

RESOURCE REVIEWS

SAVED BY GRACE ALONE

*Sermons on
Ezekiel 36:16-36*

**D. MARTYN
LLOYD-JONES**

SAVED BY GRACE ALONE

D M Lloyd-Jones

*Sermons on Ezekiel 36:16-36
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This book consists of 14 sermons preached by the late Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones in Westminster Chapel, London between 15 April and 15 July 1956. By this time, he was into the second half of

his 30-year ministry at the Chapel and his congregation was well established with his Sunday morning series on Ephesians and his famous Bible study on Romans on Friday evenings. These sermons were a series at the Sunday evening evangelistic services. As always with Martyn Lloyd-Jones this is a book that is hard to put down. Many waves of human optimism have passed and failed since 1956 but these sermons remain agelessly relevant as they tell of God's unchanging love and purpose.

The foreword summarises the whole tone very well by saying "As one reads these sermons one cannot escape the preacher's conviction that the whole of the Bible is God's word for all time"

We find an amazing systematic evangelical theology in this book as "the Doctor" starts in chapter one by emphasising the reliability of the Word, truth unchanged, the reality of the human condition by recounting that the people were in exile in Babylon because they had rebelled against God.

The human problem is diagnosed, noting that people always want the remedy rather than address the cause and, like the exiled people of Israel, need to realise the enormity of the rebellion.

The Doctor then describes how God judges and punishes sin and calls attention to the Biblical doctrine of the wrath of God. Man in sin does not change, neither does God's Holiness. He

then moves to remind us that salvation is not due to anything in us at all. It is all of God who vindicates his own name and holiness. This reminds me of the saying by Jonathan Edwards that we contribute nothing to our salvation apart from the sin that made it necessary.

He then relates the people coming out of Babylon into Canaan to our salvation, to understand the depth of sin and the height of salvation through the work of the Spirit, translated out of darkness. This gives us a clean, new heart with God's Spirit within us. He goes on to show how the Old Testament foreshadows the New Testament message and the cleansing Jesus brings by taking our sin on Himself. This gives a new heart, not just forgiven but changed, with a new spirit due to God's spirit within us, resulting in a complete salvation and restoring that which was lost.

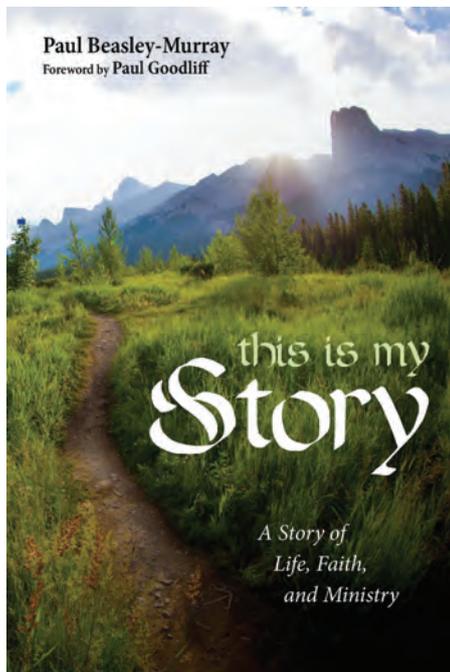
The Doctor then describes man in famine, with life not in communion with God not being Christianity. The unproductive age is desolation without God and barren spiritual periods are also barren secular periods.

In these days, when the Old Testament is often neglected in preaching and teaching, this powerful series is a very welcome correction. Likewise, is his drawing attention to key doctrines often neglected today. In chapter 12 he states "there are still people today who seem to be so dulled by sin that they cannot see the Gospel in the Old Testament. They

think it is not the same God, the same covenant, the same gracious promises, in the Old and New Testaments. But it is the same message-it is the form alone that differs—"

The final chapter titled "Saved by Grace alone" explains how our salvation undoes all the consequences of the fall - "our conception of salvation is totally inadequate unless we see in it this restoration to a living vital knowledge of God which is offered to us in the gospel..."; that we are put in a position beyond Adam in Christ. "In Him the tribes of Adam boast more blessings than their father lost". It is God's unmistakable work. A book well worth reading!

Reviewed by John McCartney



'THIS IS MY STORY'

Paul Beasley-Murray

If your grandchildren ever ask 'Who was my grandfather?' what will they be told? It was this question which prompted Paul Beasley-Murray to write his autobiography, and the rest of us are glad because it makes very interesting reading. The very early chapters read a bit like a eulogy at a funeral service - very interesting for the relatives, but

a bit tedious for the rest - but don't be put off. Once you get into it you will discover the life story of a very influential and sometimes controversial Baptist Minister.

