

Chalcedon Report

MINISTRY NEWS FROM THE CHALCEDON FOUNDATION® JUNE 2022

Rushdoony's Commentary on Paul's Letters to the Corinthians

Chalcedon Update

We are soon to go to press with a long-awaited commentary by R. J. Rushdoony on Paul's letters to the Corinthians, and the end product will be worth the wait. It's titled, *Sermons in First and Second Corinthians*.

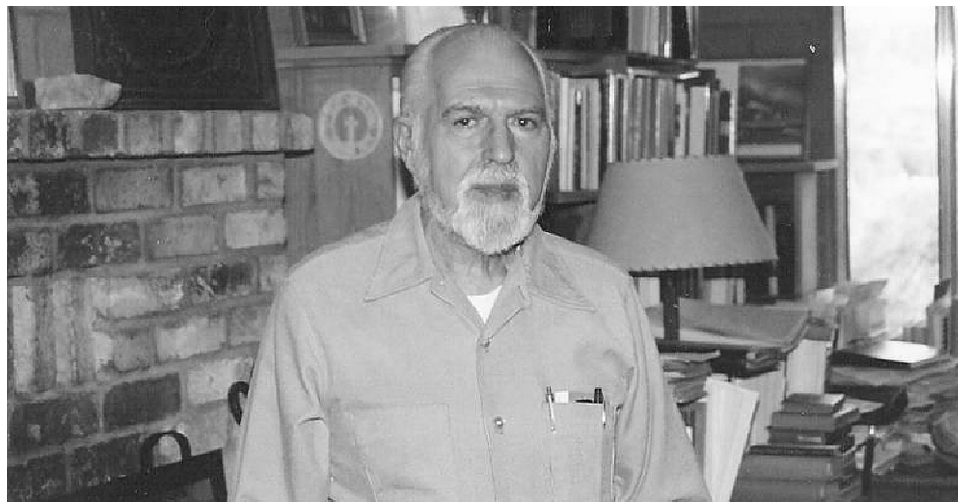
Each new book that we publish—as well as each book we republish—represents a long, tedious process of typing from handwritten manuscripts, indexing, proofing, along with page layout and cover design. There are several players in this process, and a great deal of time invested, but we feel we're publishing volumes that will have a long "shelf life."

Painstaking Work

We are also producing ebook versions as well as audio versions (see the cover story from the April issue of the *Chalcedon Report*) which means we're making Rushdoony's books more accessible than ever before, and that means greater influence!

As you know, Rushdoony wrote several commentaries on both Old and New Testament books, and we've yet to publish all of them. At present, we are also soon to publish Rushdoony's *Sermons in Zephaniah, Haggai, and Zechariah*.

Part of the reason for the length of time needed to produce these volumes is the painstaking scholarship required to review the text and make it ready for publication. This is being done by our resident scholar, Martin Selbrede, whose technical readings are putting the brakes on several publishing projects because of



In his commentary on the Corinthian letters, Rushdoony encourages the reader to faith and action.

the "jot and tittle" errors he finds which will make for even better books. When it comes to more academic books, you have to do your utmost to ensure both the text and the footnotes are reviewed and proofed carefully. We are grateful for Martin's work in this area and doubly so because he's currently serving Chalcedon on a part-time basis. He's also the vice-president of Chalcedon, so we lean on Martin a great deal. And one more thing: Martin wrote the foreword to this new commentary!

Moved to Faith and Action

Rushdoony's work on Paul's letters to the Corinthians represented one of the last writing projects before he went to be with the Lord. As he'd done previously, his writing was derived from his sermons on the letters with the text reworked after he received questions. The end result is another great commentary where one

will be encouraged to faith and action. Martin writes in his foreword:

For Dr. Rushdoony, the traditional resources he used (commentaries by Hodge, Godet, Grosheide, Morris, Conzelmann, Lenski, Evans, and Thrall) serve merely as the starting point for discussion. They simply anchor the vigorous application that Dr. Rushdoony extracts from the writings of the Apostle Paul for our era.

The sermon series Rushdoony delivered on Paul's letters to the Corinthians is entitled *Godly Social Order*, which highlights once again Rush's unwavering commitment to the Kingdom of God being manifest in every sphere of life. That same sermon series continued into Rush's exposition of First John without losing his thesis. Without neglecting the clear emphasis upon the organized church, Rushdoony points

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us to the wider application of the faith for all of life. After all, the church itself is an embassy for the Kingdom of God, so no doubt Paul himself was preparing his churches for historical victory. Once again, we cite from Martin's foreword:

Awareness of Dr. Rushdoony's purpose in preparing these lessons helps guide and shape our understanding of these important passages of Scripture. We will come to realize that Dr. Rushdoony is right: that Paul isn't so much interested in godly ecclesiastical order but something much bigger, something that embraces ecclesiastical order as just one element of many. Godly Social Order is indeed the right term to use, and it does apply to the Corinthian letters explicated here, as well as to First John.

