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A great man once said, “Life consists of a series of seasons.” Yes, life is seasons. Some seasons we dream, and wait; pray, and wait a while longer (much, much longer in some cases). Other seasons we stand amazed as God, seemingly out of nowhere, brings to fruition some of what we have dreamed seasons earlier. We, here at The Hill, are humbled as we watch God fulfill what, for many years, seemed impossible to the natural mind. This publication expresses only in brief (due to insufficient space) what God is bringing together, but you can reference our website should you desire more details. Brent Armstrong’s update is included there as well—interesting input indeed.

Ministry News

Our staff is absolutely wonderful. Brent Armstrong, Glenna Yuill, and Mike Wyatt not only care for the day-to-day needs of this ministry but more importantly, the saints who pass through. They wear a variety of hats while possessing joyful hearts, and we are grateful for their commitment to our God and His people. Dana Durr also assists Glenna in a variety of ways. Their being here allows me to spend considerable time in my office writing and preparing for retreats and conferences. I am most blessed! They also bless Kim and Benjamin, which makes life much easier for everyone involved. I want to also mention that Trey Alley (who lives in Greensboro, Ga.), Dan Carter (who lives in Newburgh, In.), and Myra Cleaver and Jhonda Johnston (who live locally), assist mightily in the production of our study materials. Bob Fichtinger (who also lives in Newburgh, In.) has assisted greatly in building and maintaining our website. Kim, my wife and mother to our son, Benjamin, remains my faithful friend, in-house secretary, and ally. I could not function without her ever-present support. Benjamin is a senior in high school and plans to attend Murray State University in the fall of 2014 to major in Ag Business. He is truly the “son of my right hand,” the Hebrew definition of his name. His assistance with the work load here has been priceless. He plans to start his farming operation in the spring (planting corn and soybeans), along with other farm related activities. Kim and I are thankful for his joyful spirit and friendship.

Last semester, eight Murray State students lived on The Hill—Rebecca Gaunce and Hillary Mott in the house by the entranceway, and Brian “Beamer” Barron, Jason Esau, Josh Gaunce, Chas Lynch, Andrew Porterfield, and Evan Watson in the log home in front of the Manna House. Their presence has been extremely healthy for the ministry. Also, Kevin Jones, from Elko, Nevada, will be moving here in January to attend Murray State and live on The Hill. These young men and women are such a joy to be around. So, if your life becomes mundane, invite some college students into your space and fun will erupt automatically. Filled with energy, spontaneity, and surprise, they provide much needed comic relief when our world gets a little too serious. We would relish the idea of having college age men and women lodge and study with us in the years ahead, but we will wait and see what God has in store. We want the most excellent situation for everyone involved, so we watch expectantly as God leads as only He can.

The retreat and camp ministry is being blessed as never before, and we look forward to having you join us as time permits. Also, the Lord is opening a wider door for the written materials, CD’s, and videos we continue to generate. In fact, Logos software has expressed interest in all of our written materials, and the *Romans 1-8* and *Hebrews* courses are presently featured on their website (logos.com). Logos’ software is the most popular “theological” software used by seminary professors, Bible school professors, seminary and Bible school students, pastors, teachers in local churches and para-church organizations, and members of Christ’s body in general. How exciting (and overwhelmingly humbling) to realize that the

message we have been proclaiming regarding our magnificent Savior will be at the disposal of the overall body of Christ. Several of you may already own Logos software, but in case you don't, we want to let you know of its availability. By the way, the *Romans 1-8* and *Hebrews* studies can be obtained through Logos without purchasing their software.

We are presently studying Romans 9-11 on Tuesday nights. Each lesson is posted weekly on our website (www.lifeonthehill.org). This study addresses some of the more controversial Scriptures in all of God's Word. For instance, did God actually hate Esau (Romans 9:13), never giving him opportunity to believe, or did Esau possess a free will to determine for himself where he would spend eternity? Due to the degree of interest in this study, we are sponsoring (February 21-22, 2014) the first of a series of retreats covering subjects such as predestination, election, the believer's chosenness, depravity, atonement, spiritual regeneration, foreknowledge, foreordination, Calvinism, Reformed Theology, Arminianism, free will, etc. Whether the sovereignty of God and the free will of man can be reconciled void of contradiction will also be addressed. I consider these topics easily resolved (free of irregularity) when one starts at the proper point of reference. Hope you can join us!