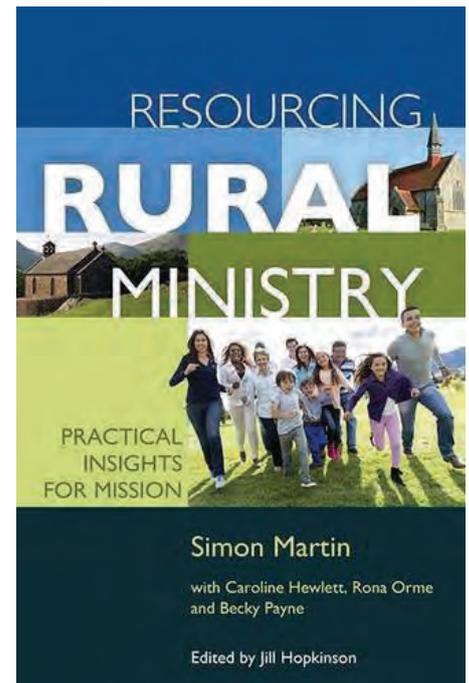
Born the son of the manse, Paul Beasley-Murray always wanted to be a Baptist Minister following in the footsteps of his father. His story recounts in detail the formative influences on his life, his childhood home, his education at Cambridge, his service overseas in both Europe and Africa, his pastorates in Altrincham and Chelmsford and his term of service as Principal of Spurgeon's College. During his pastorates both the churches were transformed into two of the fastest growing Christian communities in their areas. Whilst at Spurgeon's the number of students doubled as new patterns of training were introduced. But, like all ministerial careers there have been heartaches as well as causes for rejoicing. With openness and honesty, for example, he records his period at Spurgeon's with all the difficulties he faced, the struggles for power amongst his colleagues and the hostility which led eventually to the termination of his employment there. He is honest about the toll which that took on him, and especially on his family, his struggle to forgive and the judgemental attitude which he felt from the evangelical wing of the church. On retirement he knew the pain of the deacons of his church writing to say that in their judgement "it would be better for you no longer to go there!"

In addition to his various appointments Paul Beasley-Murray is a prolific writer, with a particular desire to equip the church and especially its ministers. With others he was a driving force behind the formation of 'Mainstream' - the Baptist equivalent to MET - although interestingly they deliberately avoided the word 'evangelical' in the title, and they refused to have a recorded membership, preferring simply to distribute a magazine regularly to keep people up-to-date.

This is a good book and an important read for all those who think that the grass may be greener on the other side, for ministers who struggle a bit and wonder if it's their fault, and for evangelicals who need to discover that not all evangelicals are the most loving people in the world.

Now retired, Paul Beasley-Murray is still influential in the College of Baptist Ministers. He still maintains his writing and now, together with his wife, worships at Chelmsford Cathedral where he received the warmest welcome from a very different wing of the church.

*Reviewed by Paul Wilson
Former Development Worker, and chair
of MET*



RESOURCING RURAL MINISTRY: PRACTICAL INSIGHTS FOR MISSION

Simon Martin et al

Abingdon: BRF, 2015, 208pp, £8.99,
9-780857-462626

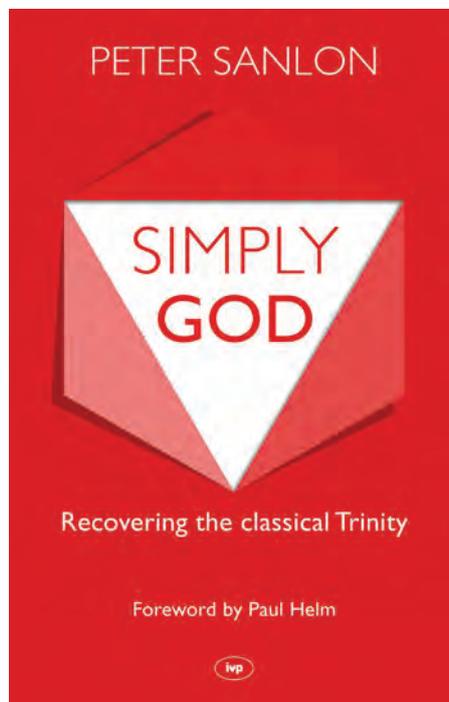
If you are looking for a practical understanding of the main issues, challenges and responses in rural ministry in Britain, this is the text for you. It's very accessible, straightforward and written by Simon Martin and others who are all associated with the Arthur Rank Centre (ARC) which seeks to equip the rural church for effective ministry and mission.