The Marks of Maturity

In similar fashion, the mission of Chalcedon is the reinforcing of a godly social order, and although we pray continually for the organized church, our great concern is the firstness of the Kingdom of God. Whether it's a small child, a denomination, a school, or an entire nation, it is the coming of the Kingdom that matters most.

However, it's this larger vision of the Kingdom of God which provides greater meaning to the details of how we organize and operate in church, family, or state, yet the opposite is often the case: we as the church are caught up in lesser matters while leaving the greater matters untouched. This is not maturity, as Martin describes:

Christians who are able to follow Dr. Rushdoony as he traces St. Paul's thoughts in these two massive epistles will be all the stronger for it, and will be able to "put away childish things," the childish things today's church clings to at its own peril.

The apostle Paul desired maturity for his congregations because he saw the forces of darkness arrayed against a struggling early church—a church which was to become light to the world. In Rushdoony's discussion of 1 Corinthians 11, he writes:

The breakdown of the Greco-Roman culture was leading to a decay of standards in all areas of life and thought.



Martin Selbrede's skills as a scholar and editor are invaluable for Chalcedon's publishing.

The old order was not unlike what twentieth-century leaders envision as a new world order! Thus, the entrance of Christianity into such a world scene was most significant. The battle between the City of God and the city of man, the dream of Babel or Babylon, was joined. Over the centuries again and again the two cities have been in total war, one against the other. This is certainly true in our day. The relevance of Paul's letter is very great.

Books are Ministry

This is how book publishing becomes important and why the mission of Chalcedon is vital for our time. We are not the sort of ministry which tries to track and speak to the ever-changing news cycle nor do we invest time and energy on the trending social issues.

The work of the Kingdom remains unchanged from Paul's day to ours, which makes the letters of Paul relevant to our times, and that is Rushdoony's approach to the Scriptures and the purpose of his writing. It is also our purpose as a ministry, and it's why we feel that publishing and distributed Rushdoony's materials is as crucial now as it was when we was with us.

For example, do you still peek at the pages of his *Institutes of Biblical Law*, or is that book irrelevant because it was published in the early 70s? Christians are still discovering the *Institutes* today and one cannot read it now without continually notice its relevance to today's issues and problems.

More Than an Assembly

The church today is more than a local assembly or a classroom. It is the place where God meets with His people and they are further equipped to advance God's Kingdom. In the first chapter of his commentary on First Corinthians, Rushdoony writes:

The Christian ecclesia was thus a body of men summoned out of the world to prepare themselves in Christ to govern the world by His law. The *ecclesia* was the church but more than a religious assembly. Every local group was a part of a universal realm, the Kingdom of God, *not* the Kingdom, but an aspect of its life. It is called together by God "in order to listen to, or to act for God." The meaning of *ecclesia* is that it is a body of men called together for action in the name of God and according to His Word. The church is thus far more than a lecture hall. It is a training place for action for God's Kingdom. With this in mind, we can see why Paul is distressed at the church's sins and shortcomings.

Rushdoony was effective at highlighting the greater purpose of God's Kingdom in order to help us avoid sappy pietism and a preoccupation with our own lives and congregations. Like Paul, Rushdoony calls us to faith and action, and his upcoming *Sermons in First and Second Corinthians* will push that thesis even further. Stay tuned for more information. We're excited to announce its publication to you. Remember, it's your support that makes all of this possible. 🙌

The Slow and Steady Work of Podcasting

Chalcedon Update

Podcasting is not new for Chalcedon. In fact, we've been releasing discussion-based audio content in a digital format since the early 2000s. However, there was someone who was "podcasting before podcasting was cool" as far back as the 1980s, and that was R. J. Rushdoony, who for several years released his monthly *Easy Chair* tapes. These recorded discussions are still available today on our website, and they remain a treasure of wealth and wisdom that can speak to us today.

Podcasts Bigger Than TV

The *Easy Chair* series is a big reason why we leveraged the budding internet in order to provide continual content in a way that was inexpensive and easy to produce. The downfall was that only a few people were tech savvy enough to know how to listen to such content, and at the time, we were limited to only featuring our audio content on our website. It wasn't until smart phones and portable digital audio players became more common that the world began to see the value in podcasts, audio books, or audio sermons and lectures.

In short, it took over twenty years for the world to become regular consumers of digital content to where podcasts are in some ways more important than television and radio programming.

This became clear when the average person heard that a stand up comic, Joe Rogan, signed a \$100 million deal with the Swedish streaming audio platform, Spotify. Not too long after—during the pandemic—Joe Rogan's podcast had more viewers and listeners per episode (11 million) than CNN's primetime news program hosted by Anderson Cooper (238,000). Even NBC's *Nightly News* had 2.5 million fewer viewers than the comedian's podcast.

When this data is combined with the radical changes in television where



consumers are spending more time and money on streaming services like Netflix than they are cable television, then you can be sure a revolution is underway.

The same is happening with traditional print media, such as newspapers and magazines, as more and more publications are ending their printed products. The latest is the 48-year-old weekly *People* magazine, which looks to be soon going exclusively online.