As spiritual erosion intensifies in our land, individuals willing to honestly and openly examine their hearts will seek truth rather than error, answers rather than opinions, and reality rather than make-believe. We, here at The Hill, are gearing up for such a season. Just as Paul stated to the church at Corinth, "*You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men*" (2Corinthians 3:2), we are a letter to the world—a letter communicating that life consists of more than just existing, and that sense can be made of the chaos. We can hardly wait to see how you, as God's ambassador, will be used to further His Kingdom.

Speaking of letters, my mother took her letter to heaven two months ago. She is now with dad enjoying her Savior face to face. I could write volumes regarding what I learned from her the last few months of her earthly journey. As I observed her trials brought about through a compromised earthly tent, God forever changed me. Hey gang, life is not only brief, but uncompromisingly fragile. May we live it to the fullest, as my mother did for so many years as a faithful wife to dad, mom to me, and friend to all who passed her way. Thanks for loving my momma during your visits here. She enjoyed every second of it! She certainly loved you in return.

Please pray for us as we seek the excellent over the good, for several new doors of opportunity seem to be opening. We will attempt to keep you informed through our website www.lifeonthehill.org, Facebook, and standard newsletters. Again, thanks for being you and continuing to love our Savior.

Thoughts from the Hill

The following input might be stimulating, especially should such subjects inundate your world. These topics, and more (many more), will be addressed at the February 21-22 event here on The Hill.

Predestined to "*Adoption as Sons*"

The phrase, "*predestined us to adoption as sons*" (Ephesians 1:5a), along with Romans 8:23, help validate that a person is not predestined until he/she is placed in Christ subsequent to exercising personal repentance and faith while depraved. We will confirm this truth by first reading Ephesians 1:5:

He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will (Ephesians 1:5)

The word crucial to a correct understanding is the first word after "*predestined*" in Ephesians 1:5a, the word "*us*." Since Paul, a fellow believer, wrote the epistle of Ephesians to church saints, the term "*us*" refers to New Testament believers. Consequently, New Testament believers (once they are made new

after repenting and believing while depraved) are the ones predestined—“*He predestined us...*” To what are New Testament believers predestined? They are “*predestined...to adoption as sons*” (Ephesians 1:5a). To what does this phrase make reference? Romans 8:23 provides the answer:

And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body (underline for emphasis). (Romans 8:23)

The “*adoption as sons*” (Romans 8:23) will occur when all members of the church age receive their new bodies, which will also fulfill the phrase, “*the redemption of our body*” (Romans 8:23). This amazing event will transpire after New Testament believers are saved/justified. Therefore, New Testament believers are “*predestined*” when they are placed in Christ and made new creations subsequent to repenting and believing while depraved. They, consequently, were not “*predestined*” to be saved/justified, but rather are “*predestined... to adoption as sons*” (Ephesians 1:5) in conjunction with being saved/justified. This sequence means that even Paul has not yet experienced the “*adoption as sons*.” Paul’s adoption as a son will not take place until his body, along with the bodies of all church saints, is resurrected in accordance with 1Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1Corinthians 15:35-58—verses that address the Rapture of the church.

“Predestined” in Romans 8:30, the Contextual View

and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Romans 8:30)

Paul states that those whom God “*predestined*,” He also “*called*”—“*called*” in this case meaning to name or give a role (or position) within the body of Christ to New Testament believers once they are placed in Christ subsequent to repenting and believing while depraved (Romans 1:1; Ephesians 4:1). (Based on 1Corinthians 1:9, “*called*” can also mean a general call “*into fellowship with*” the “*Lord*,” which does not seem to fit the context of Romans 8:30.) Continuing with Romans 8:30, God also justifies all who believe during the church age (to be “*justified*” means to have been made not guilty). He glorifies their souls and spirits at that time as well (v.30).