What I particularly like about this book is that it covers the main areas, at least as I understand them. Too many books on rural Christianity spend a lot of their time offering an analysis of the changing nature of rural communities, dealing with indices of rural deprivation, mobility and so on. This is important and helps us to understand the rural context in which we live out our faith and minister. But, too often they don't offer enough direct suggestion as to what we might actually do.

The chapters consider mission, worship, evangelism, messy church, fresh expressions, worship, discipleship, young people and multi-church ministry. I particularly appreciate the separate chapters on mission and evangelism. Too often these areas are conflated and the result is that being involved with people outside the believing community is considered to be evangelism. In reality that is mission which creates the opportunity for a more direct sharing of faith and a challenge to discipleship. This book very helpfully, in my view, gets this right.

My one small criticism of this book is that it's a bit Anglican. That is fully understandable. The ARC (<http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/>) is a largely Anglican organisation with a Methodist/United Reformed Rural Officer. The book refers to a lot of ARC resources and programmes which can be used for anyone, although at times there is more of an Anglican flavour. The chapter on 'multi-church ministry' is a good example where the Methodist norm is discussed but rather than strengths and weaknesses of a rural circuit being considered there is more of an introduction to how Methodists do things for others. I think more could be learnt by Methodists and others by a sharper critique of the current Methodist circuit.

This is a very good book that gives us a better understanding of the challenges and possibilities in rural mission and ministry. It does point to the need to produce more material that helps Methodists and other non-Anglicans understand their nuanced context. This is a fine resource that will benefit many.
Revd Dr Stephen Skuce



SIMPLY GOD: RECOVERING THE CLASSICAL TRINITY

Peter Sanlon

IVP, 2014, 240pp,
978-1-78359-104-6

One of the commendatory comments on the back of Peter Sanlon's *Simply God* describes it as 'a clear and winsome apologia for classical theism'. It is indeed admirably clear, occasionally winsome, and also a trenchant argument about who God is, One and Three. Sanlon re-states, explains and defends the church's traditional trinitarian theology, in an age which expects everything to be 'modern' and in which Christians may avoid the tough, and rich, work of delving into historical traditions.

In the introductory section, Sanlon argues the need to look again at what the Church has affirmed about God, in the face of many refusing to look at doctrine deeply or attentively enough. The traditions of the Church affirm God's otherness, and Sanlon critiques the ways in which Christians reduce God to 'one of us, but bigger'. Overall, the author affirms God's 'simplicity' - a technical term which he explains and keeps coming back to. Part I, on the 'oneness' of God consists of four chapters dealing with simplicity and perfection, time and

eternity, the problem of suffering, and the unchangeability of God. The shorter part II has three chapters exploring God's relationality, especially the nature of God as love. There is difficult material in many chapters, but the explanations are much more accessible than most discussions of these topics. Sanlon also demonstrates the pastoral implications of his arguments, though some of his illustrations or applications are more significant and persuasive than others.

In his final chapter, Sanlon notes some issues for Christians in today's Western world which might benefit from this theological argument. Given the depth of the rest of the book, the sections here are so short as to be rather cursory. But the reader who has stuck with this book throughout, and been challenged by it, has here some hints of where the arguments and the pastoral concerns could be lived out in God's world.

Each chapter ends with a 'Meditation'. This emphasises that each section is meant to feed prayer and relationship with God, not remaining 'merely' intellectual. However, they would perhaps have worked better in a poetic, rather than prose form. As they are, there's a danger of 'meditation' seeming rather didactic.

Sanlon writes from a conservative, reformed perspective. He has in his sights a number of targets: proponents of a kind of 'God is our buddy' theology, in which God's otherness is not recognised; theologians who have helpfully recovered the 'threeness' of God, in recent Western theology, but have in the process misrepresented God's 'oneness' in the traditions of the Church; and all who think that affirming 'God is one' lands us with a picture of a static, non-relational God.

Simply God is a challenging, appropriately rigorous and important book. While I would question some of Sanlon's argument, particularly his understanding of revelation, the call to delve into Christian understanding of God, with close attention to historical theological sources, is crucial and I would commend this book.

*Reviewed by Jane Craske
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