We experienced this reality check when we discontinued our printed magazine *Faith for All of Life*. The expense for layout, printing, and mailing was far greater than the return because of the limited readership. In 2018, we felt it best to switch to mailing two bi-monthly newsletters (*Arise & Build*, *Chalcedon Report*) which focused on different aspects of our ministry's expression.

Decentralized Information

What all of this means is that information is now radically decentralized and consumers are spending their time and money on what they specifically want, which has led to a plethora of specialized content creators on nearly every social media platform.

Even websites are not as trafficked as heavily as social media or streaming platforms like Spotify or YouTube, and

this is both a blessing and a curse.

The blessing is that Chalcedon can better target new readers and listeners because of the powerful database owned by social media companies, but the downside is reaching them. One of the effective ways of reaching a new audience is by consistently releasing new content that our existing supporters and followers can share with their friends and family.

In essence, we are in the "sharing" era of social media and less in the "searching" era that preceded social media. That's why you hear less about Google and more about Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook.

The message and mission of Chalcedon are best suited for these "sharing" platforms, which is why a steady stream of digital content is necessary for reaching a wider audience.

For this we have two podcasts: the *Chalcedon Podcast*, hosted by Mark Rushdoony, Martin Selbrede, and Andrea Schwartz, and the *Out of the Question Podcast* hosted by Andrea and sometimes with Dr. Charles Roberts, a longtime Chalcedon supporter and pastor of Reedy River Presbyterian Church in South Carolina.

For the *Chalcedon Podcast*, each audio episode is posted on our website, as well as on popular podcast platforms like iTunes, and a video version is posted on YouTube. As of this date, we've recorded 23 episodes of the *Chalcedon Podcast* while Andrea has published 185 episodes of *Out of the Question Podcast* to date.

For now, it's important that we continue to publish our podcasts since we have the opportunity to continually reach new people. If you haven't experienced our podcasts, you can find them at <https://chalcedonpodcast.libsyn.com> and <https://www.reconstructionistradio.com/podcasts/out-of-the-question>. 🎧

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How to Pray: Prevailing Prayer

R. J. Rushdoony (*Good Morning, Friends*, Vol. 3, pp. 131-134)

Good morning, friends. In the closing week of our Lord's ministry, the disciples, startled by the rapid turn of events and appalled by the dread prospect of their Lord's predicted death, were further shaken by His declaration that their nation was to wither like the smitten fig tree and disappear. It was for them a moment of fear and horror. They looked expectantly to the Lord: He who had predicted such dread events could no doubt predict something hopeful with regard to their own future. This expectation was not met. Jesus refused to say anything at this point concerning His disciples. Instead, He commended them to prayer, saying:

Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses. (Mark 11:22-26)

Prayer can give us more than the most accurate prediction of the future. It was prayer, therefore, that was urged on the disciples. More than that, the means to prevailing prayer was clearly stated.

According to our Lord, prevailing prayer turns on two conditions (C. E. Graham Swift, in Davidson), our relation to God and our relation to man.

The *first* condition is simply stated: "Have faith in God." "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). When we walk in faith, we face still many trying problems, but by the grace of God the mountains are made low, the rough places plain, and the valleys are exalted. Every mountain of obstructions can be met, challenged, and overcome by the man of steadfast faith. When Prince Zerubbabel was confronted by apparently insurmountable obstacles, God spoke to him through the prophet Zechariah, saying, "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain" (Zech. 4:7).

In effect, Jesus told His disciples this: the key to your future is not in prediction but in prayerful faith. To say that our future can be fully described by even accurate prediction is to reduce life to events and to declare that life can be made or broken by events. In actuality, events can be made or broken only by life, and hence the essence of our life must be faith and prayer, in order that in all things we may be more than conquerors through Him that loved us. The victory that overcomes the world and all its events is this, even our faith (1 John 5:4), the faith given and declared by God in His Word and apprehended by us and made one with our life. The first condition of prevailing faith is therefore faith in God.

The *second* condition is our relation to men, and this is specifically described as forgiveness. We live in a world in which offenses must needs come. It is impossible to find an honest human situation anywhere without finding out at the same time a wide area of offenses. We are not asked to forgive the sins, trespasses, offenses, or unkindnesses of others because they are of no account. On the contrary, sin is always very real and always most serious.

But we must forgive, for three reasons. *First*, we must forgive because it is God who requires it of us. When God speaks, we cannot argue. *Second*, we must forgive, because otherwise God will not hear us when we pray nor hearken to our own hunger for grace. *Third*, we must forgive, because it means leaving God's work to God. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19). God undertakes the task of justice and judgment: this responsibility He delegates in limited areas to duly constituted authorities in church, state, and home. The task of forgiveness He delegates through Christ to every believer, asking them at the same time to forego judgment. It would be easier for us to forgive if we could also judge, but it requires humility to withhold judgment and extend God's forgiveness. And here, as Peter made clear, we have an example: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps ... Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not ... Who, his own self, bare our sins in His own body on the tree ... by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Pet. 2:21, 23-24). 🇺🇸