God makes the souls and spirits of New Testament believers into a finished product at the point of salvation/justification. Yes, God has already “*glorified*” our souls and spirits if we have chosen to accept Christ, even though we continue to sin so long as we live in earthly bodies! (The *Romans 1-8* study covers this subject in much detail.) The words “*predestined*,” “*called*,” “*justified*,” and “*glorified*” are all in the aorist tense, pointing to past action. Consequently, what Paul describes here is experienced the moment a person, during the church age, is placed in Christ subsequent to repenting and believing while depraved.

Romans 8:30 does not, as some theologians have wrongly assumed, give the chronological order of events in the life of a believer. In other words, it does not teach that God first “*predestined*” us (from eternity past) to be saved, then “*called*” us when it was our time to be saved, then “*justified*” us, and will, in the future, glorify us. That sequence is impossible since all of these verbs are in the past tense. Thus, if we are believers, all of this action has already occurred. It took place the moment we exercised repentance and faith, while depraved, and were placed in Christ. Realize as well that God “*foreknew*” (Romans 8:29) that this action would occur. He “*foreknew*” that we would choose to believe and, thus, receive these blessings, without causing us to believe.

Amazingly, Arminianism and all forms of Calvinism perceive Romans 8:30 as teaching that all believers (past, present, and future) were predestined to salvation from eternity past by means of an eternal decree. However, this view would allow Romans 8:30 to communicate that the “*predestined*” of Arminianism and Calvinism who are not yet in existence are presently “*called*,” “*justified*,” and “*glorified*”—since “*predestined*,” “*called*,” “*justified*,” and “*glorified*” are all in the past tense. Stated

differently, had future believers been “*predestined*” to salvation from eternity past, they would presently be “*called*,” “*justified*,” and “*glorified*.” This arrangement, however, would cause them to be “*justified*” and “*glorified*” prior to existing as well as “*justified*” and “*glorified*” at physical birth. Therefore, passages such as Ephesians 2:3 discredit both Arminianism and all forms of Calvinism (including Reformed Theology), for all persons arrive on the earth “*children of wrath*.”

Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.
(Ephesians 2:3)

Note: The *Advancing in Romans 1-8* study (distributed by this ministry) addresses Romans 8:30 in much greater depth.

You may ask, “Is it not when I ‘see’ Christ that I will be glorified (1John 3:2)? Doesn’t Philippians 3:21 teach that God ‘*will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory*,’ and doesn’t this transformation take place at some point after we are released from our earthly bodies?” Indeed, New Testament believers will receive their glorified bodies at some point in the future. In Romans 8:30, however, Paul refers not to the body but to the spirit and soul (to the new creation we became when we were placed in Christ). When we were placed in Christ (2Corinthians 5:17), and Christ came to live in us (Galatians 2:20), subsequent to our repenting and believing while depraved, we were born again (saved/justified)—at which time we received a glorified soul and spirit. This transformation occurred instantaneously! Nonetheless, we will continue to commit acts of sin so long as we live in earthly bodies. Yet, even then, we are glorified saints who have made temporary mistakes—not lowly, second-class citizens of the kingdom. (Again, the *Romans 1-8* study addresses this subject more thoroughly.) Hope to see you February 21-22 for more discussion of this fascinating subject matter!

Upcoming Events

January 3-5, 2014—College Retreat; **January 14, 2014**—Tuesday night Bible Study begins (7:00 pm weekly); **January 17-19, 2014**—Youth Retreat (ages 13-18); **February 21-22, 2014**—The simplicity of predestination, election, depravity, etc.; **April 25-27, 2014**—Men’s Retreat; **July 6-12, 2014**—Youth Camp (ages 13-18); **August 8-9, 2014**—Romans Retreat; **October 17-19, 2014**—Fall Retreat for couples and singles.

These dates are posted on our website, along with additional information regarding retreats, camps, and materials. This newsletter is posted there as well.