he places the doctrine of election.
67. If election occurs before the fall, he is a supralapsarian, if following the fall an infralapsarian.

IV. Some Ramifications of Erroneous Theology:

1. Protestant youth today are discovering that there are real and serious differences that exist among their associates' respective churches.

¹ *Webster's New Twentieth Dictionary of the English Language: Unabridged*, 2d ed. (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1962), s.vv. “exegesis,” “eisegesis.”

2. This is especially true when these differences challenge basic beliefs regarding one's salvation and assurance. This is seen in the growing popularity of "lordship salvation" which is a slippery slope toward "limited atonement."
3. But the most pronounced controversy occurs when Protestant young people become attracted to each other, but later discover that one is infralapsarian while the other is supralapsarian.
4. This creates a problem that becomes intensified when they continue the relationship to the stage of compatibility. Emotions influence both to ignore the controversy and continue with the relationship.
5. If they deny the problem long enough, they will often arrive at the stage of soul rapport committed to each other and plan matrimony.
6. This is dangerous because the issue that divides them has been suppressed yet it must be dealt with at some point. After the wedding, and especially after children are born, is not the time to bring this monster out of hiding.
7. Here are the two theologies that must eventually do battle:
Young adults who are infralapsarian have been taught:
 - that salvation is given by grace to *anyone* who responds to the gospel through faith alone,
 - that one's assurance of salvation is found in the *promises* given to the sinner who believes in Christ, and
 - that "good works" are not only commanded of the believer but *only the believer can produce them* and then only through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Word of God resident in his soul.
8. Young adults who are supralapsarian have been taught:
 - that salvation is predestined for the *elect only* and is appropriated by means of the "gift of grace" which empowers the elect to believe in Christ,
 - that one's assurance of salvation is found in lifelong *perseverance* in the production of "fruits" or "good works,"
 - that the *absence* of such perseverance indicates such a person is not among the elect and is therefore reprobate predestined to the lake of fire.

9. It is obvious that these two theologies are at loggerheads. Therefore, when a young man or woman who is infralapsarian considers matrimony with a young man or woman who is supralapsarian, then the following must be kept in mind:
- The young man is the spiritual leader of the household and the young woman is going to have difficulty pursuing her beliefs in this environment.
 - Without spiritual harmony the stability of the marriage is compromised.
 - The controversy will reach critical point when their children are old enough to be evangelized and, subsequently, taught the Bible.
 - This issue can be avoided in one of two ways: (1) the infralapsarian willingly accepts supralapsarian theology, or (2) the supralapsarian willingly accepts infralapsarian theology.
 - Such a decision should be made before marriage since once married the issue will force one spouse to convert under pressure or for both to compromise their beliefs in an effort to achieve harmony.
 - And, logically, the supralapsarian cannot know with confidence that his spouse is saved and thus is in potential violation of:

2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not become partners [Do not be mismatched] with those who do not believe, for what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship does light have with darkness?

v. 15 And what agreement does Christ have with Beliar?² Or what does a believer share in common with an unbeliever?

v. 16a And what mutual agreement does the temple of God have with idols? For we are the temple of the living God. (NET)

² “The Greek term Βελιάρ (*Beliár*) is a spelling variant for Βελιόλ (*Beliól*). It occurs only here in the New Testament. *Beliar* is a reference to Satan” (*NET Bible* [Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2005], 2256, 2 Corinthians 2:15sn32).

10. This is the kind of conundrum today's young Protestant believers face because of the theology created by Theodore Bèza, adopted as Calvinism, and enshrined in the Westminster Confession of Faith.
11. Thus we find in this controversy an illustration of a person who distorts what another says or writes to his own advantage and, by doing so, creates a system that becomes so entrenched that a clear presentation of truth is compromised.

V. In defense of Literal Hermeneutics:

1. In our study of hermeneutics we analyzed a paper presented in 2003 by Dr. Earl D. Radmacher, a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, former chancellor of Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, and author and editor of several books.
2. The paper is entitled "The Nature and Result of Literal Interpretation." In our review we will summarize principles that Dr. Radmacher brings out in each of his subparagraphs.
3. The Basic Principle of Interpretation.
 1. It is very important to note that literal grammatical interpretation is the system of hermeneutics authorized by the Bible.
 2. The first example is an Old Testament reference whose context finds the Jews returning to the land from Babylonian captivity. In the process of the decades in captivity, the Jews ceased speaking Hebrew and spoke Aramaic; thus this created a language gap between themselves and the Scripture.
 3. So when the people stood in the open square before the Water Gate within the rebuilt city wall, they asked Ezra the Scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses to read to them.
 4. Also, the Levites circulated among the people to help them understand what Ezra was reading. This expanded translation is recorded in: