

A Column About This Column

By PAUL J. SCHARF

When I launched this column during Passion Week of this year—with a treatise called “What I Love About Easter”—I wrote nothing within the column itself about my plan or purpose for it. I will do that now as I endeavor to relaunch this column for the fall.

I have long desired to write a weekly column on theological and worldview issues. This was something that I had especially hoped to do as part of my service as a church ministries representative for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. I believe that this is a great vehicle for staying in touch with constituents on a regular basis, in a relevant way—reaching followers old and new.

The shutdown due to the coronavirus crisis this spring gave me the time and opportunity—and, frankly, the necessity—of establishing a presence on SermonAudio.com. Once that was in place, I had the opportunity, and again the time, to launch my column.

With the return to in-person ministry this summer, it has become much more challenging to stay on schedule with these columns, and I have missed more weeks than I intended.

I have learned that it is probably not realistic to expect myself to produce a column every week. After all, I am not *only* a columnist. In fact, at this point, as we are still raising financial support to engage completely in this work, I am not *only* a church ministries representative for The Friends of Israel, but must also do other work, as well. Writing this column is something I have taken on by choice, for the purpose of enhancing my ministry. It is, on many levels, certainly not the most urgent task of my week—although it may ultimately prove to be the most impactful thing that I will do during any given week.

I know that I should get way ahead on these columns, and I do have a few written in advance. As a writer, however, I really like to stay on the cutting edge—writing from the heart about the issues before us at the moment. Somehow, dusting off something written long ago, or watching a post load automatically after I set it up weeks ahead of time, do not always bring me the same sense of satisfaction. I realize that this kind of preparation is necessary, however, and will begin doing more of it.

I am aware that I should also have some generic columns ready to post in weeks when my pen is as dry as the sunburnt grass of late August. In time, I will get there too.

Every writer knows about the power of deadlines, though, and some of us seem to thrive on them. I echo the words of one of my seminary professors, who said that he did his best work under a *little bit* of pressure.

If you have been following this column, you know that I cover a variety of timely topics, including Biblical themes, personal reflections, and issues relating to ministry and the

church. Sometimes I take on current events. I especially love to write about holidays, and really enjoy applying lessons from church history to the times in which we live now. There is no shortage of things to cover in that vein—with this year being the 400th anniversary of the Pilgrims landing on these shores, and with the 500th anniversary of the Reformation continuing to unfold.

So, what can we accomplish through this column? The answer to that question depends largely upon you, the reader. I would love to get your response and reaction to it, as well as your ideas and your help.

My hope is to expand its impact. Right now, I place it on SermonAudio.com as a *sermon*, in both written and audio form. I also load it there as an eDoc, and will attach a specific column to other sermons whenever that seems appropriate. I post a special edition of the column (including artwork) for my Facebook group, as well. They are, in fact, usually the first to have access to the column.

I appreciate SharperIron.org picking up many of my columns. I had previously written numerous articles for SharperIron, and have worked with my friends there for years, so this has been a natural fit.

I would still like to extend its reach to new venues, and thereby multiply its effectiveness. I stand ready to make it available for other websites, in newspapers or to other media outlets, and through churches and various kinds of ministries. Perhaps, for instance, your own local church might be interested in running it in its newsletter, or even as a bulletin insert. If so, I would love to discuss that possibility with you.

Let me say, in closing, what joy it gives me as a writer whenever people read my column. As a consumer of information, I know how many good and important things are available out there. The fact that you would take the time to read (or listen to) my column causes me to experience great humility and gratitude. I thank the Lord for the ability to write and disseminate this column, and for the wonderful opportunity to serve Him through The Friends of Israel.

The Lord gave the word;
Great was the company of those who proclaimed *it*. (Ps. 68:11)

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